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AP PHOTO

Hong Kong An industrial support ship operating in the South China Sea has sunk in a storm with the possible loss of more than two dozen crew members, rescue services in Hong Kong said Saturday. Authorities dispatched planes and helicopters to aid in the rescue, with at least three people from the crew of 30 brought to safety. The accident occurred about 300 kilometers south of Hong Kong.



AP PHOTO

North Korea yesterday slammed the United States, South Korea and Japan for pushing to boost their trilateral military cooperation targeting the North, warning that the move is prompting urgent calls for the country to reinforce its military capability. North Korea has long cited what it calls hostility by the United States and its allies as a reason to pursue a nuclear program. Sunday's statement comes as North Korea's neighbors say the country is ready for its first nuclear test in five years.

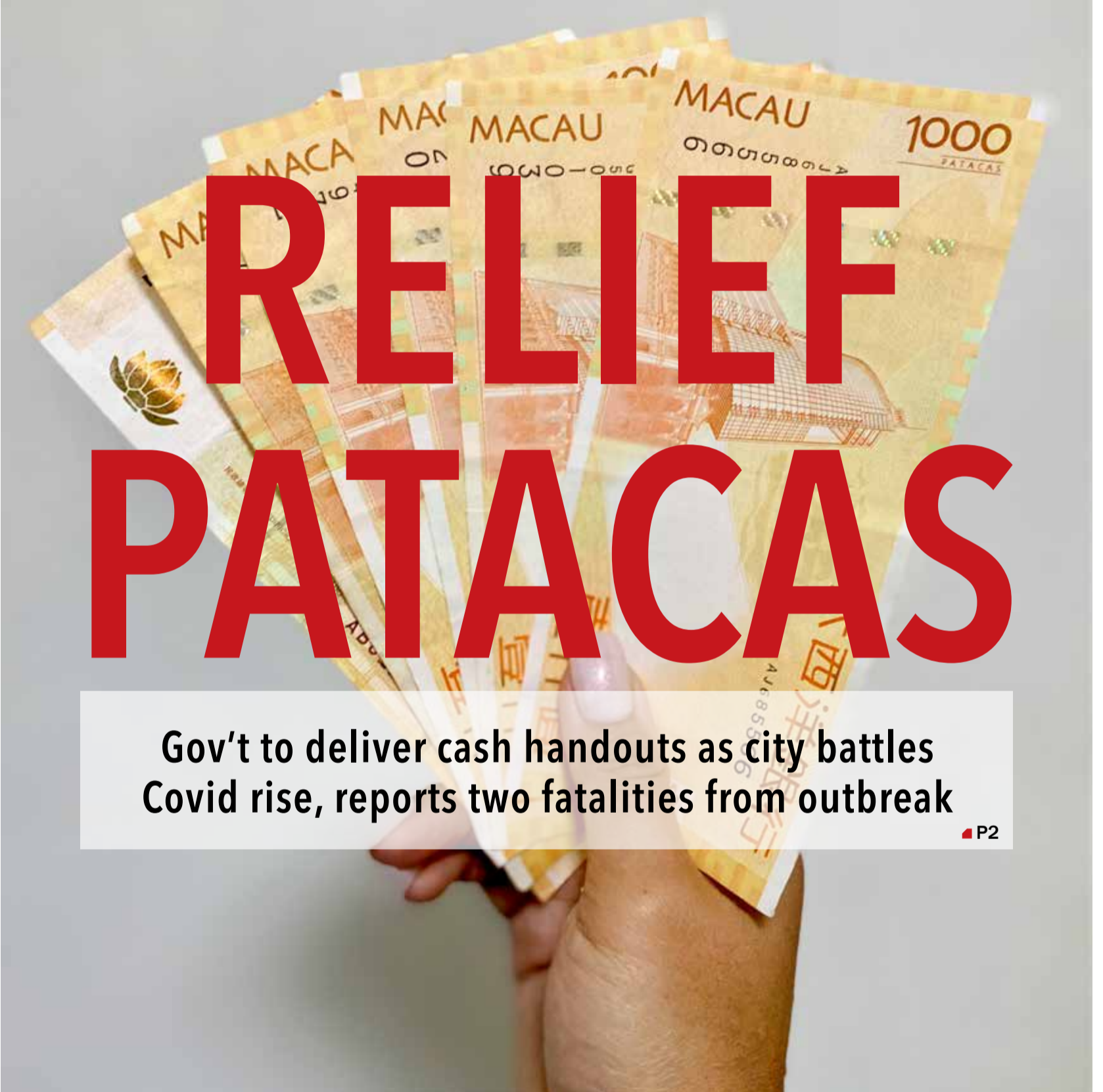


AP PHOTO

Afghanistan A three-day assembly of Islamic clerics and tribal elders in the Afghan capital concluded Saturday with pledges of support for the Taliban and calls on the international community to recognize the country's Taliban-led government. The meeting in Kabul was tailored along the lines of Afghanistan's traditional Loya Jirgas — regular councils of elders, leaders and prominent figures meant to deliberate Afghan policy issues.

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GOV'T RESPONDS TO OUTBREAK WITH CASH HANDOUTS

RENATO MARQUES

A series of nine measures including cash handouts, tax refunds, and tax exemptions, among others, have been announced by the government in response to the current situation of the Covid-19 outbreak.

"In response to the sudden outbreak of the epidemic in Macau, the Special Administrative Region government swiftly launched the '2022 10 billion Anti-epidemic Assistance Measures,'" Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, said yesterday during the Covid-19 situation press briefing.

The new round of economic stimulus covers a total of nine measures in five areas, including financial aid, employment support, tax reduction, exemption, subsidies, and internal consumption stimulus. The budgeted expenditure exceeds 10 billion patacas, Lei said.

Among the stimulus package is a new cash handout in the



amount of 15,000 patacas, which will be handed to all resident taxpayers' that have reported income subjected to tax in an amount between 6,000 patacas and 480,000 patacas over the cumulative period of two years (2020 and 2021).

Contrary to the general wealth partaking scheme that attri-

butes the same amount to every Macau permanent or non-permanent resident, this measure aims to particularly compensate those that reported low income due to unemployment, salary reduction, or lay-off situations.

According to a further explanation from the director of the

Financial Services Bureau (DSF), Stephen Long, the measure will benefit around 80% of the resident workforce, including those who are currently unemployed but have worked and earned salaries during the two years, as well as workers that have faced temporary lay-off situations.

According to Long, there are

around 231,000 local workers, including those in liberal professions, who over the last two years, have faced a significant reduction in their income base due to pandemic-related causes.

Support is also extended to shop owners and other self-employed workers who fall under "Tax group 2."

They can receive an amount between 15,000 patacas and 300,000 patacas if they have declared profits below 240,000 patacas in 2021.

Taxi drivers, touristic guides, fishermen, hawkers, and other independent licensed professionals can also receive a cash handout of 10,000 patacas.

Other measures include the exemption and refund of several licensing taxes, a special interest subsidy scheme for corporate bank loans; temporary subsidies for the taxi industry; and a citywide consumer carnival (post-pandemic) to increase internal consumption.

As Secretary Lei noted, the financial assistance will demand a new amendment to the 2022 budget that needs to be delivered, addressed, and approved by the Legislative Assembly before taking effect.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Gov't reports death of two Covid-19-infected patients

RENATO MARQUES

TWO women, aged 94 and 100, have passed away while under the medical care of the health authorities for being positive cases of Covid-19, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center announced yesterday.

The two women were part of the group of 14 residents and staff who had reportedly been infected with the virus at the Integrated Services Centre for the Elderly at Praia do Manduco.

According to the health authorities, both women had several undisclosed chronic diseases and passed away while under the care of the Health Bureau (SSM)

RENATO MARQUES



at the Public Health Clinical Centre in Coloane.

Although the authorities classified the two as the first deaths of patients infected

with Covid-19, it is not clear at this point what the causes of death were and if they were related to the disease.

Their infections were de-

tected on June 29 and 30, respectively, and previously the patients had been reported as stable and not needing special care or ventilators. Neither of these cases had been reported as severe.

According to the explanation by the SSM director, Alvis Lo, in both cases the women presented a "relatively low concentration of the virus with CT (cycle threshold) values between 30 and 40." Nonetheless, they were in a health condition classified by Ao Ieong as "very weak."

