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LAWMAKER WANG SAI MAN IS URGING THE GOVERNMENT TO CREATE A TEMPORARY MECHANISM TO REEMPLOY STRANDED TNRS P2

ECONOMY TO GROW BY OVER 60% YEAR-ON-YEAR IN 2021: FITCH RATINGS P3

PERMANENT RESIDENTS USED MORE NEW MEDIA SOURCES DESIGNED IN WESTERN COUNTRIES: SURVEY P2

China lashed out at the U.S. over new American sanctions against Chinese officials for their actions in Hong Kong, along with the sale of more U.S. military equipment to Taiwan, moves touching on two of the most sensitive issues in the increasingly contentious relationship between the nations.

Hong Kong is re-imposing a ban on in-restaurant dining after 6 p.m. and closing gyms, beauty parlors and other businesses and public venues as it tries to get a grip on the latest wave of coronavirus infections in the territory. Restaurants may only provide takeout between 6 p.m. and 5 a.m. and while open, must limit numbers of patrons at 50 percent of capacity with diners restricted to two per table.

AP PHOTO



North Korea The influential sister of leader Kim Jong Un lambasted South Korea's foreign minister for questioning the North's claim to be coronavirus free, warning yesterday of potential consequences for the comments. South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said over the weekend that it's hard to believe North Korea's claim that there has been no virus outbreak on its soil. She added that the North has been unresponsive to South Korea's offer for cooperation to jointly tackle the pandemic.

Philippines, which faces threats from Islamic State group-linked militants, has received nearly \$30 million worth of weapons from the U.S.. Acting U.S. Defense Secretary Christopher Miller made the announcement during a brief visit to Manila, where he met with his Philippine counterpart and the foreign secretary. The weapons, including equipment for snipers and anti-bomb squads, were delivered ahead of Miller's visit, officials said.

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THE NEED TO ADAPT

Tourism experts called on the industry to make headway to accommodate evolved travel sentiments and needs of mainland travelers in the new normal era P3

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RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKER'S AGENDA

WANG SAI MAN WANTS MECHANISM TO REEMPLOY STRANDED TNRS

LAWMAKER Wang Sai Man is urging the government to create a temporary mechanism to handle the cases of the many non-resident workers (TNRs) who have lost their jobs as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

In a spoken inquiry delivered yesterday at the Legislative Assembly during the period before the agenda, Wang noted that, due to the effects of the pandemic on the economy, "many non-resident workers were made redundant, some did have their contracts renewed, others did not receive the renewal authorization [on time] and, as international flights were suspended, many were unable to return to their place of origin, so they were left with no other option besides staying in Macau."

The lawmaker also added that this state of affairs, com-

bined with the loss of income, presents risks to society, as the stranded workers might engage in illegal work as a means of subsistence.

"During their stay in Macau, these workers have no income to support their living and so the probability of starting to engage in illegal work activities is high, with some daring to risk their life by performing these illegal activities, which constitutes a risk to public security," Wang said.

To avoid this problem and simultaneously alleviate the pressure on the local micro and small sized companies, which cannot recruit the necessary manpower to operate,

the lawmaker is proposing that the government consider these TNRs as exceptions to the new law for the recruitment of TNRs, allowing local companies and families to recruit them as a means of reemployment.

Wang also noted that the solution previously provided by the Labour Affairs Bureau, which suggested the recruitment of TNRs from the mainland instead, is considered ineffective by most employers, who claim that the "salary, benefits and local work environment are not attractive" for workers from the mainland, namely those involved in domestic work.



RENATO MARQUES

SURVEY: PERMANENT RESIDENTS USE WESTERN NEW MEDIA AT A HIGHER FREQUENCY

JULIE ZHU

A survey conducted by the Macao Media Research Center at the Macao University of Science and Technology (MUST) has shown that, in 2020, permanent residents of Macau used more new media sources designed in western countries than those who are not Macau permanent residents in the city, who spent more time on mainland new media.

Yesterday, the MUST Macao Media Research Center organized a meeting on its campus to release the results of a report called the "2020 Macau Residents' New Media Usage Survey Report."

Overall, the survey was intended to investigate Macau residents' habits of using new media, as well as about the respondents' political stances. The survey results contain feedback from both permanent Macau residents and those who are non-local residents.

Among the total 1,658 valid questionnaires, 1,125 respondents were Macau residents.

The researchers concluded that "permanent Macau residents use western new media at a higher frequency whereas, those who are not Macau permanent residents consume more mainland new media."

In terms of consumption frequency, comparing the two groups, Macau permanent residents led in Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp usage. Meanwhile, non-Macau permanent residents prefer WeChat, Zhihu, Weibo, and other mainland new media.

"Macau residents mainly use new media for communication and rarely reveal themselves [by posting] or report information," the report says. The survey results show that 30.41% of Macau residents use new media for communication and socializing, 24.57% use new media to learn about their friends' lives, and 25.68% of

respondents never report information on these platforms.

"Macau residents' new media participation consists mainly of 'likes', comments, reports, and posts recorded a medium level of participation. Female respondents prefer to 'like', young people aged below 30 favor 'like' and repost, and people with income over 20,000 patacas prefer to repost."

From the perspective of "news consumption," the top three areas of focus for news consumed were current affairs, social news, and entertainment. Over 70% of the respondents frequently read the first two types of news, and less than 10% never do so.

"26.35% of the respondents always give attention to Macau local news," the report noted.

According to the survey, respondents are spending more time on WeChat, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram and less time on Twitter and Line.

DSPA REPORTS HIGHER RECYCLING EFFICIENCY IN HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

JULIE ZHU

Recycling efficiency in high-rise buildings is far more significant than recycling in public streets, according to Chan Kwok Ho, Chief of the Environmental Protection Bureau's (DSPA) Environmental Infrastructure Management Center.

Yesterday, the DSPA led a media tour of the local government's recycling treatment facilities to demonstrate how the authority handles recycled materials.

On the sidelines of the visit, Chan spoke to the media regarding Macau's current recycling situation.

According to Chan, only 20% to 30% of the recycling waste collected from the recycling bins on the public streets is reusable. The percentage goes up to 50% to 60% in terms of recycling efficiency at high-rise buildings,

where there are DSPA recycling bins.

The rest of the materials collected from the recycling bins remains unrecycled.

The bureau recently put stickers on recycling bins to help members of the public distinguish between the various classifications of trash.

As of today, over 750 high-rise buildings are members of the DSPA's building recycling program, and the DSPA provides large-sized recycling bins for these buildings.

In addition, the DSPA has been expanding effort on education regarding recycling, including educational campaigns in local schools.

The environmental protection authority organizes annual seminars in local schools aiming to educate young children about recycling. In turn, the children can bring the concept of re-

cycling home.

Between January and November of this year, the DSPA recycled 293,000 kgs of paper, 63,000 kgs of plastic, and 40,000 kgs of metal. The recycled items were mostly transported to mainland China and other countries in Southeast Asia.

The Macau SAR government will ban the importation of styrofoam food containers starting from January 1 next year.

"Single use food containers, single use bowls and cups, single use plates, all made with styrofoam, are the target of this ban," according to a Chief Executive Decree recently published in the Official Gazette.

According to Chan, the recycling of styrofoam requires a complex process and Macau currently does not have a recycling network to handle styrofoam recycling.

