

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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Air Quality Good

“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

MOP 8.00 HKD 10.00



DEUTSCHE BANK HAS MODERATELY ROLLED BACK ITS PREVIOUS PROJECTION OF MACAU'S GROSS GAMING REVENUE FOR 2021 FROM \$26.60 BILLION TO \$26.35 BILLION

P5

HEALTH CODE TO REQUIRE HOME ADDRESS FROM TODAY WITH 14-DAY BUFFER PERIOD

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SJM TO DELIVER WINTER BONUS TODAY TO ITS ELIGIBLE TEAM MEMBERS WHILE THE SECOND BONUS IS EXPECTED TO BE MADE IN JULY

P5

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said yesterday vaccine approval was being speeded up and border controls beefed up to curb the spread of the coronavirus, and he promised to consider declaring a state of emergency. Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike and the governors of Saitama, Chiba and Kanagawa had asked the national government Saturday to declare the emergency after the capital saw a daily record of 1,337 cases on New Year's Eve.



Pakistan Gunmen opened fire on a group of minority Shiite Hazara coal miners after abducting them, killing 11 in southwestern Baluchistan province, a Pakistani official said. The Islamic State group later claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement on its website. The Sunni militant group has repeatedly targeted Pakistan's minority Shiites in recent years.

Lebanon A massive fire broke out in a warehouse where fuel and gas canisters were stored along the border between Lebanon and Syria, injuring seven people and causing loud explosions, the Lebanese Red Cross and army said. The fire raged in a warehouse in the border area of al-Qasr, where the line between the two countries is highly permeable.



Israel Thousands protested again this weekend against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, demanding that the long-serving leader resign over corruption charges against him and for allegedly mishandling the coronavirus crisis. Holding signs reading "Go" and "Everyone is equal before the law," the demonstrators crowded a Jerusalem square near Netanyahu's official residence.

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REMUNERATIONS UNCHANGED

The government suggested maintaining the current compensation limits of local cleaners and security guards despite the economic impact triggered by the pandemic

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MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

GOV'T: NO PLANS TO NEGOTIATE WITH NEIGHBORING REGIONS TO OPEN SPECIAL CHANNELS

P2



BLOOMBERG

2,500 SOCIAL HOUSING APPLICATIONS RECORDED SINCE AUGUST

The Housing Bureau has received upwards of 2,500 applications for social housing since the introduction of a new permanent application method on August 20, 2020. Around 2,200 applications have all required documents in place. Among them, 43% were one-person households, 28% were two-person households, and the remainder were families with three or more people. The new permanent application replaced the previous system of application rounds.

GOV'T TO INTRODUCE SMART SERVICES IN ELDERLY APARTMENTS

The Macau SAR government has planned to introduce "smart elderly care services" at senior apartments, according to a reply of the Social Affairs Bureau (IAS) to lawmaker Ella Lei's interpellation. In addition, senior housing projects will be equipped with features to improve accessibility. The local government's preliminary plan is to build 1,800 of such studio apartments within three years for the city's seniors.

SPORTS BUREAU TO CONTINUE SETTING UP HEALTH CONSULTATION STATIONS

The Sports Bureau will continue to set up health consultation stations in the city this year to promote public wellness. The stations will pop up in Sun Yat Sen Park every Sunday in January. Basic physical examinations will be provided for locals, including height, weight and blood pressure checks. Exercise workshops will be offered too. The program is to encourage residents to engage in physical exercises to improve their health.

ANTHONY LAM

FOLLOWING a system crash last month, the Macau Health Code will now require users to enter their home address in order to generate a code.

Dr Alvis Lo of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center announced the news at yesterday's weekly press briefing. He added that the new requirement will have a 14-day buffer period for both the users and the system so as to streamline the process.

During this buffer period, users can choose not to enter their home addresses. However, when the period ends, all users will be required to register their addresses in the Health Code platform.

In response to concerns over personal and data privacy, Lo reiterated that, following the previous edition of the address input function, which was what allegedly led to a system crash, the system will not ask for a user's address in full.

"They will only need to register the name of their buildings," Lo explained. "They can either search on the platform with the name of the street or the building in which they live."

The new requirement will come into effect from 11 a.m. today. The time was chosen, according to Lo, to avoid peak hours in the morning when people need to get a Health Code for work or for border crossing purposes.

Although the system has been finetuned to handle a maximum of 800,000 queries per hour, Lo revealed that a break-off mechanism is planned into the program to suspend the address input function when necessary.

With that said, should the number of queries surpass the ceiling, or should any other problems arise, the requirement will be suspended temporarily so that the larger system will not be affected.

Lo stressed that if users do not see the requirement to input their home address, they should not panic and simply follow the instructions of the e-platform, because the address input function may be suspended due to the aforementioned system provisions.

HOME ADDRESS NEEDED FOR HEALTH CODE FROM TODAY



He also explained that if it is the case, the Health Code should be generated normally.

Users who have already input their addresses during the previous function trail will not be asked for the address again. "However, if they need to change their address, they can feel free to do so," Lo said.

The Center has previously stressed that the address must be true and reflect the actual residential location of the user. Failure to register a true address may incur criminal responsibilities.

It was also explained that the address input requirement is needed to facilitate district-oriented outbreak control.

AUTHORITIES TO FOLLOW AGE RESTRICTIONS MADE BY VACCINE MANUFACTURERS

Concerns over SARS-CoV-2 vaccines were also discussed at the press briefing. It was reported by international media that there could be different age restrictions. The Center was asked whether this will also apply to the vaccines distributed in Macau.

Stressing that progress on vaccines has been smooth

and orderly, Lo used the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine as an example to explain that the particular brand of vaccine is recommended for individuals not younger than 16 years old. When administered in Macau, the administration of vaccinations will follow recommendations, including those on age limits, made by the manufacturers.

GOV'T: NO NEGOTIATION PLANS TO OPEN SPECIAL CHANNELS

INDIVIDUALS who want to return to or depart from Macau should find ways other than Taipei, which has recently closed borders to foreign entrants and transit passengers, to facilitate their journey.

Lao Fong Chi, Public Relations Division Head of the Macao Government Tourism Office, revealed that some passengers have recently successfully taken transit through Tokyo. "Of course, actual routing should be discussed with Air Macau," Lao added.

For the time being, the government has no plans to negotiate with mainland China or Hong Kong to open special channels connecting Macau to other parts of the world.

At least 36 local residents have been reportedly affected by the decision of the Taiwanese authori-

ties to ban transiting passengers from the island's airports enforced from January 1, according to the Tourism Crisis Management Office.

This comes after the Taiwan's Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) announced that the destination would ban all foreign arrivals, with just a few exceptions, effective from January 1, 2021.

Taiwan has then suspended all transit flights through its airports. The decisions were made following the discovery of the first imported case of the mutated U.K. coronavirus strain in Taiwan, which occurred that same day.

This measure has further clipped Macau's connections with other parts of the world, in particular Europe, as Taiwan had served as an integral transit hub for long-haul flights between Macau and other countries.

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CPCS: Gov't proposes keeping minimum wage, severance pay unchanged

RENATO MARQUES

THE government has proposed making no change to the amount of the minimum wage for local cleaners and security guards working in residential buildings, nor the compensation ceiling used to calculate compensation on contract termination. The decision was made during the third and last meeting of the year from the Standing Committee for the Coordination of Social Affairs (CPCS).

The final proposal by the government came after clashing points of view emerged between the representatives of the employers and members of the committee, which meant that a consensus could not be reached on the matter.

The government justified the decision of not updating the amount during the annual review by noting that this was informed by analysis of the market and economic situation during 2019 as well as the financial impacts observed during 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.



AP PHOTO

"After analyzing several factors and considering, in general, the economy, the business environment, the [current] guarantee of employees, the labor market, among other [factors] in Macau in 2019, as well as taking into account that these factors were strongly affected by the pandemic in 2020, leading to a drop in the gross domestic product and

the median of monthly income, the government suggested maintaining the current limits and level," the CPCS stated.

The decision maintains the statutory minimum wage at 32 patacas per hour, 256 patacas per day, 1,536 patacas per week, or 6,656 patacas a month, according to the method defined on the workers' contracts.

In the same way, the ceiling used to calculate the workers' compensation on contract termination continued to be calculated at a maximum of 21,000 patacas.

Following this standard was the review on the ceiling of compensation for work accidents and occupational diseases, leading to their maintenance at current levels.

