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LAWMAKERS SUBMITTED TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY A NEW VERSION OF A BILL THAT PROPOSES TO ESTABLISH A TRADE UNION LAW IN MACAU

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TOURISM REPRESENTATIVES CALL ON GOV'T TO LIFT COVID-19 TESTS FOR GBA RESIDENTS

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GRAND LISBOA PALACE AND LISBOETA PROJECTS MAY SEE THEIR OPENINGS DELAYED UNTIL NEXT YEAR DUE TO THE PANDEMIC: ANGELA LEONG

P3

South Korea A senior North Korea diplomat who vanished in Italy in late 2018 lives in South Korea under government protection, lawmakers said yesterday. If confirmed, Jo Song Gil, North Korea's former acting ambassador to Italy, would be the highest-level North Korean official to defect to rival South Korea since the 1997 arrival of Hwang Jang-yop, a senior ruling Workers' Party official who once tutored leader Kim Jong Un's father, late leader Kim Jong Il.

Japan has proposed raising its catch quotas for Pacific bluefin tuna, a fish so highly prized for sushi and sashimi that its population is at less than 5% of historical levels. An online meeting of countries that manage the Pacific bluefin is studying the proposal to raise Japan's catch limits for both smaller and larger bluefin tuna by 20%.



Indonesia Thousands of students and workers protested yesterday against a new law they say will cripple labor rights and harm the environment, with some clashing with police. One student was apparently shot. Authorities in Bandung, the capital of West Java province, blocked streets leading to the local parliament building and city hall, where clashes between rock-throwing students and riot police broke out.

Russia's representative to the global chemical weapons watchdog has hit back at calls for a transparent investigation of the nerve agent poisoning of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, saying Moscow "doesn't owe anything to anybody." The comments by Ambassador Alexander Shulgin to a meeting of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons were published yesterday on the website of Russia's embassy in The Hague, a day after Germany said that tests conducted at labs designated by the watchdog confirmed that Navalny was the victim of an attack with a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

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AMERICANS CAN STAY

US operators losing gaming license is 'remote' possibility, says brokerage P3



A VIEWER GUIDE VIRUS RESPONSE ON STAGE WITH PENCE, HARRIS

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GOV'T EXPANDS DISTINCTIVE LOCAL SHOP SCHEME

The Macao Economic Bureau (DSE) is planning to expand its distinctive local shop scheme, according to a report by TDM. In July the DSE started the first phase of a program to identify distinctive shops that typified local culture in their characteristics. The first batch of shops accredited by the bureau included 41 establishments in the historic Rua de Cinco de Outubro and streets nearby. Of these shops, 24 sell food and beverages. According to the DSE's plan, shops from other sectors may also be included in the scheme in the future. In order to decorate some local streets, the DSE has painted three murals at Rua de Cinco de Outubro, Largo do Pagode do Bazar, and Rua do Guimarães. The murals depict the exchange between Chinese and Portuguese culture. It is hoped they will become "check-in" spots in front of which visitors may take photos.

NINE FAMILIES EVICTED FROM SOCIAL HOUSING

The Social Affairs Bureau (IAS) has evicted nine families from government social housing due to various types of violations. The numbers were recorded in the first nine months of this year. Four families voluntarily moved out of their apartments after they were suspected of violations. The department undertook legal procedures to evict the other families. These families were suspected of either not using the social houses as their permanent residence, or of sharing the houses with other people who were not approved to stay in the government houses. As of October 2, among 12,984 social house families, 57 families were ordered to move out due to their "excessive" incomes. 8,166 households consist of one or two members. 4,121 families of three or four members are living in social houses. There are 656 families with five or six members and 41 families consisting of seven or more members currently residing in government social houses.

ADDITIONAL TYPES OF MACAU CARS BEING CONSIDERED TO ENTER ZHUHAI

The Guangdong government is considering allowing more types of Macau single-plated vehicles to enter Zhuhai, according to a report by the Macao Daily News. Recently, the Guangdong provincial government said that the Hengqin district of Zhuhai is currently considering the possibility of gradually allowing Macau's tourism vehicles, app-based vehicles, business vehicles and other types of cars with only a Macau plate to enter Hengqin. The Guangdong government has already reached a preliminary consensus with the Macau government. The relevant mainland department is currently working on amendments to relevant policies to allow the plan to happen. In addition, Guangdong is also considering allowing single-plated cars from Macau to enter more areas in Zhuhai.

RENATO MARQUES



LAWMAKERS SUBMIT NEW TRADE UNION BILL TO AL

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKERS José Pereira Coutinho and Sulu Sou yesterday submitted a new version of a bill that proposes to establish a Trade Union Law in Macau.

The revelation was made by Pereira Coutinho yesterday afternoon during a press conference organized by the lawmaker to evaluate the work of the Legislative Assembly (AL) during the last legislative year.

"Today, we presented once again (for the eighth-time) a bill regarding the Trade Union Law. We hope that during this legislative year, which starts on October 16, we can have it scheduled for the plenary [session] and to be discussed in the final reading so we can eventually have a Trade Union Law in Macau," the lawmaker said, adding, "I'm hopeful that the Trade Union bill that we presented can, this time, be approved so the associations can represent the workers in the different stages and processes, and namely in legal and public administration matters, protecting their rights, as they are the 'weakest link' of the labor negotiation."

Questioned on the topic by the media, Pereira Coutinho added that it is a duty of lawmakers to present bills to the AL, and although the new

government headed by Ho Iat Seng has previously given indications of its intention to propose a government-backed bill on the topic, the lawmaker said, "It is not clear when this can happen and we cannot just be waiting for the government," noting that the resolution of the matter was very urgent.

The last time a bill on the topic was brought up to the plenary was in March this year by the hand of lawmakers Lam Lon Wai and Lei Chan U.

The bill was voted down for the eleventh time, with just nine lawmakers in favor and 16 opposed.

Traditionally, pro-democracy lawmakers, as well as those linked with the Macao Federation of Trade Unions,

a platform said to represent some 70,000 workers in Macau, have voted in favor of the bills.

As for the evaluation of the AL's work, Pereira Coutinho said he was reasonably satisfied with the bills approved during the last legislative year but continued to put the focus on what he calls the "wunderkind problem" of the AL – the lack of transparency in the AL's work, namely in regard to the Committee meetings, which run behind closed doors.

Pereira Coutinho, together with other pro-democracy lawmakers, has for a long time been one of the voices calling for the full opening of the meetings of the AL Committees to increase transpa-

rency and allow citizens and the media to know exactly what has been discussed and the real opinions expressed by the Committee members.

"The opacity of the AL Committees undermines the sustainable development of the political system and harms the supervision of the work of the lawmakers by the citizens and the media," Pereira Coutinho stated.

On the same topic, Pereira Coutinho noted once again the example of the neighboring region of Hong Kong where there is a specially dedicated TV channel for the Legislative Council meetings and where all the sessions are broadcasted, an example that, in his opinion, Macau must urgently follow.

