

# COMMENT

## Editorials

### Wake-up call for countries to face up squarely to severity of the pandemic

WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan issued a stark warning in Geneva on Friday, when he told journalists at a briefing hosted by the UN correspondents association that: "People need to wake up. The data is not lying. The situation on the ground is not lying."

That the battle with the novel coronavirus is still ongoing after seven months should be worrying enough.

That there is still no end in sight, more so.

That the total number of people confirmed infected with the virus was more than 11.3 million as of Sunday, with 529,000 people having died, speaks volumes about the scale and intensity of the struggle.

Yet even after seven months and those stark statistics, the number of infections is still rising at a rate of about 150,000 per day and the number of deaths is rising at the rate of up to 4,000 per day.

With most of the infections and deaths accounted for by a handful of countries.

And that is what is most worrying of all, since it shows that some countries are not heeding the lessons offered by the experiences of others.

With some countries in Asia and Europe effectively managing to bring their once severe pandemic situations under control, the countries that are now worst affected were offered workable solutions to control the virus. Unless these countries can get a grip on the virus, not only will their own people be at risk but everyone around the world, as no one will be safe until the pandemic is controlled worldwide.

As the WHO emergencies director noted, "too many countries are ignoring what the data is telling them", because of their urgent needs to get their economies going again and the groundless belief that the virus will "magically go away".

Regrettably, with its supremacy in medical research, public health, technology and finance, the United States, which accounts for more than one-fourth of all infections as well as one-fourth of all the deaths attributable to the virus, continues to lead both rankings since it replaced Italy at the top of them in March and April respectively.

For countries to breathe life back into their economies while not giving the virus a chance to stage a comeback, it is strongly suggested that instead of placing an entire nation under lockdown, the countries carry out differentiated control measures in different areas to allow the places with lower transmission rates to resume their business operations in a step-by-step manner — with face masks, frequent washing of hands in the right way, social distancing and avoiding public gatherings compulsory — while carrying out strict restrictions in the areas where the contagion remains vibrant.

In other words, the countries must re-open up with the capacity to cope with the potential case-load. Otherwise, they will soon know that what they have experienced will be nothing but a prelude.

We all wish the virus will disappear and things could return to some kind of normalcy. Unfortunately, that is not going to happen if countries don't quickly learn their lessons.

### Intensifying tensions not good for India

What is done is done, it cannot be undone. That is also true when it comes to the Sino-Indian border skirmishes in the Galwan Valley. But if both parties demonstrate sincerity in trying to defuse the tensions then they should be able to limit the fallout.

However, bilateral relations will be problematic if one side uses the issue to stir up jingoism to start a trade war. This is what is happening in India.

The Indian customs authorities have delayed the clearance of Chinese imports, and the Indian government has raised tariffs on imports from China, banned 59 Chinese apps, blocked Chinese enterprises from participating in road construction projects and prohibited the imports of Chinese electrical equipment.

What India is doing is against World Trade Organization rules and against its own promises to the WTO and the contracts its enterprises have signed with their Chinese counterparts.

Did India ignite the border skirmishes in order to decouple its trade with China?

India may not be happy with its trade deficit of more than \$50 billion with China, and its economic reliance on China may make it feel uneasy. But the reality is that Indian people benefit from Chinese imports, as they are what India needs to improve its people's livelihoods and to facilitate its economic development.

Chinese enterprises will undoubtedly suffer if India is determined to cut economic ties with

China. But Indian people will suffer as well, and China will not hesitate to retaliate against India for what it has done against its imports, investment and economic cooperation projects.

A trade war will be a zero-sum game.

What is even worse is the fact that the deteriorating bilateral relations will likely make the two neighbors enemies at a time when they had seemed to be developing amicable relations, which will do disservice to themselves and peace and development in East Asia. The rising tensions will distract India's focus from its pandemic prevention and control work and economic development, which will create risks and uncertainties for the entire region.

Politicians should never be carried away by the jingoism, which will be harmful and destructive if allowed to dictate policy.

For the world's two most populous countries, the importance of amicable bilateral relations can never be underestimated. Their disputes over the border can be shelved and the status quo maintained if a solution acceptable to both sides cannot be found at the time being.

India's drastic measures to intensify tensions and cause further damage to bilateral ties are a miscalculation whether as a gamble for immediate gains or the long-term prospects of its economic development.

India should work with China to uphold the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries and work with it for the overall interests of bilateral relations.

### Concern for HK reveals West's hypocrisy

Those voicing criticism of Hong Kong's promulgation of a national security law, perhaps need reminding that no other state or legislature has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, in another country's internal affairs and that national security is undeniably an internal affair.

Which is why a spokesman of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government rebuked the US Congress on Friday for displaying a double standard after it passed the so-called Hong Kong Autonomy Act, saying the move by the US legislature under the pretext of human rights and democracy "was a blatant breach of obligations and respect between nations".

But such disrespect comes naturally to those who feel exceptional. Although US lawmakers continually talk of human rights and freedom, their acts targeting other countries habitually belie those causes.

The national security law officially took effect in Hong Kong on Tuesday. Like a bulwark that fends off tempests, it will effectively guarantee the long-term stability and prosperity of the SAR. Any claims to the contrary are simply malicious.