Questioned by the media, Lo clarified that while the 100-year-old woman had not been vaccinated against Covid-19, the 94-year-old had been inoculated with two doses of the inactivated Sinopharm vaccine.

Asked to elaborate on the chronic diseases of the patients, the director of SSM refused to provide more information, citing the confidential nature of the patients' medical history.

BATCH OF MANGOES, BEEF TRIPE TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID

SAMPLES collected from the external packaging of a batch of mangoes imported from Taiwan region tested positive for the novel coronavirus nucleic acid over the weekend.

This is the second time in three days that mangoes imported from Taiwan have tested positive for the virus.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) said it immediately initiated the contingency plan, and sealed the five boxes of affected mangoes, weighing a

total of 50 kilograms.

The products concerned have not entered the market and are to be destroyed. IAM suspended import from the relevant brand for one week.

Meanwhile, samples collected from the external packaging of a batch of frozen beef tripe imported from Argentina via Hong Kong also tested positive for Covid-19.

The batch contains 60 boxes of affected frozen beef tripe weighing a total of 605 kilograms, which are to be destroyed. LV

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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNER_Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

Advertisement_advertising@macaudailytimes.com

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RENATO MARQUES



COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Authorities announce three new rounds of mass testing this week

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU will see three new consecutive rounds of citywide mass testing this week, starting from today and ending Saturday, local health authorities announced yesterday in the return of the daily press briefing on the Covid-19 situation by the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

In a crowded press briefing with a total of 11 government representatives present, including two secretaries from the government and four bureau directors, it was the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, who announced that a triple round of mass testing for the whole population will commence as soon as this morning.

Complementing the information presented by Ao Ieong, the director of the Health Bureau (SSM), Alvis Lo, said that the three rounds will take place over six

days (from Monday to Saturday), with two days designated for each round.

Lo also said that the authorities implemented this intensive mass testing plan after the authorities found a total of 90 new positive cases, of which two-thirds (60) were found in the community and only one-third were cases detected in areas of control and confinement. This figure raised this outbreak's tally of positive cases to a total of 784. From these, only 317 are symptomatic, while the majority (467 cases) are asymptomatic.

The SSM director said that the goal is to find all the cases that are concealed within the community and that are causing the never-ending spread of the virus, noting that Macau is following China's national policy of "Covid-19 zero-case."

The most significant differ-

ence between these three rounds and all the previous rounds is that children aged up to three years old (on July 1, 2022) are exempt from taking part in the mass testing, while all other citizens must take part in the testing.

Authorities found a total of 90 new positive cases, of which 60 were found in the community

Ao Ieong also announced that a total of 650 workers from the health authorities of the city of Zhuhai as well as Guangdong province will take part in these rounds of nucleic acid testing (NAT) by helping with sampling collection stations.

"From these, 150 have already arrived at Macau and the other 500 will be arriving soon," she added.

The Secretary also called on all activity sectors to suspend or reduce their operations over this week to a minimum to facilitate the process and avoid cross-infection in the community, calling on all citizens to avoid leaving their homes unless strictly necessary. Examples of acceptable reasons include supplying their homes with necessities or going to get a NAT.

Additionally, and as happened in the last round, the authorities are requesting all citizens take a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) and ensure that the result is negative before going to a NAT sampling station.

"This week is very crucial, and I make this appeal to all citizens to continue to support the government in this task and to adhere to the rules. Please do not go to the NAT outside the booking time. We want to avoid crowd gathering at all costs," Ao Ieong implored.

In response to the questions from the media, Lo justified the need for the intensive rounds of NAT as well as for a complementary measure of daily RAT for everyone by referencing the "the fast propagation of the virus. If we don't have this constant testing, when we detect one case, we probably already have a large number of other cases infected. As we know, this virus has high transmissibility, and each infected person can infect another seven."

NAT and RAT for a week

The director of the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), Kong Chi Meng, has further explained that during the triple round of the citywide NAT, there will be a total of 64 sampling collection stations, 44 of which are for the general public, 13 for paid NAT and seven dedicated to testing only people with special needs. While for the general public the NAT takes place from 9 a.m. on the first day till 6 p.m. on the following day (a total of 33 hours), the priority lanes of the sampling stations will open three hours earlier, catering to people with special needs from 6 a.m.

Kong also reminded us that while children below the age of three are exempt from the NAT mass testing, this does not apply to the RAT, to be done at home, nor does it apply to those who are under control measures (Yellow Health Code). In those cases, there is no exemption based on age.

The NAT mobile stations will also be part of the mass testing, with several vehicles to be placed in different areas of the Peninsula and Islands (the precise location to be disclosed at a later stage).

During the three rounds, citizens will receive some prevention and control supplies from the government, such as five RAT kits in the first round (starting today), 10 pieces of KN95 face masks in the second round (starting Wednesday), and another five RAT kits on the round that starts on Friday. Citizens should use upload the results returned by these kits to the respective platform until at least Saturday (July 9).

Limited public services available this week

THE public sector will provide limited external services this week following two weeks of closure.

Residents, meanwhile, are required to make an appointment in advance online or by telephone to avoid gathering and crowds.

The Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) issued a statement to all public departments requesting that de-

partment heads follow the principle of maintaining minimal personnel for limited provision of public services.

It also called for staff, where possible, to work from home or work at different times to limit the spread of the virus.

Additionally, department leaders should avoid permitting staff with yellow health codes to go to work in the department.

According to the official letter circulated by the SAFP, those who have not been asked to return to work are deemed to be absent according to the provisions of public service laws, but must perform their duties, including participating in anti-pandemic support, and other work.

Meanwhile, several branches of Macau's banks will open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. this week. LV

LYNZY VALLES



GAMING

REVENUE SLUMP PERSISTS AS CITY DEALS WITH WORSENING OUTBREAK

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU'S gaming revenues have fallen to a new low - since September 2020 - as the city faces its largest outbreak yet, after recording low numbers of Covid-19 cases for two years.

Data from the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau shows that June's gross gaming revenue (GGR) stood at MOP2.48 billion, which is a plunge of 25.9% compared to May's MOP3.34 billion.

This figure is down 62.1% compared to June 2021, when it recorded a GGR of MOP6.55.

The slump comes alongside a trend in loss of gaming revenue in the city, which was initially due to the outbreaks in the neighboring region.

However, the narrative is different this time: the neighboring re-



gion has put in place strict measures that discourage travelers from the mainland from entering Macau, as the city has already recorded nearly 800 cases in two weeks.

These are cases that officials have been trying hard to control by semi-locking down the city.

The government is calling this an "unprecedented" Covid-19

outbreak; it has led to suspended operations of most government offices as well as temporary closures of shops and schools.

Due to the outbreak, the nei-

ghoring region has been requiring arrivals from Macau to undergo a 14-day quarantine at their own expense. However, the length of quarantine was shortened to seven days last week as China announced an easing of its quarantine requirement for people arriving from abroad.

Meanwhile, the downturn is expected to continue this month, due to the low number of tourist arrivals.

Two weeks ago, Macau's casino stocks plunged after the government announced a new wave of Covid-19 cases, dealing a fresh blow to the crippled gaming sector.

The outbreak, which initially involved 12 cases, led to another round of mass city-wide testing.

With the current figure, three rounds of mass testing will happen this week.

This comes after eight months of the city recording zero Covid-19 cases in the local community.

Credit Suisse analysts expect the government to order a temporary suspension of casinos if the outbreak worsens.

Gaming employees dissatisfied with authorities' pandemic prevention arrangements

STAFF REPORTER

GAMING employees have expressed their dissatisfaction with the pandemic prevention guidelines that have been set by the Health Bureau (SSM).

According to the guideline "Measure to reduce the risk of transmission in public places including casinos during the pandemic" published June 26 by the SSM, all casino employees and clients must have returned a negative nucleic acid test (NAT) within the last 48 hours, and these employees must have returned a negative rapid antigen test result the day before attending work or entering a casino.

The guidelines initially commenced the morning of June 29, which caused a large number of people to gather at NAT stations.

Cloe Chao, president of the New Macau Gaming Staff Rights Association, expressed that the due to the large



number of people who sought appointments, some employees were unable to go to work because they could not make an appointment for the test.

