

13

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GRAFT BUSTER’S PROBE ON 74 IDLE LAND PARCELS FINDS NO WRONGDOING ON GOV’T RECLAMATION OF EXPIRED CONCESSIONS

P3

CHINA SENTENCES 10 HONG KONG FUGITIVES TO PRISON TERMS; RETURNS 2 TO HKSAR

P7

CONSTRUCTION WORKS ON FOURTH MACAU-TAIPA BRIDGE SUSPENDED DUE TO SEVERE ACCIDENT, THE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE REPORTED

P4



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has reviewed the agenda for an important ruling party congress set for early next month, state media reported, dispelling outside speculation the North might delay the meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Workers’ Party Congress is the first in five years. It is North Korea’s biggest political conference and is mainly intended to set new political and economic priorities, reshuffle top officials and review past projects.



Indonesia yesterday banned a militant Muslim group with a long record of vandalizing nightspots, hurling stones at Western embassies and attacking religious rivals. The security affairs minister, Mohammad Mahfud, told reporters that the Islamic Defenders Front, known by its Indonesian acronym FPI, had continued to carry out activities that violate order and security even though it was disbanded last year as a mass organization.



Russian riot police stormed into a monastery Tuesday to detain a rebel monk who has castigated the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church leadership and denied the existence of the coronavirus. In the overnight showdown, police clashed with the priest’s supporters at the Sredneuralsk monastery outside Yekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains. The monk, Father Sergiy, was quickly flown to Moscow, where a court approved his arrest.

More on backpage

THE MISSING LINK

Taiwan will suspend transit of airline passengers through its airports from tomorrow cutting-off the link between Macau and the world beyond China

P2



MORE ARRIVALS EXPECTED FROM MAINLAND CHINA DURING NEW YEAR, CNY HOLIDAY

P2

REALTOR FORECASTS 50% GROWTH IN RESIDENTIAL SALES NEXT YEAR

P3

MORE ARRIVALS EXPECTED FROM MAINLAND CHINA DURING NEW YEAR, CNY HOLIDAY

STAFF REPORTER

MACAU is likely to welcome a further surge in arrivals into the city from mainland China during the New Year holiday, according to the latest travel data published by China's online travel agency (OTA) Trip.com.

The operator revealed that Macau is now a more sought-after city destination among holidaymakers from the mainland during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The trend is reflected in Macau's hotel booking number made on Trip.com, which bounced by 451% during New Year holiday from December 31 to January 3, month-over-month. Meanwhile, the booking volumes for air tickets to Macau also surged 229% during the same period.

The OTA forecasts that travelers from Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, Nanjing and Xiamen will contribute the greatest share of tourists to Macau during the New Year holiday.

Due to the travel restrictions still imposed in most countries, mainland travelers have channeled their travel focus from overseas to domestic destinations. The



LYNZY VALLES

OTA registered a 320% uptick in the popularity index of in-depth tours to the nation's destinations.

A study published earlier by McKinsey & Company, an America-based management and consulting company, also echoes Trip.com's statistics. It indicated that the demand for domestic travel among China's travelers is "approaching pre-pandemic levels," with its hotel occupancy rate and the number of domestic flight passengers already at 90% of 2019 levels by August.

The recent Christmas period was a testament to the city's ongoing tourism recovery. Macau registered an average daily visitor arrivals of 24,503 from December 23 to 27, up 20.2% and 30.5% from 20,385 and 18,774 in December 1 to 22 and October, respectively. There were 22,826 mainland visitors per day, on average, in the Christmas period.

On December 25, Macau saw 27,755 visitors, the second highest daily visitor number, just after the 28,000 visitor arrivals recorded on the first day of the

Macau Grand Prix on November 20.

The occupancy rate of local hotels reached 69.4% between December 23 and 27, up 22.5% from December 1 to 22.

Some travel experts also expect tourist arrivals to gain further momentum in the Lunar New Year holiday in February, provided that Covid-19 is kept under check in China. New Covid-19 cases were recently reported in Beijing, Inner Mongolia, and Liaoning provinces, among others.

Taiwan's stricter travel restrictions portend worsened Macau's connectivity

STAFF REPORTER

TAIWAN'S Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) announced yesterday that the destination will ban all foreign arrivals, with just a few exceptions, effective from January 1, 2021.

CECC also stated that Taiwan will suspend all transit flights through its airports as well. The decisions were made yesterday following the discovery of the first imported case of mutated coronavirus strain in Taiwan on the

same day.

The new Covid-19 mutation hailing from the U.K. is said to be 70% more contagious than the original strain. The latest changes to Taiwan's travel restriction bode a bad omen for Macau. The city will soon see a further reduced connectivity with other parts of the world, in particular Europe, as Taiwan had served as an integral transiting hub for long-haul flights between Macau and other countries further away.

A few exceptions apply

to resident visa holders, diplomats, businesspeople with special entry permits, spouses and children of Taiwan's citizens, persons approved under humanitarian considerations, and others with special entry permits.

The same rules apply to arrivals from Hong Kong, Macau and China. In addition, all arrivals to Taiwan are required to present a negative Covid-19 test report and arrange a proof of a quarantine facility before their departures from January 15 next year.



BIDDING 2020 ADIEU

LYNZY VALLES

THE year 2020 will be sent off a bit differently without the usual fireworks that the city hosts due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, and with the government discouraging mass gathering, late night outs in the streets have been cancelled. This restriction means that public will have to join the celebrations and countdown from home – or at the city's integrated resorts.

The good news, however, is that private celebrations will still occur, while taking strong epidemic measures set by the government. In previous years, over 30,000 people gathered at different sites along the Macau Peninsula and Taipa on New Year's Eve for countdowns.

Let's have a look at what's on.

AU REVOIR 2020 AT SOFTEL MACAU

New Year's Eve DJ Party at Sofitel Macau At Ponte 16 will be held from 8 p.m. tonight to 2 a.m., making it a great time to welcome the New Year with music, wine and delicacies.

COUNTDOWN WITH A VIEW AT VIDA RICA BAR

One of the bars with the city's best view, a live DJ and band will entertain their guests with matching food offerings including a seafood buffet with fresh Boston lobsters, caviar, oysters, sea urchin, foie gras, Wellington Wagyu beef, and much more.

DANCE INTO 2021 AT ARTYZEN GRAND LAPA

Welcome the new year in style! Start the year dancing on all-time music classics from the 80s, 90s & 2000s from 10:30 p.m. until late.

FANCY COUNTDOWN AT THE HOUSE OF ASTOR AT THE ST. REGIS BAR

Head over to the newly renovated and opened bar if you want to celebrate and welcome 2021 in sheer luxury. Classic jazz music with live entertainment will keep the guests company.

ROCK N ROLL AT THE ROADHOUSE MACAU

Had enough of 2020? Why not join The Roadhouse Macau in telling 2020 to get stuffed in style! There will be an outdoor stage, giant screen for the countdown from 8 p.m. until the wee hours of 2021.

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

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

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C,

MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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PROPERTY

Centaline anticipates 50% growth in residential sales next year

JULIE ZHU

CENTALINE Property (Macau) has anticipated that the housing market in Macau in 2021 will perform far better than this year, expecting residential sales to grow by 50%.

The real estate agency reviews the performance of Macau and Hengqin's real estate market at the end of every quarter in addition to forecasting the situation for the next quarter.

Yesterday, the company held another quarterly press conference reviewing Macau's housing market's performance this year, and forecasting the situation for 2021.

During the press conference, John Ng, senior regional manager at Centaline Property (Macau), predicted that, in 2021, there will be an "explosive rebound" in terms of buyer demands for houses in the Macau SAR.

"Stepping into the new year, Macau's housing market will further recover. The number of transactions may be big," Ng predicted.

"[Many] demands have been accumulated in 2020, together with the conclusion of the US election and the Covid-19 vaccines' adoption, with the many external uncertain factors being resolved, and without any other obstacles, we expect that the housing market



GLEB MISHIN

will rebound rapidly. There is also a great chance that the number of transactions may increase by over 50%, reaching approximately 10,000," said Ng.

The estimation of Centaline is based on this year's market performance. According to Macau government statistics, in October and November, Macau recorded 551 and 574 house transactions, respectively. The real estate agency estimated approximately 500 transactions in December, 1,600 transactions in the entire fourth quarter and 3,400 transactions in the second half of this year.

If the estimation is accurate, then the number of transactions

in the second half will be 10% more compared to those of the first half.

In addition, the statistics from the Monetary Authority of Macao show that resident deposits in October reached 667 billion patacas. Housing prices in the fourth quarter grew by 8%, according to Centaline, and the housing price in the last quarter of 2020 is approximately the same when compared year-on-year.