COUTINHO CALLS FOR CONTINUATION OF GOV'T CONSUMPTION INCENTIVES

SPEAKING during a press conference held to evaluate the work of the Legislative Assembly during the last legislative year, lawmaker Pereira Coutinho said that the government needs to continue to pay support to Macau citizens through the e-consumption voucher scheme. In the view of the lawmaker, the government should not end the scheme at the conclusion

of this year but instead should continue it into 2021 by loading another 8,000 patacas into the resident's cards to be used from January 2021, a continuation of the stimulus to keep the internal economy running. The lawmaker also said that the government should not consider ending the Wealth Partaking Scheme, a plan that issues cash handouts to all permanent and non-permanent residents once

a year, known as "the annual cheques." Instead, Pereira Coutinho thinks that to counter the increasing cost of living, the amount associated with this support should double. In 2020, under the scheme, every local permanent resident was entitled to receive 10,000 patacas, while every non-permanent resident received 6,000 patacas.

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GAMING

US operators losing license only 'remote' possibility, says brokerage

DANIEL BEITLER

It is unlikely that any of the U.S.-owned gaming operators will come up short in their bids for a new concession to operate in Macau, according to brokerage Sanford C. Bernstein, which described such a scenario as "remote."

"We view the scenario where one or more of the U.S. casino operators lose their gaming concession to be remote, unless the [U.S.-China] relationship sours significantly further and we see directed action against U.S. businesses in China, which would raise risk levels in Macau as well," said Bernstein in a Wednesday note cited by gaming news website GGRAsia.

Other analysts have suggested that the U.S.-owned concessionaires – Wynn Macau, MGM China and Sands China – make for attractive targets for Chinese retaliation against U.S. tariffs. These companies are especially vulnerable, the analysts say, because of the



closeness of former and existing shareholders with U.S. President Donald Trump.

So far, Chinese retaliation has

been "largely restrained," according to Bernstein, and has not targeted U.S. business operating in China. "Directly attacking

U.S. business (especially ones that have been solid partners to the Macau government) is not a very likely course of action," the

brokerage said.

Analysts Vitaly Umansky, Tianjiao Yu and Kelsey Zhu therefore believe that the "most likely scenario" involving the new tenders will be that "all six concessionaires will have new concessions and there will be no new entrants."

They said that the local government still has a range of economic levers at its disposal, including "altering the gross gaming revenue (GGR) tax, imposing taxation on gaming profits, imposing taxation on dividends, [and] mandating upfront fees."

After brief extensions were granted to casino operators SJM and MGM China last year, all six concessions are due to expire in June 2022. Little is known about the requirements of the future tenders, aside from the likely scenario of having diversification obligations written into the new contracts.

The Macau government wants to have a bill amending the city's gaming law ready by next year.

Sonia Chan: Withdrawal of gov't shares in companies possible

ANTHONY LAM

The Macau government has withdrawn its investments in the Macau New Technologies Incubator Centre as part of its public investment plan restructure, Sonia Chan, director of the Office for the Planning of Supervision of Public Assets in the Macau Special Administrative Region (GPSAP), disclosed yesterday.

The former Secretary for Administration and Justice added that the government is in the process of withdrawing its investment from another quasi-commercial entity, the name of which was not disclosed by the official.

Investment withdrawal is necessary, according to the public investment gatekeeper, when the government deems investment in certain public-commercial entities non-vital to their survival.

Besides withdrawing investments from a public-commercial entity, the government may even close down an entity when it is found to be redundant, even if it is



fully-funded by the government. After such a closure, the business or area of operation will be transferred to a competent, existing government bureau or office. The evaluation of such redundancy or withdrawal of investments is done regularly, according to Chan.

Chan said that the work of the review will be swift.

However, she pointed out that the inauguration of some

government-funded entities is not profit-oriented. In contrast, they were set up to ensure that public interests are attended to. These entities will likely be retained.

In addition, the office has previously disclosed that it would draft a legal framework to oversee government-invested entities and ensure they use public funds reasonably and suitably. The legal framework will provide the legal

grounds to generally review the administration and efficiency of government-invested entities.

On this matter, Chan disclosed that her office is working on the first phase of the law drafting, which is the study stage. It is striving to finish the work by the end of this legislative term, which will end in summer next year. The draft will then be released for public consultation before being delivered to the Legislative Assembly for lawmaking process.

On the contrary, the current guideline overseeing government-funded companies requires such companies to update their information in certain areas, such as human resources and procurement, on a specific government web portal. However, telecom operator CTM and power supplier CEM have previously declined to do so.

Chan noted that the two companies have made partial disclosure and stressed that the guideline will have authority over them too.

Examples of government-funded entities are Air Macau, the Macau International Airport Company Limited, the Macao Science Center and the Macao Light Rapid Transit Corporation, Limited.

ANGELA LEONG HINTS AT DELAY OF COTAI PROJECTS

BOTH the Grand Lisboa Palace and Lisboa projects may see their openings delayed until next year due to the pandemic, Angela Leong, Executive Director of Sociedade dos Jogos de Macau (SJM), hinted yesterday following a celebration of the 71st anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China hosted by the gaming operator.

The Lisboa project is not directly owned by the SJM, but is a plan by the late Stanley Ho's son, Arnaldo Ho, under the entity of Macau Theme Park and Resorts Ltd.

Leong stressed that the board was in regular meetings in an attempt to determine a date for the Grand Lisboa Palace's opening. She added that the company's performance during the October 1 Golden Week was weaker than expected. Changes to operation strategies may take place to adapt to market development.

Moreover, the company is setting targets for early next year. The SJM executive noted that logistics were hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic, delaying the opening of the projects.

Both projects were expected to open by the end of this year. Judging from their exteriors, both projects are complete, at least on the outside. The government has previously issued a hotel license to the Lisboa Hotel. The project also features the Maison L'Occitane and Line Friends - Casa de Amigo hotels, both debuting globally. **AL**

LOCAL COUPLE ACCUSED OF PERPETRATING HKD10 MILLION CHIPS SCAM

RENATO MARQUES

A local couple has been detained on the charge of carrying out a scam involving HKD10 million in casino chips, the Judiciary Police (PJ) revealed yesterday during a special press conference to discuss the case.

The alleged actions are those of a 33-year-old man, a member of the Macau Security Force (FSM) since 2006, and his wife, a 25-year-old woman, also a local resident.

The case was discovered on October 2 when two local men filed a complaint accusing the couple of fraud.

The complainants told the PJ they had given the suspects a total of HKD10 million in gaming chips to be converted into cash.

They also said that this was a service previously offered by the same couple, and that they had used the couple's services on previous occasions without any problem.

They also mentioned having given the couple a total of HKD20 million to be withdrawn at the casino cages between August and September. The couple would provide the service, completing the transactions within a week and requesting compensation equivalent to 6% of the value of the chips.

On September 7, the complainants gave the couple more gaming chips. The couple did not immediately perform the transaction as they usually did, and as of



September 10 there was no sign of the money.

When questioned by the clients, the first suspect replied that he did not have the full sum of money, as the wife had lost the amount at the gaming tables. On that occasion, the man only managed to reimburse the victims HKD1,080,000.

Since the couple never provided the remaining owed cash, the complainants decided to press charges against them, claiming to

have been tricked and involved in a fraud.