Following the chaos, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) and gaming sectors coordinated with one another to come to appropriate

arrangements in respect of these pandemic protection policies. As such, the DICJ announced the guidelines would instead start at 7 a.m. on July 1.

"Many employees complained that the government's instructions were confusing. When [several employees] finished the NAT, the government announced

that the guidelines would be delayed for three days, which made it confusing for the staff," Chao told the Times.

According to Chao, some residents claim that the guidelines are not only detrimental to pandemic prevention, but also cause gatherings (whereby gaming employees gather at the NAT stations, the sites at which residents are also doing mass testing), leading to increased spread of the virus.

"Due to the seriousness of the pandemic, all casinos have fewer than ten gaming tables that are still running," she added.

Chao said that casinos are considering better ways to help those employees and hope for the employees' understanding.

Further, the DICJ will continue to strengthen pandemic prevention inspections in casinos, and is urging gaming companies to take various measures to ensure the safety of staff in the casinos.

REPORTS: GOV'T REQUESTS CASINO OPERATORS TO REDUCE ON-DUTY STAFF BY 90%

THE government has allegedly requested casino operators to reduce on-duty staff by 90%, which comes as a hit to the sector and its employees, which are already under turmoil.

This comes as Macau is facing an unprecedented outbreak, its largest since early 2020.

The directive from the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau means that casino operators may have to reduce their staff temporarily from July 1 to July 8, according to media reports.

However, the measure may continue as Macau is facing a large outbreak that has led to the government holding three rounds of mass testing this week, totaling six since the surge of cases started two weeks ago.

The Times is aware that casino operators have already placed several of their

employees on unpaid leave, with some periods of unpaid leave lasting up to two weeks.

Others, meanwhile, have been encouraged to take leave and will be paid 50% of their salary under relevant operator schemes.

Casino employees have been under pressure in the last week as a new directive requiring them to provide a 48-hour nucleic acid test (NAT) prior to going to work came into effect. The government delayed the policy for three days after it saw chaotic large crowds gathered at NAT stations.

Information from the city's statistics bureau noted last month that most of those who are unemployed and searching for new jobs were previously engaged in gaming and junket activities, and in the construction sector. LV



ANTHONY LAM

FALLING TILES

Gov't urged to thoroughly inspect flaws in public housing

AFTER mosaic tiles fell from a housing estate in Coloane Saturday, two commentators have called for the government to promptly commence thorough inspections on government-commissioned residential estates.

It was alleged that Typhoon Chaba caused the mosaic tiles on the exterior of Block 3, Koi Nga Building in Seac Pai Van Government Housing Estate to fall from high floors.

The tiles fell to the ground, onto a leisure and recreational area for the public, but caused no injury as most were indoors due to the typhoon. The detached surface measured about 3m x 5m.

The Fire Services Bureau (CB) was informed of the fallen tiles. Upon arrival, rescuers discovered that a piece of concrete, measuring 1m x 0.5m, was also detached from the wall at Block 7 of the same residential estate.

The event was later referred to the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSCU), the police and the property management company.

That afternoon, CB officers returned to the site and discovered cracks in the external tiles on Block 15. This issue was also referred to the agencies.

The Public Works Bureau (DSOP) and the Housing Bureau (IH), in response to media enquiry, emphasized that the falling tile event would not have a structural impact on the buildings, citing a third-party inspection report.

Both bureaus added that before the typhoon hit Macau, the builder commissioned to build the buildings was required to present a repair and working plan. The builder has now been assigned to fix the problem.

However, the symptom-focused approach to managing the situation does not satisfy the two commentators to whom the Times has spoken, namely Agnes Lam, president of Macao Civic Power, and Johnson Ian, deputy director-general of the Association of Synergy of Macao.

Both Lam and Ian pointed out that the government should commence a thorough inspection on the property to confirm, at a minimum, that there are no further flaws. If present, these flaws should be addressed collectively.

In addition, both commentators were unhappy that, so far, no update had been released with regards to the procedures on defects at local government housing estates.

Earlier this year, the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) issued a report on the



matter, pointing out that the IH, being the de-facto developer of these property projects, did nothing in response to the request for sufficient documentation to facilitate its investigations.

CCAC pointed out that, despite asking other bureaus, such as the terminated Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) for information, it did nothing to pursue the information when DSSOPT refused to cooperate.

The commission added that it could have requested assistance from its superintendent, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works.

The two commentators were also in agreement on the fact that the Coloane project was built in the context of the city's most heated construction market. "The project was generally rushed to completion," Ian recalled, hinting that quality may have been sacrificed.

Lam, in addition, highlighted that falling tiles should not be a difficult problem to rectify because "it is a matter of crafts" and does not concern the structure of the buildings.

Ian expects the problem to persist if no overall inspections and improvements are conducted.

Apart from this, Ian expressed his dissatisfaction with the government's reaction to the

incident. He criticized the government for disappearing after announcing the conclusion that "the matter does not affect the buildings' structure," hinting that he thought more could have been done.

He emphasized that the government should not consider this occurrence an independent incident. A serious attitude should be exercised in handling this matter, "because residents are in a vulnerable position," he said.

On the other hand, Lam questioned why falling tiles and concrete were not observed

in casinos, hotels and banks, hinting that there were ways to achieve safety.

She expects the new laws governing engineers will improve the situation, because engineers who sign and approve certain construction works will be held accountable if any flaws are later found.

Meanwhile, she believes there much that the government can do on the matter, pursuant to current laws and regulations.

Lam also suggests that skills and materials should be weighed more heavily in bid evaluations.

It was not the first time that government-commissioned housing projects recorded flaws and accidents. The subsidized residential estate started accepting residents in 2013. Two years later, some residents discovered that certain interior walls contained carton paper as part of the filling.

In the years following, various decorative and quality flaws have been reported. Reports were also made about water leakage through the exterior walls of the buildings. Some residents are finding the situation increasingly more worrying.

NET OF REINFORCEMENT STEEL SINKS AT URBAN RENEWAL CONSTRUCTION SITE

LAST week, a construction incident was drowned out by the volume of anti-Covid-19 news. It was first uncovered by former lawmaker Sulu Sou on his social media page on June 30.

The ex-lawmaker stated that he had been informed by local residents about the sinking of a large net of reinforcement steel at Lot P in Areia Preta. It is the construction site for the mid-way residences for urban renewal projects.

Sou added that the accident caused injuries to a number of workers but "it was extremely lucky that nobody died."

He criticized the Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) for reacting too slowly because its response on the accident was only available June 30, five days after the accident. What was worse, according to

him, was that the MUR response was only given "in response to media enquiries."

The MUR is fully funded by the government. According to the MUR statement, the net of reinforcement steel that was installed as temporary support tilted. The accident mildly injured six workers, who were immediately sent to the hospital and were discharged after treatment.

The accident, according to the MUR, has been reported to the government.

On this, the former lawmaker questioned why a statement was only available five days after the accident. He also wondered whether it would be concealed if no media outlets had enquired about the accident. He also considers it important to clarify responsibilities. **AL**

Xi confident in Hong Kong's future of feats a

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping on Friday expressed confidence in Hong Kong's take-off toward "a splendid feat" with the solid implementation of "one country, two systems."

Hong Kong will share the glory of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation with the rest of the country, Xi said when attending a meeting celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland and the inaugural ceremony of the sixth-term government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

The president extended cordial greetings to all Hong Kong residents when addressing the events.

