

The Macao SAR Government urges:

Implement regular epidemic prevention measures;
Do our best to persist;
Wash hands frequently and wear a mask;
Keep a distance and avoid crowd gathering;
Perseverance leads to success.

Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre

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MACAU RCR electronics

ALL IN THE FAMILY: A 19-YEAR-OLD STUDENT ALLEGEDLY STOLE JEWELRY AND WATCHES WORTH MOP1 MILLION FROM TWO COUSINS TO GAMBLE P4

INT’L MARKET EXPECTED TO HELP GROW TOTAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO 50,000 P5

WITH THE UPCOMING SPRING FESTIVAL HOLIDAY, LOCAL SCHOLAR SIU CHI SEN IS ANTICIPATING SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN GAMING REVENUE: REPORT P2

North Korea As leader Kim Jong Un grapples with the toughest challenges of his nine-year rule, he’s set to open a massive ruling Workers’ Party congress next month to try to muster stronger public loyalty to him and lay out new economic and foreign policies. While few question Kim’s grip on power, there is still room for things to get worse, especially if the world fails to find a quick way out of the COVID-19 crisis.



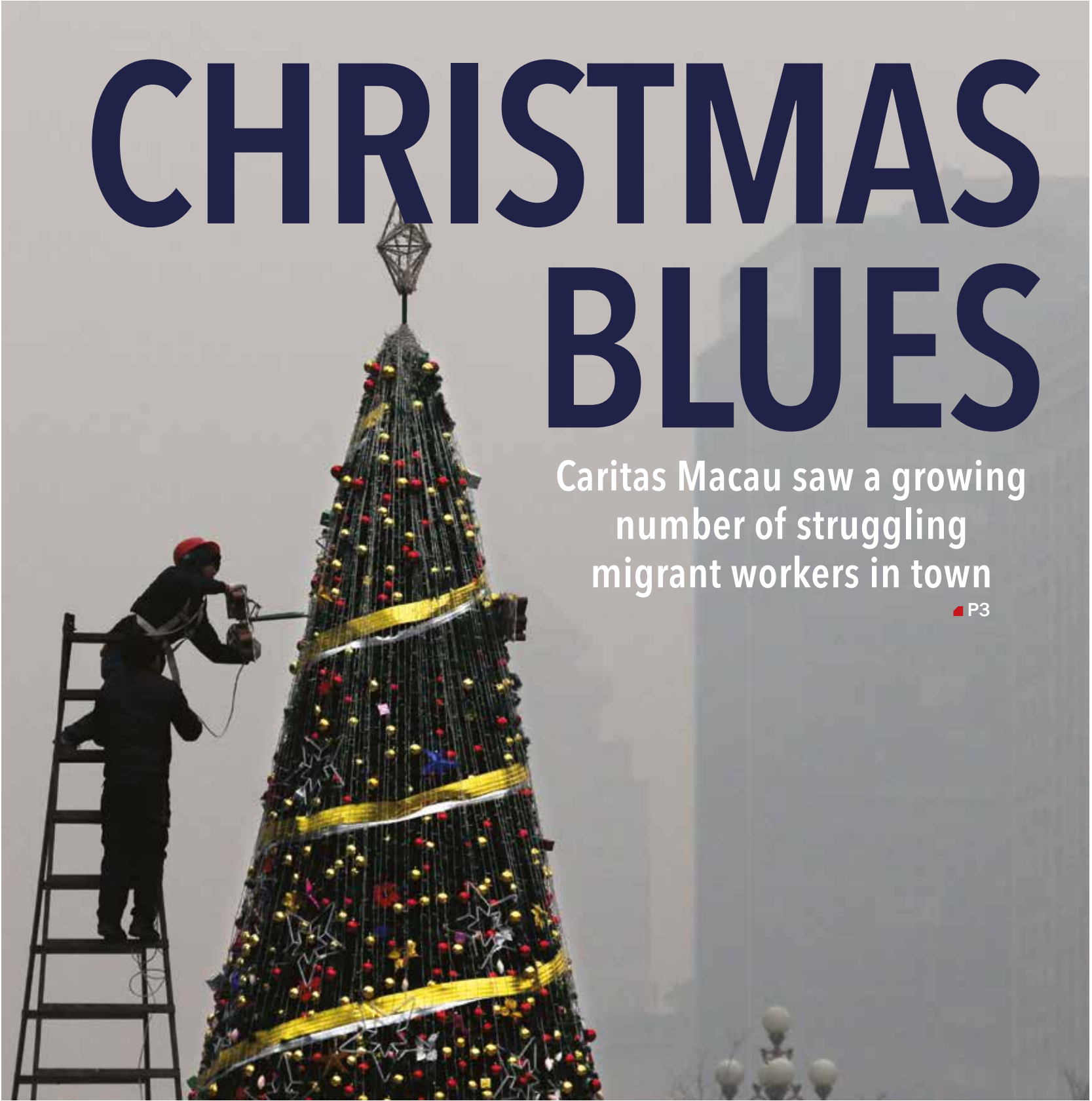
Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga says he plans to submit legislation that will make coronavirus measures legally binding for businesses, punish violators and include economic compensation as his government struggles to slow the ongoing upsurge. People have become complacent about the pandemic and store owners have become less cooperative due to the economic impact.

Afghanistan At least four people were killed in separate attacks across Afghanistan yesterday, officials said, raising further concerns about the fate of peace talks that have been suspended until at least next month. No one claimed responsibility for the attacks, and a local Islamic State affiliate opposed to the peace process has continued to regularly target civilians and Afghan security forces.



Russia A fishing trawler sank yesterday in the northern Barents Sea and 17 of its crew are still missing, emergency officials said. Two other crew members have been rescued. A criminal probe into the incident has been launched and a search operation is underway. Several vessels and an aircraft have been deployed to look for the missing crew members, Russian news agencies reported.

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Caritas Macau saw a growing number of struggling migrant workers in town

P3

TESTS IN MACAU CAN DETECT NEW VIRUS STRAINS: GOV’T

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



P3

A TRIBUTE TO JULIANA DEVOY

To my beloved mother Sister Juliana:
“...Because the Lord said, I will never
leave you nor forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5

God's Footprints

One night in deepest sleep, I dreamed
Upon the beach I walked.
The Lord was by my side each step
As quietly we talked.
Then on the sky my life appeared;
Each chapter was serene
Two sets of footprints in the sand
I saw in every scene.
And then I noticed in some parts
Of discontent and strife,
Just a single pair of footprints
In the worst times of my life.
“Lord, you said you'd walk by me,
In good times and in bad.”
“Why then weren't you with me
When you knew my life was sad?”
“My dearest child,” God whispered,
“When you suffered then, I knew;
The single pair of footprints were those
times I carried you.”

This is a poem you sent to me.
On the morning of December 14, the
sky was suddenly dark. I knew you were
gone.

A few days ago, I went to the hospital
to visit you. There were so many people
who visited you. We could only take a
short turn each. How much love you gave
to people, how many people loved you.

I remembered you, braving the sun,
carrying heavy food, visiting me. When I
was in an ordeal, I kept every letter you
wrote to me intact, and it was full of a
mother's deep love.

A month ago, I went to visit you. You took
a photo with me and were reluctant to let
me go. You wanted me to see you more.
Thinking back now, I was stupid and di-
dn't understand your love and thoughts.
I am sorry and feel heartbroken.

Since we met in the early 90s, your gra-
ces of kindness and compassion have
been countless. When I am lost and hel-
pless, the love, warmth and help you gave
me are the light in the dark, supporting
me go ahead, stand up, and have the cou-
rage to go on. You forgave my ignorance
and mistakes time and time again, be-
cause you said that God wants to forgive
people not 7 times, but 77 times. You said
that God is the God of forgiveness.

I recall that when you went to buy fruit,
you would pick the worst one up. In your
80s, you climbed the spiral staircase to
work every day. You worked hard to help
all the suffering people, to eat with them,
and live in one place. You gave the most
selfless love to all suffering women and
children.

Rest in peace, my most beloved mother.
Your coming to the world was a blessing
from God to women and children who
are suffering. You are our mother and
protect the children for a safe journey.

