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MACAO SOCIAL WORKERS' UNION STARTED AN ONLINE PETITION TO CALL FOR BETTER TREATMENT OF WORKERS CONFINED IN CARE FACILITIES

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ANALYSIS: CALL FOR CASINOS TO GROW BEYOND GAMBLING

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SRI LANKA'S POLITICAL CHAOS PERSISTS AS CRISIS TALKS GO ON

▲ P12



AP PHOTO



Japan Days after his assassination, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's party vowed to use its sizable victory in a parliamentary election to achieve his unfinished goals, including strengthening the military and revising the country's pacifist, postwar constitution. The governing Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner Komeito secured a majority in the parliament's upper house in elections Sunday. The result means Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (pictured) could rule uninterrupted until a scheduled election in 2025 and allows him to work on long-term policies. *More on p7*

Pakistan The death toll from rain-related incidents over the past month has risen to 147 as monsoon rains continue to lash Pakistan, triggering flash floods in some parts of the country, officials said. The National Disaster Management Authority said that 88 women and children are among the dead so far. The monsoon rains also damaged homes, roads, bridges and power stations across the country.

AP PHOTO



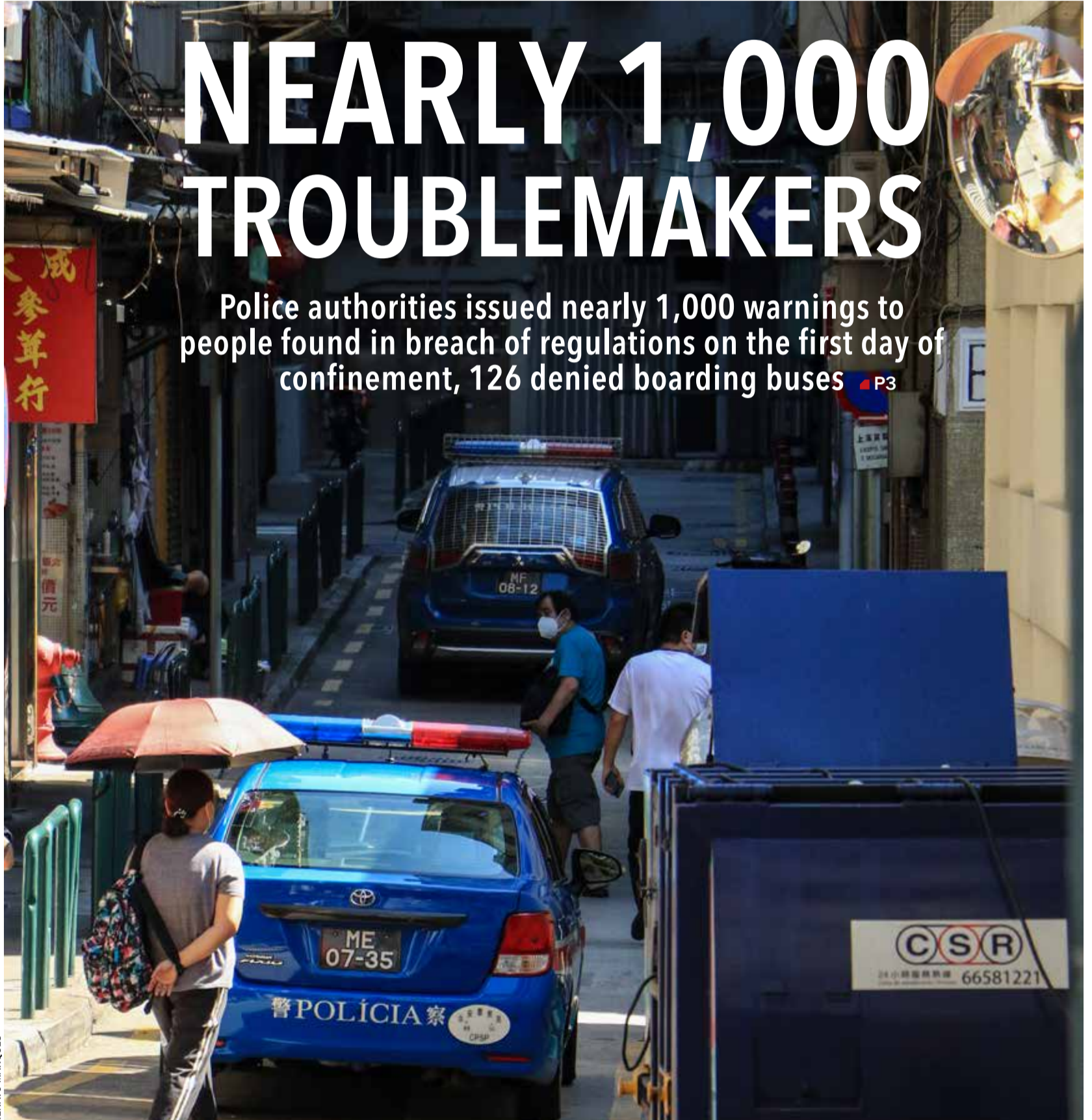
EU said yesterday it's "critical" that authorities in the 27-nation bloc consider giving second coronavirus booster shots to people between the ages of 60 and 79 years and other vulnerable people, as a new wave of the pandemic sweeps over the continent. "With cases and hospitalizations rising again as we enter the summer period, I urge everybody to get vaccinated and boosted as quickly as possible. There is no time to lose," European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides said in a statement.

More on backpage

NEARLY 1,000 TROUBLEMAKERS

Police authorities issued nearly 1,000 warnings to people found in breach of regulations on the first day of confinement, 126 denied boarding buses

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RENATO MARQUES

GAMING SHARES PLUNGE AMID CASINO CLOSURE

AP PHOTO



▲ P4

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

POSITIVE CASES TALLY RISES TO 1,526, TWO-THIRDS ASYMPTOMATIC

RENATO MARQUES

THE number of positive cases of Covid-19 in Macau reached 1,526 on July 10, health authorities informed, noting the discovery of 59 new cases on Sunday.

According to the coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, from this total, around two-thirds (969) are cases of people that do not present any symptoms of the disease and that do not require treatment, although they are being placed under medical observation in isolation at quarantine hotels.

As for the remaining 557 cases, they have been classified as confirmed cases. No new severe cases have been recorded in the new 59 cases, from which only 17 were found within the community, the same official noted.

Although the result points to some positive outlook, Leong warned that it is "too early to celebrate" as the 17 cases found in the community show that there is still a chain of transmission that is not yet under full control.

"We need to continue to follow up on these cases due to the high transmissibility of this Omicron strain. We can still be in a situation of a

RENATO MARQUES



growing trend of cases again," she warned, adding, "It is too early to say that the measures we have enforced are working or that these measures are enough to contain the outbreak. We need to continue our work until there are no more cases in the community."

Leong also informed that until 3 p.m. yesterday, a total of 47 people that were in isolation have been released from medical observation, 28 of them were asymptomatic cases and another 19 were people that have had symptoms but have already recovered.

As for the seventh round of citywide mass testing that

HEALTH CHIEF DECLINES TO PREDICT PEAK AS 'IT IS MEANINGLESS'

HEALTH Bureau (SSM) director and pulmonologist Alvis Lo refused to forecast the peak of this outbreak of Covid-19, saying that to do so would be meaningless.

He was asked over the weekend whether this outbreak is at its peak or will be soon. He was also asked when he expected the peak if not soon.

In response, the pulmonologist said he never makes predictions because they are not meaningful.

Elaborating, the health chief added that the health agency would constantly monitor the progress of the outbreak, while analyzing and assessing the efficacy of each measure.

Based on the results, the agency will decide future strategies to achieve dynamic zero-Covid.

He also attributed the falling trajectory of new

cases in the past few days to the city's rounds of intense mass SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid tests, banning dine-in services, as well as stopping public services and open-door financial operations.

Reiterating the transmissibility of the current BA.5 variant of the virus, he stressed that measures must be constantly adjusted to win against the virus.

The pulmonologist's refusal to make predictions may be due to Chinese respiratory medicine professional Zhong Nanshan's forecasting. Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has disclosed that Zhong is making models for Macau based on SSM's data.

Foreign epidemiologists and virologists have warned that efforts to confine the spread of the Omicron variant is futile due to its high transmissibility and mild to no symptoms. **AL**

Supermarkets apologize for incorrect sale prices

STAFF REPORTER

TWO supermarket chains, San Miu and Royal have apologized to public for pricing vegetables and fruits incorrectly, as was revealed by online posts.