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GTEF2020

Industry should acclimatize to mainland travelers' evolved demands: Experts

STAFF REPORTER

NATIONAL Tourism Organizations (NTOs) and the travel trade have to get in early in adapting to the drastic changes in travel behaviors and preferences among mainland travelers in the new normal era, if they wish to grab a slice of this enormous pie to drive quick tourism recovery, travel experts recommended at yesterday's Global Tourism Economy Forum (GTEF).

"The travel demand of Chinese travelers will only be temporarily suppressed during the pandemic," meaning there will be a huge pent-up demand to be released from China once Covid-19 subsides," said Wang Xinjun, CEO of Ivy Alliance, a leading tourism research and consulting firm in China, commenting on the great potential of China's tourism market.

In the midst of the health crisis, most global destinations have been eyeing China to accelerate economic revival. As of now, China's economy and travel market have been the first back on a growth trajectory since the pandemic outbreak.

The strong resilience of China's tourism market is reflected in its rapidly-recovering domestic

BLOOMBERG



travel market.

According to McKinsey & Company, the demand for domestic travel among mainland travelers is "approaching pre-pandemic levels," with its hotel occupancy rate and the number of domestic flight passengers already at 90% of 2019 levels by August.

Such a rapid revival is mainly driven by the strong travel desires of mainland travelers, which has been channeled into the domestic market while international tourism

has remained at a standstill.

Most experts who attended the forum yesterday said that Macau, which has had no new reported cases for many months and is in close proximity to China, is well-positioned to become top of the list for mainland travelers, as they are more likely to opt for short-distance trips to Asian destinations that have had a good track record of controlling Covid-19 post-pandemic.

In view of China's huge potential, experts called on the city's travel

traders to shape up to accommodate the evolved travel sentiments and needs of mainland travelers in the new normal era.

With safety and health as overriding concerns, Wang suggests that the travel trade conceive more individual tours or private tours as mainland travelers now prioritize closed-group travel instead of group tours to minimize contagion risks.

Besides, he suggests that the industry should bolster health and

safety protocols in their services and products to rebuild consumer confidence.

In the opening ceremony of the GTEF, Gao Yunlong, Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Honorary Chairman of GTEF, suggested that the tourism sector could tap into advanced technologies, like big data, artificial intelligence and digitalization, to develop smart tourism that can provide "more convenient, more accessible travel experiences" for travelers in China and abroad.

Despite facing a global health crisis, Macau has managed to show signs of recovery ever since the resumption of travel activity between Macau and China in August. Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Leong U reaffirmed the fact that China's tourism market has driven a rapid tourism rebound in the city.

The GTEF 2020, an annual tourism showcase event hosted by the SAR government, took place yesterday at MGM Macau. It convened global authorities and travel traders to exchange insights and strategies on tourism development in the new normal era.

Economy to grow by over 60% year-on-year in 2021

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU'S economy is forecast to shrink around 54%, year-on-year (YoY) in 2020, but rebound by over 60% YoY in 2021, according to the latest report published by Fitch Ratings.

The city has already seen signs of recovery in the third quarter (Q3) of this year, with the decline in its GDP reducing from -68% YoY in the previous quarter to -63.8% YoY in Q3.

The American credit rating agency attributed this growth to several factors. They include China's phased reinstatement of travel visas to Macau and a rebound on local consumer and business sentiment, which have been driven by the city's stable



pandemic situation and a series of financial stimuli rolled out to boost the local market.

In the coming fourth quarter, the GDP growth of Macau is expected to improve "given the low base effect and the gradual recovery of tourism and gaming," the agency said.

However, Macau's economic rebound will still

be limited to a degree until an effective vaccine is widely distributed. The factors that limit recovery are the soon-to-expire relief measures, persistent travel restrictions in global destinations and the weak labor market.

Earlier in November, local economist José Luís de Sales Marques, told the Times that "Macau would not have a V-shaped recovery"

as the Chinese outbound tourism market, despite its strong recovery speed, is behaving cautiously towards Macau.

The red tape of conducting the Covid-19 test and a decline in disposable income among mainland travelers, particularly the high-rollers in the VIP sector, will also be factors in hindering the recovery of the city's economy.

2020 TOURIST ARRIVALS TO REACH OVER FIVE MILLION

VISITOR arrivals in the Macau SAR for 2020 may total around five million, underscoring the fact that the city is only recording between 18,000 and 20,000 of entries daily.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Global Tourism Economy Forum yesterday, Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said, "I don't think we will have six million so that would [maybe] be five and a half [million]. It is a difficult year."

Although January's figures totaled to three million visitor arrivals, the remaining 11 months did not catch up with the figure due to the outbreak of the pandemic, which has caused global entry and travel restrictions.

"Christmas and New Year is not traditionally a travelling period for mainland Chinese so we do not antici-

pate a very high number of bookings," said Fernandes.

However, the official hopes that there will be more retail shopping that can boost spending.

Last year's tourist arrivals totaled to nearly 40 million.

Meanwhile, Fernandes explained that authorities have canceled the New Year's countdown celebration and its subsequent fireworks performance as the two events are believed to attract hordes of crowds, which may increase contagion risks.

The government wants to prioritize safety and has come to this decision after "taking into account various factors," Fernandes said.

When asked by the media whether the celebratory events during the Lunar New Year will take place, she said that the authorities are now evaluating the situation and will make an announcement in due course. **MDT**

GOV'T CONTINUES WITH BUILDING CONSTRUCTIONS TO SAVE ON RENTS

The SAR Government has recently announced that another land plot, sized 6,480 sqm and located opposite the main door of the Macao Cultural Centre, will host a new government office tower. The roof of the building will be reserved for greening purposes. Meanwhile, the tower opposite the Artyzen Grand Lapa Hotel will have a floor area of 1,636 sqm with 11 floors above ground and two underground.

HK PLAN TO BUY ZHUHAI AIRPORT SHARES MAY NEGATIVELY IMPACT MACAU

Dr Tong Kai Chung, President of the Macau Institute of Management, has said that the Macau civil aviation industry will see negative impacts, when asked to estimate the outlook after the Hong Kong Government announced plans to buy shares of the Zhuhai Jinwan Airport. The Hong Kong authority may divert cargo transport to the Hong Kong International Airport if the plan is realized.

CCAC PLEDGES CLEAN ELECTION NEXT YEAR

The Commission Against Corruption has recently announced that its main task for next year is to ensure that the Legislative Assembly Election is free of corruption. In its attempt to achieve this, the commission will continue its citywide anti-corruption campaign, which will target voters and prospective registrants. A group dedicated to this agenda will be inaugurated. Online and phone reporting channels for instances of suspected corruption will also be opened

ARISA CHATTASA



CRIME

MAN ASSISTS FRIEND TO RAPE OWN PARTNER

ANTHONY LAM

A man who allegedly helped his friend twice to rape his former girlfriend, who was then a minor, was accidentally discovered while local law-enforcement authorities were investigating a drug consumption case.

The case was uncovered in 2017, when the girl passed out after consuming drugs at her then-boyfriend's place. The police were notified by her friends and passed the case to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP).

It was originally investigated by the Public Security Police Force (PSP), as drug investigations are under its authority.

During the inquiry, the girl disclosed that she had been raped by a friend of her former boyfriend at least twice. The friend is surnamed Chu and the former boyfriend Wong, both locals.

Besides this, she has also had

sexual intercourse with Wong, the then-boyfriend.

The MP then got the Judiciary Police involved, as the crime falls within the authority of the entity.

