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90% OF POSITIVE CASES SENT TO QUARANTINE HOTELS AS THEIR SYMPTOMS DO NOT REQUIRE ANY MEDICAL CARE

LINDA CHEN TO HELM WYNN MACAU AFTER IAN COUGHLAN STEPS DOWN IN 2023

FORMER LAWMAKER SULU SOU SENDS LETTER TO DSAL OVER ALLEGED SEARCH OF MAINLAND WORKFORCE TO STATION AT QUARANTINE HOTELS



South Korea's spy agency filed charges yesterday against two of its former directors over their handling of separate border incidents with North Korea in recent years which prompted criticism that Seoul's previous liberal government improperly appeased the North to improve ties. The National Intelligence Service accused former director Park Jie-won (pictured), who served from 2020 to May this year, of destroying intelligence reports related to North Korea's fatal shooting of an unarmed South Korean citizen.



Pakistan Three days of monsoon rains left at least 17 people dead and damaged dozens of homes across southwest Pakistan, officials said yesterday. Streets and homes were flooded in various parts of Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan province, the provincial disaster management agency said. Rains have inundated areas across Pakistan, disrupting normal life.



Saudi Arabia One million Muslim pilgrims were converging on Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca yesterday for the largest hajj since the coronavirus pandemic severely curtailed access to one of Islam's five pillars. Saudi Arabia's decision to allow some 850,000 Muslims from abroad to make the annual pilgrimage, which begins today, marks a major step toward normalcy after two years of a drastically scaled-down hajj restricted to Saudi residents.

More on backpage

WHERE TO SLEEP?

The call to arrange domestic helpers to live in with employers - as Covid tally reaches 1,168 - sparked frustrations among community P3



MAKE HAY WHILE THE SUN SHINES: PANIC BUYERS



ZERO-COVID POLICY SHANGHAI, BEIJING UNDERGO NEW ROUND OF MASS TESTING

RENATO MARQUES

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

90% OF POSITIVE CASES SENT TO QUARANTINE HOTELS

OF the 1,087 positives cases reported by the health authorities up to midnight of July 5, some 900 have been referred to isolation in quarantine hotels, the deputy director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center (CHCSJ), Dr. Lei Wai Seng, said at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center press briefing yesterday.

Lei's comments came in response to a media inquiry on the clinical situation of all the patients and the apparent lack of enforcement of contingency plans previously presented by the same authorities to face a potential outbreak of Covid-19.

The representative from the public hospital explained that the authorities have felt, so far, that there was no need to enforce such plans, since the large majority of the cases are of people without any symptoms (660) and, of the remaining 427, a very large group also presented with symptoms that did not require any medical care.

"Until this moment, and after activating the treatment community center (at the East Asian Games Dome), we saw that it contributed to the effective relief of the emergency services of [CHCSJ] hospital," said Lei.

So, since our services are working smoothly, we decided not to enforce other measures [such as the makeshift hospital]. I can say that 80 to 90% of all the

RENATO MARQUES



patients are forwarded to quarantine hotels. Over 900 are in quarantine in hotels and they only need basic services and medicines, which is enough for them. They require no particular medical care," Lei added, noting that this Omicron strain is not likely to create severe problems in society unless those infected have chronic

diseases.

"Those that have special needs are the people with chronic diseases and the hospitals will take care of them, because their situation can easily become serious. The Public Health Clinical Centre in Coloane is only taking care of severe patients," Lei remarked.

He also announced that, yesterday, two cases of infected patients with chronic diseases have been sent to the Public Health Center to evaluate their situation.

According to the doctor, both patients have kidney failure that requires constant hemodialysis and other treatments but, so far, "We are only providing them with a general service, nothing really

special, we are not even medicating them with antiviral medicines. We will continue to monitor their health condition."

Of those patients whose clinical presentation is serious, Lei said that there are four people hospitalized who require the use of ventilators, noting that in two of these cases, they were already using ventilators before being infected with Covid-19, and for some years prior due to their chronic illnesses.

Only one patient is considered to be at high risk, "but his condition is also improving," the same official noted.

Lei noted that there are now also three women who pregnant. One of them is at the beginning of the gestational period and two are mid-gestation. None have presented any problems. Two of them are being moved from the hospital into quarantine hotels for not presenting with symptoms that require medical care.

The third is in the 38th week of gestation and has been placed under medical observation in quarantine as a precautionary measure because her husband tested positive and she has been listed as a close contact only.

As for children, seven of them are aged under one year old and 18 are aged between two and three years old.

According to Lei, all are under both medical and parental care and none present with any concerning symptoms for the time being.

GAMING

Linda Chen to helm Wynn Macau in 2023 as Ian Coughlan exits

LYNZY VALLES

WYNN Macau Ltd has announced Linda Chen, current vice chairman and chief operating officer of Wynn Macau, as president of the company from March 2023, in a move that comes ahead of the gaming license bidding.

In a statement yesterday, parent company Wynn Resorts Ltd. announced that Ian Michael Coughlan, president of Wynn Macau, has decided to transition

to a role as advisor to the company and non-executive director upon completion of his employment agreement.

His employment contract concludes February 28, 2023.

Coughlan has agreed to continue as an advisor to the company through the end of 2023. After the end of his contractual term, he will continue as a non-executive director on the Wynn Macau board until May 2023.

Upon his departure,

Chen will take over as president of Wynn Macau in addition to her current role of vice chairman.

"Ian's pioneering leadership, which spans the vast majority of our incredibly successful time in Macau, has been impressive and his unrelenting commitment to brand excellence and establishing our deep-rooted culture is equally remarkable. I'm pleased that he has agreed to continue as a consultant to the company and on our Board of Directors," said Craig

Billings, CEO of Wynn Resorts and Wynn Macau.

He continued, "Linda's leadership throughout the many phases of our development in Macau has been important to our success. She will work with Ian to ensure a smooth transition, and I look forward to working closely with Linda and our talented management team in the years ahead."

Chen has close ties to officials in the mainland as she sits on the Nanjing Committee of the Chinese



Wynn Macau president Ian Michael Coughlan

People's Political Consultative Conference, a political advisory board.

Meanwhile, casino operators are expected to submit bids in the coming

weeks to obtain new gaming licenses.

New contracts are slated to begin in 2023, as the current ones expire by December 31, 2022.

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COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Gov't calls on families to arrange for helpers to 'stay in'

RENATO MARQUES

THE health authorities have appealed to all families employing domestic helpers to make arrangements to allow them to stay overnight at their employers' homes, or, alternatively, to find a place for them to stay in an independent room to avoid direct contact with other people in a domestic setting.

The appeal came from the coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, during yesterday's press briefing from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

"We urge employers with domestic helpers to request them to stay in and make arrangements for that. There is a high risk associated with domestic helpers becoming infected and then passing on the virus to the families they are working for, namely to children and to elderly [residents]," Leong said.

She added that in the alternative, employers should also consider finding a lodging place for

LYNZY VALLES



these workers "that is not shared."