Your kindness and smile, and your love,
will always remain in our hearts.

May long

GOV'T RELEASES SIMPLIFIED E-PLATFORM, ONLINE DECLARATION OF LIFE PROCEDURES

ANTHONY LAM

“MY Government Account,”
the unified online servi-
ce platform administered by
the government, has recently
been upgraded with a simpli-
fied interface featuring larger
and clearer icons for its mobile
app, mainly to cater to senior
citizens.

All individuals who legally
reside in Macau and have a
Macau cellphone number are
eligible for the e-platform.

The platform is now availa-
ble in three languages on the
app, including English. How-
ever, not all sections have full
English access.

For example, as a test yester-
day, the Times tried to conduct
a service booking procedure.
The booking icons and the ins-
tructions were in English, but
the privacy agreement, which
the system requires all to read
and agree to, was only available
in Chinese or Portuguese.

Putting aside the privacy
agreement defect, English rea-
ders can now apply for a num-
ber of government services and
documents. For instance, they
can apply for Business Regis-
tration Reports using the app.
Meanwhile, they can also check
their Social Security Fund ins-
tallments or taxation payment

ANTHONY LAM



statutes using the app.

Furthermore, from the start
of 2021, senior residents can
utilize the platform to update
their proof of life documenta-
tion. The procedure is required
annually in order to facilitate
the delivery of senior subsidies,
social security funds and, if
applicable, government pen-
sion funds.

Apparently, the government
has ensured the roll-out on
time because all beneficiaries
are required to register their
proof of life documents in Ja-
nuary each year. Meanwhile,
beneficiaries of several other
types of subsidies must register
by August 31 each year.

Considering the fact that
some senior citizens are not

familiar with new technologies,
the government has allowed
such registrations to be made
on a beneficiary's behalf. No-
netheless, the registration must
be made with the consent of
the beneficiary, as well as a di-
rect family member such as
the person's spouse, children or
parents.

Even if the proof of life is
submitted on a beneficiary's
behalf, the fund will only be
transferred into the bank ac-
count of the beneficiary that
was registered prior. The go-
vernment stressed that the
funds will be not deposited into
anybody else's account.

To facilitate representatives'
registration, the family mem-
bers must also own a “My Go-

vernment Account.”

When questioned by the
Times as to how the electronic
platform can recognize that the
process was conducted by a di-
rect family member, Chou Wai
Kin, Acting Head of the Depart-
ment of Research, Develop-
ment and File Management of
the Identification Bureau (DSI),
told those gathered at the press
conference held specifically to
announce the new service that
the transmission of data is uni-
directional.

“No sharing of databases
with other bureaus has been
arranged,” Chou stressed, with
Ng Wai Han, Deputy Direc-
tor of the Public Administra-
tion and Civil Service Bureau,
echoing this.

The Times then attempted
to clarify whether the data
will be sent to the DSI for
comparison in order to verify
family relations, with Chou
affirming this.

In the process of registering
for proof of life, facial recogni-
tion of the beneficiary will be
conducted. They will be asked
by the system to adopt a series
of facial expressions in front of
the phone camera.

The government pledged
that further services will be rol-
led out in order to attract more
users.

GAMING

Scholar anticipates large revenue growth during CNY

JULIE ZHU

WITH the upcoming
Spring Festival holi-
day, local scholar Siu Chi Sen
is anticipating significant
growth in gaming revenue.

As cited in a TDM report,
the associate professor in
Business Economics from
the Faculty of Business Ad-
ministration at the Uni-
versity of Macau remarked
that the region has seen an

increase in the number of
tourist arrivals during the
Christmas season, with the
majority of visitors staying in
Macau overnight. Thus, the
situation has had a positive
effect on the casinos' mass
market business.

For next year's gaming re-
venue, Siu expects the first
quarter of 2021 to be simi-
lar to figures for the fourth
quarter of this year.

Siu, who specializes in

tourism and integrated re-
sort research, believes that
once the region starts vac-
cinations for Covid-19, it
will possibly see the return
of Macau's gaming and tou-
rism industry in the second
and third quarters of 2021.
He believes that monthly
gaming revenue may once
again total over MOP10
billion.

Kwok Chi Chung, presi-
dent of the Macao Junket

Promoters and Cooperators
Association, thinks that at
the current stage the reco-
very of Macau's tourism and
gaming industry has already
met the sector's expectation.

During the Christmas
holidays, tourist arrivals
have met the expecta-
tions of authorities, with
some 27,800 incoming
tourists on December 25.
Meanwhile, last month, the
city registered gross gaming
revenue of MOP6.75 billion,
a plunge of 70.5% compared
to the same period last year.
The November figures re-
presented the first month-
on-month dip in GGR since
August this year, when the
city began seeing signs of re-
covery in the gaming sector.

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Caritas sees growing number of struggling migrant workers in town

STAFF REPORTER

SECRETARY-GENERAL of Caritas Macau Paul Pun has found it increasingly challenging to secure enough supplies for poverty-stricken migrant workers in Macau, as they have been constantly increasing in number.

On average, the number of non-resident workers who sought help at the local charity organization increased by around 100 per week in December. "The number has kept climbing, with no signs of abatement," Pun told the Times yesterday.

During the Christmas period, Caritas Macau heightened its outreach efforts in order to throw a lifeline to this specific group — most of whom have been dismissed from their jobs and stranded in Macau as there are no flights available.

With the assistance of local schools, Pun organized two outreach events on December 20 and 27 at the institutions, each running for 8 hours a day. The foreign workers were given masks and essential food items such as rice, milk and eggs for adults, and formula for infants.

He also hosted a luncheon at a local Chinese restaurant for approximately 300 impoverished and jobless migrant workers on Boxing Day.



"We want more people in Macau to know about the hardship faced by these migrant workers during the pandemic and give a helping hand to these folks," Pun stressed, calling on locals to donate food and cash to help them weather the storm.

Since September, Caritas Macau has been reaching out to the then blue card-holders who were let go by hotels, restaurants and other companies.

As of now, the non-govern-

ment organization (NGO) has had upwards of 1,000 non-resident workers registered on its list, hailing from the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Nepal and Myanmar.

However, Pun disclosed that the NGO has maintained a low profile about its outreach activities for migrant workers, as, he explained, this might lead to misinterpretation by the public that the NGO favours migrant workers over locals.

For now, there has been al-

most no mention of such an endeavor on Caritas Macau's website and social media account.

"We have entirely banked on word-of-mouth to disseminate the details of outreach activities amidst the migrant worker community," he added.

Pun also told the Times that around 10 jobless and physically-ill migrant workers came to the NGO in search of financial assistance as they are in

debt to local hospitals from previous medical treatments.

Migrant workers are not granted the same medical entitlements as the locals. A medical treatment can incur them thousands of patacas, or even more. "However, they are not allowed to leave the city until they pay off the debt. These types of migrant workers are extremely under the pump, as they have no money in their pockets to pay the debt," Pun explained.

Given the ongoing pandemic, the official is calling on the government to introduce some approaches to provide help, including financial, living and medical assistance for sacked and stranded migrant workers who are struggling.

Official data shows that by the end of November, the city recorded a total of 180,962 non-resident workers.

Since January, Macau has lost 12,536 blue card holders who were mostly working in hotels, restaurants and similar establishments.

On December 21, the Philippine Consulate in Macau deployed a repatriation flight to bring home a total of 197 stranded Filipinos in Macau, around 40 of whom had reached out to Caritas Macau for support. The recent flight was the consulate's 12th repatriation flight.

Local nucleic acid tests able to detect mutated Covid-19 strain from UK

STAFF REPORTER

THE nucleic acid tests for Covid-19 used in Macau are sensitive enough to identify the mutated coronavirus that has been spreading rapidly in the U.K., Medical Director of Conde de São Januário Hospital Dr. Alvis Lo Iek Long confirmed at the regular media briefing regarding Covid-19 yesterday.

In the press conference by the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center, Lo said that once a specimen tests positive for Covid-19, it will be undergo further genomic sequencing to ascertain whether it carries the mutant strain.



Lo's remarks came after a growing number of countries and cities, such as Hong Kong, India and most European countries, have cut off tourist flows from the U.K. due to the specter of a new and more infectious variant of coronavirus, which reportedly hails from Britain.

