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**NEW BILL AIMS TO INCREASE MOBILITY FOR PERMANENT TEACHERS, EXCLUDES TEACHERS' ASSISTANTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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**THE NUMBER OF CRIMES YEAR-ON-YEAR PLUNGED BY 33% BUT SEXUAL ASSAULTS AGAINST CHILDREN HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED**

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**Malaysia's** Parliament approved the government's proposed 2021 budget yesterday, throwing a political lifeline to embattled Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin amid strong resistance to his 9-month-old leadership. Opposition lawmakers as well as members of his governing coalition had warned during three weeks of debate that they would reject the budget, citing insufficient funding to fight a surge in coronavirus cases and help those hit by the pandemic.



**Indonesia's** anti-corruption commission formally named the country's fisheries minister as a suspect in taking bribes related to exports of lobster larvae, and alleged he used the money on a luxury shopping spree during a visit to the United States. Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Minister Edhy Prabowo was arrested upon arrival at Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport from a working visit to the U.S..



**India** Thousands of farmers clashed with police in northern Haryana state yesterday during a protest demanding that the government abolish new farming laws that they fear will reduce their earnings and give more power to corporations. The farmers, who were traveling toward the capital, New Delhi, on tractors and motorbikes, flung police barricades into a river and threw bricks and stones at the officers near Ambala district. Police halted them by firing teargas and water cannons.

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# ON THE BACK OF RECOVERY

Macau's SMEs need longer to recover despite progressive growth in tourist arrivals

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# SHOPPING FESTIVAL TO HELP REVIVE ECONOMY: GOV'T

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SMEs

# LONGER PATH TO RECOVERY AMID GRADUAL TOURIST GROWTH

STAFF REPORTER

**W**ITH everyone staying at home to lower the risk of infection, social distancing has helped to obscure the issue of joblessness and financial ordeals some in Macau face.

Sou Kit knows better than most how the unclear unemployment situation can strip away one's confidence. He has worked in the VIP gaming sector since he was 18. It was a fancy job – until it came crashing down in 2020.

Shortly after the first Covid-19 case was reported in Macau, Sou was asked by the company to take days off without pay. He has been doing so on-and-off since February.

"I had sat idle at home for months. I felt quite helpless seeing the money draining away," said Sou, now in his early 30s.

With ample time to burn, he decided to spread his wings in mid-September and open an eatery in Taipa Village that sells food reminiscent of many locals' childhoods – a dream he had always wanted to pursue but had been too risk-averse to do so.

It was a very long shot, especially at a time when there were almost no tourists in the city at all. Nonetheless, he doggedly used money that he had been saving for a rainy day to open his own business.

His business has been picking up ever since September 23, when the Chinese government recommenced the issuance of the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) permits for all mainland travellers travelling into Macau. Sou attributed the growth to the increasing number of holidaymakers from China.

In fact, the border between Macau and China was first opened on August 12, when the IVS scheme was reinstated for Zhuhai residents. It was extended to Guangdong Province on August 26.

But Sou, who lives just one street away from Rua do Cunha in Taipa Village and had witnessed thousands of tourists gravitating towards one of the city's busiest tourist spots for many years pre-pandemic, realized that tourism had not shown any signs of recovery until September, when the IVS scheme was restored for all travelers in China.



Sou Kit



Tim Mo Fong, Miss Ho's dessert store

"There really are more mainland tourists here [in Taipa Village] after the border fully opened to China. But the volume pales in comparison with that of previous [pre-pandemic] times," he added.

Macau is a heavily tourism-reliant city. Any decline in tourist flow quickly causes a drop in business revenue. Even though the city's tourism industry is slowly improving, this will take time – probably longer than expected – for the "tourism money" to trickle down to small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Sou's snack shop, which mainly targets local customers, is among the city's SMEs that have faced prolonged difficulties during the pandemic and are not fully out of the woods yet, despite a noticeable growth in tourist arrivals to the city.

The latest statistics from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) vindicate Sou's observations. In October, Macau saw 581,986 arrivals, up 29.6% month-on-month. Yet on a year-on-year basis, this represented a sharp plunge of 81.9%.

According to the latest survey published by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), Macau

was the city most dependent on tourism in 2018, with over a half, or 50.3%, of its GDP deriving from tourism activities. The city came ahead of the 46.8% for Cancún, 30.6% for Marrakech and 27.4% for Las Vegas.

As far as tourism's contribution to the job market goes, in 2018 Macau was ranked third globally, with 32.3% of the city's jobs, or 125,000, directly supported by tourism, as stated in WTTC's report.

## AN URGENT CALL FOR THIRD ROUND OF STIMULUS

In October, Sou received a notice from his previous company saying that they had no choice but to dismiss him due to their sagging finances, which had been crippled by the dual blows of Covid-19 and China's anti-corruption campaign.

He speculated that his retrenchment may be associated with the expiry of the Subsidy Program for Businesses the gaming operator signed up for more than six months ago. The scheme doled out grants to participating companies, but in return, they were not allowed to let go of their staff within six months without a justifiable reason.

Recently, the society has expressed worry that Macau will soon be hit with a fresh wave of economic distress and new shutdowns across sectors as some economic relief measures are due to wind up by the end of 2020. The conclusion of the soon-to-end Subsidy Program for Businesses, which was part of the MOP10 billion stimulus package introduced by the government in April this year, is said to be the last straw for local employees.

In the Lawmaker Agenda session on November 19, lawmakers urged the government to launch the third round of economic stimulus in a timely manner to throw a lifeline to SMEs, who are considered more vulnerable than conglomerates.

"The government should be more forward-thinking and start formulating the third round of stimulus, especially the aid targeting the city's SMEs," Ho said when addressing other lawmakers in the session.

Lawmaker Lei Cheng I also said that Macau's economic recovery largely banks on when locals will receive the vaccine, the timeline of which is still unknown. She called on authorities to roll

out a third round of stimulus to rectify the city's climbing unemployment rate.

After being laid off in October, Sou is keen to commit all his time to his new shop.

As a new entrepreneur in a time of crisis, he considers himself relatively lucky, as he created his own business before he was let go from the casino. He also got the chance to convert the ground floor of his house into a store, which saved him large upfront rental and refurbishing costs.

Ho said he's still not accustomed to his current life as a restaurant owner, which entails waking up early and working till 2 a.m. on some days.

"I raked in money with ease just by talking to the clients at VIP tables. But now, I'm receiving only a few 10s of dollars per transaction by working so hard every day," he said.

"My life now is tough, yet satisfying, as it is my business," said Sou, adding that he would like to return to the VIP industry sometime later, but believes the sector will take at least a year or two to return to pre-pandemic levels.

## HONG KONG VISITORS STILL MISSING

Another shop owner in Taipa Village, Miss Ho, was also hit hard by Covid-19. Her shop, Tim Mo Fong, has been one of the island's go-to places for desserts and drinks, and was frequented by local students.

She closed her shop for more than a month right after the government announced it would temporarily close the city's casinos for two weeks in early February. She made the move to cut costs, as she knew there would be no tourists and most local customers would skip non-essential spending when they sank deep into financial uncertainty.

Her shop reopened months ago and her business has been growing since IVS permits for all mainland tourists resumed.

