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**A LEGAL EXPERT URGES THE GOVERNMENT TO UP ITS GAME TO FUEL THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY'S CREATIVE SECTORS**

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**THE LONDONER MACAO TO HOLD OPENING CEREMONY IN FEBRUARY 2021**

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**SURVEY SHOWS THAT MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT HAVE ENCOUNTERED RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PROBLEMS**

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AP PHOTO



**Japan** The torch relay for the postponed Tokyo Games is set to begin on March 25, from the northeastern prefecture of Fukushima. This was also to have been the starting point for the relay before the Olympics were postponed nine months ago. It faces the same questions as the Olympics about being held safely during the coronavirus pandemic.

**Japan** A court yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing and dismembering nine people, most of whom had posted suicidal thoughts on social media, in a case that shocked the country. The Tachikawa branch of the Tokyo District Court found Takahiro Shiraishi, known as the "Twitter killer," guilty of killing, dismembering and storing the bodies of the victims in his apartment in Zama, near Tokyo. Shiraishi, 30, pleaded guilty and said he would not appeal his death sentence.

**Azerbaijan** and Armenia have exchanged prisoners, a move stipulated in the peace deal between the two ex-Soviet nations that ended recent fighting over the separatist territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijani authorities said an all-for-all exchange of prisoners and hostages have been agreed with Armenia.

AP PHOTO



**Russia** A fire in a retirement home in southern Urals killed 11 people while three more were hospitalized with injuries, local officials said yesterday. The fire broke out in the early hours in a wooden, one-story building of a private retirement home in a village in the Bashkiria region. A total of 16 people were in the building. It wasn't immediately clear what caused the fire.

More on backpage

# LIVE-IN DOMESTIC WORKERS LESS INCLINED TO ENGAGE IN RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

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MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



# MACAU AMONG HARDEST HIT CITIES BY PANDEMIC

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MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



**LEI SUGGESTS  
GOV'T AVOID  
'UNLIMITED'  
INVESTMENT IN  
MID**

Lawmaker Ella Lei has recommended that the government avoid unlimited injection into public investment company Macau Investment and Development Limited (MID). In a recent interpellation, Lei expressed worry that the government had not set a ceiling on the amount to invest in MID. She criticized the company for lacking transparency, as that there is no established mechanism to evaluate and assess the return on investment, and accused the company poor cost-efficiency given the high fees paid by the government in respect of the company's management and consultation.

**GUANGDONG,  
SAR TO CREATE  
A CLUSTER OF  
'FOREST CITIES'**

The Guangdong and Macau governments plan to create a cluster of forest cities in the Greater Bay Area, according to a statement released by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM). An IAM delegation met with Guangdong's forestry authority recently to discuss how Macau can integrate into the Greater Bay Area to develop a cluster of forest cities.

**MACAU SHOOTING  
RANGE MAY BE  
DEMOLISHED**

The Macau International Shooting Range may be demolished, according to a report by TDM citing the Sports Bureau (ID). ID is currently replanning the shooting range, which is located next to the Macau East Asian Games Dome. Proposals currently under consideration include the addition of other sports facilities at the site. The same site also has one bowling hall, tennis court and other facilities occupying a total of 69,591 square meters. The current plan only concerns the shooting range.

# CCAC SEES ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT IN ELEVATOR REGULATIONS

ANTHONY LAM

**I**n a reply to a report by the Association of Synergy of Macau, the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) identified room for improvement in the regulations governing elevator maintenance.

The association disclosed that it requested the CCAC investigate flaws in the regulations on elevator safety and maintenance in 2018. In its latest reply, the CCAC said it has commenced investigations.

Despite seeing room for improvement, the corruption watchdog identified no flaws in the day-to-

-day use of the regulations by the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT). In addition, the law enforcement authority identified no deficiency in the Legislative Assembly's practices.

At a recent press conference, association Director-General Ron Lam cited the CCAC's comments and pointed out the absence of a legal basis for compulsory quality control, resulting in gaps between the level of each service provider.

Furthermore, despite conducting spot checks of 5% of all declared elevators, the DSSOPT has only regularly conducted checks

on the better quality machines, such as those installed in government buildings and public housing.

In contrast, on average, 58% of elevator malfunctions that resulted in the confinement of passengers recorded by the Fire Service Bureau took place in private housing as well as commercial and industrial buildings. These buildings, however, are not included in the pool for spot checks.

More seriously, the association said that the DSSOPT did not issue timely notifications upon discovering flaws in elevators installed in

government buildings.

With that said, even if an elevator has posted in it a safety card, this does not mean that it is safe. According to the corruption watchdog and the association, this is because there is no centralized register for Macau's elevators. All serial numbers on the safety card are internally determined by the respective service providers.

A public consultation on the absence of legislation was carried out in 2002, but lawmaking efforts have stalled since then. The government has explained that further improvement is needed for the bill.

# Survey: Majority suffer residential building problems

JULIE ZHU

**T**he majority of residents living in the northern district have encountered residential building problems, according to an investigation recently conducted by the General Union of Neighborhood Association's office for the northern district.

In the second half of August, the association collected 809 valid responses on a survey completed by local residents living in the northern district.

Nearly 73% of all respondents answered "yes" when asked whether their residential buildings had any



JOSE MANUEL

problems.

The problems identified by these respondents included water leaks, peeling of exterior cladding, old electrical wiring, out-

dated firefighting systems and equipment, clogging, illegal construction on rooftops, broken tiles in corridors, damaged elevators, and poor unsanitary

conditions.

Despite 73% of respondents acknowledging the defects in their units, nearly half (42%) of them had not carried out maintenance to fix the identified problems.

Macau currently has over 5,000 buildings older than 30 years.

According to Macau's urban building regulation, building owners should carry out maintenance of their buildings every five years. However, the regulation, which has been in effect since 1963, imposes no penalty for building owners who fail to conduct maintenance.

Earlier this year, the local

government said that it hopes to submit an amendment to the regulation to the Legislative Assembly (AL) this year.

In addition, the Macau government has been promoting an urban renewal agenda and has established a government-owned urban renewal company in the hope of improving living conditions for residents living in the old districts of the city.

Nearly 80% of respondents believe that the government's urban renewal and/or urban reconstruction plans will help improve the environment of the city's old areas.

# MUST TO ESTABLISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR MATERIALS SCIENCE, ENGINEERING

STAFF REPORTER

**T**he Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) is set to establish a new research institute fostering development in materials science and engineering, according to a note published yesterday by the university.

The objectives of founding the new academy are to "proactively integrate [MUST] into innovative technology infrastructures within the Greater Bay Area (GBA)" - a task stipulated in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area promulgated

in February 2019 - and cultivate talent in the field.