When questioned on the topic, Leong explained that domestic workers who live outside their employer's home usually live in places with a "very high concentration of people and that are lacking [amenities], which all contribute to the easy spread of con-

tagion," she remarked.

She gave the example of the case of the groups of Burmese workers who were part of the first group of infected people in this outbreak. Epidemiological investigation revealed that one apartment was being shared among a total of 14 people.

DOMESTIC WORKERS FRUSTRATED OVER APPEAL

Such an appeal had almost immediate feedback on social media platforms, with hundreds of people expressing dissatisfaction with such a request, namely foreign domestic workers.

These workers took to the so-

cial media platforms of several local media outlets, expressing discontent with the idea, which they claim to be impractical.

One of the opinions expressed is that the majority of the homes of the families they work at do not have any spare rooms where they can stay, as well as the fact that even if there was a way to stay with the employers, they would still need to continue to go out of the house often to go to the market, supermarket and for other job-related duties.

"It will be complicated to stay in an employer's house without a decent place for the helper," said one.

"It's the employers that always leave the house and play mah-jong with their friends," said another.

Some expressed that such an idea would jeopardize the little freedom they have left, fearing that they would be put to work around the clock and without necessary rest time.

According to the detailed information provided by the center on Tuesday, from the total of almost 1,000 positive cases detected in the community starting on June 18, the large majority (81.4%) were locals or people from the mainland, while among the other nationalities, the larger numbers found included 57 Filipinos (6%), followed by Nepalese (5.5%), Burmese (3.3%), Vietnamese (1.8%), and Indonesians (1.17%), with the residual figure, below 1%, referring to all other nationalities.



Grand Lisboa lockdown traps 500 people

LYNZY VALLES

500 people are locked in at Grand Lisboa as the hotel was cordoned off Tuesday afternoon following the discovery of 13 cases in the property.

The hotel will only possibly reopen after July 11.

Grand Lisboa maintains "close communication with relevant government department," SJM

Resorts announced in a statement.

The government has arranged for disinfection and cleaning of the premises.

"In relation to the designation of red code zone on premise, proper care has been extended to all affected employees, guests and tenants, which includes accommodation and three daily meals," the operator stated.

Meanwhile, the hotel also arranges delivery of essentials to those affected as sent by families and friends in accordance with government precautionary guidelines.

"Grand Lisboa will continue to implement strict containment measures, as the health and safety of all guests and employees represent its top priorities. In the face of the pandemic, Grand Lisboa stays united to fight the virus with the Macau community," it added.

FOUR SEASONS, ONE CENTRAL SHOPS CORDONED OFF

Three floors of the Shoppes at Four Seasons were also locked down after another cluster was found. On Monday, authorities closed down the first floor of the mall as 40 Covid-19 cases have been linked to its staff. Retail employees, security and maintenance staff are not permitted to go to work.

The relevant employees are also required to undergo four nucleic acid tests, and shops will only reopen once all staff present a negative result.

Also, One Central shopping mall was ordered to close yesterday after at least six staff tested positive for the virus.

TALLY GROWS TO 1,168 POSITIVE CASES

ADDING to the the 1,087 cases found up to midnight of July 5, the authorities have been able to confirm a total of 81 additional cases as of 4 p.m. yesterday, putting the tally, for the time being, at 1,168 cases in this local outbreak alone.

Dr. Leong Iek Hou also mentioned that there has been a higher incidence of cases in the community. Cases identified in the community are over three-fold in number compared to the cases found in the areas under confinement.

Still, the official said that the figures were "according to the expected and previously forecasted [number]," adding that this is the purpose of the ci-

tywide nucleic acid tests (NAT) mass testing that is ongoing.

"This is exactly the purpose and the goal, to find all the people contaminated within the community so we can break the transmission chain," Leong concluded.

As of 10 p.m. last night, a total of 349,842 samples have been collected during the fifth round of the citywide mass testing. 153,996 have yielded negative results, while a total of 16 mixed samples tested positive.

Also, as of 3 p.m. yesterday, out of 413,000 residents, 18 tested positive in their rapid antigen tests, 13 of whom were in the community. RM

FLOREN TANG



PUBLIC CONCERNED OVER ALLEGED SEARCH OF MAINLAND WORKFORCE FOR QUARANTINE HOTELS

ANTHONY LAM

A screen capture believed to be from a WeChat conversation about hiring a mainland workforce to work in Macau quarantine hotels went viral on social media yesterday.

The screen capture showed that an unknown entity is attempting to hire a quarantine workforce from the mainland to work in Macau. According to the information depicted, they will work in local quarantine hotels to distribute meals, maintain order at SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid testing sites, measure body temperatures and scan QR codes, among other responsibilities.

They will reportedly be remunerated with MOP22,000 per month by working eight hours per day. They will be required to take shifts but will receive extra pay for overtime working hours. Payment will be issued by month and the expected work duration will be four months.

Those with nursing backgrounds may be assigned to work at the makeshift hospital in Macao Dome or other hospitals in the city, the post added, to take care



of those in need.

What worries the public is that the post highlighted that those with "excellent performance may have the chance to be hired by hotels as non-local workers" after the work period.

The post noted that they will depart for Macau in late July.

The screen capture has raised concern within members of the public, with social media users questioning it in the comment section of the live broadcast of the daily health press briefing about the matter.

Users emphasized the absurdity that a lot of Macau peo-

ple are in fact unemployed but a mainland workforce is being brought to Macau.

A health official at the press briefing was questioned on the matter too. The official declined to comment, citing the fact that she had no information about the matter.

Meanwhile, former lawmaker Sulu Sou noted that, immediately after seeing the post, he sent a letter to the director of the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) to enquire on the matter.

He requested that the director verify the information. He also wanted to know whether the employer or the employment agency had made their best attempt to hire from the local workforce. The DSAL director was also asked to explain whether any such positions had been offered to local jobseekers, and how many of them had accepted similar offers.

On another matter, the former lawmaker slammed the health agency for being unprepared for severe SARS-CoV-2 cases being sent to the public hospital.

Recently, it was reportedly revealed by frontline medical staff that a severe case of the viral infection had been sent to the A&E of the public hospital. After resuscitation, the paramedics managed to save the patient, but was told that the isolation ward would not take the patient in "according to in-house guidelines."

The patient was held at the A&E in a ward that was not supposed to hold SARS-CoV-2 positive cases for 10 hours before the Coloane facility was ready to take the patient in.

Sou criticized the occurrence as showing a lack of management, decision-making skills and preparation.

Election candidates' disqualification, migrants' protest rights among concerns in report for UN

LYNZY VALLES

THE disqualification of election candidates, the denial of the right to peaceful assembly of migrant workers and the resignations of TDM's journalists following the imposition of new editorial guidelines are among the concerns that will be submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) next Wednesday.

Reports of the concerns come as the committee will hear a Macau delegation on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Macau society members are welcome to submit opinions and concerns regarding the city, and this has been done so by Jason Chao, convener of the Macau Research Group and a social activist.