"However, it is still a far cry from pre-pandemic levels," she said, adding that Hong Kong, whose residents are now deterred from coming due to the 14-day mandatory quarantine, was her other key source of clientele.

The continual travel restrictions imposed on Hong Kong travellers has been a big blow to her business. Yet she knows the stringent measures could keep Macau safe from the virus, given that there is a fourth wave in the neighboring city.

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## REACHING OUT!

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ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE Director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, has expressed her confidence that the upcoming Macau Shopping Festival will help the city out of the current economic recession.

When revealing that tourists had started spending more time in Macau, the tourism official also pointed out that tourists will have more chances to consume.

"The festival will help local businesses to commence stable revivals," Senna Fernandes said.

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have struck Macau heavily, but local people have been working hard to overcome the challenges. It is hoped that the situation will improve continuously, the tourism official added.

She also recalled that the government has joined with several e-commerce platforms, mainly from mainland China, to attract tourists and encourage them to extend their duration of stay in Macau.

The tourism official commended the shopping festival's organizing committee for picking a timely moment to hold the event. "The festival is a shot in the arm for local businesses," the official remarked. "It also provides [a platform] for them to carry on."

In its 10th edition this year, the Macau Shopping Festival highlights both large brands and local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) – from the six gambling concessionaires and major shopping malls, to traditional small bakeries and independently-owned cafes.

This year's festival will rely heavily on e-payment methods, such as local mobile payment

# MGTO: Shopping festival to help revive economy

BLOOMBERG



gateway MPay, and Chinese credit card Union Pay and its mobile payment method Cloud QuickPass.

In addition, Chinese mobile payment gateways AliPay and WeChat Pay, as well as local payment gateway ICBC Ma-

cau e-payment and BOC Macau Smart Pay, will also be included. It means that the festival's partnership does not include Visa

and Mastercard, which are also widely accepted in Macau.

Electronic lucky draws and immediate discounts will be offered by the respective e-payment gateways during the shopping festival as incentives, which totalled to MOP8.3 million.

Each payment of at least MOP300 through MPay will offer customers a chance to participate in an e-lucky draw, which gives out e-coupons as prizes so as to encourage further consumption.

Users of ICBC Macau e-payment will receive discounts every time they pay with the gateway, up to as much as MOP188.

On top of the incentives provided by payment gateways, larger enterprises will run their own promotions, too.

For example, coinciding with the duration of the shopping festival, incentives provided by premium shopping mall One Central will include a cash rebate of as much as 7% for every dollar over MOP10,000 spent at the mall.

Meanwhile, members of the shopping mall will be able to earn reward points for every dollar spent on transactions from as little as MOP100 on accommodation, dining experiences and spa treatments at the Mandarin Oriental Macau.

The Macau Shopping Festival will run from December 1 to 31.

## SECOND E-VOUCHER INJECTS NEARLY MOP2.9B INTO THE MARKET

**A**S of November 24, the second phase of the consumption card scheme, which started on August 1 and is still running, has generated more than 36 million transactions and MOP2.88 billion, the government recently announced.

The amount spent by local residents in the second phase of the scheme so far takes up about 88% of the budget reserved for the scheme. About 64% of the money was spent at small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

As for the first phase, which started on May 1 and ended July 31, it generated MOP1.87 billion worth of consumption across the city. A similar percentage as in the first phase was spent at SMEs during the second phase.

The two phases of the scheme have recorded consumption amounts of up to MOP4.75 billion so far, with about MOP3 billion spent on SMEs.

Nearly 660,000 residents have either topped up their consumption card in the se-

cond phase of the scheme or obtained new cards. The number of users in the second phase of the scheme has been greater than the first.

The technology provider, Macau Pass, has pledged that it would not take any handling fees in the first phase but will resume taking fees in the second. The decision was defended by the government, justifying the decision on the grounds that Macau Pass is a commercial business and has salaries to pay.

## Macau on a steady growth trajectory, MECC says

STAFF REPORTER

**A**T a ceremonial event organized by the Macau European Chamber of Commerce (MECC) yesterday, the alliance's members expressed confidence that the city is well-positioned for a steady economic recovery.

In his opening speech, Ambrose So, Honorary Chairman of MECC, regarded Macau as "a positive study worldwide." He attributed the city's quick recovery to the government's "timely and strong measures to control, prevent and

combat Covid-19."

Those efficient measures included border closures to foreigners since March, a request to shut down the city's hotels and casinos for two weeks in early February, and generous financial stimulus packages to help local businesses ride out the economic storm.

Thomas Gnocchi, Head of the EU Office to Hong Kong and Macau and Honorary Chairman of MECC, affirmed that ties between the EU and Macau have stayed strong despite the global economic downturn.

This is reflected in tra-

ding statistics. In 2020, the EU remains the second-largest trading partner of goods in Macau, just after China. Around one-fifth of the city's total trade is with the EU, Gnocchi said in his pre-recorded speech.

"For the EU, Macau is a growing market and our bilateral trade consists almost entirely of exports of EU goods," he adds.

Though bilateral trade slid somewhat this year owing to the pandemic, Gnocchi said he expects it will recover to pre-Covid-19 levels after the virus is kept in check.

MECC members also underlined the opportunities in the Greater Bay Area and pledged to take a central role in identifying business opportunities for European companies with a presence in the region.

The event, which commemorated the seventh anniversary of the MECC, was also attended by public officials including Lei Wai Nong, Secretary for Economy and Finance; Maria Helena De Senna Fernandes, Director of the Macao Government Tourism Office.





# Grand Lisboa eyeing 50% hotel occupancy for festive season

LYNZY VALLES

**G**RAND Lisboa Macau remains positive that it will reach a hotel occupancy rate of 50% during the upcoming December festive season, despite the month not being considered as a festive holiday in mainland China. Currently, this origin accounts for nearly all of Macau's tourists.

Official data shows that as of mid-November, Macau is recording a daily average of 20,600 visitors, while the hotel occupancy rate is approaching 45%.

SJM Holdings' Grand Lisboa Macau is eyeing the possibility of reaching 50%, yet noting that tourism arrivals in the city are beyond its control.

Henry Kong, Hotel Manager of Grand Lisboa Macau, said, "The target is possible, but it's beyond our control. It depends on tourists' decision. Because apart from domestic travel, they have Macau as an option [for a destination] too."

The executive also disclosed that its room rates have significantly lowered, similar to what



Henry Kong, Hotel Manager of Grand Lisboa Macau

other hotel operators have done to attract local residents during the peak of the pandemic when no tourists were allowed to enter the SAR – aside from those coming from mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. However, the mandatory nucleic acid test (NAT) and the 14-day quarantine period have hindered many from visiting the city.

For Grand Lisboa Macau, room rates were lowered some 20 to 30% on average.

"The problem we see is not price-related, it's related to the sourcing of guests. We need people. Of course, it can be even better if we manage to realize travel bubbles. However, our main concern is safety," he said.

Questioned as to whether there was a surge in casino patrons, the executive said, "The rise has been stable, but it was not obvious."

For its casino patrons, there are an average of 100 NAT takers per day at the hotel.

Currently, the casino has a maximum capacity of conducting 1,000 NATs daily.

Kong was speaking yesterday on the sidelines of the hotel's unveiling of its "Holiday Hamper House."