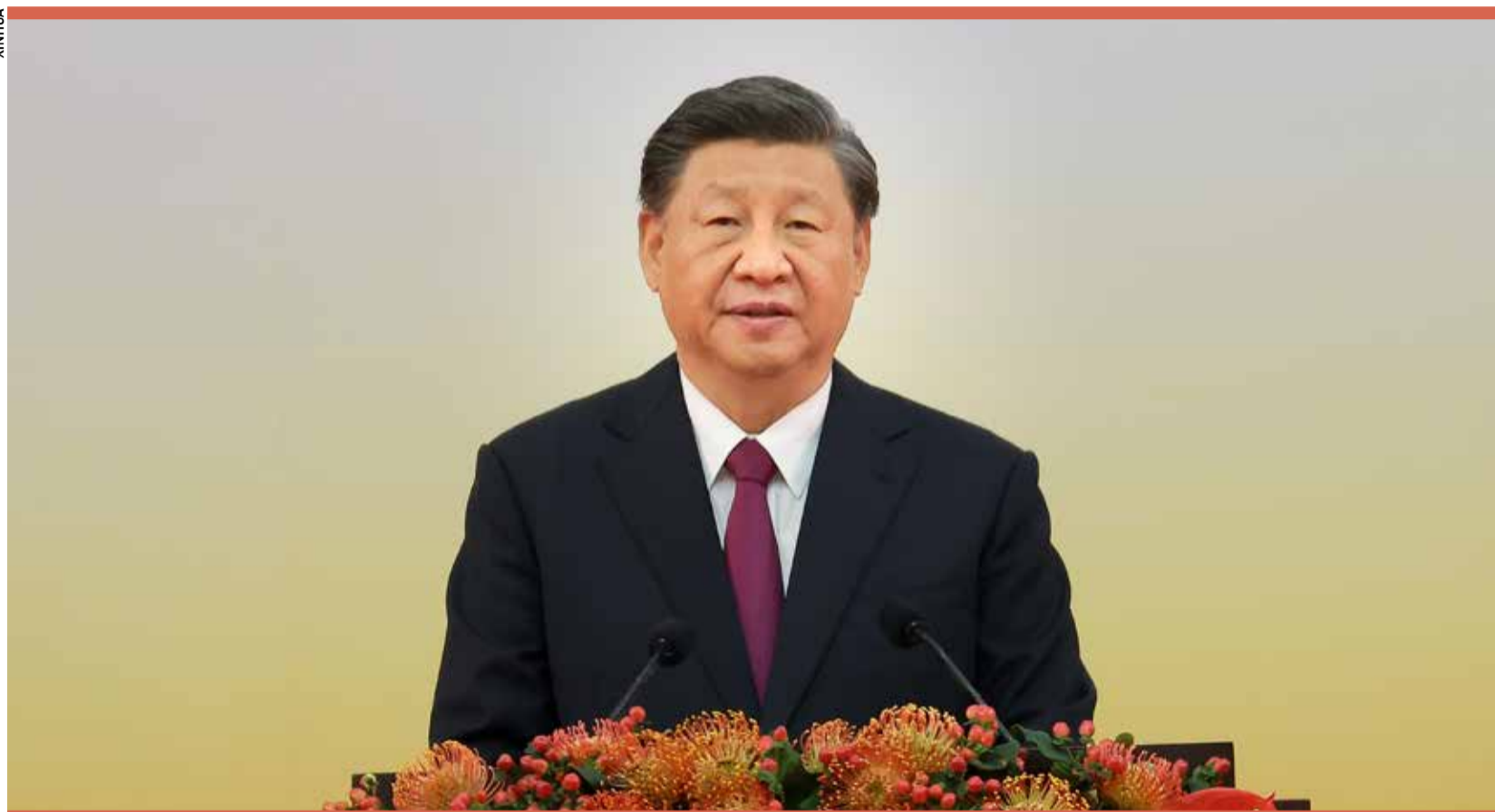
Recalling history, throughout which Hong Kong compatriots have always stood together with the motherland, Xi praised the new era of Hong Kong since its return to the motherland in 1997 and the resounding success of "one country, two systems."

The practice of "one country, two systems" has achieved success in Hong Kong recognized by all, Xi said.

"There is no reason for us to change such a good policy, and we must adhere to it in the long run," said Xi, whose Hong Kong trip has gained widespread international attention.

Hong Kong is in a new stage of transitioning from chaos to order and then to greater prosperity.

The next five years will be crucial for Hong Kong to break new ground and achieve another leap forward, said Xi, also general se-



cretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission.

A NEW ERA

Hong Kong is in a festive mood. Flags adorn avenues and alleys, red lanterns line the overpass to the main pier of the Hong Kong Island, and neon-lit celebratory messages can be seen on the facades of skyscrapers against the night sky.

Hong Kong people have every reason to be joyous on the celebra-

tory occasion and proud of their achievements over the past quarter of a century.

Since its return to the motherland, Hong Kong has overcome various difficulties and challenges and forged ahead with steady steps, Xi said, lauding Hong Kong's "irreplaceable contributions" to the development of the motherland.

Over the years, Hong Kong has become an integral part of the country's overall development and actively aligned with national development strategies.

The president's hopes for the new government involve improving governance, strengthening the city's growth momentum and addressing difficulties in people's lives

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, a significant national project, for example, has brought about new opportuni-

ties for Hong Kong.

From 1997 to 2021, Hong Kong's GDP more than doubled from 1.37 trillion Hong Kong dollars to 2.86

Palace Museum opens in Hong Kong

CHINA'S famed Palace Museum opened a branch in Hong Kong yesterday located in the West Kowloon Cultural District.

Works of calligraphy and paintings on silk dating back more than 1,000 years featured heavily in the exhibition, housed in a seven-story building in a newly developed harborside arts district.

More than 900 treasures from the collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing are put on display on rotation at the opening exhibitions. Some of the pieces are being shown in Hong Kong for the first time.

The delicate artworks will be returned to Beijing for safekeeping after 30 days.

From paintings and



bronze wares to embroideries and ancient architectures, the exhibits span the 5,000-year history of Chinese civilization, covering all categories of the

collection of the Palace Museum, including 166 pieces of first-class cultural relics of the country.

This will be the largest and highest-level cultural

heritage exhibitions of the Palace Museum outside of the mainland since its establishment in 1925.

Preparatory work for the exhibitions began in

2018, with the Palace Museum fielding a team of leading experts and scholars, in collaboration with the curatorial team of the museum.

The opening of the exhibition came just two days after China's leader Xi Jinping marked the anniversary of Hong Kong's return with a visit to what is officially called the special autonomous region and a speech emphasizing Beijing's vision of "One country, two systems."

About 80% of the around 140,000 tickets for the first four weeks of the opening exhibitions have already been sold.

Kevin Yeung, secretary for culture, sports and tourism of the HKSAR government, said the museum will leverage Hong Kong's own cultural edge to tell a good China story.

General admission is priced at HKD50, while

special exhibition tickets will be HKD120.

The museum will be free to all on Wednesdays during the first year of opening, and 150,000 general admission tickets will be sponsored by corporations and other organizations for distribution to underprivileged groups, the museum said.

Daisy Wang, the museum's deputy director, said the current exhibition was a "once in a lifetime opportunity to look at some of the rarest early works of painting and calligraphy in Chinese art history."

The collection was built during the Ming and Qing dynasties and many of its finest works now reside in Taiwan, where they were taken after the Communists seized power on the mainland in 1949.

MDT/AGENCIES

and glory

trillion Hong Kong dollars. Its economy remains one of the freest and most open in the world. While boasting a world-class business environment, Hong Kong has maintained its status as an international financial, shipping and trade center.

Xi hailed the true democracy Hong Kong has enjoyed after its return to the motherland, which ensures the democratic rights of Hong Kong residents and helps maintain Hong Kong's prosperity and stability.

Recent years have seen such efforts as the implementation of the national security law in Hong Kong, improvements to the region's electoral system, and the implementation of the "patriots administering Hong Kong" principle.

These have provided Hong Kong with a solid institutional guarantee to overcome immediate difficulties, achieve good governance, and ensure lasting security and stability.

A GOOD POLICY

Xi's Friday address reiterated implementing the principle of "one country, two systems" in both letter and spirit without deviation or wavering.

Upholding national sovereignty, security and development interests is the policy's paramount principle. On the basis of this prerequisite, Hong Kong and Macao maintain their capitalist systems in the long run and enjoy a high degree of autonomy, he said.

The more firmly the principle of "one country" is upheld, the greater the advantages the "two systems" will demonstrate in practice, Xi said.

He emphasized both enforcing the central authorities' overall jurisdiction and upholding the special administrative regions' high degree of autonomy.

The president voiced firm stance of keeping the power to administer the HKSAR "in the hands of patriots," which is essential to safeguarding the long-term stability and security of Hong Kong.

"There is no country or region in the world where its people will allow an unpatriotic or even treasonous force or figure to take power," he said.