The "Report on Human Rights in Macau 2022" raised the issue of the electoral



Jason Chao, convener of the Macau Research Group

committee disqualifying election candidates in the September 2021 elections on the grounds of being "not loyal to Macau" and "not upholding the Basic Law."

The 2021 elections saw the disqualification of 21 candidates, three of whom were already members of the Legislative Assembly and had never been pre-

vented from running for the legislature in any of the previous elections.

According to the report, "the disqualifications deprived Macau residents of a free choice of candidates at the 2021 Legislative Assembly Election."

The election recorded an all-time-low turnout (42.2%) and an all-time-high percentage of blank

votes (2.29%) since Portugal's handover of Macau to China in 1999, the group recalled.

The group then called on the UN committee to "ensure that election candidates are not disqualified for their political opinion or their exercise of freedom of expression."

Another concern was the refusal of government au-

thorities to issue a permit allowing migrant workers to hold a demonstration. Officials have reiterated that non-resident workers do not enjoy the right to assembly.

In February 2021, the Public Security Police refused to accept a prior notice of assembly submitted by Burmese migrant workers who wanted to organize a protest against the Burmese military coup.

Chao's report cited resolution 24/5 of the UN Human Rights Council, which states their obligations to "fully protect the rights of all individuals to assemble peacefully [...] including migrants."

Another controversial concern was the resignation of several reporters from TDM.

It had been circulated across local media outlets last year that TDM's management had convened a

meeting with Portuguese reporters to instruct them about the new reporting ethos and guidelines to which they should conform.

These guidelines stress that news coverage should promote patriotism, respect and love for the motherland and Macau.

TDM has clarified that it will not alter its editorial guidelines, which had stoked public controversy.

"This submission recommends that HRC urge Macau, China to: a) retract the editorial guidelines that effectively undermine the editorial independence of journalists of the public broadcaster; b) guarantee that the public broadcaster reports the diverse voices of Macau; and c) guarantee that the public broadcaster would not engage in suppressing or downplaying dissent," the report noted.

Other concerns involve "no right to strike in the planned trade union law," "planned revision of the national security law," and "restrictions on unskilled migrant workers looking for jobs."

VOX POP

Rising Covid-19 cases instill persistent panic buying among residents

STAFF REPORTER

THE continuous rise of Covid-19 cases in the city is instilling fear in the public, causing them to panic buy, despite the government ruling out the possibility of a lockdown.

Yesterday, when cases went up to a cumulative 1,168 for this outbreak, the authorities announced that they would not rule out the possibility of stricter pandemic prevention measures.

Following the announcement, the Times visited several supermarkets in the city and found that many residents, concerned about not having enough supplies at home, feared food supplies would run out.

The residents interviewed by the Times have all refused to be identified.

"As long as the pandemic is not over, residents will continue to be afraid," said one resident.

"The current pandemic is more serious compared to the past. I fear that there could someone infected in my building, which will lead to a lockdown. So, that's why I need to purchase several food items and necessities; I need to make hay while the sun shines," the resident added.

Supermarkets were again seen with longer queues than usual, with patrons' shopping carts mostly filled with fresh vegetables, meat and instant noodles – as well as tissue rolls.

Another resident remarked, "I always buy food from the supermarket. I have bought more food than before the outbreak. I always buy those that can be stocked in

FLORA TANG



the refrigerator for a long time, as well as also some noodles and packs of drinks," she added.

The Municipal Affairs Institute (IAM) has assured residents that suppliers and importers have increased the amount of fresh and live food products supplied to Macau.

The bureau has repeatedly stressed that pandemic prevention work does not affect the supply of fresh and live food products to Macau, and that the "food supply is abundant."

Previously, the bureau disclosed that major suppliers and importers of food have been instructed to ensure that the transportation of fresh and live food to Macau is not affected and that supply is stable.

In line with this, some residents have expressed that they do not fear that food supply will be limi-

ted and believed that there is no need to buy high quantities of necessities, even amid the new rounds of mass testing and surging cases.

"As long as the pandemic is not over, residents will continue to be afraid"

LOCAL RESIDENT

"I'm not much afraid of the pandemic so far, it's enough to just keep on doing the prevention measures at home according to the pandemic prevention guidelines of the Macau government," said one.

"I believe that the government is doing well in controlling the pandemic," said another.

LOSING HOPE

In terms of the pandemic's impacts upon resident, a resident has expressed that he is losing hope amid the outbreak, which has been affecting household incomes.

"I've been on leave without pay for a long time. I don't know when the pandemic will end; I am already disappointed with the government's pandemic prevention work; the number of positive cases is still increasing," he lamented.

According to previous reports, 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.

Although the staff reduction notice was only reportedly for this week, 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 three 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.

Staff from the food and beverage sector have also expressed similar sentiments, as the government has restricted dine-in services.

Although restaurants are allowed to remain open for takeaway services, some opted to close in a bid to reduce expenses, as rent still remains a problem for these SMEs.

"I'm not sure until when this will last. I fear that we won't get paid until the government decides to [return] operations back to normal. When will that be? No one knows," said another.

Seven new members appointed to Macao Foundation Trustee Board

ANTHONY LAM

IN the next two years, seven new faces and eight existing ones will administer the Board of Trustees of the Macao Foundation, the government has announced in an Official Gazette entry.

The outgoing members are Ma Iao Hang, chairman of the General Assembly of the Sports and Olympic Committee of Macau, Chi-

na; Ung Si Meng, honorary president of the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Macau; Stanley Au Chong Kit, head of Delta Asia Group; Susana Chou, former president of the Legislative Assembly, Jorge Neto Valente, president of the Macau Lawyers' Association; as well as businessmen Yueng Tsun Man Eric and Liu Chak Wan.

Following this, the new lineup of the Board will in-

clude Lei Pui Lam, Anabela Ritchie, Iong Weng Ian, Carlos Marreiros, Chan Meng Kam, Leong On Kei (Angela Leong), Lok Po, Lao Ion Fai, Chan Hong, Ng Siu Lai, Mok Chi Wai, Cristina Valente, Chan Wa Keong, Ma Chi Wa and Liu Cai Seng.

The Board is presided over by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

The Board of Directors of the foundation will be headed by Wu Zhiliang, while

Zhong Yi Seabra de Mascarenhas will be the vice president. Ho Kuai Leng, Au Weng Chi and Lai Chan Keong have been appointed as part-time members.

Lawyer Vong Hin Fai will be the president of the Supervisory Board, while Ho Mei Va, Sio Ng Kan and Lau Veng Lin have been appointed as members.

They will receive monthly remuneration of various amounts.

COURTESY MACAO NEWS



AP PHOTO



ZERO-COVID POLICY

SHANGHAI, BEIJING ORDER NEW ROUND OF MASS COVID-19 TESTING

RESIDENTS of parts of Shanghai and Beijing have been ordered to undergo further rounds of COVID-19 testing following the discovery of new cases in the two cities, while tight restrictions remain in place in Hong Kong, Macau and other Chinese cities.