In celebration of Christmas, Grand Lisboa Hotel yesterday unveiled a "Holiday Hamper House" which was designed to honour the traditions of a European Christmas. Situated in the hotel lobby, the store features holiday classics such as Christmas stollen, log cakes, plum pudding, Christmas cookies and many others.

## GAMING

# FITCH FORECASTS REVENUE DECLINES OF UP TO 60% IN 1H2021

LYNZY VALLES

**F**ITCH Rating is forecasting monthly revenue declines of 50% to 60% (relative to 2019) through the first half of 2021, with accelerating growth in the second half, led primarily by the premium mass segment.

In a report, the credit rating agency noted that the eventual easing of travel to Hong Kong and potential availability of a vaccine drove its assumption for a stronger second half of 2021 performance relative to the first six months.

"Gaming concessions expire in 2022, though the Chief Executive has a multiyear extension option. Fitch continues to believe the concession rebid process will be pragmatic," the agency stated.

Meanwhile, it reiterated that the Individual visit scheme (IVS) visas application requirements and processing times that vary by province remain a source of friction for visitation to Macau from mainland China.

In the Asia Pacific market, Fitch expects revenues in Malaysia to recover gradually to 75% of 2019 levels in 2021, aided by new attractions and the country's larger and domestic-focused market.

Singapore's recovery, however, is likely to be slower while the border remains closed, as revenues are driven mainly by international visitors — with limited near-term visibility into easing. Therefore, the company expects Singapore's 2021 gaming revenues to reach only 45% of 2019's levels.

In Japan, meanwhile, Fitch noted that the structural decline in the domestic offline gaming sector, specifically pachinko parlors and gaming arcades, remains a real risk in 2021, particularly as the pandemic has accelerated the shift toward video and online games.

"Nevertheless, Fitch believes that the sector will perform better than initially expected as lockdowns have been more limited."

AD

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RENATO MARQUES



# New bill aims to increase mobility for permanent teachers

RENATO MARQUES

A new bill that aims to amend Decree-Law 67/99/M, which establishes the general rules for teaching staff at the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ), as well as its statutory regulations, aims to increase the work mobility of permanent teachers working in Macau public schools. This constitutes a significant change to the laws and regulations currently in force, which restrict the mobility of teachers on temporary contracts, said the Chairman of the Third Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) Vong Hin Fai in a media briefing after a meeting yesterday afternoon.

During the first committee meeting to discuss the details of this new bill, Vong noted that many topics were raised, including increasing the scope for teaching staff mobility and the fact that the new law, contrary to what

is currently in force, excludes the teachers' assistants also working in public schools.

According to the chairman of the committee, the complexity of the law and the need to match it with other regulations in force, such as the General Regulation of the Civil Servants (ETAPM), has led to some concerns from the AL legal advisors.

"The committee members have paid special attention to the object of the bill, which is the statutory rules of the teachers. We heard explanations from the AL legal advisors and we decided to rename the law to start with. Because, according to Article 4, the scope of the law regarding whom it concerns was reduced."

According to Vong, the new name will be the 'Statute of the Non-Tertiary Education Teachers of the Macau Official Schools,' explaining that this happens because the bill applied to teachers only, excluding the administrative and

leadership roles, as well as other auxiliary staff from the schools and namely teachers' assistants.

The exclusion of assistants in the bill was one of the topics that raised concerns, with Vong noting that by the suggestion of many of the lawmakers that made up the committee, they are calling for a clearer explanation from the government.

The issue on the line is whether or not the government wants to enforce a transition rule for such staff, or, following the legislation logic, if the staff excluded by the law immediately and automatically become included in the ETAPM after the approval of this law.

Vong said it was necessary to clarify this with the government, since there are significant differences between the regulation in force and the ETAPM, adding that a transition period and a specific rule for that could help to ensure that these staff members "would not lose any rights previously

granted to them."

Vong also disclosed that on the first day of analysis of the bill, around 32 of its articles were discussed and seven completely new articles were added to the bill in an attempt to clarify it.

## TEACHERS' MOBILITY AND HIRING SYSTEMS REQUIRE CLARIFICATION

Related to the new mobility of the teaching staff is also the sys-

tem that allows hiring temporary teachers "in case of need."

The lawmakers of the Third Standing Committee believe that the government must present a clearer justification and clarification of the process.

"First, it looks like the new law contradicts the ETAPM by saying that permanent teachers will be included in the mobility process with an aim to make the system more flexible, and the suppression of sudden needs in different schools and even of different school levels," Vong said.

He added that while it is accepted that this can work as an important tool to allow teachers to be transferred between different levels when needed, it is opposed to the ETAPM rule that says that non-permanent civil servants are included on mobility programs.

"Besides, there is another problem regarding the rule that states that this process can be used in cases of 'lack of teachers' and that in 'special cases' other teachers can be hired on an individual temporary working contract."

He explained that this fact causes doubt among committee members who find that 'according to the needs of the system' is a very broad concept that can be potentially used to bypass the centralized recruitment systems in force.

"Who will decide this need?" Vong asked, adding, "Is it the Secretary [for Social Affairs and Culture], the director the DSEJ or is it the principal of a school? We will ask the government to clarify this."

## TEACHERS BILL VERY COMPLEX AND CONFUSING, SAYS PEREIRA COUTINHO

**LEAVING** the Third Standing Committee meeting, the lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho briefly expressed his opinion that the new bill is very complex and anticipated that a long period of discussion would be necessary before it proceeds to the plenary session for the final reading.

"There are many co-related and intertwined articles in this law, and it is written in a quite confusing manner," Pereira Coutinho told the Times, hinting that there are many aspects of the new bill that need to be clarified and harmonized with other Civil Servants regulations.

# Bill concerning urban architecture limits detailed reading of fire safety law

JULIE ZHU

THE first detailed reading of the recently passed new law concerning fire safety in buildings and specific locations, such as outdoor public spaces, has been held by the Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL).

The law clearly suggests that the personnel who are responsible for managing fire safety at these places must hire a qualified company and assign one fire safety officer from the company to provide services ensuring fire safety.

The legislation propo-

ses that the person responsible for a location should be the operator, while the tenant should be the person responsible for a rented property. If a property management company is involved, then property management should also share the responsibilities.

However, some lawmakers believe the article does not define the responsibilities clearly and they hope the government can further explain the stipulations.

According to Chairman of the Second Standing Committee Chan Chak Mo, the law has many

definitions related to fire security. However, these definitions will be included within the bill on urban architecture, which the government has not yet submitted to the AL, as of today.

In order to fully understand the fire security law, the lawmakers are urging

the SAR government to deliver the urban architecture law sooner.

The committee expects the government authority will submit the urban architecture law to the AL in the beginning of December. Both laws are expected to have their readings completed within this legislative term.

The committee discussed 29 articles during yesterday's meeting. Yesterday was the first time that the committee had discussed the law, article-by-article.



CRIME

# SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES UP 64% AS OF Q3

JULIE ZHU

**T**HE total number of crime cases in the first nine months of the year plunged by 33.1% year-on-year, whereas the number of sexual assaults against children has significantly increased, according to statistics provided by the Secretariat for Security.

Yesterday, the security authority revealed crime statistics concerning the first three quarters.