HIGH HOPES FOR NEW GOV'T

On Friday, John Lee was sworn in as the sixth-term Chief Executive of the HKSAR, and the inauguration of the sixth-term HKSAR government followed.

Xi expects the new government to take on a new look in good governance.

Hong Kong faces both opportunities and challenges, but there are more opportunities than challenges, Xi said.

The president's hopes for the new government involve improving governance, strengthening the city's growth momentum and addressing

difficulties in people's lives. Harmony and stability are also high on the agenda.

There is an extensive consensus that no time should be lost in Hong Kong's development and that all interference should be removed so that Hong Kong can stay focused on development, according to Xi.

Xi pledged the central government's support for Hong Kong' development, including the maintenance of its "free, open and sound business environment."

Xi met with Lee after his inauguration.

"We have full confidence in you and the new-term HKSAR government, and we have full confidence in Hong Kong's future," Xi told the chief executive, who won the election on May 8 by an overwhelming majority.

Being aware of the immense responsibility on his shoulder, Lee pledged to lead the HKSAR government in improving governance and making new advances in Hong Kong's development.

HEART ALWAYS WITH THE HONG KONG PEOPLE'

"Over the past five years, I have always been concerned about and caring toward Hong Kong, and my heart and the heart of the central government are always with our Hong Kong compatriots," Xi said upon his arrival in Hong Kong on Thursday.

These words echoed a well-known soundbite from his trip to Hong Kong five years ago, during which he said, "Hong Kong's development has always pulled at my heartstrings."

Over the years, Xi has interacted with young Hong Kong people on many occasions, offering encouragement, addressing their needs and helping them improve their lives.

Friday's address once again demonstrated Xi's care for the people of Hong Kong.

Currently, what the people of Hong Kong desire most are better lives, bigger homes, more business start-up opportunities, better education for their children and better elderly care, Xi said. Expressing hope for the new HKSAR government, he said, "What the people call for, we must strive to deliver."

Xi's trip to Hong Kong included meetings with senior officials and dignitaries, and warm exchanges with researchers and entrepreneurs in the Hong Kong Science Park. He also inspected the Hong Kong Garrison of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

After attending ceremony celebrations, Xi left Hong Kong by train.

At the West Kowloon high-speed rail station, people from all walks of life bid the president a warm farewell, waving flags and flowers and singing songs.

Among the crowd were many young people, upon whom Xi has pinned high hopes for the future of Hong Kong. They will, as the president said, have more opportunities to "grow and shine." XINHUA

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Golden Lion Team Endeavors to Safeguard Macau Amid New Wave of Covid-19



The new wave of local Covid-19 cases has brought overwhelming uncertainties and chaos for everyone in Macau. Amid such challenging times, MGM adheres its role as a responsible corporate citizen and continues live out its Golden Lion caring spirit to help safeguarding the city – by devoting its undivided support to the Macau SAR government's anti-pandemic endeavors and the local community.

MGM MACAU Becomes a New Citywide NAT Testing Station

Starting from the third round of Citywide Nucleic Acid Test (NAT), the Grand Ballroom of MGM MACAU became one of the newly added testing stations for public, and was put into service for 33 consecutive hours with less than two days of preparation. Not only MGM offered its venue for the testing scheme, 250 MGM team members also took the initiative to volunteer at the testing station tirelessly throughout the testing period. They helped with station set up, registration, crowd control, material distribution and other relevant coordination work, which was helpful to speed up the testing process and shorten the queuing time.



Volunteer Team Serves at Various NAT Stations

On top of offering a testing venue and volunteering at the testing station of MGM MACAU, the Company also carried out its caring heart by arranged groups of Golden Lion Volunteer team members to serve persons in need at various testing stations across the city in every round of Citywide NAT. At all previous rounds of NAT testing scheme, the team offered on-site assistance and guidance to the elderlies, persons with disabilities, children and other persons in need at the stations of Mong Ha Sports Center, Macau Forum, Olympic Sports Center and Pak On Ferry Terminal, in order to smooth out their testing procedures.



Prioritize the Safety of Team Members and Guests

The safety of its team members and guests remains to be of utmost importance to MGM. In alignment of the Macau SAR government's anti-pandemic measures, MGM has also implemented an array of safety measures, in addition to the new set of anti-pandemic measures for casinos effective on July 1. Majority of its administrative staffs, under permitted circumstances, are allowed to work from home to minimize crowd gathering. On the other hand, the Company has stepped up with all sanitization work in the properties, and has also set up plastic dividers at the employee dining room to reduce the risk of virus spreading.



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AP PHOTO



PUTIN'S WAR

Russia claims capture of pivotal city in eastern Ukraine

MARIA GRAZIA MURRU & FRANCESCA EBEL, KYIV

RUSSIA'S defense minister said Russian forces took control yesterday of the last major Ukrainian-held city in Ukraine's Luhansk province, bringing Moscow closer to its stated goal of seizing all of Ukraine's Donbas region.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told President Vladimir Putin that Russia's troops together with members of a local separatist militia "have established full control over the city of Lysychansk," a ministry statement said.

Taking Lysychansk constitutes "the liberation of the Luhansk People's Republic," one of two separatist regions in Ukraine that Russia recognizes as sovereign, the statement said.

Ukrainian fighters spent weeks trying to defend Lysychansk and to keep it from falling to Russia, as neighboring Sievierodonetsk did a week ago. A presidential adviser predicted late Saturday that the city's fate could be determined within days.

Ukrainian officials did not immediately provide an update on its status.

Earlier yesterday, Luhansk's governor said

Russian forces were strengthening their positions in a grueling fight to capture the last stronghold of resistance in the province.

"The occupiers threw all their forces on Lysychansk. They attacked the city with incomprehensibly cruel tactics," Luhansk governor Serhiy Haidai said on the Telegram messaging app. "They suffer significant losses, but stubbornly advance. They are gaining a foothold in the city."

A river separates Lysychansk from Sievierodonetsk. Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to the Ukrainian president, said during an online interview late Saturday that Russian forces had managed for the first time to cross the river from the north, creating a "threatening" situation.

Arestovych said they had not reached the center of the city but that the course of the fighting indicated the battle for Lysychansk would be decided by today.

Luhansk and neighboring Donetsk are the two provinces that make up the Donbas, where Russia has focused its offensive since pulling back from northern Ukraine and the capital, Kyiv, in the spring.

Pro-Russia separatists

have held portions of both eastern provinces since 2014, and Moscow recognizes all of Luhansk and Donetsk as sovereign republics. Syria's government said Wednesday that it would also recognize the "independence and sovereignty" of the two areas.

An occupation of Lysychansk would open the way for the Russians to move west into Donetsk province, where the sizable Ukrainian-held city of Slovyansk has come under rocket attacks several times since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. Mayor Vadym Lyakh said new attacks yesterday killed an unspecified number of people.

Elsewhere in the war, the exiled mayor of the Russia-occupied city of Melitopol said yesterday that Ukrainian rockets destroyed one of four Russian military bases in the city.

The governor of the Belgorod region in western Russia said four people were killed by fragments of an intercepted Ukrainian missile. The Russian Defense Ministry said two Ukrainian drones were shot down over the city of Kursk.

Kursk regional governor Roman Starovoit said

the town of Tetkino, on the Ukraine border, came under mortar fire.

The leader of neighboring Belarus, a Russian ally, claimed Saturday that Ukraine fired missiles at military targets on Belarusian territory several days ago but all were intercepted by an air defense system. President Alexander Lukashenko described the alleged strike as a provocation and noted that no Belarusian soldiers were fighting in Ukraine.

There was no immediate response from the Ukrainian military.

Belarus hosts Russian military units and was used as a staging ground for Russia's invasion. Last week, just hours before Lukashenko was to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russian long-range bombers fired missiles on Ukraine from Belarusian airspace for the first time.

Lukashenko has so far resisted efforts to draw his army into the war. But during their meeting, Putin announced that Russia planned to supply Belarus with the Iskander-M missile system and reminded Lukashenko that his government depends on economic support from Russia. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1954 HOUSEWIVES CELEBRATE END OF RATIONING



Fourteen years of food rationing in Britain ended at midnight when restrictions on the sale and purchase of meat and bacon were lifted.

Members of the London Housewives' Association held a special ceremony in London's Trafalgar Square to mark Derationing Day.