Some residents published a Facebook post on Sunday which shows that San Miu Supermarket was selling a Chinese Cabbage for MOP100. Other residents posted online that Royal Supermarket was selling

four Zespri gold kiwifruits for MOP209.

The Macau Consumer Council (CC) and The Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSEDT) expressed significant concerns on learning of these posts, and pursued the matter with the supermarkets immediately.

San Miu Supermarket explained that due to the staff error, the Chinese Cabbage was set at a price of MOP15 per 100 grams

instead of MOP1.5 per 100 grams.

"During the pandemic, all industries are facing challenges and pressures, as well as supermarkets," the San Miu Supermarket added.

Meanwhile, Royal Supermarket responded that an employee of their own accidentally put the price tag of MOP 209 on the package of four Zespri gold kiwifruits.

Royal Supermarket offered a sincere apology to the

public, stating, "we didn't want to deliberately cause any misunderstanding, and we will do our best in the future to prevent similar incidents from happening."

The CC and the DSEDT said it will continue to conduct inspections and stressed that the retail industry, including supermarkets, must ensure each process is accurate and the prices of the goods are clearly stated, to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

FLORA TANG



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Times

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
For subscription and general issues: general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

RENATO MARQUES

MANDATORY CONFINEMENT

AS of 3 p.m. yesterday, police authorities had issued 904 warnings to people found in breach of the regulations that impose mandatory confinement for the majority of the Macau population, called by the government a "State of Relative Confinement."

Figures were released yesterday by the representative of the Unitary Police Services (SPU), Cheong Kin Ian, at the press briefing from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

According to Cheong and as a result of the multiple patrolling and inspection activities from the different police forces, 904 verbal warnings have been issued but, so far, none of them have resulted in fines or reports of criminal activities. This is because authorities have opted for an education-driven approach across the first of seven days of confinement.

The same official noted that the almost 1,000 cases until 3 p.m. are mostly related to people walking pets, running or jogging activities, and non-use or inadequate use of facemasks.

"During this first phase, we will only provide advice to the people found breaching the rules but later we will enforce the law in a stricter manner," Cheong said, without specifying on

Police issued nearly 1,000 warnings on first day



what exact date the authorities will replace the educational and informative approach with fines and criminal reports.

Whether the activity of dog-walking is considered exempt from the confinement act was again a topic of scrutiny at the press briefing. Authorities repeatedly reaffirmed that the activity is illegal under the

Chief Executive decree as it is not considered urgent or essential.

This response came following contradictory information aired on Sunday evening from different sources, including some media companies, Animal rights associations, and lawmaker Ron Lam, who cited sources in the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM)

which claimed that dog-walking is actually permitted.

Both health and police authorities reaffirmed that this information is false, remarking that those entities and people misled and deceived those who believed them. The authorities reiterated the call for people to follow the news on official and trusted media sources.

Although yesterday, unlike Sunday, there was no representative from the IAM at the press briefing, the coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, said he had received a message from IAM stating that the bureau never issued any statements contrary to the government's policies. Dr Leong further noted that in a clarification issued earlier, the IAM said during the period of confinement (from July 11 to July 18) pet owners were only allowed to take their pets to see the vet in an emergency.

PUBLIC SMOKING ALSO A CRIME

AT the same press briefing, the representative of the Public Security Police Force (PSP), Lei Tak Fai, explained to a media inquiry that removing or lowering the facemask to smoke while in public spaces, including streets and sidewalks, is also considered a crime and is subject to the same punishments reported (up to 2 years of imprisonment or fine up to

240 days).

"It is very clear in the law that to remove or to lower the mask to smoke undoubtedly constitutes an infraction," Lei said, noting that the rules state that while performing the essential activities authorized, citizens must use properly and at all times, a facemask that follows the quality standards KN95, N95 or above.

Bus ride woes, 126 denied boarding

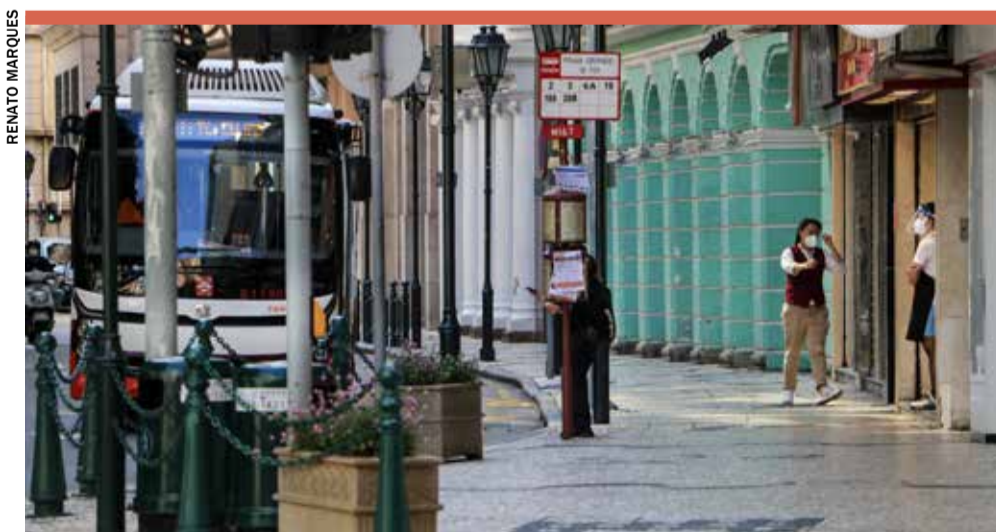
RENATO MARQUES

YESTERDAY, at least 126 people were denied boarding public buses, the representative of the Transport Bureau (DSAT), Chang Cheong Hin, said at the press briefing from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

The reason behind the refusal was primarily a failure to provide the special permit card issued to those that need to perform work duties during this week. In some cases, this was because the permits had not reached the users on time.

Still, Chang noted that 63,117 such cards were issued; the two public bus operators noted that between 5:30 a.m. and 9 a.m. on Monday 9,300 carried such cards.

The same official noted,



regarding the cases of rejection of passengers: "Today [yesterday] is [was] the first day of enforcement of these new rules and so there are people that were not aware, this is normal." Chang added, "We are in close contact with bus companies to do monitoring

of the situation. They also already trained the drivers on how to proceed in this type of situation. If the drivers find irregular cases [of people wanting to board the buses without the needed documents] they can request support from the special workers that have

been deployed to some of the major bus stops. If this happens at a stop that does not have these workers, the drivers can also try to help and clarify with the passengers why they cannot enter the bus."

The 9,300 bus commuters, according to statistics

from DSAT, is a reduction of about 90% when compared with the same day and period last week.

"We can see there is an obvious effect of this policy and that it could effectively reduce the mobility of the people," Chang remarked in support of the measure.

Nonetheless there were many complaints from workers who saw their commutes to work being canceled because they lacked the necessary permits. In some reported cases, domestic workers have been forced out of the buses due to the lack of a valid work permit (Blue Card).

Questioned on the topic, the representative of the Public Security Police Force (PSP), Lei Tak Fai, said if these workers do not possess yet their cards and they hold only the receipt, they can request a "temporary card" from the Macao Immigration Services which can temporarily replace

their blue cards.

Those who require a temporary card may contact the Services using the hotline 2872 5488.

SPECIAL PERMITS SELLING ONLINE

According to a media inquiry at the press briefing, there are reports of people attempting to sell special permit cards online.

In response to this information, Lei noted that they will enforce inspection over such matters and if people are engaging in this illegal activity, they will bear the penal responsibility.

On the same topic, Chang noted that only people holding original cards will be allowed on the buses and drivers have been instructed to refuse entry to all those presenting copies or photographs of cards.

He also noted that no valid cards have blank areas; if this happens, those cards are not considered valid.

LYNZY VALLES

GAMING SHARES PLUNGE AMID CASINO CLOSURES

AS casinos closed for the first time in two years yesterday to curb the spread of infection, gaming operators saw their stocks plunge by up to 8%.

Over the weekend, authorities announced that a special lockdown will be imposed this week as Macau battles to contain the spread of Covid-19.

The city returns to its toughest pandemic restrictions, mandating that residents only leave their homes for essential reasons, with police officers patrolling the city to enforce this.

As the city adheres to the national zero-Covid strategy, authorities have shut down non-essential firms, locked down buildings where positive cases have been detected and conducted repeated rounds of mass testing to identify and isolate affected individuals.