Between January and September, the police authority opened investigation files for 7,092 criminal cases, down 33.1% compared to the same period last year.

However, during this period, there were more sex-related crimes, including crimes against children. The statistics revealed that



MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

as of September, Macau has recorded 18 sexual assaults against children, up by 63.6% year-on-year. Ten of these cases were reported in the third quarter. The crimes mostly occurred in schools or in the children's homes, with the suspects mostly consisting of relatives, classmates or teachers.

During the first nine months of the year, the police authority also investigated 65 blackmail cases,

46 of which were directly linked to communications including naked images. Last year, there were only four cases involving the same kind of communications between January and September.

The numbers also show fewer cases of human smuggling. Until the third quarter, the police authority has recorded 31 human smuggling cases, 28 fewer compared to the same period

last year.

The Secretariat also remarked that since the city's new tax law came into effect, taxi violations have reduced significantly.

Between January and September, Macau recorded a total of 93 cases of refusing to take passengers and overcharging, 96.9% less compared to the same period in 2019.

The security authority believes that once all of Macau's taxis have a computer terminal system installed, the number of taxi violations will hopefully decrease even further.

Police have also recorded 47 cases in which car owners offered taxi services without an authorization.

Authorities also cracked down on 52 illegal gambling cases, 42 more than the same period last year.

When speaking about illegal gaming, the police authority said that in most cases individuals had provided an unauthorized space for people to play mahjong or other types of gambling activities.

## GOV'T'S CONTRACT WITH ALIBABA EXPECTED TO BE EXTENDED

**T**HE government expects to extend its partnership with Alibaba Group, the Deputy Director of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP), Ng Wai Han, disclosed yesterday.

In August 2017, the government and Alibaba Group signed a "Framework Agreement of Strategic Cooperation on Smart City Development." The agreement encompasses a series of projects to upgrade Macau's development in cloud computing and big data technology, and is valid until 2021.

Ng said that due to the pandemic, service suppliers have been unable to travel to Macau to conduct field research, as cited in a report by TDM. This means some of the progress has been delayed, including the development of some on-line service platforms.

Due to these delays, the government plans to extend the agreement with Alibaba.

Ng did not reveal how long the extension will be, saying that the government is currently evaluating the progress of those impacted.

Under the Framework Agreement, the government and Alibaba Group will jointly build a cloud computing data center in Macau. Alibaba Group will only provide technical support, without having access to any government data, which is to be stored in Macau and not transferred overseas. **JZ**

AD

**NOV 28**

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**be cool**



# China's top diplomat stresses S.Korea ties amid row with US

**C**HINA'S top diplomat yesterday stressed the importance of bilateral relations while meeting senior officials in South Korea, where there is growing concern the country is becoming squeezed between China, its biggest trading partner, and military ally the United States.

After meeting South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters that his visit during the coronavirus pandemic shows how much Beijing values its relations with Seoul. He called for stronger cooperation over anti-virus efforts, trade and finding a peaceful solution to a nuclear standoff with North Korea.

When asked whether Beijing was pressing Seoul to choose a side amid rising U.S.-China tensions over trade, security and other issues, Wang said "America is not the only nation in the world."

"There are 190 countries and each of them are sovereign na-

AP PHOTO



Moon Jae-in (right) and Wang Yi at the presidential Blue House in Seoul yesterday

tions," he said. "They include China and South Korea, which are close neighbors and should visit each other more often, like relatives."

Wang later met with President Moon Jae-in, who acknowledged bilateral accomplishments in fighting the virus and maintaining

essential business exchanges despite tightened border controls, according to a pool report.

Moon also urged Beijing to continue serving a "constructive role" in international efforts to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and helping improve relations between the rival Koreas.

Wang replied that Seoul and Beijing have set a "role model" for international cooperation amid the pandemic and conveyed a message by Chinese President Xi Jinping that he considers his "friendship and trust" with Moon as "very important."

Moon's ambitions for inter-Korean engagement have faltered amid stalled nuclear negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea, which have disagreed over the release of crippling U.S.-led sanctions against North Korea in exchange for disarmament steps by the North.

China, as North Korea's only major ally and economic lifeline, is seen as having unique leverage over the government in Pyongyang.

Wang arrived in Seoul following a visit to Japan, where he met Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

South Korea has been eager to repair its relations with China, its biggest trading partner, which reacted furiously to Seoul's decision to deploy an advanced U.S.

anti-missile system on its soil in 2016 to better cope with North Korean threats. There is also concern in South Korea over a deepening row between Washington and Beijing over trade, security, human rights and other issues, which could force Seoul into a difficult balancing act.

China, which says the U.S. anti-missile system in South Korea could be reconfigured to peer into its territory, had been accused by Seoul of retaliating by limiting visits by Chinese tour groups to South Korea. Beijing also destroyed South Korean supermarket giant Lotte's business in China after the company sold a plot of land to the South Korean government where the anti-missile system was later installed.

South Korea had hoped to secure a visit by Chinese leader Xi Jinping this year in what Seoul officials describe as a key step in repairing relations, but the pandemic has complicated such plans.

When asked about a possible Xi visit, Wang pointed to the face masks worn by reporters, saying that the coronavirus must first be contained.

South Korea yesterday reported 583 new cases of the coronavirus, its biggest daily increase in about eight months, as a resurgence in the capital region threatens to erase hard-won gains. AP

AD

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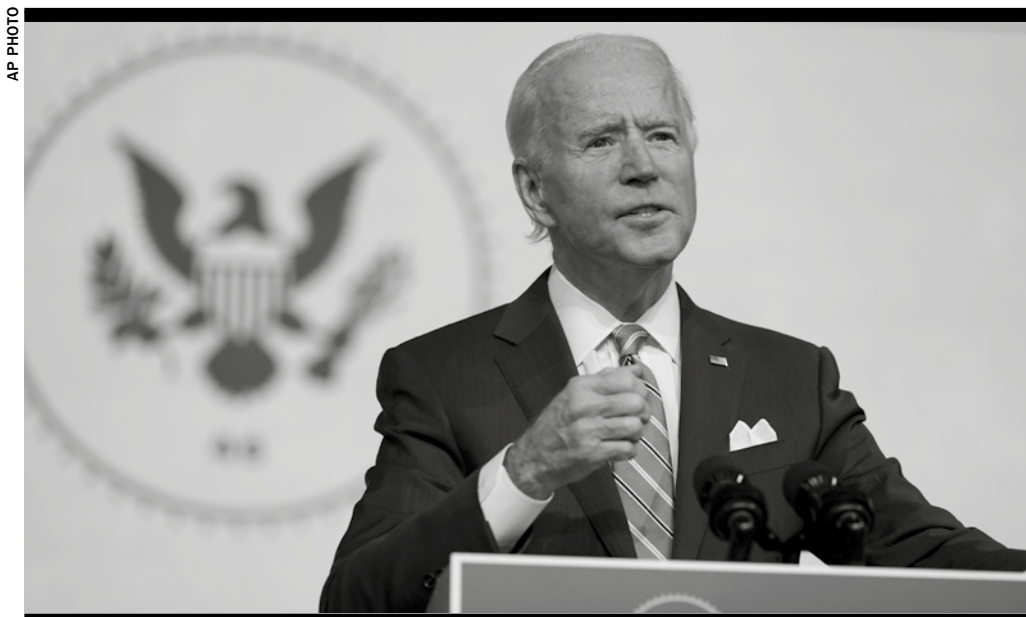
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USA

# Biden seeks unity as Trump stokes fading embers of campaign

ALEXANDRA JAFFE  
& JILL COLVIN,  
WILMINGTON (DEL.)