The Minister of Fuel and Power, Geoffrey Lloyd, burned a large replica of a ration book at an open meeting in his constituency.

But the Minister of Food, Major Gwilym Lloyd-George, told a meeting at Bebington in Cheshire he would keep his as a souvenir and praised all those traders and organisations that had co-operated with the rationing system.

For the first time since the war began in 1939 London's Smithfield Market opened at midnight instead of 0600 and meat sellers were doing a roaring trade.

High prices

Although the final step in dismantling the whole wartime system of food distribution comes into effect, it's not all good news.

Butchers are predicting meat prices will soar for the next couple of weeks until the effect of supply and demand cools the situation down.

In February the Ministry of Food stopped controlling the sale of pork and announced it would end all food rationing this summer.

Food rationing began on 8 January 1940, four months after the outbreak of war.

Limits were imposed on the sale of bacon, butter and sugar.

Then on 11 March 1940 all meat was rationed. Clothes coupons were introduced and a black market soon developed while queuing outside shops and bartering for extra food became a way of life.

There were allowances made for pregnant women who used special green ration books to get extra food rations, and breastfeeding mothers had extra milk.

Restrictions were gradually lifted three years after war had ended, starting with flour on 25 July 1948, followed by clothes on 15 March 1949.

On 19 May 1950 rationing ended for canned and dried fruit, chocolate biscuits, treacle, syrup, jellies and mincemeat.

Petrol rationing, imposed in 1939, ended in May 1950 followed by soap in September 1950.

Three years later sales of sugar were off ration and last May butter rationing ended.

CourtesyBBCNews

IN CONTEXT

Rationing was introduced because of difficulties importing food to Britain by boat during the war, to ensure everyone had their fair share and to prevent people stockpiling foodstuffs.

Various essential and non-essential foods were rationed, such as clothes, furniture and fuel. Rationing of sweets and chocolate began on 26 July 1942. During the war, health experts from the Ministry of Food ensured that the British people had a balanced diet.

Householders were told they were on the "Kitchen Front" and that they had a duty to use foods to their greatest advantage.

The Ministry devised characters such as Potato Pete and Dr Carrot to put their message across. The process of de-rationing began in 1948, but made slow progress until 1953. Then Food Minister Gwilym Lloyd-George made it a priority for his department.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

New projects may lead you into a dead end. Put your energy into your work or moneymaking ventures rather than into your emotional life today. Lend an ear to children; it can make a difference.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You can purchase items that will enhance your appearance. You've been a little down and you need a lift. Don't let anyone take credit for a job you did.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Express your interest if you want the relationship to progress. Gambling will be a waste of time and money. If you act with anger you may blow the relationship.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Partnerships may be strained if one of you has been erratic and hard to deal with. Don't overlook that fact that someone you care about may be hiding something.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

If possible, rely on coworkers to back your objectives, and talk to superiors in order to get approval. Be considerate and avoid being overly opinionated, or arguments will ensue.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Legal matters that have been pending may be alleviated through compromise. Try to control your irritability if you're experiencing emotional problems with your partner.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

This will be a very hectic day if you've made promises to too many people. Try to satisfy both of your needs. Your boss may not be in the best of moods today.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Find a way to consolidate. Problems with colleagues are likely. You can pick up information that will give you an edge.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Passion should be redirected positively. Your dramatic nature may be too much to handle. You can enjoy the company of others and come in contact with an ideal mate, if you get out and mingle.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You will be a real chatterbox today. Money problems will be difficult to deal with if you have a partner. Be careful disclosing information.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Try to convince a good friend to take a holiday with you. Observations will be far more productive. Don't blame everything on your mate.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Misunderstandings at work could easily lead to your demise. Discover opportunities based on the individuals you mingle with today. Go out with friends who are positive and supportive.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

7			9	1	6			
2			4	3	9			
9	5		6				4	
	7	5	1					2
	9	2			7	3		
	4			9	5	1		
	2			7		6	8	
		6	9	8				3
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EASY+

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4	5	9				2		

MEDIUM

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3		1		8		4		

HARD

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3	8							
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4	9					6		
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						5		

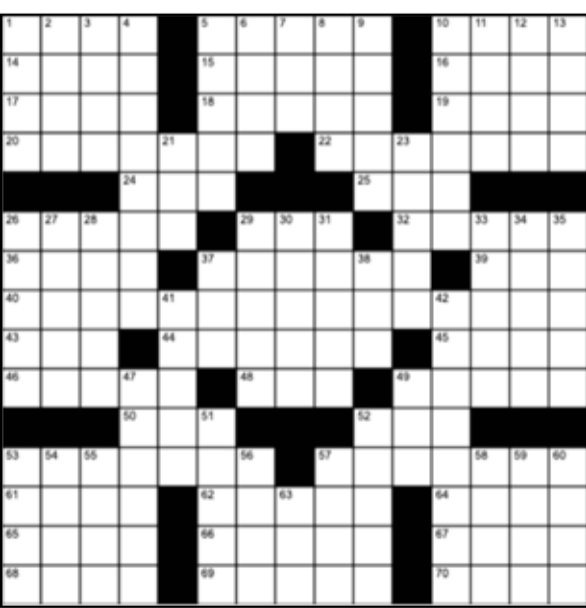
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	22	29	rain
Changchun	22	29	cloudy
Chengdu	23	34	cloudy
Chongqing	25	34	cloudy
Fuzhou	26	33	rain
Guangzhou	24	29	rain
Guiyang	20	28	showers
Haikou	25	35	cloudy
Hangzhou	26	34	overcast
Harbin	22	32	cloudy
Hefei	25	32	thunderstorms
Nanjing	26	33	cloudy
Shanghai	26	33	cloudy
Taipei	25	29	rain
Wuhan	26	31	rain
Hong Kong	26	28	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	18	28	overcast
Frankfurt	9	20	showers
Paris	16	21	overcast
London	15	20	overcast
New York	17	27	showers

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Quickly, quickly; 5- Healing plants; 10- K-12; 14- In ___ land; 15- Elbow; 16- Competed; 17- Cabinet dept.; 18- Walk; 19- Unwritten; 20- One on the run; 22- Puncture; 24- Josh; 25- Accelerate; 26- Discombobulated; 29- Enzyme ending; 32- Guides; 36- Rock's Motley ___; 37- Involve; 39- Director's cry; 40- One recording the past; 43- Biblical verb ending; 44- Get stuck in the mud; 45- Network of nerves; 46- Thaw before takeoff; 48- "___ Ventura" was played by Jim Carrey; 49- Plant again; 50- Writer Rand; 52- Feline; 53- Underwriter; 57- Like some mail; 61- Prefix for small; 62- Actor Quinn; 64- ___ contendere; 65- Sign; 66- Robbery; 67- Clubs, e.g.; 68- Strong wind; 69- Blind parts; 70- JFK postings;

DOWN 1- Sheltered, nautically; 2- Lacking; 3- A Baldwin brother; 4- Small parrot; 5- Chipped in; 6- Decoy; 7- Shelley's "___ to the West Wind"; 8- Crikey!; 9- Passover meal; 10- Develop gradually; 11- Old Italian money; 12- Warmth; 13- Goofing off; 21- Actress Zadora; 23- Gal's guy; 26- Needed liniment; 27- Hackneyed; 28- Japanese dish; 29- Inner self (Jung); 30- Zeno, notably; 31- Tidal bore; 33- Flu symptoms; 34- Because of; 35- Scatter; 37- Able was I ___ I saw Elba; 38- High dudgeon; 41- Follows orders; 42- Pretext; 47- Like a dog; 49- Squealer; 51- ___ Ark; 52- Small change; 53- Kind of alert; 54- Fine cotton; 55- Like Nash's lama; 56- Monetary unit of Cambodia; 57- Pole; 58- Defeat decisively; 59- "East of Eden" director Kazan; 60- Periods; 63- Cinco de Mayo, e.g.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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- HELLENE G. | 3 BEDS HKD12,500
- NAM LONG | 2 BEDS HKD11,500
- COLOANE V. | 1 BED HKD 9,300
- TAIPA STUDIO | 1 BED HKD 6,800
- COLOANE V. | 2 BEDS HKD10,500

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- NOVA TAIPA | 4 BEDS HKD12,880,000
- BAI YUEN GRD. | 3 BEDS HKD12,800,000
- MANHATTAN | 3 BEDS HKD12,980,000
- HELLENE G. | 4 BEDS HKD 9,588,000
- NAM LONG | 1 BED HKD 3,780,000
- HELLENE G. | 2 BEDS HKD 9,900,000
- TAIPA STUDIO | 1 BED HKD 3,980,000
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TENNIS

Tsitsipas calls Kyrgios bully after Wimbledon hubbub, loss

HOWARD FENDRICH,
WIMBLEDON,

NICK Kyrgios cursed at the Wimbledon chair umpire and asked, "Are you dumb?" He demanded to see a Grand Slam supervisor after questioning why his opponent, Stefanos Tsitsipas, didn't forfeit their ever-contentious, never-boring match for angrily hitting a ball into the stands after dropping the second set.