The academy will place major research emphasis on advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, biomedics and health-related fields. It will tap into cutting-edge materials to bring about in-

novation, such as organic optoelectronic devices, flexible electronics, wearable smart sensors, and biomedical materials.

MUST appointed Professor Lee Shuit Tong to helm the establishment of the institute who will take office in January 2021. Lee is internationally recog-

nized for his expertise in nanomaterials, nanotechnology, organic electronics, diamond and super-hard coatings.

Lee garnered a series of science awards, including the Humboldt Senior Research Award, Croucher Senior Research Fellowship of the Croucher Foundation, State Natural Science Awards, Prize for Scientific and Technological Progress of Ho Leung Ho Lee Foundation.

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ECONOMY

# ILO study shows that MSAR among cities most hit by pandemic

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE Macau SAR was among the cities in the Asia Pacific that were hardest hit economically by the pandemic outbreak, according to a study conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO).

As not a single city was spared by the economic crisis triggered by Covid-19, the hardest hit regions are those that are heavily reliant on tourism.

According to the data, Macau and the Maldives, which are heavily dependent on tourism, have had the largest downward revisions of economic growth, with their economies expected to shrink by 52% and 19% respectively in 2020.

The ILO analyzed a total of 30 countries and cities in the study.

Macau also has the largest drop in number of tourists compared to 2019, along with Hong Kong.

The city's tourism board is expecting a decline of over 90% in tourist arrivals for the whole of 2020. Official data shows that the region has only welcomed



4.60 million visitors between January and October this year. The majority of visitors arrived in January, before Macau tightened entry restrictions. The figure represents a decline of 86% compared to the same period last year.

"While some governments in the region have made efforts to promote domestic tourism, international tourism has collapsed due to Covid-19. This is the

result of travel restrictions and strict quarantine rules imposed by governments as well as commercial flight bans. In economies with available data, there have almost been no international tourist arrivals except in Indonesia and the Republic of Korea," the report stated.

Meanwhile, the economic uncertainty also caused foreign direct investment to collapse as Macau saw its second biggest

decline, just behind Sri Lanka, with a drop of more than 80%.

Foreign direct investment has also dried up.

Of the 25 economies for which data are available, only six showed an increase in greenfield investment during the same period. Macau, the Maldives, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka reflected the largest decline in greenfield investment, ranging from 84% to 89%.

## GOV'T TO NEGOTIATE INSTANT PAYMENT WITH HK, SHENZHEN

The Monetary Authority of Macau hints that it will commence negotiations with Hong Kong and Shenzhen to foster cross-boundary instant e-payments for Macau residents. A new arrangement was brought into effect Monday to allow Macau residents to pay their bills from Guangdong businesses using their Macau bank accounts. On its first day, the arrangement saw five transactions and 12 registrations. The payment method allows a cap of RMB5,000 for a single payment and RMB20,000 per day.

## CITY RECORDS NEARLY MOP200B IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES

The preliminary estimate of the city's foreign exchange reserves amounted to MOP193.2 billion as of November, about 10 times as much as the city's currency in circulation. The reserves increased by 3% from the revised value of MOP187.6 billion for the previous month. The trade-weighted effective exchange rate index for the pataca dropped 0.93 points month-on-month and 4.08 year-on-year in November 2020, implying that the pataca has become weaker against its major trading partners.

# Domestic workers living with employers less likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE city's Filipino domestic workers who lived under the same roof as their employers were less inclined to engage in risky sexual behaviors, compared to those who lived separately, a medical journal revealed.

According to the study, 34.3% of female domestic workers from the Philippines who were living with employers claimed that they had unprotected sex more than half the time over the year before the survey period. This is almost half as often as the figure of 65.8% which was reported by their stay-out counterparts. Researchers narrowed the study's focus to Macau's Filipino domestic helpers, given that they have taken up the greatest share of the



total number of domestic helpers in town, and the Philippines has been one of the world's leading labor-exporting countries. As of the end of October this year, the city had 16,538 employed Filipino domestic helpers. They made up the majority, or around 55.8%, of all employed household helpers across nationalities (29,639). This was followed

by 6,387 from Vietnam and 4,271 from Indonesia.

The scientific survey polled a total of 1,368 female migrant domestic workers in Macau from November 2016 to August 2017. The live-in domestic workers were also found to be less likely engaged in other risky sexual behaviors, including "sex while drunk" (8.6%), "sex with three or more se-

xual partners" (1.4%), and "sex in exchange for money or gifts" (0.3%). Those figures were recorded at higher rates among stay-out peers, at 13.9%, 1.5% and 0.8%, respectively.

Researchers ascribed the lower likelihood of taking part in risky sexual behaviors to increased surveillance, less freedom and less mobility when dwelling in the same house as employers.

However, "stay-out workers are likely at greater liberty to engage with their peer networks than live-in workers, leading to relatively increased sexual risk-taking," researchers reasoned.

Not only were live-in domestic helpers in Macau less likely to have unsafe sex, they also displayed a lower exposure to repro-

ductive tract infection (RTI) symptoms.

The figures suggest that it is relatively safer for foreign domestic workers to live with their bosses in terms of their sexual health. Nonetheless, the report also stated the restricted mobility may "prevent stay-in workers from seeking and/or accessing necessary sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care."

This statement was corroborated by the survey's result. Only 7.1% of Filipino domestic workers visited obstetricians or gynecologists (OBGYN) in Macau in the year of the surveyed period, whilst the figure went up to 11.7% for stay-out workers.

Another finding that may be surprising for some is that the domestic helpers who were living with their

employers in fact had a higher likelihood of obtaining a HIV test in the past-year.

Scientists associated this discovery with the fact that HIV testing in Macau has become more accessible as some non-governmental organizations, like Caritas Macau, have started to offer complimentary HIV tests and counseling for local domestic helpers.

The research result was recently published in the Journal of Migration and Health. The study concluded that the living conditions of Macau's Filipino domestic workers — either living under the same roof with employers or living separately — significantly affect their engagement in risky sexual behaviors and intention to seek sexual health medical services.

The research is titled "The influence of housing on sexual and reproductive health status and service utilization among Filipina migrant domestic workers in Macao (SAR), China: A population survey."

# NEW LAW TO REGULATE CHINESE MEDICINE QUESTIONS TRANSITORY PROVISIONS

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE members of the First Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) want assurance on how the transitory provisions of the new law governing the Traditional Chinese Pharmacies and registration of Traditional Chinese Medicines (TCM) will impact TCM business, the Chairman of the committee, lawmaker Ho Ion Sang said in a media briefing after yesterday's meeting.