ON a day of grace and grievance, President-elect Joe Biden summoned Americans to join in common purpose against the coronavirus pandemic and their political divisions while the man he will replace stoked the fading embers of his campaign to “turn the election over.”

Biden, in a Thanksgiving-eve address to the nation, put the surging pandemic front and center, pledging to tap the “vast powers” of the federal government and to “change the course of the disease” once in office. But for that to work, he said, Americans must step up for their own safety and that of their fellow citizens.

“I know the country has grown weary of the fight,” Biden said yesterday [Macau time]. “We need to remember we’re at war with the virus, not with one another. Not with each other.”

President Donald Trump, who has scarcely mentioned the pandemic in recent days even as it has achieved record heights, remained fixated on his election defeat.

He sent his lawyer Rudy Giuliani and other members of his legal team to meet Pennsylvania Republican state senators in Gettysburg. Inside a hotel near the hallowed battlefields

of civil war, they again aired complaints about the election and repeated allegations of Democratic malfeasance that have already disintegrated under examination by courts.

“We have to turn the election over,” Trump said from the Oval Office, where he joined the meeting by speakerphone.

“This was an election that we won easily,” he said. “We won it by a lot.” In fact, the election gave Biden a clear mandate, and no systemic fraud has been uncovered. Judge after judge has dismissed the Trump campaign’s accusations as baseless, and the transition to Biden’s presidency is fully underway.

Nevertheless, Trump repeated: “This election has to be turned around.”

Trump had been expected to appear in person in Gettysburg, but did not after another member of his legal team tested positive for the coronavirus. Few at the meeting wore masks.

Altogether, the forum heard — and cheered — yet another declaration from a U.S. president seeking to reverse a democratic election and the voters’ will because he wants to stay in power. The setting was about a mile from the scene of Pickett’s Charge, where Union troops repelled a desperate Confederate attack in July 1863 and helped turn the tide of the Civil War.

The president followed

up by pardoning former national security adviser Michael Flynn, the second Trump associate convicted in the Russia probe to be granted clemency by Trump.

The pardon was part of a broader effort to undo the results of an investigation that for years has shadowed Trump’s administration and yielded criminal charges against a half dozen associates. The pardon voids the criminal case against Flynn just as a federal judge was deciding whether to grant a Justice Department request to dismiss the prosecution despite Flynn’s own guilty plea to lying to the FBI about his Russia contacts.

For his part, Biden has largely projected serenity as the necessary elements of a presidential transition — money, access to office space and more — were held at bay for nearly three weeks by Trump’s machinations and a delayed ascertainment by the General Services Administration that he had won the election. Yesterday, he addressed Trump’s raw tactics only in passing.

“Our democracy was tested this year,” Biden said, “but the people of this nation are up to the task.”

“In America, we have full and fair and free elections, and then we honor the results,” he said. “The people of this nation and the laws of the land won’t stand for anything else.”

And he offered an op-

timistic vision, calling on Americans to “dream again” and predicting that “the 21st century is going to be an American century.”

Biden pledged more virus testing, more protective gear and clearer guidance for businesses and schools to reopen when he becomes president. Until vaccines are distributed, he said, masks, social distancing and limits in the size of gatherings “are our most effective tools to combat the virus.”

Biden’s remarks came as COVID-19 cases are surging nationwide. Hospitalizations, deaths and the testing positivity rate were also up sharply as the nation headed into Thanksgiving, and public health experts have warned that the large family gatherings expected for the holiday are likely to extend and exacerbate the surge.

He has formed a coronavirus advisory board of scientists, doctors and public health experts, and plans to establish a COVID-19 coordinator in the White House to lead his administration’s response.

This week, however, Biden focused beyond the crisis stateside and unveiled his national security team earlier this week, including his nominees for secretary of state, director of national intelligence and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Drawing implicit contrasts with Trump, Biden said the team “reflects the fact that America is back, ready to lead the world, not retreat from it.” He’s also expected to name Janet Yellen as treasury secretary in the coming weeks.

In urging Americans to be vigilant in their Thanksgiving plans, Biden said he was taking precautions of his own, eschewing his traditional large family gathering and spending the holiday instead with just his wife, daughter and son-in-law.

He’s traveling with his wife, Jill, to Rehoboth Beach, the small Delaware beach town where the two have a vacation home. That’s where they’ll host their family for Thanksgiving dinner. Biden is expected to stay through the weekend in Rehoboth before returning to Wilmington for further work on the transition.

Trump will forgo his usual plans to celebrate Thanksgiving at his private club in Florida and will instead remain at the White House. **AP**

## this day in history

### 1967 DE GAULLE SAYS ‘NON’ TO BRITAIN - AGAIN

The French President, Charles de Gaulle, has for a second time said he will veto Britain’s application to join the Common Market.

He warned France’s five partners in the European Economic Community (EEC) that if they tried to impose British membership on France it would result in the break-up of the community.

All five - Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Italy and Germany - have said they would support negotiations towards British membership.

Only France remains opposed.

At a news conference at the Elysee Palace in Paris, attended by more than 1,000 diplomats, civil servants and ministers as well as journalists, General de Gaulle accused Britain of a “deep-seated hostility” towards European construction.

He said London showed a “lack of interest” in the Common Market and would require a “radical transformation” before joining the EEC.

“The present Common Market is incompatible with the economy, as it now stands, of Britain,” he said.

He went on to list a number of aspects of Britain’s economy, from working practices to agriculture, which he said made Britain incompatible with Europe.

Hopes that he might offer clear terms for associate membership were also dashed. He said France would back commercial exchanges with Britain - “be it called association or by any other name” - but that was all.

His remarks were greeted with dismay in Europe, where it is feared an open crisis within the EEC is now inevitable.

General de Gaulle’s position has hardly changed since he first vetoed Britain’s application to join in 1963.

He leaves the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, with no realistic hope of taking Britain into Europe in the near future.

All three political parties are committed to joining the EEC, and the news of General de Gaulle’s continuing intransigence on the issue was met with gloom in Westminster.

The only group which was pleased with the General’s comments were anti-European campaigners.

They called on the prime minister to withdraw Britain’s application immediately.

Only then, they said, could a “humiliating” inquiry into the UK’s economic affairs be avoided when Common Market foreign ministers meet to consider Britain’s application formally next month.

Mr Wilson himself said he would not countenance what he called “peevish reactions” which might jeopardise Britain’s relations with France or the other five EEC countries.

Courtesy BBC News



## IN CONTEXT

Harold Wilson waited two days before replying to General de Gaulle’s statement. He made a 16-point rebuttal of the French leader’s statement and ruled out any offers of associate membership. He also said Britain would press ahead with its application for full membership of the Common Market. After General de Gaulle fell from power in 1969, Britain applied a third time, and was accepted. On 1 January 1973 the UK became a fully-fledged member of the EEC.



YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It's time to get back in touch with them. So through this day slowly, and take in the world around you. Don't just think about tomorrow, or you will totally miss out on today.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You can either get face-to-face with the person who is confusing you and finally get to the bottom of things, or you can move on to a different set of social partners for a while.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Your modesty isn't going to do you any good, so ditch it today and step into the spotlight! Get yourself noticed and you'll inject your mood with brightness and sass.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

To help you get back into a sunnier mood, why not call up some friends and reconnect? Shoot the breeze. Have some laughs. You don't have to spend money to have a wonderful time.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Your willingness to be flexible will be remembered by people who can make things happen down the road. One of your most ambitious goals feels like it's getting tougher today.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Let the world see the part of yourself that you never get to reveal. Take your biggest insecurities and let them all hang out. Be proud of your imperfections.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

A huge wave of creativity hits you today. This could be the beginning of a very productive period, so get cracking early in the day. Concentrate on output. Quantity is more important and quality right now.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

When was the last time you had some old-fashioned fun? It's time to work hard at having a good time in your life, and yes, it does take work! Do whatever it takes to get in a few belly laughs today.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

This isn't the best day to try to push a relationship to a deeper level. You know something they don't know, but if you use this secret to connect with someone, you'll be sorry.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Something big is coming, and it might come before you're completely ready for it! Preparation is the big theme for you today, and you'd be wise to double-check your finances.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You've got the sass, the energy, and the brilliance to carry on unique conversations with people from all walks of life, and your ability to listen to what people say is much appreciated.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Give them space and leave them alone today, because any undue pressure you put on them will only make them tense and distracted. Things are working just fine as they are, so relax.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-4	6	clear
Harbin	-15	-7	clear
Tianjin	1	5	clear
Urumqi	-8	-3	cloudy
Xi'an	0	9	overcast
Lhasa	-1	11	overcast
Chengdu	8	12	overcast
Chongqing	11	13	overcast
Kunming	8	21	clear
Nanjing	7	9	drizzle
Shanghai	11	14	drizzle
Wuhan	5	11	cloudy
Hangzhou	10	12	drizzle
Taipei	19	22	drizzle
Guangzhou	16	26	clear
Hong Kong	21	26	cloudy

WORLD

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
Moscow	-3	1	sleet
Frankfurt	0	5	cloudy
Paris	1	11	overcast
London	3	8	overcast
New York	11	19	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Latin lesson word; 5- Quizzes, trials; 10- Staff leader?; 14- Mower brand; 15- Spring up; 16- Prefix with -drome; 17- In excess of; 18- Bay; 19- Humble; 20- Antiwar activist; 22- Wagons; 23- Novel ending; 24- 1982 Disney film; 26- PC shortcut; 29- Ceylon, now; 33- Pale; 34- Beast of burden; 35- As a female, you could be queen or worker; 36- Go sky-high; 37- Lathers; 38- Catchall abbr.; 39- Lennon's widow; 40- Pulls down; 41- Tropical fruit; 42- Young bird; 44- City on the Rhone; 45- Team; 46- Farm structure; 48- Result; 51- Nickname for New York City; 55- Neet rival; 56- Use a baton, say; 58- Baby blues; 59- Tubular pasta; 60- San \_\_\_\_, California; 61- Ancient Athens's Temple of \_\_; 62- Corrida cries; 63- Words to live by; 64- Emperor of Rome 54-68;

DOWN: 1- On the peak of; 2- Relocate; 3- Length times width; 4- Magician; 5- Spoil; 6- Journalist Pyle; 7- Worm fiber; 8- Literary monogram; 9- Become firm; 10- Bathroom; 11- Cordelia's father; 12- Formerly, formerly; 13- Adversaries; 21- Harrow rival; 22- Soft drink; 24- Snares; 25- Lens holders; 26- Person who dresses stones; 27- In agreement; 28- Total disorder; 29- Jargon; 30- Birth-related; 31- Jack; 32- Brother of Prometheus; 34- TV producer Michaels; 37- Stated; 38- Continental inhabitant; 40- Nobelist Wiesel; 41- Big bash; 43- Trouble, slangily; 46- Brought into being; 47- Inuit dwelling; 48- Automaker Ferrari; 49- Arrest; 50- Web locale; 51- Sever with the teeth; 52- Combustible heap; 53- Lip-curling facial expression; 54- Canadian gas brand; 56- HBO alternative; 57- Armed conflict;



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[Macau] <i>Seaview Garden</i>	3 1/2 2 1/2
1,420 ft² \$10,900,000 (ref: 20016004)	
[Taipa] <i>Houston Court</i>	1 1/2 1 1/2
980 ft² \$10,500/mth (ref: 20091001)	
[Taipa] <i>Manhattan</i>	3 1/2 2 1/2
1,626 ft² \$19,800/mth (ref: 20031001)	

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AP PHOTO



Viola Davis in "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom"

## DRIVE IN

# 'MA RAINEY' IS BOSEMAN'S FINAL, PERHAPS FINEST GIFT

JOCELYN NOVECK, MDT/AP

**CHADWICK** Boseman surges onto the screen as fast-talking trumpeter Levee in "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" like a man on an electrified tightrope -- balancing precariously between hope and cynicism, humor and sadness, joy and pain, and love and hate.

Unlike with some of Boseman's other famous characters who've had a clear moral center from the start, it's not clear what Levee, a creation of legendary playwright August Wilson, has up his sleeve. Handsome and wiry, he's constantly on edge, and behind even his most brilliant smile there's a whiff of something amiss. We don't really know what we're looking at. But we sure don't want to look away.

Boseman's performance in this

film adaptation of Wilson's 1982 play, lovingly directed by George C. Wolfe, would be heartbreaking even if the actor hadn't tragically lost his life to cancer this year.

But watching it now, that knowledge informs every moment, as one imagines the challenges he must have faced in a famously taxing role that was clearly so important to him. It goes without saying that the performance is brilliant, and yes, electric, but it's also heroic. If there had to be a final role, what a gift that it was this, an exclamation point to a career that seems ever more momentous.

Boseman isn't the only volcanic force in "Ma Rainey," a meditation on power, race, sex and commerce in early 20th-century America treated with sensitivity and grace by Wolfe, with a screenplay by Ruben Santiago-

-Hudson and score by Branford Marsalis. There's also the matter of the titular Ma herself, played by a superb Viola Davis, nearly unrecognizable in her broadened silhouette, mouth of gold teeth, and coat upon coat of eye makeup. Together, she and Boseman conduct a master class.

A historical note: Ma Rainey, who died in 1939, was a groundbreaking Black singer from Georgia known as "Mother of the Blues." She's the only real-life character in Wilson's 10-play cycle documenting the African American experience, and the only LGBT character, too.

Wolfe, who doesn't try to underplay the material's theatrical roots, gives us a few tone-setting performance scenes. But the action takes place almost exclusively inside a white-owned studio in Chicago, where Ma and her

band are scheduled one afternoon in 1927 to record a few hits. Intensifying the claustrophobia, Wolfe has turned it from winter to sultry summer; Ma is perpetually glistening in sweat.