Shanghai has only just emerged from a strict lockdown that confined most of its 24 million residents to their homes for weeks and the new requirements have stirred concerns of a return of such harsh measures.

The latest outbreak in China's largest city, a key international business center, has been linked to a karaoke parlor that reopened without authorization during lockdown and failed to enforce prevention measures among employees and customers, including the tracing of others they came into contact with, according to the city health commission.

All such outlets have been ordered to temporarily suspend business, the city's department of culture and tourism said.

"The virus spreads quickly because such entertainment venues are mostly indoor and closed, with frequent movement of people, high concentrations of people and inadequate personal protection measures," said Zhao Dandan, deputy director of Shanghai's municipal health commission.

Apartment blocks where cases are discovered continue to be

isolated, while mass testing in the majority of the city's 16 districts has been ordered at least through today. A negative test result obtained within the previous 48 hours is required to enter residential compounds and public venues under the "two tests within three days" program.

Entertainment businesses from water parks to chess clubs and internet cafes have been wanting to reopen but face an uncertain regulatory environment.

Those types of venues will "gradually open in an orderly and strict manner according to the situation of epidemic prevention and control in each district," said Jin Lei, deputy director of the city's culture and tourism department.

Shanghai's lockdown prompted unusual protests both in person and online against the government's enforcement, which left many residents struggling to access food and medical services and sent thousands to quarantine centers.

Beijing has also seen a recent outbreak linked to a nightlife spot. It has been conducting regular testing for weeks and at least one residential compound in the suburb of Shunyi, where many foreign residents live, has been locked down with a steel fence installed over its entrance to prevent

residents from leaving.

Enforcement in China's capital has been far milder than in Shanghai, although officials continue to require regular testing and prevention measures.

In the northern city of Xi'an, whose 13 million residents endured one of China's strictest lockdowns over the winter, restaurants have been restricted to takeout only and public entertainment spots closed for a week starting yesterday.

The latest outbreak in Shanghai has been linked to a karaoke parlor that reopened without authorization during lockdown

A notice on the city government's website said the measures were only temporary and intended to prevent a renewed outbreak. It said supermarkets, offices, public transport and other facilities are continuing to operate as normal, with routine screening including temperature checks and people being required to show an app proving they are free of infection.

The gambling hub of Macau has meanwhile locked down the famed Grand Lisboa Hotel af-

ter cases were discovered there. More than a dozen residential and commercial centers in the Chinese special autonomous region of about 650,000 people have been designated as "red zones," with access restricted almost exclusively to emergency workers.

Authorities have ordered most establishments to close with the exception of casinos, which are Macau's main revenue generator and among the city's largest employers.

City residents will have to undergo three citywide COVID-19 tests this week. The local outbreak is Macao's largest since the pandemic began, with more than 900 infections reported since mid-June.

Neighboring Hong Kong has also seen a rising trend of coronavirus infections since mid-June. In the past seven days, daily infections reported averaged about 2,000 a day.

The city's new leader, John Lee, said yesterday that Hong Kong must not "lie flat" when it comes to COVID-19, rejecting the "living with the coronavirus" mentality that most of the world has adopted.

His comments echo the sentiments of Chinese authorities, who have stuck with their "zero-COVID" policy that has become closely identified with President

and head of the ruling Communist Party Xi Jinping.

However, Lee has said that Hong Kong authorities are exploring options, including shortening the duration of mandatory quarantine for incoming travelers. Currently, travelers must test negative for COVID-19 before flying and quarantine for seven days in designated hotels upon arrival.

The city, once known as a bustling business hub and international financial center, has seen tourism and business travel crippled by its tough entry restrictions.

The strict measures have remained in place despite relatively low case numbers and the negative effects on China's economy and global supply chains.

The World Health Organization recently called the policy unsustainable, a view Chinese officials rejected outright even while they say they hope to minimize the impact.

While China's borders remain largely closed, cutting off both visitors from abroad and outbound tourism, officials have cautiously increased flights from some foreign countries, most recently Russia.

Mainland China reported 353 cases of domestic transmission yesterday, 241 of them asymptomatic.

Shanghai announced just 24 cases over the past 24 hours, and Beijing five. Anhui announced 222 cases in what appears to be the latest cluster, prompting the inland province to order mass testing and travel restrictions in Si county, where the bulk of cases have been reported. **MDT/AP**

PHILIPPINES

Marcos plays balancing act in meeting with China's FM

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

NEW Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met with China's top diplomat yesterday to take up long-simmering disputes in the South China Sea, as he waded into foreign policy dilemmas that include the U.S.-China rivalry in the region.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, wearing a native Filipino formal shirt, met his counterpart for talks at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila and later met Marcos Jr. at the presidential palace.

No detailed statement about the talks was immediately released.

Wang arrived in Manila Tuesday night as part of a Southeast Asian swing that brought him earlier to Myanmar and Thailand. He will also visit Malaysia and Indonesia, where he will attend a meeting of G-20 foreign ministers in Bali.

Wang's visit ushers Marcos Jr. early to touchy foreign diplomacy issues that often had prompted his predecessors to carry out delicate balancing acts. Marcos Jr. was sworn into office last week after a landslide electoral victory in May.

He said in a televised news conference Tuesday that he would discuss with Wang possible ways to resolve Manila's disputes with



Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo (left) and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi pose for a photo before their bilateral talks at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila, Philippines, yesterday

Beijing in the contested South China Sea but would also propose to broaden ties further.

"China and the Philippines should not only be discussing the West Philippine Sea," Marcos said, using the Philippine name for the disputed waters. "Let's do other things too. In that way, it will normalize our relationship."

"We have many proposals to them in the sense that, as I said, we would like for us to increase the scope," he said, and mentioned possible expansion of cultural, educational and military ex-

changes.

He did not outline how he would handle the territorial issues but has indicated he would generally follow the approach of his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, who focused on intensifying engagements with China.

After taking office in 2016, Duterte put the disputes on the backburner and tried to nurture cozier relations with China. He disregarded calls to aggressively demand that Beijing comply with a landmark 2016 ruling by a U.N.-backed arbitration tribunal

that invalidated China's extensive claims in the South China Sea on historical grounds.

The tribunal also ruled that China's massive land reclamations and actions against Filipino fishermen at a disputed shoal violated the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea.

China refused to take part in the arbitration, which was initiated by Duterte's predecessor, the late Benigno Aquino III. Beijing continues to defy the ruling, which was welcomed by the U.S. and other Western governments.

Duterte's stance was criticized by nationalists and activists as a "sellout," which they said squandered the Philippines' arbitration victory.

"If you're talking about President Duterte's policy of engagement with China, that's really our only option," Marcos Jr. told DZRH radio network in January.

War is not an option, he said then, and added that China rejected arbitration "so that option is not available to us." Bringing in the U.S. to mediate will right away make China "your enemy," he said.