In the last point in the agenda, the CPCS heard opinions from all interested parties, namely employers and employees, on the draft law for "Occupational safety and health in civil construction." The proposed law aims to constitute a full review of the current "Regulation of Hygiene and Safety in Civil Construction Work," a law that is now approximately 10 years old and which, according to the government, must be significantly amended to be up-to-date with the developments and advancement of technology, improvement in the use of equipment for the execution of works, tools, techniques, and devices of the civil construction sector, as well as the criteria for safety tests, technical requirements and relevant standards applied in the use of equipment for the execution of works.

On the subject, the Labour Affairs Bureau, which is in charge of drafting the new bill, took note of the different opinions from CPCS members and pledged to further investigate them, and seek the necessary input for the upcoming legislative process.

CONTROVERSIAL NAM VAN LAKE PROPOSALS TO BE PRESENTED TO URBAN PLANNING COMMITTEE

ANTHONY LAM

HAVING received 138 comments in opposition to the planning conditions drafts for two Nam Van Lake land plot developments, the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) has decided to present the drafts to the Urban Planning Committee tomorrow.

The DSSOPT released the two drafts for public consultation before the Christmas break. The drafts proposed that the height clearance be extended to between 34 and 50 meters.

Commentators, professionals and advocacy groups criticized the proposals for obstructing the views to and from the Penha Hill, as well as the "Hill-Sea-City" structure of Macau.

Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, recently replied to media interviews on the matter, saying that the height clearance has not been significantly extended



"because the building heights proposed in the drafts are above sea level."

"Four meters should be deducted from the proposed heights," the Secretary said.

Local group, the New Macau Association (ANM), criticized the senior officials for playing with numbers.

Urban planner Lam Iek Chit made a similar comment to local Chinese newspaper Cheng Pou, adding that the response from Rosário "had not provided new information."

"He only presented the drafts using another way," Lam explained.

In addition, urban planner and member of the Urban Planning Committee, Chan Chio I, has asked the government to provide more information for public review, so as to avoid a public impression of "forcible governance."

Chan is a member of pro-establishment entity, the Macao New Chinese Youth Association.

The ANM sent a letter yesterday to UNESCO to

call for the organization to voice concerns over the matter. The group hopes the international body can urge the Macau government to compile a plan to protect historic landscapes and architecture as soon as possible.

Sharing a similar view is urban planner Lui Chak Keong, who is a Heritage Architect (Architecte du Patrimoine).

When interviewed by local Chinese newspaper the Macao Daily News, Lui thought the skyline of the city should be taken into account, "especially when maritime tours will be developed in the future."

The name of Penha Hill is "Western Sea-viewing Hill" in Chinese. Lui took this to explain the importance of seeing the sea from the hill.

The 50-meter clearance for the proposed new court building will generate an oppressive feeling because the building is situated on the lakeshore, according to Lui.

REGISTRATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES' UNIFIED EXAM OPEN TODAY

RENATO MARQUES

REGISTRATIONS for students seeking to participate in the Unified Exam to access the four local university institutions open today and will remain accessible until January 20.

The exam is operated jointly across the institutions and allows access to undergraduate study programs from the University of Macau, Macau Polytechnic Institute, Macao Institute for Tourism Studies, and the Macau University of Science and Technology.

Students wishing to apply to any of the four institutions must register through the online application system of the relevant institutions, and pay the registration fee. If students wish to apply for two or more institutions, they

must register individually with each institution. After completing the online applications, applicants will receive a confirmation message or email from the institutions to which they have applied.

Upon receiving this confirmation, candidates may then download the exam's participation card using the online registration system of the institutions they have applied to provided they access the system from March 10 to 21.

The card contains all the relevant information for the exam, such as the personal information of the candidate, the venue where the examination will take place, and the exact seat number.

The exams will take place between March 18 and 21.

COMMITTEE SUGGESTS WIDENING ROAD TO FIT BIGGER BUSES

Vice President of the Traffic Services Committee Wong Seng Fat suggests widening some of the city's roads to accommodate the forthcoming bus models. These buses are bigger and will be put into service soon by the city's two bus companies, Transmac and TCM. The introduction of the bigger and more environmentally friendly buses was stipulated in an agreement inked in September last year between the two bus companies and the government, which has come into force during the start of this year.

BUS ROUTE 17 TO RUN WITH LARGER VEHICLES

Bus company Transmac already has plans to use large-size vehicles for bus route No.17, according to a report by TDM. Bus route No.17 has a daily passage capacity of 13,000. This figure can reach up to 17,000 during peak hours. Once the expansions of Camões Garden Terminal and the flyover of the Avenida Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues are completed, in addition to the improvements on other roads, route No.17 will run with medium size buses.

CRIME

TEENAGER ACCUSED OF RAPE

JULIE ZHU

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) has remanded a local teenage boy and referred him to the prosecution authority on the charge of rape, the department reported yesterday during a joint police press conference.

The suspected, surnamed Kong, is a 16-year-old secondary school student. The alleged victim is his ex-girlfriend, a secondary school student of around 15 years of age. Both the suspect and the victim are Macau residents.

On December 29, the alleged victim went to the PJ to report the case, accompanied by her father.

The victim reported that she was assaulted and raped by her ex-boyfriend, with whom she had been engaged in a romantic relationship since October.

According to the victim, not long after they started dating, she requested to end the relationship with the suspect. The suspect refused to break up.

On December 28 at approximately 9 p.m., the alleged victim arrived at the suspect's house to collect some of her belongings. During the visit, an argument regarding the breakup began. The victim alleges that at this point she was assaulted and raped.

The victim said that she spent the night at the suspect's apartment because she was afraid of being hurt again if she tried to leave. As a result, she was only able to inform her father about the incident the following day.

After having received the reports, police investigators found the suspect at his apartment. The suspect admitted to the assault, including slapping and suffocating the girl but refused to cooperate with the investigation regarding the rape accusation.



Following investigation and the opinions of forensic pathologists, the PJ believes there is sufficient evidence of both the rape and the assault.

On December 30, the police authority forwarded the case to the prosecution authority.

According to Macau's Criminal Code, the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 16 years old.

Juveniles aged 16 and above who are arrested on criminal charges are subjected to the full force of the criminal justice system, including imprisonment and penalty, in addition to other punishments.

Law No.2/2007 suggests that an underage offender aged between 12 and 16 years old can be sent to a correctional home depending on the severity of the committed crimes.

Last year, in March, a 16-year-old secondary school student was charged with rape against one of his female classmates.

The Court of First Instance fou-

nd the boy was suspected of violating the article 157 of the Criminal Code, which recommends between three and 12 years' imprisonment.

After the court carried out the first hearing on the case, and considering that the boy was charged with violent assault against the victim, the court issued mandatory pre-trial detention of the individual.

Recently, lawmaker Angela Leong has proposed that the age of criminal responsibility in Macau be lowered to 12 years old. According to the lawmaker, "There is a generalization of juvenile criminality in Macau" that must be stopped through heavy penalties for the crimes perpetrated by youngsters, and reducing the age of accountability.

MAN SUSPECTED OF HANDLING STOLEN GOODS

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has apprehended a 34-year-old mainland man who is suspected of han-

dling stolen goods.

During yesterday's joint police press conference, the PJ reported the arrest.

The man is accused of a police-registered theft case dating back to 2019, when the PJ apprehended three teenagers who were accused of stealing phones at a basketball court near the Macau Tower.

The teenagers stole four phones at the location and sold the goods to the suspect, surnamed Cai, who was working at a telecommunications shop located near the Border Gate.

Upon his apprehension, Cai admitted to all the accusations. Cai said that he knew that the phones were stolen goods but still bought them from the teenagers for over 2,000 patacas.

After the purchase, Cai dismantled some of the phones. Upon capture he was found to still be in possession of all four phones, which he handed over to the police authority.

AMCM to prompt banks to offer transaction reassurance to credit cardholders

HONEY TSANG

THE Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) has pledged to prompt local financial institutions to reinforce verification measures for credit card transactions, to safeguard local customers' entitlements.

The AMCM's announcement came in response to a string of cases regarding credit card fraud reported in recent months in Macau.

In October 2020, the Judiciary Police (PJ) and Hong Kong's Police Force arrested a total of 31 suspects in both cities — who were said to be involved in an organized criminal gang engaging in credit card scams.

The individuals were arrested for allegedly stealing the information of others' credit cards, which they then used to purchase items online or resell via online forums for profit.

The data of over 500 cre-

dit cards were stolen by the criminal ring for in-app purchases, amounting to a tally of over MOP600,000, according to the PJ.

The high-profile case was spearheaded by a special operation co-launched by officers of the two cities to investigate whether Macau was the source of a leak of credit card data.

The AMCM urges local credit cardholders to remain vigilant against the scam. They should contact their bank if they detect a

suspicious case, and report it to the police.