Before Ma arrives -- suitably late -- her band gathers. There's the fatherly Cutler (Colman Domingo), Slow Drag (Michael Potts), and pianist Toledo (Glynn Turman). Then Levee bursts in, brandishing a prized new pair of shoes. Not only does he have talent, he boasts to the older guys: "I got STYLE."

That he does. And ambition. Encouraged by the white studio owner, he's writing songs and plans to launch his own band. And he has his own, jazzier version of "Black Bottom," sure to get people dancing.

But Ma isn't having it. She has her version of the song, and it

works. She's also insistent that her nephew Sylvester give the introduction, even though he stutters. And she won't begin recording until she's good and ready. "That's the way it go around here," she says.

Ma isn't merely throwing around her weight. She's staking a claim to her very dignity. Once the studio has what they need, she knows, they won't care a whit about her. And so, when the ice-cold Coke she requires is forgotten, she won't budge until it comes. Watch Davis guzzle down that Coke ferociously when it does.

Ma rightly sees Levee as a threat to her style of performing, but also to her authority. To make it worse, she senses he has eyes on her young girlfriend, Dussie Mae (Taylour Paige). She's right -- and it's more than his eyes.

But Levee isn't just a brash troublemaker. Behind the bluster is a deep well of pain, which we come to understand through several devastating tour-de-force monologues that hark back to past demons, and hint at future tragedy. If you haven't seen the play, brace yourself.

Seven years ago, Boseman wrote poignantly about the experience of meeting Wilson, whom he clearly revered, and reciting the playwright's lines, which he likened to poetry.

"Filling one's nostrils with the emotionally charged breath to recite an August Wilson monologue," he wrote, "can be transformative."

And now we know how transformative it can be to watch Boseman himself recite those monologues. We should all count ourselves lucky to be able to witness this, his final and arguably finest performance.

**"Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," a Netflix release, has been rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America "for language, some sexual content and brief violence." Running time: 94 minutes. ★★★★★**

## Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu



### THE HIBERNIAN 1050 METRES SAND

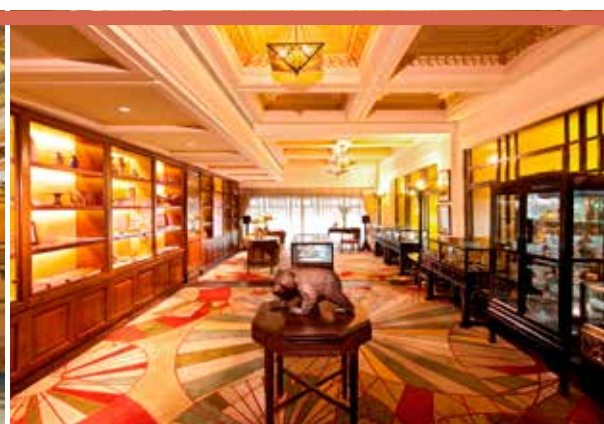
2020-11-28|Sat|16:55

**BLUE GLORY** from YC Fung's yard has shown enough to suggest that he can score another good sand race this Saturday. He rate favourably at his current rating and I am very positive in his chance in this race. He can make his presence felt and I wouldn't be surprise if he can go to the winner's stall again. **Blue Glory** has been ultra-consistent in his sand races; 3 wins and 1 place in all his sand outings last season, his only defeat was on the turf track in his first start, you can put a line to cross this one out. **Blue Glory** has taken plenty of improvement in his races on the sand track, this time he draw gate 7 which is not ideal but his racing condition and track work would off-set this. The booking of WL Ho also commands respect, let's put our fingers cross to see him cross the line strongly this Saturday. You would put him in your quinella as banker and choose which ever one for the leg. Good luck.

**Race 6 | Horse no. 4 Blue Glory to win, and banker for your quinella**







IRENE SAM, MDT

TASTE OF EDESIA

**T**HERE are many outstanding hotels in Shanghai and choosing where to stay during a short visit could be a difficult decision. For those who love history and eager to explore how the elite of Shanghai partied and adventurers travel back in the 20th century, **Fairmont Peace Hotel** is the best choice indeed.

Shanghai was the place to be back in the 19th century, a roaring international port of incredible energy and opportunity. Standing beside Huangpu River, Fairmont Peace Hotel- formerly The Cathay Hotel- was the most glamorous establishment back in the 1930s. In the city where West met East, the buildings along the river-side Bund or "Wall Street of the

East" were built by the British using dignified marble, granite and concrete. It was a symbol of prosperity and success.

A gentlemen by the name of Sir Victor Sassoon, a property and finance tycoon, enjoyed racehorses, high style and throwing fabulous parties wearing flamboyant costume, where the swanky, chic, talented, artistic and famous all mingled. Back in 1929, The Cathay Hotel was already well-known for its world-class amenities. It had air-conditioning, in-house telephones as well as water that came from the Bubbling Well spring, a water source to the

Western end of Nanjing Road.

In the early 1930s wars started to break out in Shanghai and The Cathay Hotel was damaged by bombs. The historic hotel survived World War II and after the Communist victory of 1949, it reopened in 1956 as The Peace Hotel. The old Peace Hotel Jazz Band played on, and the distinctive green copper pyramid tower could still be seen on the Shanghai skyline. At that time the hotel only received distinguished visitors such as foreign delegations and in 1964, China's beloved Premier, Zhou EnLai held diplomatic discussions in the hotel.

Today in the 21st century, the famous hotel on the Bund re-opened as the Fairmont Peace Hotel after years of careful restoration. Elements of contemporary sophistication can be detected in numerous infrastructural details and service standards. 1920s Lalique glass ornaments, fixtures, and the original Art Deco frieze of the two greyhound design reminds us of the old world.

A stay in the French Suite is a must at the hotel as it exudes old-world glamour and was restored to what it was in history but with all the modern amenities and comforts discer-

ning travelers deserve. Foodies would be delighted by the food and beverage offerings crafted by talented chefs. At Dragon Phoenix, a venue visited by President Xi Jinping not long ago, authentic Shanghaiese cuisine is served beautifully presented in a space which overlooks the exciting Huangpu River and the Pudong area across. The meticulous chef at Dragon Phoenix pairs modern cooking methods and visualisation with a traditional Shanghaiese taste that does not overwhelm the palate with sweetness. Every dish is a sight to behold and beyond delicious. The Cathay Room, an epicentre for European cuisine, features creative dishes such as vegetarian pasta with rice paper which adds a truly unique touch to a wonderful stay at one of the most iconic hotels in China.

## A journey through time



OPINION

World Views

Bobby Ghosh, Bloomberg



WHY MARADONA WAS BETTER THAN RONALDO AND MESSI

Soccer fans are fortunate to live in a time when two superstars are simultaneously making the claim to be the best player in the history of the sport — and more fortunate still that we can watch the contest between Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo play out, week in and week out, live before a global audience of billions. Thanks to YouTube, I can watch high-quality videos of their most compelling performances, and of every goal they’ve ever scored.

When Diego Maradona was staking his claim to the title of best ever, most of the world could only get a quadrennial glimpse of his genius, when he turned out for Argentina in the ’82, ’86, ’90 and ’94 World Cups. Growing up in India during that period, I never saw highlights of his performances for FC Barcelona or Napoli (a city where he’s still regarded as part deity, part royalty).