He also stressed that the public "should not be too pessimistic" regarding the outcome of the upcoming vaccine, even though a vaccination may not guarantee quaranti-

ne-free entry into Macau.

The vaccine, Ho stressed, is effective at lowering the risk of severe illness or death once an individual is infected with Covid-19. It can also control the transmission of the virus if a significant number of people in the city are vaccinated.

Since December 21, the center has tightened quarantine restrictions, extending the mandatory quarantine period from 14 days to 21 days for all arrivals entering Macau from Hong Kong and all other places, except mainland China and Taiwan.

"We decided to prolong the length of quarantine based on two factors, which were the emergence of

the new Covid-19 variant from Britain and the increasing number of cases who had tested positive after being released from 14-day quarantine reported in some parts of the world," said Dr. Leong Iek Hou, Coordinator of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

In the interim, those who have already been discharged from quarantine hotels, are required to perform self-health monitoring for an extra seven days and take another Covid-19 test on the 20th day.

Leong said that this group of people has already completed an additional test for Covid-19 and their health code was converted from yellow to green on the 21st day.

When asked by the media about the technical hitch on the health code website on December 24, which coincided with the

launch of a new function for applicants to input their address on the website, Lo said the issue was caused by a glitch in the server and had nothing to do with the new function.

Lo said the new function for filling in addresses, originally scheduled to be put into service on December 24, will be re-launched after New Year's Day.

As of December 27, a total of 386 people were observing quarantine periods in Macau — 271 of them were non-Macau residents, whilst the remainder were Macau residents.

From May to December 27, over two million nucleic acid tests were carried out in Macau — 1.3 million of which were carried out on Macau residents, whilst the remaining 700,000 were carried out on non-Macau residents.

CRIME

TWO CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ACCUSED OF CHRISTMAS DAY APARTMENT THEFT

RENATO MARQUES

Two construction workers who are mainland residents are being accused of breaking and entering an apartment located at Rua Nova à Guia and stealing cash and jewelry worth around 25,000 patacas, a Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesperson said yesterday morning during a special press conference at PJ headquarters.

The case was revealed by the victim, a local woman in her 40s who went to PJ in the early hours of December 26 to file a complaint.

According to the victim's report, she left her home on December 25 at around 6 p.m. and returned about 11 p.m.

Upon arriving home, she immediately noticed that her bedroom had been ransacked by someone who had also broken in to one of her drawers.

She realized she had lost a white gold necklace and her collection of Chinese zodiac commemorative banknotes, valued at about 25,000 patacas in total.

The PJ investigators requested access to the surveillance cameras of the apartment building. In the footage, they spotted two suspects who entered the building at around 8 p.m. that day and left about an hour later.

The investigators were able to identify the suspects using the footage, and they were arrested the next day at around 1 p.m. while exiting a hotel unit in the city.



Both suspects denied the accusations, refusing to collaborate with the PJ. However, the investigators found in a body search several banknotes matching the ones the victim reported as lost, as well as a receipt for the acquisition of a mobile phone.

According to the PJ spokesperson, the clothes both suspects were wearing at the time of their apprehension by police also matched the clothing seen in the footage from the building surveillance cameras.

Following the lead of the mobile phone receipt, the PJ also found that the suspects had used several of the commemorative banknotes to ac-

quire the phone, notes that were still in the shop's possession.

During the press conference, the PJ also displayed several tools and copies of keys, which were allegedly used to break-and-enter into the apartment and potentially into others. However, the spokesperson did not want to speculate on such a matter for the time being.

Despite the lack of collaboration from the suspects, the PJ believes that there is strong evidence of the two suspects' involvement in this theft. The case has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office for formal charging and further investigation.



CRIME

COUSIN STEALS MOP1 MILLION WORTH OF JEWELRY, WATCHES TO GAMBLE ONLINE

RENATO MARQUES

A 19-year-old local student has been accused of aggravated theft after allegedly stealing two pieces of jewelry and four watches worth MOP1,055,000 from two of his cousins, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported yesterday in a specially organized press conference.

The case was revealed when the two victims, sisters and both in their 20s, reported the loss of the items in the early hours of December 27.

According to the complaint filed to the PJ, at around 11 p.m. on December 26, one of the sisters discovered that two of her expensive watches and one diamond encrusted bracelet (valued at MOP696,000 in total) had disappeared from a drawer in her bedroom in an apartment located at Rua do Chunam-beiro.

Alerted by her sister's discovery, the second victim also searched her bedroom and realized that she had also lost two valuable watches and one jade bracelet (valued at MOP359,000 in total).

The PJ investigators in charge of the preliminary investigation

found that there were no signs of a break-in on the doors and windows of the apartment. This led the investigators to suspect that the theft was performed by someone familiar with the house, who had access to it without needing to break and enter.

While the PJ was investigating the case, the victims attended the PJ headquarters once again, this time accompanied by their cousin, whom they suspected.

The local student confessed to having committed the crimes in question, and claimed to have done the acts on two different occasions. The first occurred around September this year and the second in October.

He also said that he pawned the goods for a total of HKD170,000, which he then lost to online gambling.

Following this lead, the PJ found three of the four watches and the jade bracelet at a local pawn shop. They are continuing to search for the final missing watch and the diamond encrusted bracelet.

The suspect has been presented to the Public Prosecutions Office to be charged with aggravated theft.

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EDUCATION

Int'l market expected to take Macau's student number totals to 50k by 2025

JULIE ZHU

THE Macau SAR government is hoping to enroll more international students, with the total number of students at local universities projected to increase by 28% by 2025.

Yesterday, the Higher Education Bureau (DSES) held a press conference to officially launch the framework for the mid- and long-term development of Macau's higher education sector, specifically for the period of 2021 to 2030.

The framework includes three goals and eight measures. Overall, the government aims to develop Macau into a platform for "excellent talented human resources," for leading academic research and for the development of the Macau SAR.

The eight measures are: perfecting the education mechanism; expanding the scale of the number of students; promoting the sharing of resources among schools; protecting continuous improvement in higher education; training students' comprehensive development; enhancing school staff's proficiencies; promoting research development; and encouraging regional cooperation.

Regarding the expansion of the scale of the number of students, the local government expects to increase the number of university students from the current 39,000 to 50,000 by 2025.

The anticipated figure of 50,000 students is based on evaluation. "No matter if it is the teaching facilities or other aspects, the schools are completely capable of providing enough studying positions to reach the goal of 50,000," Chang Kun Hong, acting director of DSES, said.

Over the past few years, Macau has been producing approximately 4,000 high school graduates an-



nually, around half of whom chose to study at local universities.

DSES acknowledged that due to the decreasing birthrate in Macau, which has caused a decrease in the number of high school graduates in turn, it has become increasingly difficult for local universities to enroll students.

The authority hopes to attract more students from Southeast Asian countries and Europe, as well as students from countries linked by China's Belt and Road initiative.

Currently, students from over 60 regions and countries are studying in Macau.

"Most of the [non-local] students come from mainland China. Besides enrolling local students, we also hope that we can attract more non-local students, including mainland students. Enrolling foreign students into Macau [universities] is a long-term goal," Chang said.

In addition to international students, DSES also wishes for local universities to hire more international teaching staff.

"At the current stage, the percentage of international lecturers in [local] schools is different. We hope schools can hire high quality, well-known scholars from all over the

world to provide educational services," said Chang, who also said that Macau is still lagging behind in the ratio of students to lecturers when compared with international standards.

"We hope to adjust the ratio between teachers and students to 1:15," said Chang.

PATRIOTIC EDUCATION NOT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

DSES has made it explicit that patriotic education is not made for the international students.

According to the higher education development framework, students are required to learn about the Constitutional Law and Macau's Basic Law. The government hopes to enhance students' love of the state and Macau.

"The sentiment of loving the country mainly targets local students and mainland students. Regarding foreign students, there is a necessity for them to learn about the country's Constitutional Law and the Basic Law," Chang explained.

At present, Macau provides over 100 courses at university level, including elective courses and requi-

red courses. Constitutional Law and Macau's Basic Law are required courses.