As the PJ spokesperson explained, the two victims are in reality intermediaries for actual gamblers from the mainland who, due to the pandemic, have not been able to exchange their gaming chips as usual, via bank transfers using the casinos' VIP rooms.

He also added that the two men would eventually charge 7% of the value of the chips to the original chip owners in the mainland, ear-

ning the 1% difference.

On October 5, the second suspect was caught by the police while attempting to exit Macau via the Border Gate border post. The husband was detained at home the following day.

The PJ said that when taken into questioning, both refused to cooperate with the police, and the woman, at the time she was detained, only said that she had no knowledge or means of performing the exchange of chips for cash.

Following its investigation, although the suspects have not cooperated or admitted to the crime, the PJ has stated that it has found sufficient evidence that the couple was colluding in all the aforementioned activities.

They were presented to the Public Prosecutions Office yesterday morning, to be charged under Article 211 of the Macau Penal Code with aggravated fraud, facing a potential penalty of 2 to 10 years' imprisonment.

World Press Photo Exhibition closed without warning

DANIEL BEITLER

THE World Press Photo Exhibition at Casa Garden has been closed since October 1, the Times has learned, with no indication that it will reopen before its scheduled conclusion on October 18.

Local organizer Casa de Portugal em Macau (CPM), which has hosted the prestigious exhibition since 2008, said the closure took place because of "management reasons."

The World Press Photo Exhibition was supposed to be open from September 25 to October 18, according to the website of the World Press Photo Foundation, closed only on Mondays. However, sources have informed the Times that the exhibition may have closed



just days after its inauguration.

October 1 is National Day, a public holiday that

commemorates the formal establishment of the People's Republic of China. It is an important date in the

calendar, when Chinese authorities are particularly sensitive to criticism of the country or party.

This year's exhibit is considered controversial by some because the work of one of the nominees for World Press Photo Story of the Year portrays the social unrest in Hong Kong during the anti-government protests of last year.

A representative of CPM yesterday confirmed the exhibition's closure with the Times, citing "management reasons" as being behind the decision without elaborating. The representative would not confirm how long the exhibition had been closed, nor whether it would reopen.

A person guarding the exhibition at Casa Garden told the Times that all of the photographic exhibits were still inside the venue, but would not comment on any individual artwork.

The Casa Garden venue managed by CPM is the only site in Chinese territory to host the exhibition this year, although organizers have not ruled out expanding to other Chinese cities at a later stage.

The Macau Daily Times contacted the World Press Photo Foundation yesterday, however nobody was immediately available to comment on the closure.

Earlier, CPM told the Macau Daily Times that this year might be the exhibition's last in Macau. According to CPM President Amelia António, the association might have to suspend the 2021 exhibition because of the costs involved. CPM says bringing the exhibition to Macau costs around MOP200,000 annually.

Group urges IAM president to step down

JULIE ZHU

A group of caretakers for stray animals, together with representatives of the Macau People Power association, have urged the president of the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) to step down in a demonstration at the Government Headquarters.

Yesterday, a group consisting of approximately 30 people, including the Macau People Power representatives, delivered a letter to the Chief Executive asking the local government to change its methods of handling stray animals. Following the delivery of the letter, the self-described volunteers shouted the slogan, "Step down, José Maria da Fonseca Tavares."

The group's reaction was triggered by the IAM's president's response to lawmaker Sulu Sou's question on stray animals. Tavares stated that it is illegal to feed stray animals, and that feeding stray animals may result in fines.

Iam Weng Hong, leader of Macau People Power and spokesperson for yesterday's group,



told the media that the policies have deterred many residents from feeding stray animals, which, according to Iam, has led to the eventual death of these animals.

"It's better for the government not to impose such heavy fines. Everybody will suffer, in-

cluding the animals," said Iam.

Iam and the group have called for a government-managed home for the stray animals.

All of the 30 people present said they are volunteers who feed stray animals and offered some proposals to the government. One of their suggestions

was for the government to take up responsibilities in providing a shelter.

"All people gathered here, plus all other groups, don't have the responsibility and the obligation to provide such a shelter for [these stray animals]," said the group leader.

In his opinion, only the Macau government is capable of resolving the issue and giving the animals shelter.

"Who represents the Macau people in providing stray animals a shelter? You [the government] leave the obligation to the residents. Why don't you give your power and your resources to the people as well?" Iam asked. "Money is where the power is, and responsibility is also where the power is. This responsibility is absolutely on the Macau government."

Besides building a shelter, the local government could also sterilize stray animals in case the authority wishes to control the number of stray animals, according to the association. However, previously, the IAM stated that Macau currently does not have the right conditions to implement the Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) scheme.

"We need to sterilize them, otherwise they will continue breeding and [the government] will continue the killing. We either stop them from breeding, or we provide them with some basic living spaces," said the group leader.

Tourism representatives call on gov't to lift Covid-19 tests for GBA residents

JULIE ZHU

LAWMAKER Mak Soi Kun urged the local government to lift the Covid-19 test requirement in respect of all kinds of border entries.

Well-known local businessman Cora Vong, Chairman of the Travel Industry Council of Macau, has also come forward with the same proposal.

During yesterday's TDM radio program, Macau Forum, Vong shared his opinions on how to lead Macau's economy towards a quicker recovery.

In August, the local government launched a promotional scheme to encourage visitors to travel to Macau. Under the scheme, mainland tourists may follow the government's accounts on two mainland social media platforms to participate in two separate lucky draws to win hotel accommodations and flight privileges.

On one hand, Vong believes that the local government and local business operators should continue to offer promotions, and the effect of each kind of promotion should



ld undergo a review in order to achieve more ideal outcomes.

According to a report by Xinhua, China saw a total of 97 million domestic tourist trips on Thursday October 1, the first day of the eight-day national holiday. Through the first four days of the week-long holiday, some 425 million people traveled domestically, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, nearly 80% of last year's throngs.

In Vong's opinion, mainland China's domestic tourism has recorded an obvious recovery during the National

Day Holiday. This indicates that there are hopes for the local economy since it is largely dependent on the mainland China market.

On the other hand, it is vital that Macau must try to change its policies on entry restrictions.

"We can see that movement within mainland provinces does not require a Covid-19 test. Maybe we can also try to lift the test requirement for rather safe places and places with lower Covid-19 risks, starting with Zhuhai or the Greater Bay Area," said Vong.

However, in Vong's opi-

nion, the biggest discouragement for mainland visitors is not the Covid-19 test but the travel endorsement application process.

Previously, mainland residents could apply for a travel endorsement to Macau from a self-service kiosk. However, currently, mainland immigration has suspended all kiosk machines. This means that mainlanders have to wait for up to seven days for their travel permit.

In addition, Vong also expressed his concerns about package tours. She noted that, as of today, there are barely any package tour products available for travel to Macau. Vong hopes that mainland China will lift outbound package tour restrictions.

Aside from that, some companies on the mainland, including state-owned companies, have also issued explicit instructions to their workers not to travel outside mainland China, and employees must first gain company approval if they wish to do so.

30 RESEARCHERS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FIELDS RECEIVE AWARDS

AN award ceremony was held by the government yesterday to celebrate 16 projects and 30 researchers in the science and technology fields. A total of 46 awards were given.

