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HOTEL OCCUPANCY, GROSS GAMING REVENUE DROP TO 'DISAPPOINTING' LEVELS DURING GOLDEN WEEK

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SMUGGLERS CAUGHT AFTER DRAMATIC SPEEDBOAT CHASE

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AP PHOTO



North Korea leader Kim Jong Un warned that his country would “fully mobilize” its nuclear force if threatened as he took center stage at a military parade that unveiled what appeared to be a new intercontinental ballistic missile and other weapons. Kim described the North’s continuing efforts to develop its nuclear deterrent as necessary for its defense and said it wasn’t targeting any specific country.

AP PHOTO

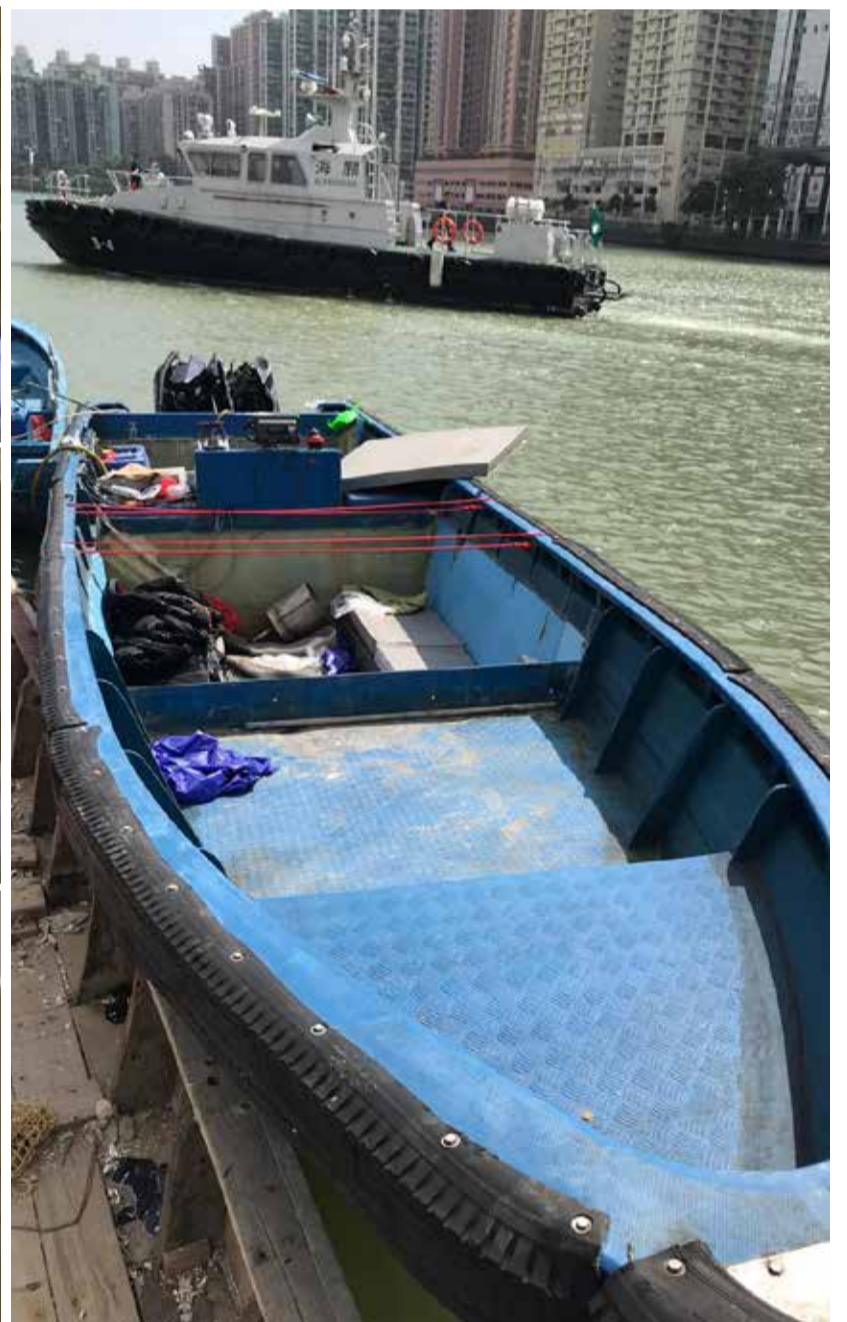


Thailand At least 17 people died yesterday when a train collided with a bus, officials said. The tour bus was traveling with 65 passengers on board when it crossed the railway track during rain in Chacheongsao, 80 kilometers east of Bangkok, where a train smashed into the vehicle.

Cambodia Flooding has killed at least 11 people since the beginning of the month, a disaster official said yesterday. Seasonal rains were made worse by a tropical storm, which caused flash floods in several provinces last week, said Khun Sokha, a spokesman for the National Committee for Disaster Management. Among the 11 dead, 10 have reportedly drowned in floodwaters and one was killed by lightning, he said.

Pakistan blocked the Chinese social media app TikTok, saying the company failed to fully comply with the instructions to develop an effective mechanism to control unlawful content. In a statement, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority said that it took the step after receiving complaints against “immoral and indecent” content on the video-sharing platform.

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TRAVEL WITHOUT BORDERS

The industry gets creative with sea and air tours to nowhere

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BLOOMBERG



JACKSON CHANG ACQUITTED OF CORRUPTION BUT GUILTY OF LEAKING INFORMATION

JULIE ZHU

THE former president of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) has not been convicted of bribery but has been found guilty of leaking confidential information to third parties. The court ruled that Jackson Chang is to serve two years in prison.

On Friday, the Court of First Instance delivered the finding in relation to Chang as well as 25 other defendants' lawsuits.

Chang has been found not guilty of four charges of taking bribes, whereas he has been convicted of leaking confidential information. Chang is also guilty of inaccurately declaring his wealth.

"Jackson Chang has remained silent and showed no sign of regret. As the highest leader at that time, he should have set a good example for other people, but he did not," the court judge read.

The judge ruled that Chang took advantage of his power multiple times to obtain the department's internal information and pass it onto other people who were not authorized to access that information.

"Such behavior created a severely negative impact on the government and civil servants," the judge said.

Chang is given 20 days to decide whether to appeal against the court's ruling. Chang was



RENATO MARQUES

also temporarily released on bail after yesterday's verdict.

Before the court ruling comes into effect, he will not be held in custody under the condition that he reports his personal information and residential information to the relevant department in addition to a 100,000 patacas bail.

Chang passed information to the other defendants regarding IPIM's criteria in granting residence permits to investors or skilled professionals, the court found.

According to evidence disclosed during the trial, immigration

applications made through an investment plan will score zero points, in terms of net asset, if the amount is below 13 million patacas. Applications will score 7 points for a sum between 13 million patacas and 20 million patacas. IPIM gives an applicant 11 points or 15 points if the asset is between 20 and 35 million patacas, or above 35 million patacas, respectively.

This was the crucial information Chang leaked to other defendants, including Ng Kuok Sao, who was an agent representing several other defendants to

process immigration applications. Ng was the leader of an organization that was involved in inauthentic immigration applications.

The prosecution authority tried to prove Chang's guilt in accepting cash, bank transfers and luxury watches. However, the plaintiff failed to prove this charge.

The prosecution authority also failed to prove that Ng offered Chang other bribes, by hiring Chang's daughter, Crystal Chang, to do menial work and to receive a better salary benefit compared to another person working in the same position.

"Jackson Chang, you have been accused of [...] bribery, but the court didn't have sufficient evidence [to prove it]. Even though there is not sufficient evidence, it does not mean that you didn't do it," said the judge.

Chang's wife and daughter were faced with accusations of money laundering and of ignorance in declaring wealth. The court found both innocent.

Ng is found guilty of organized crimes and was sentenced to 18 years in prison. He is convicted of organizing criminal syndicates and forging documents.

Former Director of IPIM, Glória Batalha Ung, is found guilty of leaking confidential information and is sentenced to one year and nine months in jail.

The judge made similar re-

marks on Ung, having condemned her behavior's negative impact on the government and civil service's image.

The other defendant is former IPIM official, Ian Iat Chun, who is a former deputy chief of IPIM's Residency Application and Legal Affairs Division. He is convicted of forging documents and is sentenced to four years in jail.