Following the inquiry, the police arrested Wong in September 2017 for having sexual intercourse with a minor. The girl was below 16 years old when she had sex with Wong, which is under legal age of consent.

The couple started dating each other in October 2015. Several months later, in early 2016, the girl visited Wong's place and found Chu also there. Wong asked to have threesome but the girl refused.

Ignoring the lack of consent, Chu approached and raped the girl. Out of fear, the girl did not disclose the rape to anybody else.

In March 2016, the three joyride in a car driven by Wong, who pulled up on a hillside on Coloane. Chu took advantage of the

isolation and raped the girl again, witnessed by Wong, who made no sound and obstruction.

With Wong arrested already, the law-enforcement entities carried on tracing the remaining suspect, Chu, for three years. The suspect was arrested at the Border Gate by the PSP as he attempted to leave Macau for mainland China on December 4.

MAN ARRESTED FOR FALSIFYING CRIMES

A man who deceived his sister in an attempt to get money for further gambling has been arrested by the PJ for falsifying crimes.

Surnamed Li, the mainland tourist and suspect staged a hoax to cheat his sister, who was then in mainland China. She was told that Li had been abducted by loan sharks after losing and being unable to repay the HKD50,000 that he had borrowed from them.

Desperate to save her brother,

the sister reported the case to the police right away.

The police commenced an investigation at the hotel reported by the brother to be the location of the abduction. They discovered Li alone in a hotel room and could not find any indication of abduction.

Although the police found the crime to be untrue, Li tried to further deceived the police, making up details of his abduction. However, when questioned by the police, Li was not able to tell where he was abducted.

Meanwhile, the police reviewed footage from surveillance cameras in the hotel and on the streets nearby. They could not find any evidence to prove the claimed abduction.

Rather, they discovered Li walking freely around the neighborhood, on top of gambling without any risk or concerns in the casino.

Following further inquiries, the suspect finally confessed the fraud to the police. He was charged with falsifying crimes and scamming.

After all, it was true that Li had indeed lost all his money at the casino. Only the story about the abduction was faked, in the hopes of getting money from his sister.

Taipa construction accident leaves one dead

A construction worker was killed in an accident in which he was buried by falling earth at a construction site near the Light Rail Transit's Ocean Station on Tuesday, the government has announced.

At the time of the accident, the 50-year-old male non-resident worker from mainland China, surnamed Liang, was working in a 2.5-meter deep pit, which was dug to facilitate the sewage pipe construction project tendered by the

Municipal Affairs Bureau.

While he was in the course of stabilizing one of the pit walls, earth from the other wall came loose, burying the worker. Firefighters arrived at the scene and unearthed the man, who was not breathing and had no heartbeat upon rescue.

The victim sustained bone fractures to the head and the neck and was pronounced dead at the hospital.

The accident has

prompted a suspension of the construction until the Labour Affairs Bureau deems it safe. The bureau will investigate the cause of the incident. Should any malpractice be discovered, the contractor will be penalized.

Extra training sessions will also be provided to the contractors.

The bureau has also sent its condolences to the family of the victim and pledged to offer any assistance as needed. AL

BLOOMBERG



Artyzen Grand Lapa to undergo further rebrand in early 2021

LYNZY VALLES

GRAND Lapa Macau has announced its change of name to Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau as part of its rebranding process.

Although they are yet to announce the full details of the rebranding development, Rutger Verschuren, Area Vice President – Macau Operations, Artyzen Hospitality Group and General Manager – Grand Lapa Macau, said that now is the perfect time for the rebrand as the hotel has concluded its renovations.

The pandemic outbreak has slowed the progress of the rebrand, however, the executive is confident of its offerings once the market returns.

“The market is slowly returning. [...] It's the perfect time to start with a new name and chapter for this hotel,” Verschuren said.

The hotel opened in 1984 as the Excelsior and was later renamed the Oriental Hotel and then the Mandarin Oriental.

“Now is the time to turn a



page with the new energy and better products than before. [We are] getting out of the pandemic slowly – it's been a couple of months since we've been seeing more volume coming back in Macau.”

Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau is set to announce further information on the rebranding early

next year.

Meanwhile, when asked about the hotel's occupancy rate, the executive said, “It is improving but it is still very slow,” adding that the tourist arrivals and hotel occupancy numbers are tricky as there is a high percentage of day trippers from Guangdong Province.

For the hotel, the current challenge is to continually attract non-gaming tourists from the mainland.

“We're going full steam and we're enthusiastic about what is going to happen [after the rebranding],” he added.

Artyzen Hospitality Group is the management company of Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau and Grand Coloane Resort Macau.

Currently, the latter resort is designated as a quarantine hotel.

Verschuren was speaking on the sidelines of a Christmas event held yesterday.

CHRISTMAS PROMOTIONS ROLLED OUT

To celebrate the festive season, Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau is hosting stilt arts performances every Friday to Sunday from December 11, and a workshop from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on December 13 and December 20.

The hotel is also offering a “Christmas Stay and Dine” all throughout this month, as well as a New Year Dinner on its lawn and a countdown at the hotel lobby.

PORTUGUESE, ENGLISH PRESS EXPLORE GBA CITIES

The Macau Portuguese and English Press delegation is currently visiting the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area's cities of Guangzhou, Zhaoqing and Jiangmen, among others, to explore the culture and tourism of the GBA. The four-day trip, which kicked off yesterday, aims to promote cultural exchanges between the Greater Bay Area and Portuguese-speaking countries. The Macau Daily Times is represented by Editor-in-Chief Paulo Coutinho.

SERVICE TERM OF SAM HOU FAI RENEWED

The service term of the Court of Final Appeal (TUI) Presiding Judge, Sam Hou Fai, will be renewed for three more years, according to a report by TDM Radio. The official's term was slated to end on December 20, marking his 20th year as head of the top court, following his appointment by former Chief Executive Edmund Ho. Sam is also the President of the Council of the Judicial Magistrate.

AD

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SULU SOU APPEAL TO PLENARY ON DISCLOSURE OF ASSOCIATIONS' ACCOUNTS REJECTED

RENATO MARQUES

A final appeal made by lawmaker Sulu Sou to the plenary of the Legislative Assembly (AL) over the decision to reject the discussion of a bill that aimed to publicize the accounts of the associations that receive funding from the government was rejected by the majority of lawmakers yesterday.

Sou's intentions of seeing his proposal discussed were voided by 28 votes against and only four in favor, in the lawmaker's last chance to see the project voted on at the plenary.

Sou's appeal comes after the request to discuss and vote on the bill, initially submitted to the AL by the lawmaker back in mid-July this year, was rejected by the President of the AL, Kou Hoi In, with the allegation that the proposal was interfering with the functioning and duties of the government.

Sou had previously submitted an appeal against Kou's decision to the AL executive board, which also did not find support from the body that decided in



favor of the president's decision.

During his justification yesterday, the lawmaker explained that he disagrees with the decisions of both the president and the executive board, which he noted had failed to justify the rejection.

According to Sou, "In Macau there are more than 9,000 as-

sociations and the government subsidizes most of them," he said, noting that many of them overlap with each other in their purposes and objectives, and that they also submit subsidy applications on the same or similar topics and matters.

"Without this regime [the publication of the associations'

accounts] it is impossible for citizens to know if the [public's] money is well spent and on what. My purpose is to avoid the diversion of these public funds [to purposes other than their original stated purposes] and the waste of public funds," he remarked.