The awards were issued pursuant to the Science and Technology Award Regulations. The government describes the awards as further encouraging and supporting local talents to immerse themselves in scientific research.

In his opening speech, Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, who attended on behalf of the Chief Executive, sent his regards to all the awardees, before reiterating that the development of science and technology in Macau has the support of the Central People's Government in Beijing.

The official reminded those present that a science and technology innovation corridor was endorsed in the Greater Bay Area Development Framework. Within this idea, Macau, alongside Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong, will form the engine of the area's science and technology development.

In her acceptance speech, Mok Seng Peng, an awardee representative, recalled seeing leaps in development in the area in Macau in the past 10 years, after she returned to the city from abroad. She also encouraged young people to participate in the sector. **AL**

BLOOMBERG



CHINA'S BUILDING MEGA REFINERIES JUST AS FUEL DEMAND STALLS

CHINA is investing tens of billions of dollars in new mega-refineries even as its fuel demand is expected to peak within five years, raising the risk it will flood the region with cheap exports.

At least four projects with about 1.4 million barrels a day of crude-processing capacity, more than all refineries in the U.K. combined, are under construction. That's after the country already added 1 million barrels since the start of 2019. All that capacity will add more petroleum products and plastics just as China National

Petroleum Corp. sees fuel demand peaking in 2025 as electric vehicles sap consumption.

The mismatched building boom underscores how rapidly clean energy and electric vehicles are changing the industrial landscape in China, especially after Xi Jinping's pledge last month to go carbon neutral by 2060. It also positions the country to be an even bigger exporter of fuel, endangering refinery operations from South Korea to Australia to Europe.

"China is increasingly in a position to take market share globally

as it continues to expand refining capacity while its own demand growth is slowing," said Michal Meidan, director of China at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies.

Chinese refining capacity has nearly tripled since the turn of the millennium as the country's oil giants tried to keep pace with the rapid growth of diesel and gasoline consumption.

There's now more fuel production than the country needs, leading to exports of nearly 1 million barrels a day, close to the volumes shipped by South Korea and India, according to IHS Markit.

Domestic demand is likely to grow more slowly in the future as the country begins its long transition toward carbon neutrality.

Even before Xi announced the 2060 target, China National Petroleum Corp. said it expected refined products demand to grow by just 0.9% a year through 2025 and peak around then, compared to 5.6% average annual growth from 2000 to 2019.

To be sure, China's vehicle sales have increased for two months - the first market to rebound since the pandemic - and gasoline- and

diesel-guzzlers still make up the vast majority of that. Still, CNPC researchers said they expect electric vehicles and alternative fuels such as hydrogen and ethanol to displace increasing amounts of petroleum fuel.

The new mega-refineries under construction in places like Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Yantai will be geared toward turning crude oil directly into petrochemicals and plastics. That's particularly bad news for plants in Taiwan and South Korea designed to cater to China's petrochemical market, said Harry Liu, executive director for oil markets, midstream and downstream at IHS Markit.

While their plastics emphasis means the new plants will produce less transport fuel on a relative basis than older plants, the supply of petroleum products will have to be sold somewhere. In the future, Chinese refiners could export fuels as far afield as Australia, Europe or even the U.S., according to traders in the region.

Those exports will eat into market share of existing refineries, potentially causing smaller plants within China, as well as others from Japan to Australia, to shutter permanently.

"Refinery closures will come in several forms," said Sushant Gupta, an analyst with Wood Mackenzie Ltd. in Singapore. "It does not make sense now to operate a standalone refinery or a standalone petrochemicals plant for that matter."

The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the trend of refinery closures. The damage caused by the virus to demand is likely to be structural and permanent, according to IHS.

"Our current estimate is there's going to be about 1 million barrels a day refining capacity that is facing closure threat," IHS's Liu said. "Out of which, 60% will be in non-China territories."

BLOOMBERG

Messner's law firm represented state-run Chinese insurer

REPUBLICAN Senate candidate Corky Messner takes a hard line against China in his campaign, but his law firm once represented an insurance company run by the Chinese government that sued a U.S. manufacturer.

Messner, who hopes to unseat Democratic U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen next month, is a founding partner of Messner Reeves, a Denver-based law firm with offices in five states. On the campaign trail, he is a frequent critic of China, blaming it for the coronavirus pandemic and calling it a rogue country that has damaged U.S. manufacturing.

"We need to bring back the economy so our families can preserve the American dream," he says in a recent ad touting his economic plan. "In my USA Plan, we can provide incentives to American business to bring manufacturing jobs back to the United States from China - and create manufacturing jobs here in New Hampshire."

In 2016, Messner Reeves attorneys represented China Export and Credit Insurance Corp. when it sued The Carlstar Group, a Tennessee-based maker of specialty tires, and several of its partner companies.

China Export and Credit

was seeking \$1 million it claimed was owed to a Chinese exporter, while The Carlstar Group said its payments were diverted after hackers breached the exporter's data network. The suit was dismissed in 2017 after the two sides reached a settlement, and Messner Reeves no longer represents the Chinese insurer.

Asked about the lawsuit, Messner's senior campaign adviser, Mike Biundo, said earlier this week it is impossible for Messner to know the inner workings of each case, given that he built a national law firm with thousands of clients.

"Further, it would not be

appropriate for his business to make political decisions about what clients the firm engages with. Our republic is built on the premise that everyone is entitled to a lawyer," he said in an email.

Biundo also took a swipe at Shaheen, via her husband, attorney Billy Shaheen, whose law firm has represented clients accused of sexual assault, stalking and other crimes.

"If the Shaheen campaign would like to discuss the questionable clients Shaheen & Gordon has served, we'd welcome that discussion," Biundo said.

Josh Marcus-Blank, spokesperson for Shaheen's

campaign, said the senator is not involved in her husband's law firm. And he sought to contrast Shaheen's record of standing up for New Hampshire small businesses with what he called "Messner's willingness to cash in with the communist Chinese government against an American business."

"Messner is conflating an American's right to legal representation with shaking down an American company on behalf of a foreign government," he said.

In addition to bringing back jobs from China, Messner's USA, or "Unleashing the Strength of America,"

plan also calls for legislation to ensure that government pension funds divest from companies controlled by the Chinese Communist Party.

In May, the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board said it would halt its decision to invest billions from the retirement assets of federal government employees in what Shaheen and others called "opaque Chinese firms engaged in human rights abuses."

She and Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Florida, also sponsored bipartisan legislation to permanently prevent the steering of federal retirement savings to China. **AP**

Ex-Chinese diplomat details new WTO forecast on world trade

JAMEY KEATEN, GENEVA

A former Chinese diplomat took center stage yesterday [Macau time] at the World Trade Organization, announcing its revised prediction for a 9.2% percent decline in world merchandise trade this year and cautioning that a further hit could await if the coronavirus continues to spread.

Deputy Director-General Yi Xiaozhun's presentation of the new WTO forecast symbolized a coming-of-age moment for China not yet a generation after it acceded to the trade body. It comes amid a punishing U.S. trade war against China under President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly accused the country of unfair trade practices and intellectual property theft.