Currently, many local banks have been offering verification measures for purchases made through credit cards. Some banks will even deliver a message to inform the cardholder about any purchases that exceed the card's transaction limit.

The authority also vows to strengthen the promotion effort regarding credit card security to raise public awareness.



GAMING

DEUTSCHE BANK SCALES BACK CITY'S 2021 GGR FORECAST

HONEY TSANG

THE Deutsche Bank Securities Inc has moderately rolled back its previous projection of Macau's gross gaming revenue (GGR) for 2021 from USD26.60 billion to \$26.35 billion.

The latest adjustment made by the German-based multinational investment bank came after the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) released the latest statistics for the December GGR last Friday.

In December, Macau's GGR plunged 65.8%, year-on-year, to MOP7.82 billion. The annual GGR for 2020 reached a total of MOP60.4 billion, down 79.3% from the MOP292.5 billion recorded in 2019.

A Deutsche Bank analyst, Carlo Santarelli, said that the actual December GGR in 2020 was below the institution's earlier estimate of just above US\$1 billion, according to a report published yesterday by GGR Asia.

Deutsche Bank's revised GGR of US\$26.35 billion for 2021, once it realizes, will translate to a year-on-year uptick of 248% from the annual GGR recorded in 2020.

Macau's GGR for December saw a sharp fall on a year-on-year basis. However, it represented the smallest monthly drop since February 2020, when Covid-19 infections first appeared in the city.

In addition, brokerage firm Sanford C. Bernstein also commented in a memo that the December GGR was "weaker than initially hoped."

Its analyst Vitaly Umansky stated: "The month [December] continued to be negatively impacted by visitation bottlenecks due to visa processing and Covid[-19] test requirements, and by weakness in VIP volumes."

The brokerage projects the January GGR in 2021 to shrink by "low- to mid-60s of percent," year-on-year. It is also expecting the yearly GGR for 2021 to reach

around 80% of 2019's levels.

Following the release of December GGR, gaming experts have expressed varied views on the prospect of Macau's gaming revenue in 2021.

Some experts, such as managing partner of IGamiX Management & Consulting, Ben Lee, believe Macau's VIP and premium mass sectors will be "severely depressed" by China's new, yet stricter gambling law, which will come into force in March 2021.

Lee believes the 2021 GGR will not be likely to reach the government's target of MOP130 billion, which is around 44.5% of 2019 figures.

While some expressed the view that Hong Kong's Covid-19 situation will also be factored in when it comes to projecting the GGR tally this year, as visitors from Hong Kong — once allowed to enter Macau this year — may play an influential role in propelling the city's GGR figure in 2021.



MONTHLY GAMING REVENUE

	2020	2019	Variance
Jan	22,126	24,942	-11.3%
Feb	3,104	25,370	-87.8%
Mar	5,257	25,840	-79.7%
Apr	754	23,588	-96.8%
May	1,764	25,952	-93.2%
Jun	716	23,812	-97.0%
Jul	1,344	24,453	-94.5%
Aug	1,330	24,262	-94.5%
Sept	2,211	22,079	-90.0%
Oct	7,270	26,443	-72.5%
Nov	6,748	22,877	-70.5%
Dec	7,818	22,838	-65.8%

These numbers are expressed in millions (MOP)

SJM TO DELIVER 'LIVING SUBSIDY' TO STAFF TOMORROW

HONEY TSANG

MACAU'S gaming operator Sociedade de Jogos de Macau, S.A. (SJM) has affirmed its commitment to deliver two bonuses as part of the casino industry's customary annual stipend, also dubbed the "living subsidy", according to the conglomerate's announcement published yesterday.

The subsidy can comprise an amount totaling 1.5 to 2 months of salary. It will come in two equally split installments. The first payment will be delivered to eligible employees tomorrow, and the second payment is expected to be made in July.

Ever since the pandemic began, the city's casino workers have been propelled into financial suffering, with many of them being laid off or furloughed.

The two bonuses are considered a much-needed life-saver for struggling casino staff during the crisis.

"Without these two [bonuses], the annual paycheck a casino worker can receive by 2020 will drop drastically by around 70%," Cloee



Chao, President of the New Macau Gaming Staff Rights Association previously told the Times.

A casino worker used to receive bonuses twice yearly pre-pandemic, as the summer and winter bonuses. Each is equivalent to about one month's salary. They are traditionally handed out in the July-August period and before Chinese New Year, respectively.

The SJM's first bonus, which is set to be delivered tomorrow, is deemed the winter bonus.

In a written memo, Daisy Ho, Chairman of the Board of Directors of SJM said, "We would like to thank our staff members for their diligent

work and dedicated support amidst the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic."

In a study surveying around 1,200 local casino workers in November 2020 conducted by the association, nearly 80% of respondents said that they had suffered a great loss to their income. Over 99.5% of them claimed they are pinning hopes on the issuance of the winter bonus before the Chinese New Year.

The crises of joblessness and underemployment caused by the pandemic prompted the association to deliver a letter to the Chief Executive in November last year, imploring him to safeguard staff wage interests.

BEAUTY PRODUCTS LEAD THE INCREASES ON IMPORTS IN NOVEMBER 2020

RENATO MARQUES

BEAUTY, cosmetic and skincare products category led the hike in imports to the MSAR by 57% from the figure registered in November last year.

The personal care products were accountable for a near-fourfold (381%) soar year-on-year on the imports when compared to the same month on 2019, followed by the Perfumes, which also registered an import growth of about 182%, figures released by the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) show.

In the opposite direction were the articles for the casino industry as well as Fuels and Lubricants, which registered drops year-on-year of 65% and 36%, respectively.

In total, the amount of imports to Macau soared to a total of MOP13.4 billion.

At the same time, total exports registered a year-on-year drop of 16% (MOP957 million) with



the value of re-exports (MOP810 million) falling even further (17%) led by a drop of 83% of Articles for the casino.

Still, November 2020 was not an exceptional month for local exports, since results from the first 11 months of 2020 show that the total value of merchandise exported decreased by 18% year-on-year to MOP9.6 billion, of which the value of re-exports (MOP8.21 billion) dropped 21%.

Despite the significant hike of imports in November, the total value of merchandise imported in the period between January

and November dipped by 0.5% year-on-year to MOP80.80 billion.

According to the analysis of the DSEC, the fall in exports was mostly due to the reduction in exports to Hong Kong (MOP6.58 billion) and the European Union (MOP167 million), which reduced by 12% and 5%, respectively, during the first 11 month of last year.

Opposing this trend were exports to Portuguese-speaking countries (MOP11 million), which leapt by 765%, followed by the exports to the U.S., which also doubled in the same period.

OPINION

China Daily

Editors, Xinhua News Agency

CHINA SHEDS LIGHT ON GLOBAL POVERTY ERADICATION

China has made historic achievements in eradicating absolute poverty. It was a problem that has plagued the Chinese nation for thousands of years. It is also a victory for humanity.

In 2020, all of China's nearly 100 million impoverished rural residents living below the current poverty line shook off poverty after eight years' efforts. All 832 poor counties have now been lifted out of poverty.

Eliminating poverty in a country with a population of 1.4 billion may sound too ambitious or be regarded as a mission impossible for some Western critics. But it is a mission that must be accomplished for China because achieving mutual prosperity is the goal of socialism. The Party has always come from the people and is rooted in the people. No individual or ethnic group should be left behind on the nation's way to a moderately prosperous society for all.

With the philosophy of putting people first, CPC members and government officials at all levels and the society have made concerted efforts to fight poverty. These efforts include releasing preferential tax policies, improving the use of anti-poverty funds, and establishing online platforms for selling agricultural products from poverty-stricken areas. It also includes launching workshops and recruitment campaigns to alleviate poverty, coordinating wealthy eastern regions to support impoverished western areas, and sending millions of cadres from government to these areas for the anti-poverty battle. These efforts are a manifestation of China's systematic advantage — the ability to mobilize resources and pool strengths to tackle critical issues.

Precision is key to the success of China's battle against poverty. The country precisely identifies real problems of different localities and individuals. It enables the government to take targeted measures to ensure substantive and sustainable outcomes. Localities across China have developed various industries to support employment and increase people's income according to local conditions, relocated those living in uninhabitable areas, and participated in pairing-up aid programs, among other measures.

China's poverty-relief success did not come easily. By the end of 2019, 5.51 million people were still living in poverty. The COVID-19 epidemic has added an unprecedented challenge to the country's efforts to lift those people out of poverty. However, the promise to the people had to be kept. A symposium on securing a decisive victory in poverty alleviation was held on March 6, the 300-day countdown for China to eradicate absolute poverty as promised. It demonstrated that the country never considered finding any excuse to retreat.