Philippine Ambassador to Washington Jose Romualdez said Marcos Jr. was aware of the pitfalls of the U.S.-China rivalry and would foster relations with the two global powers in a way that would help the Philippine economy recover from two years of coronavirus pandemic lockdowns and cushion it from the global impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"He always cites the saying that these are two elephants and when they fight, they step on the grass. We are the grass," Romualdez said.

An initial dilemma would be which of the two capitals Marcos Jr. should visit first.

President Joe Biden has sent a letter formally inviting him to Washington. Wang was expected to relay Xi's invitation for the new president to Beijing, Romualdez said.

Marcos Jr. is planning to attend the U.N. General Assembly meeting in September, where he could have an initial meeting with Biden on the sidelines. A separate U.S. state visit could be arranged in the near future, Romualdez said.

SRI LANKA

President calls Russian leader seeking fuel

KRISHAN FRANCIS,
COLOMBO

SRI Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said yesterday that he had a telephone call with Russian leader Vladimir Putin to request credit support to import fuel for the island nation that is facing its worst economic crisis in memory.

"Had a very productive telecon with the Russia President Vladimir Putin. While thanking him for all the support extended by his govt to overcome the challenges of the past, I requested an offer of credit support to import fuel to #lka in defeating the current econ challenges," Rajapaksa said in a tweet.

Western nations largely



Auto rickshaws queue up outside a fuels station amid fuel shortage in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Tuesday

have cut off energy imports from Russia in line with sanctions over its war on Ukraine. Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickreme-

singhe said earlier that the government would look for other sources first but it has not been successful.

Since Russia's invasion

of Ukraine in late February, global oil prices have skyrocketed, prompting a number of countries to seek out Russian crude, which is

being offered at steep discounts.

Sri Lanka's economic crisis has led to a dire fuel shortage forcing the government to shut schools and ask employees other than those in essential services to work from home to cut down on consuming the limited stocks. The government said earlier that no entity is willing to supply oil to Sri Lanka even for cash because its petroleum corporation owes a heavy debt.

Sri Lanka's foreign currency crunch led to its suspending repayment of foreign debt in April pending outcome of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout package. However, Wickre-

mesinghe told Parliament on Tuesday that discussions with the IMF have been complex and difficult because Sri Lanka is now a bankrupt nation.

Unlike in the past, when Sri Lanka entered negotiations as a developing country, this time it has to produce a debt sustainability report to the IMF for approval before any agreement could be reached.

Sri Lanka's foreign debt stands at \$51 billion, of which it must repay \$28 billion by the end of 2027. It means a payment of an average of \$5 billion for the next five years.

Sri Lankans for the past months have been forced to stand in long lines to buy the limited stocks of fuel, cooking gas and foods. The crisis has led to monthlong street protests and scuffles with police at gas stations. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

EU chief warns of danger of complete cut-off of Russian gas

RAF CASERT & SAMUEL
PETREQUIN, BRUSSELS

EUROPEAN Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday that the 27-nation European Union needs to make emergency plans to prepare for a complete cut-off of Russian gas in the wake of the Kremlin's war in Ukraine.

"It is obvious: (Russian President Vladimir) Putin continues to use energy as a weapon. This is why the Commission is working on a European emergency plan," she told legislators in Strasbourg, France.

The EU has already imposed sanctions on Russia, including on some energy supplies, and is steering away from Kremlin-controlled deliveries. But the head of the EU's executive branch said the bloc needed to be ready for shock disruptions coming from Moscow, and said the first plans would be presented by the middle of the month.

"If worst comes to worst, then we have to be prepared," she said, hoping to avoid the chaotic scenes, and the my-country-first attitude that some member states showed early on in the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Energy, and the prospect of a winter without enough heating for homes or power to keep factories going, could now pose a similar challenge to EU solidarity and a source for populist-spawned division.

"It is very important to have a European overview



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen delivers her speech at the European Parliament, yesterday

and a coordinated approach to a potential complete cut off of Russian gas," von der Leyen said. A dozen members have already been hit by reductions or full cuts in gas supplies as the political standoff with Moscow over the Ukraine invasion intensifies.

Highlighting the potential challenges ahead, Germany said last week it suspects that Russia may not resume natural gas deliveries to Europe through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline after planned maintenance work in July, complicating the outlook for this winter.

Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom blamed a technical problem for the reduction in gas flowing through Nord Stream 1, which runs under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany. The company said equipment

maintenance was affected by Western sanctions.

European Union countries already agreed last month that all natural gas storage in the 27-nation bloc should be topped up to at least 80% capacity for next winter to avoid shortages during the cold season. The new regulation also says underground gas storage on EU soil will need to be filled to 90% capacity before the 2023-24 winter.

Von der Leyen said that the storage stood at 55% a week ago, adding that liquefied natural gas deliveries from the United States had already tripled.

The war in Ukraine has prompted the 27-nation bloc to rethink its energy policies and sever ties with Russian fossil fuels. Member countries have agreed to ban 90% of Russian oil by year-end in

addition to a ban on imports of Russian coal that will start in August.

The EU has not included gas — a fuel used to power factories and generate electricity — in its own sanctions for fear of seriously harming the European economy. Before the war in Ukraine, it relied on Russia for 25% of its oil and 40% of its natural gas.

To slash its use of Russian energy, the European Commission has been diversifying suppliers.

In the meantime, the average monthly import of Russian pipeline gas is declining by 33% compared with last year, von der Leyen said as she called for a speedy transition toward renewable sources of energy.

"Some say, in the new security environment after Russia's aggression, we have to slow down the green transition. This transition would come at the 'the cost of basic security,' they say. The opposite is true. If we all do nothing but compete about limited fossil fuels, the prices will further explode and fill Putin's war chest," she said. "Renewables are home-grown. They give us independence from Russian fossil fuels. They are more cost-efficient. And they are cleaner."

The EU Council agreed last month to raise the share of renewables in the bloc's energy mix to at least 40% by 2030 — up from the previous target of 32%. In addition, a 9% energy consumption reduction target for 2030 will become binding on all EU member states for the first time. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

2005 BOMB ATTACKS ON LONDON



A series of bomb attacks on London's transport network has killed more than 30 people and injured about 700 others.

Three explosions on the Underground left 35 dead and two died in a blast on a double decker bus.

The first three bombs went off at 0850 on underground trains just outside Liverpool Street and Edgware Road stations, and on another travelling between King's Cross and Russell Square.

The final explosion was around an hour later on a number 30 double-decker bus in Tavistock Square, not far from King's Cross

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said the bombings had "the hallmarks of an al-Qaeda-related attack".

Prime Minister Tony Blair promised the "most intense police and security service action to make sure we bring those responsible to justice".

Mr Blair, who flew back to London from the G8 summit in Gleneagles, condemned the terrorists and paid tribute to the stoicism and resilience of the people of London.

"They are trying to use the slaughter of innocent people to cow us, to frighten us out of doing the things that we want to do," he said in a televised statement from Downing Street.

Courtesy BBC News

DIPLOMACY

Russian foreign minister stops in Vietnam ahead of G-20

HAU DINH, HANOI

RUSSIAN Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Vietnam yesterday as part of an effort to bolster ties with a country that has not openly condemned its invasion of Ukraine or imposed sanctions against it.