WTO officials are required to serve the Geneva trade body, not their national interests. But the presentation by a former Chinese diplomat - Yi previously served as China's ambassador to the WTO - could resonate for a U.S. admini-

AP PHOTO



World Trade Organization Deputy Director General Yi Xiaozhun (centre)

nistration that has been withering in its criticism of the Communist government that oversees the No. 2 world economy.

Yi announced that WTO economists have revised to a 9.2% drop in merchandise trade this year, down from their earlier prediction of a 12.9% plunge. That forecast was presented in April, when COVID-19 case counts were soaring in major economic engines like the Europe Union and the United States.

The revision follows better trade performances in June and July, notably thanks to rising demand for health care goods and electronic equipment. WTO now also predicts a 7.2% rise in trade next year, far more "pessimistic" than the April forecast for a 21.3% bounce-back. The forecasts exclude trade in services, and focus only on merchandise.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is above all a public health crisis, and

preventing further suffering is the WTO's overriding concern," Yi said. "However, the outbreak has also disrupted the global economy in unprecedented ways."

Health measures initiated to battle the pandemic have hit many service sectors that require "in-person interactions," but such measures "saved many lives" despite the economic costs, he added. Yi specializes in economic research and statistics at WTO.

"Relatively fast action in many countries to provide fiscal and monetary support has helped mitigate some of the negative economic effects," Yi said. "The net result has been a deeper but less prolonged decline in trade, although considerable uncertainty remains about the strength of any recovery going forward."

He said this year's trade slump would accompany a drop in GDP of 4.8%, followed by a 4.9% jump next year.

"A resurgence of COVID-19 requiring new lockdowns could reduce global GDP growth by two to three percentage points, and shave up to four percentage points off of merchandise trade growth in 2021," he said.

Yi pointed to "some limited upside potential" if effective vaccines or other medical treatments can be made available quickly.

Yi is one of four WTO deputy directors-general along with others from Germany, Nigeria and the United States. Former WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo left the job in August, nearly a year ahead of schedule, and five remaining candidates are vying to succeed him in a process likely to be completed in coming weeks.

Yi has spoken publicly in his role, but had never previously led a WTO news conference, according to the trade body's press office. **AP**

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Door opens at 9:30 PM

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VIEWER'S GUIDE

Virus response on stage with Pence, Harris

MIKE Pence and Kamala Harris do not have a tough act to follow.

The vice presidential debate set for today follows the disorderly prime-time spectacle last week that had viewers of President Donald Trump and Democratic rival Joe Biden's matchup bemoaning the moderator's inability to shut off a candidate's microphone.

As vice president Pence has worked to level Trump's roughshod style and steer his response to the coronavirus pandemic. He will face a U.S. senator known for sharp questioning who has made it clear she wants to invoke her prosecutorial chops on the debate stage.

The handling of the pandemic and the contraction of COVID-19 by the president, along with several others in the White House, will almost literally be center stage. Pence and Harris are expected to be separated by a plexiglass shield to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

The debate starting at 9 a.m. today [Macau time] at the University of Utah is the only matchup scheduled between Pence and Harris.

What to watch:

COVID-19

Expect Pence and Harris to have starkly different assessments of the way the Trump administration has responded to the virus that's killed more than 210,000 Americans. Pence has led the White House's coronavirus task force, taking a high-profile spot at White House briefings, projecting an aura of calm and empathy rarely made by his boss. Harris, the former California attorney general, is likely to cross-examine Pence on the early response to the virus, the Trump campaign's decision to resume holding large rallies and the president's frequently cavalier attitude toward the disease.

RACE

Before Harris became the first Black woman to appear on a major party's presidential ticket, she had one of her most striking moments in the Democratic presidential primary when she ques-

AP PHOTO



Members of the production crew work on the stage near plexiglass barriers which will serve as a way to protect the spread of Covid-19

tioned Biden for once opposing the federally mandated busing of students to desegregated schools. As she faces off with Pence, who is white, expect her to address Trump's comments at the last debate where he demurred when was asked to condemn white supremacy, along with his remark that there were "very fine people" on both sides of a 2017 protest by white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, in which a counter-protester was killed.

SUPREME COURT FALLOUT

The GOP's push to quickly fill a Supreme Court seat once held by the late Ruth Bader Ginsberg could energize voters who see abortion, health care and other major issues on the line. Pence has emphasized his conservative Christian beliefs and anti-abortion stance on the campaign trail and portrayed Democrats as a threat to religious freedom. Harris, a member of the powerful Senate Judiciary Committee, set to hold a hearing on Trump's nominee, has been a staunch defender of abortion rights. A statement this week from two conservative justices raised new criticism of the court's 2015 ruling legalizing same-sex marriage and suggested the court needs to revisit the decision. The move underlines liberals' fears and conservatives' excitement about the potential reshaping of the court. Harris has been a staunch defender of same-sex marriage. Pence,

as Indiana governor in 2015, drew national attention for signing a law that allowed business owners to deny service to gay people for religious reasons.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Pence is considered a potential successor to Trump and a likely 2024 presidential candidate. He brings executive experience as Indiana governor and vice president and would instantly be a leading contender if he jumps into the GOP race. Harris has only elevated her profile since joining the Biden ticket and is expected to mount another run for the presidency in the future. That could come as soon as 2024 as Biden hasn't committed to running for a second term if he wins this year. Look for whether Pence and Harris set the stage for their own political ambitions.

GENDER DYNAMICS

Unlike the last debate, with two men and a male moderator, Wednesday's debate features Harris, the fourth woman to ever appear on a major party's presidential ticket, and a female moderator in Susan Page, the Washington bureau chief of USA Today. The Trump-Pence campaign is working to make inroads with female voters and suburban women in particular. Harris has made her own appeal on the campaign trail, telling voters that a Supreme Court challenge to the national health care law could end insurance coverage for birth control and enable in-

surers to treat pregnancy as a preexisting condition.

SAFETY MEASURES

Though Pence has not tested positive for COVID-19, his recent exposure to people who have led the Biden-Harris campaign to request a see-through barrier separating the candidates as a precaution against possible transmission. They will also be stationed more than 12 feet apart. Don't expect them to wear masks or shake hands. As with the previous debate, they're expected to have a limited in-person audience.

TRUMP

Though the president won't be on the debate stage, he's resumed his frequent Twitter habit since returning to the White House on Monday after spending three days in a military hospital for COVID-19 treatment. The president, an avid cable TV news viewer, may chime in via tweet as the debate unfolds.

HOW TO WATCH:

The 90-minute debate will be divided into nine 10-minute segments without commercial breaks. It will be aired on major networks and cable news channels, including ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox, Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network, PBS, NBC, MSNBC and C-SPAN. Most of the networks will offer a way to watch the debate live online, through their apps and accounts on YouTube and other social media channels. **MDT/AP**

this day in history



2003 THE TERMINATOR TAKES ON CALIFORNIA

The film star Arnold Schwarzenegger has been elected governor of California, ousting the incumbent, Gray Davis, three years before his term was due to end.

It is the first time in the state's history that a governor has been sacked mid-term.

With most of the ballots counted, Mr Schwarzenegger has won almost 48% of the vote.