Leading the stock market falls was Sands China, at a 8% decrease, while shares in Melco International, Wynn Macau, SJM, Galaxy MGM China, dropped be-



tween 6% and 7%.

Investor confidence has been hit hard as the closure came following three weeks of low gaming revenues due to the absence

of tourists from neighboring regions.

The seven-day quarantine requirement for mainland residents arriving from Macau has dis-

couraged travelers from coming to the city.

Brokerages have forecast that recovery in the gaming sector may not happen until the end

of third or fourth quarter of this year.

"We would probably need to write-off July and likely August as well from the models," said DS Kim, an analyst at J.P. Morgan.

Gaming analysts have also expressed the expectation that no casino operators would escape the economic fallout caused by the pandemic, expecting negative EBITDA in the second quarter for all six concessionaires.

International economic rating institution S&P Global Ratings expects that Macau's 2022 end gross gambling revenue (GGR) will reach USD10.08 billion at most, citing the city's largest outbreak.

Estimates given by brokerage Sanford C. Bernstein states that the average daily casino gaming revenues from July 1 to 10 stood at MOP20 million, which is a daily average of MOP2 million.

If this trajectory continues, driven by the one-week closure of casinos, the city could record its lowest casino revenues ever this month.

ASSOCIATION WARNS OF FINANCIAL MAYHEM FOR GAMING EMPLOYEES UNDER 'ZERO-COVID' STRATEGY

STAFF REPORTER

A gaming association has expressed concern that the Macau government's confinement measures will likely disadvantage employees in the sector.

To curb the spread of Covid-19, Macau has ordered a seven-day shutdown of casinos, non-essential services, and mandates that the public stay at home except for emergency reasons.

Under the mandatory confinement, some gaming companies have promoted a voluntary leave plan for employees to apply the leave in the form of annual or supplementary leave.

"Not every employee has a condition to stop their work for seven days," said Stephen Lau, president of Power of the Macao Gaming Association, told Chinese media outlet Macao Daily.

Lau said that the lockdown measure is causing a huge controversy in the community.

He explained most employees rely on a monthly salary to meet their living expenditure, which include items such as loan repayments, supporting parents and the utilities bills.

Moreover, if there are two employees in one family, it means that the family will



Police seen patrolling on the first day of "special confinement"

lose salaries for a total of 14 days.

Lau said stopping people work lives means they are not guaranteed enough money to meet their daily needs.

According to the "Labour Relations Law" published by the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), employers are not required to pay relevant salary to employees in the state of suspended work.

"There are some contradictions between the standstill measure and mass testing," said Lau.

He asked whether the pandemic prevention policies of the government can really realize the national zero-Covid strategy, while pointing out that while the government promulgated the mandatory confinement measure, it also required residents to do the mass tes-

ting during the confinement period.

He also expressed concern over the fact that the number of positive cases are still rising despite the government's call to limit the operations of businesses three weeks ago.

Lau worried that the government has missed the best time to control the pandemic, adding that residents shouldn't bear the consequences of the government's "ineffective pandemic prevention works."

According to a statement published by the government on July 9, all companies providing non-essential services are temporarily closed this week until midnight of July 18. Companies necessary to maintain society operation and residents' health will not be affected.

SOCIAL WORKERS HOST ONLINE PETITION TO RAISE CONCERNS OVER FRONTLINE COLLEAGUES

ANTHONY LAM

MACAO Social Workers' Union has started an online petition to call for better treatment of social workers and other workers who are now in confined management in care facilities.

The union's management called on fellow social workers to post pictures with placards with their requests on social media to raise awareness of their situation.

Since July 24, workers in care facilities, such as elderly homes and drug rehabilitation facilities, have been put under de-facto confinement. They must remain in their workplaces at all times because the government will not allow them to go home, citing "disease control" as justification.

The confinement is referred to by the government as "closed-loop management."

The union said that it had received complaints from fellow workers about exhaustion and mental burden working and living in the same place for an indefinite



period. Alongside them, medical staff have also voiced the same sentiment via various channels.

At yesterday's daily health press conference, President Hon Wai of the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) revealed that confinement swap was being considered. Substitute workers will be allowed to enter the "closed-loop" after a seven-day quarantine at a designated location.

Earlier, however, Hon said only when zero-Covid is achieved can these workers be released.

In fact, the union expressed its understanding of the situa-

tion and provided an alternative to the government. It said that even if confinement is unavoidable, humane and private areas for rest should be available. The union pointed out that these concessions would help the workers achieve sufficient and quality rest to "fight the battle together."

The union believes that if more people are willing to speak out, the government will be more likely to make adjustments.

The union added that the workers' ultimate wish is to end confinement early so that they can go home and be with their families.

AP PHOTO



ANALYSIS

'Las Vegas of Asia' tells casinos to grow beyond gambling

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

LOSING money due to COVID, the American casino giants that helped make Macau the "Las Vegas of Asia" face a fresh challenge: The tiny Chinese territory wants them to help reduce its reliance on gambling by paying to build theme parks and other attractions.

The former Portuguese colony stayed out of business decisions for decades and now is aligning with official strategy on China's mainland, where foreign companies are required to help pay for the ruling Communist Party's development ambitions, profitable or not.

The licenses of MGM Resorts, Las Vegas Sands, Wynn Resorts and three Chinese rivals that invested billions of dollars in Macau expire in December. Rules released in early July say any that want to operate over the next 10-year period face an added requirement to invest in "non-gaming projects."

Casinos face still more financial pressure after they were ordered to close this week, along with most other businesses, while Macau tries to control a renewed coronavirus outbreak. They already were operating under rules imposed in late June that limited the number of their

employees to 10% of normal.

Financial analysts expect the Americans to get licenses, but the government says bidding is open to anyone.

The territory of 700,000 people crowded onto a 30-square-kilometer peninsula jutting into the South China Sea near Hong Kong is the biggest global center for gambling but is under pressure from Chinese President Xi Jinping's government to rely less on its dominant industry.

Beijing wants theme parks, entertainment and conventions to attract more non-Chinese visitors.

Even before tourist travel was shut down to fight COVID in 2020, the mainland was trying to limit the flow of gamblers across the fenced boundary that separates Macau from Guangdong province.

Macau is "dedicated to steering the composition of industries towards adequate diversification," said its economy secretary, Lei Wai Nong, at a May 31 government meeting.

An added complication for the Americans: Relations between Xi's government and Washington are strained by disputes over tra-

de, technology, human rights and other irritants. Other companies have been hit by retaliation for U.S. tariff hikes, but Macau casinos haven't been targeted.

"There is a high risk that at least one, if not two, may not get a new concession," said Ben Lee, managing partner of IGamiX, a gambling industry consulting firm in Macau. "Why would 50% of such a dominant industry in Macau be ceded to foreigners, particularly Americans?"

Pressure for change comes as Macau faces growing competition for potential non-Chinese gamblers from casinos in Singapore, Malaysia and Cambodia

Pressure for change comes as Macau faces growing competition for potential non-Chinese gamblers from casinos in Singapore, Malaysia and Cambodia.

Financial analysts expect MGM, Sands and Wynn to be approved for licenses due to the jobs and tax revenue they generate.

Their casino hotels with thousands of employees soar above the narrow lanes of Macau's centuries-

old city center and Cotai, a strip of land reclaimed from the sea.

Still, the risk an established operator might fail to receive a license "should not be ignored," Fitch Ratings said in a June 16 report.

The Chinese competitors include SJM Holding, part of the empire of the late Stanley Ho, a competitive ballroom dancer and Macau's "King of Gambling," who had a four-decade, government-granted monopoly on casinos until 2001. SJM is run by Ho's daughter Pansy.

The others are Melco International, run by Ho's son Lawrence, and Galaxy Entertainment Group.

The decision to allow in foreign-owned casinos in 2002 brought

a flood of money to Macau, once best known in China for its Portuguese-style egg tarts, and billions of dollars in profit to their operators. In total, the six license holders operate 41 casinos.

Annual revenue from slot machines, dice tables and other games peaked at \$45 billion in 2013. That was equal to \$65,000 for each man, woman and child in Macau and more than triple

Nevada's 2021 revenue of \$13.5 billion.

But revenue was sliding even before COVID hit in 2020. Beijing was tightening controls on how often mainland gamblers could visit. Curbs were imposed on financial transfers to Macau in a crackdown on money laundering and tax evasion.