Lavrov, on his way to the Indonesian island of Bali for a meeting of the Group of 20 leading rich and developing nations, sought to strengthen ties with Vietnam, which also has a strong relationship with the United States.

"I expressed my appre-

ciation for the very balanced objective position of Vietnam which is demonstrated by the refusal of this country to join the illegal sanctions," he said at a news conference after meeting his Vietnamese counterpart, Bui Thanh Son.

Commenting on the si-

tuation in Ukraine, Lavrov said the West should realize its responsibility for the deaths of civilians in the regions where Ukraine is using Western weapons.

Lavrov is currently on a trip to Asia to seek support amid his country's diplomatic isolation by the West and punishing sanctions leveled over its invasion of Ukraine. He visited Mongolia a day before arriving in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi. Mongolia also retains ties with Moscow but has burgeoning relations with Washington. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

In total 52 people lost their lives in the London bombings. 700 people were injured.

The attacks were carried out by four suicide bombers.

The presumed ringleader, Mohammed Siddique Khan, had recently visited Pakistan and was later found to have made a video message in which he claimed British foreign policy was oppressing Muslims.

Al-Qaeda issued a videotaped statement in September claiming it was behind the London bombings.

On July 21 there were four more attempted bombings in London. None of the devices exploded.

On 22 July 2005, police shot dead a man, Jean Charles de Menezes, they mistook for one of the bombers.

Five men were later arrested and are due to face trial in September 2006.

A decision is still awaited on whether any charges will be brought over the de Menezes shooting.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You may want to make drastic changes concerning your personal partner. Business trips might prove unproductive. Weigh the pros and cons and make a decision that will change how you've been living.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Matters pertaining to your home environment will be favorable if you are direct. Don't overlook that fact that someone you care about may be hiding something.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

False information is likely if you listen to idle chatter or gossip. If you keep busy you won't feel the personal pressures you are going through. You can make excellent purchases today.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You will be uncertain of your feelings. Your boss may be on the rampage and you certainly don't want to be the one to take the brunt of a bad situation. Your home environment appears to be a little shaky.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You can meet interesting new friends if you join worthwhile groups. Although it does look promising, be careful not to overextend yourself or you will lose in the long run.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Social evenings at your place will be highly successful. You can expect to experience delays or additional red tape if you deal with institutions. Restrictions may be difficult for you to live with.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Group endeavors will provide you with entertainment. You will be extremely sensual; take precautions and don't take any risks. You should be looking at ways to spoil yourself.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Don't get involved in other people's private doings. Don't be too quick to let friends and relatives know what you're up to. Abstain from getting involved with married individuals.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Try looking into new ways to make extra money. Hassles with female colleagues may lead to problems with your boss. Now is a good time to ask for favors.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Someone you live with may cause drastic alterations in your usual routine. Cultural activities will prove to be quite enlightening for everyone. You may be tempted to spend too much on entertainment.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Let your boss know your goals. Don't ruffle the feathers of those you care about most. Social functions will bring you in touch with new lovers.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Join a club to work off that excess energy; but consider ways of doing that without spending the money. Social evenings at your place will be highly successful.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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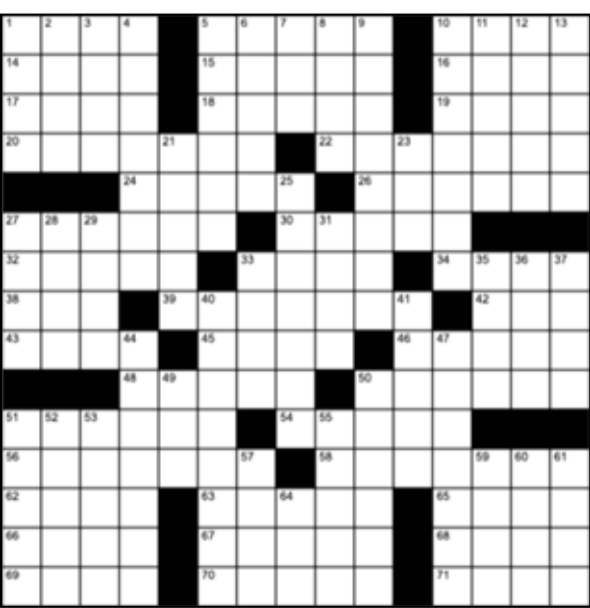
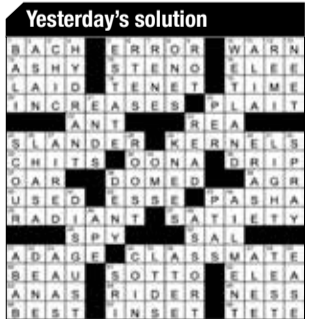
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	22	35	fine
Changchun	22	26	rain
Chengdu	25	37	fine
Chongqing	26	38	fine
Fuzhou	26	35	rain
Guangzhou	26	32	rain
Guiyang	20	30	cloudy
Haikou	26	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	27	37	rain
Harbin	23	27	rain
Hefei	24	34	rain
Nanjing	27	34	cloudy
Shanghai	29	36	rain
Taipei	25	30	rain
Wuhan	25	33	showers
Hong Kong	25	28	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	18	31	showers
Frankfurt	11	23	rain
Paris	12	25	overcast
London	14	25	overcast
New York	21	26	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Salzburg vista; 5- _____ point; where it all becomes clear; 10- Poor actors; 14- Kind; 15- Home of the Black Bears; 16- Quod ___ demonstrandum; 17- Be up and about; 18- Cost; 19- Top-notch; 20- Break; 22- Set apart; 24- Gets under control; 26- Catch in a sting; 27- Decrees; 30- Effectiveness; 32- Supple; 33- "___ Brockovich"; 34- Edible roots; 38- Monsters; ___; 39- Causes to remember; 42- Great Lakes canals; 43- Contented sighs; 45- Seedy joint; 46- Tendency; 48- Coach Rockne; 50- Establishes; 51- Zealot; 54- Rescues; 56- Dental filling; 58- Harmonious relation; 62- Churn; 63- Bent; 65- Bacchanalian cry; 66- Tackle box item; 67- Lerner's partner; 68- Raise to third power; 69- Toward the mouth; 70- Wound up; 71- Revenuers, for short;

DOWN: 1- Helper; Abbr.; 2- Monetary unit of Lesotho; 3- Schoolmarmish; 4- Strain; 5- Public meetings; 6- Declaim; 7- Jailbird; 8- Opposed to; 9- Unfinished detail; 10- Robust; 11- Bellowing; 12- Devilfish; 13- At quite an incline; 21- Western; 23- Thunder Bay's prov.; 25- Tries hard; 27- Charles Lamb's pen name; 28- Actress Merrill; 29- Need a scratch; 31- Mozart's "___ kleine Nachtmusik"; 33- Expel gas or odor; 35- Just ___; 36- ___ Blanc; 37- Lays down the lawn; 40- Capable of being taught; 41- Throat problem; 44- Able; 47- Esteem; 49- Pester; 50- Sidestepped; 51- Danny's daughter; 52- Love, in Paris; 53- Currency unit in Nigeria; 55- ___ having fun yet?; 57- Earth's satellite; 59- Egg cell; 60- Choir attire; 61- High schooler; 64- Tie the knot;



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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- ONE CENTRAL | 2 BEDS HKD16,500
- BUCKINGHAM | 2 BEDS HKD13,900
- 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

FOR SALE

- JADE GARDEN | 4 BEDS HKD15,380,000
- 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
- NOVA PARK | 2 BEDS HKD10,800,000

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MARKETS

US FUTURES EDGE DOWN, EURO HOVERS AT 20-YEAR LOW TO DOLLAR

U.S. futures slipped yesterday and European benchmarks rose in early trading despite lingering anxieties about an economic slowdown that has pushed the euro to a 20-year low against the U.S. dollar.

