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AP PHOTO



Japan used a visit by the Chinese foreign minister yesterday to protest Beijing's increased activity and what it calls infiltration around disputed East China Sea islands. Both sides agreed to avoid provocative actions in the contested area.

Japan Tokyo's governor on yesterday asked bars and other places where alcohol is served to close earlier for three weeks to help prevent a resurgence of coronavirus infections from turning explosive. Gov. Yuriko Koike, after meeting with officials to discuss ways to combat the upsurge, said bars, karaoke outlets and restaurants serving alcohol in the city are being requested to close by 10 p.m. beginning Saturday until Dec. 17.

AP PHOTO



Thailand Pro-democracy demonstrators yesterday again took to the streets of the capital, even as the government escalated its legal battle against them, reviving the use of a harsh law against defaming the monarchy. Police had issued summonses for 12 protest leaders to answer charges of lese majeste, defaming or insulting key members of the royal family. The offense is punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

AP PHOTO



India's ruling Hindu nationalist party has approved legislation in the country's most populous state that lays out a prison term of up to 10 years for anyone found guilty of using marriage to force someone to change religion. The decree for the state of Uttar Pradesh follows a campaign by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party against interfaith marriages.

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ANDRÉ CHEONG

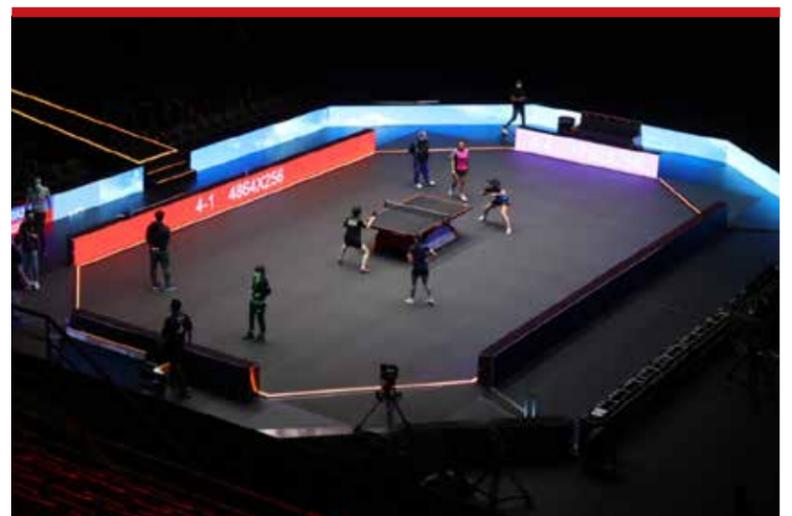
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POLICY ADDRESS

CHEONG: GOV'T 'HIGHLY CONCERNED' ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY, DEMOCRACY

JULIE ZHU

SECRETARY for Administration and Justice André Cheong has affirmed that the Macau SAR government places great importance upon democracy and the accountability of high-ranking officials.

During yesterday's Legislative Assembly (AL) plenary meeting, lawmaker Sulu Sou asked questions related to the aforementioned two topics.

The lawmaker said that the SAR government did not mention democracy and political reform in the 2021 Policy Address.

"I don't know if you have read it. Regarding the development of democracy, there is not a single word. [The former Chief Executive] Chui Sai On would still make a show and mention 'the stable development of democratic politics.' But the two policy addresses of this government have not mentio-



ned democracy," said Sou. The lawmaker asked whether the government is paying attention to democratic politics.

Lawmaker Fong Ka Chio also asked about political reform.

In response to the lawmakers, Cheong acknowledged that for the government to "not mention it does not mean does not care about it and it does not mean that [democracy] is not important."

"The development of politics requires specific timing and social groundwork. As to how

to develop Macau's politics, we need to start from Macau's actual situation," Cheong said.

Cheong aims for the government to set a good example by "loving the country, loving Macau," and exhibiting understanding of the Basic Law as well as the constitution.

Meanwhile, other concerns were related to high-ranking officials' accountability.

Lawmaker Sou claimed that since the establishment of the Macau SAR, high-ranking officials have not been made accountable for their mistakes.

In reply, Secretary Cheong said that the government "regards [the mechanism for ensuring] high-ranking officials' accountability highly," acknowledging that the mechanism is not perfect.

In Cheong's opinion, "The most effective way to hold high-ranking officials [to account] is through criminal accountability."

The Secretary remarked that, currently, Macau has a high bar to which it holds high-ranking officials accountable criminally, and that some officials are unable to be held accountable because they have already retired when an investigation takes place.

The SAR government is expected to make a proposal concerning the high-ranking officials' accountability mechanism later.

"The issue cannot be solved through disciplinary punishment, nor criminal punishment. [Macau] needs to establish a friendly and healthy high-ranking official culture," Cheong commented.

After Cheong's reply, lawmaker Au Kam San remarked that "If the policy address didn't mention [democracy and high-ranking officials' accountability], then the topics are not important [to the government]."

POLICY ADDRESS

MANDATORY REGISTRATION OF FOOD-TAKEOUT BUSINESSES BEING CONSIDERED

JULIE ZHU

THE Macau SAR government will trial a mandatory registration measure for food take-out businesses, as announced by the Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong during yesterday's Legislative Assembly (AL) plenary meeting.

When questioned by lawmaker Zheng Anting, who asked about e-governance, Cheong stated that the SAR government is not considering launching a food take-out licensing scheme, as it involves complex matters.

In 2021, the government expects to first mandatorily require food take-out businesses to

register with the government. Moreover, through this measure, the authority hopes to regulate the hygiene of food suppliers.

However, the official acknowledged that, in the long term, when there are proper conditions, the government will then consider a licensing system.

Speaking about e-governance, Cheong remarked that the authority plans to strengthen cybersecurity for public departments as well as training those responsible for e-governance matters.

The Secretary also revealed that once the city's new street market law comes into effect, street market businesses will be required to adopt e-mo-

nitor systems, which involves using electronic scales, electronic price boards, e-files and others.

During the meeting, lawmaker Leong Sun Lok asked about phone call marketing tactics. Leong expressed hope that the consumers' protection law currently under discussion will ban phone call marketing tactics.

Responding to Leong, the Secretary said that Macau has a specific situation due to its small territory, which, in turn, makes it easy for people to avoid regulations or take advantage of grey areas of the law. Under such a situation, phone call marketing groups may use phone numbers from outside of Macau to

continue the strategy.

At the current stage, the only way out for the government is to continue strengthening law enforcement.

Moreover, Cheong also provided upgrades on the relocation of the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM)'s laboratory.

Currently, the laboratory is being relocated to the wholesale market building because the government wants to optimize the office's environment.

According to the official, recently, Macau has been seeing a large demand for nucleic acid tests for cold chain food street market, so the activities are highly dependent on the laboratory's equipment and facilities.

However, the current office of the laboratory is relatively simple, and he believes that the relocation will help improve the working environment.

During another round of lawmakers' questioning, Cheong was asked again regarding the civil service, with the Secretary criticizing "some civil servants" and praising the Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

The Secretary remarked that some of the civil servants may be used to sitting inside the office and may not make field trips to learn about the practicalities of cases.

In Cheong's opinion, these civil servants suffer from a "lack of field trip work method and new mentality."