"I always think that, as citizens of China and as students from China, we must have passion and love for the country, and we must understand the country's development. In regard to foreign students, we are not forcing them, and we will not force them to go through education to love China. They must adapt to the law here if they live here and they need to learn about Macau's Basic Law and the country's Constitutional Law," said Chang.

Speaking about academic freedom, Chang claims that the government will not impose any restrictions to suppress academic freedom.

"It is explicitly included in the law that universities have academic freedom," Chang said, adding that teaching staff at universities have the freedom to choose what to discuss on whatever occasion. "Discussing inappropriate topics – not necessarily political ones – under an inappropriate situation or discussing topics that makes the students [uncomfortable] are different from academic freedom," the official said.

2021'S ELECTORAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ASSIGNED

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng recently designated the Electoral Affairs Committee, which will administer next year's Legislative Assembly Election. The committee is presided over by Justice Tong Hio Fong and consists of Prosecutor Coordinator Lai U Hou, President of the Municipal Affairs Bureau's Municipal Administrative Council José Tavares, Director of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau Kou Peng Kuan, Director of the Financial Services Bureau long Kong Leong, as well as Director of the Government Information Bureau Inês Chan.

IC ADDS ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCES OF 'STEPHEN CHOW'

Two additional performances of the programme "Stephen Chow" will be offered on January 25 and 26 at 7:30 p.m. due to public demand, the Cultural Affairs Bureau announced in a statement. The show is a medley of scenes from Stephen Chow's films, which "evokes pleasure for the audience in appreciating the philosophy of life," the organizer said in a statement. Themed "Everyone is an Artist," this year's Macao City Fringe Festival will present a total of 18 programmes and 17 outreach activities from January 20 to 31.

Workers threaten to jump from Galaxy Macau building amid labor dispute

ANTHONY LAM

FOUR mainland men threatened to jump off a building on a Galaxy Macau construction site yesterday morning. The incident is believed to be related to a labor dispute.

After negotiations, the four non-resident workers

returned to safety.

In a brief statement, the Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL) noted that teams had been deployed to handle the situation once the bureau was notified of the situation. Emergency services were also at the scene.

The DSAL disclosed that, following a preliminary in-

vestigation, they surmised that the dispute was related to salary disagreements.

During the investigation at the construction site, the DSAL discovered another group of 14 non-resident workers who were protesting regarding similar salary disputes.

The 14 workers, accor-

ding to local Chinese newspaper Macao Daily News, were not directly employed by Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG). Instead, they were hired by contractors.

The DSAL explained to all 18 workers their labor rights and the relevant legal stipulations. However, the authority noted in the

statement that further investigation remains underway.

A statement last night from a GEG representative noted, "Due to the completion of some of the construction work at GEG's new development projects in Cotai, the exit of the related non-resident construction workers has been arranged, and all their salaries and compensation have been paid in full accordance with the Macau Labor Relations Law and their contracts."

After learning the demands of the migrant workers, GEG noted that it requested the related subcontractors to follow up and coordinate with the related non-resident construction workers accordingly.

"We understood that there were agency fee disputes between the four related non-resident construction workers and their labor agencies based in the mainland. According to their subcontractor, the issue has been resolved."

LOCAL EXPERTS ENCOURAGE REGIONAL INTEGRATION FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY

GRACE YU

THE fifth plenary session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China finished at the end of October, during which the Party leadership's proposals for formulating the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 was adopted.

China will strive to take new strides in economic development during the period, according to the communique released after the session. Furthermore, the proposal of China's new five-year plan stressed the importance of being on high alert to outside interference in Hong Kong and Macau affairs.

China should resolutely guard against and contain outside interference in Hong Kong and Macau affairs, reads the new plan.

The new plan emphasizes the enhancement of the national awareness and patriotism of citizens in the two cities, while also stressing support for the better integration of Hong Kong and Macau into the development of the country, developing the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area in a high-quality manner, and improving policies and measures to make it easier for Hong Kong and Macau residents to develop on the mainland.

Distinct from the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), which focused more on economic, cultural and education cooperation in the regions, the 14th Five-Year Plan highlights the overall governance of the central government over the special administrative regions, emphasizing the implementation of law and enforcement mechanisms in safeguarding national security.

Local experts believe the adjustment shows that China is drawing lessons from the implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle over the past five years, and that there is a lot more for Macau to participate in and improve.

Wang Yu, member of Macao Special Administrative Region Basic Law Committee and vice chairman of Macao Legal Workers Association, pointed out that Macau experienced its first year of fiscal deficit since the handover as it was affected by the pandemic. Macau's economy and society are facing huge challenges; thus the region needs to re-emphasize economic diversification. The mainland has launched a series of policies benefiting Hong Kong

XINHUA



President Xi Jinping visits Shenzhen in October

and Macau residents when they work and live on the mainland. Macau should make good use of these policies and actively integrate into the construction of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) to further consolidate and enhance its competitive advantage.

Despite the fact that Macau has attached great importance to the promotion of the Constitution and the Basic Law since the handover, and patriotic education programs have been carried out smoothly in various local schools, Macau still needs to continuously enhance residents' national consciousness and patriotism, according to Wang.

Kong Wa, a senior instructor at the University of Macau, stressed the keywords "communication" and "collaboration." In addition to making full use of various convenience measures and preferential policies provided by the central government, the Macau Special Administrative Region should also strengthen exchange and cooperation with the mainland, especially in the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area and the joint collaboration between Guangdong and Macau. Macau should also play an active role in assisting Hengqin's development.

Meanwhile, the MSAR should stick to its goals in developing "one center" (as a world center for tourism and leisure), "one

platform" (for trade cooperation services platform between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries) and "one base" (acting as a cultural exchange and cooperation base), as quoted from Kong's remarks.

Wang Xin, an associate professor from City University of Macau, believes that the MSAR should incorporate systemic concepts into exploring the new Five-Year Plan for Macau. At the same time, the Macau government should correctly understand the development situation of the country from a comprehensive, systematic, holistic and long-term perspective.

Wang identified that the key at present is to do a good job in developing the cooperation between Guangdong and Macau as it concerns to the development of Hengqin, so as to integrate into the overall national development plan with a more proactive attitude.

Ye Guiping, head of Socioeconomic Development Research Center of City University of Macau, indicated the spread of Covid-19 had fully exposed the defects of Macau's single industrial structure. It once again proves, he says, that moderate economic diversification is the right way for Macau's future economic and social development.

Participating in the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area,

a major national development strategy is precisely the most direct and convenient way to help Macau get out of its predicament. This will also help Macau to overcome bottlenecks in human resources, city capacity, and so on.

This important document gives a total of 60 suggestions, three of which specifically mention the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area. Ye proposed that it is necessary to form an international technological innovation center, creating an innovation platform in GBA, and thus supporting the high-quality development of the GBA.

The Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone is committed to serving as a direct foothold for Macau to participate in the construction of the Greater Bay Area. Ye suggests that the SAR government can build more technology industrial parks in the zone to attract high-end scientific and technological talents. Advanced manufacturing cities such as Dongguan, Zhongshan, and Huizhou could provide research and development that may result in transformation. In addition, Macau can also actively promote the sound integration of the Bay Area's science and technology innovation categories, rules, systems and mechanisms, and formulate short, medium and long-term plans for science and

technology policies, discussing the establishment of the GBA's science and technology development bank and fund.

Lao Chi Ngai, lawmaker and director of the Macau Economic Association (ACEM), pointed out that Macau is at an important intersection of the new development pattern of the country's "dual cycle" strategy, which will benefit economic diversification and hopefully help Macau with economic recovery.

President Xi Jinping first raised the idea in May and later elaborated on the concept that China will rely mainly on "internal circulation" - the domestic cycle of production, distribution, and consumption - for its development, supported by innovation and upgrades in the economy. Xi also said "internal circulation" will be supported by "external circulation."

Fang Quan, a faculty dean at Macau University of Science and Technology and Macau representative for the All-China Women's Federation, pointed out that promoting moderate economic diversification is not a new issue for Macau; it used to be discussed more, but less was done because of a lack of motivation. Following the pandemic, economic pressure has become a motivating factor, urging economic diversification and the reduction of the city's external dependence on tourism.