And let's not imply it is only the United States that is guilty of such double standards. It would be remiss of us to let the United Kingdom off the hook because its hypocrisy is equally appalling. It has wrongly claimed that the national security legislation "violates" Hong Kong's autonomy, despite knowing that the national Constitution as well as the Basic Law form the constitutional basis for the principle of "one country, two systems".

Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of autonomy as part of one country.

In view of the increasingly pronounced national security risks that have appeared in the SAR, the enactment of the national security legislation is clear-eyed and prudent.

No government would tolerate external forces creating a security threat in part of the country or let its young people be misled and brainwashed into being a security threat by ill-intentioned political elements.

The strong opposition Western countries have voiced to the law, the US and the UK in particular, is clear evidence that it is reaching its intended targets.

Steve Sack



AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

## Opinion Line

### This year's gaokao an even tougher test than usual

Since this year's annual national college entrance examination, or *gaokao*, will be held during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education, together with other relevant departments, has stressed the importance of adhering to the prescribed prevention and control measures during what is the largest public event since the pandemic began.

To ensure the safety and health of the 10.71 million students sitting the exam and those monitoring them and other staff, the ministry has set strict containment measures for the nearly 400,000 exam rooms in more than 7,000 exam sites across the country.

All students and staff have been monitoring their health situations by taking temperature every day over the 14 days before the exams begin,

and they will have to have their temperatures checked and wear face masks before entering the exam sites.

Students in low-risk areas will be able to decide for themselves whether to wear masks, while those in medium- and high-risk areas and all monitors and staff are required to wear masks for the duration of the exams.

But because of the pandemic, this year's *gaokao* comes one month later than usual. And July is always hotter than June, so there might be a risk of the participants suffering breathing difficulties if they are wearing masks, so monitoring staff will need to be vigilant to any examinee showing signs of distress.

Special isolation rooms have been set up at each exam site, and students with respiratory problems will be evaluated by medical staff to

decide if they can continue to take the exams. If they pass the evaluation they will continue to take their exams in the isolation rooms.

What makes this year's *gaokao* even more special is that three cases in which one person went to college under another person's *gaokao* scores and identity have been probed in Shandong province, with more under investigation. Which is why the ministry's requirement that all colleges strictly check the identities of new students has been welcomed. In the recently exposed cases, some college staff were found to have participated in the cheating that made the illegal activity possible. It is therefore right that college enrollment has come under scrutiny.

We wish all students well in this year's *gaokao*.

— BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

### Answer to exam question, generation gap perhaps

In the final exam of Grade 6 Chinese language course this semester, a school in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, included popular Chinese food blogger Li Ziqi as an good example for students to emulate. One parent shared the photo of the exam paper and expressed his concern that it might mislead kids by teaching them the wrong values.

The photo of the exam paper shows Li was selected for promoting an idyllic traditional Chinese lifestyle and for spreading traditional Chinese culture to the world. Li has a huge global following for her videos which show her preparing meals that she shares with her grandmother.

The parent questioned the appropriateness of Li's inclusion as a role model expressing concerns about the picture of an idyllic life she was promoting and that the inclusion of a digital influencer might encourage children to spend too much

time online.

Such worries are understandable, but unnecessary. Li works hard. She and her team put in a lot of efforts and her videos appeal to people all over the world. Children can learn from her hard work and professionalism, how can that be misleading?

Besides, we live in a commercial society. Children will sooner or later have to understand that money matters for everyone. As for the concerns

about it encouraging children to spend too much time online. They are going to go online anyway, so they may as well see how a good idea and hard work can pay off.

It is also worth noting that Li was one of three examples that the children were presented with. The other two were Yuan Longping, a renowned Chinese agronomist and Lei Haiwei, a deliveryman and the champion of the Third China Central Television's Poetry Competition show. The children were asked to select one and give their reasons why they chose the one they did.

Given this, some parents have said that it is good for primary education to follow the social trend and so children can be more familiar with what is happening around them. Maybe that's a more practical attitude so that education keeps in step with the times.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

### Larger shopping list gives Hainan a boost

Hainan's new tax-free shopping policy came into effect on Wednesday. Starting on July 1, the island province increased its tax-free quota from 30,000 yuan (\$4,245) to 100,000 yuan per person each year, the 8,000-yuan duty-free limit for a single commodity was abolished and the categories of tax-free goods were expanded from 38 to 45.

Commodities such as electronics and liquor are included in the new policy. As reported, one may even buy a smartphone at a price 2,000 yuan lower in Hainan than in other regions.

The new tax-free policy benefits the people, boosts Hainan's economy and prospers the economy of the whole nation.

Many people said that they previously planned to travel overseas, but now they have changed their minds and hope to go to Hainan. Data show that China has more than 100 million visitors that go overseas every year and their consumption overseas exceeds 1 trillion yuan every year. If some of that consumption goes to Hainan, that will be a boost for the domestic economy.

Hainan is the fourth island tax-free zone in the world and its tourists will not only come from within China, but also from the rest of the world. The beautiful scenery combined with the beneficial policy can help Hainan prosper.

And Hainan's new policy is part of

China's efforts to deepen its opening-up and make its economy more open to the world. That's especially important considering that the world is experiencing a new round of reforms and changes right now. Protectionism, economic unilateralism are rising and posing greater challenges to the pace of globalization; China is making more contributions to the development of the world economy.

Of course, there is much work for Hainan to do. It needs to improve its business environment and improve the quality of services for tourists, so that tourists will want to return. A good policy with good implementation will help the island prosper.

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