In a victory speech before jubilant supporters, Mr Schwarzenegger thanked the people of California for giving him their trust.

"I want to be the governor of the people," he said. "I know that together we can make this the greatest state in the greatest country in the world."

He pledged to restore trust in California's government and to re-impose discipline on the state's out-of-control budget.

Gray Davis has already accepted defeat, telling supporters voters had decided "it was time for someone else to serve and I have accepted their judgement."

The vote was triggered by Republican activists, frustrated at high levels of unemployment, struggling schools, and the state's budget deficit, which now runs into tens of billions of dollars.

In a two-part ballot, voters were first asked if they wanted to recall - or sack - Governor Davis.

The only other governor in US history to be recalled was North Dakota's Lynn Frazier, in 1921.

Then - regardless of their answer to the first question - they had to indicate who they preferred as an alternative among the 135 alternative candidates running.

With 96.8% of the results in, 54.4% wanted a recall.

Mr Schwarzenegger was running ahead with 47.9% support. His closest rival, Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante, was on 32.4%.

The Austrian-born film star and former body builder - who made his name in action films such as The Terminator and Total Recall - galvanised the campaign when he announced he would be running on talk show host Jay Leno's television show earlier this year.

Large crowds have gathered to see him at campaign speeches and rallies.

But the political fight has been brutal at times, with Mr Schwarzenegger accused of sexually harassing a number of women, and allegations that he once praised Hitler.

He has denied the allegations, although he made an apology for "rowdy behaviour" on film sets.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The final result was 55.4% in favour of a recall, with 44.6% opposing it.

Arnold Schwarzenegger won a decisive victory with 48.7% support, 16% ahead of his nearest rival.

He was sworn in as Governor of California on 17 November 2003.

His first act was to abolish an unpopular car tax rise imposed by Governor Davis. He also formally ruled out tax rises - one of the big question marks overhanging his campaign.

Later policies, however, have caused controversy. In February 2004 he ordered his top legal official to act against the city of San Francisco for allowing gay marriages in defiance of state law, saying they represented "an imminent risk to civil order".

After weeks of wrangling with senators, Governor Schwarzenegger secured a last-ditch agreement on California's \$103bn (£56bn) budget in July 2004.

The budget neither raised taxes, nor cut spending too deeply, instead committing the state to borrowing heavily to keep its finances on track.

Some economists have warned the policy only postpones - and could exacerbate - the state's economic problems.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Today will be all about feeding your brain, and you should waste no time exploring topics and people you don't know very well. If a conversation drifts toward foreign ideas or weird sports, try to keep up with it.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Impromptu socializing just isn't realistic sometimes, so plan ahead and show them that you want to make room in your life for them. They'd love to hear from you.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

When that little voice inside your head tells you that one of your friends is in need, you should listen to it. Don't be afraid to reach out and see if someone you care about needs your help.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Friction with authority figures is never fun, but you shouldn't compromise what you believe just for the sake of not making someone else uncomfortable. It's time to stick to your guns.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

If you woke up this morning pretty sure of where you wanted to devote most of your energy now, as this day unfolds you could learn a few things that sway your opinion in other ways.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

If you take on a higher profile, will it create problems with co-workers? And does that even matter? At a certain point, you have to choose advancement over popularity.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

When something is troubling you, it can be helpful to try to keep yourself so distracted that you don't have to deal with it, but this is at best a short-term solution.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You may not realize it, but you have just about reached a goal you've been fighting to achieve for a while. Slow down today and take a look at where you are right now. Is this your destination?



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You're getting back into the mood for socializing and meeting new people, and this is a good time to expand your horizons. Step out of your normal social circle and see what's going on.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

It might feel like your emotions are taking over your entire life right now, but maybe that's not such a bad thing. If you feel tears welling or a giggle coming, don't try to fight it.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

This isn't tattling. This is problem solving, so don't hesitate to share what you've noticed. It's time for you to separate yourself a little bit from the people who are doing things in a way you don't approve of.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Stick close to home base. If you're worried you'll be bored, don't be! There is enough going on to help you make use of all the good vibes you've got going on.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	9	21	cloudy
Harbin	3	17	clear
Tianjin	11	23	cloudy
Urumqi	2	13	clear
Xi'an	12	17	drizzle
Lhasa	10	23	clear
Chengdu	14	18	drizzle
Chongqing	16	18	drizzle
Kunming	16	23	cloudy
Nanjing	16	24	cloudy
Shanghai	19	24	cloudy
Wuhan	12	20	clear
Hangzhou	17	25	cloudy
Taipei	21	26	drizzle
Guangzhou	21	27	cloudy
Hong Kong	24	29	cloudy

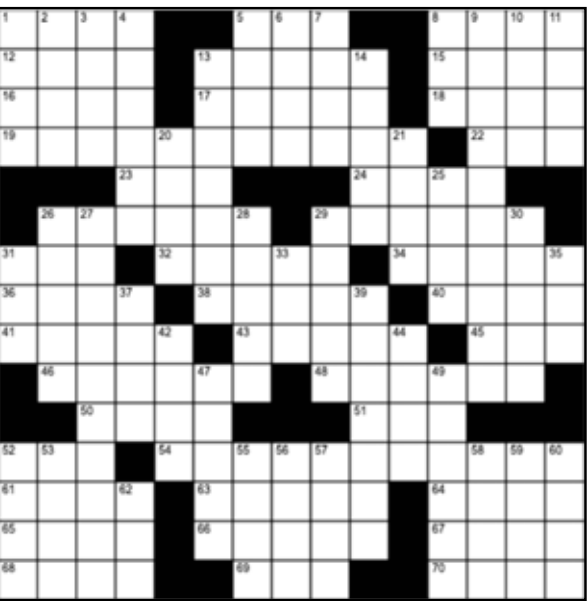
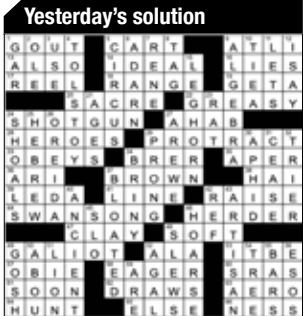
WORLD

Moscow	11	17	overcast
Frankfurt	9	16	cloudy
Paris	13	17	overcast
London	12	16	drizzle
New York	13	26	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- ____ Fox; 5- Riled (up); 8- Anthem starter; 12- Hard to find; 13- Chopper top; 15- Exec's note; 16- Starting; 17- Delight; 18- Trudge; 19- Inconsiderate; 22- Monk's title; 23- Overly; 24- Mozart's "____ kleine Nachtmusik"; 26- Winged child; 29- Emphasis; 31- Dundee denial; 32- Sacred song; 34- Go into; 36- Morale of "NYPD Blue"; 38- Politico Kefauver; 40- Electric fish; 41- ____ firma; 43- Runs without moving; 45- 911 respondent; 46- Phases; 48- Puget Sound city; 50- Milk source; 51- Buddhist temple; 52- That's awful; 54- Elementary; 61- Pasternak heroine; 63- Recipient; 64- Writer Wiesel; 65- Middy; 66- Shoved aside; 67- Church court; 68- Jessica of "Dark Angel"; 69- Porridge plant; 70- Box;