By 2019, before the pandemic, gambling revenue had sunk 19% from 2013's level to \$36.4 billion. In 2020, it collapsed a further 80% to just \$7.6 billion. Last year, revenue climbed back to \$10.8 billion, but that is down 75% from 2013.

Macau's economy, possibly the world's most tourism-dependent, has shrunk by half since 2019, according to government data.

The government has appealed to casino operators to avoid laying off employees.

Macau's appeal is so powerful that Las Vegas Sands Corp., traditionally the biggest global casino operator by revenue, sold its namesake Las Vegas hotel in 2021 to wager everything on its six Macau properties and one in Singapore.

The company has invested an estimated \$13 billion in Macau. It is in the midst of a \$2.2 billion overhaul of one of its hotels.

Betting so heavily on Asia, however, meant Sands suffered the biggest COVID hit. The company reported a first-quarter loss of \$478 million. Revenue fell 21% from a year earlier to \$943 million.

Wynn Resorts Ltd. said revenue at its two Macau casinos fell, but its Las Vegas properties helped to limit its overall loss to \$183.3 million on revenue of \$953.3 million, temporarily putting it ahead of Sands.

MGM Resorts said its first-quarter revenue of \$268 million in Macau was down 76% compared with the pre-outbreak level of \$734 million in the first quarter of 2019.

Adding non-gambling assets would make Macau more like Las Vegas, where casinos try to attract families and non-gamblers with roller coasters, music, shopping centers, art exhibits and water parks.

SJM operates a zip line and indoor skydiving attractions. It has dropped an earlier proposal for a Hello Kitty theme park. The tycoon behind Galaxy talked about a possible theme park resembling the movie "Avatar," but it never went ahead.

"Entertainment and theme parks are costly to run, with questionable returns," said Lee.

Regulators need to craft investment requirements "very carefully," Lee said. "You can't force concessionaires to invest in theme parks and entertainment without a return unless it is in black and white." **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

GOV'T MULLS MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS AS COVID CASES RISE

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

HONG Kong authorities are considering implementing a health code system in the city that would restrict the movements of those infected with the coronavirus and overseas arrivals, as infections rise again.

The system is similar to that of mainland China, in which a red code completely restricts a person's movement, a yellow code is for partial restriction, while a green code means freedom of movement. The colors would appear on Hong Kong's risk-exposure app LeaveHomeSafe.

Hong Kong's health chief said yesterday that if such a system is implemented, real-name registration would be required and those who test positive for COVID-19 would be given a red code "to identify those who have been infected" and prevent them from interacting with the community.

Authorities are also considering reducing the current seven-day hotel quarantine for inco-



ming travelers, and moving part of it to home isolation and health monitoring.

Such travelers may be issued yellow health codes, and will

not be allowed to remove their masks or enter high-risk premises such as hospitals and elderly care homes.

"We hope that we will be able

to enforce the home quarantine in a more effective way and try to prevent these people from causing community outbreak," Lo said.

Starting Friday, all those who are given a home isolation order will also be issued electronic wristbands to ensure that they stay quarantined.

The city's health code measures are being considered amid an increase of Covid-19 infections after the city battled its fifth and worst outbreak that infected over a million people and killed over 9,000.

Hong Kong recorded over 2,800 cases yesterday, as well as seven deaths.

Lo dismissed concerns that the measures would invade privacy, saying that real-name registration required for the health app is to help law enforcement and not to restrict freedoms of those unaffected.

"I'd like to say that we would make use of technology to put in place a precision strategy," he said. "This is to reduce our cost in our fight against the epidemic and to maximize effectiveness."

In mainland China, local media reported that the health code system was used to restrict the movements of people who were planning to join a protest in the Chinese province of Henan last month after they found their bank accounts frozen at a rural bank. The move sparked widespread criticism over its misuse. **MDT/AP**

TECHNOLOGY

Alibaba and Tencent stocks plunge after latest fines

ZEN SOO AP, HONG KONG

SHARES of Chinese technology firms Alibaba and Tencent fell sharply yesterday, a day after Chinese regulators fined their subsidiaries for not disclosing transactions and failing to comply with anti-monopoly rules.

E-commerce giant Alibaba's shares in Hong Kong fell 6.8%, while gaming and social media company Tencent Holdings sank 3.2%. The Hang Seng index declined 3%.

On Sunday, China's State Administration for Market Regulation published a list of 28 deals that violated anti-monopoly rules.

It included five of Alibaba's transactions and 12 of Tencent's. A wide-reaching crackdown on the technology sector has often hit stock prices in Hong Kong and Shanghai. For violations in



each case, the maximum fine was 500,000 yuan (\$74,500).

A wide-reaching crackdown on the technology sector has often hit stock prices in Hong Kong and Shanghai, though signs the authorities might be easing up spurred gains in recent months.

Alibaba's shares had risen 70% and Tencent's were up 18% since mid-March, before Monday's losses.

"The dip is likely to be temporary. The market was more wary about the U.S. raising interest rates so sharply, but it's just been overrun by the new fines," said Francis Lun, an investment manager and veteran market commentator in Hong Kong.

An increase in coronavirus cases that raised fears of more pandemic lockdowns in Shanghai also shook investor sentiment, he said. **MDT/AP**

CHINESE BANK DEPOSITORS FACE POLICE IN ANGRY PROTEST

KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

A large crowd of angry Chinese bank depositors faced off with police Sunday, some roughed up as they were taken away, in a case that has drawn attention because of earlier attempts to use a COVID-19 tracking app to prevent them from mobilizing.

Hundreds of people held up banners and chanted slogans on the wide steps of the entrance to a branch of China's central bank in the city of Zhengzhou in Henan province, about 620 kilometers southwest of Beijing. Video taken by a protester shows plainclothes security teams being pelted with water bottles and other objects as they charge the crowd.

Later videos posted on social media show an unclear number of protesters being shoved forward individually and down stairs by security teams dressed in plain white or black T-shirts. Phone calls to Zhengzhou city and Henan province police rang



People hold banners and chant slogans during a protest at the entrance to a branch of China's central bank in Zhengzhou in central China's Henan Province, Sunday

unanswered.

The protesters are among thousands of customers who opened accounts at six rural banks in Henan and neighboring Anhui province that offered higher interest rates. They later found they could not withdraw their funds after media reports that the head of the banks' parent company was on the run and wanted for financial crimes.

"We came today and wanted to get our savings back, because I have elderly people and children at home, and the inability to withdraw savings has seriously affected my life,"

said a woman from Shandong province, who only gave her last name, Zhang, out of fear of retribution.

What had been a local scandal became a national incident last month because of the misuse of the COVID-19 tracking app. Many who set out for Zhengzhou to demand action from regulators found that their health status on the app had turned red, preventing them from traveling. Some reported being questioned by police after checking into their hotel about why they had come to the city. Five Zhengzhou officials were later punished. **MDT/AP**

ELECTIONS

Abe's party vows to finish his work after win in Japan vote

MARI YAMAGUCHI,
TOKYO

DAYS after his assassination, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's party vowed to use its sizable victory in a parliamentary election to achieve his unfinished goals, including strengthening the military and revising the country's pacifist, postwar constitution.

The governing Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner Komeito secured a majority in the parliament's upper house in elections Sunday that took on new meaning after Abe was shot to death while campaigning Friday in a crime that shook the nation. The result means Prime Minister Fumio Kishida could rule uninterrupted until a scheduled election in 2025 and allows him to work on long-term policies — but the constitutional amendment would still face an uphill battle.

Kishida welcomed the victory but also acknowledged the need to unify the party without Abe, who even after resigning as prime minister in 2020 remained a force in the party and national politics.

"Because we've lost a great leader, undeniably we could be affected in many ways," Kishida said. "Our party must unite as we face difficult issues."

He said the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and rising prices would be his priorities. But he also vowed to push for reinforcing Japan's national security and amending the constitution, which only allows the country's military to act in self-defense.

Abe and some of the country's ultra-conservatives consider the document written by the U.S. in the wake of World War II a humiliation and have long sought to turn the country's Self Defense Force into a full-fledged military. But many in the public are more supportive of the document and see addressing the pandemic and the soaring cost of food, fuel and

AP PHOTO



childcare as more pressing. "We will inherit his will and tackle the issues he had to leave unachieved," Kishida said.

To propose a constitutional amendment, both houses of parliament need to support it by a two-thirds majority. Sunday's vote gave the LDP-led coalition and two opposition parties open to a charter revision that margin in the upper chamber of parliament. Alone the governing coalition now has 146 of the house's 248 seats. All four parties together control 179. That group of four parties also has the necessary seats in the more powerful lower house.