However, he said, the Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng frequently visits places to learn about the problems they face.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CAR PARKING IN COLOANE

Dear Editor,

I write on behalf of some residents of Coloane regarding car parking in the village.

Parking in the village has become a major challenge. Prior to 1999, there were parking spaces available, and residents could leave cars without payment. As Macau became busier, the volume of traffic grew, and in the mid-2000s it became necessary to outline specific parking spaces in the village, although meters were not yet used.

10 years later, in the middle of the last decade, both public and private housing developments opened on Coloane, creating a huge increase in village traffic.

Parking meters are limited to 1-hour, 2-hour and 4-hour periods. During the week it can be difficult to park, but on weekends, it is nearly impossible. As a resident, if we are able to find a space, to follow the law we have to drive out of that space and try to find another one when the time is up to avoid 'feeding the meter.' Most weekends we are forced to park illegally, and continually watch the phone for a message that the car is being ticketed or clamped.

The government has been encouraging tourism tours to the village, and the area has become a turnaround point for the public buses. It also serves as a parking lot for the Police Academy cadets whilst they undergo their training. However, there are no public parking facilities in the village other than the metered ones.

We submit this open letter to respectfully request the government that parking permits (or a similar practice) be set up in Coloane. For example, the permits might come at a monthly or yearly cost to the user, may only be obtained by the registered owner of a property or the registered tenant (as registered with the government tax office) whose name matches the car owner. A permit might allow the car to park on any meter space within the village for a maximum of 72 hours (to avoid car dumping). Alternatively, the provision of some spaces specifically for permit holders may also be feasible.

Whichever way it is addressed, it is a matter of urgency for Coloane residents, and government intervention would be very much appreciated.

Thank you.

**A concerned citizen
(Name and address supplied
but withheld from publishing.)**

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (DIRECTOR) Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Daniel Beitter, Emilie Tran, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Julie Zhu, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Lynzy Valles, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Viviana Seguí
DESIGNERS Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES Associated Press, Bloomberg, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua
SECRETARY Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR
Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
Advertisement advertising@macaudailytimes.com
For subscription and general issues: general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

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PLAYERS OUTSIDE TOP 8 KICK OFF TOURNAMENT

RENATO MARQUES

THE first-ever World Table Tennis (WTT) event kicked off yesterday at Macau's Tap Seac Multisport Pavilion.

Doing the honors of the event opening were the players ranked outside the top eight, who met for the four matches included in "Battle One."

In the male section, the Brazilian Gustavo Tsuboi started well, winning (3-1) against China's Zhao Zihao.

Zhao started the match on top, winning the first game (4-11) but after that, Tsuboi corrected his moves and took advantage of his added experience, winning three games in a row, closing the match with (11-6, 11-8, 11-8).

In the other match of the male section, Hong Kong's Wong Chun Ting had a harder task than



China's Liu Weishan

expected to beat the Egyptian Ahmed Saleh (8-11, 11-10, 11-7, 9-11, 11-9).

Seeded four positions lower than Wong, Saleh put on his best show, winning the first game and almost obtaining a two-game advantage in the second game, which he eventually lost (11-10).

The second game worked well as a wake-up call for Wong, prompting him to put on his best effort to beat Saleh. The match was only decided by the fifth and last game after Saleh equalized the games to two each on the fourth.

In a final show of pressure, Wong edged

to a final and narrow win (11-9) in an exciting match to follow.

In the women's section, China's Liu Weishan beat Korean Suh Hyowon (1-3) in the first international match for Liu this year.

Maybe because of that lack of routine, Liu took some time to get up to speed. Suh took advantage of that window of opportunity and won the first game (6-11).

Liu, applying more concentration, recovered the upper-hand and won the three following rounds, ending the last game with a clear 11-3 score showing her real value.

Still, and being the lowest-seeded player in the women's singles draw, Suh showed competitiveness and good skill.

On the other match of the women's "Battle One," another Korean, Jeon Jihee, easily beat the Puerto Rican Adriana Diaz 3-0 (11-6, 11-2, 11-8).

From start to finish, Jeon showed clearly that she was in absolute control of the match, with 20-year-old Diaz able only to take a lesson from it. Even so, a meaningful one that may boost her up in the future.

11% OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS BULLIED ONLINE

STAFF REPORTER

MORE than 11% of high school students have reported falling victim to cyberbullying, according to the results of a recent survey jointly published by the General Association of Chinese Students of Macau and the Macau Youth Research Association.

From a total of 3,690 pupils polled, 415 said they were "bullied" online, while around 4%, or 152, considered themselves as "perpetrators." Another 71%, or 2,628, claimed to have been "onlookers."

The proportion of high school students pushing others around in the digital world is considered relatively low when taking into account the total number of over 20,000 secondary pupils in 2019, the associations acknowledged.

The respondents said the oppressive behavior mostly came from "strangers," "classmates" and "cybermates."

The deleterious effects of digital harassment were found to be most pronounced in relation the victims' mental health, with a majority of bullied res-

pondents admitting they were affected mentally for around a week after the incident.

The most common means of digital bullying was harassing and threatening information, followed by oppressors circulating disconcerting images or digitally-manipulated images or text.

Researchers also found that over 80% will seek help after encountering or witnessing digital bullying. They mostly turned to parents for help, followed by classmates or friends, and teachers.

In September, the two alliances polled 3,690 pupils from 16 secondary schools in Macau to gauge the weight of cyberbullying within the schooling environment.

The associations suggested bolstering the promotion of cyberbullying, setting up hotlines for reporting, as well as recommending that network providers reinforce surveillance control.

Meanwhile, they also advised the government to lay down legislation to discipline tormentors, which can also serve as a deterrent to would-be offenders.

CRIME

MAN ARRESTED AFTER INDECENT VIDEOTAPING

A male non-resident worker has helped police apprehend a man accused of non-consensual videotaping of a woman's private parts at the Border Gate.

At 10:15 p.m., November 21, the worker reported to on-site Public Security Police Force (PSP) officers that he witnessed another man videotaping from beneath a woman's skirt with his cellphone.

The police reviewed surveillance camera footage and discovered that the female victim took the escalator to the departure hall of the border checkpoint at around 10 p.m.. While she was doing so, both the suspect and the witness took the escalator after her.

During the escalator ride, the suspect laid a plastic bag on one of the steps of the escalator. He then lowered himself

into a semi-squatting position. Seeing the scene unfold, the witness stopped the suspect as the escalator ride ended and called for help from the on-site police officers.

Surnamed Zhen and in his 40s, the suspect, a mainland Chinese non-resident worker, admitted the offence to the police. After reviewing the contents of his cellphone, the police officers discovered two offending video clips.

DRIVER APPREHENDED FOR DRUNK DRIVING

In a separate case, the PSP apprehended a local driver for drunk driving. The man has been sentenced to three months' imprisonment under 18 months of probation. In addition, the driver will be suspended from driving for one year and two months.

At 5:30 a.m. on November 22, during a regular road

operation, PSP officers tested the driver's blood alcohol content. The result indicated 1.7g/L. He confessed to the police that he had consumed alcoholic beverages before driving.

57-YEAR-OLD MALE CHARGED WITH ARSON

A third case involved a 57-year-old male local suspect charged with arson. At 6 p.m., October 31, a fire on Avenida de Artur Tamagnini Barbosa was reported to the Judiciary Police (PJ), in which some carton paper had been burnt.