Rejecting the idea that the bill would interfere with the duties and responsibilities of the government, Sou presented several legal arguments to the plenary, including one put forth by the former AL legal advisor Paulo Cardinal.

For Sou, the proposed bill functions only as a complement to and improvement upon government work and the laws on the topic, and does not oppose any of them.

"My bill had the purpose to introduce improvements, for example, by requesting that the Chief Executive finally establish an amount for the ceiling [that is already contained within legal provisions] at which the associations should make their accounts public, and also improve on the sanctioning re-

gime," Sou added.

The lawmaker stated that such a role is important to ensure that the "AL of today [does not] deny the AL of yesterday."

Representing the AL executive board, the first secretary, lawmaker Chan Hong, justified the decision of the board by saying, "In our opinion, the premises that justified the appeal from lawmaker Sou are not valid as he stated that the president did not justify the rejection of the bill, which is not true," adding, "Both the executive board and the president always substantiate their decisions."

After the vote results, lawmaker Ma Chi Seng took the word in a vote declaration stating that he had voted against the acceptance of the bill.

"There is already an office for the planning and supervision of public assets (the Public Assets Supervision and Planning Office) that has these competencies," he said, remarking also that, in his opinion, the bill, "violated the legislative initiative that belongs to the government," he concluded.

AD

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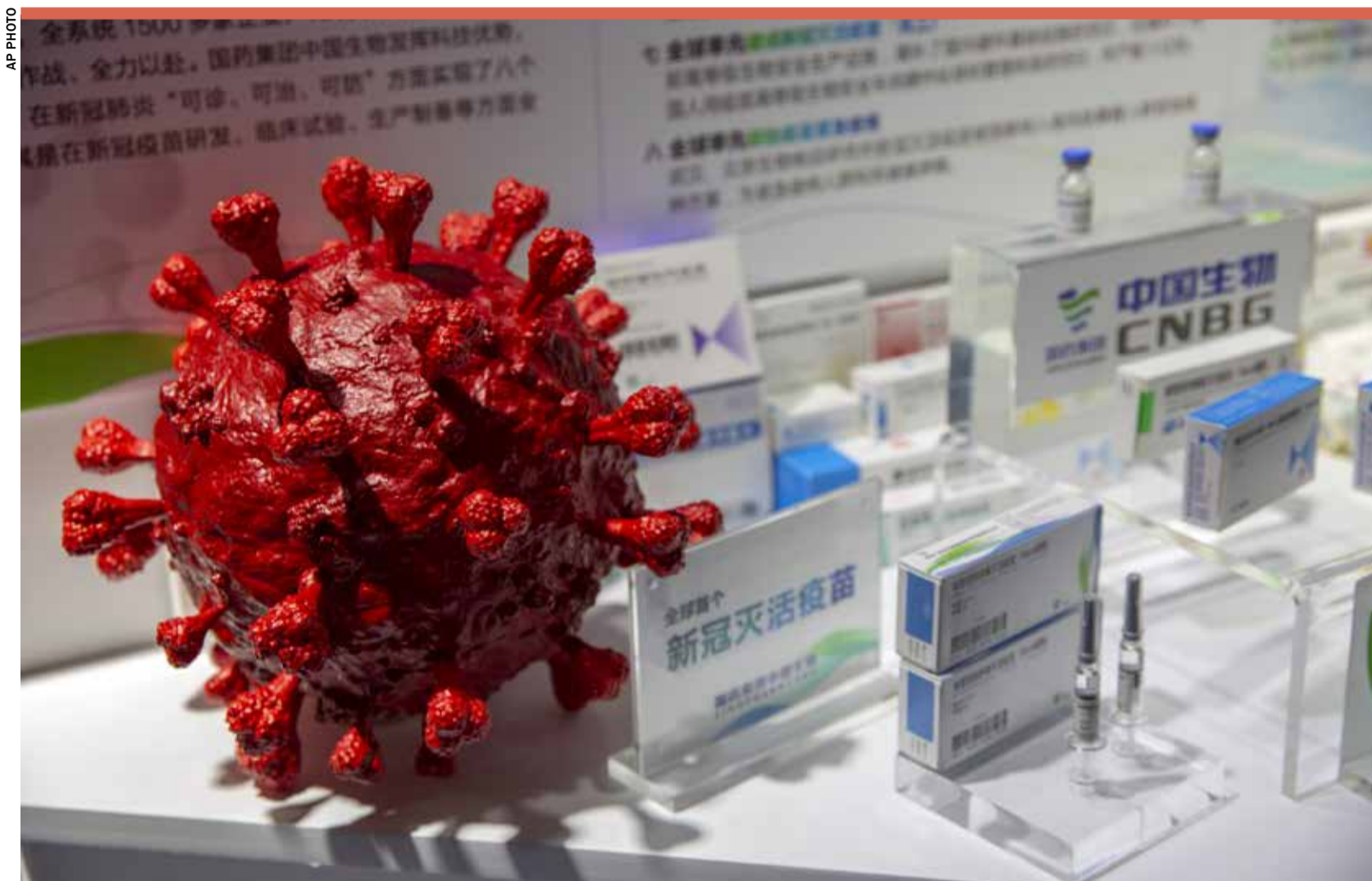
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UAE says Chinese vaccine 86% effective, offers few details

JON GRAMBRELL, DUBAI

THE United Arab Emirates said yesterday a Chinese coronavirus vaccine tested in the federation of sheikhdoms is 86% effective, in a statement that provided few details but marked the first public release of information on the efficacy of the shot.

The announcement brought yet another shot into the worldwide race for a vaccine to end the pandemic, a scientific effort that has seen China and Russia

compete with Western firms for an effective inoculation. While questions remain about the Sinopharm shot, already at least one country outside China plans to roll it out in a mass-vaccination campaign.

The UAE, home to Dubai and Abu Dhabi, conducted a trial beginning in September of the vaccine by Chinese state-owned pharmaceutical giant Sinopharm involving 31,000 volunteers from 125 nations. Volunteers between 18 and 60 years old received two doses of the vaccine over 28 days.

The UAE's Health and Prevention Ministry announced the results via a statement on the state-run WAM news agency, saying they "have reviewed Sinopharm CNBG's interim analysis of the Phase III trials."

"The analysis shows no serious safety concerns," the statement said, without detailing whether any participant suffered side effects.

It wasn't immediately clear if the announced results included only those taking part in the testing in the UAE or if they also

include results from China and elsewhere. The statement described the vaccine as receiving "official registration" without elaborating on what that meant.

Emirati officials and Sinopharm did not respond to questions from The Associated Press.

However, calls yesterday to SEHA, the Abu Dhabi health authority, included an option for individuals to schedule an appointment to receive a "COVID-19 vaccine." The center was swamped with calls following the

announcement on the vaccine's efficacy.

The Sinopharm vaccine has been approved for emergency use in a few countries and the company is still conducting late-stage clinical trials in 10 countries. Morocco is gearing up for an ambitious COVID-19 vaccination program, aiming to vaccinate 80% of its adults in an operation starting this month that's relying initially on the Sinopharm vaccine.

Sinopharm's shot relies on a tested technology, using a killed virus to deliver the vaccine, similar to how polio immunizations are made. Leading Western competitors, like the shot made by Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech, use newer, less-proven technology to target the coronavirus' spike protein using RNA. The United Kingdom already has begun vaccinating people with the Pfizer shot.

Top officials in the UAE, including Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, have publicly received the shots as part of the vaccine testing.