Because of these efforts, China will achieve the goals set in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ten years ahead of schedule. Its practice and exploration have proved that if a country can follow a people-first approach, draw concerted efforts, proceed from its development realities, and seek a targeted and practical solution, it will successfully find a poverty reduction path suiting its own conditions and needs.

Despite the achievement in poverty alleviation, China remains the biggest developing country globally. It still faces acute problems caused by unbalanced and inadequate development and onerous tasks of consolidating and expanding poverty alleviation achievements. For China, poverty alleviation is a success but not a full stop.

The country will improve the monitoring and assistance mechanism to prevent those who have shaken off poverty from falling back into destitution. It will work to beef up follow-up support for relocated people to ensure that they can settle down, stay employed, and steadily get rich and help families with semi-able-bodied members find jobs nearby to ensure their livelihood.

China's poverty alleviation cause has received a lot of support and assistance from the international community. The country has taken concrete actions and shared its experience and wisdom to contribute to global poverty reduction efforts.

Putting all the detailed measures aside, a glimpse of China's determination, persistence, and concerted efforts to protect every person's rights in pursuit of a happy life could give the world more reason to be confident in meeting challenges posed by poverty.

Extreme poverty is rising. The threat of famine looms. The world faces the biggest global recession in eight decades.

It is indispensable for countries to tackle this common challenge facing humanity with strong political wills, targeted policies, and close international cooperation. The international community must commit more decisively to working together and ensuring that no one across the globe is left behind along the path towards the world's final victory over poverty.

PMI

MANUFACTURING RECOVERY WEAKENS IN DECEMBER

CHINA'S manufacturing activity improved in December but at its weakest rate in three months as the economy recovered from the coronavirus pandemic while its trading partners struggled with rising infections, according to two surveys.

A monthly purchasing managers' index issued yesterday by a business magazine, Caixin, slipped to 53 from November's 54.9 on a 100-point scale on which numbers above 50 show activity expanding. A separate PMI by an official industry group, the China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing, declined to 51.9 from the previous month's 52.1.

China is the only major economy on track to record positive economic growth in 2020 while the United States and Europe struggle with rising case numbers that have prompted governments to re-impose travel and business controls.

Sub-indexes of exports and employment in both surveys rose but at a slower rate than December.

"We expect the economic recovery in the post-epidemic era



to continue for several months," economist Wang Zhe of the Caixin Insight Group said in a statement.

Caixin said a sub-indicator of business confidence in its survey dipped to a three-month low.

"We need to pay attention to the mounting pressure on costs" due to higher raw material prices, Wang said. That is "particularly important" as regulators decide how to withdraw economic stimulus. AP

HONG KONG

Gov't extends school closures until Lunar New Year

HONG Kong pushed back the re-opening of classrooms for more than a month as part of government measures to stamp out the spread of the coronavirus.

The suspension of in-person classes at kindergartens through high school, a restriction originally scheduled to expire Jan. 10, will be extended until the lunar new year holidays, which begin on Feb. 12, Education Secretary Kevin Yeung said during a briefing yesterday. The city reported 53 new cases for the day, 43 of which were local.

Six of yesterday's cases were untraceable, the lowest number since Nov. 19.

Hong Kong has been one of the most aggressive places worldwide to close schools despite research from the likes of the United Nations warning about the adverse consequences of doing so. Still, the city has continued to suspend classes as part of its arsenal to bring down case numbers and re-open its economy to travelers, particularly to those from mainland China.



Besides schools, the government will extend other social distancing measures by another two weeks until Jan. 20.

The city recently banned travelers from the U.K. in the wake of a more contagious strain of the coronavirus being detected there. An earlier effort to open up quarantine-free flights to and from Singapore — the first major air travel bubble — collapsed last

month after a resurgence of cases in Hong Kong.

Separately, Hong Kong reported that a pet cat tested positive for Covid-19 after its owner became infected by the virus. So far, eight dogs and eight cats have tested positive in the city, though the government said there's no evidence that pets are spreading the coronavirus to people. MDT/BLOOMBERG

NUCLEAR

Iran starts 20% uranium enrichment, seizes S.Korean tanker in strait

JON GAMBRELL
& ISABEL DEBRE, DUBAI

IRAN yesterday began enriching uranium up to 20% at an underground facility and seized a South Korean-flagged oil tanker in the crucial Strait of Hormuz, further escalating tensions in the Middle East between Tehran and the West.

The announcement of enrichment at Fordo came as fears arose that Tehran had MT Hankuk Chemi had been seized. Iran later acknowledged the seizure, alleging "oil pollution" sparked the move. However, hours earlier, Tehran had said a South Korean diplomat was due to travel there to negotiate over billions of dollars in its assets now frozen in Seoul.

The dual incidents come amid heightened tensions between Iran and the United States in the waning days of President Donald Trump's term in office, which saw the U.S. leader unilaterally withdraw from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers and set off months of escalating incidents between the two countries.

Iranian state television quoted spokesman Ali Rabiei as saying that President Hassan Rouhani had given the order for the move at the Fordo facility.

Iran's decision to begin enriching to 20% a decade ago nearly



In this 2019 file photo, a forklift carries a cylinder containing uranium hexafluoride gas for the purpose of injecting the gas into centrifuges in Iran's Fordo nuclear facility

brought an Israeli strike targeting its nuclear facilities, tensions that only abated with the 2015 atomic deal. A resumption of 20% enrichment could see that brinkmanship return as that level of purity is only a technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

Trump withdrew the U.S. unilaterally from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. In the time since, there have been a series of escalating incidents between the two countries.

Iran's decision comes after its parliament passed a bill, later approved by a constitutional wa-

tchdog, aimed at hiking enrichment to pressure Europe into providing sanctions relief. It also serves as pressure ahead of the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden, who has said he is willing to re-enter the nuclear deal.

Iran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency last week that it planned to take the step. The IAEA said yesterday that "agency inspectors have been monitoring activities" at Fordo and that its director-general Rafael Mariano Grossi planned to issue a report to member-nations of the U.N. organization later in the day.

Meanwhile, satellite data from MarineTraffic.com showed the MT Hankuk Chemi off Bandar Abbas, with no explanation as to the change in the vessel's path. It had been traveling from Jubail, Saudi Arabia, to Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates. The ship had been carrying an unknown chemical shipment, according to data-analysis firm Refinitiv.

Calls to South Korea's Foreign Ministry and the ship's listed owner, DM Shipping Co. Ltd. of Busan, South Korea, were not immediately answered after business hours yesterday. Iran did not acknowledge the vessel's location.

The United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations, an information exchange overseen by the British royal navy in the region, acknowledged an "interaction" between a merchant vessel and Iranian authorities in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of all the world's oil passes.

As a result, the UKMTO said the merchant vessel made an "alteration of course" north into Iran's territorial waters.

Cmdr. Rebecca Rebarich, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, said authorities there were aware and monitoring the situation.

Ambrey, a British security firm, reported the incident as an appa-

rent seizure. Dryad Global, another maritime security firm, said the ship's crew was 23 sailors from Indonesia and Myanmar.

Iran's announcement coincides with the anniversary of the U.S. drone strike killing Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad last year. That attack later saw Iran retaliate by launching a ballistic missile strike, injuring dozens of U.S. troops in Iraq. Tehran also accidentally shot down a Ukrainian passenger jet that night, killing all 176 people on board.

As the anniversary approached, the U.S. has sent B-52 bombers flying over the region and sent a nuclear-powered submarine into the Persian Gulf.

On Thursday, sailors discovered a limpet mine on a tanker in the Persian Gulf off Iraq near the Iranian border as it prepared to transfer fuel to another tanker owned by a company traded on the New York Stock Exchange. No one has claimed responsibility for the mining, though it comes after a series of similar attacks in 2019 near the Strait of Hormuz that the U.S. Navy blamed on Iran. Tehran denied being involved.