Earlier this year, the Macau government released the Draft of Urban Master Plan for Macau SAR (2020-2040), dividing the city into 18 areas.

Among the total 18 areas, Cen-

taline is most optimistic for Eastern Area-1 regarding property development.

Eastern Area-1 is connected to the western side of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge's artificial island and consists of a large part of Areia Preta area. The government proposes to develop Eastern Area-1 into the "door" to Macau.

The real estate agency voiced that once the government transforms this area into a commercial area, builds more walking systems, adds more green land and open space for the public, and improves living environment, housing prices at Eastern Area-1 might consequently grow.

17 MACAU LAWYERS ALLOWED TO PRACTICE IN GUANGDONG

As of today, mainland China has allowed 17 lawyers from Macau to practice in Guangdong province, according to a report by Macao Daily News. Recently, the Department of Justice of Guangdong province revealed that there are 14 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau joint lawyers' agencies operating in the province. Around 160 Hong Kong lawyers are also certified to operate in Guangdong. The department claims to fully execute the legislative authority the province has and to take advantage of the legislative power of the two SARs in order to enhance the three regions' legal cooperation.

ENERGY OFFICE MERGES WITH DSPA

The Energy Sector Development Office (GDSE) will merge with the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) with effect from tomorrow. GDSE's Director Hoi Chi Leong will become Deputy Director at the DSPA. The DSPA's current Deputy Director, Vong Man Hung, will step down from the position. After the merge, DSPA will have a new department - the department of energy development and management, which will be responsible for energy policies and products.

CCAC probe finds no wrongdoing on gov't reclamation of expired land concessions

RENATO MARQUES

THE Commission Against Corruption's (CCAC) investigation report on the reclamation of 74 idle land parcels with expired concessions by the government resulted in the acknowledgment that there was no wrongdoing on the government side on the application of the Land Law.

According to the investigation ordered over two years ago by the previous government on the suspicions of wrong application of the law on the land parcels reclamation, the procedure of reclaiming the 74 land plots did not involve any abuse or illegality, the



corruption watchdog stated in its final report published yesterday.

CCAC's report states that suspicions were "unfounded and cannot be used as

justification to promote an amendment to the Land Law."

The report goes a little further and states that the rules in place did not suffer a significant change when the amendment of the land law was made, noting that what motivated the reclamation of the land parcels from 2015 was mostly a change of attitude by the government authorities to abide the law more strictly so as to "put the order in the chaos."

In the investigation report, the bureau also points the finger at the previous DSSOPT management and operations for not enforcing the existing regulations that allowed the reclamation of idle land plots.

"[DSSOPT] did not implement in due time, the

existing legal regime did not fulfill its responsibilities to take the initiative to inspect and monitor the [concessionaires] compliance with the provisional land concession contracts, nor did follow up on time on situations in which the land parcels could meet conditions to be recovered by the Administration," the CCAC states.

In response to the CCAC report, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, issued a statement noting the report's conclusions and recommendations saying that the Secretariat already gave instructions to the services to "reflect on the issues highlighted, as well as to make every effort to improve the land management mechanism to allow the most appropriate and effective use of the land resources, under the law provisions."

CRIME

LOCAL MAN ASSAULTED AND ROBBED IN FAKE CURRENCY EXCHANGE SCHEME

RENATO MARQUES

A local resident was assaulted with pepper spray and tied up in a hotel room where he was threatened with a knife as he attempted to fulfill a currency exchange deal offered earlier by the aggressor, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) informed yesterday during the regular joint press conference of the police forces.

The incident occurred on December 21 around 5 p.m. in a hotel located at NAPE district. According to the report, the victim met the suspect through the mobile communication application WeChat and the suspect had offered to exchange currency in Hong Kong Dollar to Chinese yuan at a rate of RMB86 for each HKD100.

The victim agreed with the conditions of the deal and went to the suspect's hotel room, at the arranged time, to perform the exchange.

Upon opening the door, the suspect sprayed pepper spray on the victim's face and pulled him into the room. He grabbed the bag which had HKD118,200 in cash.

After that, he placed a knife to the victim's neck so that the victim could not resist and tied him using plastic zip ties and a rope.

While tied up inside the room, the victim attempted to negotia-



te with the attacker, saying that he had money and they could go to the casino located on the third

floor of the same hotel and gamble without the need to hurt anyone.

The suspect agreed on the deal

and brought the victim down to the gaming floor. Being near the casino security guards, the man

called for help.

The suspect tried to flee but the casino security detained him and called the PSP, which took him for questioning.

The suspect, a 40-year-old tourist from the mainland holding a visa valid until December 24, confessed to the crimes.

In the bag possessed by the suspect, the officers found the cash belonging to the victim as well as two cans of pepper spray, one knife, a bundle of rope, five plastic zip ties prepared to be used as handcuffs, a pair of gloves and a roll of scotch tape. He also had 100 fake HKD100 banknotes in his possession.

He informed the police that he had acquired all the equipment through an online store.

He has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office to be charged for robbery and possession of forbidden weapons and explosive substances, according to Articles 204 and 262 of the Macau Penal Code.

WOMAN ACCUSES MAN OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SUSPECT CLAIMS MEMORY LOSS

A 27-year-old local woman is accusing a 35-year-old man who works as a croupier in a local casino of sexually harassing her while she was walking on the street, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) reported yesterday.

In the report, the woman said that on December 28 at around 2 a.m., while she was walking on the street near the intersection between the Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira and Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga, the man crossed the sidewalk with her and patted her

private parts. She also mentioned that the man had a strong odor of alcohol.

During the investigation, the PSP reviewed the CCTV footage of the area and was able to identify the suspect and gather evidence of him touching the woman.

On the same day, around 4:30 p.m. the PSP found the suspect at his friends' house. At the same location, they also found the clothes which he wore when he touched the woman.

The suspect told the police that on the eve-

ning of December 27, he had been eating and drinking with his friends and he had drunk a lot of alcohol, claiming to not being able to recall the incident with the woman on the street.

The police spokesperson said that the force believes that there is strong evidence of the crime reported and has forwarded the case to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigation regarding the sexual harassment charge. **RM**

CONSTRUCTION PROCESS OF FOURTH MACAU-TAIPA BRIDGE SUSPENDED

JULIE ZHU

THE Infrastructure Development Office (GDI) has issued a work suspension order towards the construction company responsible for building the fourth Macau-Taipa Bridge.

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) said in a statement yesterday that it has ordered the contractor to immediately suspend the use of cranes, and requires the complete review and correction of the work processes, equipment and safety installations of that shipyard.

Earlier this week, at the project's construction site in Pac On, Taipa, an accident involving a crane resulted in a 38-year-old foreign worker being trapped and sustaining injuries.

The worker was operating a lorry-mounted crane

when the crane vehicle suddenly flipped. The worker was trapped inside the operator's room for approximately 30 minutes.

The Fire Services Bureau dispatched six ambulances and 25 firefighters to rescue the man.

On the same day, December 29, GDI requested the contractor to cooperate with the government's investigation and submit a report.

If it is confirmed that the contractor was negligent or provided insufficient safety facilities which led to the accident, the government will pursue legal responsibilities from the contractor.

According to DSAL's statement, the preliminary investigation revealed that the crane involved in the accident was carrying out lifting work. During this

period, the soil where the crane was located suddenly collapsed and caused the crane to overturn, resulting in this accident.

According to statistics of the DSAL, between January and September this year, 3,071 workers have sustained injuries while on-duty, nine of whom were killed in work-related accidents, and seven of whom suffered long-term injuries which prevent them from working.

Earlier this month, a construction worker was killed in an accident in which he was buried by falling earth at a construction site near the Light Rapid Transit Ocean Station.

In March, three workers were killed and four others were injured in an industrial accident at the Galaxy Macau Phase 3 construction site.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN SEPT-NOV DECREASES SLIGHTLY TO 4%

STAFF REPORTER

THE unemployment rate of Macau's residents was 4.0% from September to November, down by 0.1 percentage points compared to the previous three-month period from August to October, according to the latest statistics gauged by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

Meanwhile, the general unemployment rate remained at 2.9% in the latest surveyed period, the same as the previous period.

The number of unemployed residents declined by 100 from the previous period to 11,600. Most of them were hired previously by the gaming and junket sectors and the construction industry.

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) indicated in

yesterday's announcement that its employment support measures — launched to bolster the local job market upended by the Covid-19 pandemic — have yielded positive outcomes. From January until now, the bureau has helped 3,700 locals land jobs.

Ever since September, the DSAL hosted 15 vocational matchmaking events for professions across industries, including security, property management, F&B, retail. Around 350 people were hired in these events.