Already, Pfizer reports its shot as being 95% effective, while another RNA candidate from Moderna appears to be 94.5% effective. Results suggest a third vaccine from Oxford University and AstraZeneca is safe and about 70% effective, but questions remain about how well it may help protect those over 55.

In transport, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines must remain at cold temperatures — negative 70 degrees Celsius and negative 20 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The Sinopharm vaccine is believed to be able to travel at a temperature of 2 to 8 degrees Celsius, a major draw for areas of the world where nearly 3 billion people live without stable electricity and refrigeration. In November, the Communist Party secretary for Sinopharm said almost 1 million people in China had received its vaccine. AP

Gov't orders removal of 105 apps, including TripAdvisor

ZEN SOO

COMPANIES including the Chinese arm of TripAdvisor Inc. have been ordered by regulators to overhaul their mobile phone apps in what the Chinese government said is a crackdown on pornography and other improper content.

The National Cyberspace Administration ordered the removal of 105 apps including TripAdvisor from app stores this week, although it gave

no details of what each app was accused of doing wrong. It cited what it said were public complaints about obscene, pornographic and violent information or fraud, gambling and prostitution.

The ruling Communist Party tightly controls what the Chinese public sees online and has launched repeated crackdowns on websites and apps.

TripAdvisor China, a joint venture between TripAdvisor and its Chinese

partner Trip.com, did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Following the removal of its app in China, Nasdaq-listed TripAdvisor's stock price was down 1.68% to \$29.59 at the market's close in the U.S. on Tuesday.

TripAdvisor owns a 40% stake in TripAdvisor China, with Trip.com owning the other 60%. Under the partnership, the companies share its travel inventories and content. AP



Merkel pleads for Christmas sacrifice to protect loved ones

ARNE DELFS
& RAYMOND COLITT

CHANCELLOR Angela Merkel urged Germans to rein in Christmas celebrations, making an unusually emotional appeal as the country's soft shutdown fails to slow the coronavirus spread.

Calling for tougher measures, she appealed for restraint over the holidays to protect friends and family. While the government will seek to keep schools open, closing non-essential stores, sending children home for the holidays early and further reducing contact between people is the right path, Merkel said yesterday in Berlin.

"We need to make one more effort," she said in a speech in Germany's lower house of parliament - Bild, the country's largest newspaper, called it the most emotional of her 15 years in office. "We've already spent so many months with this virus, and we've learned that we can do something against it."

A partial shutdown, which closed bars, gyms and cinemas but allowed schools and other business to continue operating, has so far failed to lower Germany's contagion rates to levels



the government has determined to be manageable. Nations such as France and the U.K., which had harsher lockdowns, are gradually easing measures.

While vaccinations will start in the first quarter, she warned that the country won't be able to carry out enough immunizations over the winter to change the course of the pandemic. The latest incidence rate stands at 149 infections per 100,000 people over the past seven days, nearly three times the government's target of 50.

"What will people say looking back at a once-in-a-century event if we can't find a solution" for the coming weeks, the chancellor

said, her voice briefly cracking. "If we have too many contacts before Christmas, and it turns out to be the last Christmas with the grandparents, we will have missed an opportunity."

While Merkel has pushed for stricter curbs in recent weeks, she's failed to convince leaders of Germany's 16 states to adopt them.

Germany had record Covid-19 fatalities over the past 24 hours, highlighting the government's struggles to contain the disease. Some states like Bavaria and Saxony have tightened restrictions, and tougher nationwide measures could come next week.

With Germany currently

holding the European Union presidency, Merkel is battling on multiple fronts. A post-Brexit trade deal with the U.K. hangs in the balance, and the bloc's \$2.2 trillion spending plan is under threat from a veto from Hungary and Poland. The German leader will travel to Brussels today to try to find ways forward.

For Germany's future, she said it's key to fight the pandemic in order to set the stage for growth and be in a position to return to pre-crisis economic levels in 2022.

"We should be careful not to destroy too many human lives and thereby keep the economy running," Merkel said. **BLOOMBERG**

TURKEY

Erdogan downplays rifts with US, dismisses EU threat

SELCAN HACA OGLU
& FIRAT KOZOK

TURKEY'S President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signaled he's interested in resolving differences with U.S. President-elect Joe Biden, a vocal critic, as the Turkish government finds itself increasingly at odds with world powers.

Erdogan said yesterday that he would probably talk with Biden after he takes office in January to address issues dividing the allies, including the

threat of U.S. sanctions over Turkey's purchase of a Russian missile-defense system and American support for Syrian Kurdish forces.

Biden last December derided Erdogan as an autocrat and pledged to bolster the Turkish leader's domestic opposition. But Erdogan chose a different memory.

The incoming U.S. president "is someone who even visited me at my home" back in 2011, Erdogan said before departing

for Azerbaijan to celebrate its Turkish-backed gains in the war with Armenia for Nagorno-Karabakh. "I believe we will handle policy matters with the U.S. in a very different way."

Erdogan struck a conciliatory tone at a time when his country is growing increasingly isolated. Ankara's military cooperation with Russia alarmed NATO powers that likely will drive a hard bargain before again fully embracing Turkey.

Turkey's drilling for gas in the Mediterranean has

upset Greece and Cyprus, and drawn threats of European Union sanctions. Erdogan has rowed with French President Emmanuel Macron over the latter's comments on Islam.

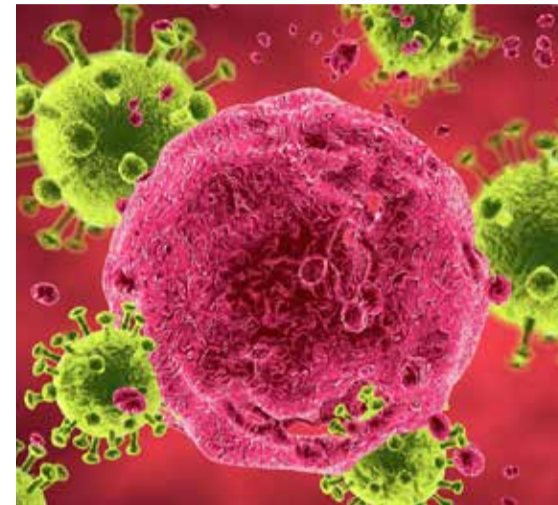
At the same time, Ankara and Moscow's interests are increasingly diverging. They've lined up on opposing sides in proxy conflicts in the Middle East, and just recently in Russia's Caucasus backyard in the Nagorno-Karabakh fighting.

While making overtures to the incoming Biden administration, Erdogan stood his ground on Turkey's energy exploration in the eastern Mediterranean.

"Turkey won't be swayed if it is sanctioned by the Europeans," Erdogan said, ahead of a European Council meeting starting today.

this day in history

1981 MYSTERY DISEASE KILLS HOMOSEXUALS



A mysterious epidemic, which has been discovered in homosexual men, is causing increasing concern in the United States.

The unknown condition, which consists of two separate diseases - a form of pneumonia and skin cancer, has been found in 180 patients in 15 states since last July.

It has claimed around 75 lives so far in the US and up to 92% of the victims are homosexual men.

One death has been reported from the virus in London. Although doctors have identified what appears to be a new disease, they have yet to devise a cure.

The epidemic is being investigated by the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta.

The specialist unit has already discovered the causes of two other diseases, the toxic shock syndrome and Legionnaires' disease.

Dr James Curran, who is investigating the condition, said: "It is a very serious problem and it does not seem to be on the wane."