But it's far from clear sailing: Komeito, the centrist party that forms part of the governing coalition, says changing the article in the constitution that puts constraints on the military is unnecessary. In addition, any amendment would need to secure a majority of support in a national referendum to pass.

Abe, who stepped down as prime minister two years ago, citing health reasons, said at the time he regretted leaving many of his goals unfinished, including revising the constitution.

Last night, a wake was held for Abe at a Buddhist temple in downtown Tokyo where Kishida and top for-

mer and current political leaders, as well as ordinary mourners, paid tribute. Some broke down in tears.

A funeral is planned at the temple today by his family. The government is expected to hold a separate memorial service at a later date.

Earlier in the day, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Kishida to offer condolences and deliver a letter from President Joe Biden to Abe's family.

"We simply want them to know that we deeply feel the loss on the personal level as well," Blinken told Kishida. "Mostly I'm here because the United States and Japan are more than allies — we are friends."

Blinken said Abe "did more than anyone to elevate the relationship between the United States and Japan to new heights."

Japan's longest-serving political leader, Abe was the grandson of another prime minister and became the country's youngest leader in 2006, at age 52. That stint in office abruptly ended a year later, also because of his health.

He returned to the premiership in 2012, vowing to revitalize the nation and get its economy out of its deflationary doldrums with his "Abenomics" formula, which combines

fiscal stimulus, monetary easing and structural reforms. He won six national

elections and built a rock-solid grip on power.

On Sunday, the suspect

accused of his murder was transferred to a local prosecutors' office for further investigation.

Police said the suspect, Tetsuya Yamagami, told investigators he acted because of Abe's rumored connection to an organization that he resented. Some Japanese media identified the group as South Korea's Unification Church, and reported that the suspect's mother donated large amounts of money to the church. They suggested that the donations and her subsequent bankruptcy were a possible motive.

The Japan branch of the church acknowledged Monday that the suspect's mother was a member, but denied that it demanded large donations from anyone.

Tomihiro Tanaka, head of the church, declined comment on the specifics of donations, saying a police investigation was ongoing. Speaking in generalities, he confirmed some people had made generous donations, but stressed none were forced.

Tanaka said Abe was not a member though he supported its global peace movement. **MDT/AP**

AD

An advertisement for MacauCloser magazine. The background is green. At the top, it says "生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE" and "MACAUCLOSER". Below that, the main headline is "可持續的生活 LIVING SUSTAINABLY". Underneath, it says "認識正在為城市綠化努力的澳門人" and "MEET MACAU LOCALS MAKING AN EFFORT TO GREEN UP THE CITY". There are two magazine covers shown: one titled "MACAU CLOSER TO THE GREATER BAY AREA" with the subtitle "橫琴 就是未來 THE FUTURE IS HENGQIN" and a photo of a man, and another titled "MACAUCLOSER" with the subtitle "可持續的生活 LIVING SUSTAINABLY" and a photo of red flowers. A QR code is in the top right. A yellow circle in the bottom right says "現在發售 NOW ON SALE". At the bottom, it says "OUR GREATER BAY AREA SUPPLEMENT INSIDE 本期雜誌加入了大灣區特刊, 不容錯過".

PUTIN'S WAR

Putin extends fast-track Russian citizenship to all Ukraine

MSTYSLAV CHERNOV,
KHARKIV

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin signed a decree yesterday expanding a fast-track procedure to receive Russian citizenship to all Ukrainians, in yet another effort to expand Moscow's influence in war-torn Ukraine.

Until recently, only residents of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as residents of the southern Zaporizhzhia and the Kherson regions, large parts of which are under Russian control, were eligible for the simplified procedure.

Ukrainian officials haven't yet reacted to Putin's announcement.

Between 2019, when the procedure was first introduced for the residents of Donetsk and Luhansk, and this year, more than 720,000 residents of the rebel-held areas in the two regions — about 18% of the population — have received Russian passports.

In late May, three months after Russia invaded Ukraine, the fast-track procedure was also offered to residents of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. A month ago, the first Russian passports were reportedly handed out there.

The move by Putin came as Russian shelling of Ukraine's second-largest city killed at least three people yesterday and 31 others were injured, the local administrator said. Hours earlier, Russian troops launched three missile strikes on Kharkiv which the official described as "ab-



A local man clears rubble from his house which was destroyed after a Russian attack in a residential neighborhood in downtown Kharkiv, Ukraine, yesterday

solute terrorism."

Kharkiv regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said on Telegram that the shelling came from multiple rocket launchers, and those hospitalized for injuries suffered in the attacks included children ages 4 and 16.

"Only civilian structures — a shopping center and houses of peaceful Kharkiv residents — came under the fire of the Russians. Several shells hit the yards of private houses. Garages and cars were also destroyed, several fires broke out," Syniehubov wrote.

Earlier, he said that one of the missiles the Russian forces launched on Kharkiv overnight destroyed a school, another hit a residential building, while the third landed near warehouse facilities.

"All (three were launched) exclusively on civilian objects, this is absolute terrorism!" Syniehubov said.

Kharkiv resident Alexander Peresolin said the at-

acks came suddenly, without warning, causing him to lose consciousness.

"I was sitting and talking to my wife," he said. "I didn't understand what happened. There were two strikes, two or three."

Peresolin said neighbors carried him to the basement where he later regained consciousness.

The strikes came just two days after a Russian rocket attack struck apartment buildings in eastern Ukraine, killing at least 24 people. A total of nine people have been rescued, emergency officials said.

The attack late Saturday destroyed three buildings in a residential quarter of the town of Chasiv Yar, inhabited mostly by people who work in nearby factories.

Russian attacks in the east also have continued, with Luhansk regional Gov. Serhiy Haidai saying that the shelling hit settlements on the administrative border

with the Donetsk region.

Russian forces carried out five missile strikes and four rounds of shelling in the area, Haidai said.

The Luhansk and Donetsk regions together make up Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland known as Donbas, where separatist rebels have fought Ukrainian forces since 2014.

Earlier this month, Russia captured the last major stronghold of Ukrainian resistance in Luhansk, the city of Lysychansk.

After the seizure of Lysychansk, some analysts predicted Moscow's troops likely would take some time to rearm and regroup, but Ukrainian officials said there has been no pause in attacks.

The British military assessed that Russian troops weren't getting needed breaks.

The Defense Ministry tweeted yesterday that online videos suggested at least one tank brigade in the war was "mentally and physically exhausted" as they had been on active combat duty since the start of the war on Feb. 24.

The British said: "The lack of scheduled breaks from intense combat conditions is highly likely one of the most damaging of the many personnel issues the Russian (Ministry of Defense) is struggling to rectify amongst the deployed force."

Also yesterday, the main Russian gas pipeline to Germany began a 10-day closure for maintenance amid European fears that Moscow may not turn the flow back on after its completion. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1986 ORANGE PARADE SPARKS RIOTS



Dozens have been injured in the second consecutive night of violence in Portadown, County Armagh.

Violence flared when Orangemen converged on the town yesterday evening after their annual marches to commemorate the Battle of the Boyne.

Protestant youths began throwing missiles at the police as they attempted to section off Catholic areas.

Disturbances are expected into the night with nationalist and loyalist rioters directing their anger against the security forces and each other.

Vehicles have been overturned and police have been attacked with darts, bottles and stones. Four were seriously injured including one who was dragged from his car and stabbed in the neck.

RUC officers responded with baton charges and about 150 plastic bullets. A total of 127 police and civilians have been injured over the two nights.

Yesterday evening there were skirmishes between Catholic and Protestant factions as they hurled petrol bombs over wasteland in anticipation of today's parade.

The march in the Portadown area passed off peacefully this afternoon after the Orangemen accepted a compromise from the RUC late last night.

The authorities expected trouble after sealing off the Tunnel section of Obins Street yesterday. This is the traditional outward route of the Portadown parade to Drumcree church.

When the RUC allowed Orangemen down Obins Street last Sunday there were angry scenes between police, loyalist marchers and Catholic residents.

Today, hundreds of troops joined the 1,000-strong force of officers lining the re-routed parade.

It took the 400 Orangemen from eight lodges 25 minutes to walk down the mainly Catholic Garvaghy Road.

Courtesy BBC News

BRITISH PARLIAMENT

UK Conservatives jostle in crowded, testy leadership race

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

CANDIDATES to replace Boris Johnson as Britain's prime minister are scattering tax-cutting promises to their Conservative Party electorate, as party officials prepared yesterday to quickly narrow the crowded field of almost a dozen candidates.