Unsatisfied with the response, Kyrgios asked, "What are you talking about, bro?" Then came this: "Bro, bring out more supervisors. I'm not done. Bring 'em all out. I don't care. I'm not playing until we get to the bottom of this."

He did continue to play. And the unpredictable, unseeded Kyrgios won 6-7 (2), 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (7) to reach the fourth round at the All England Club for the first time since 2016 — then was criticized by the No. 4-seeded Tsitsipas for having "a very evil side."

"It's constant bullying. That's



Nick Kyrgios

what he does. He bullies the opponents," said Tsitsipas. "He was probably a bully at school himself. I don't like bullies."

There was more, so much more, from underarm serves hit by the Kyrgios — including one between his legs — to the three shots purposely smacked right at

him by Tsitsipas. A total of three code violations were called by chair umpire Damien Dumusois, one on Kyrgios for an audible obscenity, and two on Tsitsipas for ball abuse, earning a point penalty.

Told of Tsitsipas' "bully" comment, Kyrgios laughed and

shook his head.

"He was the one hitting balls at me. He was the one who hit a spectator. ... I didn't do anything. Apart from me going back and forth with the umpire, I did nothing toward Stefanos today that was disrespectful, I don't think," Kyrgios said at his news conference.

"If he's affected by that today, then that's what's holding him back," Kyrgios said about Tsitsipas. "Because someone can just do that, and that's going to throw him off his game like that? I just think it's soft."

There even was some terrific tennis along the way, with the players combining for 118 winners. It all took 3 hours, 17 minutes, with nary a dull moment, and finished so late that the retractable roof at No. 1 Court was shut and the artificial lights turned on midway through the fourth set.

Tsitsipas held a pair of set points to force a fifth, but Kyrgios saved both, the latter with a half-volley winner after serving-and-

-volleying on a second serve.

Kyrgios was fined \$10,000 by the tournament for unsportsmanlike conduct at his first-round match, which he ended by spitting the direction of a spectator he said was heckling him.

"There comes a point where you really get tired of it, let's say," said Tsitsipas, a 23-year-old from Greece. "The constant talking, the constant complaining."

After Kyrgios broke to grab the second set, Tsitsipas swatted a ball with a backhand into the crowd. The ball appeared to ricochet off a wall, but what wasn't entirely clear was whether it landed on anyone.

Tsitsipas apologized for that afterward, saying it stemmed from frustration created by "all the circus show going on, on the other side of the net."

"I didn't hit any people. It did hit the wall, thank God," he said, and acknowledged he was trying to hit his foe with some other balls aimed right at his body. "For sure I'm never doing that again. It's my responsibility, for sure."

That drew just a warning from Dumusois, which didn't sit well with Kyrgios.

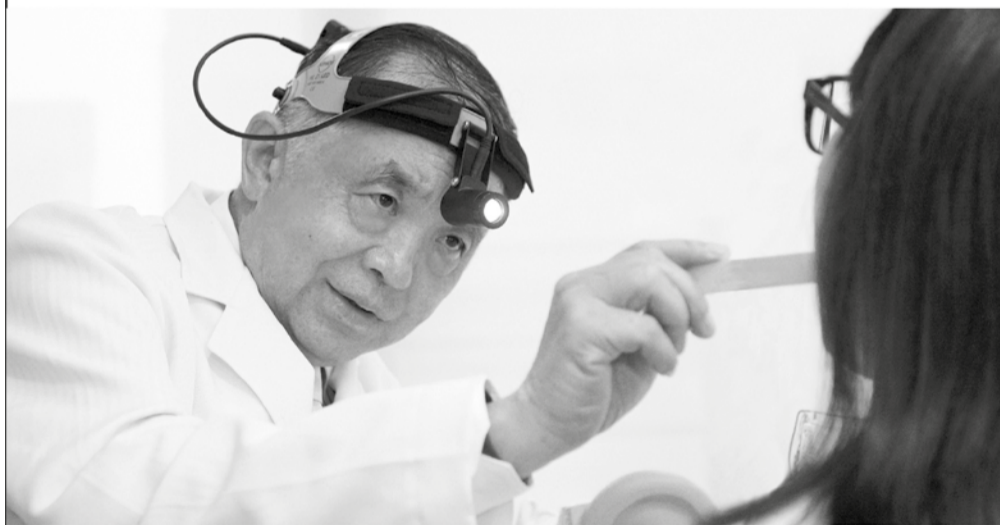
People will get another chance to see Kyrgios today, when he faces Brandon Nakashima for a spot in the quarterfinals. Nakashima is one of four American men in the fourth round, the most at Wimbledon since 1999. **MDT/AP**

AD



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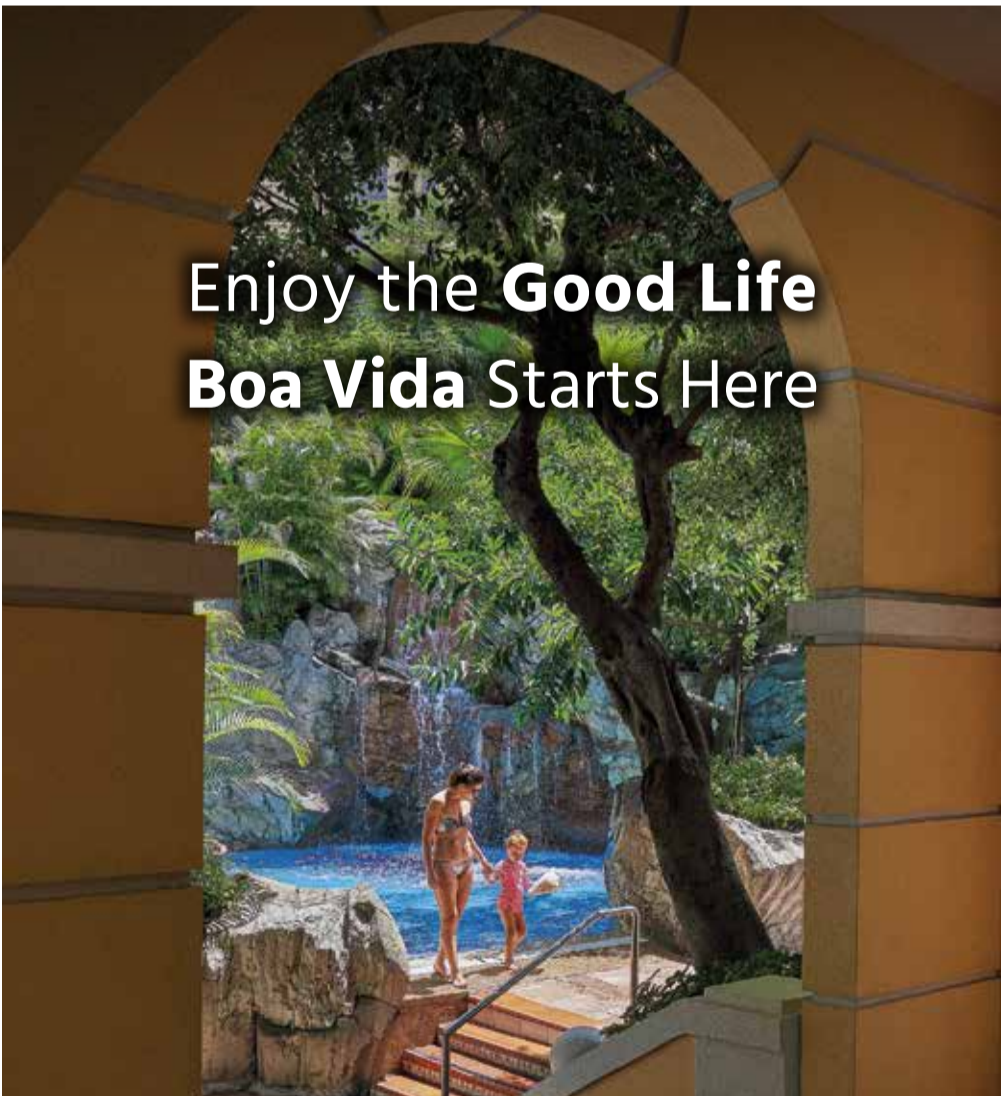
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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**EVEN BRIGHTER
 FUTURE BECKONS
 HK AFTER 25
 YEARS OF SUCCESS**