DOWN: 1- German sausage; 2- Like some decisions; 3- Switch back?; 4- Prove to be false; 5- Romance novelist Victoria; 6- Bibliography abbr.; 7- Carry; 8- Mantric syllables; 9- Amour-propre; 10- Cupid; 11- Indian exercise method; 13- Give another abode; 14- Adjust to zero; 20- Hiker's snack; 21- Foal's father; 25- Hawaiian goose; 26- Lawsuits; 27- Object of infatuation; 28- Groundwork; 29- Silvery fish; 30- Alabama city; 31- After taxes; 33- Inc.; overseas; 35- Queue after Q; 37- Dies ____; 39- Kelp; 42- Culture medium; 44- Examine, search; 47- Piece of music written for a solo instrument; 49- Furry swimmers; 52- It parallels a radius; 53- London jail; 55- Extinct flightless bird; 56- Swenson of "Benson"; 57- Run into; 58- Hanging to one side; 59- Comic Rudner; 60- Age unit; 62- "SNL" alum Gaster;



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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[Taipa] Hoi Wan Garden 2 1 1
900 ft² \$4,900,000 (ref: 19106003)

[Taipa] Taipa Village (2 units) 4 2 1
1,404 ft² \$8,380,000 (ref: 19096006)

[Taipa] Studio apartment 1 1 1
650 ft² \$9,000/mth (ref: 20061003)

[Taipa] Taipa Village Apartment 2 1 1
600 ft² \$9,900/mth (ref: n/a)

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Circus school in full swing again, despite Covid

FRANCISCO SECO,
BRUSSELS

THE ropes are swinging. Chalk stains the mats anew. And students at the ESAC international circus school in Brussels are smiling again, even if it is through a mask sometimes.

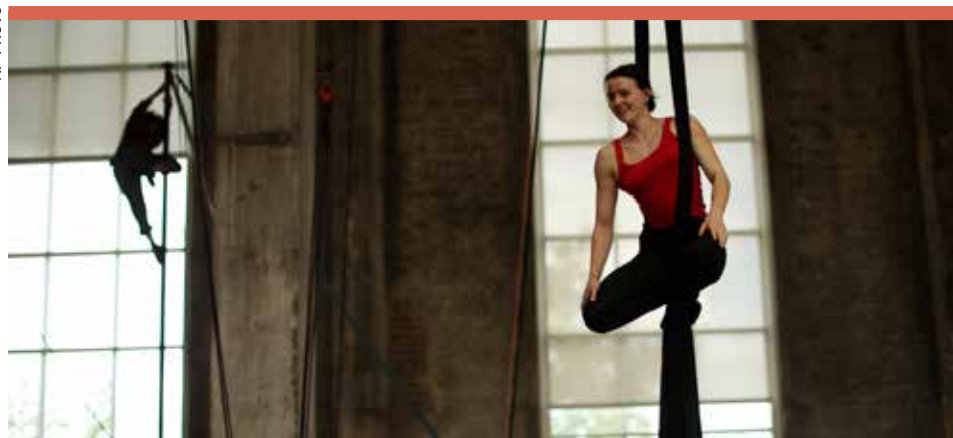
The pandemic forced the school to close in March, but with new measures in place to limit exposure the smell of sweat and the grunts of exertion are back again.

"We are still training and working as hard as we always do," said second-year student Sidney Billings, 20, enjoying the opportunity to hone her athletic talents again. Those who pick a circus career are so driven, they were quick to get rid of the rust.

"The students were excited to come back to work on a regular basis and to regain contact with teachers or project managers" said Spanish dance teacher Silvia Ubieta, 49, who joined the school in 2007.

For safety reasons amid the pandemic, Venezuelan school director Reynaldo Rampersad had to cut the number of students by 25%, creating "bubbles" where only a few work together in a small group and do online theory classes.

Only technical classes are face-to-face at the school facilities, where the use of masks depends on an official sports protocol. It creates scenes where one



AP PHOTO



student is hanging upside down with a white mask on while others are swinging with only a smile to cover their face.

Billings, the U.S. student, played down the impact of the measures on her daily routine: "Being in the school is honestly not so different: we have

to wear masks and the different years are more separate," she said. "Relationships with the coaches are a little bit different. We stay further away and they wear masks the whole time, but the actual relationship hasn't changed much."

Like so many students,

Billings says the pandemic has drawn a thick veil over her future.

"I am not entirely sure where I would like to be in 5 years. I feel a lot of that depends on how we deal with corona. All I know is that I would like to be performing or creating in a circus," she said. **AP**

Book It

'MISSIONARIES' SEES OUR FOREVER WARS AS VOCATION

Phil Klay's "Re-deployment" was a masterwork in mostly spare prose, its tonal range from laugh-out-loud, Joseph Heller-esque absurdity to soul-crushing bleakness. It may be our best literary window into the Iraq war.

A young Marine veteran's literary debut, the short story collection won a 2014 National Book Award.

"Missionaries," out Oct. 6 from Penguin Press, is Klay's next act. A big, ambitious novel, it spans a few decades and continents and plumbs U.S. forever wars' psychic imprint on peripatetic American warriors, militarism as a way of being and the consequences of ill-conceived foreign meddling.

Two U.S. Special Forces vets of Afghanistan and Iraq — transitioned to mercenary and a military attaché — have fought "in enough murky war zones to lack the near-religious faith in democracy that the war was sold on." Their next stop is Colombia, where Washington's targeting-killing apparatus, first turned on leftist insurgents, now hunts drug-trafficking warlords.

Colombia is a tremendously complex conflict. In fact, it's not really one but a multitude of conflicts whose dizzying dynamics vary by region, a dirty war mostly of rural civilians suffering forgotten.

A callow U.S. journalist, done with Kabul, dispatches to Colombia, which she considers "an extension of the same war, not the endless war on 'terror' but something vaguer ... related to the demands of America's not-quite-empire which was always projecting military power across the globe and just shifting the rationale of why."

Ugly Americans mixed up anew in somebody else's fight.

The novel's Colombian characters, including a second-generation army officer, his questioning daughter and a demobilized paramilitary, bear practically at birth the scars of a land where war's brutality has been a chronic condition.

Klay's considerable accomplishment in "Missionaries," goes well beyond incisive "insider access into the next permutation of the massive, industrial-scale U.S. machine for generating and executing targets."

In the tradition of Robert Stone and Graham Greene, he makes geopolitical misadventure, cultural blindness and atavistic behavior pulse inevitably toward terrible denouement.

The Colombian officer, a cultured, religious man Jesuit-schooled like Klay, reflects with a certain resigned callousness on his profession: "the work of violence, which is what makes history happen." **FRANK BAJAK, AP**



Phil Klay's "Missionaries" (Penguin)

AD



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OPINION

Our Desk

Lynzy Valles



A NOT-SO-GOLDEN WEEK

The streets of Leal Senado leading up to the Ruins of St Paul have not been crowded for the past – at least – seven months, due to the city's entry and travel restrictions amid Covid-19.

In the beginning, everyone found it weird and almost eerie that one could count on one hand the numbers of residents walking along that street.