Little-known junior minister Rehman Chishti became the 11th candidate to declare he wants to succeed Johnson, who quit as Conservative leader on Thursday amid a party revolt triggered by months of ethics scandals. Other contenders include Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, Treasury chief Nadhim Zahawi, former health

secretaries Sajid Javid and Jeremy Hunt, and backbench lawmakers Tom Tugendhat and Kemi Badenoch.

The new leader will be chosen in a two-stage election, in which the 358 Conservative lawmakers reduce the race to two candidates through a series of elimination votes. The final pair will be put to a postal

ballot of party members across the country. Under Britain's parliamentary system the new leader will automatically become prime minister without the need for a general election.

The party's 1922 Committee, which runs leadership contests, was set to elect a new executive yesterday, which will lay out rules for the contest. The committee wants to complete the parliamentary stage of the election before lawmakers break for the summer on July 21. That would mean a summer second round with a new leader in place by the time the House of Commons returns on Sept. 5. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

The Orange Order was founded near Portadown in 1795 after a clash between Catholics and Protestants at the Battle of the Diamond. With about 75,000 members it remains the largest Protestant organisation in Northern Ireland.

Every 12 July it celebrates the victory of Protestant William of Orange over Catholic King James at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

Tensions were high in 1986 because loyalists claimed concessions were being made to Catholics through the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement.

In 1997 an independent Parades Commission was established.

The Garvaghy Road continues to be a source of unrest and Orangemen have not been allowed to march down there since 1997.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Look into making changes to your personal papers and don't neglect those bills that have been piling up. Minor health problems will cause setbacks if you haven't taken proper care of yourself.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You may want to take extra special care of your luggage if you are traveling today. Cutbacks at work will be a cause for worry. Don't believe everything you hear.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Being unappreciated by your boss could make it hard to do your work effectively. Travel will also be very informative. Get down to business and do the work yourself.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You may exaggerate your emotional situation. Today will be rather hectic on the domestic scene. You are best not to say too much to colleagues.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Anger might lead to carelessness and minor injuries. Hold on; your time will come. Avoid any confrontations with colleagues.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Trips will be favorable for business as well as pleasure. You will have a great deal of insight when dealing with others. You really can't do anything to change matters today.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You're in the mood to get out and visit friends. You will be prone to carelessness that could result in accidents. You can make financial gains if you are prepared to take a risk.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You can make changes to your living quarters that should please family members. Daydreaming will be your downfall. You will be highly sensitive to comments made by your lover.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Purchases will be well worth it and they will last a long time. You'll look guilty if you don't lay your cards on the table. Investments concerning your residence will be profitable.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Your ability to take hold of a situation will surely bring you popularity and leadership. Do your own thing. You can enjoy your involvement in organizations that make charitable contributions.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You will be able to pick up on future trends if you keep your eyes peeled for unique ideas. Trips, educational pursuits, or projects that could lead to new outlooks should be on your agenda.

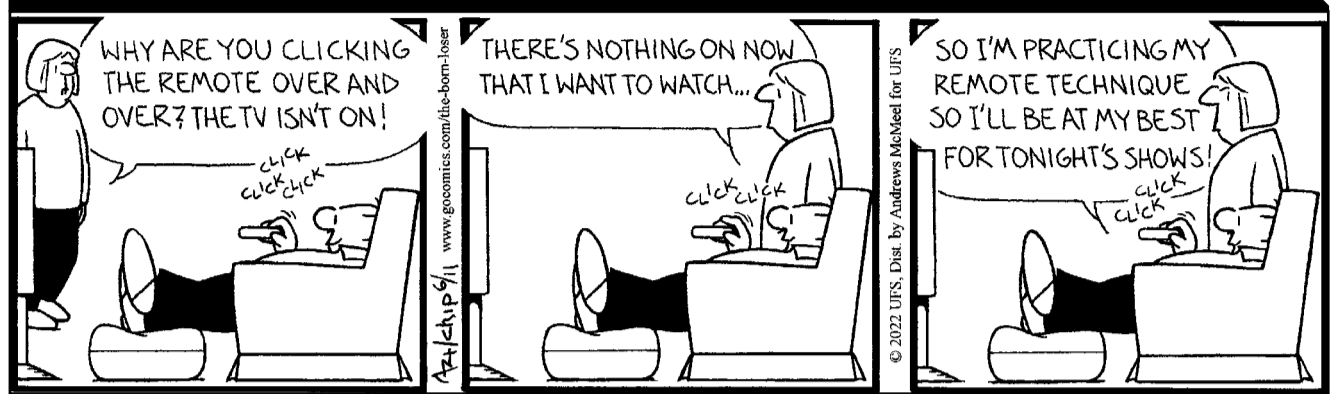


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You will find that friends or relatives may not understand your needs. Your high energy should be spent pleasing your mate. Your diplomatic nature will help you in straightening out unsavory situations.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

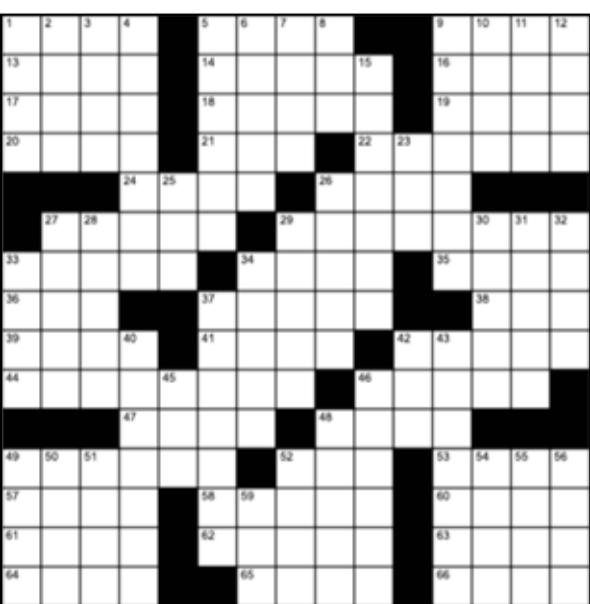
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	23	29	rain
Changchun	20	30	cloudy
Chengdu	25	31	overcast
Chongqing	32	41	fine
Fuzhou	27	39	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	36	fine
Guiyang	22	30	cloudy
Haikou	26	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	30	39	fine
Harbin	20	31	cloudy
Hefei	28	39	cloudy
Nanjing	29	39	fine
Shanghai	30	39	cloudy
Taipei	26	31	cloudy
Wuhan	30	36	fine
Hong Kong	26	29	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	15	24	rain
Frankfurt	16	29	overcast
Paris	20	33	overcast
London	20	31	cloudy
New York	23	33	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Ad word; 5- Sign over; 9- Church recess; 13- Burn the midnight oil, studying; 14- Rice-___; 16- Cricket equipment; 17- At the apex of; 18- Long lock of hair; 19- Apartment, e.g.; 20- Wall St. letters; 21- Refusals; 22- Westerns; 24- The back end of something; 26- Flutter; 27- Pry; 29- Mexican sandal; 33- Complete reversal; 34- Resting place; 35- Burrow; 36- Impresario Hurok; 37- Jibe; 38- Literary monogram; 39- Raines of film; 41- Greek temple; 42- Brass wind instrument; 44- Hold back; 46- Band's sample tapes; 47- Hawaiian city; 48- Type of school or cook; 49- Hat; 52- Possess, to Burns; 53- Beancurd; 57- Bumpkin; 58- Avowed; 60- Earth Day subj.; 61- Send forth; 62- Theme; 63- French 101 verb; 64- Being, to Brutus; 65- Desire; 66- Driver's license datum;

DOWN 1- Examine, search; 2- Bohemian; 3- Neighbor of Cambodia; 4- High ruler; 5- Doze; 6- Diamond flaw?; 7- Female rabbits; 8- Printing widths; 9- Boundaries; 10- Sheet of stamps; 11- Agitate; 12- Ballpark figs.; 15- Set apart; 23- Atmosphere; 25- Awfully long time; 26- Melts together; 27- Fur scarf; 28- Negates; 29- Wading bird; 30- Freight; 31- Small mountains; 32- Gaelic language of Ireland or Scotland; 33- Addict; 34- Mystery writer Marsh; 37- Shrink; 40- Jock; 42- Spelling contest; 43- Many; 45- Curved bone; 46- Soak; 48- Seine spot; 49- Corner; 50- Jamaican exports; 51- Large wading bird; 52- Arizona Native American; 54- Twice tetra-; 55- Configuration; 56- Peter Fonda title role; 59- Exclamation of surprise;



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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FOR RENT

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- MANHATTAN | 3 BEDS HKD17,500
- 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

STOCKS OPEN LOWER ON WALL STREET, LED BY DROPS IN TECHNOLOGY

U.S. futures are down with corporate earnings season kicking off this week amid rising anxiety over how companies are navigating soaring inflation, and news about the spread of a new coronavirus variant.