"The three of you, as high-ranking leaders of IPIM [Chang, Ung, and Ian], didn't set a good example. You even conspired with other people. [...] None of you admitted the mistake and [you] remained silent [...] and didn't bear the consequences."

In total, approximately eight defendants were found guilty. The others were given sentences with varying years of imprisonment.

Ung's lawyer has confirmed that his client will appeal the ruling within the legal period as he considered it unfair that Ung received a similar period of imprisonment as Chang, who was indicted for more accounts than Ung.

During Friday's verdict session, only five defendants appeared in the court, including Chang and his wife as well as Ung. The court judge requested absent defendants to provide reasonable explanations regarding their absence, or else they will be subjected to fines.

Defense 'only partially pleased' with court sentence, may appeal

RENATO MARQUES

THE defense lawyer of the former president of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), Jackson Chang, is only "partially pleased" with the sentence handed down on Friday by the judges of the Court of First Instance (TJB), expressing his intention to appeal, Álvaro Rodrigues

told the media after the court session.

"Partially, justice has been served, at least in what concerned the crimes of the criminal organization, corruption, and money laundering," Rodrigues said, noting the crimes of which Chang was acquitted, "We have not yet made a final decision [on the appeal], but I will speak to my client next

week and we will decide. I believe we will [most probably] appeal."

Chang was sentenced to two years of imprisonment for the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information of IPIM as well as submitting an inaccurate income report.

Rodrigues also considered the sentence excessive having regard to the type of crime as well as the penal

framework, noting that although his client was cleared of all the serious accusations, the feeling is that the result is "somewhat unfair since my client has already served 1 year and 3 months of prison that he should not have served since that time was handed as preventive custody concerning the serious crimes of which he has now been acquitted."

Pedro Leal, the defense lawyer of the former executive director of IPIM, Glória Batalha Ung, was unhappy with the court's decision regarding his client.

"I don't agree with the imprisonment penalty. The suspension of the effectiveness of prison sentences is exactly for this type of situation, for people who have always lived their lives by justice and the law, and are suddenly caught in a situation like this. The court ended up [additionally] penalizing [Glória Batalha] due to the fact that she refused to confess to the crimes. People confess when they

know they have committed a crime. She remains confident that she did not commit a crime," Leal said while exiting the courtroom, TDM Radio reported.

In regards to Batalha's sentence of 1 year and 9 months of imprisonment for three counts of breach of secrecy and one for abuse of power, Leal considered the sentence to be excessive when compared to the two years handed to Chang for seven counts of the crime of breach of secrecy.

Both the defense lawyers and the prosecution have 20 days to appeal from the court's decision.

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Hotel occupancy scores low for supposedly busy period

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU welcomed over 156,000 visitors during the Golden Week this year, marking a year-on-year fall of 86.0% in average daily visitor arrivals during the national holiday.

Some 145,000 visitors came from the mainland which was the major source of visitors, constituting 93.1% of total visitor arrivals with an 84.0% decline in average daily visitor arrivals from last year. According to a statement issued by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), from the first week after travel permit issuance was resumed up to Golden Week, the average daily visitor arrivals rose from around 6,000 to nearly 20,000.

Despite measures against the Covid-19 pandemic and the decline in travel plans among other factors, visitor arrivals from the mainland have slowly risen in recent months as the pandemic situation became generally stable in both regions.

Since the SAR has opened its borders to mainland China, no Covid-19 cases have been recorded.

Visitors are required to show

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



a negative Covid-19 test prior to entering the city, as well as complete the health code conversion between Guangdong and Macau.

Macau has been waiting for the Golden Week to see its economy recover after several months of economic downturn due to the strict travel restrictions enforced by the SAR and

mainland China.

The absence of mainland China's visitors and international tourists has caused a number of SMEs to shut down, which also led to thousands of workers being laid off.

Meanwhile, figures provided by industry operators revealed that local hotel establishments (hotels and guest houses) saw

an average occupancy rate of 43.6% during Golden Week, a year-on-year decrease of 50.4 percentage points. To date, the supply of local hotels and guest houses has reached a total of 42,441 rooms.

The MGTO had previously expressed that it was keen on seeing at least 50% hotel occupancy as a good sign of recovery.

The average room rate of hotel establishments (hotels and guest houses) was about 1,290.5 patacas during Golden Week, a year-on-year decline of 30.0%.

The national holiday is considered a peak season when hotel rooms are more expensive than normal days.

The average room rates of five star and four star hotels were around 1,634 patacas and 605.2 patacas respectively, down 26.9% and 49.4% respectively.

MGTO also carried out a joint initiative against illegal accommodation with the Public Security Police Force, but did not discover any apartment operating illegally during the operation.

AVERAGE HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATE DURING GOLDEN WEEK

	Average Occupancy Rate	Diference from 2019
5-Star hotels	43.2%	-52.0
4-Star hotels	45.2%	-47.4
3-Star hotels	51.9%	-42.8
2-Star hotels	21.4%	-61.0
1-Star hotels	23.9%	-51.7

GAMING

Bernstein: 'disappointing' GGR over holidays

LYNZY VALLES

THE total gross gaming revenue (GGR) for traditionally one of the busiest periods in the gaming calendar has plunged 76% year-on-year, which analysts have dubbed as disappointing.

"At this stage, we estimate [that] October [will] see a [GGR] decline of maybe 70 percent" from the prior-year period, according to a note from Sanford C. Bernstein Ltd., as cited by GGRAsia.

"This is largely tied to visa processing and visitation and the severity of any liquidity constraints which remain largely uncertain."

The company added that things could improve over the next couple of months, citing measures that simplify the process of incoming

BLOOMBERG



tourists.

"The key will be the simplification of the visa process (which is currently taking up to two weeks to process), and perhaps the elimination of the Covid-19

test requirement."

According to the group's channel checks, the city's GGR recorded a total of 1.95 billion patacas, implying that it saw a daily average rate of 279 million patacas

during the national holiday.

However, the figure was already up by 279% when compared to the previous month, according to analysts Vitaly Umansky, Tianjiao Yu and Kelsey Zhu.

thought would outweigh the nuisances related to travel arrangement to Macau and stricter capital control," said JP Morgan analysts.

"A broadening clamp-down on illegal/overseas gambling in China is creating jitters among agents/players at unprecedented levels, in turn throttling any VIP/high-end demand recovery (which, by the way, was touted and supposed to lead the initial rebound)," the group added.

With no upcoming major holiday in the next few weeks, the gaming sector as well as businesses still remain uncertain about recovery.

As previously reported by the Times, the health of the economy now depends entirely on mainland visitors and their willingness to visit. However, the figures revealed over the holidays as well as since the resumption of the Individual Visit Scheme is somewhat still below the expectations of analysts.

Golden Week visitors to the SAR only totaled to over 156,000 visitors, a drop of 86.0% compared to the 985,000 visitors during the week spanning October 1 to 7. This marked the 2019 peak for gross gaming revenue with some 26.4 billion patacas wagered in Macau's casinos.

The lack of recovery for Macau during the seven-day national holiday – particularly the slow movement of gambling activity, has led to other analysts predicting that it may be as far into the future as 2022 before GGR figures return to pre-coronavirus highs.

This means that Macau has to weather the economic downturn for another year.

"We were overly hopeful about the prospect of pent-up demand, which we

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

CONSUMERS' CONFIDENCE IN EMPLOYMENT DROPPED TO LOWEST POINT SINCE 2008

JULIE ZHU

THE latest results of the Macau Consumer Satisfaction Index show that local consumers' confidence in local employment has dropped to its lowest point since, according to a statement released by the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST).

Compared with the previous quarter, four of the six sub-indices included in the survey calculation fell, while two sub-indices rose.

According to the index setting, 100 points marks a high level of confidence.

The institute interviewed 845 Macau residents who are aged 18 and above.

Among them, the "local economy" sub-index fell the most, at 60.67 points this quarter, a decrease of 19.94% from the previous quarter.

Another major decrease was recorded for the sub-index of "employment", which was 59.93 points, a 12.14% drop



compared to the previous quarter. This is a new low since the first Macao Consumer Satisfaction Index in 2008.

The sub-index of "properly purchase" recorded 64.28 points, a decrease of 11.07% from the previous quarter, whereas the sub-index of "investment in stocks" was 79.47 points, a decrease of 4.59% from the previous quarter.

The only two sub-indices which showed better performance compared to the previous quarter were "price level" and "living standard", which were up by 1.5% and

28.96% respectively.

Compared to Macau, mainland consumers' confidence grew by 1.4% in the third quarter of this year.

In summary, the overall consumer confidence of Macau in the third quarter of 2020 continued the downward trend of the previous quarter.

The institute concluded that local consumers' confidence in employment has hit a record low.

"After the epidemic in mainland China was brought under control, the economy is rebounding at a considera-

ble speed. At present, the global Covid-19 vaccine research and development effort has multiple technical routes in progress, and it is likely to land within the year," the research team concluded.

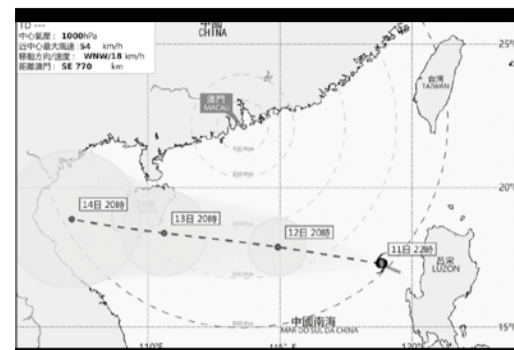
"The implementation of the vaccine will reduce global economic uncertainty, help boost physical investment and consumption in contact-type agglomeration industries, and promote the recovery of the overall economy."

On Friday, the Macao New Chinese Youth Association also recorded similar findings.

According to a survey conducted recently by the association, 82% of university graduates who are currently looking for jobs confirmed that the pandemic has negatively affected the start to their career.

Among 754 valid responses, nearly 70% of the interviewees have found stable jobs.

Over 40% expect their monthly salary to be below 13,000 patacas.



TYPHOON SIGNAL NO.1 HOISTED AS HAINAN-BOUND STORM NEARS

THE Macao Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) raised typhoon signal No.1 at 10 p.m. last night as a tropical depression detected about 770 kilometers southeast of the city was seen moving through the South China Sea.

This is a precaution signal, the bureau said, however it is likely that the warning will be replaced with a higher signal later today.

The path of the tropical depression suggests it will make landfall in Hainan Island tomorrow after traveling on a westerly course throughout today.

According to the SMG, the weather in Macau will be unsettled on Tuesday and Wednesday this week. The weather authority said yesterday that the possibility of raising typhoon signal No.3 later this evening was "relatively high."

The SMG advises the public to pay attention to the latest weather information. **DB**

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Customs authority arrests seven mainlanders in dramatic maritime chase

THE customs authority has apprehended seven mainland men believed to be running a smuggling operation off Taipa's northeast coast.

A dramatic speedboat chase in which the smuggler's boat briefly evaded capture by two customs vessels was captured on video and shared widely on social media.

The Macau Customs Service said it arrested seven individuals, all residents of the mainland, and transferred them to the judicial authorities for processing. They stand accused of a variety of crimes, including illegal entry, smuggling and resisting arrest.

The suspects were arrested during an anti-smuggling operation conducted early on Friday morning, according to a statement from the customs authority.

While patrolling the northeast coast of Taipa, the authority intercepted and searched a man who was acting suspiciously. The man was found to be carrying a handheld communications device and the Customs officer who searched him believed it was



being used to carry out smuggling activities.

The bureau dispatched coastal patrol officers and speedboats to search for other suspects in nearby areas.

They discovered a speedboat off the coast of northern Taipa and approached the vessel to investigate. Upon detection, the suspects onboard attempted to flee in the speedboat and the customs authority gave chase.

According to the video foota-

ge, the smugglers' boat was able to outmaneuver two Customs speedboats for several minutes before it was finally intercepted. Five male suspects were arrested on board.

In a follow-up statement released several hours after the first, the Macau Customs Service sought to dispel a rumor circulating online that officers had used firearms during the operation.

"The customs officers did not use any firearms for interception,

and the customs speedboats used general interception techniques to stop the case during the pursuit," said the statement published in Chinese.

Meanwhile, in accordance with the epidemic prevention guidelines, the customs officers performed temperature checks on the intercepted persons and took the relevant protective measures. They were sent to be tested for the virus and the results came back negative. **DB**

ELDERLY MAN FOUND DEAD AT HOME

An 89-year-old man was found dead at his home after the neighbors reported an unpleasant smell coming from his apartment to the police. According to the Judiciary Police (PJ) report, around 9 a.m. yesterday, neighbors of the elderly man reported to the building management that an unpleasant smell was coming from the housing unit where the man lived. After knocking on the door without receiving a reply, the management called the police who then sought assistance from the Fire Services (CB) to enter the apartment. There, the fireman found the body of the man lying on the floor behind the front door. The body showed signs of deterioration compatible with death occurring several days ago. Upon inspection, the PJ inspectors found no injuries or evidence of any crime. The PJ also informed that the deceased was a resident and lived alone.

TEENAGER SCAMS FOUR MEN IN FAKE SEXUAL ENCOUNTER

A local 19-year-old male has allegedly scammed four men through an online dating website, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported. According to the report, the teenager contacted people through the Internet and asked them to make advance payments to provide sexual services, to which he had a total profit of 4,800 patacas from four different victims. The case was revealed after one of the victims reported the scam to the PJ. The victim, a 30-year-old male resident said that after being requested to pay a security deposit and before meeting the person, he was asked to increase the amount of the deposit. After being caught and questioned, the youngster admitted to having performed the crime justifying it with the need for cash due to being unemployed. The suspect is now facing accusations of aggravated fraud.

SSM CALLS ON SENIORS TO GET THE FLU VACCINE

The Health Bureau (SSM) is urging senior citizens to get the flu vaccine that is being provided by the health authorities, Deputy Director of SSM, Dr Cheang Seng Ip said during a public event over the weekend. Noting that the flu vaccination process is on-going since September 28 and for the time being, specially dedicated to the high-risk priority groups, Cheang called on such residents to get the vaccine as soon as possible. The Deputy Director also said that due to the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the SSM is paying special attention to the high-risk groups, including the elderly, to prevent potential overlapping infections. Cheang said that residents are becoming more aware of the advantages of vaccination noting that this year the number of people vaccinated increased significantly. Cheang said that 20,000 people have already received the vaccine in less than two weeks.

BNU, BOC to continue issuing the pataca for a decade

ANTHONY LAM

THE Macau Special Administrative Region Government has recently signed a new currency issuing contract with the city's two currency issuing banks.

Unlike many other jurisdictions, the legal tender of Macau is not issued by its Central Bank, which in the city's case is the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM). Instead, the pataca is issued by two retail banks, Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) and the Bank of China, Macau Branch (BOC).

The new contract is valid for the next decade and will expire on October 15, 2030. The two note issuing banks are



assigned with equal authority. When they issue new notes, they are bound by the law to provide an equivalent amount of foreign reserve.

Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, signed the

contract on behalf of the government, while Carlos Cid Álvares signed on behalf of the BNU and Li Guang on behalf of the BOC.

The pataca's issuance is 100% backed by foreign exchange reserves

in Hong Kong dollar at a fixed rate of HKD1 to MOP1.03 with a non-interest-bearing Certificate of Indebtedness as a legal backing for the issued banknote. With that said, the AMCM assures the full convertibility of the

pataca into Hong Kong dollars.

In addition, as the issuance of the Hong Kong dollar is backed by the U.S. dollar, the patacas thus indirectly have a linked exchange rate with the U.S. currency. The rate is pegged at about USD1 to MOP8.

According to the AMCM, in 1905, the Macau government granted BNU the exclusive right to issue banknotes in pataca denominations. The first batch of the pataca banknotes circulated in Macau on January 27, 1906.

In 1980, the then government transferred the exclusive right to the Currency Issuing Institute of Macau (IEM). However, BNU has continued to issue pataca banknotes. When the Government renewed its note issuance agreement with BNU on October 13, 1995, the BOC became the second note-issuing bank.

CHINA BACKS INDONESIA TO BECOME VACCINE HUB OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

China supports Jakarta's efforts to become the center for vaccine production in Southeast Asia, Indonesia Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investments Luhut Pandjaitan said after meeting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Indonesia has the strongest capacity for vaccine production in Southeast Asia, Wang said, according to a statement issued by Pandjaitan after the two held a discussion on Saturday. Wang will support China's companies to step up cooperation, according to the statement. Volunteers in Indonesia's city of Bandung, the capital of West Java province, are already taking part in trials for a vaccine being developed by China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd. Southeast Asia's biggest economy is also working on its own inoculation, called the Merah Putih vaccine, as it seeks to ensure there are enough doses for its 270 million population. The two ministers discussed developing three industrial zones in Indonesia's Bintan, Batam and Semarang areas, and the participation of Chinese universities in researching herbal medicine in North Sumatra, according to the statement released yesterday.

MALAYSIA SEIZES SIX CHINESE FISHING VESSELS, DETAINS 60 CITIZENS

Malaysia's maritime authority detained six Chinese fishing vessels and their crews for allegedly trespassing in waters off one of its southern states. The vessels, registered in Qinhuangdao, China, were believed to be sailing toward Mauritania in northwestern Africa to fish but had to stop and anchor off Johor state due to a malfunction, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency said in a statement Saturday evening. There were six captains and 54 crew members, all Chinese nationals and between the ages of 31 and 60, it said. All were arrested after failing to produce permits from authorities to conduct activities or anchor in Malaysian waters, the agency said. It added the vessels, which didn't have any cargo, were seized.

PHILIPPINES, CHINA FOREIGN MINISTERS REAFFIRM TIES

The Philippines and China foreign ministers reaffirmed the "continuing vitality" of their countries' relations amid recent tensions in the South China Sea. China Foreign Minister Wang Yi hosted Philippines counterpart Teodoro Locsin at a meeting in Tengchong City, in the southern province of Yunnan, on Saturday to discuss political and economic cooperation, according to a statement issued by Manila. Wang affirmed China's commitment to support the Philippines' infrastructure program, it said. "The two foreign ministers also engaged in a candid and in-depth exchange on regional security concerns, as well as issues of mutual interest in the context of Asean-China relations in which the Philippines acts as China coordinator," the statement said. The meeting came weeks after Locsin said the Philippines won't follow China's policy of keeping the U.S. out of the South China Sea, and President Rodrigo Duterte's remarks before the United Nations that the Philippines will "firmly reject attempts to undermine" a 2016 arbitral ruling in its favor in the maritime dispute.



U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos

US SEES 'MALIGN INFLUENCE' IN CHINA-BACKED SCHOOL PROGRAM

COLLIN BINKLEY

The Trump administration on Friday encouraged U.S. schools and colleges to rethink their ties to the Confucius Institute, a program that brings Chinese language classes to America but, according to federal officials, also invites a "malign influence" from China.

In letters to universities and state education officials, the State Department and Education Department said the program gives China a foothold on U.S. soil and poses a threat to free speech. Schools are being advised to examine the program's activities and "take action to safeguard your educational environments."

"The presence of this authoritarian influence on our campuses has never been more concerning, nor more consequential," officials wrote in the letters, which were signed by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

More than 60 U.S. universities host Confucius Institute through partnerships with an affiliate of China's Ministry of Education. China provides teachers and textbooks and typically splits the cost with the university. The program also brings Chinese language classes to about 500 elementary and secondary classrooms.

The program has drawn mounting scrutiny from U.S. officials amid ratcheted tensions with China. In August, the State Department labeled the program's national office as a

foreign mission of the Chinese Communist Party, which requires the program to submit reports about its operations and spending in the United States.

In Friday's letters, U.S. officials drew attention to China's new national security law in Hong Kong, which critics say curtails free expression and other liberties. The letters cite recent reports that some U.S. college professors are allowing students to opt out of discussions on Chinese politics amid fears that students from Hong Kong or China could be prosecuted at home.

Such fears are "well justified," officials said, adding that at least one student from China was recently jailed by Chinese authorities over tweets he posted while studying at a U.S. university.

The Confucius Institute U.S. Center did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

DeVos and Pompeo echoed longstanding complaints from academic groups that say schools give China too much control over what's taught in Confucius Institute classes. Teachers who are vetted and paid by the Chinese government "can be expected to avoid discussing China's treatment of dissidents and religious and ethnic minorities," the officials wrote.

"Confucius Institutes are branded as Chinese language and cultural learning centers, but there is increasing evidence that they are also tools of malign PRC influence and dissemination of CCP propaganda on U.S. campuses," officials said, referring to the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party.

The letters do not explicitly urge schools to cut ties with the Confucius Institute but say the measure could avoid problems. Officials said many schools have built "excellent Chinese language and culture programs" without the Chinese government.

Teachers who are vetted and paid by the Chinese government 'can be expected to avoid discussing China's treatment of dissidents,' say officials

The move marks the Trump administration's latest attempt to curb China's presence in the U.S. amid a battle over trade, the coronavirus and human rights issues. Authorities have also asked universities to help stop the theft of trade secrets by scholars tapped by the Chinese government.

Once hosted at more than 100 universities, Confucius Institute has been closed on many campuses amid a drumbeat

of criticism. At least 39 universities have announced plans to shutter programs since the start of 2019, according to a log published by the National Association of Scholars, a conservative nonprofit group.

Some of the closures were prompted by a 2018 defense bill that barred universities from using Defense Department money to support Chinese language programs if they also hosted a Confucius Institute. At the University of Maryland, which founded the nation's first Confucius Institute in 2004, officials cited the bill in their decision to end the program this year.

Last year, a bipartisan Senate report encouraged all universities to cut ties with the Confucius Institute unless Chinese officials provided more transparency around the program and offered the U.S. equal opportunities for cultural outreach in China. Soon after, DeVos launched a crackdown on foreign gifts

and contracts to U.S. universities, often focusing on financial ties to China.

Other nations have also sought to curb China's influence in their schools. In August, Australia's most populous state, New South Wales, cut ties with the Confucius Institute and replaced the program with one funded by the state government. Canada's New Brunswick province has also announced it will end the program in its public schools. AP

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Hong Kong police arrest nine for aiding dozen to flee territory

POLICE in Hong Kong said Saturday they have arrested nine people on suspicion of providing funds and other assistance to a group of 12 who sought to flee the territory by boat in August but were intercepted by Chinese authorities.

A police official said the nine, including four men and five women, were believed to be friends of those in the earlier group.

They were arrested on the charge of assisting offenders and believed to have also arranged for the boat and furnished transport and accommodation, Ho Chun-tung of the Organized Crime Division told reporters.

"That means they might have done something to prevent prosecution of these people or to prevent them from being arrested by the police," Ho said, referring to the 12 detained in August.

In the Saturday morning operation, police also seized the equivalent of \$63,640 in Hong Kong currency, computers, mobile phones and receipts relating to the boat journey, Ho said.

They are also looking into

whether these nine people had helped others to flee the city, and are not ruling out more arrests.

The 12 were believed to have been headed for self-governing Taiwan following China's imposition of a sweeping national security law targeting political views in Hong Kong that diverge from those dictated by Beijing. China has said they are being held in the city of Shenzhen awaiting prosecution, but authorities have released few details.

Though Hong Kong is part of China, it has a separate immigration system and there are border controls between the territory and the mainland.

Ho said the 12 detained by mainland Chinese authorities were suspected to have contravened the laws within the mainland, and that their arrests had "nothing to do with the Hong Kong police."

Taiwan in July opened an office to help Hong Kong residents who wish to emigrate. The self-governing island democracy is a popular choice among protesters who have chosen to leave Hong Kong since the passage of the new law in June. **AP**

CHINA PROTESTS LATEST US NAVY MISSION IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

CHINA said it dispatched ships and planes to track the U.S. guided-missile destroyer John S. McCain as it passed near Chinese-held islands in the South China Sea.

The People's Liberation Army accused the U.S. warship of trespassing into Chinese territorial waters on Friday near the Paracel Islands — called Xisha by China — during the latest freedom of navigation missions by the U.S. Navy aimed at defying China's vast claims in the strategic waterway.

Spokesperson for the PLA's Southern Theater Command Col. Zhang Nandong said Beijing demanded the U.S. end such actions, calling them "blatant navigation hegemony and military provocation" that "seriously violated China's sovereignty and security interests, and gravely jeopardized peace and stability in the South China Sea."

"We urges the US side to immediately stop such kind of provocative actions, strictly manage and control its maritime and air military operations so as not to cause any eventuality", Zhang was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua News Agency.

China claims sovereignty over virtually the entire South China Sea, which is also claimed in whole or in part by Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam. Frictions between China and Indonesia have also increased over activities by China's fishing vessels, the coast guard and navy within Indonesia's exclusive economic zone.

China ignored a 2016 arbitration ruling that invalidated most of its territorial claims in the South China Sea, but has encountered persistent pushback from the U.S., its allies and China's Southeast Asian neighbors over its moves to cement its control in the disputed area. **AP**

ADVERTORIAL



MGM Takes Holistic Approach to Responsible Gaming

MGM exerts itself to promote responsible gaming (RG) to team members and the public. Apart from providing regular RG awareness training and promotional activities to team members, MGM continues to support and participate in the annual "Responsible Gambling Promotions" co-organized by the Social Welfare Bureau, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau and the Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming of the University of Macau. To tie in with this community-wide campaign's 2020 edition, MGM has launched an RG event series at its properties to raise team members' awareness of problem gambling.



"Lost Control, Lose Family"

Home is always a shelter where we can relax our mind during hard times. Excessive gambling will damage relationships with family members; not only have impacts on yourself, but more on family members. With the theme of "Lost Control, Lose Family", the "MGM Responsible Gaming Roadshow" was held at MGM hotels' back-of-house areas which marked the beginning of its annual RG event series. Through fun games, questionnaires and counseling sessions, team members got to know the impacts of problem gambling on family and were able to gain some tips for healthy family financial management.

Another highlight of the event series will be the "Healthy Family Starts with Financial Stability Workshop" conducted by a Sheng Kung Hui speaker in mid-October. Featuring group discussions, interactive games and case studies, the workshop will emphasize that money management is not merely a personal matter, but a vital ingredient in family bliss. Team members will be taught to develop a healthy and family-centric approach to money management, so they will be less likely to face financial difficulties and resort to gambling in order to manage their depression. The workshop will also remind them to stay away from high-risk investment options under the principle of financial prudence.



Enrich Training on Addictive Behavior

MGM continues to enrich the modules of its regular RG training for its team members. Its newly developed "Let's Roll RG" course, a face-to-face training launched in August, is an add-on to MGM's mandatory RG induction and refresher training for frontline gaming staff. While the induction and refresher training focuses primarily on MGM's RG measures and promotional programs, "Let's Roll RG" places an emphasis on collateral information of RG such as addictive behavior ranging from problem gambling, internet addiction to gambling disorder. Team members can gain a broad understanding of addictive behaviors and help protect themselves, family and friends.

MGM also seizes every opportunity to collaborate with community partners to promote responsible gaming. The Company invited the Youth Volunteers Association of Macao to present a "Responsible Gaming Promotion Roadshow" at its properties last month, conforming to its multi-pronged approach to raise team members' awareness of gambling-related problems.



MGM
Avenida Dr. Sun Yat Sen, NAPE, Macau
T 853 8802 2888 F 853 8802 3333
E sustainability@mgm-macau.com
W <http://www.mgm.mo/>





A man examines damage of the roof of his house after shelling by Azerbaijan's artillery

Armenia, Azerbaijan say Nagorno-Karabakh truce violated

ARMENIA and Azerbaijan agreed to a Russia-brokered cease-fire in Nagorno-Karabakh starting Saturday, but immediately accused each other of derailing the deal intended to end the worst outbreak of hostilities in the separatist region in more than a quarter-century.

The two sides traded blame for breaking the truce that took effect at noon (3 p.m. Macau time) with new attacks, and Azerbaijan's top diplomat said the truce never entered force.

The cease-fire announcement came overnight after 10 hours of talks in Moscow sponsored by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. The deal stipulated that the cease-fire should pave the way for talks on settling the conflict.

If the truce holds, it would mark a major diplomatic coup for Russia, which has a security pact with Armenia but also cultivated warm ties with Azerbaijan. But the agreement was immediately challenged by mutual claims of violations.

Minutes after the truce took force, the Armenian

military accused Azerbaijan of shelling the area near the town of Kapan in southeastern Armenia, killing one civilian. Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry rejected the Armenian accusations as a "provocation."

The Azerbaijani military, in turn, accused Armenia of striking the Terter and Agdam regions of Azerbaijan with missiles and then attempting to launch offensives in the Agdere-Terter and the Fizuli-Jabrail areas. Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov charged that "conditions for implementing the humanitarian cease-fire are currently missing" amid the continuing Armenian shelling.

Armenia's Defense Ministry denied any truce violations by the Armenian forces and said in the evening that the truce was "largely holding" despite Azerbaijani "provocations," to which the Armenian troops responded in kind.

The latest outburst of fighting between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces began Sept. 27 and left hundreds of people dead in the biggest escalation of the decades-old conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh since a

separatist war there ended in 1994. The region lies in Azerbaijan but has been under control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia.

Since the start of the latest fighting, Armenia said it was open to a cease-fire, while Azerbaijan insisted that it should be conditional on the Armenian forces' withdrawal from Nagorno-Karabakh, arguing that the failure of international efforts to negotiate a political settlement left it no other choice but to resort to force.

The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan signed the truce in Moscow after Russian President Vladimir Putin had brokered it in a series of calls with President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian.

Russia has co-sponsored peace talks on Nagorno-Karabakh together with the United States and France as co-chairs of the so-called Minsk Group, which is working under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. They haven't produced any deal, leaving Azerbaijan increasingly exasperated.

Speaking in an address to the nation Friday hours before the cease-fire deal was reached, Aliyev insisted on Azerbaijan's right to reclaim its territory by force after nearly three decades of international talks that "haven't yielded an inch of progress."

His aide, Hikmat Hajiyev, said that the Minsk Group must offer a concrete plan for the Armenian forces' withdrawal from Nagorno-Karabakh. "There will be no peace in the South Caucasus until the Armenian troops pull out from the occupied territories," he said.

Fighting with heavy artillery, warplanes and drones has engulfed Nagorno-Karabakh, with both sides accusing each other of targeting residential areas and civilian infrastructure.

According to the Nagorno-Karabakh military, 404 of its servicemen have been killed since Sept. 27. Azerbaijan hasn't provided details on its military losses. Scores of civilians on both sides also have been killed.

The current escalation marked the first time that Azerbaijan's ally Turkey took a high profile in the conflict, offering strong political support. Over the past few years, Turkey provided Azerbaijan with state-of-the-art weapons, including drones and rocket systems that helped the Azerbaijani military outgun the Nagorno-Karabakh separatist forces in the latest fighting.

Armenian officials say Turkey is involved in the conflict and is sending Syrian mercenaries to fight on Azerbaijan's side. Turkey has denied deploying combatants to the region, but a Syrian war monitor and three Syria-based opposition activists have confirmed that Turkey has sent hundreds of Syrian opposition fighters to fight in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turkey's highly visible role in the confrontation worried Russia, which has a military base in Armenia. Russia and Armenia are linked by a security treaty obliging Moscow to offer support to its ally if it comes under aggression.

But at the same time, Russia has sought to maintain strong economic and political ties with oil-rich Azerbaijan and ward off Turkey's attempt to increase its influence in the South Caucasus without ruining its delicate relations with Ankara. **MDT/AP**

this day in history



1986 REYKJAVIK SUMMIT ENDS IN FAILURE



US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev have failed to reach agreement at a disarmament summit in Reykjavik.

The two men came close to striking a radical arms reduction deal after a weekend of lengthy negotiations at Hofdi House in the Icelandic capital.

But the talks finally stalled over President Reagan's refusal to abandon his Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI).

The White House spokesman, Larry Speake said, "We had high hopes and we came very close to realising them but in the end we are deeply disappointed at the outcome."

After the summit, Mr Gorbachev said that he had told President Reagan, "We are missing an historic chance. Never had our positions been so close together."

Before flying back to Washington, President Reagan said:

"We moved towards agreement on drastically reduced numbers of intermediate-range missiles in both Europe and Asia and sharply reducing our strategic arsenals for both."

"We made progress in the area of nuclear testing, but there was remaining at the end of our talks one area of disagreement."

This was the American SDI programme - also known as Star Wars - a series of networked satellites intended to protect the USA from foreign missile attacks.

The two leaders have met for 11 hours over the past two days including an unscheduled meeting today.

Stalemate was reached this afternoon.

President Reagan agreed to develop and test his missile defence system for a decade but wanted a definite plan to deploy it after then.

Mr Gorbachev insisted a decision on its implementation should be reserved until the end of the 10 year period.

Soviets officials questioned the need for Star Wars if America's stated ambition was arms reduction.

They fear the project could potentially give the US a first strike capability and promote an arms race.

The US Secretary of State George Shultz defended SDI saying it "was the best insurance policy" against the USSR backing out of arms reduction.

The leaders plan to meet in Geneva next but no fixed date has been arranged.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

President Reagan's administration invested heavily in building up America's nuclear capability.

It was estimated that SDI would cost \$26bn over a five-year period.

Critics dubbed the project Star Wars indicating they thought SDI was nothing more than a futuristic plan that would never work.

Gorbachev eventually de-linked negotiations on arms control from the SDI issues.

In December 1987, Gorbachev and Reagan signed the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. This was the first ever treaty to reverse the arms race.

The INF treaty effectively eliminated more than 2,500 long and short range missiles.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You'll get to your destination just as quickly. You may have ignored or neglected your mate lately. Mingle with those who have similar interests, and you should be able to start something.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 You need more time to think this whole situation through. You may want to look into warm vacation spots. Put all your energy into moneymaking ventures.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Stand up and propose your ideas, and you'll be surprised how many people will follow you. Take special care in any home improvement project you work on today, you'll be glad you did.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 You should make sure that your personal papers are in order. People trying to entice you to join in will be less than trustworthy. Just be yourself. Business partnerships will prove lucrative.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Jealousy may get in the way of a good relationship. Think about taking the time to complete unfinished domestic chores. Involvement in groups will be favorable.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 You will find that valuable knowledge can be gained if you are willing to listen. You might find added popularity with those around you today. Exercise programs will be effective.
 LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 You should get out and enjoy social events where you are likely to meet new potential mates; however, don't over spend. You can make money if you pursue your own business.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Joining organizations will provide you with stimulating romantic contacts. You need to get out and have some fun to reduce tension. Be sure to take care of any minor ailments.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Build on friendship rather than starting out in an intimate encounter. Coworkers may not be completely honest with you; try not to rely on help from others.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Your greatest enjoyment will come through social activities and pleasure trips. Listen to the advice given by those with experience. You may want to have a heart-to-heart talk with a close and trusted friend.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 An older member of your family may have left you with a pressing situation. Your lover will cost you dearly if you let them. You may be likely to have difficulties with females.	 PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 You might find group functions tiring. Travel will be on your mind, but you should be sure that you've got all your work up-to-date. Travel opportunities should be your first choice.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

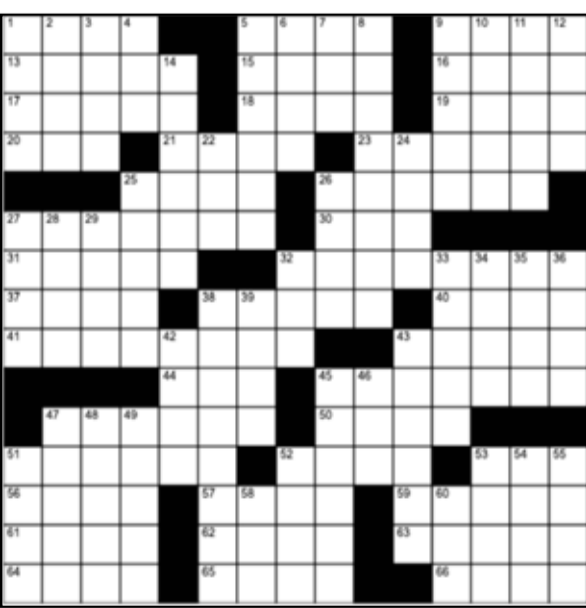
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	7	18	clear
Harbin	2	9	clear
Tianjin	9	17	clear
Urumqi	2	11	clear
Xi'an	13	17	overcast
Lhasa	9	24	clear
Chengdu	16	18	overcast
Chongqing	18	21	drizzle
Kunming	12	24	clear
Nanjing	15	25	cloudy
Shanghai	19	25	cloudy
Wuhan	16	24	cloudy
Hangzhou	16	25	cloudy
Taipei	24	27	drizzle
Guangzhou	21	31	cloudy
Hong Kong	25	30	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	9	15	overcast
Frankfurt	4	16	drizzle
Paris	7	15	clear
London	6	14	cloudy
New York	13	18	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Gator's cousin; 5- Paradise lost; 9- Habeas corpus, for one; 13- Brother of Prometheus; 15- Bounty rival; 16- Mozart's "___ kleine Nachtmusik"; 17- Squallid; 18- ... ___ saw Elba; 19- Vogue rival; 20- General on Chinese menus; 21- Ready to eat; 23- Served soup; 25- Extremities; 26- Counterbalance; 27- Underwater missile; 30- Russian space station; 31- Bunk; 32- Unbarred; 37- Chip in; 38- Journalist Pyle; 40- Fabled loser; 41- Like a fez; 43- Actress Shire; 44- Desire; 45- Hindmost part; 47- Swindle; 50- Homecoming guest; 51- Most cunning; 52- Cupid; 53- Author Fleming; 56- Rind; 57- Metrical foot; 59- Unwarranted; 61- Latest thing; 62- Meat dish; 63- Glove material; 64- Belgian river; 65- Scottish Gaelic; 66- Neet rival;

DOWN: 1- Players; 2- Hwys.; 3- Bread spread; 4- Vulgar, ill-bred fellow; 5- Nevertheless; 6- Desperate; 7- 12/24 or 12/31; 8- Manicurist's tool; 9- Garden intruders; 10- Lunar valley; 11- Bay; 12- Ticked (off); 14- Capital of New South Wales; 22- Strange; 24- Bushy hairdo; 25- Sporting blades; 26- Old Dodge model; 27- Yonder thing; 28- The last Mrs. Chaplin; 29- Doesn't keep; 32- Sturm ___ Drang; 33- Amulet; 34- Moolah; 35- Ireland; 36- Like a noted Norwegian Blue parrot?; 38- Optional; 39- Actor Auberjonois; 42- Organs used for sight; 43- The Bull; 45- Stroll; 46- "Xanadu" band; 47- Circus performers?; 48- Feudal vassal; 49- Conger catcher; 51- Nimble; 52- Latin lesson word; 53- It's a thought; 54- Autobahn auto; 55- ___-do-well; 58- ___Lingus; 60- Church lady;




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



<p>FOR SALE</p>  <p>Manhattan Luxury Residence in Central Taipa HK\$12,980,000 1,720 ft² 3 2</p>	<p>FOR RENT</p>  <p>Manhattan, Luxury 3 Bed, Taipa \$19,800/mth 1,720 ft² 3 2</p>	<p>Rain Dance Property "We dance until it's SOLD!"</p>  <p>Renovated Duplex, Macau with Amazing View HK\$4,200,000 817 ft² 2 2</p>	<p>FOR SALE/ RENT</p> <p>[Taipa] Unique Studio 1 1 650 ft² \$3,780,000 (ref: 20076001)</p> <p>[Taipa] Wa Bao 2 2 1,071 ft² \$7,995,000 (ref: 18115568)</p> <p>[Taipa] Taipa Village Apartment 2 1 600 ft² \$9,900/mth (ref: n/a)</p> <p>[Taipa] Houston Court 1 1 980 ft² \$10,800/mth (ref: 20091001)</p>
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AD


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Property of the Week



Manhattan - Luxury Residence in Central Taipa
HK\$12,980,000 1,720 ft² 3 2



One of the best buildings and locations throughout Macau, The Manhattan has a great reputation for quality. Managed by Savills, the property has a Clubhouse, Gym, Swimming Pool, Massage Room, Function Rooms, a Cinema and a children's play area making it the idea family dwelling.

The apartment has 3 bedrooms, the Master Bedroom is en-suite and the 2 further bedrooms share one bathroom. It is in great condition and comes with furnishings included.

Viewing by appointment. Find out more on www.jmlproperty.com

Rain Dance Property "We dance until it's SOLD!"



Renovated Duplex with Amazing View

\$4,200,000

817 ft² 2 2



Property Hotlist



Manhattan D Unit, Taipa

\$15,980,000

2,305 ft²

4 2



Manhattan, Luxury 3 Bed, Taipa

\$19,800/mth

1,720 ft²

3 2



Taipa Apartment
Great Venetian view

\$28,000/mth

2,060 ft²

4 2



More Listings

For Sale

- [Taipa] Unique Studio 1 1 650 ft² **\$3,780,000** (ref: 20076001)
- [Taipa] Wa Bao 2 2 1,071 ft² **\$7,995,000** (ref: 18115568)
- [Macau] Unique Loft unit 2 2 2,200 ft² **\$9,990,000** (ref: 15115464)
- [Macau] Seaview Garden 3 2 1,420 ft² **\$10,900,000** (ref: 20016004)
- [Taipa] Buckingham 2 2 1,439 ft² **\$11,770,000** (ref: 19045004)

For Rent

- [Taipa] Taipa Village Apartment 2 1 600 ft² **\$9,900/mth** (ref: n/a)
- [Coloane] Houston Court 1 1 980 ft² **\$10,800/mth** (ref: 20091001)
- [Coloane] Grand Coloane Resort 1 1 710 ft² **\$16,500/mth** (ref: 20021002)
- [Macau] One Central 2 2 1,269 ft² **\$25,000/mth** (ref: n/a)
- [Taipa] Ocean Garden 4 4 3,700 ft² **\$35,000/mth** (ref: 18040674)

Recent Movements

Sold Raintance property SOLD in 3 weeks!

One Central, Views Over Nam Van Lake, 2 bed 2 bath

Rented

Car park space, Manhattan

Sold

Va Fat, Taipa, 2 bed, 1 bath

SOLD



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Singapore's cruises to nowhere to start in November

KYUNGHEE PARK

TWO cruise ships will start sailing from Singapore from next month into the open seas and back as the city-state aims to give residents some outlet for their wanderlust amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Genting Cruise Lines' World Dream and Royal Caribbean International's Quantum of the Seas will begin round-trip journeys from November and December respectively, the Singapore Tourism Board said in a statement last week.

Stringent protocols for cruise operators and passengers to permit the pilot voyages have been established under a CruiseSafe certification program. They include Covid-19 testing of crew and passengers, increased sanitization, fresh air circulating measures, and onboard steps to discourage close contact and intermingling. The boats will sail at a reduced capacity of 50% and the journeys are only open to residents of Singapore.

A visitor surfs on the FlowRider surf simulator on the top deck of the The Spectrum of the Seas cruise ship, operated by Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.'s cruise line brand Royal Caribbean International (RCI), sits berthed at the Marina Bay Cruise Center in Singapore in 2019.

"This cruise pilot is a valuable opportunity for cruise operators to reinvent the entire cruise ex-



perience in order to regain the confidence of passengers," said Singapore Tourism Board Chief Executive Officer Keith Tan. "Singapore remains committed to supporting and growing cruise tourism in the region."

The cruise-ship industry globally shut down in March after a series of Covid-19 outbreaks at sea, including one at cruise giant Carnival Corp.'s Diamond Princess off Yokohama, Japan, in February. Even healthy passengers have suffered, as many ports turned ships away for fear of seeding new shore-side outbreaks. Tens of thousands of crew members were trapped on vessels for months.

Singapore is looking at ways to boost its tourism industry, which has been hit hard as the pandemic decimated travel. The outbreak has led to record losses at

the nation's flag carrier Singapore Airlines Ltd. and destroyed traffic at Changi Airport. The government warned earlier this week that Singapore can't afford to wait a year or two for a vaccine to become widely available.

Genting is offering two- and three-night packages starting Nov. 6. In July, the cruise operator restarted services in Taiwan. Royal Caribbean will operate three- and four-night packages from Dec. 1.

Passengers will need to get tested and submit travel and health declarations before they board. During the trip, they'll have to wear masks at all times and keep a safe distance of one meter. Tracing tokens or apps will be mandatory outside of cabins.

Crew members that are flying into the city-state will be required to take a test on arrival and another

at the end of a 14-day quarantine.

The tourism board said that Singapore is one of the first countries to develop and implement a mandatory audit and certification program for cruise lines. Prior to sailing, all cruise lines out of Singapore must obtain the CruiseSafe certification, which requires assessment by a third-party certification firm.

Genting Cruise Lines and Royal Caribbean are in the process of attaining the certification, the board said, adding that Singapore will decide on the next steps for the cruise industry after carefully monitoring the voyages.

To woo customers, Royal Caribbean is offering various flexible terms and conditions, including Covid-19 related onboard medical cost cover of up to SGD25,000 (\$18,400) per person. **BLOOMBERG**

Qantas 'full-day' flight to nowhere takes off

QANTAS Airways Ltd. launched a sight-seeing flight across Australia in the airline's latest effort to contend with the impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector.

The "full-day outing" from Sydney took off on Saturday morning with 150 passengers and was scheduled to pass over some of the country's key landmarks, including Uluru, the famed red sandstone monolith in the Northern Territory, the carrier said in a statement. The airline didn't specify the duration of the flight or when it is scheduled to return to the same airport.

The aircraft will drop to 4,000 feet at some points during the trip for a better view, compared with 35,000 feet normally. The flight on a Boeing Co. 787 Dreamliner, usually reserved for long-haul international flights, will use offsets to account for its carbon emissions, Qantas said.

Airlines and tourism operators are grappling with a dramatic plunge in passenger traffic as a result of border closures, quarantine measures and curbs on movement. A third of the world's passenger jets remain grounded, while the number of flights in the U.S. is about half the total a year ago and about 60% lower in Europe, according to aviation data provider Cirium. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

LUXURY THAI HOTELS OPENING IN PANDEMIC BET ON 5-STAR QUARANTINE

NATNICA CHUWIRUCH

Aslew of luxury hotels opening in Thailand amid the Covid-19 pandemic are pinning their hopes on a government plan to lure high-spending tourists, betting those seeking five-star quarantine will help cushion the devastation wrought on the travel industry.

About half-a-dozen luxury hotels that opened in Bangkok during the pandemic, or will open soon, from Four Seasons, Kempinski and Capella are likely to benefit from a new visa aimed at attracting long-stay visitors, high-spenders and medical travelers to put the economy back on a growth track.



While Thailand has weathered the virus outbreak better than most other Southeast Asia nations, it is faced with one of its worst recessions on record because of the loss of tourists, who in 2019 pumped \$62

billion into the economy. Targeting luxury travelers who stay longer and spend more could staunch some of those losses, said Deepak Ohri, chief executive officer of Lebua Hotels & Resorts. "The pandemic

has given Thailand the opportunity to hit reset on how the tourism industry will look after Covid-19," he said in an interview.

Starting this month, tourists with the new visa will be allowed into Thailand for the first time since borders closed in late March. They will be required to stay at least 90 days, including a mandatory 14-day quarantine, which can be served in a luxury hotel. After that, they will be free to travel anywhere they want.

"These groups of travelers have the highest potential of increasing money spent on lodging and dining, which can help boost the economy, especially during these difficult pandemic times," said Yu-

thasak Supasorn, the head of the Tourism Authority of Thailand. "We have about 800 to 1,000 Chinese tourists who are ready to travel here on private jets in the first phase of reopening."

Even so, the government, which used to worry about the effects of over-tourism, expects about 1,200 visitors a month to use the new visa, generating about 1.2 billion baht (\$38 million) in revenue - a fraction of the amount spent by mass-market holidaymakers. A majority of Thais don't agree with the plan to open the borders, a survey showed Wednesday.

"It's a good starting initiative to focus on quality instead of quantity, but it

won't be enough to make up for the lost revenue," said Sompravin Manprasert, chief economist at Bank of Ayudhya Pcl. "Tax measures aimed at middle- to high-income Thais to promote spending would help inject more money into the economy."

The Capella opened on Oct. 1, making it the latest of several luxury hotels that have entered the market since the pandemic began. Before Covid-19, the hotel was expecting up to 90% of revenue to come from foreign travelers. Next door, The Four Seasons is set to open by year-end. This follows other top-end hotels such as the Rosewood and the Siam Kempinski Sindhorn. **BLOOMBERG**

OPINION

World Views

Clara Ferreira Marques, Bloomberg

RUSSIA'S POST-SOVIET HEGEMONY IS FADING

Vladimir Putin has long sought to portray himself as strong statesman and guarantor of stability, at home and abroad. Now the Russian president is grappling with successive crises among his country's neighbors. It's an unwelcome test of Moscow's role as regional watchman.

From Belarus to the Caucasus, the Kremlin cannot leave the outcomes of these flare-ups to chance. Yet the post-Soviet region is atomized, Russia's economic might is bruised and its leverage vastly reduced. There seems to be little appetite for military action, and Moscow has few successful models of engagement to draw on. It's also no longer the only power in town as Turkey and others play a greater role.

While the ructions on Russia's fringes haven't been caused by the pandemic, the extra strain hasn't helped. Remittances from migrant workers, which make up roughly 30% of gross domestic product in places like Kyrgyzstan, have dried up. Management of the health crisis has ranged from mediocre to total denial, as initially happened in Belarus. Turkmenistan has yet to officially record a single case.

Domestic political struggles have contributed more to the unrest, but also the unfinished, three-decades-old business of post-Soviet transition. It makes Moscow's role, or its absence, all the more significant. There's a risk more hotspots pop up too, with upcoming polls. There's November's presidential vote in Moldova, a country torn between Europe and Russia, and legislative elections later this month in Georgia, the first since rules were changed, reducing the chance of excessively powerful majorities.

For now, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, a mainly Armenian-populated enclave within Azerbaijan, is the most alarming. In 1994, as it was still emerging from the wreckage of the Soviet Union, Moscow successfully brokered a cease-fire between the two sides, and has since defused serious border clashes. It needs another such breakthrough. [...]

Putin had until now largely sought to smooth tensions and to avoid triggering trouble at home, where there is a large population of Armenians and Azeris. Turkey has tested that resolve by supporting Azerbaijan, and linking the crisis to Russia's occupation of Crimea, portrayed as fueling instability.

Belarus is no less complex. If anything, it is more vital to the Kremlin and to Putin's future and there are even fewer good options. So far, Moscow has stuck with strongman Alexander Lukashenko, unable to countenance a successful uprising on its doorstep. But mass protests persist two months after his contested election, so it needs to tread lightly. It can't risk turning a Russia-friendly population into one more likely to turn elsewhere for support. Already, opposition candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya has met European leaders, and EU sanctions are in place.

Meanwhile, Kyrgyzstan is in turmoil once again as groups jostle for power after Sunday's disputed parliamentary election. The travails of this more democratic but also corrupt state are far less dramatic for the Kremlin, even if it prefers to see stability across the region. Even so, it will still be uncomfortable to watch a tainted poll trigger resignations.

These situations may be driven by internal dynamics rather than geopolitics, but Putin needs each one of them to go Russia's way.

Certainly the aura of hegemony is still there, nurtured by the Kremlin, which sees a superpower role for Russia everywhere from Libya to the post-Soviet states. But the country was ill-prepared for events close to home that should have been predictable, no doubt because of stretched financial and analytical resources.

When the two warring sides meet for talks over Nagorno-Karabakh in Moscow, Russia has a real opportunity to show it is still custodian, and not simply a necessary participant. Successfully brokering negotiations is already encouraging. The complexities of the clashes suggest a cease-fire at best — but even de-escalation would be a victory, and a welcome one at that. [Abridged]

DETAINED CANADIANS IN CHINA GET RARE CONSULAR ACCESS

The Canadian government said Saturday that China granted consular access to two detained Canadians in China for the first time since January.

The Global Affairs department said Dominic Barton, Canada's Ambassador to China, was granted virtual consular access to Michael Spavor on Friday and virtual consular access to Michael Kovrig on Saturday.

"The Canadian government remains deeply concerned by the arbitrary detention by Chinese authorities of these two Canadians since December 2018 and continues to call for their immediate release," the government said in a statement.

Canada continues to press Beijing to release Kovrig and Spavor, both detained since December 2018 following Canada's arrest of Meng Wanzhou, a Chinese Huawei official and the daughter of the company's founder. Canadian police detained Meng in Vancouver on a U.S. extradition request nine days before Kovrig and Spavor were arrested.

The U.S. is seeking Meng's extradition on fraud charges and her extradition case is before the Canadian courts. Her arrest severely damaged relations between China and Canada.

Neither Kovrig, a former diplomat, nor Spavor, an entrepreneur, were permitted visits from consular officials amid the coronavirus pandemic.

THE BUZZ

SPANISH GOV'T IMPOSES STATE OF EMERGENCY IN VIRUS-HIT MADRID



A waiter sweeps the terrace of a bar in downtown Madrid

BARRY HATTON & ALICIA LEON, MADRID

SPAIN'S government declared a state of emergency in Madrid on Friday, wresting control of efforts to fight the spread of COVID-19 from local authorities in a region that is experiencing one of Europe's most significant coronavirus outbreaks.

The step, which took immediate effect and lasts for two weeks, forced Madrid authorities to restore restrictions on travel that had been introduced by the national government but were struck down the previous day by a Madrid court ruling.

That successful legal challenge by Madrid officials was part of a long quarrel between the country's main political parties over their coronavirus response. Those differences, and the changing rules, have often dismayed and confused local residents.

"Well, it is all very nauseating," Vicente de la Torre, a 22-year-old Madrid mechanic, told The Associated Press. "We have no idea what we should do or what we shouldn't do."

The government announced the state of emergency after a hastily arranged Cabinet meeting in the wake of the court ruling. Health Minister Salvador

Illa said the previous measures would come back into force and that only the legal framework for them was changing.

He told a press conference it was "undeniable" that there is community transmission in the Madrid region, not just isolated outbreaks, at a crucial juncture as winter approaches and respiratory problems increase.

"Action is needed, and today we couldn't just stand by and do nothing," Illa said. "It's very important that this doesn't spread to the rest of the country."

The Madrid region's 14-day infection rate of 563 coronavirus cases per 100,000 residents is more than twice Spain's national average of 256 and five times the European average rate of 113 for the week ending Sept. 27.

The central government's measures prohibit all nonessential trips in and out of the capital and nine of its suburbs, affecting some 4.8 million people. Restaurants must close at 11 p.m. and stores at 10 p.m. Both must limit occupancy to 50% of their capacity.

The national government had ordered police in Madrid to fine people if they left their municipalities without justification.

More than 7,000 police officers will now be deployed to ensure the restrictions are observed, Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska said.

But Madrid's conservative regional government opposed those restrictions, saying they were draconian and hurt the economy. Madrid's regional president, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, said her own, more moderate measures were enough to fight Covid-19.

A Madrid court on Thursday upheld the regional government's appeal, saying the national government's imposition of restrictions violated people's fundamental liberties.

The spat has taken place against a backdrop of political differences: Spain's national government is led by the center-left Socialist party, while the Madrid region is run by the country's main opposition party, the conservative Popular Party.

"It seems to me like an ideological war that is trying to show who has more power," said 18-year-old student Marta Illo. "They [the Spanish government] don't really like the regional government of Madrid. And we the people of Madrid are paying the price for a fight that is really political and has nothing to do with us." AP



Middle East Wildfires triggered by a heatwave hitting the region have killed three people, forced thousands of people to leave their homes and detonated landmines along the Lebanon-Israel border, state media and officials said. The areas hit by the heatwave are Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories. The fires come amid an intense heatwave that is unusual for this time of the year.



Egypt's president ratified a maritime deal setting its Mediterranean Sea boundary with Greece and demarcating an exclusive economic zone for oil and gas drilling rights, the state-run news agency reported, in a move that has angered Turkey. The bilateral agreement is widely seen as a response to a rival deal between Turkey and Libya's Tripoli-based government that spiked tensions in the East Mediterranean region, along with Turkey's disputed oil and gas exploration in the seaways.

Belarus' authoritarian president on Saturday visited a prison to talk to opposition activists, who have been jailed for challenging his re-election that was widely seen as manipulated and triggered two months of protests. President Alexander Lukashenko spent more than four hours talking to his jailed political foes at the Minsk prison that belongs to Belarus' State Security Committee, which still goes under its Soviet-era name, KGB. Lukashenko's office said that "the goal of the president was to hear everyone's opinion."

Italy A 15-year-old Italian computer whiz who died of leukemia in 2006 moved a step closer to possible sainthood Saturday with his beatification in the town of Assisi, where he is buried. Carlo Acutis is the youngest contemporary person to be beatified, a path taken by two Portuguese shepherd children living in the early 1900s who were proclaimed Catholic saints in 2017.