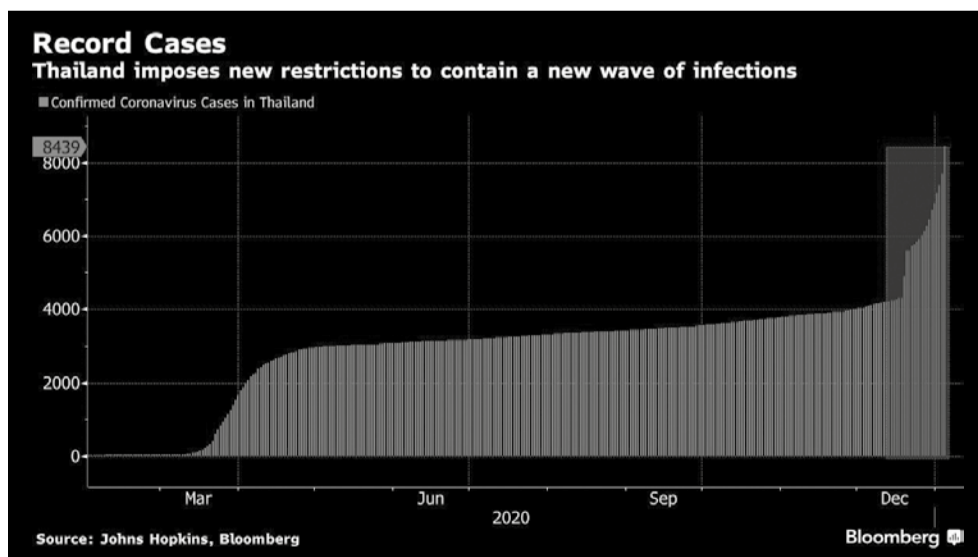
In November, an Iranian scientist who founded the country's military nuclear program two decades earlier was killed in an attack Tehran blames on Israel. AP

PANDEMIC

Thailand reports record daily cases as more curbs imposed

THAILAND reported 745 new coronavirus cases yesterday as a surge in infections prompted authorities to impose fresh curbs in some of the most-populous regions including capital Bangkok.

The latest tally, which included 729 local transmissions, took the nation's total caseload to 8,439, according to the Center for Covid-19 Situation Administration. More than 4,000 of those infections have been reported since the middle of December, when the new virus cluster was first detected among migrant workers, official data show. Total fatalities rose to 65 with the death of a 56-year-old man in Bangkok with underlying diseases.



The new wave of infections in Thailand, which was relatively successful in containing the pathogen after becoming the first country outside China to report the deadly virus, has

prompted authorities to close schools and temporarily shut some businesses including gyms, spas, pubs and bars in 28 provinces identified as high-risk areas. The rapid rise in cases wei-

ghed on the nation's stocks with the benchmark index tumbling as much as 1.7% before rebounding to close 1.3% higher.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha, who has held

off on a national lockdown, said yesterday the new measures will curb the spread of the virus, and the government may consider some steps to support the economy and businesses in the near term. Relief-measures may include an extension of the domestic travel subsidy and co-spending program, government spokesman Anucha Burapachaisri said.

Southeast Asia's second-biggest economy is expected to deteriorate further this year amid the resurgence in cases, according to a survey by Bangkok-based National Institute of Development Administration. The impact of Covid-19 may be even more deadly than in 2020, according to 48.1% of the 1,326 respon-

dents in the survey held between Dec. 24-25.

A meeting of the Center for Covid-19 Situation Administration panel chaired by Prayuth approved the extension of a national state of emergency until Feb. 28 to contain the outbreak, spokesman Taweewit Witsanuyotin said. The current state of emergency is set to expire on Jan. 15.

Once the order has been approved by the cabinet today, it would be the ninth extension since the initial order in March. The emergency rules allow the government to enforce mandatory quarantines and streamline disease-control plans without multiple approvals from various agencies. MDT/BLOOMBERG

AP PHOTO



Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, left, shakes hands with Vice President Dick Cheney (2006)

USA

Extraordinary warning to Trump by 10 former Pentagon chiefs

ROBERT BURNS,
WASHINGTON

IN an extraordinary rebuke of President Donald Trump, all 10 living former secretaries of defense are cautioning against any move to involve the military in pursuing claims of election fraud, arguing that it would take the country into "dangerous, unlawful and unconstitutional territory."

The 10 men, both Democrats and Republicans, signed on to an opinion article published Sunday in *The Washington Post* that implicitly questioned Trump's willingness to follow his Constitutional duty to peacefully relinquish power on Jan. 20. Following the Nov. 3 election and subsequent recounts in some states, as well as unsuccessful court challenges, the outcome is clear, they wrote, while not specifying Trump in the article.

"The time for questioning the results has passed; the time for the formal

counting of the electoral college votes, as prescribed in the Constitution and statute, has arrived," they wrote.

The former Pentagon chiefs warned against use of the military in any effort to change the outcome.

"Efforts to involve the U.S. armed forces in resolving election disputes would take us into dangerous, unlawful and unconstitutional territory," they wrote. "Civilian and military officials who direct or carry out such measures would be accountable, including potentially facing criminal penalties, for the grave consequences of their actions on our republic."

A number of senior military officers, including Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have said publicly in recent weeks that the military has no role in determining the outcome of U.S. elections and that their loyalty is to the Constitution, not to an individual leader or a political party.

The 10 former Pentagon leaders also warned in their *Post* article of the dangers of impeding a full and smooth transition at Defense Department prior to Inauguration Day as part of a transfer to power to President-elect Joe Biden. Biden has complained of efforts by Trump-appointed Pentagon officials to obstruct the transition.

Without mentioning a specific example, the former defense secretaries wrote that transfers of power "often occur at times of international uncertainty about U.S. national security policy and posture," adding, "They can be a moment when the nation is vulnerable to actions by adversaries seeking to take advantage of the situation."

Tensions with Iran represent just such a moment. Sunday marked one year since the U.S. killing of Qassem Soleimani, the top Iranian general; Iran has vowed to avenge the killing, and U.S. officials said in recent days that they are on heightened alert for poten-

tial Iranian attack on U.S. forces or interests in the Middle East.

In a further sign of U.S.-Iranian tension, the acting secretary of defense, Christopher Miller, announced yesterday [Macau time] that he has changed his mind about sending the Navy aircraft carrier, the USS *Nimitz*, home from the Middle East and instead will keep the vessel on duty. Just last week, Miller announced that he was sending the *Nimitz* home, a decision that had been opposed by senior military officers.

In reversing himself, Miller cited "recent threats issued by Iranian leaders against President Trump and other U.S. government officials." He did not elaborate, and the Pentagon did not respond to questions.

The opinion article in the *Post* was signed by Dick Cheney, William Perry, Donald Rumsfeld, William Cohen, Robert Gates, Leon Panetta, Chuck Hagel, Ash Carter, James Mattis and Mark Esper. Mattis was Trump's first defense secretary; he resigned in 2018 and was succeeded by Esper, who was fired just days after the Nov. 3 election.

The *Post* reported that the idea for writing the opinion piece began with a conversation between Cheney and Eric Edelman, a retired ambassador and former senior Pentagon official, about how Trump might seek to use the military in coming days. **AP**

this day in history

1985 ISRAEL ENDS MAJOR ETHIOPIAN RESCUE MISSION

Israel has airlifted thousands of Jewish Ethiopian refugees out of Sudan, it has emerged.

Operation Moses, which has been taking place in secret since 21 November 1984, has been suspended since news of the covert airlift became public.

Press leaks have forced the Israeli Government to admit that about 8,000 Ethiopians fleeing famine-struck Ethiopia have now arrived in Israel.



The Arab world has been angered by Khartoum's decision to co-operate with Israel and allow charter planes to fly from Sudan - which does not recognise the country.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, has insisted that Operation Moses will continue.

Jewish people from Ethiopia are said to be able to trace their lineage back almost 3,000 years and may be the descendants of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

They are a minority in Ethiopia where the major religions are Christianity and Islam.

The Jewish community has suffered discrimination, particularly in recent years under Marxist President Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam who prohibited the practice of Judaism and the teaching of Hebrew.

The operation began following reports last September that more Jewish refugees from Ethiopia were arriving in Sudan, and many were dying from malnutrition.

Some of them, who now live in Israel, claim that details of Operation Moses was leaked by Israelis who have been alarmed at the number of Jewish refugees from Ethiopia arriving in the country.

Until recently they were not given Jewish status and public opinion in Israel on the government's motives for launching Operation Moses are mixed.

Some believe its reasons are humanitarian, but others think the refugees from Ethiopia are simply the latest immigrants to settle in Israel and raise the numbers now living there.

There are now between 10,000 and 15,000 Jewish people from Ethiopia living in Israel.

Estimates suggest there is still a similar figure living in famine-hit villages in the Ethiopian province of Gondar and 1,000 in refugee camps in Sudan.

Jewish people from Ethiopia who live in Israel claim the publicity surrounding the operation has endangered the safety of refugees in Sudan.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

It is estimated that around 4,000 Jewish people from Ethiopia died making the journey by foot to Sudan.

The US completed the airlift when it launched Operation Joshua in the same year.