The lawmakers expressed concern over how the transitory provisions included in the new law would affect the business of the Chinese Pharmacies and other TCM producers that are already operating under the current rules.

On the line are the differences between the current rules and rules that will regulate the sector in the future, but also the scope of the bill and which types of establish-



ments will fall under the new law's provisions.

"We will ask the government to clear up our doubts and questions, because, for instance, we know that there are several kinds of stores that use and sell TCM-related products and we need to understand if supplements, soups, and tea-shops are in-

cluded or not, and what is to be the impact of this new law for these establishments," Ho said. According to Ho, such questions are included in a list of queries that was raised yesterday to seek answers from the government.

Another of the doubts raised has to do with a proposed committee that will be in

charge of inspecting the facilities and venues where TCM and related products are produced and handled. According to Ho, the bill says that such a committee will have the power to issue opinions on the matter but "it does not clarify if such opinions are binding or non-binding."

The question of whether the committee's opinions are binding was very important to understanding the supervisory power of the committee, according to Ho.

In general, the lawmaker thinks that the law contains a lot of detailed provisions and will be an important tool to regulate an area towards which the government is devoting significant effort, as it hopes that TCM will be one of the sectors that can help to diversify the economy. He highlighted that the existing laws are very outdated and completely incompatible with the current reality of this sector.

This was the first meeting of the Standing Committee on the topic. Ho said that the main focus of the members was in establishing a comparison between the existing regulations and the new law, ensuring that the new law is more complete while also taking into account the current rules that regulate the industry.

On the last topic, he mentioned the Good Manufacturing Practices, which are international regulations that take into account both the "hardware and software for this activity," Ho recalled that since 2012, the Health Bureau has been issuing guidelines based on recommendations from the World Health Organization on this matter.

# NEW REGULATION SUGGESTS BROADER USES OF STREET MARKET

JULIE ZHU

**T**HE recently passed law regarding the management of public street markets has expanded the definition of street markets to include more uses than those attributed to wet markets.

The government currently manages the affairs of street markets with three regulations: the municipal law, which came into effect in 1954; the street market law, established in 1960; and the islands' municipal law, implemented in 1974.

Under these three regimes, the nine street markets of Macau provide meat, fish, vegetables and other types of food.

However, the new law, which consists of 26 articles and is not yet in effect, contains a broader definition of the functions of a street market.

According to the law, street markets are locations that provide goods and services for daily life.

"Street markets as suppliers of goods and services for daily life are rather different when compared to street markets that provide food," Ho Ion Sang, Chairman of the First Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL), commented during a press conference after a committee meeting yesterday.

Citing Ho, lawmakers of the committee noted that there are normally other types of businesses within the surrounding vicinity of the street markets.

"There are many businesses surrounding street markets. Based on the current low rent for a stall inside the street markets, if, in the future, street markets [become] an integrated commercial facility, will the government consider the fact that street markets might impact businesses in the proximity?" Ho queried.

The new law prescribes the outsourcing of street market locations through an open public tender process.

"What criteria will the government use to select bidders?" Ho asked. "Basically, we can't see any relevant regulation in this law concerning the outsourcing procedure."

Another article in the law prescribes that, before the expiration of a three-year contract, the contract may be renewed for another three years (or another period) should the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) make a proposal and receive the approval of the tenant within 90 days before the expiration date.

"What does it mean if IAM does not make a proposal? Does it mean that the contract will not be renewed?" Ho questioned.

The law prescribes that the tenants shall follow the instructions issued by the street markets, comply with the regulation regarding "continuous operation," and operate the business by themselves for no fewer than 240 days. In addition, the law provides that IAM has the right to install recording devices inside street markets.

In relation to these rules, Ho asked, "What are the instructions? What is the regulation regarding the 'continuous operation'? How long a time period will be considered a 'continuous operation'? How are the 240 days calculated? The recording practice must be regulated and it must comply with personal data law."

Ho remarked that this law does not contain any explicit details in relation to these questions.

In total, the public street market law consists of 26 articles and was generally passed in AL on November 6 this year.

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



**R**ECOGNISING committed suppliers with outstanding service and providing encouragement to local small and medium enterprises, Sands China Ltd. celebrated their achievements on December 4th with back-to-back ceremonies at The Venetian Macao. The 2020 Sands Supplier Excellence Awards were held directly following a ceremony honouring the 7th and 8th intake of local SME suppliers to graduate from the Sands Procurement Academy, enabling a unique and valuable opportunity for graduates to gain inspiration by witnessing the successes of some of Sands China's suppliers.

"Each year, the Sands Supplier Excellence Awards recognises the outstanding performance and unrelenting efforts of all our partners who remain steadfast in walking side-by-side with Sands China. Our company's determination to continue investing in Macao during such difficult times remains unwavering, and we sincerely appreciate the key role our major partners have played in the company's business and strategy," said Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd.

In its eighth year, the Sands Supplier Excellence Awards acknowledges the cooperation and services of suppliers, with winners selected by a judging committee of Sands China executives.

Kenny Cheung is the chairman of the board of China Travel Service (Macao) Ltd., this year's Corporate Culture and Sustainability winner. Cheung said that together with Sands China, they are fulfilling their corporate social responsibility. At the peak of the epidemic period, CTS cooperated with carrying out the strategies and epidemic prevention requirements of the SAR government and Sands China. CTS has been operating up to 40% more shu-

# Sands China determined to support and encourage local SMEs



ttle bus shifts to take employees to and from work with peace of mind, and to ensure that Sands China – and Macao as a tourist city – both continue to operate as usual.

"We are thankful to Sands China for giving us many opportunities over the years," explained CY Liu of Cyberbox-Chic, winner of the Innovation Award. "Even with the instabilities of the pandemic, Sands China continues supporting smaller suppliers like us. They provide different financial support plans and have also continued both big and small orders, and we really appreciate that. The award we got today will serve as a great reference of our company and our service in the future."

Eva Ng, managing director of MACEXPO, said: "I was remarkably moved by the support of the Sands China team while I was organising the Sands Shopping Carnival. This was the biggest-ever shopping carnival in Macao, with 518 booths. The challenges included the short 3-month preparation time and the need to balance the epidemic prevention measures with the effects it would have on the event. It was important and necessary to ensure strict

compliance with the government's epidemic prevention guidelines and requirements, and we were very happy to see the event attract over 100,000 visitors in three days.

The three-day Sands Shopping Carnival also supported the Macau SAR government's

**"Our company's determination to continue investing in Macao during such difficult times remains unwavering, and we sincerely appreciate the key role our major partners have played in the company's business and strategy."**

DR. WILFRED WONG, PRESIDENT OF SANDS CHINA LTD.