Also this week, the U.S. will release fresh data about rising costs for both companies and families with inflation hovering near four-decade highs.

Futures for the Dow Jones industrials fell 0.6% and futures for the S&P 500 slid 0.7% before yesterday's opening bell.

Shares are sinking in Europe at midday after most Asian markets also fell, with the exception of Japan's benchmark, which rallied after the ruling Liberal Democratic Party garnered a landslide parliamentary election victory.

The euro sagged closer to parity against the U.S. dollar, dipping nearly 1% to \$1.0091. Europe's shared currency is at its lowest level in 20 years against the U.S. dollar, hit by worries over possible recession and the surge in the greenback as the Federal Reserve raises interest rates to combat inflation.



The U.S. dollar rose to 137.15 Japanese yen from 136.10 yen.

Germany's DAX fell 1% as the shut-down of a major gas pipeline from Russia to Germany for annual maintenance brought concern Russia might not resume the flow of gas as scheduled.

In Paris, the CAC 40 declined 0.8%, while Britain's FTSE 100 lost 0.4%.

Wall Street had a sputtering fi-

nish last week, as global markets eyed Chinese economic indicators and maneuvers by central banks, including the U.S. Federal Reserve, to contain stubborn inflation.

On Friday, the S&P 500 dropped 0.1% and the Dow also fell 0.1%, while the Nasdaq rose 0.1%. The Russell 2000 index of small company stocks slipped less than 0.1%.

"A recession is not the market's base outlook, but until proven otherwise, investors will debate the depth of the growth hit, not the likelihood of recession; thus, good economic data is good news for stocks," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

China reports its April-June growth data on Friday, and an update on U.S. inflation is due

Wednesday. Investors also are watching for upcoming corporate earnings reports, which will give investors insight into how inflation is impacting businesses and consumers. Banks, airlines and health care companies start reporting midweek.

COVID-19 infections are also surging in some areas. The Asian gambling center of Macau will close all its casinos for a week starting yesterday and largely restrict people to their homes as it tries to stop a COVID-19 outbreak that has infected more than 1,400 people in the past three weeks.

The quickly changing coronavirus has spawned yet another super contagious omicron mutant that's worrying scientists as it gains ground in India and pops up in numerous other countries, including the United States, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and Canada.

Scientists say the variant - called BA.2.75 - may be able to spread rapidly and get around immunity from vaccines and previous infection.

This week, major airlines, banks and health companies will post quarterly earnings and the U.S. will post data on consumer and producer prices.

Asian shares were mostly lower yesterday, though Japan's benchmark Nikkei jumped 1.1% to 26,812.30. MDT/AP

AD

合夥人 PARTNERS:
官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha^o
山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues^o
馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata^o
趙魯 Zhao Lu^{*}
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AP PHOTO



TENNIS

Djokovic tops Kyrgios for 7th Wimbledon, 21st Slam trophy

HOWARD FENDRICH,
WIMBLEDON

NOVAK Djokovic waited. He waited for Nick Kyrgios to lose focus and lose his way. Waited to find the proper read on his foe's big serves. Waited until his own level rose to the occasion.

Djokovic is not bothered by a deficit — in a game, a set, a match. He does not mind problem-solving. And at Wimbledon, for quite some time now, he does not get defeated.

Djokovic used his steady brilliance to beat the ace-delivering, trick-shot-hitting, constantly chattering Kyrgios 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (3) on Sunday for a fourth consecutive championship at the All England Club, seventh overall there, and 21st from all Grand Slam tournaments.

"It's weird. I felt like he didn't do anything amazing today," said the unseeded Kyrgios, offering an assessment with which some might not concur, given that Djokovic accumulated 31 winners and merely eight unforced errors over the last two sets, while facing zero break points in that span.

"But he was just so composed. That's what I was just thinking to myself. In big moments, it just

felt like he was never rattled. I feel like that's his greatest strength: He just never looks rattled," said Kyrgios, about whom those words likely have not been uttered. "He just looks completely within himself the whole time. Didn't look like he was playing overaggressive, even though it felt like he was playing big."

Among men, only Roger Federer owns more Wimbledon titles than Djokovic, with eight, and only Rafael Nadal owns more major trophies, with 22.

"The more you win, it's logical the more confident, the more comfortable you feel out there every next time you step out on the court," said the top-seeded Djokovic, who was pleased to hear some spectators at Centre Court chanting his nickname, "No-le! No-le!" as he served out the final point of a tremendously well-played tiebreaker.

As of now, Djokovic will not be able to try to pull even with Nadal by winning the U.S. Open, which begins in late August: The 35-year-old Serbian can't enter the United States because he decided not to get any shots against COVID-19, the same reason Djokovic missed the Australian Open in January.

"I'm not vaccinated," Djokovic said Sunday, "and I'm not planning to get vaccinated."

Aside from his experience — 32 Grand Slam final appearances versus one for the unseeded Kyrgios — his skill and his clutch gene shined in the concluding tiebreaker, and all of those qualities were present for two particularly pivotal games that helped swing the match.

"Key moments," Djokovic called them.

They were games in which Djokovic steeled himself, and Kyrgios blinked. And games that Kyrgios would not let go as he began engaging in running monologues, shouting at himself or his entourage (which does not include a full-time coach), earning a warning for cursing, finding reason to disagree with the chair umpire he fist-bumped before the match, and chucking a water bottle.

With Djokovic serving for the second set at 5-3, Kyrgios got to love-40 — a trio of break points. But Kyrgios played a couple of casual returns, and Djokovic eventually held. When that set ended, Kyrgios waved dismissively toward his box, sat down and dropped his racket to the turf, then groused to no one in particular: "It was love-40! Can it get any bigger or what?! Is that big enough for you?!"

Djokovic noticed. "He knew on this stage, when

Nick starts to talk, he's going to be vulnerable," said Djokovic's coach, 2001 Wimbledon champion Goran Ivanisevic. "That happened."

In the third set, with Kyrgios serving at 4-all, 40-love, he again let a seemingly sealed game get away, with Djokovic breaking there.

"It was a huge momentum shift," Djokovic said, "because up to that point we were quite even."

Kyrgios was almost perfect in the first set, with 11 winners before he made a second unforced error. The 40th-ranked Kyrgios, a 27-year-old from Australia, never had been past the quarterfinals in 29 previous Grand Slam appearances — and the last time he made it even that far was 7 1/2 years ago.

His talent is unmistakable. But over the years, Kyrgios has drawn more notice for his preference for style over substance on court, his tempestuousness that has earned him ejections and suspensions and his taste for the nightlife.

During the past two weeks alone, Kyrgios racked up \$14,000 in fines — one for spitting at a heckling spectator after a first-round victory, another for cursing during a wildly contentious win against No. 4 seed Stefanos

Tsitsipas in the third round — and caught flack for wearing a red hat and sneakers before or after matches at a place where all-white clothing is mandated. Word also emerged that he is due in court next month in Australia to face an assault allegation.

On Sunday, Kyrgios tried shots between his legs, hit some with his back to the net, pounded serves at up to 136 mph and produced 30 aces. He used an underarm serve, then faked one later.

For all of the significant records and other factoids logged in the 560-page Wimbledon Compendium — including categories such as "ambidextrous players" or "runners-up who wore glasses in a final" — no mention is made of "underarm serves in a gentleman's final," but it seems safe to say that was a first.

Perhaps, in some ways, it would have been fitting for such a unique player to emerge as the champion at such a unique Wimbledon.

All players representing Russia or Belarus were barred by the All England Club because of the war in Ukraine; among those banned was No. 1-ranked Daniil Medvedev, the reigning U.S. Open champion. In response, the WTA and ATP tours took the unprecedented step of revoking all ranking points from Wimbledon (Djokovic, for example, earned zero points for his title and will slide to No. 7 on Monday).