"DSAL will adjust the field of industries signing up for the matchmaking events, based on the employment needs of local residents," the bureau stated in the document.

The first round of subsidized training programs, organized by the DSAL and

provided by three local institutions to offer tutelage to enhance students' vocational skills, has also been completed. As of the end of December, 1,103 graduates were employed and received subsidies.

The next round of the program will be open for application from January 4 next year.

In terms of job support targeting youths, a dedicated scheme had created internship opportunities for 720 local graduates. Around 70% of these graduates were offered positions by enterprises.

The DSAL stressed it would prioritize jobs for Macau residents and adjust the number of foreign workers in the city. As of end November, Macau had 180,962 non-resident workers, down 7.7% year-on-year.

GEG's Loving & Inclusive Arts Series Diversified Approach to Bring Communities Together and Enrich the City's Cultural Ambience



Service users of Seng Kong Se, AFEDMM and GEG volunteers got together for the Doraemon: Nobita's New Dinosaur movie screening.

Throughout the years, Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) has employed a diversified approach for engaging in community service to care for different segments of community, cooperating with a number of social organizations, hosting different cultural and arts activities, and making good use of its own resources and property facilities. This December, GEG again introduced a series of outreach initiatives to promote social inclusiveness, including hosting of the Doraemon: Nobita's New Dinosaur movie screening and "Jurassic x The Dinosaur Park" visit as well as sponsoring venues for the Hot Blood Youth Music Festival 2020 and a handkerchief printing workshop corresponding to the theme of the joint exhibition of Masking Tape & Handkerchief Design, extending a helping hand and sending warmth to those in need in society.

YOUTH POWER FUELS LOCAL MUSIC SCENE



The Music Festival brought together local youth in celebrating Macau's return to the Motherland.

Broadway Macau has always been a social hub in our community, and this December, Broadway Food Street and Broadway Theatre have again been turned into the melting pot of music, art and culture. Hosted by the Macao Hot Blooded Performing Arts Association, the Hot Blood Youth Music Festival 2020 brought together local musicians, performing arts groups, and

musicians from mainland China for a holiday musical spectacular. On December 19, the Life Band of the Fuhong Society joined other local bands to perform at Broadway Macau. "Life Band is an inclusive band composed of disabled, autistic and able-bodied individ-



The Music Festival brought together local youth in celebrating Macau's return to the Motherland.

uals. They really treasure this opportunity to perform in front of a crowd. For people with disabilities, they need more time to prepare for a performance; those with autism have a special memory, but they need to learn how to engage in the performance of a musical ensemble. They always hope to have an interactive music experience with other bands and learn from them," said Representative of Life Band and the Hostel Manager of Fuhong Society of Macau Louis Ip Kok Kit. "The band's name 'life' means to share the belief that music has no boundaries."



Games, food and drinks sales and creative pieces were offered at the Hot Blood Youth Music Festival.

At the music festival, audience also enjoyed a relaxing and joyful evening of food and games at Broadway Food Street. "Thanks to GEG's full support, artists are provided the venue and resources they need to perform on

stage and we are able to make this one-stop event integrating music, cultural creation, and food happen. It is second to none in Macau," said Lo Ka Seng, Director of Macau Hot Blooded Performing Arts Association.

ENHANCING THE LINKS BETWEEN ART AND EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES

Hosted by the Macau Illustrators Association, a joint exhibition of Masking Tape & Handkerchief Design was held at the M floor of Broadway Macau from December 18 to 31, displaying 150 illustrations created by illustrators from Macau, Mainland China and Japan in the theme of "love". On the sideline of the exhibition, GEG invited



By adapting artworks on paper tapes and handkerchiefs, artists tried to engage art in daily life in the exhibition.

the Association to present a handkerchief printing workshop to the service users of Fuhong Society of Macau where they used stamps created through the designs from the local illustrator Yolanda Kog to make combination with elements of streets of Macau on blank handkerchiefs. Yolanda said, "I am glad to work with 17 pairs of parents and children with learning disabilities to create unique works through this simplest form of print art. The rubber stamp design is all about Rua da Praia do Manduco, a historic, lively street on the Macau Peninsula with shops, restaurants and people that represent the local characteristics. Through these familiar patterns, I hope they can appreciate the unique beauty of Macau, thus loving more their home."

PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR A HAPPY HOLIDAY



AFEDMM's service users enjoyed the Doraemon: Nobita's New Dinosaur movie screening with their families.

In early December, GEG invited service users at Seng Kong Se, Association of Parents of the People with Intellectual Disabilities of Macau (AFEDMM) for the Doraemon: Nobita's New Dinosaur movie screening with their families at UA Galaxy Cinemas at Galaxy Macau. "This event provides members with intellectual disabilities and their parents a chance to celebrate Christmas at the movie. By giving them opportunities to connect with the outside world, I believe it would enhance their independent living capabilities," said Lo Kwok Chung, Center Head of Seng Kong Se, AFEDMM.



GEG volunteer team distributed holiday gifts to service users at Seng Kong Se, AFEDMM.

"Jurassic x The Dinosaur Park" landed on Broadway Macau on December 18. GEG invited service users from the Macau Association for the Mentally Handicapped, Richmond Fellowship of Macau, Love and Joy for Macau Children Association, and Macau Deaf Association for a one-of-a-kind experience on the first day of its opening and in late December. GEG volunteer teams accompanied the associations' service users to explore the park, taking them back to the era of dinosaurs to experience the overwhelming sensation at the heyday of dinosaurs. Kylie Leung, a parent from Love and Joy for Macau Children Association said, "This dinosaur exhibition allows children to get close to dinosaurs, creating a learning opportunity for them through the journey."



Parents and their child rode on a dinosaur skull for a surprising holiday experience.

GOV'T HOPES NO TEMPORARY EXTENSION NEEDED FOR CTM CONCESSION

With the concession for local telecom service provider CTM expiring end of next year, Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, expressed his intention to not temporarily extend the concession like the government did to the bus operators. Previously, the government has disclosed that the main challenge in handling CTM's concession is the accounting of quasi-public assets and inventory. A cross-departmental cluster has been set up to administer the matter.

ROADWORK ON VENCESLAU DE MORAIS TO COMMENCE WITH DETOURS

Drainage enhancement work at Avenida de Venceslau de Moraes will commence January 4. The estimated delivery period is 160 working days. During the work period, detours may be implemented and drivers are reminded to stay alert to changed routes. Meanwhile, the work will be done to improve the pipe and cable systems, the road and sidewalk conditions, as well as installing fences. In order to shorten the delivery period, work has been allowed until 10 p.m. on weekdays and continue on holidays.

IPIM LANDED 220 FOREIGN INVESTMENT PROJECTS BETWEEN JAN-NOV

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) handled 220 foreign investment projects in the first 11 months of 2020 via its "Investor's One Stop Service." It expedited the establishment of large-scale pharmaceutical and high-tech companies from China, and license application for three mask factories and three disinfection supplies factories. As of end-November, the service completed 2,500 investment plans, assisting over 3,000 foreign companies to settle in Macau since its institution in 2000.

GROUP PETITIONS AGAINST REAPPOINTMENT OF MUNICIPAL ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

ANTHONY LAM

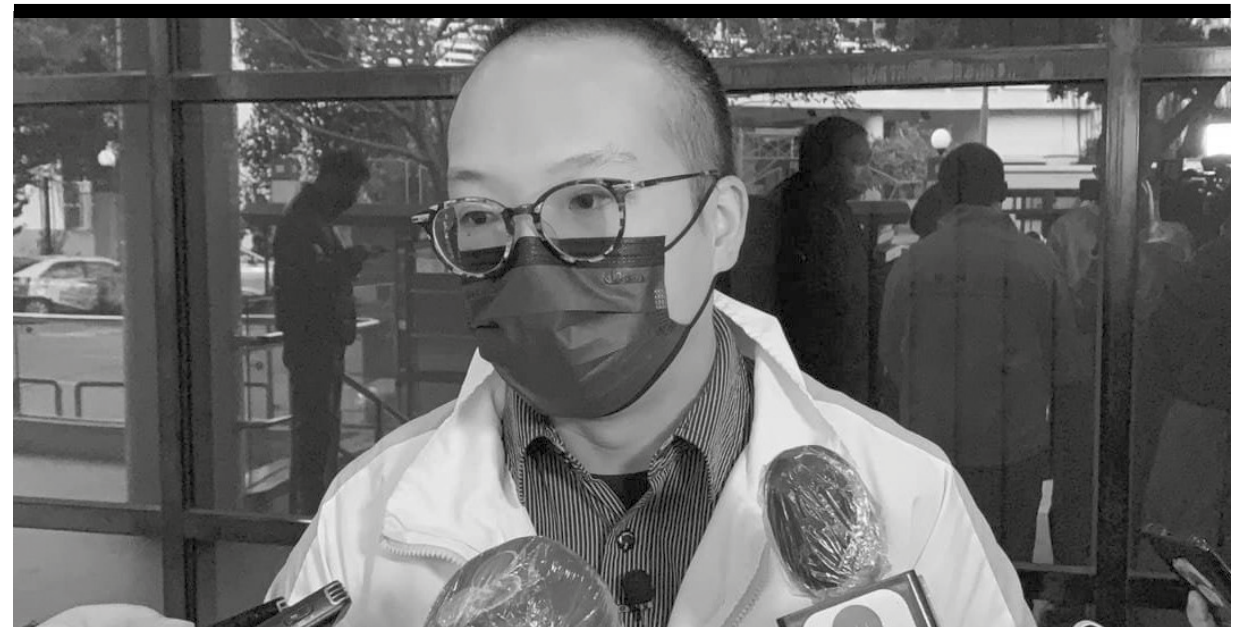
THE government has broken the recommendation mechanism for a municipal advisory board, Rocky Chan, Deputy Director-General of the New Macau Association (ANM), told a press conference yesterday.

In addition, Chan also criticized the government for neglecting the years-long public requests on elected municipal affairs representatives.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has recently reappointed the same group of 25 people as members of the Consultative Committee on Municipal Affairs. They were appointed for the first time in 2018 by the then government head, Chui Sai On.

The committee debuted back then as an advisory body for the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), which was restructured and renamed from its predecessor, the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau, in 2019.

Accusing the committee for not satisfactorily delivering its work, Chan cited several examples, namely the artificial circumnavigation promenade at Sai Van Lake, tedious requirements for clearing up pet excretions, the omission of the Trap-Neuter-Release mechanism, the infringement of the Mid-Autumn festive light decoration, preservation of a distinguished industrial site, as well as the installation of lighting on the Taipa Grande. The last project raised worries that it will endanger



Rocky Chan, Deputy Director-General of the New Macau Association

the livelihood of glowworms.

During the legislative discussions and debate on the structure of the IAM, the ANM and lawmaker Sulu Sou have voiced their objection on a fully appointed committee that, in their words, does not represent and is not held responsible to the general public. They called for members to be elected.

At the end of the day, a mechanism has been added to allow recommendations and self-recommendations. However, the recommendation procedure has concluded with mainly individuals from traditional community associations, which normally are considered pro-establishment.

Before the reappointment of the committee members, there has been no recommendation or self-

-recommendation procedure.

Chan described the lack of recommendation process as "the government is not even willing to stage a soap opera," continuously putting the municipal democracy of the city behind.

Moreover, the meeting sessions of the committee have been conducted in a closed-door manner, obstructing the rights of the public to be fully informed of the discussions, hindering transparency of the meetings that directly cause impact on the livelihood of the general public.

To support the view, Chan cited the proposed construction of a crematorium in Taipa back in 2018, which incited objections from the public. Chan explained that the decision-making process has not

involved the general public.

Among the 25 reappointed members, there is Chan Pou Sam, who has previously called for the government to rename local street names with Portuguese connotations or colors so as to decolonize the city. Chan is a vice president of the Jiangmen Communal Society.

In addition, there are Chan Ka Leong and Leong Hong Sai from the Neighborhood Association, Chio Lan Ieng from the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, Cristina Ho from The Women's General Association of Macau, Lei Leong Wong from the Macau United Citizens Association, Cheong Ka Man from the Macao New Chinese Youth Association, as well as Lei Sio Chou from the General Association of Chinese Students of Macao.

National Flag, Emblem Laws repromulgated amid amendments



ANTHONY LAM

FOLLOWING the recent passing of the amendments to the National Flag Law and the National Emblem Law of the People's Republic of China by the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the SAR Government repromulgated the laws in the Official Gazette.

The two laws are among the national laws, regulations and resolutions enacted in the Macau SAR as stipulated in Annex III of the SAR's Basic Law. The amended

laws will be enacted on January 01, 2021.

The promulgated amended National Flag Law requires schools – except on school holidays – to raise the national flag every day. In addition, schools should also hold a flag-raising ceremony once every week, unless there is a holiday.

Where conditions allow, kindergartens and nurseries should follow such stipulations to raise the flag as well.

On important dates, such as festivals and commemoration dates, public entities, civil groups, major

plazas and parks should raise the flag. Private enterprises and real estates should also raise the flag on these dates if the condition allows.

Under the law, inverted flags and irresponsible disposal of the national flag are strictly prohibited.

The amendments have also made stipulations more detail oriented. For example, an additional article in the National Flag Law sets forth the five official dimensions of the Chinese flag, which should be complied with most of the time.

If the official dimensions are not applicable on certain occasions, the proportional resizing will be allowed. The conditions for flag-covered coffins at funerals are also stipulated.

Court sentences ten seeking to flee Hong Kong to prison terms

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

A Chinese court yesterday sentenced 10 pro-democracy activists and protesters who sought to flee Hong Kong by speedboat to between seven months and three years in prison, in a case with major political overtones for the territory.

The Yantian District Court in the southern city of Shenzhen gave the harshest sentences to the two accused organizers of the ill-fated Aug. 23 attempt to reach self-ruled Taiwan. Relatives said all defendants pleaded guilty, a move apparently aimed at receiving lighter sentences.

The defendants are believed to have feared they would be prosecuted for their activities in support of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement. Hong Kong media reports said at least one may have had a warrant out for his arrest under a tough new national security law imposed on the semi-autonomous territory by Beijing in June.

The organizers received sentences of two and three years, while the eight other participants were given seven months in prison.

They were among 12 people on board when their boat was stopped by Chinese authorities. The court said it held a private hearing for two minors and would not charge the them for illegally crossing the border even though they had admitted guilt.

The two youngest detainees –

AP PHOTO



One of the 12 Hong Kong activists detained at sea by Chinese authorities (second from right), is escorted by HK officers after being transferred by Chinese authorities at Shenzhen Bay Port

aged 17 and 18 – were handed over to Hong Kong police by mainland authorities yesterday.

They could face additional charges in the city for absconding, police said at a news conference in Hong Kong.

"We will bring this issue up to the court tomorrow and apply to the court to remand these two persons in jail custody," said Cheng Lai-ki, chief superintendent of the Commercial Crime Bureau.

The pair were given the chance to speak with their families by

phone, and relatives will be able to visit them yesterday, police said.

Relatives of Wong Wai-yin and Li Tsz-yin, who received prison sentences of seven months, said in a voice recording that they hoped the mainland government would give clear instructions on visiting rights. The recording was released by the 12 Hongkongers Concern Group, which is assisting the families.

The father of Cheng Tsz-ho, who also was sentenced to seven months, said that every day is an injustice, according to the

recording.

Relatives of the accused said they were prevented from hiring their own lawyers and that the charges are politically motivated. The defendants could have been sentenced to up to a year in prison for crossing the border and seven years for organizing the trip.

They were picked up after entering mainland Chinese waters for crossing the maritime border without permission. While Hong Kong is part of China, travelers must still pass through immigration when going to and from the

mainland, which surrounds Hong Kong by land and sea.

The sentences appear to be a warning to opposition activists against trying to evade enforcement of the national security law.

"China is a country under rule of law, where laws must be followed and violations must be punished. China's judicial organs handled the case in strict accordance of law," China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a daily news conference.

Hong Kong has already frozen assets and issued arrest warrants for several government opponents who have fled abroad, including to the United Kingdom, which governed the territory until the handover to Chinese rule in 1997.

Hong Kong was promised it would be allowed to maintain its separate political, economic and social systems for 50 years following the handover, including considerably greater freedoms of speech and protest than permitted in mainland China. Critics say Chinese moves, including the imposition of the national security law, widespread arrests of critics and the cancellation of elections for the Legislative Council, have all but nullified that pledge.

The U.S. and several European countries have called for the 12 to be released and returned to Hong Kong, saying their trial was not fair. Along with not being able to pick their own legal representation, their access to government-appointed lawyers was heavily restricted, the European Union said in a statement.

"The defendants' rights to a fair trial and due process - in accordance with international human rights law and as provided by China's Criminal Procedure Law - have not been respected. We call on China to guarantee procedural fairness and due process of law for these individuals," the EU said. AP

EU and China to sign investment deal amid unease over rights

THE European Union and China are set to sign a long-awaited business investment deal after seven years of intense discussions despite concerns about the human rights situation in the country.

The deal was sealed after China committed to pursuing ratification of the International Labor Organization's rules on forced labor, according to the unnamed official. The EU hopes the agreement, known as CAI, will help correct an imbalance in market access and create new investment opportunities for European companies in China by ensuring they can compete on an equal footing when operating in the country.

AP PHOTO



The EU previously said the agreement, which includes provisions for settling disputes, should increase the transparency

of Chinese state subsidies and make sustainable development a key element of the relationship between the EU and China. The deal

also includes clear rules against the forced transfer of technologies, a practice in which a government requires foreign investors to share their technology in exchange for market access.

The agreement was reached as the EU expressed concerns yesterday [Macau time] about "the restrictions on freedom of expression, on access to information, and intimidation and surveillance of journalists, as well as detentions, trials and sentencing of human rights defenders, lawyers, and intellectuals in China."

The EU's diplomatic agency, the European External Action Service, called for the immediate release of Zhang Zhan, a former

lawyer who reported on the early stage of the coronavirus outbreak in China and has been sentenced to four years in prison.

"According to credible sources, Ms. Zhang has been subject to torture and ill-treatment during her detention, and her health condition has seriously deteriorated," the EU said. "It is crucial that she receives adequate medical assistance."

To enter into force, the agreement will need to be ratified by the European Parliament, and the issue of human rights could be a sticking point.

"The stories coming out of Xinjiang are pure horror. The story in Brus-

sels is we're ready to sign an investment treaty with China," Guy Verhofstadt, a Belgian member of the EU legislature said as he tweeted out a news story on forced labor in the Xinjiang region of northwestern China. "Under these circumstances any Chinese signature on human rights is not worth the paper it is written on."

The EU-China agreement also has the potential to cause tension with the administration of U.S. President-elect Joe Biden only weeks after the EU proposed a trans-Atlantic dialogue to address "the strategic challenge presented by China's growing international assertiveness." MDT/AP

FAST AND FURIOUS

After a year like this, expect a strange New Year's Eve

JENNIFER PELTZ,
NEW YORK

IF ever a year's end seemed like cause for celebration, 2020 might be it.

Yet the coronavirus scourge that dominated the year is also looming over New Year's festivities and forcing officials worldwide to tone them down.

From New York's Times Square to Sydney Harbor, big public blowouts are being turned into TV-only shows and digital events. Fireworks displays have been canceled from the Las Vegas Strip to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Even private parties in some places are restricted.

The occasion stirs mixed feelings for people like Cesar Soltero, who was taking photos, and taking stock, in Times Square this week.

"I'm going to celebrate that I'm alive, but I'm not precisely too happy for this year," said Soltero, 36, an engineer visiting from Orlando, Florida, after forgoing his usual holiday trip to see family in Mexico.

Simona Faidiga and Alessandro Nunziata strolled through Times Square with their Labrador retriever puppy, Maggie, who has given Faidiga a lift after she lost her tour guide job.

The Italian couple moved to Miami for new jobs in March, just as the pandemic froze tourism. He is working as a sales representative, but she is not back at work yet. And they're not ready to declare 2021 will be better, not wanting to jinx it.

"I mean, I don't think it could be worse than 2020," said Nunziata, 27.

Days ahead of the ball drop in Times Square, it clearly wasn't New Year's as usual at the Crossroads of the World. There was room to roam on sidewalks that would normally be all but impassable.

Vendors' carts and window displays at the area's struggling gift shops flaunted few 2021-themed souvenirs as workers set up a stage for a celebration that will unfold this year without the usual throngs of cheering, kissing revelers. Police will

AP PHOTO



Jan. 1, 2020: Fireworks for New Year's Eve erupt over the Strip in Las Vegas

block off the area so spectators can't get a glimpse.

"It's almost like a 'Seinfeld' episode," Police Commissioner Dermot Shea said, invoking the 1990s "show about nothing." "This is a ball drop about nothing, where you can't see, so you may as well stay home."

The event's special guests will be first responders and essential workers. But they won't be joining the mayor on stage to lead the countdown. Instead, each guest will watch from a private, well-spaced area.

The night's performances — including disco diva Gloria Gaynor's singing of the apt-for-2020 anthem "I Will Survive" — will be aimed at TV audiences.

New Year's Eve will look different around the world after a year in which the virus killed an estimated 1.8 million people, including more than 330,000 in the U.S.

Germany banned the sale of fireworks, which residents usually set off in on the streets, and a pyrotechnics show at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate is off.

So, too, are the fireworks over the River Thames in locked-down London, where New Year's Eve also marks Britain's final economic split from the European Union. However, Big Ben, which has been largely silent since 2017 while its clock tower is restored, will sound 12 bongos at midnight.

The Netherlands moved the national countdown

from an Amsterdam park to a soccer stadium, where spectators won't be allowed in and pyrotechnics will be replaced with "electric fireworks."

In Rome, the fireworks are still on, but customary concerts in public plazas have been scrapped in favor of livestreamed performances and art installations. Pope Francis will skip his typical Dec. 31 visit to the Vatican's life-sized Nativity scene in St. Peter's Square and plans to deliver his New Year's Day blessing indoors, to prevent crowds from gathering.

Rio de Janeiro nixed the fireworks, open-air concerts and rooftop parties that draw crowds of white-clad revelers in the Copacabana neighborhood, where only residents will be allowed in.

New Year's Eve is one of the busiest days of the year at Paulo Roberto Senna's Copacabana beach stand, but the 57-year-old said he was OK with the shutdown: "No money can buy our health!"

Hot dog vendor Fabio Henrique saw it differently.

"They tell us to stay home, but for those who don't have money, where are we going to get the means to live?" asked Henrique, 39.

In Russia, New Year's Eve has been more widely celebrated than Christmas, which is marked on Jan. 7 by the country's Orthodox Christian majority. Public events have been banned or restricted in many regions.

But the country's so-called New Year's Eve capital, the city of Kaluga, is luring tourists with a week of festivities, despite pleas from residents to cancel. Officials in Kaluga, 150 kilometers southwest of Moscow, said virus precautions will be taken.

Poland has told residents not to circulate between 7 p.m. on Dec. 31 until 6 a.m. on Jan. 1. Turkey declared a four-day lockdown starting on New Year's Eve, and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned that security forces will inspect hotels for illicit parties.

In the U.S., the Christmas morning bombing of the downtown tourist district in Nashville, Tennessee, led the city to cancel its plan to light fireworks and blow up a 2020 sign.

"To say it would have been tone deaf would be an understatement," said Bruce Spyridon, president of the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.

South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa suggested a new way of observing the holiday by lighting candles to honor COVID-19 victims and front-line workers and to hope for a healthy 2021.

Back in New York, yoga and stress-management instructor Allison Richard, 39, wrote up a few New Year's wishes on confetti that will be dropped at midnight in Times Square.

"Freedom," she wrote, and "contentment," "commitment," "connection," "prosperity" and "love." AP

this day in history

1999 UK PREPARES TO CELEBRATE MILLENNIUM



Britain is gearing up to join a global party in a spectacular array of revelries to welcome in the third millennium.

The scale of the celebrations ranges from large organized events, to street parties to an evening at home watching television footage from around the world.

Despite predictions of rain, millions are expected to pack the banks of the Thames in London Thames for funfairs, music, and street entertainment from 1100GMT until 0200GMT New Year's Day.

Celebrations around the world will kick-off at 1000 GMT as the Chatham Islands, Tonga, Fiji and Kiribati experience the new millennium first.

The people of Samoa will have to wait 25 hours more as the millennium arrives there last.

In between, festivities will be staged around the world.

With Britain's capital the home of time, eyes turn to the Queen's official opening of the £758m Millennium Dome, in Greenwich, south London.

She will arrive by boat along the River Thames to join 10,000 invited guests including 6,000 members of the public - who have not all received their tickets yet.

Celebrities and politicians including Prime Minister Tony Blair will attend.

In a blow to the celebrations, the Millennium Wheel will be officially unveiled but will not take passengers due to a capsule failing a safety check.

At midnight, a 60m high "River of Fire", created by pyrotechnic candles, will light up along the Thames in 10.8 seconds - as fast as the earth rotated into a new age.

In Scotland, the Royal National Scottish Orchestra, pop group Texas, and old favourites the Bay City Rollers will perform in Edinburgh and a beacon lit at Ben Nevis.

A giant beacon will be lit in Cardiff as part of Welsh celebrations, and one in Northern Ireland.

In Liverpool, the nightclub Cream is hosting a dance party with Fat Boy Slim and Pete Tong while in Birmingham people are expected to gather in Centenary and Victoria Squares.

Celebrations in Manchester include a huge fireworks display at Castlefield.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

While many enjoyed the festivities thousands in London did not.

Revelers struggled to get home for hours as key tube stations were shut for safety reasons and central parts of the capital were cordoned off.

The Millennium Wheel - the British Airways London Eye - did not open until a month later but its subsequent success could make it a permanent feature of the capital's skyline.

Thousands suffered delays of several hours in being admitted to the Dome on Millennium Eve because of an administrative error.

It failed to attract sufficient visitors and suffered huge losses before it closed a year later.

After difficulties selling the site, the government gave it to developers for free in return for a share of any profits.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Sometimes it feels like patience isn't a virtue as much as a method of torture! If you want to retain any sense of balance in your life, you're going to have to find a way to take your internal clock and slow it down.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Slowing down might not feel comfortable right now, but it's the right thing to do. The intense energy you put out today shouldn't be directed at solving problems or putting out fires.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

It's a good thing to share your ideas and goals with the people in your life who can encourage you, but you need to do more than that right now. After all, is talking about what you want going to get it? No!



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You might assume they know how you feel, but they'd appreciate hearing it. If you can't see them in person, send handwritten cards or letters. Bake some cookies or other treats you can take to them or send them.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

People could be projecting their own issues onto you today, so don't listen to anyone who seems to be pointing out your faults. They're either jealous of you or worried that they themselves are failing.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

They are different from you, so what worked for you might only make things worse for them. You can express your ideas, but don't offer advice and don't take anyone's side. Stay neutral right now.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

A new person could come into your life whose powerful, magnetic charisma you find captivating! But be careful it doesn't distract you from what you need to get done.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You could encounter someone who seems like a textbook example of a jerk, but try to be open-minded about them. Judging a book by its cover has never been your style, so don't start now.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

The smallest details of the day could be like blinking neon signs. That's how powerful your observational skills will be. This means it's a great day for negotiating.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You have a lot to offer others, and your friends could come back and reciprocate your help in some manner in the future. Take advantage of it. One good turn always deserves another...



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

It can be your partner, a sibling, a friend, or even a stranger. It could be in person or by video chat. But spending time as part of a pair today could be very rewarding and revealing.

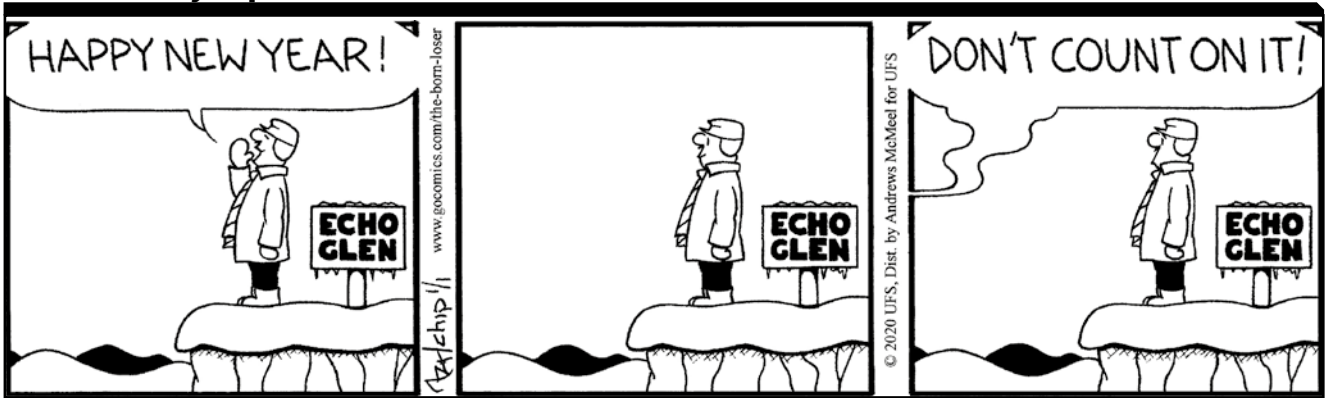


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

It can be your partner, a sibling, a friend, or even a stranger. It could be in person or by video chat. But spending time as part of a pair today could be very rewarding and revealing.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-13	0	clear
Harbin	-26	-17	cloudy
Tianjin	-11	-1	clear
Urumqi	-19	-10	cloudy
Xi'an	-8	2	cloudy
Lhasa	-6	10	clear
Chengdu	1	6	clear
Chongqing	6	8	overcast
Kunming	4	15	overcast
Nanjing	-8	1	clear
Shanghai	-6	0	clear
Wuhan	-6	4	clear
Hangzhou	-6	1	clear
Taipei	7	11	drizzle
Guangzhou	5	15	clear
Hong Kong	7	12	clear

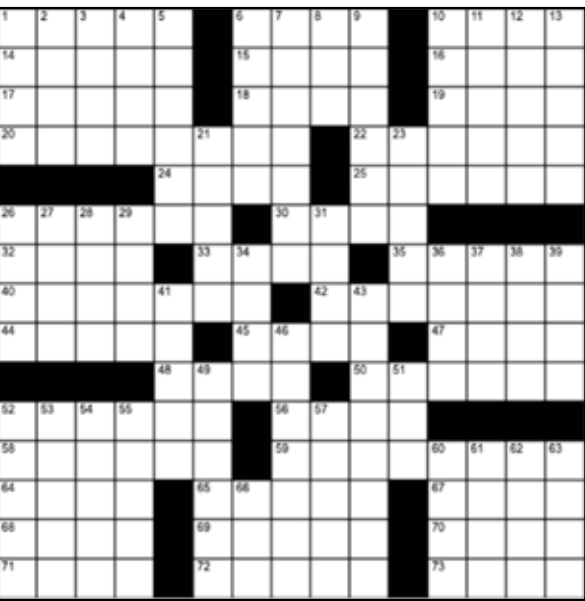
WORLD

Moscow	-1	0	sleet
Frankfurt	1	3	overcast
Paris	3	5	sleet
London	-1	4	clear
New York	6	11	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Measured with a watch; 6- Rider's command; 10- Solid; 14- Rub out or remove from memory; 15- 16th letter of the Hebrew alphabet; 16- Mayberry moppet; 17- Capital city of Yemen; 18- Big bash; 19- Tabula ____; 20- Arboreal bushy-tailed rodent; 22- Annul; 24- Actress Hatcher; 25- Put in; 26- Actress Mason; 30- ____ avail; 32- That's ____ haven't heard; 33- Dreg; 35- Crusoe's creator; 40- Former; 42- Away from the wind; 44- Actor's parts; 45- Hero; 47- Scored 100 on; 48- Puts into words; 50- Softly; 52- Conviction; 56- Not a dup.; 58- Snout beetle; 59- Tongue; 64- Clarinet range; 65- Astonish; 67- Stepped; 68- In the neighborhood; 69- Drive; 70- Yours, in Tours; 71- Bohemian; 72- Very hard mineral; 73- Weight;

DOWN: 1- Actress Harper; 2- Oil-rich nation; 3- Hindu lawgiver; 4- Morales of "NYPD Blue"; 5- Paucity; 6- Bet; 7- Colorless variety of opal; 8- Wildcatter's find; 9- Bayer alternative; 10- Hard outgrowths; 11- Expeditiously; 12- Stair part; 13- Distributed cards; 21- Kingdom; 23- Battery terminal; 26- Heath; 27- ____ Domini; 28- Film spool; 29- Web locale; 31- Scandinavian capital city; 34- Hard to hold; 36- Actor McGregor; 37- Truth; 38- Hurler Hershisier; 39- Whirlpool; 41- Japanese immigrant; 43- Machinery; 46- Set apart; 49- Blazing; 51- Silly Putty container; 52- African sir; 53- Conger catcher; 54- Free to attack; 55- Creamy white; 57- Sharp-edged instrument; 60- Beehive State; 61- Commedia dell' ____; 62- Flub; 63- Prepare a book or film for release; 66- Pop's partner;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999

Fire department 28 572 222

PJ (Open line) 993

PJ (Picket) 28 557 775

PSP 28 573 333

Customs 28 559 944

S. J. Hospital 28 313 731

Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333

Commission Against

Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300

IAM 28 387 333

Tourism 28 333 000

Airport 59 888 88

Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283

Water Supply – Report 2822 0088

Telephone – Report 1000

Electricity – Report 28 339 922

Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



AD

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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IRIDIUM SPA WINS FOR THE SIXTH TIME AT WORLD SPA AWARDS

IIRIDIUM SPA at The St. Regis Macao has been awarded Macau's Best Hotel Spa 2020 at the World Spa Awards for the sixth year running.

Janet McNab, Managing Director of The St. Regis Macao and Sheraton Grand Macao remarked, "It gives me great pleasure to see Iridium Spa recognized by the World Spa Awards as Macau's best hotel spa for the sixth year in a row, which is a testament to the skill of our beauty and wellness experts and therapist that provide truly exquisite relaxation and rejuvenation treatments."

To celebrate the award and the reopening of Iridium Spa on January 1, a range of new treatment packages have been made available.

The treatment offers include an Iridium Spa take-home gift, and a special 30% discount on selected spa products.

Iridium Spa – located on the Level 38 of The St. Regis Macao – features 10 suites inclusive of two couples' suites and a Thai treatment room. It is also the only spa in Macau to offer Gemstone therapy.

Gemstone treatments are deeply rooted to the Asian culture of gemstone therapy, using products rich in minerals from the gemstones, resulting in total well-being and indulgence.



WELLNESS SOOTHING VIBRATION

IRENE SAM, MDT

DUE to the Covid 19 pandemic, many individuals are having emotional issues such as anxiety and stress. As these problems arise, muscle tensions and other physical discomfort also follows. To truly heal the mind and body, a massage is often a good option. The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Macau offers a special treatment titled "The Healing Touch."

An integrative treatment that unwind your body and mind with subtle of healing blends which resonance your own energy and sound vibration of the healing bowl, it is created under the guidance of renowned wellness guru, Dr. Buathon Thienarom, Founder of Sukkasart Institute of Healing Arts, Hua Hin, Thailand,

The treatment begins with answering a questionnaire that will enable our therapist to understand your body better before proceeding to a selection of healing blends.

A selection of the unique healing blend that provides different results. Then, the guest

is ushered into a healing room start with the signing bowl that allowing your body to totally relax and rejuvenate. A slow form of massage that leaves your body in a state of relaxation follows before ending it with the sound vibration using a singing bowl that will boost your energy from within.

"From the vibration of the healing bowl I will find out where the tensions are in the body. Then, I will focus on those areas. So this is really a personalised treatment. It is different for everyone," says experienced therapist Na who is specifically trained to deliver the massage.



AD



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AP PHOTO



Manchester United's Marcus Rashford, left, celebrates with Paul Pogba after scoring the opening goal

FOOTBALL

Man United goes second in Premier League

MAN UNITED 1, WOLVES 0

THREE weeks after crashing out of the Champions League, Manchester United is looking more like potential English champions again.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side rose to second place — two points behind Premier League leader Liverpool — with a 1-0 victory over Wolverhampton yesterday [Macau time].

While ponderous at times, United pushed for a winner that came in the third minute of stoppage time when Marcus

Rashford's shot deflected off Romain Saiss and wrong-footed goalkeeper Rui Patrício.

"It's probably not the most beautiful goal but we'll take the three points and move on," Rashford said. "Today was tough but at the end of the day we managed to get over the line."

"We're obviously a little bit disappointed that we didn't play as well as we could have. (But) it doesn't matter how scrappy they are, we'll take them."

United hasn't lifted the Premier League trophy since Alex Ferguson retired in 2013, with Solskjaer winning six titles as a

player under him.

"Last season we didn't win many points towards the end of games and we have a tradition of it at this club," Solskjaer said. "Now we've won quite a few points towards the end of games and that's both a mental aspect and also a physical aspect."

"We've got a group now that's more robust both mentally and physically, we've gone through some tough training periods and played loads of games and they're getting fitter. But mentally it gives you a mental boost knowing you can win games towards the end of games."

WEST BROM 0, LEEDS 5

In a meeting of promoted clubs, Leeds routed West Bromwich Albion 5-0.

Ezgjani Aljoski, Jack Harrison and Rodrigo scored three in nine minutes after Romaine Sawyers' own-goal put Leeds in front. The midfielder played a blind back pass but failed to notice goalkeeper Sam Johnstone to the left of his goal and the ball rolled into the empty net.

Raphinha added the fifth in the second half as Leeds rose to 11th place, while West Brom is only above Sheffield United at the bottom.

"We have only been in this league for 16 games and there are still many challenges and many tests we have to pass before we can legitimately say we belong," Leeds manager Marcelo Bielsa said. "Every game in this league is a challenge, all the teams have secrets and capacities. There are few games you can think of where there are very few difficulties to resolve."

BRIGHTON 0, ARSENAL 1

Alexandre Lacazette scored 29 seconds after entering the field as a second-half substitute to give Arsenal a 1-0 win at Brighton.

Lacazette had just come on when Bukayo Saka turned from inside his own half and made a superb run down the right before pulling the ball back to him. Lacazette took one touch to control the ball just inside the penalty area before driving a shot inside the right post in the 66th minute.

The win eases some pressure off manager Mikel Arteta as Arsenal rose to 13th place.

"This is what all the managers dream of, to bring people from the bench to win you the game like he's done," Arteta said. "It was a great move from Bukayo first to create the action that he did." AP

JEEP TO PAY JUVENTUS \$55M PER SEASON IN JERSEY SPONSORSHIP

JUVENTUS renewed its jersey sponsorship with Jeep in a deal that will bring the Italian champions \$55 million per season through 2023-24, the club said.

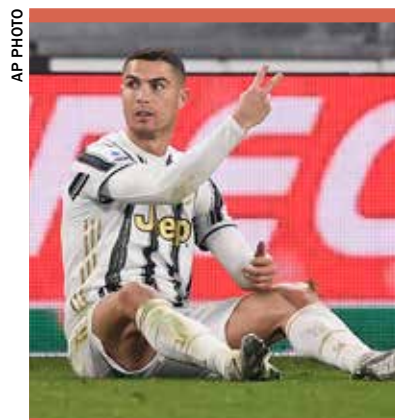
Juventus already makes more than \$100 million per season from Jeep and brand sponsor Adidas. The German sportswear company is paying the club a base rate of 51 million euros (\$62 million) per season through 2026-27.

The Jeep extension provides a base fee of 45 million euros (\$55 million) "and variable components based on sporting results" beginning in the 2021-22 season, the club said.

Jeep and Juventus are controlled by Exor, the Agnelli family holding company.

"This agreement stems from the mutual satisfaction of a successful partnership that has been accompanying Juventus and Jeep since 2012/2013 sporting season," the club said in a statement.

In October 2019, the club announced that Jeep had increased its annual sponsorship to 42 million euros (\$51 million) — potentially 46 million euros (\$56 million) with bonuses — for 2019-20 and this season. AP



Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



THE LENS 1500 METRES TURF 2021-01-02|Sat|16:20

HAPPY NEW YEAR to all MJC fans, my best wishes to all officials in MJC for they are doing a fantastic job in 2020 under such difficult circumstances. Well back to racing, let's make a good winning start this Saturday. My NAP for the day is **Dare To Be** from the S.Chow's yard, with the booking of senior jock of W.L. Ho this indicates that he is very confident in going into this 1500 metres turf race this weekend. He look solid in his preps in the morning, **Dare to Be's** racing style fit in perfectly with the racing condition in this race, thanks to his good barrier draw; he rates a leading chance in this race. Let's go with him for our first winner in 2021.

Race 5 | Horse no. 9 Dare To Be Win & Place Bets for this Saturday



OPINION

World Views

Conor Sen, MDT/Bloomberg



JUST SEND THE BIGGER CHECKS ALREADY

Let's get down to brass tacks: Sending \$2,000 in direct payments to Americans is a politically effective but economically inefficient way to provide needed relief to workers and families.

When Congress recently approved a new stimulus package, it included \$600 cash payments to Americans. But that struck many people as a measly gesture compared to the \$1,200 checks issued in the previous stimulus, and considering the economic damage done by the pandemic over the nine months since the Cares Act. So when President Donald Trump called for \$2,000 checks, Democrats immediately jumped on board and some Republicans followed.

The new \$2,000 amount was approved in the House on Monday, though a vote in the Senate yesterday was blocked by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. The proposal is still very much alive, garnering support from both GOP Senate incumbents David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler, who face a runoff election on Jan. 5 in Georgia. Given the controversy, it's worth asking how much the larger amount will actually help the economy.

I'll start with the positives. Most of the unemployment benefits passed in the Cares Act expired at the end of July, and because of archaic unemployment systems in states, many eligible workers never got them. These individuals have gone months wondering if or when more fiscal relief would come, and when we'll get the kind of economic reopening that will bring back millions of jobs in industries like travel and dining. The fiscal relief package just passed by Congress will reinstate those unemployment benefits for a while, but at a reduced level. For everyone that falls into these buckets, an additional \$1,400 payment is an efficient way to provide additional relief without relying on state unemployment systems to process claims on time, and to make up for Congress letting relief lapse over the summer.

And checks are broadly popular with the public. According to Data for Progress, 78% of Americans support the \$2,000 payments. There's something to be said for giving the people what they want in a high-profile way. It makes them feel like the system is working for them and builds trust for the future. Arguably, it was the success of the \$1,200 checks in the Cares Act that bought the political will for another round of fiscal relief this month.

Those positives dwarf the negatives associated with the checks. From a macroeconomic or distributional standpoint it would be better to tailor relief more to where it's most needed - unemployed workers, or certain hard-hit state and local governments that continue to have big revenue shortfalls. But those options lack the political momentum that the \$2,000 checks have. And a larger cash payment will still benefit these groups - for instance, money spent by individuals will be taxable, indirectly benefiting state and local budgets.

The bigger checks might be wasted on some recipients who don't need the money -- but not entirely. Any two-person households making \$150,000 that receive the additional payments might just stick it into savings. Or maybe they'll spend it on a Playstation 5 or a new set of AirPods Max.

Individuals with an impulse for gambling might use the money to buy speculative stocks or bitcoin. That could add some froth to the financial markets, but that's not particularly harmful to the economy, either. With inflation and interest rates as low as they are, a little excess consumption of trendy gadgets or risky stock bets isn't going to lead to any kind of economic overheating.

The bottom line is that checks are popular with the public, easy to deliver, will help the fortunes of those who are struggling, and don't pose a near-term inflationary risk to the economy. Congress should go ahead and send 'em.

AMID VIRUS FEARS, CHINA URGES WORKERS TO SKIP HOLIDAY TRAVEL

China is encouraging tens of millions of migrant workers not to travel home during February's Lunar New Year holiday to prevent further spread of the coronavirus.

The measure from the National Health Commission is not a direct travel ban but is still extraordinary because Lunar New Year is China's most important traditional holiday and the only time of the year when many workers have the opportunity to travel home to see their families.

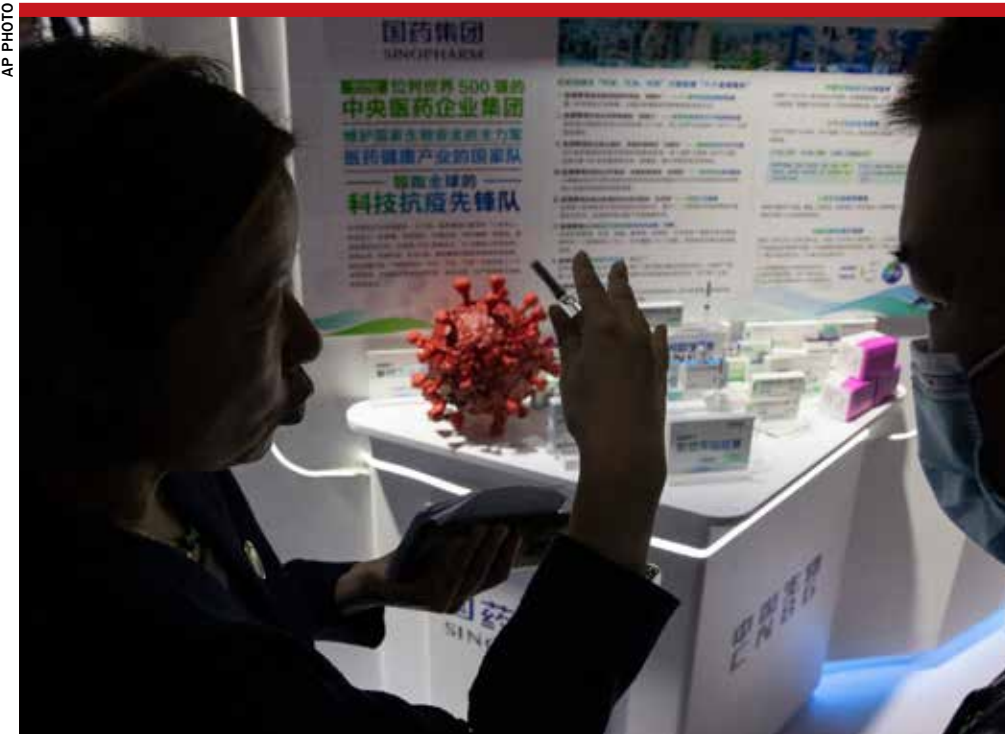
The NHC said it was encouraging provincial governments to per-

suaire workers to follow the suggestion while taking into account their personal wishes. It also said workers who stay behind should be paid overtime and offered other opportunities to take vacation.

China has all but eradicated local transmission of the coronavirus, but authorities remain on high alert over a possible resurgence.

Already, schools are scheduled to begin the Lunar New Year vacation a week early and tourists have been told not to visit Beijing, the capital, during the holiday.

CHINESE DRUGMAKER: VACCINE 79.3% EFFECTIVE IN FINAL TESTS



A promoter talks about the COVID-19 vaccine produced by Sinopharm subsidiary CNBG in a trade fair in Beijing

A Chinese drugmaker said yesterday its coronavirus vaccine was found to be 79.3% effective at preventing infection in preliminary data from the final round of testing, moving Beijing closer to possibly being able to fulfill its pledge to supply other developing countries.

The announcement by a unit of state-owned Sinopharm gave the first official data from a Chinese vaccine's late-stage trial. Its reported effectiveness rate is behind Pfizer Inc.'s vaccine at 95% and Moderna Inc.'s at 94%. Scientists have cautioned coronavirus vaccines may only be about as effective as flu vaccines, which generally are 50% effective.

Sinopharm is one of at least five Chinese developers that are in a global race to create vaccines for the disease that has killed more than 1.7 million people. More than 1 million health care workers and others in China have received vaccines being developed by Sinopharm and another supplier, Sinovac, under emergency approval while testing was underway.

The two-sentence statement by the Sinopharm unit that developed the vaccine, the Beijing Biological Products Institute Ltd., gave

no additional details. Final proof of its effectiveness will depend on publication of more data.

"That's useful, and at least it is showing that it is probably effective," said Jin Dong-yan, a medical professor at the University of Hong Kong.

Jin said "it would be helpful" to know how many people were vaccinated, how large the control group was and other details.

"They should release more information," Jin said.

Also yesterday, another developer, Sinovac Biotech Ltd., signed an agreement to build a production facility in Beijing for a coronavirus vaccine with a planned annual capacity of 1 billion doses, the newspaper Beijing Youth News reported.

Sinopharm, or China National Pharmaceutical Group, has applied for approval of the Beijing Institute's vaccine following the third and final stage of testing, the company said.

It would be the second vaccine from a Sinopharm unit, following a separate candidate developed by the company's Wuhan Institute of Biological Products Ltd.

The Beijing Institute's vaccine has been approved by the United Arab Emirates. Regulators there said it was 86% effective.

The vaccine relies on two doses, the Beijing Institute said, similar to Western-developed vaccines. It gave no information about side effects or conditions required to transport and use the vaccine.

Western-developed vaccines must be kept frozen at temperatures as low as minus 70 degrees Celsius. Chinese developers say theirs can be stored at 2 to 8 degrees Celsius.

Chinese authorities are carrying out a campaign to vaccinate 50 million people before the Lunar New Year holiday in February, when hundreds of millions of people travel.

A former Shanghai CDC immunologist and medical professional, Tao Lina, said he received the first dose of Beijing Institute's vaccine on Saturday under the emergency use program.

Tao said he had "absolutely no adverse reactions, not even a localized reaction."

Chinese producers have at least six possible vaccines in the final stage of clinical trials. They are testing vaccines in more than a dozen countries including Russia, Egypt and Mexico. Few details have been released, leaving experts abroad wondering about effectiveness and side effects. MDT/AP



Croatia A strong earthquake in Croatia destroyed buildings and killed at least seven people southwest of the capital, displacing scores of area residents or making them afraid to sleep indoors as emergency teams searched for those still missing by nightfall. The European Mediterranean Seismological Center said the magnitude 6.3 quake hit 46 kilometers southeast of Zagreb. It caused widespread damage in the hardest-hit town of Petrinja. The same area was struck by a magnitude 5.2 quake on earlier in the week.

Yemen A large explosion struck the airport in the southern Yemeni city of Aden as a plane carrying the newly formed Cabinet landed there, security officials said. The source of the blast was not immediately clear. There were no reports of casualties among the government delegation but officials at the scene said they have seen bodies lying on the tarmac and elsewhere at the airport. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

US The first reported case in the country of the COVID-19 variant that's been seen in the United Kingdom has been discovered in Colorado, Gov. Jared Polis announced yesterday [Macau time], adding urgency to efforts to vaccinate Americans. The variant was found in a man in his 20s who is in isolation southeast of Denver in Elbert County and has no travel history, state health officials said.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Monday January 4. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.