For Hong Kong residents and all others who wish it well, nothing can be as reassuring as President Xi Jinping's pledge of "maintaining Hong Kong's unique status and advantages" which he made in his speech after presiding over the swearing-in ceremony for the sixth-term governing team of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on Friday. The day when the city celebrated the 25th anniversary of its return to the motherland.

No matter how hard the China-haters in the West try to besmirch Hong Kong in order to derail the city's socioeconomic development as part of their design to check China's rise, the SAR, given its remarkable achievements over the past 25 years under the "one country, two systems" framework, will not fall into their trap.

Contrary to the claims of those Machiavellian Western politicians and media outlets, the SAR has consistently excelled in global rankings. For example, the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index, a leading source of independent, authentic data on the rule of law situation of 139 countries or jurisdictions, ranked Hong Kong 19th on its 2021 list.

While the World Competitiveness Yearbook 2022 ranked Hong Kong fifth out of the 63 most competitive economies, up from seventh in 2021 and ahead of the United States (10th), Germany (15th) and the United Kingdom (23rd), the Fraser Institute in its "Economic Freedom of the World 2021 Annual Report" again ranked Hong Kong as the world's freest economy.

And the World Bank's 2021 Worldwide Governance Indicators placed the SAR 15th on a list of 209 countries/jurisdictions in the "control of corruption" category, and second in Asia.

These factors, along with many others, have helped propel the SAR toward greater prosperity and success, including maintaining its status as a leading global financial (after New York and London), trading and shipping hub. And that has been possible because it follows the "one country, two systems" principle, which President Xi asserted will continue, for there is no reason to change the "time-tested, good system" that benefits both the country and the two SARs (the other being Macao).

Hong Kong residents do not need "Washington's solidarity with the people of Hong Kong". They only need Washington to stop poking its nose in the city's affairs, for they are China's internal affairs. And they certainly do not need UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's sovereignty transgressing claim of "not giving up on" Hong Kong, for the UK has no jurisdiction over the SAR.

Standing on a firmer institutional foundation after major institutional reforms over the past two years, Hong Kong is on a new journey to achieve greater glories by leveraging the support of the central government and efforts of Hong Kong residents. Indeed, an even brighter future beckons Hong Kong.

**GOOGLE TO ERASE MORE LOCATION INFO
 AS ABORTION BANS EXPAND**

**THE
 BUZZ**

Google will automatically purge information about users who visit abortion clinics or other places that could trigger legal problems now that the U.S. Supreme Court has opened the door for states to ban the termination of pregnancies.

The company behind the internet's dominant internet search engine and the Android software that powers most of the world's smartphones outlined the new privacy protections in a Friday blog post.

Besides automatically deleting visits to abortion clinics, Google also cited counseling centers, fertility centers, addiction treatment

facilities, weight loss clinics, and cosmetic surgery clinics as other destinations that will be erased from users' location histories. Users have always had the option edit their location histories on their own, but Google will proactively do it for them as an added level of protection.

"We're committed to delivering robust privacy protections for people who use our products, and we will continue to look for new ways to strengthen and improve these protections," Jen Fitzpatrick, a Google senior vice president, wrote in the blog post.



**MONKEYPOX CASES TRIPLE
 IN EUROPE, WHO SAYS,
 AFRICA CONCERNED**

**MARIA CHENG
 & FARAI MUTSAKA**

THE World Health Organization's Europe chief warned that monkeypox cases in the region have tripled in the last two weeks and urged countries to do more to ensure the previously rare disease does not become entrenched on the continent.

And African health authorities said they are treating the expanding monkeypox outbreak as an emergency, calling on rich countries to share limited supplies of vaccines to avoid equity problems seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO Europe chief Dr. Hans Kluge said in a statement that increased efforts were needed despite the U.N. health agency's decision last week that the escalating outbreak did not yet warrant being declared a global health emergency.

"Urgent and coordinated action is imperative if we are to turn a corner in the race to reverse the ongoing spread of this disease," Kluge said.

To date, more than 5,000 monkeypox cases have been reported from 51 countries worldwide that don't normally report the disease, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Kluge said the number of infections in Europe represents about 90% of the global total, with

31 countries in the WHO's European region having identified cases.

Kluge said data reported to the WHO show that 99% of cases have been in men — the majority in men that have sex with men. But he said there were now "small numbers" of cases among household contacts, including children. Most people reported symptoms including a rash, fever, fatigue, muscle pain, vomiting and chills.

Scientists warn anyone who is in close physical contact with someone who has monkeypox or their clothing or bedsheets is at risk of infection. Vulnerable populations like children and pregnant women are thought more likely to suffer severe disease.

About 10% of patients were hospitalized for treatment or to be isolated, and one person was admitted to an intensive care unit. No deaths have been reported.

Kluge said the problem of stigmatization in some countries might make some people wary of seeking health care and said the WHO was working with partners including organizers of gay pride events.

In the U.K., which has the biggest monkeypox outbreak beyond Africa, officials have noted the disease is spreading in "defined sexual networks of gay, bisexual, or men who have sex with men." British health

authorities said there were no signs suggesting sustained transmission beyond those populations.

Ahead of gay pride events in the U.K. this weekend, London's top public health doctor asked people with symptoms of monkeypox, like swollen glands or blisters, to stay home.

Nevertheless in Africa the WHO says that according to detailed data from Ghana monkeypox cases were almost evenly split between men and women, and no spread has been detected among men who have sex with men.

The main vaccine being used against monkeypox was originally developed for smallpox and the European Medicines Agency said this week it was beginning to evaluate whether it should be authorized for monkeypox. The WHO has said supplies of the vaccine, made by Bavarian Nordic, are extremely limited.

To date, there have been about 1,800 suspected monkeypox cases in Africa, including more than 70 deaths, but only 109 have been lab-confirmed. The lack of laboratory diagnosis and weak surveillance means many cases are going undetected.

Vaccines have never been used to stop monkeypox outbreaks in Africa; officials have relied mostly on contact tracing and isolation. **MDT/AP**



India Fresh rain and falling boulders hampered rescuers who have so far pulled out 26 bodies from the debris of a mudslide that wiped out a railroad construction site in India's northeast, officials said. Rescue work is expected to continue for a couple of days in rugged hilly terrain with little hope of finding survivors among 37 people still missing.



Greece is receiving European assistance for the summer wildfire season, with the first group of firefighters arriving in Athens. The 28 Romanian firefighters were welcomed Saturday by Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Minister Christos Stylianides and the leadership of Greece's Fire Service. A total of more than 200 firefighters from six European countries will eventually be deployed to Greece.

France Tourism is booming again in France — and so is Covid-19. French officials have "invited" or "recommended" people to go back to using face masks but stopped short of renewing restrictions that would scare visitors away or revive antigovernment protests. Virus-related hospitalizations rose quickly in France over the past two weeks, with nearly 1,000 patients with Covid-19 hospitalized per day.



UK Hundreds of thousands of people turned out on the streets of London this weekend to mark the 50th anniversary of the U.K.'s first Pride parade, filling the streets of the British capital with color. A vibrant crowd turned out to either take part in or watch the festivities, forming a spectacle of rainbow flags, glitter and sequins. After two years of cancellations because of the coronavirus pandemic, the parade came a half-century after Britain's first march to celebrate Pride in 1972 in London.