A woman who was born in Russia but has represented Kazakhstan for four years, Elena Rybakina, won the women's trophy Saturday with a 3-6, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Ons Jabeur. There's more: Federer missed the tournament for the first time since the late 1990s, The No. 2 man in the rankings, Alexander Zverev, sat out injured. Three of the top 20 seeded men, including 2021 runner-up Matteo Berrettini, pulled out of Wimbledon after testing positive for COVID-19. And Nadal withdrew with a torn abdominal muscle before he was supposed to face Kyrgios in the semifinals.

On Sunday, it was Djokovic holding the trophy, as he has so often. He trailed in the final, just as he had in the quarterfinals (when he was two sets down) and the semifinals. Just as he had in last year's French Open and Wimbledon finals. Just as he had in the 2019 final at the All England Club, facing two championship points against Federer.

Each time, he waited for the opportunity to seize control. Each time, he won.

"So the run keeps going," Djokovic said after his unbeaten streak at Wimbledon reached 28 victories. "I feel very connected with this court and with this tournament, without a doubt." **MDT/AP**

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

MULTIPLE FACTORS TO BLAME FOR SRI LANKA'S WOES

Hundreds of thousands of angry protesters stormed the presidential palace in Colombo, capital of Sri Lanka, and broke into the prime minister's private residence and set it on fire on Saturday.

They are in a rage because of an unprecedented economic crisis that has caused shortages of food, fuel and medicines for ordinary people, and they are demanding that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa resign, blaming him and his family for what they see as incompetence and corruption.

Indeed, the pace at which the once-relatively rich country has failed economically is both surprising and saddening.

Some Western politicians with ulterior motives have tried to blame China for Sri Lanka's dire situation, claiming its extensive loans to the country have dragged it into a debt trap. However, China ranks only third among Sri Lanka's creditors after Japan and the Asian Development Bank and accounts for only 10 percent of its debt. Its loans have mainly served Sri Lanka's infrastructure and economic development.

A combination of many factors, both domestic and external, has driven the Sri Lankan economy from bad to worse. Terrorism was the first to blame. Tourism used to generate 10 percent of the country's GDP. Yet in 2019, bombings carried out by Islamic State-linked militants killed more than 250 people on Easter Sunday, bringing the country's tourism to a near stop.

Adding to the woes were the government's flawed policies.

In 2019, the new government of Rajapaksa launched the country's largest tax cuts in history, slashing value-added tax to 8 percent from 15 percent, among other tax reductions, in the hope of reviving the fragile economy. Yet the move severely reduced government revenue and prompted creditors to downgrade Sri Lanka's ratings, thus preventing the country from borrowing more money as its foreign reserves shrank.

This problem was compounded by the US abruptly raising interest rates and shrinking its balance sheet, which led to drastic changes in the international financial environment.

Moreover, in April 2021, Rajapaksa announced that the country would only allow organic farming, banning fertilizers. This led to a 20 percent drop in rice production, which drove the price of rice higher, making life more difficult for poor people.

The final straw was the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. That has pushed prices of food and oil even higher, given that Sri Lanka imports 45 percent of its wheat and more than half of its soybeans from the two countries, which are also key buyers of Sri Lanka tea and important sources of tourists. Inflation in Sri Lanka now stands around 40 percent and food prices were up nearly 60 percent in May, forcing Sri Lankans to skip meals and line up for hours to try to buy fuel.

China has been and will always be Sri Lanka's reliable friend and partner, ready to provide any assistance to the country in the best of its capacity.

It will continue to work with Sri Lanka to help the country overcome its current difficulties.

NEW CORONAVIRUS MUTANT RAISES CONCERNS IN INDIA AND BEYOND

THE BUZZ

The quickly changing coronavirus has spawned yet another super contagious omicron mutant that's worrying scientists as it gains ground in India and pops up in numerous other countries, including the United States.

Scientists say the variant – called BA.2.75 – may be able to spread rapidly and get around immunity from vaccines and previous infection. It's unclear whether it could cause more serious disease than other omicron variants, including the globally prominent BA.5.

Still, the fact that it has already been detected in many parts of

the world even with lower levels of viral surveillance "is an early indication it is spreading," said Shishi Luo, head of infectious diseases for Helix, a company that supplies viral sequencing information to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The latest mutant has been spotted in several distant states in India, and appears to be spreading faster than other variants there. It's also been detected in about 10 other countries, including Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and Canada. Two cases were recently identified on the West Coast of the U.S., and Helix identified a third U.S. case last week.



AP PHOTO
 People throng President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's official residence for the second day after it was stormed in Colombo, Sri Lanka, yesterday

SRI LANKA

POLITICAL CHAOS PERSISTS AS CRISIS TALKS GO ON

KRISHAN FRANCIS, COLOMBO

A weekend of political chaos in Sri Lanka stretched into yesterday, with opposition leaders yet to agree on replacements for embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his prime minister whose residences remain occupied by protesters angered over the country's economic collapse.

Crowds of demonstrators overran Rajapaksa's home, his seaside office and the official residence of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on Saturday and demanded they step down in the most dramatic day of the three-month crisis.

Corruption and mismanagement has left the island nation laden with debt, unable to pay for imports of food, fuel, medicine and other necessities, causing widespread shortages and despair among its 22 million people. The country is seeking help from neighboring India and China and from the International Monetary Fund.

Rajapaksa has said he will step down on Wednesday, according to the speaker of parliament. The protesters have vowed to stay until the resignations are official.

In a video statement yesterday, the first since the weekend protests, Wickremesinghe reiterated he will stay on until a new

government is in place because he wants to work within the constitution.

"A government has to function according to the law. I am here to protect the constitution and through it fulfill the people's demands," Wickremesinghe said. "What we need today is an all-party government and we will take steps to establish that."

The president hasn't been seen or heard publicly since Saturday and his location is unknown. But his office said Sunday that he ordered the immediate distribution of a cooking gas consignment to the public, suggesting that he was still at work.

Months of demonstrations have all but dismantled the Rajapaksa political dynasty, which has ruled Sri Lanka for most of the past two decades.

Wickremesinghe also explained the sequence of events that led to the burning of his private residence on Saturday. He said the protesters gathered around his house after a lawmaker, in what Wickremesinghe said was an inaccurate tweet, stated he had refused to resign at a meeting of parliamentary party leaders.

Police charged with batons and fired tear gas, he said, adding: "The last option was to shoot. We did not shoot but they came and burnt the house."

A group of nine Cabi-

net ministers said they will quit immediately to make way for an all-party government, outgoing Justice Minister Wijayadasa Rajapakshe said. Wickremesinghe's office said another group that met with him decided to stay on until a new government is formed.

Opposition party leaders have been in discussion to form an alternative unity government, an urgent requirement of a bankrupt nation to continue discussions with the IMF.

Lawmaker Udaya Gammanpila said the main opposition United People's Front and lawmakers who have defected Rajapaksa's ruling coalition have had discussions and agreed to work together. Main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and Dulas Alahapperuma, who was a minister under Rajapaksa, have been proposed to take over as president and prime minister and have been asked to decide on how to share the positions before a meeting with the parliamentary speaker yesterday.

"We can't be in an anarchical condition. We have to somehow reach a consensus today," Gammanpila said.

Opposition parties are also concerned over military leaders making statements about public security in the absence of a civil administration. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO
Germany A major gas pipeline from Russia to western Europe shut down for annual maintenance yesterday amid concern in Germany that Russia may not resume the flow of gas as scheduled. The Nord Stream 1 pipeline runs under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany and is the latter's main source of Russian gas. Gas is usually sent onward to other countries as well. It is scheduled to be out of action until July 21 for routine work that the operator says includes "testing of mechanical elements and automation systems." The operator's data showed the gas flow dropping as planned yesterday morning.



AP PHOTO
Spain A tense fifth bull run at Pamplona's San Fermin Festival left three people gored and three others with bruises yesterday, a Spanish Red Cross spokesman said. It was the first run with gorings in the festival so far this year. There are three more daily runs before it finishes Thursday. Red Cross worker José Aldaba told Spanish National Television that one man was gored on the street, while two others were pierced by a bull's horn inside the bullring at the end of the run.



AP PHOTO
Sports Former Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone will be charged with fraud by false representation following a government investigation into his overseas assets, British prosecutors said yesterday. Chief Crown Prosecutor Andrew Penhale said after reviewing evidence from the tax office, authorities have authorized a charge against Ecclestone over his failure to declare overseas assets worth more than 400 million pounds.