Apparently, it has, for some time, been considered normal that one would not have to try so hard to make one's way to the Ruins of St Paul, given the lack of foot traffic – or at least not be annoyed by the fact that there is a lot of luggage alongside the streets, rendering them unwalkable.

Even amid the resumption of visas to Guangdong residents on August 26, there hasn't been much of a difference in terms of foot traffic in the city center – nor in the city's entertainment resorts.

The SAR only welcomed some 10,000 to 15,000 daily visitor arrivals from the province last month.

The reinstatement of the Individual Visit Scheme has been long-awaited for the government as well as gaming operators, as only then will it be a sign of economic recovery. As said by Ho Iat Seng, the effect of the pandemic has shown that the city is overreliant on the casino industry, as several SMEs have closed, affecting thousands of local and non-local residents.

In any case, government officials and gaming representatives have been careful about giving their estimates on the number of possible tourist arrivals in the SAR.

The tourism board is looking at some 12,000 to 16,000 daily visitor arrivals, while the Chief Executive has expected some 20,000 daily arrivals from the mainland.

Preliminary data shows that there were a total of over 120,000 tourist arrivals in the first six days of the Golden Week – which represents an 86.6% year-on-year drop.

Hotel occupancy – according to the tourism board – was around 40% for 5-star hotels, and some 30% for the lower rating hotels.

Although the numbers are far from usual, the board still seems pleased with what the city is attaining in terms of tourist numbers and hotel occupancy rates.

The massive drop isn't a surprise. Actually, I feel like the surprise is that it even recorded over 20,000 visitor arrivals on some days, noting that the central government had already encouraged these people to travel within the country. Although that included Macau, I believe that getting the Covid-19 test may have discouraged many of them from coming.

But even on the mainland alone, domestic travel was down nearly a quarter from 542 million to 425 million.

Although the SAR has not recorded such strong numbers for this year's national holiday, local residents have somewhat enjoyed the long weekend.

Apparently, staycations aren't really over for local residents.

Several integrated resorts, particularly 5-star ones, are still offering good deals for locals.

On Agoda alone, 3 to 4-star hotels in the Macau peninsula still have their prices as low as 200 patacas, while rooms in the Cotai Strip start from 800 patacas.

I know that a lot of locals and non-locals alike have been taking up these offers, as when the city goes back to its pre-pandemic levels and tourists return to the city, staycations will be a rare activity, unlike now, where families are still opting to stay in hotels despite having finished the summer break.

This Golden Week isn't so bad after all – at least for the locals who get to enjoy further promotions during their long weekend.

GREEK COURT RULES GOLDEN DAWN PARTY CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION

A Greek court ruled yesterday that the far-right Golden Dawn party was operating as a criminal organization, following a politically charged five-year trial against dozens of defendants, including former lawmakers of what had become Greece's third largest party.

Delivering landmark verdicts, the court ruled that seven of the party's 18 former lawmakers, including party leader Nikos Michaloliakos, were guilty of leading a criminal organization, while the others were guilty of participating in a criminal organization.

Those convicted of leading a criminal organization face between

five and 15 years in prison, while the others face sentences of up to 10 years.

As news of the guilty verdicts broke, cheers and celebrations erupted among the crowd of more than 15,000 people gathered in an anti-fascist rally outside the Athens courthouse. A small group among the crowd threw Molotovs and stones at police guarding the courthouse, with authorities responding with tear gas and use of a water cannon. It was not immediately clear why the group began throwing projectiles in the otherwise peaceful rally.

THE BUZZ

TWO SCIENTISTS WIN NOBEL CHEMISTRY PRIZE FOR 'GENE SCISSORS'

AP PHOTO



France's Emmanuelle Charpentier (left) and American Jennifer Doudna

TWO scientists won the Nobel Prize in chemistry yesterday for developing a method of genome editing likened to "molecular scissors" that offer the promise of one day curing inherited diseases and even cancer.

Working on opposite sides of the Atlantic, Frenchwoman Emmanuelle Charpentier and American Jennifer A. Doudna developed a method known as CRISPR/Cas9 that can be used to change the DNA of animals, plants and microorganisms with extremely high precision.

"There is enormous power in this genetic tool, which affects us all," said Claes Gustafsson, chair of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry. "It has not only revolutionized basic science, but also resulted in innovative crops and will lead to groundbreaking new medical treatments."

Gustafsson said that, as a result, any genome can now be edited "to fix genetic damage," adding that the tool "will provide humankind with great opportunities."

But he cautioned that the "enormous power of this technology means we have to use it with great care."

It has already raised serious ethical questions in the scientific community. Most of the world became more aware of CRISPR in 2018, when Chinese scientist Dr. He Jiankui revealed he had helped make the world's first gene-edited babies, to try to engineer resistance to future infection with the AIDS virus. His work was denounced worldwide as unsafe human experimentation because of the risk of causing unintended changes that can pass to future generations, and he's currently in prison.

Charpentier and Doudna developed a method that can be used to change the DNA of animals, plants and microorganisms with high precision

In September, an international panel of experts issued a report saying it's still too soon to try to make genetically edited babies because the science isn't advanced enough to ensure safety, but they mapped a pathway for any countries that want to consider it.

"I was very emotional, I have to say," Charpentier,

51, told reporters by phone from Berlin after hearing of the award, announced in Stockholm by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

Asked about the fact that it was the first time that two women have won the chemistry Nobel together, Charpentier said that while she considers herself first and foremost a scientist, she hoped it would encourage others.

"I wish that this will provide a positive message to young girls who would like to follow the path of science," she said.

Doudna told The Associated Press about her surprise at receiving the early morning call.

"I literally just found out, I'm in shock," she said. "I was sound asleep."

"My greatest hope is that it's used for good, to uncover new mysteries in biology and to benefit humankind,"

Doudna said.

The Broad Institute at Harvard and MIT have been in a long court fight over patents on CRISPR technology, and many other scientists did important work on it, but Doudna and Charpentier have been most consistently honored with prizes for turning it into an easily usable tool. **AP**

AP PHOTO



Polish antitrust authorities have fined Russia's state-owned energy giant Gazprom \$7.6 billion for its role in building the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline to Germany, saying the project hurts Polish consumers and increases Europe's dependence on Russian imports. The Office of Competition and Consumer Protection yesterday also fined five other international companies participating in the project a total of \$61 million (52 million euros).

AP PHOTO



Israeli police clashed with hundreds of ultra-Orthodox Jews overnight as they sought to enforce restrictions on public gatherings during a nationwide coronavirus lockdown, the police said yesterday. Footage released by police showed huge crowds of ultra-Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem chanting and hurling stones and metal bars at police officers. The police said 17 people were arrested.

Spain's prime minister unveiled a major plan yesterday to boost his country out of recession by spending 140 billion euros (\$162 billion) of European Union aid to reshape the economy, with the aim of creating 800,000 jobs over the next three years.

AP PHOTO



Senegal Tens of thousands of Muslims descended upon Senegal's holy city this week for the annual Grand Magal pilgrimage, a tradition in West Africa that some fear could become a super-spreader event for COVID-19. In previous years, as many as 3 million people have traveled to the city of Touba during Magal.