Consume for the Economy initiative and provided a free business platform for local SMEs and Sands retailers amid the pandemic period, creating a weekend destination for local residents and tourists. Of the 54 graduating local SMEs from the 7th and 8th intake of the Sands Procurement Academy, 19 were exhibitors at the Sands Shopping Carnival.

Co-organised with the Macao Chamber of Commerce and the Macau Productivity and Technology Centre (CPTTM), the Sands Procurement Academy promotes the development of local SME suppliers by sharing business knowledge and skills. The academy's goal is to help the SMEs gain experience and capacity for working with lar-

ge-scale international corporations like Sands China, targeted at small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), micro-enterprises, Macao young entrepreneurs, and "Made-in-Macao" enterprises.

"Although I'm not yet a Sands China supplier, I'm honoured to be invited to participate in the Sands Procurement Academy, said Erica Leong, an academy graduate from local enterprise S&E Handmade. "I have learnt more about the procurement and logistics operations of large companies, like Sands China. I now understand that cooperating with large companies requires continuous self-enhancement and the gaining of more experience in order to meet companies' requirements, and that's what I will work on."

Another graduate of the

programme, Chan Kuok Ieng of Shun Xin Workshop said: "The training enabled me to better understand the operations of many major departments of large enterprises. The procurement knowledge learned in class is not only useful for applying to business operations, but also for daily life. Quality inspection, for example, is not only important for corporations and their procurement, but the practice can help protect the rights and interests of individual consumers as well when doing things like shopping."

The Sands Procurement Academy is a first-of-its-kind industry training concentrating on practical knowledge for participating SMEs; graduates of the programme have given very positive feedback on the impact to their businesses. Since the founding of the academy in 2017, nearly 240 suppliers have enrolled in the programme and 226 have graduated.

## 2020 SANDS SUPPLIER EXCELLENCE AWARDS:

- Corporate Culture & Sustainability: China Travel Service (Macao) Limited
- Cost Management: Wai Hung Hong Decoration and Design Company Ltd.
- Project Delivery: Peter Silling & Associates Hotel Interior Design Limited (PSA) and Sundart Engineering Services (Macao) Limited
- Innovation: Cyberbox-Chic Industries Ltd.
- Quality Management: Yuet Tung Shipping Company Ltd.
- Service Excellence: Man Heng Decoration and Furniture Engineering
- Small Medium Enterprise (SME): Macexpo Exhibition Co., Ltd.

# LEGAL EXPERT URGES REGION TO FOSTER CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU is well-positioned — from the legal perspective — to develop a sound and dynamic creative economy, but it has to up its game to fuel the development of creative sectors, which contributed only an exiguous portion of the city's gross domestic product (GDP), said Rostam Josef Neuwirth, Head for Department of Global Legal Studies of the University of Macau.

The city has grappled with a long-term issue of limited economic diversity. It is an issue not only acknowledged by Neuwirth, but also by the SAR government.

In the Policy Address for the Fiscal Year 2020, the government indicated that the city's economy had tilted heavily towards the gaming industry, which contributed more than 50% of the city's GDP at the time. This is in stark contrast to the exhibition, cultu-



ral and creative industries that made up less than 1% of the city's GDP.

Although "economic diversification does not show much progress," as stated in the document, Neuwirth said that the prospect of Macau's creative economy is still promising due to its sound legal

framework to protect intellectual property.

"I genuinely would say the enforcement of intellectual rights in Macau is sufficient," Neuwirth told the Times.

Macau is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This means the city observes the

Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) — that came into force in 1995 and lays down the minimum standards for WTO members to regulate the protection of intellectual property.

The wide-ranging TRIPS agreement governs various forms of in-

tellectual property, including copyright, trademarks, patents and industrial designs.

Against the background of a favorable legal structure, Neuwirth suggests the government step up efforts to carve out more opportunities for the creative sector to grow.

One recommendation of paramount importance was Neuwirth's suggestion that the government cultivate local talent in creative industries via educational initiatives to "instruct local students here to be creative," he stressed.

He also suggests the city bring in more creative talent from overseas. "Culture is not a thing you can contain within a border." He cited the success of Hollywood which has garnered a global following by bringing in international actors.

Earlier in November, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong U pledged to revisit and enhance the development of Macau's cultural industry. The authorities will also host the first award to honor quality enterprises in the creative industry and introduce measures to support the local film industry.



## The Londoner Macao to hold opening ceremony in February 2021

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU will see a new integrated resort opening with the Londoner Macao to help broaden its tourism appeal in 2021.

The Londoner Macao, a British-themed integrated resort of Sands China Ltd., is set to open early next year, according to a statement published by the resort yesterday.

In the announcement, several new facilities will open in the first quarter of next year as part of the first phase of the integrated resort's opening, including the all-suite Londoner Hotel, the Crystal Palace atrium, new eateries and interactive London-themed attractions.

The official ceremony will be held in early February 2021.

"London is an iconic city and we

anticipate this addition will further raise the profile of Macau while increasing the number of visitors, as our other flagship properties have done," said President of Sands China Ltd. Wilfred Wong as cited in the statement.

Sands China has invested around MOP16 billion into the resort so far, which the conglomerate said will open in phases throughout 2021.

The investment "is a clear signal that we believe Macau's future as one of the world's most important leisure and business destinations remains on course," said Robert Goldstein, President and Chief Operating Officer of Sands China Ltd.'s majority shareholder, Las Vegas Sands.

The resort features 14 exclusive

David Beckham themed suites, designed by London-based interior design firm David Collins Studio. The suites are slated to launch later in 2021 and will be Macau's first celebrity-designed suites and a first for Beckham globally.

The Londoner Macao encompasses five hotel brands with more than 6,000 guestrooms, retail outlets and meetings, incentives, conferencing, exhibitions (MICE) facilities.

The Londoner Macao will include two new all-suite hotels: The Londoner Hotel, with its interior designed by Hong Kong-based Steve Leung Design Group; and Londoner Court, which will open later in 2021. The three existing properties are Conrad Macao, Sheraton Grand Macao and the St. Regis Macao.

## 21% MORE ROADWORKS NEXT YEAR

THE government disclosed at a press conference yesterday that it has received applications for 363 roadworks projects to be conducted next year so far, equating to a 21% increase compared with this year.

These roadworks applications only include those led by government bodies and public utility providers. Of these, 55 will be on major roads, including the Avenida de Amizade, the Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida, and some near the Canidrome. This figure remains unchanged compared with this year.

It was further announced that the underground pipelines along Avenida de Almirante Lacerda have not been entirely restored, as the almost-full closure of the road this past summer could only facilitate partial completion of the work. The remaining sections of the pipelines will be laid during the next summer holiday period.