The PJ discovered a suspect by reviewing surveillance camera footage. The suspect was suspected of irresponsibly discarding his cigarette butts, which caused the fire. He admitted his actions to the police in an inquiry on November 24. **AL**

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Source market diversification vital to tourism in long term: academics

ANTHONY LAM

Macau's long-term prospects of tourism revival and development will depend on cultural factors, Dr Pan Lei, academic at the University of Macau and an enthusiastic traveler, has told the Times in an exclusive interview.

Lei teaches Communications at the university, but is an extensive traveler. He has authored several travel-related books.

Often considered "side dishes" to support the gambling-oriented tourism industry of the city, cultural factors should have their role in the long term of the industry's development, Lei argues.

"Although it is the heartbeat of Macau, [the effect of] tourism cannot only be evaluated based on monetary income, it also affects quality of life," Lei explained. "If our cultural development is stale, the tourism industry will be affected as well."

He admitted that developing cultural factors may not immediately bring in economic advantages, but in the long term it will be beneficial to the tourism industry.

According to Lei, cultural tourism is not about getting a city packed with people. Rather, it is about attracting tourists to revisit Macau. "This is beneficial to the healthy development of the tourism industry," Lei concluded.

"The main problem facing Macau is over-crowdedness," Lei pointed out, citing some of his friends from Hong Kong and Mainland China, who are of a middle-class background, are not so much convinced to come back to Macau because conducting tours in Macau is time-consuming, inconvenient and family-unfriendly, despite their fondness for the cultural atmosphere of the city.

It is also crucial to Macau's revival because if travelling is restrictive, tourists will prefer to see places

that they consider worthwhile.

On the other hand, Professor Leonardo Dioko, director of the Tourism Research Centre of the Macau Institute for Tourism Studies, estimated it may take a couple of years for Macau to regain its prominent tourism performance.

"Probably 1 to 2 more years before we get on [the] way to recovery and begin regaining pre-Covid status," Dioko estimated. He listed out several variables determining the speed of recovery: the availability and distribution of vaccine in both Macau and its source markets, as well as the impact on disposable incomes in Macau's source markets. "Travel demand will remain dampened unless [it is] accompanied by economies recovering as well," he explained.

Lei holds similar expectations, adding that quality of tourism products is a determining factor. "When global tourism activities gradually return, people will

choose places they have been to and liked, or those with better recommendations," Lei explained. "Quality should be [considered] all the time."

Heavily relying upon mainland Chinese tourists, the city's government has always discussed economic diversification, but not so much source market diversification. When asked about the topic, both academics expressed their approval of the Macao Government Tourism Office's (MGTO) efforts in the attempt to diversify the city's source markets of visitors.

Lei agreed that the MGTO has done quite a lot of work to promote Macau in markets other than the Greater China Region.

As far as he knows, the MGTO has regularly organized familiarization tours for journalists from various regions. He has also been interviewed by journalists from Singapore and Malaysia, hinting that the effort of MGTO in promoting

Macau in these countries has worked out.

"I even saw advertisements placed by the MGTO on one whole carriage of a Japan Railway train," Lei said.

Meanwhile, Dioko also applauded the MGTO. "[Efforts] expended in source market diversification, especially those by the MGTO, have been admirable, given the tough pre-Covid competition and alternative destinations now available to our traditional source markets," Dioko remarked.

Regarding the future, both academics addressed the difficulties of source market diversification.

"Source market diversification has been the holy grail of Macau's tourism development," the professor remarked. "[It] has been very difficult for Macau to be weaned off its reliance upon the lucrative markets of Greater China."

On the other hand, Lei observed the monetary and chronological difficulties.

"Usually these tourists are from further [away] places, meaning it is more costly to them," Lei explained. Seeing more tours covering both Hong Kong and Macau, the academic admitted that in many ways Macau still has to rely on nearby cities to diversify its source market.

In addition, Lei pointed out that it also relies on Macau's own attractiveness to various types of tourists. For example, it is a question whether the city is attractive to Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) tourists, family tourists and cultural tourists.

On the establishment of travel bubbles with other markets, Dioko considers it impossible, at least in the short term. It relies on the existence of various similarities between the two hypothetical participating destinations.

"We need each other's thorough help in various strategic arenas such as healthcare, vaccine purchase and distribution, economic assistance, etc., and [we need to] adopt a regional collaborative approach," the academic explained.

In October, Macau received nearly 590,000 visitors, an approximate 30% rise from the figure in September. The first ten months saw slightly more than 4.6 million visitors.

Gov't reclaims 'Ocean World' land plot

STAFF REPORTER

THE SAR government reclaimed the debated Taipa land plot originally slated for the "Ocean World" theme park but left desolate for decades on Tuesday. The authorities, through a

cross-departmental collaboration, reclaimed a long stretch of state-owned land in Taipa, measuring a total area of 193,775 square meters.

The two plots of land had been cluttered with makeshift houses made

of metal boards, vehicles, containers and many other debris. Despite a clearance warning published by the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau earlier, which requested that the people involved vacate and return the plots within the

specified period, the area had still been left abandoned. In view of the expiration of the clearance period, the government cleared and reclaimed the two fields on Tuesday.

The land plots recovered by the government were

composed of two types of land, including the invalid land grant and illegally occupied land. The invalid land grant, spanning 134,891 square meters, is located at Taipa's waterfront, across from the Regency Art Hotel. It was previously granted in

1997 to a company, Chong Va - Entretenimento Limitada, designated for the development of "Ocean World." However, work on the construction of Ocean World never commenced. In December 2018, the government launched the annulment of the land concession for the original site of the theme park due to its long-overdue development.

SANDS CHINA'S LOCAL TEAM MEMBERS UNDERGO TRAINING, EYEING PROMOTION

LYNZY VALLES

SEVERAL local team members at Sands China Ltd. have been in the process of receiving promotions after the gaming operator offered a training platform for their career development.

Yesterday, the company hosted its Sands China Academy Distinctive Talent Development Sharing Session to celebrate its achievements of its various human resources initiatives.

The company's horizontal and vertical management talent development programmes encourage team members to take advantage of opportunities within the company to develop new skills and undertake training in different fields.

"Over the past decade, Sands China has remained committed to local talent development by continuously improving its human capital strategies in line with the direction set by the Macau SAR government," Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd, said yesterday during the event. Among the examples are the Sands China Integrated Resort



From left: Lei Weng San, Pierre Lai and Uni Lei

Business Analyst Development Programme and the Sands China Manager Development Programme for Integrated Resorts, which have helped over 1,600 team members to advance their careers since 2016 by completing more than 30 programmes.

For Sands China's All-Round Food and Beverage Management Programme, a collaboration with the Labour Affairs Bureau, the company accepted only six out of

100 applicants into the programme. And with the 'train-the-trainer' development series, more than 410 team members have passed their exams to become certified trainers.

Lei Weng San, acting assistant manager at one of the gaming operator's F&B departments, said that he has undergone training for 18 months, which was divided into three parts.

"[I was trained in] three outlets:

casino restaurants, evening service and fine dining restaurants," said Lei, who started his career as a server.

"It is helpful because as a fresh graduate, this provided me with management skills training and on the job training. It's very well-rounded and has helped me find my direction in my career," he added.

Meanwhile, another team member, Uni Lei, currently an In-

tegrated Resort Business Analyst, said that by joining the programme, she was able to participate in six different departments, such as Finance, E-Commerce and Strategic Analysis, among others.

"I am on the third rotation now. This is a great opportunity for me to further discover whether I fit into the industry, and whether I am really capable to be an analyst or not," said Lei.

Amid the pandemic, Lei stressed that the gaming operator has provided them with online classes so as not to disrupt their learning.

A table game pit manager, Pierre Lai, remarked, "This programme has opened doors for me for some potential horizontal development. I would like to try working in other departments with the knowledge gained through this training." Wednesday's sharing session featured a preview of the company's new Management Trainee Programme, which aims to train leaders who are able to "develop strategies with big-picture thinking, and to better meet the needs of participants in light of changing realities in the market."

Sands' occupancy rate expected to reach over 40%

STAFF REPORTERS

WILFRED Wong, who helms Sands China, remains confident that the occupancy rate of the groups' hotels in December will fare far better than November.

"The overall occupancy rate may reach upwards of 40%," said Wong, President of Sands China, in response to questions raised by media about the prospect of the approaching Christmas period yesterday.

Wong said he has come to this estimate by drawing on the growth in tourist arrivals to Macau.

The higher volume of holidaymakers to Macau has also given a fresh impetus to the group's retail sector, especially the high-end luxury segment, which Wong said already achieved a sale amount similar to that of last year.

Ever since September 23, when the application for Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) permit was reinstated



for all mainland tourists, the number of hotel guests has been climbing, despite the "moderate and gradual pace," which Wong acknowledged.

In October, Macau attracted a total of 581,986 tourists, representing an increase of 29.6% month-over-month, according to Statistics and Census Service.

Among all visitors, those

coming from the nine Pearl River Delta cities in the Greater Bay Area amounted to 282,170 - with 48.2% of them hailing from Zhuhai. The city also saw 37,909 visitors from Hong Kong and 4,574 from Taiwan.

However, Wong expressed a cautiously optimistic stance about the prospects of casino receipts, saying it will take time for the gaming earnings to rebound.

Yet he believes a greater number of tourist arrivals to Macau will eventually culminate in better revenue for the city's gaming industry.

When asked about the development of non-gaming businesses, Wong said the group has all along invested in non-gaming elements to align with the government's vision of economic diversification.

The TeamLab Macao in The Venetian, a non-gaming project to which the group committed USD20 million, will be a key drawcard for tourists, he believes.

Besides, Wong disclosed that many non-gaming components, such as a new theatre that can accommodate audiences of up to 5,000 and new restaurants, will be incorporated into The Londoner Macao, a new addition to the group's hotel properties.

The Londoner Macao is slated to open in early February 2021.

Wong delivered his forecast to the media following the group's event titled "Sands China Academy Distinctive Talent Development Sharing Session" yesterday.

IC DEFENDS NOT PUBLICIZING LONG LIST OF POTENTIAL HERITAGE SITES

PUBLICIZING a list of more than 100 properties of potential historic significance may jeopardize the goodwill of preserving them, Leong Wai Man, Vice President of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has recently remarked.

In 2014, the IC administered a survey on the more than 100 properties to identify their historic value. The list has never been publicized by the bureau, raising concerns that the properties may become at-risk, as no public supervision is possible.

Furthermore, the IC has not tracked its progress in enlisting properties as legal heritage sites, although it announced on Tuesday a shortlist of 12 properties for public consultation.

In response to the concern, Leong pointed out that not publicizing the

list of surveyed properties may better protect them. "We are not fond of or don't think it is necessary to publicize the list," Leong said.

Currently, Macau has enlisted a total of 147 items of properties as legal heritage sites. Meanwhile, of that list, 128 were enlisted before the promulgation of the Cultural Heritage Protection Law.

Among the more than 100 properties, around 60 have not yet had their historic value assessment procedures commenced. When questioned as to whether they will all see these procedures take place, Leong replied that it was still uncertain.

She added that some properties may not meet legal commencement conditions following reassessment. Procedures will only commence when a property meets legal requirements. **AL**

China stepping up virus testing on imported food packaging

CHINA is stepping up virus inspections on imported food packaging as cooler weather brings new waves of coronavirus infections in several overseas countries, Chinese officials said yesterday.

Packaging is "not exempt" from carrying the virus, deputy director of the National Food Safety Risk Assessment Center Li Ning told reporters.

While the coronavirus positivity rate for tests on packages was just 0.48 per 10,000, that proportion is increasing along with the number of tests being conducted, Li said.

She said the virus could "to some extent" be passed to humans from packaging, although neither Li or any other official at yesterday's news conference mentioned any such confirmed cases.

Chinese testing of packaging has stirred some controversy, with exporters of frozen food items questioning the science behind it and whether it amounts to an unfair trade



barrier. China has defended the practice as an additional measure to prevent the virus's spread.

Through mask mandates, mass testing, lockdowns and case tracing, China has largely eliminated cases of local transmission, causing it to place extra attention on infection threats from outside the country. China's National Health Administration yesterday reported five new cases, all imported, bringing China's total to 86,469, including

4,634 deaths.

Stopping the virus's spread is "like fighting a war," demanding fast, decisive action, CDC Chief Epidemiologist Wu Zunyou said.

"Victory only comes after the entire country is united in its efforts. On this front, technical strategy, strong leadership and coordinated action all play important roles," Wu said.

The coronavirus is known to be more stable in colder, dryer conditions, and disin-

fecting packaging at freezing temperatures creates "special challenges," said Zhang Liubo, chief disinfection officer for the Center for Disease Control. Even when disinfection works and the virus is no longer infectious, remnants can remain on the packaging, leading to a positive test, Zhang said.

However, "as of present, we have yet to discover any infection caused by direct consumption of products from this cold chain," Zhang said. AP

BEIJING DEMANDS INDIA RESCIND APP BAN AMID BORDER TENSION

CHINA yesterday demanded India rescind a ban on more Chinese mobile phone apps amid tension between Beijing and other governments over technology and security.

A foreign ministry spokesman accused India of violating global free-trade rules and discriminating against Chinese companies.

India announced a ban on 43 apps, many of them Chinese. It said they threaten India's "sovereignty and integrity" but gave no details. That came on top of earlier bans on Chinese apps including popular video service TikTok.

"The Indian side should immediately correct this discriminatory practice so as to avoid causing greater damage to the cooperation between the two sides," said the spokesman, Zhao Lijian.

Zhao called on India to "safeguard the legitimate rights and interests" of Chinese companies but gave no indication whether Beijing might retaliate.

The United States and some other governments also have expressed concern about whether Chinese apps might be gathering too much sensitive information about their users. The Trump administration is pressing TikTok's Chinese owner to sell its U.S. operation.

Chinese-Indian relations are unusually sensitive because soldiers from the two sides are locked in a standoff over control of an area along their border high in the Himalayas. MDT/AP

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USA

America is back: Biden pushes past Trump era with nominees

ALEXANDRA JAFFE,
MATTHEW LEE
& AAMER MADHANI,
WILMINGTON (DEL.)

DECLARING "America is back," President-elect Joe Biden introduced his national security team, his first substantive offering of how he'll shift from Trump-era "America First" policies by relying on experts from the Democratic establishment to be some of his most important advisers.

"Together, these public servants will restore America globally, its global leadership and its moral leadership," Biden said yesterday [Macau time] from a theater in his longtime home of Wilmington, Delaware. "It's a team that reflects the fact that America is back, ready to lead the world, not retreat from it."

The nominees are all Washington veterans with ties to the Obama administration, a sign of Biden's effort to resume some form of normalcy after the tumult of President Donald Trump's four years in office. Another sign that Biden will soon be in charge: He scheduled a Thanksgiving address to the nation for Wednesday afternoon, planning to focus his remarks on shared sacrifices during the holiday season and expressing confidence that Americans will get through the coronavirus pandemic together.

There are risks to choosing experienced hands from the previous Democratic administration. Besides Republican attacks, progressives fret that Biden is tapping some officials who were too cautious and incremental the last time they held power.

Still, Biden's nominees were a clear departure from Trump, whose Cabinet has largely consisted of men, almost all of them white. Biden's picks included several women and people of color, some of whom would break barriers if confirmed to their new positions.

Yesterday, they stood behind Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris spaced apart and wearing masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, a contrast with Trump and many of his top aides who have largely eschewed facial coverings.

The president-elect's team

AP PHOTO



President-elect Joe Biden introduces his nominees and appointees

includes Antony Blinken, a veteran foreign policy hand well-regarded on Capitol Hill whose ties to Biden go back some 20 years, for secretary of state; lawyer Alejandro Mayorkas to be homeland security secretary; veteran diplomat Linda Thomas-Greenfield to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations; and Obama White House alumna Jake Sullivan as national security adviser.

Avril Haines, a former deputy director of the CIA, was picked to serve as director of national intelligence, the first woman to hold that post, and former Secretary of State John Kerry will make a curtain call as a special envoy on climate change. Kerry and Sullivan's position will not require Senate confirmation.

With the Senate's balance of power hinging on two runoff races in Georgia that will be decided in January, some Senate Republicans have already expressed antipathy to Biden's picks as little more than Obama world retreads.

Sen. Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican and potential 2024 presidential candidate, argued that Biden is surrounding himself with people who will go soft on China.

Sen. Marco Rubio, another potential White House hopeful, who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that will consider Blinken's nomination, broadly wrote off the early selections.

"Biden's cabinet picks went to Ivy League schools, have strong resumes, attend all the right conferences & will be polite & orderly caretakers of America's decline," Rubio tweeted.

Biden said his choices "reflect the idea that we cannot meet these challenges with old

thinking and unchanged habits." He said he tasked them with reasserting global and moral leadership, a clear swipe at Trump, who has resisted many traditional foreign alliances.

The president-elect said he was "struck" by how world leaders have repeatedly told him during congratulatory calls that they look forward to the U.S. "reasserting its historic role as a global leader" under his administration.

Trump, who has debated recently whether to mount another presidential campaign in 2024, appeared to defend his worldview.

"We shouldn't go away from that — America First," he said at the annual turkey pardon, a lighthearted pre-Thanksgiving White House tradition.

While Trump expected total loyalty from his Cabinet and chafed at pushback from advisers, Biden said he expected advisers to tell me "what I need to know, not what I want to know."

Further drawing a contrast with Trump, Haines said she accepted Biden's nomination knowing that "you value the perspective of the intelligence community, and that you will do so even when what I have to say may be inconvenient or difficult."

Haines said she has "never shied away from speaking truth to power" and added "that will be my charge as director of national intelligence."

Biden celebrated the diversity of his picks, offering a particularly poignant tribute to Thomas-Greenfield. The eldest of eight children who grew up in segregated Louisiana, she was the first to graduate from high school and college in her family. The diplomat, in turn,

said that with his selections, Biden is achieving much more than a changing of the guard.

"My fellow career diplomats and public servants around the world, I want to say to you, 'America is back, multilateralism is back, diplomacy is back,'" Thomas-Greenfield said.

Mayorkas, who is Cuban American, also offered a nod to his immigrant upbringing.

"My father and mother brought me to this country to escape communism," he said. "They cherished our democracy, and were intensely proud to become United States citizens, as was I."

But Mayorkas might pose the most difficult confirmation challenge from Biden's early round of nominees.

The Senate previously confirmed him in December 2013 by a party-line vote to be the deputy secretary of Homeland Security. The Senate was controlled by Democrats then, and all of the chamber's Republicans voted against his confirmation mainly because he was then under investigation by the inspector general in that department who had been appointed by President Barack Obama. At the time, the Senate historian's office said it was unprecedented for the Senate to vote on a nominee who was under investigation.

The inspector general, John Roth, found in March 2015 that Mayorkas, as director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, appeared to give special treatment to certain people as part of the visa program that gives residency preference to immigrants who agree to invest in the U.S. economy.

There were signs that the stalled formal transition of power is now underway. Biden's team now is in contact with all federal agencies, according to a transition official who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe developments that have not been announced.

At the Pentagon, Kash Patel, chief of staff to the acting secretary of defense, is heading the department's transition work. A transition task force has been assembled, led by Tom Muir, head of the Pentagon office that provides administrative and management services to all Defense Department facilities in the Washington area. AP

this day in history

1992 QUEEN TO BE TAXED FROM NEXT YEAR



A British monarch is to pay income tax for the first time since the 1930s.

The Prime Minister, John Major, told the House of Commons the Queen had informed him earlier this year that she wished to make changes to her tax arrangements.

She will also take responsibility for the working expenses of most of her family under changes Mr Major said should be implemented in April 1993.

The decision has been broadly welcomed by Westminster and is fully supported by the Prince of Wales, who already pays some tax on his income.

Buckingham Palace has denied the announcement is related to growing public concern about the rising cost of the monarchy.

Questions have been raised about who will foot the bill for repairing Windsor Castle, which was severely damaged in a fire last week.

But a palace spokesman said the Queen and Prince Charles had made their decision before the July summer recess of Parliament.

Under the new arrangement the only royals who will be paid for by the public will be the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Queen Mother.

Chairman of the influential Tory backbench 1922 Committee Sir Marcus Fox said public pressure should now come off the monarchy.

And constitutional expert Lord St John of Fawsley said the decision proved the Queen was in tune with public opinion.

"She's a wise woman - she's known nine prime ministers and she's been on the throne for 40 years," he said.

But historian David Starkey told the BBC even bigger changes were needed.

"This is not the solution, this is simply addressing the symptom - the solution is to find something positive for the monarchy to do," he said.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Since 2001 the monarchy have published their annual accounts in an attempt to make royal finances more transparent. The Queen's duties as head of state continue to be funded with public money. In the financial year 2003-2004 this amounted to £36.8m. Her personal fortune is estimated to be about £275m.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You can't be the leader all the time, and it's important for you to learn how to step back and hand control over to someone else when the situation requires it.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Timing is everything right now. Act too soon and you'll move forward before you're absolutely ready. Act too late and you'll miss out on a very important opportunity.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

It's fun to always have plans, but you may be running the risk of losing yourself in all the noise of socializing. Are you putting as much energy into yourself as you're putting into your friendships?



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Your energy is vacillating today, so it's unwise for you to commit to anything right now. You won't be as reliable as you usually are, and you could let your friends down.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Time is pressing right now, and you don't have the luxury of being able to wait for other people to discover what wonderful ideas you have. It's time for self-promotion!



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Sure, you could make an educated guess and feel pretty confident about it, but why take that chance? There is too much at stake, so don't do any guessing now.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You could easily get in over your head before you can stop yourself. So act cautiously today. It's great that you're excited and eager to keep going, but it's just not wise to go too far too fast.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Short-term gains are nothing compared to what could be coming for you down the road. Keep your eyes on the prize and say thanks but no thanks to the distractions coming your way.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

At times, being blunt can be charming. People can appreciate a person who cuts to the chase and doesn't waste their time with empty compliments or wishy-washy sentiments.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

People might think that you aren't real competition for them, but you're sure to come from behind and blast past them to a jaw-dropping, breathtaking finish. It will be the last time anyone underestimates you!



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Save your energy and don't try to figure out why things are happening the way they are happening today. The answers won't satisfy you anyway. Just roll with the punches.

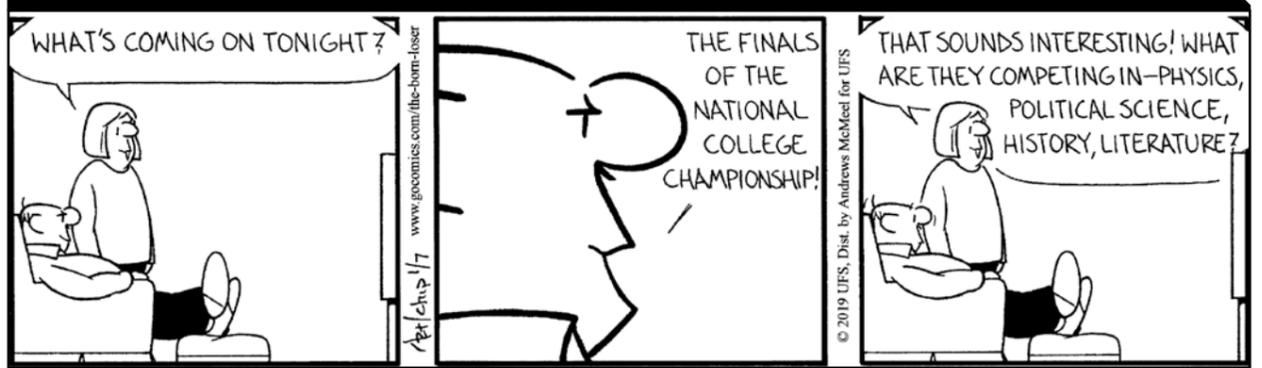


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

In all your activities today, your enthusiasm will bubble up from deep inside you without any effort at all. This easy, positive energy is contagious and will spread around through all of your people.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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				8				1
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7	3		6					
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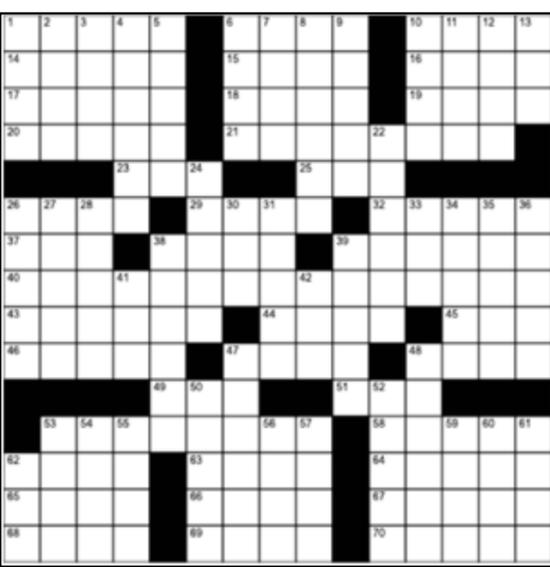
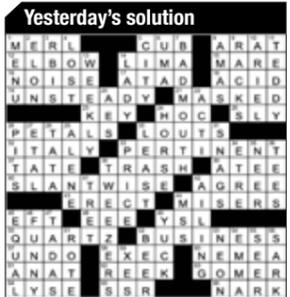
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-4	4	cloudy
Harbin	-14	-6	clear
Tianjin	2	6	overcast
Urumqi	-10	-6	cloudy
Xi'an	-1	9	cloudy
Lhasa	-4	14	cloudy
Chengdu	7	13	cloudy
Chongqing	11	14	overcast
Kunming	9	21	clear
Nanjing	9	11	drizzle
Shanghai	13	15	drizzle
Wuhan	4	9	overcast
Hangzhou	10	16	overcast
Taipei	21	25	cloudy
Guangzhou	19	28	clear
Hong Kong	22	27	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	2	moderate snow
Frankfurt	0	8	clear
Paris	5	11	cloudy
London	8	13	cloudy
New York	6	14	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Wreck; 6- Tailless rodent; 10- Dog-powered snow vehicle; 14- Cover story; 15- The gamut; 16- Pinguid; 17- Put a new price on; 18- Sports figure?; 19- Miss; 20- Bowwow; 21- Foolproof; 23- Shoshone language member; 25- Chem., for one; 26- Greek temple; 29- Stand; 32- Frighten; 37- Prone; 38- Couch; 39- Person with a cool job?; 40- Make a trade?; 43- Penetrate; 44- Barbie, e.g.; 45- ___ de guerre; 46- Beast of Borden; 47- The ___ Valley is a Californian wineland; 48- Member of the Conservative Party; 49- Expected; 51- Elfin; 53- Aversion; 58- Bungling; 62- Et ___ (and other men); 63- Small yeast cake; 64- One of the United Arab Emirates; 65- Hard, in Havana; 66- Take ___ from me; 67- Rub out or remove from memory; 68- Yemen neighbor; 69- Capone foe; 70- Leases;

DOWN: 1- Waterproof canvas; 2- Muffin topper; 3- Bandleader Puente; 4- Calculating device; 5- Luminous; 6- Get an A, say; 7- Aleutian island; 8- Unrefined; 9- Montezuma, for one; 10- Arias, usually; 11- Make-up artist?; 12- Additional; 13- Bad start?; 22- Pertaining to revenues; 24- Uneven; 26- One of the two equal sections of a cone; 27- Month of showers; 28- Siouan speakers; 30- Contingencies; 31- You ___ mouthful; 33- Animation unit; 34- Acid type; 35- Sharp-edged instrument; 36- Antagonist; 38- Break away; 39- Relative by marriage; 41- Calendar abbr.; 42- Alley-___; 47- Nullify; 48- Term of holding; 50- Living in a city; 52- Duck with soft down; 53- Homecoming guest; 54- Old Italian money; 55- Hero; 56- Large wading bird; 57- Hats; 59- Abba of Israel; 60- Gone by; 61- Connections; 62- Stir;



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



FOR SALE

Taipa - Nam Kwai Duplex
HK\$10,500,000 1,746 ft² 4 4

FOR SALE

Simplex Apartment w/ Outdoor Terraces
HK\$18,800,000 4,080 ft² 2 3

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

Amazing View Renovated Duplex apartment
HK\$4,200,000 817 ft² 2 2

PROPERTY LIST

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

[Macau] *Seaview Garden* 3 2
1,420 ft² \$10,900,000 (ref: 20016004)

[Taipa] *Houston Court* 1 1
980 ft² \$10,500/mth (ref: 20091001)

[Taipa] *Manhattan* 3 2
1,626 ft² \$19,800/mth (ref: 20031001)

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be cool

BIG PHARMA

With hope high for vaccine, Europe prepares to roll it out

DANICA KIRKA, LONDON

WITH major COVID-19 vaccines showing high levels of protection, British officials are cautiously — and they stress cautiously — optimistic that life may start returning to normal by early April.

Even before regulators have approved a single vaccine, the U.K. and countries across Europe are moving quickly to organize the distribution and delivery systems needed to inoculate millions of citizens.

“If we can roll it out at a good lick ... then with a favorable wind, this is entirely hypothetical, but we should be able to inoculate, I believe on the evidence I’m seeing, the vast majority of the people who need the most protection by Easter,” Prime Minister Boris Johnson said earlier this week after vaccine makers have announced encouraging results. “That will make a very substantial change to where we are at the moment.”

The U.K. has recorded more than 55,000 deaths linked to COVID-19, the deadliest outbreak in Europe. The pandemic has prevented families from meeting, put 750,000 people out of work and devastated businesses that were forced to shut as authorities tried to control the spread. England’s second national lockdown will end Dec. 2, but many restrictions will remain in place.

The British government has agreed to purchase up to 355 million doses of vaccine from seven different producers, as it prepares to vaccinate as many of the country’s 67 million people as possible. Governments around the world are making agreements with multiple developers to ensure they lock in delivery of



AP PHOTO

the products that are ultimately approved by regulators.

The National Health Service is making plans to administer 88.5 million vaccine doses throughout England, according to a planning document dated Nov. 13. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are developing their own plans under the U.K.’s system of devolved administration.

The first to be vaccinated would be health care workers and nursing home residents, followed by older people, starting with those over 80, according to the document, first reported by the London-based Health Service Journal. People under 65 with underlying medical conditions would be next, then healthy people 50 to 65 and finally everyone else 18 and over.

While most of the injections would be delivered at around 1,000 community vaccination centers, about a third would go to 40 to 50 “large-scale mass vaccination centers,” including stadiums, conference centers and similar venues, the document

indicates.

The NHS confirmed the document was genuine but said details and target dates are always changing because the vaccination program is a work in progress.

Professor Mark Jit, an expert in vaccine epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said Britain has the advantage of having a well-developed medical infrastructure that can be used to deliver the vaccine.

But this effort will be unlike standard vaccination programs that target individuals one at a time.

“The challenge now is to deliver the biggest vaccine program in living memory in the U.K. and other countries around the world,” Jit said. “We’re not vaccinating just children or pregnant women like many other vaccination programs.... We’re trying to vaccinate the entire U.K. population. And we’re trying to do it very quickly.”

Other European countries are also getting ready, as are the companies that will be crucial to the rollout.

For example Germany’s Biontech, which makes specialized cooling equipment for laboratories, has ramped up production of refrigerated containers needed to transport some of the vaccines under development. Biontech is producing a unit that will reach the ultra-cold temperatures needed to ship the Pfizer vaccine.

The German government has asked regional authorities to get special vaccination centers ready by mid-December. France, meanwhile, has reserved 90 million vaccine doses, but has not yet laid out its plan for mass vaccination. A government spokesman said last week that authorities were working to identify locations for vaccination centers, choose companies to transport vaccines and set the rules for shipping and storage.

In Spain, health workers will get priority, as will residents of elder care homes. Spain hopes to vaccinate some 2.5 million people in the first stage between January and March and have most of the vulnerable population

covered by mid-year. The vaccinations will be administered in 13,000 public health centers.

But sticking syringes in people’s arms is just the last part of the enormous logistical challenge the worldwide mass vaccination campaign will pose.

First, drugmakers must ramp up production, so there is enough supply to vaccinate billions of people in a matter of months. Then they have to overcome distribution hurdles such as storing some of the products at minus-70 degrees Celsius. Finally, they will need to manage complex supply chains reminiscent of the just-in-time delivery systems carmakers use to keep their factories humming.

“It will be the challenge of the century, basically, because of the volumes and everything else which are going to be involved ...,” said Richard Wilding, a professor of supply chain strategy at Cranfield School of Management. “It’s just the absolute scale.”

Vaccines from three drugmakers are considered leading candidates. Pfizer and Moderna have released preliminary data showing their vaccines were about 95% effective. AstraZeneca on Monday reported interim results of its vaccine developed with Oxford researchers that were also encouraging. Dozens of other vaccines are under development, including projects in China and Russia.

Britain and other Northern Hemisphere countries may also get a boost from the weather, said Chris Whitty, England’s chief medical officer. Transmission of respiratory viruses generally slows during the warmer months.

“The virus will not disappear, but it will become less and less risky for society.”

But Johnson, who credited NHS nurses with saving his life after he was hospitalized with COVID-19 earlier this year, warned restrictions will continue for months and Christmas celebrations will be curtailed this year.

“We can hear the drumming hooves of the cavalry coming over the brow of the hill, but they are not here yet,” Johnson said. AP

5G

China accuses Britain of discriminating with tech ban

CHINA accused Britain yesterday of improperly attacking Chinese tech companies after the British government proposed a law to block market access to telecom equipment giant Huawei and other vendors that are deemed high-risk.

The foreign ministry gave no indication whether

Beijing might retaliate if the law proposed this week is approved. It would tighten security requirements for next-generation wireless and optical fiber networks and fine violators.

The Trump administration is lobbying European and other allies to avoid Huawei and other Chinese vendors as they upgrade

telecom networks. Washington says Huawei, China’s first global tech brand, is a security risk, which the company denies.

“Without any evidence, the British side has repeatedly cooperated with the United States to discriminate against and suppress Chinese companies under the pretext of unfoun-

ded risks,” said a ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian.

Britain is “blatantly violating the principles of market economy and free trade, seriously damaging the normal operations of Chinese companies” and hurting trust between the two governments, Zhao said.

Huawei is at the center

of U.S.-Chinese tension over technology and security.

The Trump administration is trying to limit U.S. market access to Chinese companies it says might collect too much information about users or pose other risks. They include video app TikTok, video surveillance provider Hik-

Vision and messaging service WeChat.

The law proposed Tuesday would formalize British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s July order that blocks Huawei from a planned fifth-generation, or 5G, network. Britain earlier gave Huawei a limited role but reversed that under U.S. pressure. MDT/AP

OPINION

World Views

Anjani Trivedi, MDT/Bloomberg



CHINA MAKES A SAFE SPACE FOR CONSUMERS. WILL THEY SPEND?

Emerging from nearly a year of battling an economy dragged down by Covid-19 and a rickety financial system, Beijing is realizing what the most important collateral damage has been: consumers. Without their wallets and balance sheets, China's economic blueprint for the next five years won't work.

That explains why authorities have been talking up consumer protection, household leverage and the risks of fintech lenders. At a State Council meeting last week, boosting consumption—from autos and services to home decoration—topped the agenda. Separately, the banking and insurance regulator pointed to major problems that it's targeting and would investigate. Among them are high interest fees and problems with online tech platforms, insurance sales and complex wealth management products. Household balance sheets are increasingly indebted, while creditworthiness is weakening.

The focus on consumers is understandable. Ultimately, any percentage of some 1.4 billion people who feel poorer or have lost money could undermine the social stability so highly prioritized by the government. Without them, the recovery and future goals will be derailed. The growth strategy unveiled in the new five-year plan depends partly on generating consumer demand. Currently, Beijing has been able only to boost supply.

In protecting its hundreds of millions of households, the government wants buyers to know their rights and to empower them—or at least to make them feel that way. It's a theme taking hold globally. The Group of 20 leaders' declaration last weekend touched on the subject, while the European Commission has launched a new consumer agenda for citizens to "play an active role in the green and digital transition."

In China, courts are hearing more cases that involve complaints over online shopping for food, electronics and healthcare products. Beijing has a draft personal information protection law in the works that could become the country's first legislation in safeguarding an individual's data. The central bank has announced new measures to protect consumers' rights and fined six state-owned banks for infringing them.

The government's plan involves extending each yuan of household income. While the lending side has taken much of the blame for excesses in the online fintech draft rules, the reality is that consumers and small companies have had their borrowing capped above certain levels. Earlier this month, China loosened restrictions on licensed consumer finance companies to enable lower provision coverage ratios. That would allow them to lend more, and help consumers borrow more. The banks need retail franchises to thrive because the balance sheets of their corporate clients continue to look burdened.

It will be a challenge. Beijing has spent \$1.3 trillion to lift the economy out of Covid-19. But consumers aren't ready to spend yet and are holding onto their cash.

Will making consumers feel secure help China battle a problem that it's faced for years: a falling household consumption ratio? So far, it doesn't appear so. China's stands at 39% of gross domestic product, according to Goldman Sachs Group Inc. analysts, compared to 68% in the U.S., where the propensity to consume as well as household disposable income ratios are higher. In China, however, falling disposable incomes are a major factor driving the decline, as is a rise in urban savings. Making each yuan go further won't solve the problem until consumers either have more money, or feel financially safer. Beijing hasn't shown it's helping on this front.

One way would be to step up communication and information. Broader protection is commendable and obviously necessary. But a muddled approach doesn't help, such as restricting online fintech loan facilitators that borrowers want to tap, and forcing action from others like consumer financing companies that are theoretically easier to regulate. Think about the upended initial public offering just suffered by Jack Ma's Ant Group.

Safeguards need to be executed with the right long-term goals in mind and no room for short-term regulatory arbitrage. With the wrong rules, China may be creating room for yet more unwanted behavior.

[Abridged]

ARGENTINE FOOTBALL LEGEND DIEGO MARADONA DEAD AT 60

Football legend Diego Maradona has died of a heart-attack at the age of 60, Argentina's media reported last night.

The former Argentina attacking midfielder and manager had successful surgery on a brain blood clot earlier in November. It was then announced he was to be treated for alcohol dependency, BBC reported.

One of the greatest players of all time, Maradona was captain when Argentina won the 1986 World Cup, producing a se-

ries of sublime individual performances. He played for Barcelona and Napoli during his club career, winning two Serie A titles with the Italian side.

Maradona scored 34 goals in 91 appearances for Argentina, representing them in four World Cups.

He led his country to the 1990 final in Italy, where they were beaten by West Germany, before captaining them again in the United States in 1994, but was sent home after failing a drugs test for ephedrine.



THE BUZZ

HONG KONG

CARRIE LAM LAUDS NEW SECURITY LAW DESPITE CRITICISM



ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

HONG Kong leader Carrie Lam lauded the city's new national security law yesterday as "remarkably effective in restoring stability," despite criticism that it is severely narrowing the space for free speech and political opposition in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

Lam said in her annual policy address that the law had prevented a return of political unrest and that bringing normalcy back to the political system is an urgent priority.

Beijing imposed the security law on Hong Kong in June, aiming to crack down on dissent following months of anti-government protests in the city that at times descended into violence. Last year's protests were triggered by a proposed extradition law that would have allowed suspects in Hong Kong to be sent to the mainland. The proposal was eventually scrapped.

"Advocacies of Hong Kong independence and collusions with external forces have progressively subsided, some of the prominent figures have kept a low profile, radical organizations have ceased operations or dissolved," Lam said in her address.

"After a year of social unrest with fear for personal safety, Hong Kong people can once again enjoy their basic

rights and freedoms, according to the law," she added.

Lam also criticized foreign governments for interfering in Hong Kong's affairs, saying it had jeopardized national security.

The security law's passage has drawn strong criticism among rights groups and foreign governments, who say it betrays China's promise under the "one country, two systems" framework to allow Hong Kong to maintain its own legal system and civil liberties for 50 years following the handover from British to Chinese control in 1997.

They point to the curtailing of free speech through the outlawing of statements advocating Hong Kong's independence and criticism of China, the pulling of books from public libraries with suspect political views and a new emphasis on "patriotic education" in schools.

The U.S. responded to the new law by targeting a number of Chinese and Hong Kong officials responsible for implementing the legislation with travel bans and financial sanctions, Lam among them, and by moving to reduce Hong Kong's special status with the imposition of higher tariffs and visa restrictions.

The U.S. and a number of other countries also suspended their extradition treaties with Hong Kong, while Britain said it would allow

holders of British National (Overseas) passports extended stays and a path to citizenship. Taiwan opened an office to help Hong Kongers interested in moving to the island.

Beijing has rejected all such actions and criticisms as brazen political interference and taken an ever-tougher stance on dissent in Hong Kong.

Earlier this month, China passed a resolution disqualifying four pro-democracy Hong Kong lawmakers after they were accused of violating their oaths of office. The move prompted all of Hong Kong's pro-democracy legislators to resign en masse as a show of solidarity.

Lam said that Hong Kong has experienced one of its most severe political challenges over the past year.

"One of our urgent priorities is to restore Hong Kong's constitutional order and political system from chaos," she said.

She said the government would introduce a bill by the end of this year to amend local laws related to oath-taking, to "deal with those who have engaged in conduct that breaches the oath of the swearing-in."

Lam's address had been postponed for more than a month so she could seek Beijing's support for various economic measures aimed at reviving Hong Kong's economy. AP

Afghanistan Roadside bombs exploded in central Afghanistan killing at least 13 civilians and a traffic policeman, officials said, even as government negotiators and the Taliban meet to try to end decades of war. Tariq Arian, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said 45 people were also wounded in a late afternoon blast in Bamian city in Bamian province. Several shops and vehicles were destroyed or damaged.



US Purdue Pharma pleaded guilty to three criminal charges, formally taking responsibility for its part in an opioid epidemic that has contributed to hundreds of thousands of deaths but also angering critics who want to see individuals held accountable, in addition to the company. In a virtual hearing with a federal judge in Newark, New Jersey, the OxyContin maker admitted impeding the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's efforts to combat the addiction crisis.

Russia released new results claiming its experimental COVID-19 vaccine was highly effective, and promised it would cost less on international markets than vaccines by some of its Western competitors. According to the Russian Direct Investment Fund, which bankrolled the development of the job, Sputnik V will cost less than \$10 per dose—or less than \$20 for the two doses needed to vaccinate one person—on international markets. The vaccination will be free for Russians, the Fund said.

Greece Airlines are rescheduling or canceling flights to, from and within Greece this week as air traffic controllers join a nationwide public sector strike scheduled for today. The strike is set to disrupt public transport, including ferry services between the islands and the mainland. The civil servants' union called the strike on a variety of demands, including the increase of coronavirus-related protective measures in workplaces and in schools, mass hirings for the health and public transport sectors, and salary increases for civil servants.