ZHANG ZHAN

Court sentences lawyer who reported on outbreak to four years

A Chinese court yesterday sentenced a former lawyer who reported on the early stage of the coronavirus outbreak to four years in prison on charges of “picking fights and provoking trouble,” one of her lawyers said.

The Pudong New Area People's Court in the financial hub of Shanghai gave the sentence to Zhang Zhan following accusations she spread false information, gave interviews to foreign media, disrupted public order and “maliciously manipulated” the outbreak.

Lawyer Zhang Keke confirmed the sentence but said it was “inconvenient” to provide details — usually an indication that the court has issued a partial gag order. He said the court did not ask Zhang whether she would appeal, nor did she indicate whether she would.

Zhang, 37, traveled to Wuhan in February and posted on various social media platforms about the outbreak that is believed to have emerged in the central Chinese city late last year.

She was arrested in May amid tough nationwide measures aimed

at curbing the outbreak and heavy censorship to deflect criticism of the government's initial response. Zhang reportedly went on a prolonged hunger strike while in detention, prompting authorities to forcibly feed her, and is said to be in poor health.

China has been accused of covering up the initial outbreak and delaying the release of crucial

information, allowing the virus to spread and contributing to the pandemic that has sickened more than 80 million people worldwide and killed almost 1.8 million. Beijing vigorously denies the accusations, saying it took swift action that bought time for the rest of the world to prepare.

China's ruling Communist

Party tightly controls the media and seeks to block dissemination of information it hasn't approved for release. In the early days of the outbreak, authorities reprimanded several Wuhan doctors for “rumor-mongering” after they alerted friends on social media. The best known of the doctors, Li Wenliang, later succumbed to COVID-19. **AP**



A police officer tries to stop media as a lawyer, center, of Zhang Zhan arrives at a court in Shanghai



LIN QI

Shanghai police say suspect detained in games tycoon's death

POLICE in Shanghai say they have detained a suspect in the case of the death by possible poisoning of the billionaire founder of a Chinese video game company that makes films based on the popular science fiction novel “The Three-Body Problem.”

Lin Qi, 39, died on Christmas Day after being hospitalized, according to his company, Yoozoo Games Co., also known as Youzu Interactive.

A police statement said a 39-year-old coworker, identified only by the surname Xu, was detained. The statement said the victim was hospitalized Dec. 17 and diagnosed with possible poisoning but gave no other details.

An employee who answered the phone yesterday at the Shanghai police press office said there was no additional information to release.

The business magazine Caixin, citing unidentified industry sources, said the suspect is an employee of Yoozoo's film division and was working on “The Three-Body Problem.”

Yoozoo also is known for its game “Game of Thrones: Winter Is Coming,” based on the popular TV series.

Lin ranked No. 870 among China's richest entrepreneurs with a net worth of 6.8 billion yuan (\$1 billion), according to Hurun Report, which follows China's wealthy. **AP**

COVID-19

CHINESE VACCINES ARE POISED TO FILL GAP

WITH rich countries snapping up supplies of COVID-19 vaccines, some parts of the world may have to rely on Chinese-developed shots to try to conquer the outbreak. The question: Will they work?

There is no outward reason to believe they won't, but China has a history of vaccine scandals, and its drugmakers have revealed little about their final human trials and the more than 1 million emergency-use inoculations they say have been carried out inside the country already.

Wealthy nations have reserved about 9 billion of the 12 billion mostly Western-developed shots expected to be produced next year, while COVAX, a global effort to ensure equal access to COVID-19 vaccines, has fallen short of its promised capacity



of 2 billion doses.

For those countries that have not yet secured a vaccine, China may be the only solution.

China has six candidates in the last stage of trials and is one of the few nations that can manufacture vaccine on a large scale. Government officials have announced a

capacity of 1 billion doses next year, with President Xi Jinping vowing China's vaccines will be a boon to the world.

The potential use of its vaccine by millions of people in other countries gives China an opportunity both to repair the damage to its reputation from an outbreak that es-

caped its borders and to show the world it can be a major scientific player.

Yet past scandals have damaged its own citizens' trust in its vaccines, with manufacturing and supply chain problems casting doubt on whether it can really be a savior.

“A question mark remains over how China can ensure the delivery of reliable vaccines,” said Joy Zhang, a professor who studies the ethics of emerging science at the University of Kent in Britain. She cited China's “non-transparency over scientific data and a troubled history with vaccine delivery.”

Bahrain last week became the second country to approve a Chinese COVID-19 vaccine, joining the United Arab Emirates. Morocco plans to use Chinese vaccines in a mass immunization

campaign slated to start this month. Chinese vaccines are also awaiting approval in Turkey, Indonesia and Brazil, while testing continues in more than a dozen countries, including Russia, Egypt and Mexico.

In some countries, Chinese vaccines are viewed with suspicion. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro has repeatedly sown doubt about the effectiveness of Chinese company Sinovac's vaccine candidate without citing any evidence, and said Brazilians won't be used as “guinea pigs.”

Many experts praise China's vaccine capabilities.

“The studies look to be well done,” said Jamie Triccas, head of immunology and infectious diseases at the University of Sydney's medical school, referring to clinical trial results published in scientific journals. “I wouldn't be overly concerned about that.” **MDT/AP**

USA

Trump signs massive measure funding government, Covid relief

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has signed a \$900 billion pandemic relief package, ending days of drama over his refusal to accept the bipartisan deal that will deliver long-sought cash to businesses and individuals and avert a federal government shutdown.

The massive bill includes \$1.4 trillion to fund government agencies through September and contains other end-of-session priorities such as an increase in food stamp benefits.

The signing yesterday [Macau time], at his private club in Florida came amid escalating criticism over his eleventh-hour demands for larger, \$2,000 relief checks and scaled-back spending even though the bill had already passed the House and Senate by wide margins. The bill was passed with what lawmakers had thought was Trump's blessing, and after months of negotiations with his administration.

His foot-dragging resulted in a lapse in unemployment benefits for millions struggling to make ends meet and threatened a government shutdown in the midst of a pandemic. But signing the bill into law prevents another crisis of Trump's own creation and ends a standoff with his own party during the final days of his administration.

It was unclear what, if anything, Trump accomplished with his delay, beyond angering all sides and empowering Democrats to continue their push for higher relief checks, which his own party opposes.

In his statement, Trump repeated his frustrations with the COVID-19 relief bill for providing only \$600 checks to most Americans instead of the \$2,000 that his fellow Republicans already rejected. He also complained about what he considered unnecessary spending by the government at large.

"I will sign the Omnibus and Covid package with a strong message that makes clear to Congress that wasteful items need to be removed," Trump said in the statement.



Donald Trump rides in a motorcade vehicle as he departs Trump International Golf Club, Sunday

ved," Trump said in the statement.

While the president insisted he would send Congress "a redlined version" with items to be removed under the rescission process, those are merely suggestions to Congress. The bill, as signed, would not necessarily be changed.

Democrats, who have the majority in the House, immediately vowed to prevent any cuts. Democrats "will reject any rescissions" submitted by the president, said Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., in a statement.

Lawmakers now have breathing room to continue debating whether the relief checks should be as large as the president has demanded. The Democratic-led House supports the larger checks and is set to vote on the issue Monday, but it's expected to be ignored by the Republican-held Senate where spending faces opposition. For now, the administration can only begin work sending out the \$600 payments.

Republicans and Democrats swiftly welcomed Trump's decision to sign the bill into law.

"The compromise bill is not perfect, but it will do an enormous amount of good for struggling Kentuckians and Americans across the country who need help now," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "I thank the President for signing this relief into law."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi,

D-Calif., called the signing "welcome news for the fourteen million Americans who just lost the lifeline of unemployment benefits on Christmas weekend, and for the millions more struggling to stay afloat during this historic pandemic and economic crisis."

But others slammed Trump's delay in turning the bill into law. In a tweet, Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., accused Trump of having "played Russian roulette with American lives. A familiar and comfortable place for him."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said he would offer Trump's proposal for \$2,000 checks for a vote in Senate — putting Republicans on the spot.

"The House will pass a bill to give Americans \$2,000 checks. Then I will move to pass it in the Senate," Schumer tweeted. "No Democrats will object. Will Senate Republicans?"

Democrats are promising more aid to come once President-elect Joe Biden takes office, but Republicans are signaling a wait-and-see approach.

Congress will push ahead Monday, with the House expected to vote to override Trump's veto of an annual must-pass Defense bill, confronting the president on another big issue in the final days of the session. The Senate is expected to follow on Tuesday.

In the face of growing economic hardship, spreading disease and a looming shut-

down, lawmakers spent yesterday urging Trump to sign the legislation immediately, then have Congress follow up with additional aid. Aside from unemployment benefits and relief payments to families, money for vaccine distribution, businesses and more was on the line. Protections against evictions also hung in the balance.

"What the president is doing right now is unbelievably cruel," said Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt. "So many people are hurting. ... It is really insane and this president has got to finally ... do the right thing for the American people and stop worrying about his ego."

Republican Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania said he understood that Trump "wants to be remembered for advocating for big checks, but the danger is he'll be remembered for chaos and misery and erratic behavior if he allows this to expire."

Toomey added: "So I think the best thing to do, as I said, sign this and then make the case for subsequent legislation."

The same point was echoed by Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a Republican who's criticized Trump's pandemic response and his efforts to undo the election results. "I just gave up guessing what he might do next," he said.

Republican Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois said too much is at stake for Trump to "play this old switcheroo game." AP

this day in history



1975 NEW LAWS TO END BATTLE OF THE SEXES



Radical new legislation introducing a woman's right to equal pay and status in the workplace and in society have come into force in the UK.

The Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts will prevent women being paid less than their male counterparts. The Acts are being introduced to coincide with the end of the International Women's Year.

Sex discrimination by employers, unless they employ five or fewer people, is now illegal as is any form of bias by landlords, finance companies, schools and restaurants.

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has been set up, and under the Act it has a duty to promote equality of the sexes.

Job advertisements will now have to be sexless and it will no longer be possible to offer a position exclusively for males or females.

In every day language there will be many changes for example, such as "firemen" becoming "fire fighters".

The impact of the Acts is far-reaching and affects the media and education.

The EOC has begun issuing guidelines to discourage advertisers showing women in stereotypical roles of domesticity or in submissive work.

But with no means of enforcing this there have been criticisms the organisation is toothless, although many advertisers have taken heed and plan to be more representative.

The Inner London Education Authority is already considering the replacement of "sexist" reading material which uphold stereotypes, for example a woman in the kitchen and a man at work.

These are currently not barred by the Acts but in a booklet sent to 13,000 head teachers, managers and governors of schools the authority recommends "myths and taboos" should be tackled.

Advisory panels of teachers are also considering lobbying authorities to make mathematics compulsory up to the fifth year in a move designed to help girls.

But the most poorly-paid women are unlikely to gain a lot from the new legislation the Low Pay Unit said in a report yesterday.

Despite the gradual introduction of equal pay until its final implementation today women's earnings have risen to only 55.5% of men's earnings from 51.1% in 1972.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Sex Discrimination Act is applicable to men, women, and children of any age and also prohibits discrimination against someone who is or is not married. The Act came as a culture shock to many in a society where some venues still barred women. Some employers attempted to circumvent the Equal Pay Act by changing women's job descriptions or employing women for roles in which there was no male equivalent position. But they faced fierce resistance from the authorities.

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Your thinking can't be constrained by the group — so let yourself roam free! Your terrific mental energy should help you come up with at least four great new ideas to get started on right away.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20

Your philosophical notions are making life a little sweeter today — so make sure that you're spending extra time pondering life's mysteries. You may actually stumble on something practical!

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21

Usually the deeper you delve into preliminary research, the more confident you feel in your eventual decisions. But sometimes, if you look too deeply, you will find out things that just confuse you further.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You need to take care of yourself today — so make sure that you're on top of your own needs. It may feel weird to put yourself first, but sometimes that's just the way it is.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You feel tireless today, so make sure that you're in a position to do something useful (or fun) with all this great energy. You can get almost anything done without too much trouble.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Try to go with the flow today — though you may feel like lashing out at the slightest provocation! It's one of those days when you've got to try to relax, if only to get past the small stuff.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Your communication should be especially expressive today — so much so that you may find it simple to reach out to someone who has shut you out almost entirely. Work your magic!

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Things seem pretty good right now — maybe a little too good! Your innate skepticism is worth deploying, because you are sure to find something suspicious at the edges of this deal.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Your admiration for a friend or family member shines brightly today — and it pays off, too! Hand out compliments freely and you may find that the gratitude comes back to you quickly.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

It's one of those days when the clock seems to move faster than usual. Unless you're under a hard deadline, that can be a good thing, as you may plow through lots of work without realizing it.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You're the Welcome Wagon today — at work, in the neighborhood or among your friends. Make it easy for new folks to integrate into the group and you should score some much-needed karma.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Try to avoid blunt communication today — if you can give yourself time to craft your message, you should be fine. That could be hard in the heat of the moment, so you're better off retreating for now.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	-1	cloudy
Harbin	-23	-15	cloudy
Tianjin	-2	1	overcast
Urumqi	-17	-10	cloudy
Xi'an	-3	7	cloudy
Lhasa	-5	11	clear
Chengdu	8	9	cloudy
Chongqing	8	10	drizzle
Kunming	4	19	clear
Nanjing	4	14	cloudy
Shanghai	8	15	cloudy
Wuhan	4	16	clear
Hangzhou	7	15	clear
Taipei	18	21	drizzle
Guangzhou	16	26	clear
Hong Kong	17	22	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-16	-9	overcast
Frankfurt	0	4	moderate rain
Paris	3	7	drizzle
London	0	5	overcast
New York	-3	6	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Ovid, e.g.; 5- Tops; 10- Greek portico; 14- Bear in the sky; 15- Sports area; 16- Fellow; 17- Back; 18- Comfortably informal; 19- Employ; 20- Coarse; 22- Prayers; 24- British nobleman; 27- Fully aware of; 28- Slaughterhouse, in France; 32- Dead duck; 35- High dudgeon; 36- "The Crucible" setting; 38- Jeopardy; 40- Additional; 42- Craze; 44- Hindu music; 45- Defiles; 47- Quit; 49- Also; 50- Considers; 52- Rulers; 54- Small change; 56- Capri, for one; 57- Bonelike; 60- Room; 64- Jewish month; 65- Not hesitant; 68- Breezy; 69- Actress Singer; 70- Melodies; 71- Dies ____; 72- Actor Stoltz; 73- Stretch; 74- C.S.A. soldiers;

DOWN: 1- Run smoothly; 2- Hydrox rival; 3- Biblical birthright seller; 4- Aim; 5- Exclamation of relief; 6- ____-Magnon man; 7- Exec's note; 8- Dicembre follower; 9- Proverb; 10- Sailing vessel; 11- Lean; 12- Long objects used to row a boat; 13- Pet for King Solomon; 21- Panama and bowler; 23- Discontinue; 25- Travel far and wide; 26- New Hampshire's state flower; 28- Intentions; 29- Young; 30- Lofty nest; 31- Actress Taylor; 33- One of the Muses; 34- Strictness; 37- Heat home; 39- Neighbor of Cambodia; 41- Charged; 43- Snakes; 46- "Peter Pan" pirate; 48- Electric fish; 51- Grunts; 53- Mend; 55- Jam; 57- Scent; 58- Dress often worn by Hindu women; 59- Hamlet, e.g.; 61- Yorkshire river; 62- Kvetch or whinge; 63- Stares at; 64- Draft choice; 66- Singer Shannon; 67- Fashion monogram;

Yesterday's solution

A	S	I	A	S	N	E	E	R	P	A	R	A
S	P	E	C	C	A	P	R	I	A	P	E	X
A	A	R	E	O	B	E	Y	S	R	I	A	L
P	R	E	T	E	N	S	E	S	E	S	A	M
T	I	P	A	R	C	S	O	R	E			
R	O	L	E	S	A	O	N	E	A	S	E	
A	N	A	A	M	A	S	S	I	B	N		
T	I	I	N	I	K	E	S	A	G	A	S	
T	A	N	N	I	N	G	V	A	C	A	T	E
N	A	S	S	A	O	V	E	R	R			
N	A	S	S	A	O	V	E	N	D	E	T	T
E	M	I	T	N	O	I	S	E	A	R	I	L
B	A	T	E	C	L	O	S	E	G	E		
R	H	E	A	E	E	L	E	R	E			

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999

Fire department 28 572 222

PJ (Open line) 993

PJ (Picket) 28 557 775

PSP 28 573 333

Customs 28 559 944

S. J. Hospital 28 313 731

Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333

Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300

IAM 28 387 333

Tourism 28 333 000

Airport 59 888 88

Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283

Water Supply – Report 2822 0088

Telephone – Report 1000

Electricity – Report 28 339 922

Macau Daily Times 28 716 081

FOR SALE

Apartment in the Historical Centre
HK\$3,900,000 840 ft² 2 1 1

FOR RENT

Large 3 Bedroom - Hellene Gardens
\$21,800/mth 2,530 ft² 3 2 2

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

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

PROPERTY LIST

[Macau] One Oasis modern studio 2 1 1
691 ft² \$6,357,000 (ref: n/a)

[Taipa] Chun Fok apartment 2 2 2
834 ft² \$8,998,000 (ref: 20036002)

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

[Taipa] Villa da Taipa 3 2 2
1,450 ft² \$11,000/mth (ref: 20101002)

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ALIBABA PROBE STIRS GLOBAL WORRY ON WHAT'S NEXT FOR CHINESE TECH

COCO LIU

ALIBABA Group Holding Ltd. led a second day of frenetic selling among China's largest tech firms, driven by fears that antitrust scrutiny will spread beyond Jack Ma's internet empire and engulf the country's most powerful corporations.

Alibaba and its three largest rivals - Tencent Holdings Ltd., food delivery giant Meituan and JD.com Inc. - have shed nearly \$200 billion in Hong Kong over the two sessions since Thursday when regulators revealed an investigation into alleged monopolistic practices at Ma's signature company. That marked the formal start of the Communist Party's crack-down on not just Alibaba but also, potentially, the wider and increasingly influential tech sphere.

"It is very hard to predict the outcome of the Chinese government's ongoing investigation into Alibaba and other large consumer internet platforms," Baird analyst Colin Sebastian wrote in a note. He cut his price target on Alibaba's U.S.-listed shares to \$285 from \$325, citing "uncertainty around government oversight and potential for direct regulatory action in the coming year."

The company's American depositary receipts fluctuated yesterday - after a historic 13% slide the previous session - as volume passed the 12-month daily average in first half-hour, reflecting doubt over what's going to happen next. JD.com fell 3.4% and Tencent declined 2.9%. The day's Hong Kong trading was also fierce: Alibaba fell 8% yesterday, shedding \$270 billion of value

since its October peak. Tencent and Meituan both tumbled more than 6%.

KeyBanc Capital Markets wrote that this “significant” pullback had created an attractive buying opportunity, adding that it doesn’t anticipate a meaningfully different competitive landscape for the company.

On Sunday, China's central bank ordered Ma's other online titan - Ant Group Co. - to return to its roots as a payments service and overhaul adjacent businesses from insurance to money management, spurring talk of an eventual breakup.

Once hailed as the standard-bearers of China's economic and technological ascendancy, Alibaba and its compatriots now face increasing pressure from regulators worried about the speed with which they're amassing

clout in sensitive arenas such as media and education and gaining influence over the daily lives of hundreds of millions. That concern crystallized in November, when regulators torpedoed Ant's \$35 billion initial public offering before unveiling draft rules enshrining sweeping powers to clamp down on anti-competitive practices in sectors from e-commerce to social media.

“The Chinese government is putting more pressure or wants to have more control on the tech firms,” Jackson Wong, asset management director at Amber Hill Capital Ltd., said by phone. “There is still very big selling pressure on firms like Alibaba, Tencent or Meituan. These companies have been growing at a pace deemed by Beijing as too fast and have scales that are too big.” **BLOOMBERG**

CORPORATE BITS

Sands China co-assembles 40,000 hygiene kits for Clean the World



Around 200 volunteers from Sands China Ltd. and local community groups recently worked together at The Venetian Macao to build 40,000 hygiene kits for Clean the World, an international social enterprise that provides hygiene supplies essential to populations in need around the globe.

Some 50 volunteers came from three local associations: the Macau Association for the Mentally Handicapped, the Macau Autism Association and Fuhong Society of Macau, according to a statement issued by the gaming operator.

"With the world cur-

rently navigating a new and challenging landscape due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it's more important than ever to continue initiatives like this so that areas in need can be better prepared to deal with times of crisis and difficulty," said Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd.

The kits will benefit global charity Children International, who will deliver them to families in need in the Philippines, providing hygiene supplies that are essential in times of crisis.

Including this year's event, the company and its community partners have assembled a total of 280,000 kits since 2013.

AD

合夥人 PARTNERS:

官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha °
山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °
馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °
趙魯 Zhao Lu °
馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

大律師 ASSOCIATES:

高文軒 Adelino Correia °
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues *
白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
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FOOTBALL

'Big Sam' pulls off another stunner at Anfield in EPL

STEVE DOUGLAS

LIVERPOOL 1, WEST BROM 1

A trip to Anfield has become the most daunting match in English soccer.

Unless, that is, you are Sam Allardyce.

"Big Sam" — as he is widely known — pulled off another masterstroke Sunday, guiding likely relegation contender West Bromwich Albion to a 1-1 draw at Liverpool as the champions dropped points at home for the first time in their Premier League title defense.

It was only Allardyce's second match in charge of West Brom since taking over, for his first managerial job in 18 months, with the team in the relegation zone.

Go back to April 2017 and it was Allardyce who led Crystal Palace to a 2-1 win over Liverpool at Anfield. That remains the last time Liverpool lost a league game

at home.

Indeed, Allardyce is unbeaten in each of his last four league games at Anfield. They have all been with different clubs — Sunderland, Palace, Everton and now West Brom — with a short and ill-fated spell as England coach coming in between.

"We kept a tight ship all the way through," said Allardyce, who is out to prove once again why he has a status as the survival specialist in English soccer.

Liverpool had won its first seven home matches in the league this season, and was on its way to an eighth when Sadio Mane controlled on his chest a pass from Joel Matip, swiveled and struck a fierce low shot into the corner in the 12th minute.

That, though, was one of only two shots on target all match from Jürgen Klopp's side, which was suffocated by Allardyce's deep defensive set-up. It wasn't unusual to see West Brom have 10 men behind the ball, the ne-

xt-to-last visitors finishing the match having had just 22% possession.

And from one of West Brom's rare forays forward, a cross came over from the right and Semi Ajayi climbed above Fabinho to send a header into the net off the post in the 82nd.

"People will say we are lucky," Allardyce said, "but that was good application from the players and they took their opportunity at the other end."

Liverpool is still on course to retain the title, sitting in first place with a three-point lead — over Merseyside neighbor Everton — after playing 15 games.

But Klopp's defensive problems mounted when Matip hobbled off with a left adductor injury in the 60th. He was Liverpool's only fit senior center back, with Virgil van Dijk and Joe Gomez out with long-term injuries.

"It is not a game we will talk about in 20 years," a disgruntled Klopp said.

AP PHOTO



West Bromwich Albion's manager Sam Allardyce

WOLVES 1, TOTTENHAM 1

Wolves striker Raul Jimenez made a welcome return to Molineux for the first time since sustaining a fractured skull. He watched from the stands as teammate Romain Saiss scored an 86th-minute equalizer to secure a 1-1 draw against Tottenham.

Mexico international Jimenez hasn't attended a Wolves game since he was injured in a clash of heads playing for the team in a match at Arsenal on Nov. 29.

Wolves conceded after just 57 seconds, when Tanguy Ndombele smashed a low shot from 20 meters past Wolves goalkeeper Rui Patrício.

Saiss snatched a point for the hosts by heading in a corner from Pedro Neto.

Wolves manager Nuno Espirito Santo has refused to give a timeframe for Jimenez's possible return to action.

By conceding, Tottenham missed a chance to move into third place, instead climbing to fifth and six points behind Liverpool. AP

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OPINION

Our Desk

Renato Marques



MACAU'S ONLY PROBLEM

Reading the daily news and strolling around the city, one might easily be led to think that Macau, despite being a beautiful and safe place to be right now, is full of problems.

From one side, one hears about the housing issue, and from another, the employment situation, the traffic, the high population density, the consumer price hike, the pollution, the lack of tourists, the excess of tourists, the lack of space, the increasing suicide rate, the lack of economic diversification and so on. (We could be here all day.)

In reality, I believe that the large majority of these “problems,” if not all of them, can be reduced to one single issue – the rental market.

Let's just stop for a second in our busy lives and think about what could happen or would happen if the local government – which is always so concerned with the wellbeing of all citizens – decided to control the rental market and lower rental fees significantly. And I mean significantly – something like 50% down.

How many SMEs that have had the rope of high rents tied around their necks for years could be “saved”? And in saying so, how many associated workers and companies of all sizes and sectors could keep their jobs and salaries, and with them, how many of those companies could also keep their workforce?

How many issues have we covered already?

Moreover, could a retail establishment make the same profit (or more) by selling cheaper goods and services? What proportion of their total monthly expenses does rent account for? How about salaries? Could people in Macau earn less and still improve their quality of life?

I believe so, and I say this not as a fantasy, but something that is possible to achieve as I have already experienced it.

No, I am not talking about in a different place or region of the planet; I experienced this here in Macau, not so long ago. This caused me to think.

With this in mind, I quickly picked up a calculator and started to input a few figures from when I arrived in Macau, roughly 14 years ago, and compared them to the current situation.

I quickly realized that, in general, most spending on living items, daily necessities, and amenities has increased by about 20% over the past 14 years.

Then I went to check the income statistics and realized that it had also grown, but not at such a high rate, with the current difference in income staying at about 16%.

What, then, made the big difference? What is the factor that accounts for the lower quality of life that I feel I am experiencing? You guessed right – the housing rental fees. Comparing to the same period, my rental expenses have hiked 216%.

Don't get me wrong, I'm no economics expert, but I'm guessing that I have found the root of the pressing problem.

We all understand why this happened and when. The point of this story is not to form a judgment on that, but instead to realize that the method that has been followed in the past few years to try to tackle this issue, with the world-famous cash handouts and by pressuring employers to raise salaries more than what would be logical elsewhere, are exhausted policies without any room for progression.

That is why I agree and disagree with the Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, when he says that locals must be willing to accept more “modest” jobs. I'm sure many would, if they were able to afford the cost of living with them. But do not fear, I have the solution – bring rents down to the same “modest” level. Problem solved!

UK WARNS OF ‘BUMPY’ POST-BREXIT TRANSITION DESPITE DEAL

First came the Brexit trade deal. Now comes the red tape and the institutional nitty gritty.

Four days after sealing a free trade agreement with the European Union, the British government warned businesses to get ready for disruptions and “bumpy moments” when the new rules take effect on Thursday night.

Businesses were scrambling yesterday to digest the details and implications of the 1,240-page deal sealed by the EU and the U.K. on Christmas Eve.

EU ambassadors, meanwhile, gave their unanimous approval yesterday to the Brexit trade deal with the U.K. Germany, which holds the EU presidency, said the decision came during a meeting to assess the Christmas Eve agreement.

“Green light,” said Germany's spokesman Sebastian Fischer.

The approval had been expected ever since all EU leaders warmly welcomed it. It still needs approval from the EU's legislature, which is expected to come in February. The U.K.'s House of Commons is expected to approve it tomorrow.

BOX OFFICE

‘WONDER WOMAN 1984’ DEBUTS WITH PANDEMIC-BEST \$16.7M

AP PHOTO



Gal Gadot in a scene from “Wonder Woman 1984”

DESPITE premiering simultaneously by streaming service, “Wonder Woman 1984” managed the best box office debut of the pandemic, opening with \$16.7 million over the Christmas weekend, according to studio estimates yesterday [Macau time].

That's only a faint glimmer of typical business during the holiday season, when cinemas are usually packed and box-office receipts are among the best of the year. Last year, “Star Wars: Rise of Skywalker” exceeded \$32 million on Christmas Day alone. According to data firm Comscore, 35% of North American theaters are currently open.

But Warner Bros. nevertheless celebrated the performance of “Wonder Woman 1984,” which landed in 2,150 theaters and bettered the approximately \$10 million launch of Warner Bros.' “Tenet” in North America. (Universal Pictures' “The Croods: A New Age” opened similarly in late November.) “Wonder Woman 1984” grossed an additional \$19.4 million in international markets where it began playing a week earlier. The Patty Jenkins-directed sequel, starring Gal Gadot, has made \$85 million globally to date.

“This is a very weak theatrical opening,” said David Gross, who runs the

movie consultancy FranchiseRe. “With more than half of North American theaters closed and the pandemic surging, the majority of moviegoers and fans have little choice but to watch the film on television. Early foreign openings have been weak as well.”

Warner Bros. has come under criticism throughout Hollywood on its plans to divert “Wonder Woman 1984” and all of its 2021 titles to HBO Max through a hybrid release plan intended to boost subscribers. “Tenet” director Christopher Nolan called the strategy “a mess.” Earlier this month, AT&T chief executive John Stankey said the service has 12.6 million activated users, up from 8.6 million on Sept. 30.

In 2017, “Wonder Woman” opened with more than \$100 million in ticket sales from 4,100 theaters, setting a record for biggest opening by a female filmmaker. It ultimately grossed \$822 million worldwide. The sequel, made for about \$200 million, had been expected to approach \$1 billion in box office before the pandemic but is on course to make about \$180 million, according to Gross's projections.

But WarnerMedia is counting on “Wonder Woman 1984” to matter more to HBO Max, which wobbled

in its initial rollout. Reports circulated over the weekend of some users having technical difficulties streaming “Wonder Woman 1984,” particularly when playing the film through Roku. HBO Max went live on Roku in mid-December after months of negotiations.

Warner Bros. nevertheless seized on the returns for “Wonder Woman 1984” as the best as could be expected, given the circumstances. The studio announced that it would fast-track a third “Wonder Woman” film, with Jenkins and Gadot returning.

“Wonder Woman 1984 broke records and exceeded our expectations across all of our key viewing and subscriber metrics in its first 24 hours on the service, and the interest and momentum we're seeing indicates this will likely continue well beyond the weekend,” said Andy Forssell, executive vice president and general manager for WarnerMedia's direct-to-consumer operations. “During these very difficult times, it was nice to give families the option of enjoying this uplifting film at home, where theater viewing wasn't an option.”

“Wonder Woman 1984” wasn't the only big movie that detoured into homes over Christmas. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Russia A top associate of opposition leader Alexei Navalny was released from detention and said she was charged with trespassing after ringing the doorbell of an alleged security operative who inadvertently revealed details of Navalny's supposed poisoning with a Soviet-era nerve agent. Lyubov Sobol, a key figure in Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, was detained for 48 hours on Friday after a day of interrogation, following Sobol's attempt to reach the alleged operative in his Moscow apartment.

AP PHOTO



Bosnia Hundreds of migrants were stranded Saturday in a squalid, burnt-out tent camp in Bosnia as heavy snow fell in the country and winter temperatures suddenly dropped. A fire earlier this week destroyed much of the camp near the town of Bihac that already was harshly criticized by international officials and aid groups as being inadequate for housing refugees and migrants.

Vatican Pope Francis has formally stripped the Vatican secretariat of state of its financial assets and real estate holdings following its bungled management of hundreds of millions of euros in donations and investments that are now the subject of a corruption investigation. Francis signed a new law over the weekend ordering the secretariat of state to complete the transfer of all its holdings to another Vatican office by Feb. 4.

AP PHOTO



US A recreational vehicle parked in the deserted streets of downtown Nashville exploded early Christmas morning, causing widespread communications outages that took down police emergency systems and grounded holiday travel at the city's airport. Police encountered the RV blaring a recorded warning that a bomb would detonate in 15 minutes. Police evacuated nearby buildings and called in the bomb squad. The RV exploded shortly afterward.