Several major projects will kick off, as the government pledged, next year. These will include the Fourth Macau-Tai-pa Bridge, the pedestrian system near the Guia Hill and the underwater tunnel between the New Urban Zone A and the NAPE District.

Reviewing the roadworks this year, the government disclosed that there were 28 projects brought forward from previous years. As of the end of November, 18 of these have been completed, with four remaining in progress. The remaining six will commence next year.

In the same period, 49 roadworks have had to be repeated.

Repeated roadworks occurs when the same location is dug up soon after the completion of previous roadworks. Such occurrences are a long running irritation in Macau as they keep the same section of the road unavailable to traffic. **AL**



ADVERTORIAL



# Australian PM says China coal ban would breach WTO rules

ROD MCGUIRK,  
CANBERRA

**A**USTRALIA'S prime minister said yesterday that China would be violating World Trade Organization rules and a bilateral free trade agreement if it banned Australian coal.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison was replying to a report in China's state-owned Global Times newspaper that said Beijing's main planning agency had given power plants approval to import coal without restrictions, except for Australian coal.

Morrison said he was treating the report as "media speculation" because the Chinese government had yet to clarify its position.

"If that were the case, then that would obviously be in breach of WTO rules," Morrison told reporters. "It would be obviously in breach of our free trade agreement and so we would hope that's certainly not the case."

China has targeted various Australian exports as relations with the country have deteriorated after Australia called for an independent inquiry into the coronavirus pandemic.

Asked about the report,

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin gave no specifics but said China had "recently taken measures against some imported Australian products in accordance with law and regulations."

China has consistently said Australia is entirely responsible for disruptions in economic and political ties motivated by what it sees as anti-Chinese bias among Australian politicians, civic leaders and media outlets.

Wang said China would "never accept" accusations of unfair trade practices, and accused Australia of having politicized bilateral exchanges in trade, investment, science and technology, while targeting Chinese companies with increased security checks on investments.

"We hope that the Australian side will reflect on itself, be consistent with its words and actions, and effectively provide good conditions and atmosphere for China-Australia practical cooperation in various fields, rather than the other way around," Wang told reporters at a daily briefing.

China's pique has pitted Australia's most important trading relationship against its alliance with the U.S., which

has rolled out increasingly harsh measures against Beijing over trade, technology and human rights.

Beijing's grievances against Australia range from accusations of Chinese meddling in Australian politics to the barring of tech giant Huawei and the government's push for an independent investigation into the pandemic that is believed to have originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

Coal and iron ore, Australia's most lucrative exports, appear to have suffered due to Chinese barriers, while wine, lumber and other products have also seen their Chinese markets reduced.

Trade Minister Simon Birmingham said Australia was close to finalizing a complaint to the World Trade Organization over Chinese tariffs imposed on barley.

"We see these reports and obviously are deeply troubled by them," Birmingham told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. referring to the reported coal import ban.

"They, if true, would indicate discriminatory trade practices being deployed by Chinese authorities and we would urge them to rule that out swiftly," he added. AP

## SANDS CHINA NEWS

### Sands China Highlights Talent Development Achievements at Sharing Session in Innovative Setting

Includes announcement of new Management Trainee Programme

Sands China Ltd. celebrated the achievements of its various human resources initiatives with the Sands China Academy Distinctive Talent Development Sharing Session Nov. 25 at The Venetian Macao.

Human resource initiatives are an essential part of Sands China's commitment to nurture local talent. Its Sands China Academy is a platform to train team members for their career development and foster professional talent in Macao, while implementing a human capital strategy that is constantly innovating and evolving.

That strategy focuses on three key areas: horizontal and vertical management talent development, professionalism training, and development of industry professionals outside of Sands China.

These various human resource development initiatives then centre around three key features: programmes that are diverse, high-quality, and dynamic as the market evolves.

Through a variety of horizontal and vertical management talent development programmes, Sands China is able to encourage team members to develop in different fields, challenging potential candidates with high standards for participation, while adjusting programmes from time to time based on the latest market trends.

The Nov. 25 event also featured a preview of the Management Trainee Programme, which incubates future integrated resort leaders to develop strategies with big-picture thinking, while better meeting the needs of participants in light of changing realities in the market.

Sands China offers various career mobility opportunities through its Academy. To date, team members have earned approximately 19,500 vertical promotions, made over 2,000 horizontal career movements, and received over 1.2 million on-the-job training hours.

The company's focus on providing team members with ideal development prospects has helped increase employee loyalty. Including the 950 team members celebrating 10- or 15-year anniversaries in 2020, more than 8,100 team members have now served the company for 10 years or more, representing more than 30 per cent of Sands China's employees.

The company's nurturing of team members has resulted in a substantial growth in the ratio of its Macao locals in management positions – more than quadrupling from 20 per cent in 2004 to 90 per cent currently.



# Electoral College makes it official: Biden won, Trump lost

MARK SHERMAN,  
WASHINGTON

**E**LECTORAL College decisively confirmed Joe Biden as the nation's next president, ratifying his November victory in an authoritative state-by-state repudiation of President Donald Trump's refusal to concede he had lost.

The presidential electors on yesterday (Macau time) gave Biden a solid majority of 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232, the same margin that Trump bragged was a landslide when he won the White House four years ago.

Heightened security was in place in some states as electors met to cast paper ballots, with masks, social distancing and other pandemic precautions the order of the day. The results will be sent to Washington and tallied in a Jan. 6 joint session of Congress over which Vice President Mike Pence will preside.

For all Trump's unsupported claims of fraud, there was little suspense and no change as every one of the electoral votes allocated to Biden and the president in last month's popular vote went officially to each man. On Election Day, the Democrat topped the incumbent Republican by more than 7 million in the popular vote nationwide.

California's 55 electoral votes put Biden over the top. Vermont, with 3 votes,



was the first state to report. Hawaii, with 4 votes, was the last.

"Once again in America, the rule of law, our Constitution, and the will of the people have prevailed. Our democracy — pushed, tested, threatened — proved to be resilient, true, and strong," Biden said in an evening speech in which he stressed the size of his win and the record 81 million people who voted for him.

He renewed his campaign promise to be a president for all Americans, whether they voted for him or not, and said the country has hard work ahead on the virus and economy.

But there was no concession from the White House, where Trump has continued to make unsupported allegations of fraud.

Trump remained in the

Oval Office long after the sun set in Washington, calling allies and fellow Republicans while keeping track of the running Electoral College tally, according to White House and campaign aides. The president frequently ducked into the private dining room off the Oval Office to watch on TV, complaining that the cable networks were treating it like a mini-Election Night while not giving his challenges any airtime.