In 1991, Israel launched Operation Solomon and airlifted 15,000 Ethiopian Jewish people.

There are now around 80,000 Jewish people from Ethiopia living in Israel, but they have faced difficulties assimilating into society.

According to a government report in 1999, many cannot write Hebrew and the unemployment rate among the Ethiopian community in Israel is at least three times the national average.

Coming from a subsistence economy some found it hard to find work in an industrialised country.

But nearly all young Ethiopian males have been assimilated into the army during national service.

An independent report has said that Jewish people from Ethiopia were "no longer viewed as a curiosity, but as a familiar part of Israel's ethnic mosaic".

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Being intrigued by new people and new cultures will energize you to a point that you might finally understand what you really need to be doing with your life. The blinders are coming off.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
 Step back, slow down, and try to keep yourself busy just having a good time. Take a long lunch or a long walk - whatever will keep you peacefully distracted.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
 Go ahead and take the good advice of friends and associates. Who cares if that means they'll know how much influence they have over you?

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Eloquence is right up there, too: The right words will always be right at the tip of your tongue, and you will be in plenty of situations to make the most of your wit.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Your brain is a big and vital organ - and it's nowhere near even half full! Spend some time learning something new today, and you'll be doing something very good for yourself.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Too many variables are at play, and the chances that you will emerge from the arrangement without losses are very slim. Define your boundaries today.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Your time is extremely valuable. Every minute of your day is as good as money, especially right now, when you are just so busy. Who deserves this valuable commodity more than your family and friends?

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 All you need to do is avoid conflict. So try to resist your natural urge to go against the crowd, because it could ruffle a few feathers. Just go with the flow and play nice.

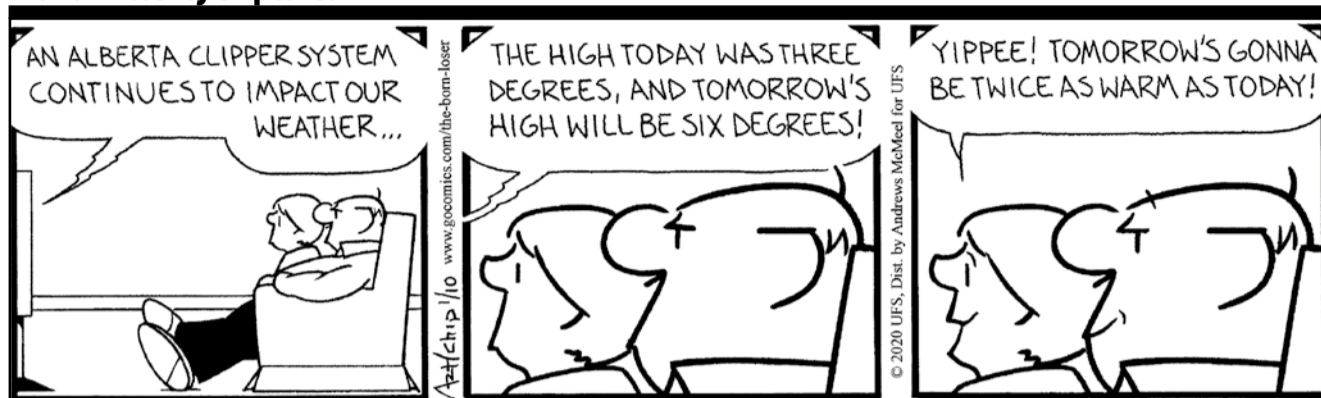
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Today, despite the tension that you can sense brewing under the surface, you should just focus on having fun. The impending drama is not something you created, and it is absolutely not your responsibility.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 A door is opening in your career, but it might require you to leave your family for a while. Travel is something that you usually enjoy quite a bit, but this time it could be a lot more work than you were expecting.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 The patterns you have developed in your social life are becoming a little bit boring - what you need right now is a new cast of characters, and a new agenda for fun.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Today, if you let yourself get drawn into a mystery, you will be giving this mystery power over you. Don't try to figure out why things are happening the way they are happening.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-11	-2	clear
Harbin	-25	-18	clear
Tianjin	-8	-2	clear
Urumqi	-21	-18	foggy
Xi'an	-2	5	cloudy
Lhasa	-3	11	cloudy
Chengdu	5	8	overcast
Chongqing	7	9	drizzle
Kunming	6	21	clear
Nanjing	2	5	overcast
Shanghai	6	9	overcast
Wuhan	1	6	cloudy
Hangzhou	6	10	drizzle
Taipei	15	19	drizzle
Guangzhou	15	21	cloudy
Hong Kong	17	21	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	0	sleet
Frankfurt	0	3	sleet
Paris	0	2	sleet
London	0	4	sleet
New York	1	9	overcast

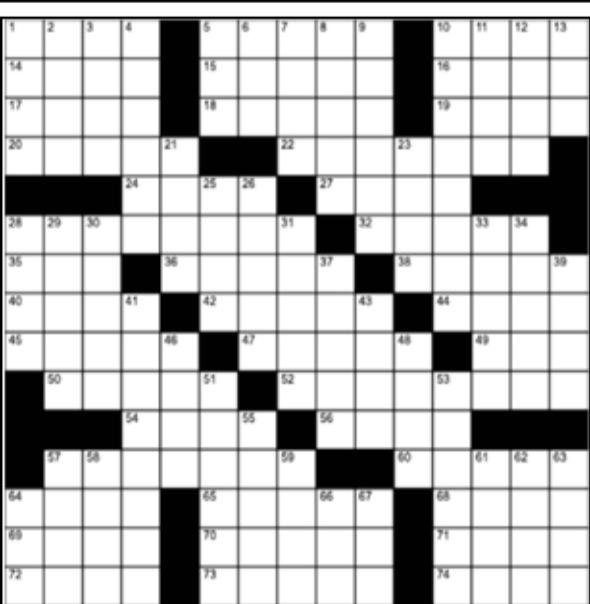
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Comic Fox; 5- That is to say...; 10- Prejudice; 14- Actress McClurg; 15- Best; 16- Snakes; 17- Highly excited; 18- Mystery writer Marsh; 19- Lip-curling facial expression; 20- Gift of the Magi; 22- Rug rat; 24- 1994 Costner role; 27- Knock off; 28- Root of Apium graveolens; 32- Group character; 35- Monetary unit of Vietnam; 36- Course with pluses and minuses; 38- Reddish dye; 40- Inner drive; 42- Stigma; 44- Greasy; 45- Unable to see; 47- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 49- Fair-hiring abbr.; 50- Metal fastener; 52- Helipolis-shaped design; 54- Honolulu's island; 56- Clairvoyant; 57- Castrated male horse; 60- Movie critic Roger; 64- Hawk; 65- "Amadeus" director Forman; 68- That's ___; 69- Cut-price retail event; 70- Meat; 71- Mission control gp.; 72- Stepped; 73- Gossipmonger; 74- K-6;

DOWN: 1- 500 sheets; 2- Jittery; 3- Designer Christian; 4- Extent; 5- Charged particle; 6- Drinking cup; 7- Coup d'___; 8- "Farewell!"; 9- Dried strip of egg dough; 10- Blatant advertising; 11- Got it; 12- Impersonator; 13- Georgia, once; Abbr.; 21- Injure; 23- Go out with; 25- Narrow inlets; 26- Singer LaBelle; 28- Great Lakes fish; 29- Viscounts' superiors; 30- Reasoning; 31- Total disorder; 33- Willow; 34- Grain stores; 37- Nasal cavity; 39- Russian no.; 41- Registered; 43- Mudville complement; 46- With "eye," unerring aim; 48- Busy as ___; 51- Capricious humor; 53- Sophisticated; 55- Put together; 57- Stuff; 58- Cockney greeting; 59- Small secluded valley; 61- Airline to Tel Aviv; 62- Stand; 63- Side; 64- Concorde, e.g.; 66- Bran source; 67- Musical style with similarities to reggae;

Yesterday's solution

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



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



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\$10,500/mth 824 ft² 1 1/2 1 1/2

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

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

PROPERTY LIST

- [Taipa] *Wa Bao* 2 1/2 2 1/2
 1,071 ft² **\$7,995,000** (ref: 18115568)
- [Taipa] *Taipa Village (2 units)* 4 1/2 2 1/2
 1,404 ft² **\$8,380,000** (ref: 19096006)
- [Taipa] *Taipa Village* 2 1/2 1 1/2
 630 ft² **\$12,500/mth** (ref: n/a)
- [Taipa] *Macau Riviera* 2 1/2 2 1/2
 866 ft² **\$15,000/mth** (ref: 20111001)

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GLOBAL STOCKS RISE AFTER WALL STREET ENDS 2020 AT NEW HIGHS

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

GLOBAL stock markets and U.S. futures rose yesterday on 2021's first trading day, boosted by optimism about coronavirus vaccines after Wall Street ended the year on a new high.