Futures for the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.3% and futures for the S&P 500 retreated 0.4%. Asian markets finished mostly lower, while oil prices recouped some lost ground.

Analysts said markets were focusing on a variety of risks, including inflation, oil prices, moves by the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks on interest rates, political developments in Britain and worries over COVID-19.

In Paris, the CAC 40 added 1.4%, while Germany's DAX rose 1.1%. Britain's FTSE 100 added 1.5%.

The euro was trading for \$1.0188, dipping below its previous 20-year low on worries over how disruptions to energy supplies might weigh on European economies. It was trading at \$1.0429 late Tuesday.

The dollar has surged as the Federal Reserve has embraced a more aggressive approach to taming inflation, widening the gap between interest rates in the U.S. and lagging rates in Europe and Japan, where the European Central Bank and the Bank of Japan are adopting a more cautious stance.

"The euro has depreciated sharply due to a toxic cocktail of

AP PHOTO



negative drivers," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary. "An oddly hesitant ECB contrasts with a more aggressive Fed, worries about natural gas supply disruption and economic recession are deepening," he said.

But the risks are evident. European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said the 27-nation European Union needs to make emergency plans to prepare for a complete cut-off of Russian gas in

the wake of the Kremlin's war in Ukraine.

The EU has already imposed sanctions on Russia, including on some energy supplies, and is gearing away from Kremlin-controlled deliveries, but von der Leyen said the bloc needed to be ready for shock disruptions coming from Moscow "and even a complete cut-off of Russian gas supply."

U.S. benchmark crude oil gain-

ed 73 cents at \$100.23 per barrel. It sank \$8.93 on Tuesday, eventually settling below \$100 a barrel for the first time since early May in New York trading. Brent crude, the international standard, gained \$1.49 cents to \$104.26 per barrel.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 1.2% to finish at 26,107.65. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slipped 0.5% to 6,594.50. South Korea's Kospi shed 2.1% to 2,292.01. Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 1.2%

to 21,586.66 while the Shanghai Composite slid 1.4% to 3,355.35.

Markets have grown more volatile as investors fret that economies are slowing under the weight of surging inflation and sharply higher interest rates, pressures that could tip them into recession.

Inflation has been squeezing businesses and consumers, tightening its grip after Russia invaded Ukraine in February. The invasion sent oil prices higher globally and sent gasoline prices in the U.S. to record highs. Consumers struggling with higher prices on everything from food to clothing are cutting back on spending.

Lockdowns in China from rising COVID-19 cases have also made supply chain problems worse.

"Mostly, though, it is China and COVID zero that are weighing on the sentiment in Asia, which was going to be fragile anyway," said Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst, Asia Pacific at OANDA. "The prospect of more COVID zero restrictions in China is an unwelcome dose of reality for Asia and is certainly carrying more weight, although Asian currency weakness is also in play," he said.

Residents of parts of Shanghai and Beijing have been ordered to undergo further rounds of COVID-19 testing following the discovery of new cases in the two cities, while tight restrictions remain in place in Hong Kong, Macao and other Chinese cities.

Wall Street will get a closer look at the employment market on Friday when the the government releases employment data for June. Investors are also looking ahead to the next round of corporate earnings.

In other trading, the U.S. dollar edged down to 135.29 Japanese yen from 135.84 yen. **MDT/AP**

Amazon faces UK investigation over anti-competitive concerns

BRITAIN'S competition watchdog is investigating whether Amazon is harming competition and hurting consumers by giving an unfair advantage to merchants that pay for extra services.

The Competition and Markets Authority's formal investigation said yesterday that it will look into concerns that the e-commerce giant is abusing its dominance to undermine rivals, echoing similar investigations carried out by the European Union's executive Commission and Germany's antitrust agency.

Amazon said it will work closely with the CMA during the investigation.

"We believe we've always

AP PHOTO



worked hard to help small businesses selling on Amazon to succeed, which is in both their and our best in-

terests," the company said. "We remain proud of the continued support we provide to businesses of all si-

zes across the U.K."

While Amazon supplies some of the products that it sells online, many others

are from third-party merchants and retailers, and Amazon provides them with essential services to make sales.

The watchdog said it will consider whether Amazon gives an unfair edge to merchants using optional services that cost extra, including storage, packaging and delivery.

With millions of customers in Britain, "it's right that we carefully investigate whether Amazon is using third-party data to give an unfair boost to its own retail business and whether it favours sellers who use its logistics and delivery services - both of which could weaken competition," the watchdog's general coun-

sel, Sarah Cardell, said in a prepared statement.

It's also important to have a competitive market for British merchants selling on Amazon, Cardell said. "Any loss of competition is a loss to consumers and could lead to them paying more for products, being offered lower quality items or having less choice."

The investigation will focus on how Amazon chooses suppliers for the so-called Buy Box, which shows customers one-click "Buy Now" or "Add to Basket" options. Also under scrutiny is the eligibility criteria for offers under the premium Prime label and the collection and use of data. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

Ghana recruits five players now eligible for World Cup duty

FOUR months before competing at the World Cup, Ghana's national team added five new recruits who are now eligible to play in Qatar.

Brighton defender Tariq Lamptey had played for England Under-21s, Hamburger SV pair Stephan Ambrosius and Ransford-Yeboah Königsdorfer both represented Germany Under-21s and Athletic Bilbao forward Iñaki Williams played one friendly for Spain, where he was born, six years ago. Another Germany-based player, Patric Pfeiffer, is a forward at Darmstadt.

The Ghana soccer federation said yesterday all five have switched nationality to represent the African country.

"This follows exhaustive engagements between the leadership of the (federation), the players and their parents in the last few months," the Ghana soccer body said in a statement. FIFA eligibility rules let coun-



tries recruit players from their global diaspora in certain cases. Players are allowed to switch allegiance to a new nation-

al team if they never played a competitive game for the first country they were eligible to represent.

Ghana qualified for its fourth World Cup, and first since 2014, by eliminating Nigeria in a two-leg playoff in March.