There are now some video highlights online that preserve a grainy record of him in his pomp — including THAT goal against England in the Azteca Stadium on June 22, 1986. But these only hint at what he was capable of. They don’t constitute sufficient supporting evidence to the argument that he was the best ever.

What makes it harder still is the even scarcer evidence for claimants of previous generations: Hungary’s Ferenc Puskas, Spain and Argentina’s Alfredo di Stefano, Brazil’s Pele, the Dutchman Johan Cruyff, Germany’s Franz Beckenbauer, et al. That they played under different conditions and rules, and in different positions, makes the argument moot, anyway.

We can’t, then, know if Maradona was technically the best to have kicked a ball.

Nevertheless, I’m here to argue that he was the greatest of all time. And my case rests on the simple fact that he, more than all the other claimants named here, came closest to defying the dictum that soccer is a team sport.

For most of his career, Maradona played in teams that lacked any other world-beating players. Run your eye down the list of the Napoli squad with which he conquered Italian soccer in 1986-87, and there’s not a single other player who would make it to a Serie A hall of fame. He had a slightly better supporting cast in the Argentina sides that he took to two World Cup finals — winning it in ’86, and coming agonizingly close in ’90 — but nobody would argue that Jorge Valdano was to Maradona what, say, Jairzinho was to Pele in ’70.

It is one thing to be a brilliant player surrounded by other brilliant players; in this regard Messi and Ronaldo have been exceptionally fortunate with their club teams. But Maradona made magic out of mediocre materials.

What makes this even more remarkable is the weight of expectation he carried on his diminutive frame. When he signed for Napoli in 1984, the club had never won the Italian league, and yet its fans immediately began to dream of championship glory. The “pibe de oro,” or golden boy, was as much talisman as captain and player.

Other footballers — Messi among them — have since had to cope with comparable pressure, but modern superstars are surrounded by a scaffolding of public relations professionals and psychiatrists to help them. Maradona, lacking support off the field as he did on it, nonetheless delivered the “oro” for club and country over and over again.

Until he didn’t. It was probably inevitable that the burdens of his genius would eventually crush him, and they did so in spectacular fashion. But he withstood them long enough to cast in bronze — like the plaque commemorating THAT goal outside the Azteca Stadium — his claim to being the greatest of all time.

RIP, Diego Armando Maradona, GOAT.

Obituary on macaudailytimes.com

CHINA WON’T HIKE RATES SOON AS IT EXITS STIMULUS, SAYS STATE MEDIA

THE BUZZ

China is very likely to exit from some of its stimulus measures as the economy improves, but there won’t be any interest rate hike soon, a leading state newspaper said on its front page yesterday.

“If previous rounds of withdrawing stimulus policies are a guide, ‘tight money’ and ‘tight credit’ are inevitable, and policy rate hikes are also normal,” the China Securities Journal said. “However, we shouldn’t see the monetary authority proactively raising the policy rate for some time to come.”

While the state newspaper didn’t attribute its view to any policy

maker, citing mainly economists instead, a front-page story could be seen as an official signal of policy.

Chinese officials have been talking about gradually winding back stimulus since the summer, alongside evidence of a rebounding economy fueled by strong export growth and a coronavirus outbreak that’s now under control domestically. The People’s Bank of China remains on course to taper its emergency support even as a string of defaults by government-linked companies sent tremors through the credit markets recently.

SOUTH KOREAN CHAT ROOM OPERATOR GETS 40 YEARS FOR BLACKMAIL

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

THE operator of online chat rooms in South Korea was sentenced yesterday to 40 years in prison on charges of blackmailing dozens of women, including minors, into filming sexually explicit videos and selling them to others.

The Seoul Central District Court convicted Cho Ju-bin, 24, of violating laws on protecting minors and organizing a criminal ring, court spokesman Kim Yong Chan said.

The court ruled Cho “used various methods to lure and blackmail a large number of victims into making sexually abusive contents and distributed them to many people for an extended period,” according to Kim. “He particularly disclosed the identities of many victims and inflicted irreparable damage to them.”

Cho has maintained he only cheated victims into making such videos but didn’t blackmail or coerce them, prompting some of the victims to testify in court.

Kim said the court decided to isolate Cho from society for a prolonged period in consideration of his attitude and the seriousness of his crime.

Both Cho and prosecutors, who had requested a life



Cho Ju-bin (center) leader of South Korea’s online sexual blackmail ring so called “Nth room”

sentence, have one week to appeal.

Prosecutors formally arrested or indicted Cho and seven accomplices in June for allegedly producing sexually abusive videos of 74 victims, 16 of them minors, and distributing them on the Telegram messaging app, where users paid in cryptocurrency to watch them in 2019-2020.

A prosecutors’ statement called Cho’s group “a criminal ring” of 38 members. Yesterday, the Seoul court sentenced five of Cho’s accomplices, one of them a 16-year-old, up to 15 years in prison.

When he was shown before the media following his initial detainment at a police station in March, Cho said “Thank you for stopping the life of a devil (I) couldn’t

stop.”

Cho’s case has triggered an intense public uproar and soul-searching in South Korea over a culture that some experts say is too lenient about sexual violence and continuously fails the victims. President Moon Jae-in earlier called for a thorough investigation and stern punishment for those operating such chatrooms and their users.

In recent years, South Korea has been struggling to cope with what the government describes as digital sex crimes, which aside from abusive chatrooms also include the spread of intimate photos and videos taken by smartphones or tiny spy cameras hidden in public spaces and buildings, an issue that triggered massive protests in 2018. AP



India Parts of the country’s southern coast were flooded yesterday after a cyclone slammed into its shores, triggering heavy rains, uprooting trees and cutting power lines. Cyclone Nivar made landfall in Puducherry, a federal territory near the southern state of Tamil Nadu, with winds of up to 130 kilometers per hour, according to the India Meteorological Department. It said the storm was weakening as it moved north toward Karnataka state.

Cambodia A court yesterday began hearing the cases of nearly 130 government critics and opponents charged with treason for taking part in nonviolent political activities over the past three years, in what one of them called a sham trial. Only 33 defendants attended the session at the Phnom Penh Municipal Court, with some believed to be overseas. Most are former members or supporters of the disbanded Cambodia National Rescue Party.



US President Donald Trump pardoned his former national security adviser Michael Flynn, ending a yearslong prosecution in the Russia investigation that saw Flynn twice plead guilty to lying to the FBI and then reverse himself before the Justice Department stepped in to dismiss his case. “It is my Great Honor to announce that General Michael T. Flynn has been granted a Full Pardon,” Trump tweeted. “Congratulations to @GenFlynn and his wonderful family, I know you will now have a truly fantastic Thanksgiving!”

Ethiopia’s prime minister said yesterday the army has been ordered to move on the embattled Tigray regional capital after his 72-hour ultimatum ended for Tigray leaders to surrender, and he warned its half-million residents to stay indoors and disarm. The military offensive “has reached its final stage” after three weeks of fighting, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s office said. That means tanks and other weaponry can close in on Mekele, whose residents had been warned of “no mercy” if they didn’t move away from Tigray leaders in time.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd



Maradona. A mourner, sporting a tattoo of Diego Maradona on his forearm, waits in line to pay his final respects to the soccer great Diego Maradona lying in state outside the presidential palace in Buenos Aires yesterday.