London and Frankfurt opened higher while Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul advanced. Tokyo declined.

Optimism about vaccines has outweighed concern about rising infection numbers in the United States and some other countries and conflict over economic aid in Washington, said Stephen Innes of Axi in a report.

Traders are "perhaps a bit over-eager" but believe vaccines will "provide the ultimate economic kick-start, offering a massive booster shot to corporate profits," said Innes.

In early trading, the FTSE 100 in London rose 1.5% to 6,556.13 while the DAX in Frankfurt added 1.1% to 13,869.71. The CAC 40 in France gained 1.4% to 5,628.05.

On Wall Street, futures for the benchmark S&P 500 index and



South Korean financial officers wearing face masks celebrate the opening for the Year 2021 trading outside of the Korea Exchange in Seoul

Dow Jones Industrial Averages were 0.4% higher.

On Thursday, the S&P rose 0.6% in 2020's final trading day. It ended the year up 16.3%, or a total return of about 18.4% with dividends.

The Dow rose 0.7% to a record. The Nasdaq composite added 0.1%.

In Asia yesterday, the Shanghai Composite Index rose 0.9% to 3,502.96 and the Hang Seng

in Hong Kong added 0.9% to 27,472.81.

The Nikkei 225 in Tokyo lost 0.7% to 27,258.38 after Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said a state of emergency was under consideration for the Japanese capital and three surrounding prefectures due to surging virus caseloads.

Suga called on restaurants and bars to close by 8 p.m. and said it would be difficult to restart a tra-

vel promotion program that was suspended last month. He said the government would expedite approval of coronavirus vaccines and begin providing injections in February.

The Kospi in Seoul rose 2.5% to 2,944.45 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 added 1.5% to 6,684.20.

India's Sensex advanced 0.4% to 48,055.61. Southeast Asian markets also rose.

Vaccine development by U.S., European and Chinese producers has helped to buoy optimism that a return to normal might be closer after the global economy's worst decline since the 1930s.

The United States and Britain have approved Pfizer Inc.'s vaccine and Britain approved a second vaccine from AstraZeneca and Oxford University. China has given the greenlight for its first domestically developed vaccine. Others are being tested.

Governments might throw less stimulus at their economies than last year, but policy is "still at a very loose setting," which supports stock prices and lending, said Kerry Craig of JP Morgan Asset Management in a report.

"Investors should look through the bumpier start to the new economic cycle and focus on the improved earnings outlook," Craig said.

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude gained 95 cents to \$49.47 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose 12 cents on Thursday to \$48.52. Brent crude, used to price international oils, added \$1.16 to \$52.96 per barrel in London. It rose 17 cents the previous session to \$51.80.

The dollar declined to 102.80 yen from Thursday's 103.27. The euro rose to \$1.2282 from \$1.2211. AP

AD

合夥人 PARTNERS:

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

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FOOTBALL

Man City surges to win over Chelsea in Premier League

ROB HARRIS, LONDON

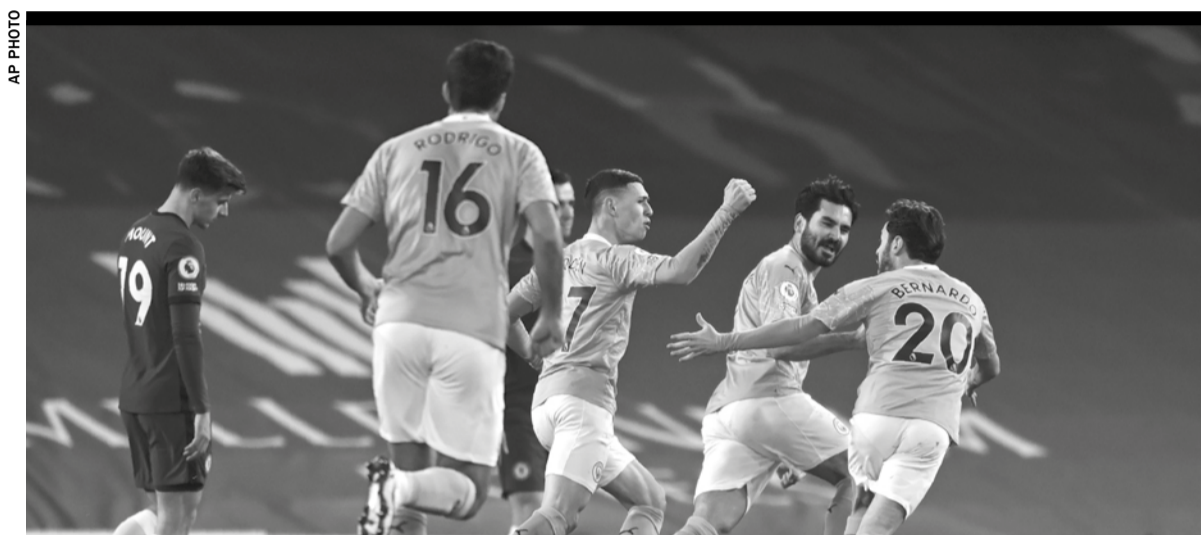
CHELSEA 1, MAN CITY 3

MANCHESTER City left Chelsea in disarray by sweeping to a 3-1 victory yesterday [Macau time] with a ruthless attacking display that consigned Frank Lampard's team to a fourth loss in its past six Premier League games.

Ilkay Gündogan, Phil Foden and Kevin De Bruyne scored in a devastating 16-minute first-half spell as City rose to fifth in the standings despite coronavirus cases depleting the squad.

Chelsea is only three points behind City but has played two games more and the manner of this defeat will be alarming to notoriously impatient owner Roman Abramovich.

"Everyone a month ago was saying we can win the league," Lampard said. "I was pretty sure in the fact that where we're at, in terms of a rebuild, the ban, new players in the team, the youth, that



City's Ilkay Gundogan, second right, celebrates after scoring the opening goal

there were periods of pain we were going to go through as a club and individuals. It was a painful first half for the players."

The absence of any crowd due to coronavirus restrictions spared Lampard from any negativity from his own fans at least.

City had been missing five players due to coronavirus infections and there was off-field tu-

mult in the buildup to the game caused by defender Benjamin Mendy breaching pandemic restrictions on inter-household mixing by holding a New Year's Eve party.

With Ederson in isolation recovering from COVID-19, goalkeeper Zack Steffen started his first Premier League game. It was a nervy start for the 25-year-old

American, earning a booking for handling outside the penalty area after five minutes.

But thanks to City's scintillating forays forward and Chelsea's attacking deficiencies, Steffen wasn't tested.

Instead it was opposite number Edouard Mendy picking the ball out of his net three times.

In the 18th minute, Foden re-

ceived a pass from De Bruyne and teed up Gündogan on the turn to net his third goal in four games.

City was in devastating form, orchestrated as so often by De Bruyne with less than three minutes between the opening two goals.

An initial cross from the Belgium playmaker was intercepted by Thiago Silva, but he regained the ball to set up Foden for the second. It was a slick final touch from Foden that allowed him to beat Mendy at his near post.

"We conceded two really poor goals back to back in the game," Lampard said. "I felt it knocked us, and that we didn't react as well as I'd want. Serious lessons in the first half. Good character in the second half but the game was done."

The third was started and completed by De Bruyne. He headed to Sterling to launch a breakaway down half the length of the pitch unchallenged before hitting the goal frame with a shot. By that time, De Bruyne had arrived to meet the rebound in the 34th minute, scoring on the day the playmaker was deployed as the central striker.

"A little bizarre in the beginning — I've done it a couple of times in my career," he said. "Obviously there are a lot of strikers, forward players who are out. The coach asked me to do this job so I tried to do it as best as possible, and it is good we won in this way." MDT/AP

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OPINION

Our Desk

Julie Zhu



HOW MUCH OF A 'SHAM' IS A 'SHAM MARRIAGE'?

In October 2019, the Court of First Instance issued a three-year suspended imprisonment sentence to a "couple" because the court had found them guilty of forging documents in order to register their marriage in Macau.

The couple was composed of a mainland man and a Macau woman.

They first registered their marriage in mainland China. Afterwards, the man applied to immigrate to Macau using "family reunion" as his basis for the move.

During the court proceeding, witnesses who investigated the case said that, at the man's house, they could not find any items belonging or relating to the woman, his wife. What they did find was a receipt indicating that the man had taken a payment from the woman. In addition, the couple's WeChat conversation records indicated that the couple's marital status was fake.