Coach Otto Addo's team was drawn in a World Cup group with Portugal, South Korea and Uruguay. The Uruguay game will be a rematch of their controversial 2010 World Cup quarterfinal in South Africa, when Ghana was denied a late winning goal by Luis Suárez's handball save, missed the subsequent penalty, then lost in the shootout.

The World Cup starts in Qatar on Nov. 21.

"It's about time," said a Twitter post by Ghana's national team regarding Iñaki Williams. "Welcome to the Black Stars."

The 28-year-old Williams was born in Spain from parents who reached a refugee camp in Ghana after saying they fled civil war in Liberia, then moved to the Basque Country region.

"I feel the moment has come for me to find my origins within myself and with Africa and Ghana, which mean so much to me and my family," Williams said on Twitter. "I want to return a small part of everything it has given to us, because Ghana has played a significant part of becoming who I am as a person, as a son and as a brother."

Williams was a member of Spain's youth squads and made one appearance with the main team in a friendly against Bosnia in 2016. He had not been called up recently by current Spain coach Luis Enrique. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

'COVID DISCRIMINATION' MUST BE ROOTED OUT

Even as the country tries to spur its economy back on the normal track, the stigmatizing of those who have been infected with the novel coronavirus has appeared in the job market.

Job recruitment notices issued by local employers in some places such as Shanghai explicitly exclude recovered patients from applying for positions, according to reports. Volunteers who worked at temporary quarantine facilities are also being discriminated against.

Such practices are outrageous. Not only do they rub salt in the wounds of those who have already suffered so much — both physically from symptoms of the illness, and mentally as the result of their going through the stressful experience, from infection to recovery, often isolated from their family members and friends — they are also illegal.

It is against the law to deny people of the right to work, as discrimination based on gender, age, social and health status is strictly prohibited in China's Labor Law. The disdain for the legal system being displayed by some employers should not be tolerated.

Moreover, there are no scientific grounds for such prejudice. Rather, after overcoming their infection, most of those who have been infected with the virus and recovered will have some protection from repeat infections. Rejecting a person only because he/she once tested positive for the virus is thus as unnecessary as it is unethical and illegal.

Discrimination of any kind is toxic to society. The labor authorities must intervene to correct the wrongs of the employers who refuse to recruit people because they were infected with the virus.

Such a practice must be quickly nipped in the bud across the country, lest such "COVID discrimination" percolates through society. If that happens it could further deepen the "COVID shame" already felt by some people after they become infected.

By adding a sense of guilt to their stress and anxiety, it could deter them from having interactions with other people, thus causing a serious social problem given there are already about 891,000 people on the Chinese mainland who have been infected and the number is still growing.

It could also prompt those who become infected but whose symptoms are mild to avoid seeking medical treatment, or try to hide their health condition or journeys for fear of becoming the target of discrimination.

This would disrupt the country's prevention and control work by making the work of transmission chain tracing more difficult.

Like any form of bigotry, COVID discrimination must not be tolerated.

UKRAINIAN MATHEMATICIAN AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS FIELDS MEDAL

Ukrainian mathematician Maryna Viazovska was named Tuesday as one of four recipients of the prestigious Fields Medal, which is often described as the Nobel Prize in mathematics.

The International Mathematical Union said Viazovska, who holds the chair in number theory at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne, was being honored for her research into geometric problems.

Viazovska, 37, said she was very humbled to receive

the prize for her work, which she said addresses a "very old and natural question," namely the densest way to pack identical spheres.

While many people are familiar with the problem having seen cantaloupes stacked like a pyramid in a supermarket, Viazovska took it to another dimension — the eighth and 24th, to be precise — solving it in a way that drew widespread praise from top mathematicians.

THE BUZZ



AHEAD OF G-20 MINISTERS' MEETING, CHINA SLAMS US, NATO

CHINA slammed the U.S. and NATO yesterday, days before a meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian's comments underscore the increasingly fractious relationship, along with China's increasingly confrontational approach to foreign relations that heatedly rejects criticism.

At last week's NATO summit in Spain, Blinken accused China of "seeking to undermine the rules-based international order."

In his comments yesterday, Zhao said the "so-called rules-based international order is actually a family rule made by a handful of countries to serve the U.S. self-interest."

Washington "observes international rules only as it sees fit," he said, adding that NATO "must renounce its blind faith in military might."

U.S.-China relations are dominated by disputes over issues from tra-

de and human rights to Taiwan and Beijing's territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Meanwhile, China has refused to condemn Russia's four-month-long war against Ukraine, criticized sanctions brought against Moscow by NATO members and accused Washington and its allies of provoking the conflict.

Russia and China have strengthened political, economic and military ties, while aligning their foreign policies to oppose the influence of liberal democracies. Weeks before Russia's February invasion, Chinese leader Xi Jinping hosted his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin for a meeting at which they pledged a partnership that had "no limits."

At its summit, NATO for the first time singled out China as one of its strategic priorities for the next decade.

"China is substantially building up its military forces, including nuclear weapons, bullying its neighbors, threatening Taiwan [...] monitoring

and controlling its own citizens through advanced technology, and spreading Russian lies and disinformation," Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said after presenting NATO's 10-year Strategic Concept.

In his comments at yesterday's daily briefing, Zhao said the U.S. "has been working closely with NATO to hype up competition with China and stoke group confrontation."

"The history of NATO is the one about creating conflicts and waging wars [...] arbitrarily launching wars and killing innocent civilians, even to this day," Zhao said. "Facts have proven that it is not China that poses a systemic challenge to NATO, and instead it is NATO that brings a looming systemic challenge to world peace and security."

Blinken is expected to meet with Wang on Saturday at a meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of 20 leading rich and developing nations on the Indonesian island of Bali. MDT/AP



EU lawmakers voted yesterday to include natural gas and nuclear in the bloc's list of sustainable activities, backing a proposal from the EU's executive arm that has been drawing fierce criticism from environmental groups and will likely trigger legal challenges. As the EU wants to set the best global standards in the fight against climate change, the decision could tarnish the bloc's image and question the region's commitment to reaching climate neutrality by 2050.

Germany Tens of thousands of migrants, who have been living in Germany for years without long-lasting permission to remain in the country, will be eligible for permanent residency after the government approved a new migration bill. The new regulation, endorsed by the Cabinet, applies to about 136,000 people who have lived in Germany for at least five years by Jan. 1, 2022.



France A strike by railway workers demanding higher pay amid cost of living increases interrupted train services in France yesterday. National railway company SNCF said about one high-speed train in four was canceled, while regional services such as suburban trains in the Paris region experienced disruptions. International lines, including Eurostar trains to London and Thalys trains to Brussels, were expected to run normally, SNCF said.



Nigeria At least 600 inmates escaped in a jailbreak in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city, officials said, blaming the attack on Islamic extremist rebels. Over 300 escapees have either been recaptured or turned themselves in at police stations, authorities said. The "very determined" rebels attacked the Kuje maximum prison in Abuja on Tuesday night with "very high-grade explosives," killing one guard on duty.



Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian