



PSYCHOLOGISTS LIST TACTICS THAT MAY HELP STABILIZE MENTAL CONDITIONS DURING PARTIAL LOCKDOWN

P2

COVID-19 OUTBREAK: 57 NEW CASES FOUND, TALLY RISES TO 1,583

P3

UKRAINE GRANTED EXTRA EU AID OF 1 BILLION EUROS

P8



AP PHOTO



Australia's foreign minister yesterday urged Pacific island neighbors to unite on their shared challenges of U.S.-China strategic competition, climate change and COVID-19, after the Micronesian state of Kiribati split from the 18-nation organization in a major blow to regional harmony. Foreign Minister Penny Wong (pictured) said Pacific leaders have talked with her about the challenges of climate change and Covid-19 — "which have fallen harder on this region than on many other parts of the world and, of course, strategic competition," Wong said.

AP PHOTO



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on China to comply with a 2016 arbitration ruling that invalidated Beijing's vast territorial claims in the South China Sea and warned that Washington is obligated to defend treaty ally Philippines if its forces, vessels or aircraft come under attack in the disputed waters. Blinken's statement, issued by the U.S. Embassy in Manila yesterday, was released on the sixth anniversary of the 2016 decision by an arbitration tribunal set up in The Hague under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea.

AP PHOTO



Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit Iran next week, the Kremlin said yesterday, a day after the U.S. warned that Tehran could provide Moscow with drones for its action in Ukraine. During a trip to Tehran next week, Putin will attend a trilateral meeting with the leaders of Iran and Turkey, the so-called Astana format of meetings for Syria-related talks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. More on p8

More on backpage

CLOSED-LOOP MAYHEM

Care facility workers under confinement call for a decent place to rest, slams IAS for lack of communication on concern P5



XINHUA

MANDATORY CONFINEMENT NINE PROSECUTED FOR BREACHING RULES

P3

LYNZY VALLES



NGOS CALL ON GOV'T TO RESPECT ANIMAL RIGHTS

P4

MENTAL HEALTH

PSYCHOLOGIST: FIVE TACTICS MAY HELP STABILIZE MENTAL CONDITIONS DURING LOCKDOWN

ANTHONY LAM

A psychologist in Taiwan has offered suggestions which may help Macau people to more easily endure this week with their mental health intact.

At Sunday's daily health press briefing, president Hon Wai of the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) was asked about the bureau's preparation for this week's lockdown.

He noted that his bureau alongside Health Bureau (SSM) and Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), has regularly "held seminars" on special or specific cases with mental complications and provided various follow-up avenues in the hope of preventing the re-occurrence of such problems.

"In this coming week, there will be an extended period of time that family members remain [together] in a confined space," he remarked. "Therefore, I recommend people to be mentally prepared and practice empathy."

In addition, he asked people to exercise greater care when interacting with those family members with whom they did not meet regularly. "The changes in [environmental factors] will very likely cause anxiety and stress," Hon admitted.

On the matter of support provided by the government, Hon concluded that support from family members and friends would be best.

In contrast to the intra-household support strategy that Hon mentioned, an article by Assistant Professor Yi-Wen Kung at the Department of Psychology of Fo Guang University in Taiwan listed five principles recommended by post-traumatic psychological specialists worldwide.

Colloquially referred to in Taiwan as "tranquility can bring hope", the five principles promote security, tranquility, ability, connectivity and positivity.

To achieve security, Kung suggests people maintain good health. For tranquility, she suggests that people regularly, but not excessively or repeatedly, be exposed to news about the disease and the infection levels within the community.

PRISCILLA DU PREEZ



As for ability, people should consider establishing a Covid-normal lifestyle, such as working or studying from home, as well as working out or engaging in a pastime at home. Kung remarked that this will help improve individuals sense of normalcy.

Moreover, technology can be used to foster connectivity. For example, people can engage in daily video calls with their friends or family members who do not live in the same household. Support can be offered through conversation.

Kung added that practicing these four principles will help settle mental conditions.

However, local-registered psychotherapist, Nadia Chan Hei-ka who is also a Britain-registered clinical psychologist and Pennsylvania-licensed professional counselor, emphasized that whenever a person shows symptoms of extreme unhappiness, depression, anxiety or self-harm, emergency rescue agencies must be notified immediately to safeguard the individual's life.

"If family members know of [mental disturbances in co-habiting family members], they should pay greater attention [to them]," Hon said. "Of course, if they don't know what is best to do, contact Caritas Macau's Lifeline Hotline. Our fellows will provide adequate help."

He added that IAS would not

suspend its outreach help effort during this coming week.

Adding to Hon's response, Chan emphasized the difficulty for laypeople to pinpoint or be aware of potential mental disturbances in themselves or the people around them.

"Symptoms might not be easy to notice by laypeople, as firstly, symptoms can be overlapping and interacting with each other and second, there can be misunderstanding about symptoms: for example, anxiety is internal while stress is external," the psychotherapist explained.

In addition, a study by Associate Professor Danny Horesh at the Department of Psychology, Bar-Ilan University and Department of Psychiatry, New York University School of Medicine, and Associate Professor Adam D. Brown at Department of Psychology, New School for Social Research, and Department of Psychiatry, New York University School of Medicine, questioned the efficacy of conventional or existing trauma-focused therapy because these methods may not be appropriate to the specific situation of Covid-19-imposed restrictions.

The two academics added that since "the peritraumatic [distress experienced immediately after a traumatic event] phase of the Covid-19 crisis is likely to be rather long, treating people for acute stress disorder and/or initial

posttraumatic symptoms, which have not yet crystallized into full-blown PTSD, may be of particular importance."

MENTAL BURDEN UPON THE ELDERLY

Also on Sunday, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced two separate cases of alleged suicide, involving two octogenarians.

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center pointed out on its website that social isolation is a risk factor in suicide amongst the elderly. The city's current week of de-facto isolation, with police officers patrolling around the city to "encourage" – as the government describes – people on the streets to return home unless they have one of the few valid reasons for doing so, could be considered a scenario which creates an absence of social connectedness, as was seen in lockdowns in other cities across the globe.

In fact, Kung pointed out that people whose sociality gets restricted due to disease prevention measures will face social isolations and restrictions.

Social connectedness is a protective factor in avoiding or lowering the risk of suicide amongst the elderly. Government officials at the daily health press briefing have referred to activities that senior citizens do on a regular

basis when they exemplify what they considered "survival activities." For example, they said that "playing chess in parks or leisure areas" would not be considered a type of survival activity.

Before this week, elderly residents were regularly seen having chats on benches in leisure areas, either by themselves or with their grandchildren.

The resource center has also pointed out that physical illness, disability and pain are conditions that are worthy of worry as they pose greater risks on the mental stability and health of elderly people.

Kung highlighted that four psychological reactions would arise if elderly citizens experience mental distress as a result of the social isolation: non-specific and uncontrolled fear, pervasive anxiety, frustration and boredom, and disabling loneliness.

After confinement, Kung pointed out that instances of poor mental health could linger. Citing a study helmed by Prof Gianluca Serafini at the Department of Neuroscience, San Martino Hospital, University of Genoa, Italy, Kung pointed out that confined people will show symptoms of mental disturbances, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), emotional fatigue, fury, insomnia and depression.

These changes in behavior, which can include hand washing with a vigilant intent and avoiding crowded locations, may occur for a lengthy period.

Kung also stressed that these symptoms of mental distress might also occur in healthcare or other care members. This could be caused by separation from families, fatigue, or loneliness, posing great psychological threats to these groups.

They may also develop signs of depression, anxiety, insomnia and feeling distressed.

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) encourages residents to be aware of their psychological and emotional state as well as that of their relatives and friends. In case of need, residents can call Caritas' Life Hope hotline (28525222) or IAS' counseling hotline (28261126).

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Nine prosecuted for breaching 'confinement' rules, another 810 warned

RENATO MARQUES

A total of nine people in Macau have been detained and referred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) to be investigated and charged with breaching the provisions of Article 30 of Law number 2/2004 on the Prevention, Control, and Treatment of Infectious Diseases, according to representatives of the police authorities at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

According to the representative of the Unitary Police Services (SPU), Cheong Kin Ian, the police forces filed for the prosecution of four new people from yesterday as of 3 p.m. in addition to five others from Monday.

Despite refusing to address the infractions committed by the nine suspects in detail, Cheong said

that four of the cases related to non-compliance with facemask mandates.

Additionally, the police forces issued 810 warnings in total in the period between midnight and 3 p.m. of July 12, noting that, in most cases, these warnings were issued to people for the "improper use of facemasks, public smoking, among others."

"These situations continue to happen and the authorities, should they catch the suspects red-handed, may immediately forward them to the MP and the courts for follow-up. They will be tried immediately following the ordinary procedures," he said.

"Regarding non-resident workers, if they breach the law, in addition to incurring criminal responsibility they also risk the cancellation of their blue cards," Cheong said, appealing to every-

one to abide by the law.

The representative of the Public Security Police Force (PSP), Lei Tak Fai, noted that the latest case (out of the nine previously mentioned) involves a 50-year-old man who was caught breaching the law at Lao Hon area around 3 p.m. yesterday.

According to previous reports from the PSP, the first four cases involved four men – two local residents, and another two non-resident workers from the mainland and Vietnam who were caught not wearing facemasks on the street while they engaged in physical activities such as jogging or cycling.

Lei remarked that it "is not the goal" of police to find and prosecute citizens, rather, it aims to ensure that people abide by the law and that society is protected. He noted that the over 800 cases in



which the officers opted to issue a mere warning were related to "not so serious offenses."

While the police will continue

to issue these warnings, "we will progressively be more rigorous with [...] law enforcement," he concluded.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

57 new cases found, tally rises to 1,583

RENATO MARQUES

THE discovery of 57 new positive cases on Monday brought the total number of Covid-19 cases to 1,583, the coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, announced during yesterday's press briefing of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

Of these, 24 are considered cases found in the community. However, Leong noted that only 18 were technically found in the community via mass testing and community testing measures. This is because six of the cases were found in people already under observation as a result of being close contacts of others known to be infected.

The same official also informed that 25 new people have been released from medical observation (10 previously confirmed cases and 15 asymptomatic cases).

Although the figure represents an effective increase when compared with the results for July 10, Leong explained that this happens because of the need to follow up on the results obtained during



the seventh round of citywide testing, which revealed that 17 batches of 10-in-1 samples tested positive. The final results of these tests were only obtained on the following day

and so were recorded on July 11.

She also noted that from those 17 cases, eight positive cases were found in the testing of the key groups:

three cases related to people working in the food and beverage sector, and another five on people working in the cleaning sector.

"We can verify that these measures [citywide mass testing and testing of key groups] are essential to identify all the positive cases within the community and to effectively interrupt the transmission chain," Leong said, adding that to achieve an eventual outcome of no cases in the community, "we must continue to test."

Noting the eighth round of citywide mass testing, which started yesterday, Leong said that until 3 p.m. 182,404 samples had been collected. Of these, 32,952 have already returned negative results. No group sample tested positive as of this time yesterday.

The eighth round of mass testing concludes today at 6 p.m.

88-YEAR-OLD WOMAN RECORDED AS THIRD DEATH OF COVID-INFECTED PATIENT

AN 88-year-old woman has passed away while under the care of the health authorities while infected with Covid-19 since July 6, deputy director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center, Dr. Lei Wai Seng has confirmed at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center press briefing.

According to Lei's report, the woman – who had contracted Covid-19 in an elderly home – had several chronic diseases, including a cardiac condition and diabetes, among other health issues.

Noting the attempt from the physicians from the Health Bureau to treat her with antiviral medicines, "she became unwell due to a severe [diabetic] episode and after discussion with her family members it was decided to not treat her more invasively. She was pronounced dead at around 1 p.m. yesterday," Lei said.

This is the third death of a patient infected with the virus, although in none of these cases was a direct correlation between the virus and the cause of death established.

GAMING

SANDS CHINA TAKES OUT USD1B LOAN FROM PARENT COMPANY AMID TURMOIL

LYNZY VALLES

SANDS China has entered into a loan agreement with its parent company, Las Vegas Sands (LVS), totaling USD1 billion and repayable on July 11, 2028.

In the first two years of the agreement, the local gaming operator can either pay cash interest at 5% annually or payment-in-kind interest at 6% per annum.

Only after these two years will the cash interest be payable.

LVS stated that the loan was provided in order to support the "working capital and general corporate purposes of the group."

In a statement, Sands China suggested that the loan agreement is indicative of the companies' confidence in the future growth potential of Macau's market, adding that the loan "further bolsters the company's balance sheet position and liquidity."

Last month, Fitch Ratings downgraded the Issuer Default Ratings (IDRs) of Las Vegas Sands Corp., Sands China Ltd., and Marina Bay Sands Pte. Ltd. to 'BB+' from 'BBB-'.

The downgrade reflects Fitch's reduced confidence in the recovery of Macau's gaming industry as a result of strict governmental Covid-19 policies, continued weak visitation, and Fitch's recently reduced economic forecast for China.

Fitch has revised down its Macau industry-wide assumptions, and "LVS' resultant leverage trajectory is no longer consistent with an investment-grade rating," the ratings agency stated.

NGOS CALL ON GOV'T TO RESPECT ANIMAL RIGHTS

STAFF REPORTER

SEVERAL non-government organizations opposed the measure published by the Macau government on July 11 prohibiting people from taking out their pets unless it is necessary.

Most pet owners have slammed the government on social media platforms after the government announced that taking pets out for a walk is "not essential."

"Usually when I go to the supermarket, I walk with my dog. Now, I only take my dog for a short walk when I throw out the garbage at night, but I am afraid of being seen by the police," a social media user claimed.

"The building where I live has turned to a red zone, and my dog has not defecated for three days," said another pet owner.

The Association of Synergy of Macau president Ron Lam criticized the government's "excessive application of the law, lack of common sense and empathy."

"Walking the dog is not closely related to pandemic prevention measures. As long as the pet owner complies with the law, it can be done safely," Lam expressed, calling on authorities to reflect on the added societal pressures caused by the new measure.

A statement published by Everyone Stray Dogs

Macau Volunteer Group stated that many opinions have been received from animal volunteer groups and pet owners who have said that their dogs have been experiencing both physical and mental health problems such as anxiety and food refusal throughout the measure, and that the measure is in violation of the Animal Protection Law.

"Because [animals' physiological habits] are formed over a long time, it is difficult to change habits in a short period time even through training by dog trainers," the association stated.

Moreover, the group hoped that the government would consider the physiological needs of animals and refer to the practices of neighboring areas.

"Dogs who cannot leave home to [do their business] during the partial lockdown will endure physical burdens, especially in dogs with urinary system problems," said Macao Canine Training Association.

"It's a serious problem when a dog has not urinated or defecated for a long time, and can even be life-threatening," said Abandoned Animals Protect Association of Macau (AAPAM).

The AAPAM has expressed hopes that the government will protect the right of animals and called on the government to reconsider allowing pet owners and

their pets to leave the house for a short walk for five to 10 minutes within a specific distance.

Furthermore, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has stated that during the partial lockdown, residents whose conditions at home may affect their dog's health may use the temporary care services of the Municipal Kennel. The period of the service starts from today 3 p.m. to July 18.

IAM has stated that in line with the pandemic prevention law, pets can only be taken out of the house when being taken to a veterinary clinic – a statement that was widely criticized on social media.



IAM OFFERS 'DOG CARE' SERVICE TO NEEDY OWNERS

THE Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has stated that it will offer "dog care" services from 3 p.m. today for all pet owners who are facing challenges as a result of the restrictions imposed by the confinement state currently in force until at least July 18.

The information was announced by the coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, during yesterday's press briefing of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center on behalf of the bureau.

According to Leong, dog owners who are unable to handle their pets' needs and have concerns regarding their health can request the help of the IAM. The IAM will pick the dogs up at their homes and take them to the Municipal Kennel during this period.

Interested parties should contact the IAM via the hotline on 2833 7676 to book the service or request more information.

Use of the service will incur a daily fee between

130 and 150 patacas per day, according to the size of the animal, Leong explained.

Leong also disclosed that the IAM is currently caring for between 45 and 50 pets from owners undergoing isolation or under medical observation in quarantine and who do not have friends or family available to take care of their pets during that time.

Initially, the IAM only provided the pet care service to those in isolation. It has since decided to expand the scope of the service to the general public in response to the many complaints received from pet owners. In particular, dog owners have criticized the difficulties imposed by the confinement rules preventing them from walking their dogs until midnight of July 18.

As the authorities have informed on several occasions, this activity is not considered urgent and essential so is grounds for criminal prosecution as a breach of the Prevention, Control, and Treatment of Infectious Diseases law provisions. **RM**

Wynn Macau names Frederic Jean-Luc Luvisutto as new COO

LYNZY VALLES

WYNN Macau has named current Wynn Palace Chief Operating Officer (COO) Frederic Jean-Luc Luvisutto as the new COO for the local subsidiary and Wynn Resorts.

The appointment was effective July 7, with Linda Chen stepping down from the COO position to helm the two local properties in 2023.

The change in management comes amid the turmoil affecting the casino sector, which is expected to linger until at least the end

of this year's third quarter due to the economic fallout caused by the pandemic.

Gaming analysts have forecasted that the gaming operator has the liquidity to be sustained for at least another 1.5 to 2 years.

In a filing, Wynn Macau CEO Craig Billings stated, "Frederic Luvisutto has been a standard bearer of the Wynn brand for many years. After opening Wynn Palace in 2016, he worked diligently to lead the operations team to the current standard of Five Star service."

The promoted veteran

joined Wynn Palace as COO in January 2014 and was responsible for running the company's operations and gaming.

In his new positions, Luvisutto is slated to work closely with Chen and Billings and will oversee operations at Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace.

"His promotion to Chief Operating Officer of Wynn Macau, Limited represents a significant step in establishing the team that will lead our company in the next phase of Macau's development. [...] Wynn Macau's brightest days lie

ahead and I look forward to working closely with Linda Chen and Frederic in the years to come," Billings added.

This is the third announcement in a week that the company has made regarding changes in its upper management.

Late last week, it was disclosed that casino lifer, Ciarán Carruthers, will step down at Wynn Macau Ltd., an announcement that came a day after the operator revealed the intended departure of current president Ian Michael Coughlan next year.



ANTHONY LAM

CARE facility workers under confinement do not oppose controlling the spread of SARS-CoV-2 but are calling for a decent place to rest after work, the Macao Social Workers' Union (MSWU) has emphasized.

An online press conference was held yesterday afternoon so that MSWU could address the matter.

According to Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), about 1,800 workers in 36 care facilities across the city are under lockdown. Since June 24, they have been put under confinement within their workplaces, meaning that they have been working, sleeping and living every day within their workplaces.

Officially referred to by the government as a "closed-loop management" system, the de-facto confinement period was originally set to last for only 14 days, according to MSWU and some social workers.

However, many of them have not left their workplaces since the start of the confinement period. Further, the decision to instigate the confinement period was made only hours before June 24, leaving little time for those already working to prepare.

For example, a social worker who spoke at the press conference and asked to be referred to as Miss C, recalled that her colleagues, who were on the shift late on June 23, resorted to calling other colleagues to seek assistance in obtaining personal amenities.

"They could not even get underwear [to change into] in the days ahead," Miss C said. "There was literally no physical or mental preparation."

Another social worker, who re-

Social Workers' Union: We're poorly treated



ferred to herself as KZ, echoed the comments, recapping the same situation in her workplace.

The union emphasized that neither it, nor social workers, were trying to push for special treatment, but were questioning whether they would be permitted to follow the practices currently enacted in some parts of the medical field.

Some medical staff members may leave their workplaces to stay at proper rest facilities by transport arranged by Health Bureau.

CONFUSION SETS IN AT FACILITIES

In addition, KZ said that she received a set of guidelines issued by IAS on the night she entered

confinement. The document listed a phone number, which IAS recommended workers under confinement call for assistance, support or clarification on confinement or any other time during the period.

"But I didn't get any help after calling," KZ said.

Because the confinement period was only set to last 14 days, at least according to the government's initial plan, social workers only prepared sufficient resources and amenities for this length of stay.

Bringing a large amount of luggage was neither practical nor recommended amid the "abrupt decision," which was how KZ and Miss C described the confi-

nement.

"We tried to ask our families to help us get more amenities, but we were told it wasn't allowed," KZ said. "Was the decision well-made?"

Moreover, as the order came so suddenly, KZ and her colleagues did not have a proper mattress to sleep on. "We had to sleep on carton paper in our rooms," she said. "IAS had not prepared anything."

The union added that some members had reported sleeping under their desks because of space or other challenges.

The confinement measure was, however, planned three months ago, when the government announced its Contingencies for

Mass Outbreaks in Macau.

Although mattresses were provided as the confinement period progressed, they were described as being poorly maintained or even dirty. "Some colleagues started developing skin problems or allergies," KZ added.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), "[in] a vicious cycle, stress, depression and other kinds of psychological problems can exacerbate [...] skin problems."

In addition, "[the] common dermatological issues that have been documented to be made worse by stress include acne, rosacea, psoriasis, itching, eczema, pain and hives, just to name a few," said Rick Fried, American MD and PhD.

With that said, the skin problems reportedly experienced by workers under confinement may not have solely developed due to physical reasons, but also as a result of mental and emotional stress.

"Every day, during [our] colleagues' sleep hours, we could hear them weeping," KZ said. "Some requested sleeping pills from medical teams so that they could catch some sleep."

Meanwhile, facility residents are reported to be developing signs of anxiety, distress and anger. "They have questioned us as to why their families could not visit them," KZ recalled, adding that facility residents wonder how the government would implement such "brutal policies."

They feared, in conclusion, amid this challenging environment, that service quality would be at risk because service providers did not have the physical and mental stability to care for their residents.

Social worker group slams IAS for lack of communication

ANTHONY LAM

THE Macao Social Workers' Union criticized the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) yesterday for its lack of communication with the group about the issue of worker confinement.

Yesterday, the group held an online press conference to discuss the matter.

Coincidentally, 11 minutes before the commencement of the press conference, IAS issued a press release, stating that only a handful of care facility staff who are currently under confinement in their workplaces desired alternative measures.

It stated that out of the 1,800 such workers, 30% are local and the other 70% are non-local. Of the local

workers, "some wanted point-to-point (P2P) closed-loop arrangements or to take turns for closed-loop, [arrangements]" the bureau noted.

'Closed-loop' is the official term the government used to refer to a system in which workers are not permitted to go home after work. They are either accommodated in hotels, as some medical staff are currently doing, or sleep at their workplaces, like many care facility workers.

Despite the small number of requests, the IAS said it would try to accommodate workers who preferred a closed-loop arrangement.

The social worker union, meanwhile, said at the press conference that they had no idea about the press

release and had not been consulted prior to its release.

In addition, the IAS said that management at facilities had been notified that the IAS will accommodate workers who seek alternative arrangements, but received feedback that most workers consider their facilities' security more important than their own well-being.

Despite this, the union was unconvinced, in light of the requests it had received.

For example, it pointed out that an IAS guideline issued to all care facilities was not accessible to frontline workers to the union's knowledge, let alone the public. A crucial provision that allows workers already



under confinement to change their minds, according to the union, was not clearly put forward to frontline staff.

However, "IAS is proac-

tively following-up on subsidies for facility workers currently under confinement," the bureau noted. No information has been announced yet regarding

how much will be distributed and the way in which this will occur, including the strategy to ensure the money will benefit workers directly.

HONG KONG

JOHN LEE DEFENDS HEALTH CODE PLANS TO COMBAT COVID

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

HONG Kong leader John Lee yesterday defended the city's plans to implement health codes that would more accurately restrict the movements of inbound travelers and those infected with Covid-19, dismissing concerns that the system could be used as a political or social control tool.

Lee, who spoke at a regular news conference yesterday, said that the health code plan is part of the city's objective to adopt "precise strategies to minimize the scope of restrictions."

"We are a law-abiding place, the government will of course abide by the law," he said. "Any measures meant for tackling the epidemic will not be used for other purposes, it is not going to happen."

He was speaking a day after the city's health chief unveiled plans to implement a health code system in Hong Kong, where those who are infected with COVID-19 would receive a red code, while those under hotel quarantine would receive a yellow code. Those who receive such codes will have their movements restricted.

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 spiked its cumulative



numbers to over a million infections and over 9,000 dead.

Hong Kong more than 2,700 cases yesterday. The city has on average logged over a thousand infections daily since mid-June.

The planned health code system has sparked concerns over privacy and social control after Chinese media reported that mainland Chinese authorities used its health code system to prevent residents from attending a planned protest at a bank in the

province of Henan.

Lee said that the health code system is a way of "early identification" of possible infections while affecting the least number of people.

"We aim to allow most people to get on with their lives with a minimum amount of restrictions," said Lee, adding that only those infected with COVID-19 and inbound travelers will be restricted by the health codes.

Despite Lee's reassurances

about the health code system, some Hong Kong residents remain wary about it.

"This is a massive privacy issue, it's like placing a target on the back of people who receive red or yellow codes," said Wong Wing-tang, 33-year-old Hong Kong resident. "Here, there is still the attitude where people treat those with COVID-19 as outcasts."

Wong said that the system did not seem to be particularly comprehensive, especially if those

who are infected with COVID-19 choose not to self-report their symptoms.

"We've had these restrictions for two to three years, but nothing has improved," she said.

Lee, who became the city's leader on July 1, has been vocal about Hong Kong taking an intolerant approach to the coronavirus, like China's "zero-COVID" policy. The city remains one of the few places, together with mainland China, to maintain restrictions such as a mandatory quarantine period as much of the world has opened up.

"In the long run, I think we have to be realistic about what kinds of risks we may be facing," Lee said.

But some experts say that the health code system has only a very limited impact on preventing the spread of the omicron variants that are driving outbreaks in the rest of the world.

"Look at the objective facts, in mainland China and Macau, they have had the health code system running for quite some time and yet we are seeing the importation of various variants into different cities," said Dr. Leung Chi-chiu, a respiratory specialist. "COVID-19 is not something that we can prevent using a health code and that is the objective reality."

He said that authorities should work on boosting vaccination rates among high-risk groups such as the elderly and the very young, and that if the city wants to open up to the rest of the world while keeping outbreaks in check, it has to first start by relaxing social distancing restrictions to build up immunity among its residents.

MDT/AP

China bank customers to get deposits back after protests

HUIZHONG WU, TAIPEI

FINANCIAL regulators in central China's Henan and Anhui provinces have promised to give some bank customers some of their deposits back after a protest over their frozen accounts Sunday turned violent.

In statements issued late Monday, officials said customers with deposits of 50,000 yuan (about \$7,400) or less would be reimbursed. They said others with larger bank balances would get their money back at a later, unspecified date.

The bank protests drew wide attention because angry depositors who tried to go to Zhengzhou in Henan to try to get their money back from the six financially troubled rural banks were stopped from traveling by a health app on their cell-phones. On Sunday, they



staged their largest protest yet, which police and plainclothes security broke up with force.

The protesters are among thousands of customers who opened accounts at the banks in Henan and neighboring Anhui province that offered relatively high interest rates. They

later found they could not make withdrawals after media reports that the head of the banks' parent company was wanted for financial crimes.

The announcement by regulators was received with skepticism by customers who have been organizing protests online and

offline since April to try to get their money back.

"This does not actually solve the problem," said Xu Zhihao, a bank customer who didn't take part in the protest Sunday.

The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, guarantees deposits of customers up to 500,000

yuan (\$74,000), but that won't be enough to cover some peoples' losses.

One protester, who gave only her last name, Ding, said she and her mother had 800,000 yuan (\$119,000) in savings deposits at multiple banks.

"They made this announcement because we put our lives on the line. This less than 50,000 yuan isn't what we are owed. It's more a payment to keep social stability," said Ding, who declined to give her full name out of fear of reprisal.

She said and her husband were hit by plainclothes security staff during a protest Sunday, when several people were injured.

Multiple protesters told the AP that some people were hospitalized after being hurt when police and plainclothes security officers used force to disperse

the protesters, though most of the injuries were scrapes or cuts.

The bank customers started their accounts online through financial platforms such as JD Digits, which is owned by e-commerce giant JD.com, drawn by offers of higher interest rates, such as five-year fixed deposit accounts paying an interest rate of just over 4%.

When they realized they couldn't withdraw their money, they tried to contact the banks, the local Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission and the central bank.

When that failed, they set out to protest at the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission's provincial headquarters in Henan's capital, Zhengzhou. Sunday's protest was the largest so far, drawing hundreds of people. MDT/AP

Japanese say final goodbye to assassinated former leader Abe

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

JAPANESE bid their final goodbye to former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday as a family funeral was held at a temple days after his assassination shocked the nation.

Abe, the country's longest-serving prime minister, remained influential even after stepping down two years ago for health reasons. He was gunned down Friday during a campaign speech in the western city of Nara.

Hundreds of people, some in formal dark suits, filled sidewalks outside Zojoji temple in downtown Tokyo to bid farewell to Abe, whose nationalistic views drove the governing party's conservative policies.

Mourners took photos and some called out "Abe san!" as a motorcade with the hearse carrying his body accompanied by his widow, Akie Abe, slowly drove by the packed crowd.

About 1,000 people, including her, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and senior party leaders as well as foreign officials, attended the funeral at the temple.

At the ceremony, Akie Abe said her husband's death still sees unreal. "I believe there were many things he left unfinished as a politician. But he had planted many seeds and I'm sure they will sprout," she was quoted by Japan's NHK television.

Abe's long-time ally and mentor, Finance Minister Taro Aso, said the two former prime mi-



Akie Abe, wife of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, sitting at right, is seen in the hearse carrying Abe's body as it leaves Zojoji temple after his funeral in Tokyo, yesterday

nisters were "bonded together as they thought about Japan's national interest together."

Aso described Abe as "the most talented politician in postwar Japan who raised Japan's international profile."

Aso, 81, said he was supposed to be the one to ask Abe to make a condolence speech for him.

The hearse traveled through Tokyo's main political district, Nagata-cho, where Abe spent more than three decades after being first elected to parliament in 1991. It then drove slowly by the governing party headquarters, where senior lawmakers in dark

suits stood outside and prayed, before heading to the prime minister's office, where Abe served a total of nearly a decade.

Kishida and Cabinet members pressed their hands before their chests as they prayed and bowed toward the hearse heading to a crematorium.

On Sunday, two days after Abe's killing, his Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner won a landslide victory in elections for the upper house, the less powerful of parliament's two chambers.

That could allow Kishida to govern uninterrupted until a sche-

duled election in 2025. But Abe's death also opens up a period of uncertainly for his party. Experts say a power struggle within Abe's party faction is certain and could affect Kishida's grip on power.

Kishida has stressed the importance of party unity after Abe's death.

Abe's assassination has shaken Japan, one of the world's safest nations with some of the strictest gun laws.

The suspect, Tetsuya Yamagami, was arrested on the spot Friday and is being held at a local prosecutors' office for further investigation. They can detain him

for up to three weeks while deciding whether to formally press charges.

Police said Yamagami cited a rumored link between Abe and an organization the suspect hated as the motive for the killing. Media reports said the organization was the Unification Church and that Yamagami disliked it because donations by his mother to the religious group had bankrupted his family.

The head of the Japanese branch of the South Korean-based church, known for its anti-communist stance and mass weddings, confirmed on Monday that the mother was a member. He said Abe was not, but may have spoken at groups affiliated with the church.

Yesterday, public security chief Satoshi Ninoyu said he has instructed the National Police Agency to investigate security protocols for political and business leaders.

Abe, the son of an earlier prime minister, became Japan's youngest premier in 2006 at age 52. He left after a year in office due to health reasons but returned to power in 2012.

He vowed to revitalize the nation and lift its economy out of its deflationary doldrums with his "Abenomics" formula, which combines fiscal stimulus, monetary easing and structural reforms.

His long-cherished goals, shared by other ultraconservatives, were to revise Japan's pacifist constitution drafted by the United States after World War II and transform Japan's Self Defense Force into a full-fledged military.

Abe, who was 67, left office in 2020, citing a recurrence of the ulcerative colitis he'd had since he was a teenager. MDT/AP

China protests Taiwan paying respects at Abe's memorial

CHINA has filed a formal protest with Japan over the presence of the Taiwanese vice president at a memorial for assassinated former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

China claims Taiwan as a breakaway province to be reunited by force if necessary and objects to any expression of its independent political identity.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin yesterday said Taiwanese authorities had "latched onto the opportunity for political manipulation," and that Beijing has "made stern complaints with Japan

in Beijing and Tokyo and made clear its position."

"Its political scheme can never succeed," Wang said at a daily briefing.

Taiwan's vice-leader Lai Ching-te on Monday paid his respects at Abe's Tokyo residence. Lai was later photographed leaving the Zojoji temple in downtown Tokyo where Abe's funeral was held.

Lai is the most senior Taiwanese official to visit Japan since Tokyo severed formal diplomatic relations with Taipei in 1972 in deference to Beijing.

Abe was known as a staunch supporter of Taiwan, a Japanese co-

lony for 50 years where public sentiment strongly favors Tokyo.

China and Taiwan split amid civil war in 1949.

In deference to China, Taiwan, with its 23 million people and high-tech economy, has been shunned by the United Nations and can only participate in global sporting events as "Chinese Taipei."

In 2021, after resigning as prime minister, Abe angered Beijing with a speech in which he issued strong support for Taiwan and said that "military adventure would lead to economic suicide." MDT/AP



Lai Ching-te, center, leaves Zojoji temple after the funeral of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo, yesterday



Czech Republic's Finance Minister Zbynek Stanjura, right, speaks with Ireland's Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe, second right, during a meeting of EU finance ministers in Brussels, yesterday

PUTIN'S WAR

Ukraine granted extra EU aid of 1 billion euros

EUROPEAN Union nations yesterday approved fresh aid for Ukraine as the country faces growing economic damage from Russia's invasion.

Finance ministers from the 27-nation EU gave the go-ahead yesterday to 1 billion euros (\$1 billion) in loans to the Ukrainian government.

The sum brings to 2.2

billion euros the total amount of EU macro-financial assistance to Kyiv this year. An initial 1.2 billion-euro EU loan package got the green light from the bloc's finance chiefs days before Russia's full-scale Feb. 24 attack.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, in mid-May proposed extra assistance of up to 9 billion euros to Ukraine. The plan-

ned 1 billion-euro payout is part of this initiative, which comes as Russia makes advances in eastern Ukraine and casualties mount on both sides.

"This will give Ukraine the necessary funds to cover urgent needs and ensure the operation of critical infrastructure," said Zbynek Stanjura, finance minister of the Czech Republic, which cur-

rently holds the EU's rotating presidency, in a statement.

Ukraine said last week that its post-war reconstruction would cost \$750 billion. Meanwhile, the government in Kyiv is estimated to need around 5 billion euros a month to keep the economy afloat.

Group of Seven countries, including the United States, have pledged to help Ukraine meet its short-term financing requirements in addition to providing military aid to Kyiv and imposing wide-ranging economic sanctions against Russia.

The five-month-old war is having worldwide economic and social reverberations, ranging from possible food shortages in Africa to energy-supply disruptions in the EU. These in turn are raising the risk of a global recession.

The EU tomorrow is expected to lower its forecast of bloc-wide economic growth in 2022 for the third time this year.

In May, the European Commission projected that EU gross domestic product would expand 2.7% in 2022, downgrading a forecast made in February of 4% growth. The February outlook was itself weaker than a November projection of 4.3% EU GDP growth this year.

Over the past two months, Russia has cut off or reduced natural gas deliveries to more than 10 EU countries and inflation in Europe has continued to surge. In June, inflation in the 19 countries that share the euro currency reached a record 8.6%. **MDT/AP**

Putin set to visit Iran next week

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,
MOSCOW

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin will visit Iran next week, the Kremlin said yesterday, a day after the U.S. warned that Tehran could provide Moscow with drones for its action in Ukraine.

During a trip to Tehran next Tuesday, Putin will attend a trilateral meeting with the leaders of Iran and Turkey, the so-called Astana format of meetings for Syria-related talks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Putin's visit to Iran will follow U.S. President Joe Biden's trip to Israel and Saudi Arabia this week, where Iran's nuclear program and malign activities in the region will be a key subject of discussion.



Peskov told reporters that on the visit to Tehran, Putin will also have a separate meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In March, Erdogan helped mediate talks between Rus-

sian and Ukrainian representatives in Istanbul, Turkey. Peskov said there was no discussion about a new round of such negotiations.

The White House said Monday that it believes that

Russia is turning to Iran to provide it with "hundreds" of drones, including those capable of carrying weapons, for use in Ukraine.

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said it was unclear whether Iran had already provided any of the vehicles to Russia, but said the U.S. has "information" that indicates Iran is preparing to train Russian forces to use them as soon as this month.

"Our information indicates that the Iranian government is preparing to provide Russia with up to several hundred UAVs, including weapons-capable UAVs on an expedited timeline," Sullivan told reporters Monday, referring to drones by the acronym for unmanned aerial vehicles.

Iranian Foreign Minister spokesman Nasser Kanaani did not deny the U.S. claim in comments yesterday. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1985 LIVE AID MAKES MILLIONS FOR AFRICA



The Live Aid concert for the starving in Africa has raised triple the £10m expected.

And as the London event draws to a close at Wembley Stadium, Britain had contributed £1,100,000 to the global total of £30m.

Described as the Woodstock of the eighties, the world's biggest rock festival was organised by Boomtown Rats singer Bob Geldof to raise money for famine relief in Africa.

Wembley was packed with a crowd of 72,000, and TV pictures, co-ordinated at BBC Television Centre, have been beamed to over 1.5 bn people in 160 countries in the biggest broadcast ever known.

The transatlantic concert began in London's midday sunshine with a fanfare for Prince Charles and Princess Diana and Status Quo performing Rocking All over the World.

Stars were flown in by helicopter into the arena in a line-up that included David Bowie, Wham and royal favourites Dire Straits.

Frequent appeals by Bob Geldof reminded viewers of the motive for the occasion: "Don't go to the pub tonight. Please stay in and give us your money. There are people dying now."

He himself took the call from the ruling family in Dubai who made the biggest single donation of £1m.

Across the UK eight appeal centres were set up with 200 phone lines to handle - mainly credit card - donations of up to £2,000.

In the US 22,000 pledges were received within five minutes of the Beach Boys taking to the stage in the simultaneous concert at JFK Stadium, Philadelphia.

The 16-hour music marathon is being completed there tonight with acts including Bob Dylan, Duran Duran and Paul Simon.

Nine months after the droughts, disease and famine in north eastern Africa were brought to the media's attention the UN has warned that 160m people are still affected.

Governments have begun a global relief operation but there are still problems of distribution in the worst hit areas - mainly Sudan and Ethiopia.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

After seeing BBC news reports of the African famine Bob Geldof and Midge Ure from Ultravox wrote the song Do They Know It's Christmas to raise money for the crisis. Mr Geldof went on a crusade to attract other stars to the cause.

Performing under the name Band Aid, they released the song on 7 December 1984. It was the fastest selling single ever and raised £8m. Live Aid eventually raised £40m. Half of the money was spent on food and half on long-term development.

Bob Geldof was given an honorary knighthood in 1986.

On 2 July 2005 Bob Geldof organised Live 8 - a series of rock concerts around the world to raise awareness about global poverty and put pressure on the leaders of the G8 nations to tackle the problem.

Six days later the G8 summit at Gleneagles in Perthshire, Scotland, agreed a \$50bn aid package for Africa.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Arguments with employers or colleagues will be to your detriment. If you take on too much of a financial burden you may make yourself ill. Your stubborn nature might backfire.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You will need to take a look at the renovations that are necessary and try to find the cheapest way to get things done. You will have difficulties spreading yourself between your work and your home.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Don't allow your lover to take advantage of your good nature. Your accomplishments could exceed your expectations if you mix a little business with pleasure.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Try not to hesitate; act on your initial instincts. Tie up your personal papers or push to have legal settlements completed. Unexpected romantic connections can be made.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Your ability to put things together will be appreciated by your comrades. Enjoy the company of relatives today. Don't blow situations out of proportion.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Don't upset elders in your family who don't understand your present situation. Look into ways that you can make extra cash. Travel will promote new romantic connections.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You don't like confrontations at the best of times; however, you may find them difficult to avoid. You can get a lot done if you get your hands on the right equipment.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Your tendency to take on too much will end in fatigue. Sudden changes of heart may cause disruptions in your domestic scene. Your talent will be recognized.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Ferret out information that will hold them responsible. Your creative ideas must be put to good use. Concentrate on your job.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Extravagance and overindulgence are not a cure if you're feeling sorry for yourself. Confusion regarding other people's money and joint ventures will come to a head. Do not sign your life away.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You won't impress anyone by being overly generous. Restrictions may be difficult for you to live with. Be prepared to overcome frustrations and obstacles at work.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
If you're preoccupied, be careful while operating a vehicle or any kind of equipment or machinery. A little volleyball or other outdoor sports should be on your agenda. Don't deny yourself today.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	22	34	cloudy
Changchun	21	29	rain
Chengdu	24	31	showers
Chongqing	32	40	cloudy
Fuzhou	26	39	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	35	thunderstorms
Guiyang	22	30	cloudy
Haikou	26	31	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	29	39	cloudy
Harbin	22	29	cloudy
Hefei	28	39	cloudy
Nanjing	30	39	fine
Shanghai	30	40	overcast
Taipei	26	31	overcast
Wuhan	29	36	fine
Hong Kong	29	32	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	15	25	overcast
Frankfurt	18	33	overcast
Paris	20	37	overcast
London	16	28	overcast
New York	23	33	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Jewish month; 5- Shrimp; 10- Effortlessness; 14- Olympic event; 15- Aquarium buildup; 16- I smell ___; 17- Field of expertise; 18- Minimum; 19- Laugh loudly; 20- Speechless; 22- Cursed; 23- Jolts; 24- ___ Brith; 26- Arrogant; 29- Indolent; 33- Have a feeling about; 34- Piece of music written for a solo instrument; 35- Aussie hopper; 36- Warmth; 37- Capture; 38- Composed; 39- ___ see it...; 40- High up; 41- Bandleader Shaw; 42- Lycanthrope; 44- Like marshes; 45- Intro to physics; 46- Draft classification; 48- Wined and dined; 51- Freezing rain squall; 55- Forsaken; 56- Watering holes; 58- As far as; 59- The wife of Geraint in Arthurian lore; 60- Rare delight; 61- Sorry sort; 62- Serpents; 63- Unfolds; 64- "___ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto);

DOWN 1- There oughta be ___; 2- Hard, in Havana; 3- Antiquing agent; 4- Readapt; 5- More wan; 6- Like non-oyster months; 7- Turkish titles; 8- Used to be; 9- Open mesh fabric; 10- Nocturnal insect; 11- Buck follower; 12- Coal-rich region; 13- French 101 verb; 21- Put aboard; 22- Saltimbocca seasoning; 24- Utter impulsively; 25- Unclothed; 26- Fiddlesticks; 27- Actress Witherspoon; 28- Broadcasting; 29- Employees; 30- Angry; 31- Like a rock; 32- Cozy; 34- ___ Gay; 37- Token taker; 38- Animal; 40- Quite impressed; 41- Ancient Athens's Temple of ___; 43- Edits; 46- Body of salt water; 47- Bird homes; 48- Type of market; 49- Seemingly forever; 50- Journey; 51- Uh-huh; 52- Literary work; 53- Hwys.; 54- Additional; 56- Oklahoma First Nation; 57- Dadaist Jean;

Yesterday's solution

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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BUY

RENT

FOR RENT

- MANHATTAN | 4 BEDS HKD18,800
- 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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LAWSUIT

LOOMING MUSK-TWITTER LEGAL BATTLE HAMMERS COMPANY SHARES

SHARES of Twitter slid more than 11% in the first day of trading after billionaire Elon Musk said that he was abandoning his \$44 billion bid for the company and the social media platform vowed to challenge Musk in court to uphold the agreement.

AP PHOTO



Twitter is now preparing to sue Musk in Delaware where the company is incorporated. While the outcome is uncertain, both sides are preparing for a long court battle.

Musk alleged Friday that Twitter has failed to provide enough information about the number of fake accounts on its service. Twitter responded in a weekend letter disclosed Monday that his "purported termination is invalid and wrongful" and that the company has continued to provide the information he "reasonably requested."

Twitter said last month that it was making available to Musk a "fire hose" of raw data on hundreds of millions of daily tweets.

The company has said for years in regulatory filings that it believes about 5% of the accounts on the

platform are fake. But on Monday Musk continued to taunt the company, using Twitter, over what he has described as a lack of data. In addition, Musk is also alleging that Twitter broke the acquisition agreement when it fired two top managers and laid off a third of its talent-acquisition team.

Musk agreed to a \$1 billion breakup fee as part of the buyout agreement, although it appears Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal and

the company are settling in for a legal fight to force the sale.

"For Twitter this fiasco is a nightmare scenario," Wedbush analyst Dan Ives, who follows the company, wrote Monday. He said the result would be "an Everest-like uphill climb for Parag & Co." given concerns over employee morale and retention, advertiser concerns and other challenges.

The sell-off in Twitter shares pushed the share price below

\$34, far from the \$54.20 that Musk agreed to pay for the company. That suggests Wall Street has very serious doubts that the deal will go forward.

Many experts in the legal and business sectors believe Twitter likely has a stronger case.

Morningstar analyst Ali Mogharabi noted that Twitter has described its estimate of fake and spam accounts for years in regulatory filings while explicitly noting

that the number might not be accurate given the use of data samples and interpretation.

Given current market conditions, Mogharabi said, Twitter may also have a solid argument that the layoffs and firings of the past weeks represent "an ordinary course of business."

"Many technology firms have begun to control costs by reducing headcount and/or delaying adding employees," he said. "The resignations of Twitter employees cannot with certainty be attributed to any change in how Twitter has operated since Musk's offer was accepted by the board and shareholders."

Tech industry analysts say Musk's interlude leaves behind a more vulnerable company with demoralized employees.

"With Musk officially walking away from the deal, we think business prospects and stock valuation are in a precarious situation," wrote CFRA Analyst Angelo Zino. "(Twitter) will now need to go at it as a standalone company and contend with an uncertain advertising market, a damaged employee base, and concerns about the status of fake accounts/strategic direction."

The uncertainty surrounding who will run Twitter, Mogharabi said, could lead wary advertisers to curtail their spending on the platform. **MDT/AP**

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UK Olympian Mo Farah reveals he was trafficked as a child

DANICA KIRKA, LONDON

FOUR-TIME Olympic champion Mo Farah says he was illegally brought to the U.K. as a young boy and forced to care for other children before he escaped a life of servitude through running.

In a new documentary, Farah says his real name is Hussein Abdi Kahin and that he was from taken from the East African nation of Djibouti. The film that tells the story of his being trafficked and was produced by the BBC and Red Bull Studios.

The athlete says he was 8 or 9 years old when a woman he didn't know brought him to Britain using fake travel documents that included his picture alongside the name Mohammed Farah, the BBC reported.

The woman took him to an apartment in west London where he was forced to care for her children, Farah said. He wasn't allowed to go to school until he was 12.

"I wasn't treated as part of the

AP PHOTO



family..." Farah says in the documentary. "If I wanted food in my mouth, my job was to look after those kids — shower them, cook for them, clean for them."

Farah, who represented Britain at three Olympic Games, won gold medals in the 5,000-

and 10,000-meter runs at both the 2012 London Olympics and the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro.

He previously said he had moved to Britain with his parents as a refugee from Somalia.

But in the documentary, he says his parents never were in

the U.K. His father was killed by stray gunfire during unrest in Somalia when Farah was 4 years old, according to the film. His mother and two brothers live on the family farm in Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia that is not internationally recog-

nized.

Farah says his fortunes changed when he was finally allowed to attend school. A teacher who was interviewed for the documentary recalled a 12-year-old boy who appeared "unkempt and uncared for," was "emotionally and culturally alienated" and spoke little English.

But he began to blossom on the track and eventually told his story to a physical education instructor. The teacher contacted local officials, who arranged for a Somali family to take him in as a foster child.

"I still missed my real family, but from that moment everything got better," Farah said. "I felt like a lot of stuff was lifted off my shoulders, and I felt like me."

Farah said he had feared he would be deported if he spoke about his childhood experiences. He decided to tell his story to publicize and challenge people's perceptions of human trafficking, he said.

"I had no idea there was so many people who are going through exactly the same thing that I did," he said. "It just shows how lucky I was."

Farah was granted U.K. citizenship in 2000 and represented Britain at the 2008, 2012 and 2016 Olympics. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2017. **MDT/AP**

AD

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**IMPERATIVE
 TO NARROW
 DEVELOPMENT GAP**

Monday was World Population Day. In his message to mark the day and the release of the United Nations latest World Population Prospects report, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed that “it is a reminder of our shared responsibility to care for our planet and a moment to reflect on where we still fall short of our commitments to one another”.

In the report, the UN anticipated that despite growing at its slowest rate since the 1950s, the world’s population will hit 8 billion in November, and peak at around 10.4 billion during the 2080s.

Notably, countries in sub-Saharan Africa are expected to contribute more than half of the increase through 2050, while the populations of 61 countries, mostly mid- and high-income ones, are expected to decrease by at least 1 percent over the next three decades as a result of sustained low birth rates.

That means the demographic structure of the world will become more polarized and uneven in the foreseeable future, which will make the development gap between the developed and developing world a more prominent challenge.

Without a fairer distribution of wealth and development opportunities, the rapid growth of the population in less-developed countries will make eradicating poverty, combatting hunger and malnutrition, and increasing the coverage of health and education systems more difficult.

True, “eight billion people means eight billion opportunities to live dignified and fulfilled lives”, as Guterres said. But that entails countries, especially the less-developed ones, investing more in the further development of their human capital by ensuring access to healthcare and quality education at all ages, and by promoting opportunities for productive employment and decent work.

Yet that cannot be realized without international solidarity and cooperation to improve global governance and help the less-developed countries to deal with the common challenges that can generally be attributed to the developed countries consuming more, emitting more and wasting more.

Although the efficiency with which humankind can produce food, mine minerals, make goods and communicate have increased exponentially over recent decades, that has largely benefited the developed countries and further strengthened their capacity to exploit the rest. That model and trend explains why, despite the advancement of technology, the world’s hungry population has not declined and remains at a level of about 800 million, and the population living in abject poverty is still about 700 million, or 9.2 percent of the global population.

That it took about 15 years, from 1960 to 1975, for the world population to swell from 3 billion to 4 billion, and only about 11 years, from 2011 to 2022, to surge from 7 billion to 8 billion, speaks volumes of the progress of human society, as well as the urgency to make its development fairer and more balanced.

Iran has arrested an internationally renowned filmmaker, several newspapers reported yesterday, the third Iranian director to be locked up in less than a week as the government escalates a crackdown on the country’s celebrated cinema industry.

The arrest of award-winning director Jafar Panahi and wider pressure on filmmakers follows a wave of recent arrests as tensions escalate between Iran’s hard-line government and the West. Security forces have detained several foreigners and a prominent reformist politician as talks to revive Tehran’s nuclear accord with world powers

hit a deadlock and fears grow over the country’s economic crisis.

Panahi, one of Iran’s best-known dissident filmmakers, had gone to the prosecutor’s office in Tehran on Monday evening to check on the cases of his two colleagues detained last week, when security forces scooped him up as well, the reports said.

A colleague of Panahi, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of fear of reprisals, told The Associated Press that authorities sent him to Iran’s notorious Evin Prison to serve out a prison term dating back years ago.



AP PHOTO



AP PHOTO

Ukrainian authorities said yesterday that their forces targeted a Russian ammunition depot in southern Ukraine overnight, resulting in a massive explosion captured on social media. The Ukrainian military’s southern command said a rocket strike targeted the depot in Russian-held Nova Kakhovka, about 55 kilometers east of the Black Sea port city of Kherson, which is also occupied by Russian forces.

DEMOGRAPHICS

**UN PROJECTS WORLD
 POPULATION WILL REACH
 8 BILLION ON NOV. 15**

THE United Nations estimated that the world’s population will reach 8 billion on Nov. 15 and that India will replace China as the world’s most populous nation next year.

In a report released on World Population Day, the U.N. also said global population growth fell below 1% in 2020 for the first time since 1950.

According to the latest U.N. projections, the world’s population could grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050 and a peak of around 10.4 billion during the 2080s. It is forecast to remain at that level until 2100.

The report says more than half the projected increase in population up to 2050 will be concentrated in just eight countries: Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tanzania.

The report, “World Population Prospects 2022,” puts the world’s population at 7.942 billion now and forecasts it will reach 8 billion in mid-November.

John Wilmoth, director of the U.N. Population Division, said at a news conference to release the report that the date when the U.N.’s projection line crosses 8 billion is Nov. 15.

But, he noted, “we do

not pretend that that’s the actual date ... and we think that the uncertainty is at least plus or minus a year.”

The report projects that next year India, with a current population of 1.412 billion, will surpass China, with a current population of 1.426 billion, but Wilmoth said there is more uncertainty about that date than the Earth reaching 8 billion inhabitants on Nov. 15.

Wilmoth said the U.N. moved the date forward from 2027, especially as a result of China’s 2020 census. India had been planning its census in 2021, but he said it was delayed because of the pandemic. The U.N. will reassess its projection after it takes place.

The U.N. projects that in 2050 the United States will remain the third most populous country in the world, behind India and China. Nigeria is projected to be No. 4, followed by Pakistan, Indonesia, Brazil, Congo, Ethiopia and Bangladesh. Russia and Mexico, which are in the top 10 most populous countries in 2022, are projected to lose their ninth and 10th spots in 2050.

In other highlights, the report said global life expectancy improved almost 9 years from 1990 — to 72.8 years for babies born

in 2019 — and is projected to reach 77.2 years in 2050 as death rates continue to decrease. But in 2021, it said, life expectancy in the world’s poorest countries lagged 7 years behind the global average.

As for gender balance, the report says, “Globally, the world counts slightly more men (50.3%) than women (49.7%) in 2022.” “This figure is projected to slowly invert over the course of the century,” it says. “By 2050, it is expected that the number of women will equal the number of men.”

The share of working age people between ages 25 and 64 has been increasing in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean “thanks to recent reductions in fertility,” the report says.

Wilmoth said high life expectancy and very low levels of fertility and birth rates in European countries, Japan, North America, Australia and New Zealand are driving the tendency toward rapid population aging, and eventually potential population declines.

As a result, over the next few decades, international migration “will be the sole driver of population growth in high-income countries,” the report said. **MDT/AP**

Germany’s vice chancellor yesterday defended the government’s commitment to ending the use of nuclear power at the end of this year, arguing that keeping its few remaining reactors running would be complex and do little to address the problems caused by a possible natural gas shortfall. Germany’s main opposition party has called repeatedly for the country’s last three nuclear reactors to be kept online after the end of December amid fears that Russia may halt natural gas supplies entirely.

European Union is set to remove the final obstacles to Croatia adopting the euro, enabling the first expansion of the currency bloc in almost a decade just as the euro has dropped to its lowest level against the dollar in 20 years. EU finance ministers plan at a meeting in Brussels to approve three laws that will pave the way for Croatia to become the 20th member of the eurozone on Jan. 1.



AP PHOTO

UK London’s Heathrow Airport is capping daily passenger numbers for the summer and telling airlines to stop selling tickets as it steps up efforts to quell travel chaos caused by soaring travel demand and staff shortages. Britain’s busiest airport said yesterday that it’s setting a limit of 100,000 passengers that it can handle each day through Sept. 11. The restriction is likely to result in more canceled flights even after airlines already slashed thousands of flights from their summer schedules.