The president had grown increasingly disappointed with the size of "Stop the Steal" rallies across the nation as well as efforts for the GOP to field its own slates of electors in states. A presidential wish for a fierce administration defense led to TV appearances by Stephen Miller, one of his most ferocious advocates, to try to

downplay the importance of the Electoral College vote and suggest that Trump's legal challenges would continue all the way to Inauguration Day on Jan. 20.

Late in the day, he took to Twitter to announce that Attorney General William Barr was leaving the administration before Christmas. Barr's departure comes amid lingering tension over Trump's unsupported fraud claims, especially after Barr's statement this month to The Associated Press that the election results were unaffected by any fraud.

In a Fox News Channel interview taped over the weekend, Trump said that "I worry about the country having an illegitimate president, that's what I worry about. A president that lost and lost badly." AP

## RUSSIA

# Putin congratulates Biden on winning US election

**R**USSIAN President Vladimir Putin yesterday congratulated Joe Biden on winning the U.S. presidential election after weeks of holding out.

Putin's message to Biden came a day after the Electoral College confirmed Biden as the nation's next president, ratifying his November victory in an

authoritative state-by-state repudiation of President Donald Trump's refusal to concede that he had lost.

The Kremlin had said earlier that the Russian president would hold off on congratulating Biden until the winner was officially confirmed. "We are just waiting for the end of the internal political con-

frontation," Putin said last month, referring to numerous Republican challenges to the vote count.

In his message, Putin wished Biden "every success," according to a Kremlin statement yesterday, and expressed confidence that "Russia and the U.S., which bear special responsibility for global

security and stability can, despite the differences, really contribute to solving many problems and challenges that the world is currently facing."

The Russian president noted that "the Russian-American cooperation based on the principles of equality and mutual respect would meet the interests of the people in both countries and the entire international community."

"For my part, I am ready for interaction and contact with you," Putin was quoted by the Kremlin as saying. AP

## this day in history

### 2001 THOUSANDS RALLY FOR SCOTS COUNTRYSIDE



Thousands of countryside campaigners have taken to the streets of Edinburgh in the largest demonstration of its kind ever witnessed in Scotland.

They are protesting against decisions being made on rural affairs.

More than 10,000 people joined the Scottish Countryside Alliance to protest against a bill to ban dog-hunting, the uncertain future of rural schools and the handling of the foot and mouth crisis.

Protesters are also upset about the Scottish Land Reform Bill, which will open up the countryside and extend the rights of communities to buy their land.

The event, called the March on The Mound began in Edinburgh's Meadows at around 1200 GMT and it made its way through the city towards the Scottish parliament.

It won support from rural organisations including the National Farmers' Union, the British Association of Shooting and Conservation, game-keeping and other countryside groups.

The march follows repeated accusations from rural campaigners ministers at the Scottish Executive do not understand their needs and have ignored their complaints.

Sounding horns, chanting and stomping through the city centre the demonstration included campaigners from across the UK and from as far afield as Australia, Norway and Europe.

In a rousing speech the Countryside Alliance director Allan Murray said: "The countryside is frustrated and angry. Countryside people feel their traditions and rights are being taken out of their hands.

"They feel ignored, patronised and dictated to by people with an urban mindset."

But in a statement the Scottish Executive defended its position and said it was committed to driving the rural agenda forward.

"Rural development is a key priority for the Scottish Executive, which has made a commitment to support and enhance all aspects of rural life in Scotland," the statement read.

"In doing so, recognising rural Scotland is an integral part of Scotland and critical to its success."

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act, which came into effect on 1 August 2002, effectively banned mounted fox hunts, hare coursing and fox baiting. It signalled the end of a long-running battle between those for and against the activity. The Scottish Countryside Alliance (SCA) said the new legislation would lead to unemployment and cause businesses to go bust. The SCA vowed to fight to overturn the legislation despite losing a legal fight at the Court of Session in Edinburgh the day before it came into effect.



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**YOUR STARS**



**ARIES**

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

No one - not even you - can be selfless and generous all the time! It's okay to mix a few selfish acts in with your good deeds today. Don't do anything too egomaniacal.



**TAURUS**

Apr. 20-May. 20

There's nothing quite like a healthy dose of attention to boost your mood! Today, look fast and you could catch some admiring glances being tossed your way.



**GEMINI**

May. 21-Jun. 21

You are embracing new ideas now, but it looks like you might be the only one. Everyone around you is behaving with extra caution, and what they fear might not be clear to you, and it doesn't have to be.



**CANCER**

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You have things well under control. Good for you! But before you dedicate all your newfound free time to celebrating your accomplishments, give some thought to what's coming down the pike.



**LEO**

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You know how to deal like a pro! When you're put in charge of the game today, you'll show a good combination of objectivity and charm that puts all the players at ease.



**VIRGO**

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Before you start any project today, put together a plan. You'll get nowhere without it. Too many details have lives of their own, and if you don't watch them carefully, they'll take you in all the wrong directions.



**LIBRA**

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Sometimes people need a push to take a leap of faith, and who better to give you a push than the folks you love and trust? You are entering a phase of new possibilities, so grab on and see where they take you.



**SCORPIO**

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Every little choice you make today won't be a matter of life and death, but there are some far-reaching issues camouflaged by some seemingly trivial choices.



**SAGITTARIUS**

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Simply turn your back on what is bothering you and take a day off from the burden of self-examination. You need to get back in touch with your inner cheerleader.



**CAPRICORN**

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Everyone has a different idea about what is beautiful. All aesthetic issues are inherently subjective, and you'll be much happier today if you understand that.



**AQUARIUS**

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Next, feed your mind. You're more intellectually curious right now than you have been in a long time, and there are mysteries you've been pondering for a while. Today is the day to solve them.



**PISCES**

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You should push your personal agenda a little bit more forcefully than you normally would today. A little extra effort will take you a long way right now.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

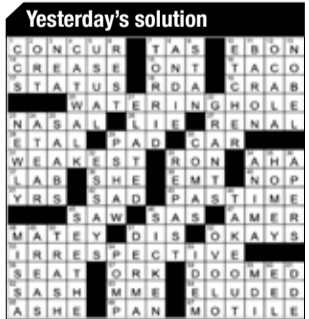
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-8	2	clear
Harbin	-25	-15	clear
Tianjin	-6	2	clear
Urumqi	-18	-10	clear
Xi'an	-4	3	cloudy
Lhasa	-6	13	clear
Chengdu	2	5	drizzle
Chongqing	7	8	overcast
Kunming	8	20	cloudy
Nanjing	-4	5	clear
Shanghai	1	8	cloudy
Wuhan	-3	6	clear
Hangzhou	-1	6	cloudy
Taipei	15	17	drizzle
Guangzhou	8	14	cloudy
Hong Kong	13	17	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-6	-3	overcast
Frankfurt	4	8	overcast
Paris	5	11	cloudy
London	7	10	overcast
New York	-2	4	overcast

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Cancels a dele; 6- Does' beaus; 11- Simile center; 14- Conscious; 15- We're Off \_\_\_ the Wizard; 16- French article; 17- Motion picture; 18- Tool; 20- Compass pt.; 21- Yard tunneler; 23- Foot bones; 24- Steeple; 26- Cock; 28- Scholar; 30- Conclusion; 31- Bit of parsley; 32- A trainee in a profession; 33- ER VIP; 36- Before long; 37- Gives a 9.8, say; 38- Architect Saarinen; 39- Medicinal amt.; 40- Symbol of Lebanon; 41- Higher; 42- Bit of wisdom; 43- Like jambalaya; 44- Balloon car; 47- Fads; 48- Disney mermaid; 49- Trumpet accessory; 50- T.G.I.F. part; 53- Recovery; 56- \_\_\_ Dame; 58- Hydrocarbon ending; 59- View; 60- Fish basket; 61- KLM rival; 62- Schlepped; 63- Warble;

DOWN: 1- Ditto; 2- Terrible time?; 3- Listen secretly; 4- Part of TNT; 5- Ostensible; 6- Subway turner; 7- Heavy book; 8- Nile viper; 9- Hair goop; 10- Make sure; 11- Vigilant; 12- Psychics claim to have a sixth one; 13- Up and about; 19- Aggregate; 22- Meal crumb; 25- Physical suffering; 26- Bill attachment; 27- Change for a five; 28- Attention-getting sound; 29- Epic poetry; 30- Deadly; 32- Training group; 33- Placed; 34- Hurler Hershiser; 35- Reactor part; 37- Sincere; 38- Pentathlon need; 40- Yo-Yo Ma, e.g.; 41- Insistence; 42- Noble; 43- Cmdr Data's was named Spot; 44- Nostrils; 45- Concert venue; 46- Quotes; 47- Governed; 49- Long luxuriant hair; 51- Family portrait?; 52- Offer; 54- Green prefix; 55- Fido's appointment; 57- Acapulco gold;



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- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
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- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
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# China's regulators review Huya's USD6b deal to buy DouYu

COCO LIU & ZHEPING HUANG

CHINA'S regulators said they are reviewing Huya Inc.'s proposal to acquire game-streaming rival DouYu International Holdings Ltd., part of a crackdown on anti-competitive behavior in the country's technology industry that throws the USD6 billion transaction into question.

Guangzhou-based Huya offered to buy its domestic competitor in October, proposing an all-stock transaction that would have created a combined business valued at about \$11 billion at the time. Internet giant Tencent Holdings Ltd., a shareholder in both companies, would have had about 68% of the merged business's voting shares.

Regulators announced their review of the Huya acquisition on Monday as they levied fines against a Tencent affiliate and Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. for their M&A transactions. The two companies were fined 500,000 yuan (\$76,500) each over failing to declare past acquisitions under the country's anti-monopoly laws. The antitrust agency singled out the Huya deal during a lengthy Q&A posted on its website explaining why it was tightening oversight of internet-sector deals in general.



A Huya spokesperson said the company has applied to the anti-trust watchdog for a review of the proposed merger and will cooperate with the regulator. DouYu representatives didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Their combined market valuations are now about \$8.5 billion. DouYu's U.S.-traded shares fell 2.4% at 2:03 p.m. in New York while Huya slid less than 1%. The transaction was negotiated before the recent government crackdown and was aimed at creating the country's dominant live-streamed gaming leader akin to Amazon.com Inc.'s Twitch. BLOOMBERG

# TWITTER SLAPPED WITH FINE FOR BREAKING EU'S DATA PRIVACY LAW

STEPHANIE BODONI

TWITTER Inc. was fined 450,000 euros (\$547,000) by its chief European Union data protection watchdog for failing to give a timely warning about a breach that threatened the privacy of Android phone users across the bloc.

Twitter violated EU data protection rules by failing to report a breach within the required 72 hours, Ireland's Data Protection Commission said yesterday in a statement. Twitter was also fined over its "failure to adequately document the breach."

The administrative fine was levied as "an effective, proportionate and dissuasive measure," the Irish watchdog said.

The U.S. social-media giant last year warned the Irish authority of a potentially disabled privacy setting that put some devices running on Google's Android mobile operating system at risk. The Irish authority's investigation started in January 2019. Because it potentially affected users throughout the EU, the regulator had to send the draft findings of its probe to other authorities, dragging out a process that critics complained took far too long.

Cases at the Irish data-protection regulator have been piling up since the bloc's tough General Data Protection Regulation took effect in May 2018. The slow pace has attracted criticism from privacy advocates and other EU regulators, which have no power to decide on cases concerning wider European violations by companies with an Irish EU base.

GDPR allows regulators to levy penalties of as much as 4% of a company's annual revenue for the most serious violations. The biggest fine to date under the EU's data protection rules was a 50 million-euro penalty for Google issued by France's watchdog CNIL. BLOOMBERG

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**OPINION**

**World Views**

Daniel Moss, MDT/Bloomberg



**CHINA JUST SHOWED HOW MUCH THE WORLD NEEDS IT**

The world needs China more than ever. Thank goodness it's showing up: Economic data released yesterday all looked strong and in line with forecasts. The upbeat projections for a strong global rebound in 2021 depend on Beijing maintaining this momentum.

Most of the traffic from other consequential economies is going the wrong way, owing to restrictions aimed at suppressing the current wave of Covid-19 infections. There's a prospect of double-dip recessions in Germany and Japan, and the U.S. rebound has been losing steam. With big question marks over three of the four biggest commercial powers, China is the indispensable player.

China may be the only major economy to notch any growth at all this year. The new data showed industrial output climbed 7% in November from the previous year, and retail sales advanced. Fixed-asset investment increased 2.6% in the first 11 months of 2020, compared with the same period in 2019. These numbers all matched economists' forecasts; that does nothing to detract from their importance. The solid 5% rise in retail sales from a year ago is particularly encouraging, given consumers came late to the recovery that began in the second quarter.

In reviewing the global scene, the world's second-biggest economy stands out all the more. Contrast it with German Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision, with state leaders, to impose a hard lockdown that will shut down most retailers from Wednesday. That's an especially heavy blow, considering the comeback from the first one hadn't taken firm hold. Schools have been encouraged to take long holiday breaks. A fourth-quarter contraction is in the cards after declines in gross domestic product during the first half of 2020.

Things are looking grim in Japan, too, where new daily infections topped 3,000 for the first time on Saturday. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has been forced to suspend his signature economic initiative, a subsidized domestic travel program called, "Go To." Few people are heading anywhere. Tokyo asked restaurants and bars to continue with shortened hours until Jan. 11. The blow to the economy, which never really recovered from a consumption-tax hike in 2019, will be significant. It bodes equally poorly for Suga, who has struggled to reverse a slide in the government's standing since taking over from Shinzo Abe a few months ago.

In the U.S., improvements in the labor market look to be stalled. Figures last week showed applications for jobless benefits surged, topping estimates with the highest level since September. If Congress can't agree on an additional federal relief package by the end of the December, millions of Americans could start the new year with lapsed unemployment benefits. As if President-elect Joe Biden won't have enough to contend with.

Critics contend that President Xi Jinping was able to shut down China and reopen at a whim earlier in the year because of the authoritarian political system; there's some truth to that. Or that its statistics are fiction, though few economists quibble with the overall direction of numbers published these days. What matters most is that the economy is at the very least hanging in there, and likely doing much better than that.

**NOUN DESCRIBING SOCIAL DISTANCING IS DUTCH WORD OF THE YEAR**

THE BUZZ

One-and-a-half-meter-society has been voted the Dutch word of the year by a (social) distance.

Anderhalvemetersamenleving, a compound noun describing life under the Dutch government's 1.5-meter social distancing requirement, was the runaway winner of a vote held by the Van Dale dictionary company.

The lengthy new word, which was added to the dictionary in April during the first spike in Dutch coronavirus infections, garnered just under 30% of some 12,000 votes in the annual competition.

The results were announced yesterday, the day the Netherlands

began a strict five-week lockdown to counter recent sharp rises in new infections.

In second place with 11% was "fabeltjesfuik" a noun which Van Dale defines as the "phenomenon that users of social media who are interested in conspiracies are offered more and more messages about conspiracies due to the operation of social media, which gradually leads them to believe in them."

All the other words in the top 10 were related to the year's defining story — the coronavirus pandemic — and celebrate the Dutch way of creating new words by knitting together existing words to describe a new phenomenon.

**WHY IS THE EU TAKING SO LONG TO OK VACCINE?**

AS Canadians, Britons and Americans begin getting immunized with a German-developed vaccine against coronavirus, pressure is building on the European Medicines Agency to approve the shot made by Pfizer Inc. and the German company BioNTech. German officials have been especially vocal that they want it approved before Christmas. Here's a look at the EMA approval process:



**WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY?**

The EMA is Europe's medicines regulatory agency and approves new treatments and vaccines for all 27 countries across the European Union. It is roughly comparable to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

**WHY IS THE EMA TAKING SO LONG TO APPROVE A VACCINE?**

Britain, Canada and the U.S. granted approval for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to be used under emergency use provisions earlier this month, meaning the shot is an unlicensed product whose temporary use is justified by the urgency of a pandemic that has already killed over 1.6 million people.

But the EMA's approval process for coronavirus vaccines is largely similar to the standard licensing procedure that would be granted to any new vaccine, only on an accelerated schedule. The companies will still need to submit follow-up data to the EU regulator and the approval will need to be renewed after one year.

EMA began its expedited approval process of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in October and the companies formally asked for their shot to be licensed on Dec. 1.

Using its expedited approval process, the EMA says the time for assessing a new drug or vaccine has been shortened from about 210 days to fewer than 150.

**HOW WILL THE EMA DECIDE WHETHER TO OK THE VACCINE?**

The EMA is convening an "extraordinary" meeting

on Dec. 29 — although that date could be moved up sooner — during which their experts will discuss the data behind the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The meeting, which will be closed, will include a presentation by two officials charged with assessing the vaccine and could also include bringing in company representatives to answer questions.

Within hours of the meeting's conclusion, the EMA will issue a statement on whether or not it is recommending the vaccine be approved. Several days later, they will release their full scientific assessment explaining the decision.

The EMA's approval is valid in all 27 EU countries and once it is granted, countries can start receiving vaccines for immunization campaigns.

**WILL THE EMA SPEED UP ITS APPROVAL?**

Cooke, the agency's chief, said Monday that EMA staff are working "around the clock" and that if they have sufficient data and have completed their required protocols, the Dec. 29 meeting to consider the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine could indeed be moved up.

"We feel a huge responsibility to get this right ... to make sure that what we deliver in terms of a scientific opinion is robust and reliable," Cooke told the AP in an interview last week. "It's already a huge responsibility, I

can tell you, without putting a race around it."

**IS THE AGENCY EXAMINING ANY OTHER CORONAVIRUS VACCINES?**

The EMA is also planning to convene a meeting Jan. 12 to consider approving the coronavirus vaccine made by Moderna, but said that discussion too could be moved up earlier.

It is also assessing data from two other vaccines, one made by Oxford University and AstraZeneca and the other by Janssen, but neither of those two companies have yet made a formal request to be licensed in the EU.

**HOW WILL EMA MAKE SURE A VACCINE IS SAFE ONCE IT'S BEING USED?**

The agency usually asks companies to deliver data on vaccines' safety and side effects every six months, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, it will be asking companies for that data every month.

"We need to consider how (these vaccines) perform once they are once they are deployed in a mass vaccination situation," Cooke said, explaining that the EMA is adopting extra surveillance measures to detect any rare or serious side effects.

Although tests of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine suggested the shot is safe and about 95% effective in preventing COVID-19, there is still limited long-term safety data on it. AP

Germany yesterday increased the pressure on the European Union's regulatory agency, with its health minister, a leading hospital association and lawmakers all demanding that the agency approve a coronavirus vaccine before Christmas. "Our goal is an approval before Christmas so that we can still start vaccinating this year," Health Minister Jens Spahn said.



Britain's foreign secretary and his Indian counterpart met yesterday in New Delhi in an effort to deepen ties between their countries. Dominic Raab and Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar held talks for about four hours and discussed a wide range of issues, including the post-pandemic world, defense, trade and the environment.



Canada administered its first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine yesterday [Macau time], becoming one of the first countries to do so in the effort to beat back the pandemic. Five front-line workers in Ontario were among the first Canadians to receive the vaccine at one of Toronto's hospitals.

Australia's prime minister said yesterday that China would be violating World Trade Organization rules and a bilateral free trade agreement if it banned Australian coal. Prime Minister Scott Morrison was replying to a report in China's state-owned Global Times newspaper that said Beijing's main planning agency had given power plants approval to import coal without restrictions, except for Australian coal. More on p7

Puerto Rico A respiratory therapist who treated the first two COVID-19 patients hospitalized in Puerto Rico became the first person in the U.S. territory to be vaccinated against the virus yesterday.