Three studies in the New England Journal of Medicine show that the immune systems of victims are severely weakened, leaving them vulnerable to serious infections from germs which most people normally shrug off.

Homosexuals who have developed either of the two conditions have shown a low resistance to standard tests on their immune system.

Four victims also had rare skin ulcers normally caused by the herpes simplex virus.

Researchers claim that their findings are "part of a nationwide epidemic of immunodeficiency among male homosexuals".

Doctors are unsure of the cause of the epidemic which is carried in semen and other body secretions.

A study at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) suggests that homosexuals may be repeatedly infected with the virus.

One case also involved an intravenous drug user which implies that the disease could be spread by sharing needles.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The unknown condition was eventually named as Aids (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) virus. The disease caused widespread panic in the United States where 4,000 people were infected in the space of two years.

During that time it also became apparent that the epidemic was not restricted to homosexuals. Cases of Aids were also discovered among heterosexuals, drug users and blood transfusion patients.

The virus which was isolated as the cause of the disease was called Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and it was first discovered in 1983.

Around 24 million people have died from Aids since it first emerged and it is the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa.

There is still no cure for the disease despite numerous trials in North America, Europe and Thailand.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Be supportive in order to avoid confrontations. Do not travel unless absolutely necessary. Be careful. You need to get involved in groups that offer physical activities.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Your positive attitude and intellectual outlook will draw others to you. You could be cornered, so be prepared to tell the truth. Arguing won't help.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Find ways to make extra cash. Start making things or reusing rather than buying ready made. Make career changes that may increase your income.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You will be extremely receptive to new and progressive methods at work. Take a close look at any contracts you've signed in order to be sure exactly where you stand.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Don't let your emotional partner upset you today. Investments will not be as they appear today. If you can get away for a vacation, do so. Wait and get all the information before consulting your boss.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You need to do something that will make you feel better about yourself. Do a little extra work at home. There's a good chance that they won't come back.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Be aware of any emotional deception. Do not sign legal contracts or documents today. This is a great day to beautify your living quarters or to entertain at home.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You will enjoy physical activities more than you think. Take care of any medical problems if they've been troubling you. You should be able to get a lot done.

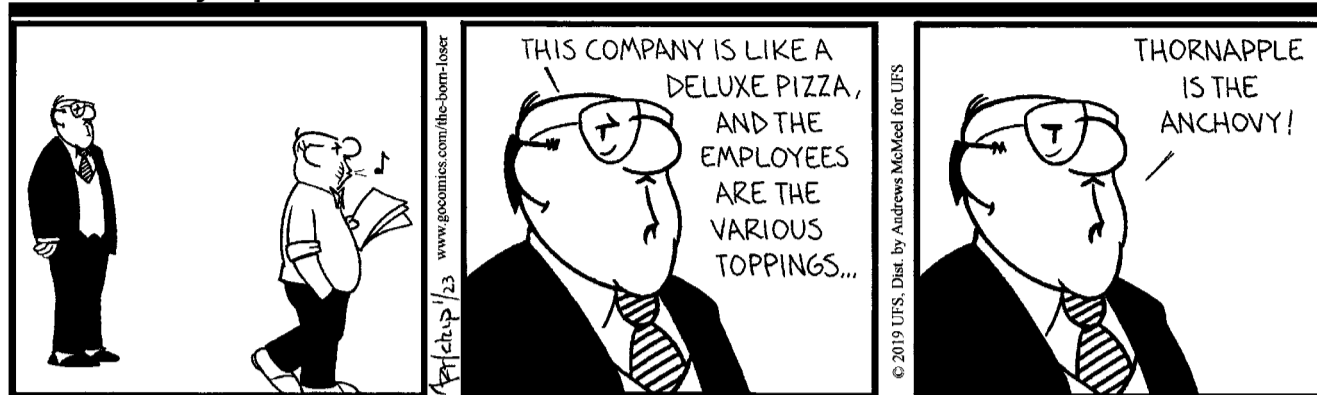
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Children will want to help, too. However, you must not neglect your family. Try to spend more time with children and relatives. Educational pursuits should help you develop your hobbies.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You may find yourself interested in more than one person. Your best results will come through business trips. You can make life easier for an older member of your family.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
If you can't get ahead in the company you're with, perhaps it's time to move on. You can make financial deals that will bring you extra cash. You will have a problem with your boss if you haven't done your job.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Find a way to consolidate. Don't give up what you have until you can be certain just what it is you're getting. Try to visit friends or relatives you don't get to see often.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

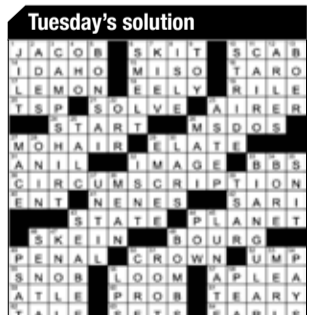
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	6	clear
Harbin	-15	-9	cloudy
Tianjin	-3	5	clear
Urumqi	-12	-7	clear
Xi'an	-1	8	cloudy
Lhasa	-4	14	cloudy
Chengdu	7	11	overcast
Chongqing	10	13	overcast
Kunming	5	19	clear
Nanjing	8	10	overcast
Shanghai	10	14	overcast
Wuhan	5	13	cloudy
Hangzhou	8	13	overcast
Taipei	20	21	moderate rain
Guangzhou	14	23	cloudy
Hong Kong	19	22	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-9	-6	clear
Frankfurt	0	2	sleet
Paris	3	5	overcast
London	5	7	drizzle
New York	3	6	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Boise's state; 6- Maze word; 11- Go, team!; 14- Eminent; 15- Kitchen gadget; 16- May ___ excused?; 17- Beat; 18- Author Calvino; 19- ___-Wan Kenobi was a character in "Star Wars"; 20- Ceremony; 22- Faucet stuff; 24- Bring back; 28- Minuscule; 30- False; 31- 1972 Derek and the Dominos hit; 32- Brainstorms; 33- Finishing touch; 37- Not for a Scot; 38- Spring sign; 39- CD-___; 40- Ribbons; 43- Pitcher Martinez; 45- Long-billed sandpiper; 46- Least feral; 47- Upward trend; 49- Unemployed person?; 50- ___ salts; 51- City on Norton Sound; 52- Japanese drama; 53- Discombobulated; 56- Springs; 61- ___ roll; 62- Misplaces; 63- One in prison for good; 64- Tool with teeth; 65- Hagar the Horrible's dog; 66- Latin stars;

DOWN 1- CD earnings; 2- Her partner would be a buck; 3- PIN requester; 4- With it; 5- Aromatic; 6- Malice; 7- London gallery; 8- First name in Notre Dame football; 9- Fam. reunion attendee; 10- Plastering tools; 11- Mob scenes; 12- Monastery; 13- One who has something coming?; 21- High dudgeon; 23- Med school subj.; 24- Debris; 25- Conclude by; 26- Guide; 27- Song syllable; 28- Ribbons; 29- Organs used for sight; 31- France's longest river; 33- Fancy pancake; 34- Command; 35- Scandinavian; 36- Chew the scenery; 38- Among; 41- Canadian gas brand; 42- Creatures; 43- Kneecap; 44- U.K. record label; 46- President pro ___; 47- Once ___ time...; 48- Nonsense!; 49- Way to cook; 50- Slaughter in Cooperstown; 51- ___-do-well; 54- Bunch; 55- Compass pt.; 57- Frozen Wasser; 58- P.m.; 59- A pop; 60- Madrid Mrs.;



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- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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650ft² \$3,780,000 (ref: 20076001)
- [Taipa] Buckingham 2 1/2 2 1/2
1,439ft² \$11,770,000 (ref: 19045004)
- [Taipa] Villa da Taipa 3 1/2 2 1/2
1,450ft² \$13,000/mth (ref: 20101002)
- [Cotai] One Oasis high ceiling 3 1/2 2 1/2
2,100ft² \$30,000/mth (ref: 20111002)

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

CHINA SET TO BAIL OUT IRAQ WITH MULTIBILLION-DOLLAR OIL DEAL

LAURA HURST, SALMA EL WARDANY, GRANT SMITH & ALFRED CANG

BLOOMBERG



IRAQ is poised to sign a multibillion-dollar contract with China ZhenHua Oil Co., a bailout from Beijing for the cash-strapped government which will receive money upfront in exchange for long-term oil supplies.

The deal is the latest example of China, via state-controlled trading companies and banks, lending to struggling oil producers such as Angola, Venezuela and Ecuador, with repayment in the form of oil barrels rather than cash. This year's crash in oil prices has hammered Iraq's budget and the government has failed to pay teachers and civil servants on time.

The Iraqi agency in charge of petroleum exports, SOMO, picked ZhenHua after asking oil traders for bids, according to people familiar with the matter. Cabinet spokesman Hassan Nadhim said on Tuesday there had been "several offers" and they were being

studied before Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi makes the final decision.

Under the terms of a letter SOMO sent last month, the winning bidder will buy 4 million barrels a month, or about 130,000 a day. They will pay upfront for one year of supply, which at current prices would bring in more than \$2 billion, according to Bloomberg calculations. The deal runs for five years - but the

upfront payment is only for one year.

The deal attracted widespread interest among major oil traders, according to the people. The deadline for the tender was extended from late November to allow companies more time to bid.

ZhenHua Oil didn't reply to an email seeking comment that was sent to its headquarters in Beijing after normal business hours on Tuesday.

All major producers have taken a hit from oil's coronavirus-triggered plunge. But Iraq, where crude accounts for almost all government revenue, is in a worse position than most. Its economy will contract 12% this year, more than that of any other OPEC member under a production quota, according to International Monetary Fund forecasts.

Thousands of Iraqis have taken to the streets in recent months to protest about worsening living conditions. The government has struggled to fulfil its commitments to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which agreed at the height of the pandemic in April to cut output. Baghdad has pumped above its cap on several occasions, angering OPEC's de facto leader Saudi Arabia.

Energy-rich nations short on revenue have often relied on pre-payment deals to raise money, but Baghdad hasn't done so until now. The semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq has used simi-

lar contracts in the past, as have Chad and the Republic of Congo.

In a pre-payment deal, the oil buyer effectively becomes a lender to the country. The barrels are security for the loan.

Iraq's woes make it harder for the government to raise money more conventionally, such as through the bond market. The country's dollar yields average 7.5%, one of the highest levels for any sovereign. Goldman Sachs Group Inc. said this week that Iraq was among the most vulnerable bond issuers heading into 2021.

The pre-payment part of Iraq's contract is one of the largest in recent history, although less than the record \$10 billion that Russia's state-run Rosneft raised in 2013 from trading houses Vitol Group and Glencore Plc.

Besides its size, the Iraqi deal is rare because it allows the winner to ship crude to wherever it wishes for a year. Normally, Middle Eastern crude is sold with strict clauses preventing traders and refiners from re-selling the barrels to different regions.

The exclusion of that clause was probably seen as advantageous enough to compensate for the fact the pre-payment money is effectively interest-free for Iraq. A country usually pays a yield for the cash it receives upfront. **BLOOMBERG**

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Football players lay down 'marker' in fight against racism

PLAYERS have taken a knee, unfurled slogans and demanded tougher action only to find soccer — their working environment — remains infected with racism.

The tipping point might just have come, with elite players in Paris taking the extraordinary step of refusing to continue playing.

At the end of a year of striking gestures against racial injustice and discrimination, the Champions League produced one of soccer's most powerful shows of solidarity against racism when players from Paris Saint-Germain and Istanbul Basaksehir left the field and didn't return.

"The walk off by both Basaksehir and PSG together lays down a marker in Europe," Piara Powar, executive director of the anti-discrimination Fare network, told The Associated Press. "Many players are fed up with half measures to tackle racism and are more prepared than ever to exercise their right to stop a match."

The flashpoint came 14 minutes into the game when the fourth official — Sebastian Coltescu of



Players of Paris Saint Germain leaving the pitch

Romania — was accused of using a racial term to identify Basaksehir assistant coach Pierre Webo before sending him off for his conduct on the sidelines. Webo is Black.

"You are racist," Basaksehir coach Okan Buruk said to Coltescu.

An enraged Webo demanded an explanation from Coltescu, repeating at least six times: "Why you say negro?"

The exchanges were broadcast live around the world from soccer's biggest club competition.

"Why when you mention a Black guy, you have to say 'This Black guy?'" asked Basaksehir substitute Demba Ba, who is Black.

The Fare network helps UEFA prosecute discriminatory acts like the incident at the Parc des Princes.

"Our colleagues at the Romanian state anti-discrimination organization have confirmed it is racist in Romanian to refer to a player by using his race as an identifier," Powar said. "There is no ambiguity. This incident shows the need for much better training of match officials. Unintentional racism is still racism."

Racism at soccer games has typically come from the stands, but matches in countries such as France are being played without fans because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The high-profile incidents tend to highlight the inadequate responses, like in the Portuguese league in February.

Porto striker Moussa Marega tried to walk off the field after being the target of racist abu-

se from fans in a game against Guimarães and demanded to be substituted. But he faced attempts by his own teammates and opposing players to prevent him from leaving the field.

The referee then gave Marega a yellow card for refusing to continue in the game — the type of action that dissuades players from walking off.

The Romanian referee who was in charge of the game in Paris — Ovidiu Hategan — was in the same role for the 2013 Champions League game when Manchester City player Yaya Toure complained about the lack of action against monkey noises he heard from CSKA Moscow fans.

"If officials cannot set the standards by their own behavior," Powar said, "they cannot be relied on to deal with racism on the pitch or in the stands."

Referees have often been criticized for not leading players off the field, instead leaving them to take the decision themselves. England's national team decided to continue playing a game in Montenegro last year after Callum Hudson-Odoi and Danny Rose were targeted with monkey chants.

"The players walking off is a step in the right direction," former Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand said on Britain's BT Sport television. "But it can't just be left to them." AP

ALBERGUE SCM 婆仔屋文創空間

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OPINION

World Views

Mark Gilbert, Bloomberg



EU ROLLS BREXIT TANKS ONTO U.K. HEDGE FUND LAWN

As negotiations about the terms of the U.K.'s departure from the European Union rumble on interminably, it's pretty clear that the future relationship will be fractious at best. For the asset management industry, the fight around cross-border arrangements for overseeing investments is reigniting, with London's hedge funds stuck in the crosshairs.

The shoe is pinching around so-called delegation rights, the rules that allow funds to be marketed and sold in one country and managed from another. Depending on how cynical you're feeling, the EU is either concerned that post-Brexit Britain will leave savers exposed to a laxer regulatory regime, or it sees a one-time opportunity to attract a chunk of the lucrative asset-management industry away from London.

There's a lot at stake. About 8.5 trillion pounds (\$11 trillion) is overseen by U.K. fund managers, according to the Investment Association. Some 3.6 trillion pounds of that is on behalf of overseas customers, with European accounts contributing about 2.1 trillion pounds of the total. British-based hedge funds oversee an additional 350 billion pounds, the IA estimates.

In January 2019, an attempted power grab by the European Securities Markets Regulator was rebuffed by the European Parliament. ESMA had sought more control over the supervision of delegation rights; lawmakers made it clear that national watchdogs would remain the arbiters of what is and isn't acceptable in outsourcing those fund-management activities.

But in August, ESMA said the current arrangements lead to increased market risk. And last week, the European Commission opened a consultation on reviewing the rules for so-called alternative investment funds (AIFs), which includes hedge funds, private equity and real estate.

One of the stated aims of the review, which asks industry participants to answer 102 questions by the end of January, is to secure "a wider choice of AIFs for investors while at the same time ensuring that EU AIFMs [hedge funds] are not exposed to unfair competition or are otherwise disadvantaged." Hold the questionnaire up to the light and it's clearly watermarked with the sentiment, "how can we win more asset management business back from London?"

Question 50, for example, asks "are the delegation rules sufficiently clear to prevent creation of letter-box entities in the EU," which reflects concern that firms might have no physical presence beyond a brass plaque on a building, with all of the staffing housed outside of the bloc. Question 52 goes on to ask whether existing rules should be expanded to include "quantitative criteria" or "a list of core or critical functions that would always be performed internally and may not be delegated to third parties," which could hobble the ability of non-EU firms to manage money for the region's savers. A courtroom judge might reasonably assess these lines of questioning as leading the witness.

Brussels has made no secret of its disquiet at the prospect of the City of London answering only to its local regulator while continuing to act as the key venue for a vast swathe of euro and European trading activities. The likelihood that divergences between the regulatory regimes will increase in the coming years — either because one side seeks to gain a local advantage by loosening its rules, or as a result of natural drift over time — means the status quo is unlikely to persist for long.

Delegation isn't just an issue for the U.K. asset management industry. It's a global framework, and restricting its use could deprive, say, a saver in Italy from harnessing the skills and local knowledge of portfolio managers in the U.S. or Asia. Moreover, Luxembourg and Ireland are also big beneficiaries of the prevailing regime.

But for financial services in general and fund management in particular, the post-Brexit landscape remains vulnerable to attempts at land grabs and terraforming. Let's hope that greed and mistrust don't conspire to produce a savings environment that leaves both European investors and U.K. money-management firms worse off.

UK INVESTIGATES POSSIBLE ALLERGIC REACTIONS TO COVID-19 SHOT

THE BUZZ

U.K. regulators said yesterday that people who have a "significant history" of allergic reactions shouldn't receive the new Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine while they investigate two adverse reactions that occurred on the first day of the country's mass vaccination program.

Professor Stephen Powis, national medical director for the National Health Service in England, said health authorities were acting on a recommendation from the Medical and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

"As is common with new vaccines the MHRA have advised on a precautionary basis that people with a significant history of aller-

gic reactions do not receive this vaccination after two people with a history of significant allergic reactions responded adversely yesterday," Powis said in a statement. "Both are recovering well."

The comments came as Dr. June Raine, head of the MHRA, told a Parliamentary committee that regulators had received reports of two allergic reactions from the vaccine.

"We know from the very extensive clinical trials that this wasn't a feature," she said. "But if we need to strengthen our advice, now that we have had this experience with the vulnerable populations, the groups who have been selected as a priority, we get that advice to the field immediately."

CHINA, NEPAL SAY EVEREST A BIT HIGHER THAN PAST MEASUREMENTS



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BINAJ GURUBACHARYA

CHINA and Nepal jointly announced a new official height for Mount Everest, ending a discrepancy between the two nations.

The new height of the world's highest peak is 8,848.86 meters, which is slightly more than Nepal's previous measurement and about four meters higher than China's.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Nepalese counterpart, Pradeep Gyawali, simultaneously pressed buttons during a virtual conference and the new height flashed on the screen.

The height of Everest, which is on the border between China and Nepal, was agreed on after surveyors from Nepal scaled the peak in 2019 and a Chinese team did the same in 2020.

There had been debate over the actual height of the peak and concern that it might have shrunk after a major earthquake in 2015. The quake killed 9,000 people, damaged about 1 million structures in Nepal and triggered an avalanche on Everest that killed 19 people at the base camp.

There was no doubt that Everest would remain the highest peak

because the second highest, Mount K2, is only 8,611 meters tall.

Everest's height was first determined by a British team around 1856 as 8,842 meters.

But the most accepted height has been 8,848 meters, which was determined by the Survey of India in 1954.

In 1999, a National Geographic Society team using GPS technology came up with a height of 8,850. A Chinese team in 2005 said it was 8,844.43 meters because it did not include the snow cap.

A Nepal government team of climbers and surveyors scaled Everest in May 2019 and installed GPS and satellite equipment to measure the peak and snow depth on the summit.

Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Nepal later that year and the leaders of the two countries decided that they should agree on a height.

A survey team from China then conducted measurements in the spring of 2020 while all other expeditions were canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Nepal's climbing community welcomed the end of confusion over the mountain's height.

"This is a milestone in mountaineering history

which will finally end the debate over the height and now the world will have one number," said Santa Bir Lama, president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association.

China's official Xinhua News Agency quoted Xi as saying the two sides are committed to jointly protecting the environment around Everest and cooperating in scientific research.

For China, the announcement appeared to be as much about politics as geography. China has drawn Nepal ever closer into its orbit with investments in its economy and the building of highways, dams, airports and other infrastructure in the impoverished nation.

That appears to serve China's interests in reducing the influence of rival India, with which it shares a disputed border, and Nepal's role as a destination for refugee Tibetans.

The Xinhua report said nothing about the technical aspects but heavily emphasized the joint announcement's geopolitical weight.

China and Nepal will establish an "even closer community of a shared future to enrich the countries and their peoples," Xinhua quoted Xi as saying. AP



AP PHOTO

Indian health officials have found traces of nickel and lead in a few blood samples taken from hundreds of patients who have been hospitalized by a mysterious illness in a southern state, officials said. The Andhra Pradesh state government said in a statement that investigations by experts from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences has not been able to ascertain the possible source of excessive nickel and lead particulate matter in the patients' blood.

Russia has signed an agreement with Sudan to establish a navy base in the African nation for at least a quarter century, part of Moscow's efforts to expand its global reach. The deal published Tuesday on the official portal of government documents allows Russia to simultaneously keep up to four navy ships, including nuclear-powered ones, in Port Sudan on the Red Sea. The agreement lasts for 25 years and could be automatically extended for 10-year periods if none of the parties objects to it.

Netherlands An explosion damaged a Polish supermarket in a Dutch town near Amsterdam yesterday morning, the third such blast in two days. Police said the explosion happened at a store in the town of Beverwijk. Nobody was injured, but the store was badly damaged in the explosion. Dutch media reported that the owner of the store also owns another Polish supermarket in Aalsmeer that was gutted by an explosion and fire.

France will build a new, nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to replace its Charles de Gaulle carrier by 2038, French President Emmanuel Macron announced. Macron framed the decision to use nuclear reactors to propel the future warship as part of France's climate strategy, stressing its lower emissions compared to diesel fuel.