The city's identification authority and police authority have always cracked down on "sham marriages," with cases frequently reported during the police authority's routine press conferences.

According to police information, married couples sometimes divorce so that one of them may marry a Macau local resident, therefore becoming eligible to get a Macau ID, and then divorce again, only to remarry with the previous "real" spouse. Eventually, this could allow for an entire family to obtain Macau IDs. In some cases, individuals pay a commission to an "agent" who will match a Macau local resident with the client, helping the latter to obtain a Macau ID. There are other related types of schemes in addition to these tactics.

According to Macau law, the government authority normally charges suspects with document forgery under law No.6/2004 when illegal entry, illegal staying or deportation are involved.

But how much of a "sham" are these sham marriages actually? In order to answer this question, I must pose another one first: do we believe in platonic love?

"Platonic love is a special emotional and spiritual relationship between two people who love and admire one another because of common interests, a spiritual connection and similar world-views. It does not involve any type of sexual involvement," an article from Psychology Today says.

What if these "unauthentically" married couples were engaged in a platonic relationship? That could be one way of looking at it.

However, if we forget about the Platonic Love sophistry for these cases, and instead focus on the administrative procedure of these couples' marriage registrations, then I wonder, should anybody be put behind bars for these marriages?

Law No.6/2004, article 18, says: "those with intent to hinder the effectiveness of this law, forge ID cards or other official documents to prove identity, forge passports and other travel documents or any other statutory documents required to enter or stay in the Macau SAR, or who forge a permit to stay in the Macau SAR shall be sentenced to two to eight years' imprisonment." This is the article frequently used by the government authority to charge suspects with "sham marriage" accusations.

Article No.19 of the same law says "anyone who intends to evade the effect of this law and make a false statement or false certification regarding identity, marital status, or other qualifications granted to him or others by law to a public authority of a civil servant performing his duties shall be sentenced to a maximum of three years in prison."

However, when all documents are official, duly issued by government authorities, how come these individuals are the accused ones? The government "married" them and "certified" their marriage.

MALAYSIA CORONER RULES OUT OTHERS IN FRENCH-IRISH TEEN DEATH

A Malaysian coroner ruled that the death of a French-Irish teen whose body was found near a Malaysian jungle resort where she vanished while on vacation was most likely a misadventure that didn't involve other people.

Coroner Maimoonah Aid ruled out homicide, natural death and suicide and said Nora Anne Quoirin likely got lost after leaving her family's cottage on her own.

The 15-year-old disappeared at the Dusun eco-resort in southern Negeri Sembilan state on Aug. 4, 2019, a day after the fa-

mily arrived for a vacation. After a massive search, her naked body was found on Aug. 13 beside a stream on a palm oil estate about 2.5 kilometers from the resort.

Police believed she climbed out of the cottage window on her own, with no evidence of any foul play. But the teen's parents said she was likely kidnapped because she had mental and physical disabilities and wouldn't have wandered off on her own.

The coroner described the family's suggestions as "nothing more than probably theory" with no evidence.

THE BUZZ

UK JUDGE REFUSES EXTRADITION OF WIKILEAKS FOUNDER ASSANGE

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

A British judge yesterday rejected the United States' request to extradite WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to face espionage charges, saying he was likely to kill himself if held under harsh U.S. prison conditions.

District Judge Vanessa Baraitser rejected allegations that Assange is being prosecuted for political reasons or would not receive a fair trial in the United States. But she said his precarious mental health would likely deteriorate further under the conditions of "near total isolation" he would face in U.S. prison.

"I find that the mental condition of Mr. Assange is such that it would be oppressive to extradite him to the United States of America," the judge said.

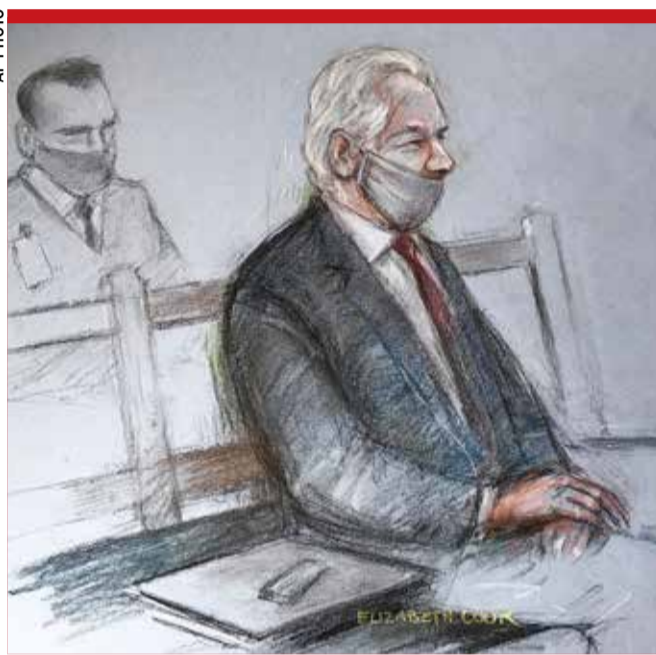
She said Assange was "a depressed and sometimes despairing man" who had the "intellect and determination" to circumvent any suicide prevention measures taken by American prison authorities.

The U.S. government said it would appeal the decision. Assange's lawyers said they would ask for his release from a London prison where he has been held for more than a year-and-a-half at a bail hearing tomorrow.

Assange, who sat in the dock at London's Central Criminal Court for the ruling, wiped his brow as the decision was announced. His partner Stella Moris, with whom he has two young sons, wept.

Assange's American lawyer, Barry Pollack, said the legal team was "enormously gratified by the U.K. court's decision denying extradition."

"The effort by the United States to prosecute Julian Assange and seek his extradition was ill-advised from the start," he said. "We hope



This is a court artist sketch of Julian Assange appearing at the Old Bailey in London for the ruling in his extradition case, yesterday

that after consideration of the U.K. court's ruling, the United States will decide not to pursue the case further."

The ruling marks a dramatic moment in Assange's years-long legal battles in Britain — though likely not its final chapter.

"The effort by the US to prosecute Assange and seek his extradition was ill-advised from the start.

BARRY POLLACK
LAWYER

U.S. prosecutors have indicted Assange on 17 espionage charges and one charge of computer misuse over WikiLeaks' publication of leaked military and diplomatic documents a decade ago. The charges carry a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison.

Lawyers for the 49-year-old Australian argue that he was acting as a journalist and is entitled to First Amendment protections of freedom of speech for publishing leaked documents that exposed U.S. military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The judge, however, said Assange's actions, if proven, would "amount to offenses in this jurisdiction that would not be protected by his right to freedom of speech."

The defense also argued during a three-week hearing in the fall that extradition threatens Assange's human rights because he risks "a grossly disproportionate sentence" and detention in "draconian and inhumane conditions" that would exacerbate his severe depression and other mental health problems.

The judge agreed that U.S. prison conditions would be oppressive. She accepted evidence from expert witnesses that Assange had a depressive disorder and an autism spectrum disorder.

"I accept that oppression as a bar to extradition requires a high threshold. ... However, I am satisfied that, in these harsh conditions, Mr. Assange's mental health would deteriorate causing him to commit suicide with the 'single minded determination' of his autism spectrum disorder," the judge said in her ruling. MDT/AP



India Hundreds of Tibetans in exile braved the rain and cold in India's northern city of Dharamsala, where the exiled government is based, and voted for their new political leader. In this first phase of voting, two candidates for the top government post of president will be shortlisted, including 90 parliamentarians. The second and final round of voting will take place in April.



Belgium is stepping up its coronavirus vaccination campaign in nursing homes, where more than half of all COVID-19 deaths in the country have been recorded. Amid strong criticism over its slowness in deploying vaccines, Health Minister Frank Vandenbroucke said yesterday that 87,000 shots will be given every week to nursing home residents and staff.

Rome A Spanish-flagged humanitarian ship was seeking a port of safety for 265 migrants its crew rescued from the Mediterranean Sea in the last few days. The Open Arms charity tweeted that its vessel had safely brought aboard 96 migrants who had been adrift in a wooden boat with without life vests in international waters. It said the passengers, most of them from Eritrea, included two women and 17 minors and were suffering from hypothermia.

Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan resumed their years-long negotiations this weekend over the controversial dam Ethiopia is building on the Blue Nile, officials said. The negotiations have centered on the filling and operation of the giant dam. Key questions remain about how much water Ethiopia will release downstream if a multi-year drought occurs and how the three countries will resolve any future disputes. Ethiopia has rejected binding arbitration at the final stage of the project.