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AP PHOTO



**China's** Hebei is enforcing stricter control measures following a further rise in coronavirus cases in the province adjacent to the capital Beijing that's due to host events for next year's Winter Olympics. The National Health Commission yesterday reported another 20 cases in Hebei, bringing the province's total to 39 since Sunday. Residents of areas classified as medium or high risk, primarily in the cities of Shijiazhuang and Xingtai, were being tested and barred from going out.

**Thailand** is planning to expand testing to thousands of factories in a province next to Bangkok as it reported 365 new cases around the country yesterday and one new death. Authorities have focused their efforts on migrant workers mainly in the seafood industry in Samut Sakhon province that has been the epicenter of the new outbreak. They're also trying to trace itinerant gamblers who travel widely and are blamed for a second major hotspot outside Bangkok.

AP PHOTO



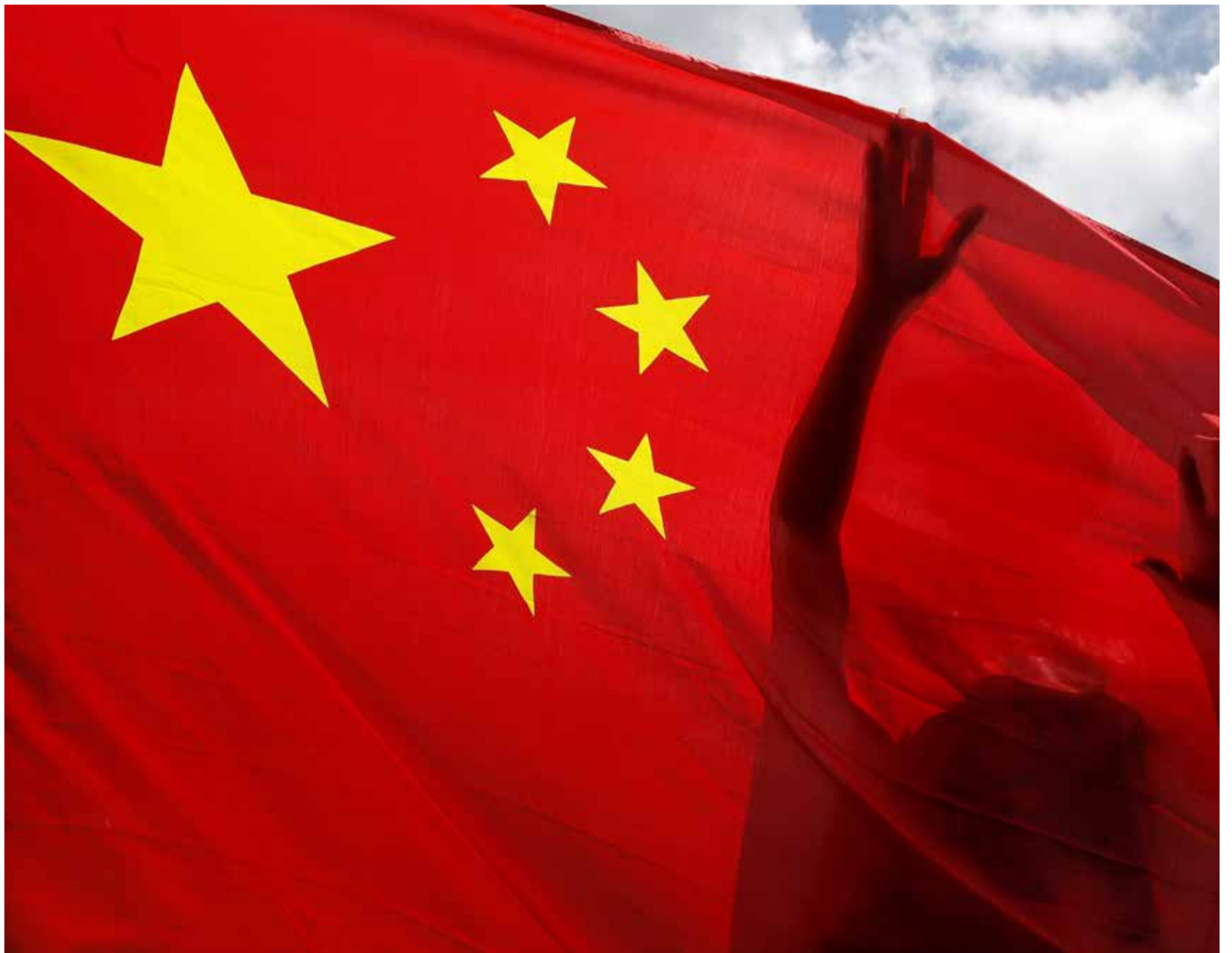
**Japan** Tokyo yesterday reported a daily record of 1,591 coronavirus cases as the national government prepares to declare a state of emergency this week to cope with a new wave of infections. Those needing critical care in the capital also reached a record 113 people, according to the metropolitan government. Toshio Nakagawa, head of the Japan Medical Association, called the situation "extremely serious" but stopped short of criticizing PM Yoshihide Suga for acting too slow to contain the latest outbreak.

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CITIZENS AIRLINES

**STRANDED RESIDENTS MAKING PLAN B FOR PRIVATE CHARTER FLIGHTS**

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# RETURNEES STRANDED IN EUROPE MAKING PLAN B FOR CHARTER FLIGHTS

HONEY TSANG

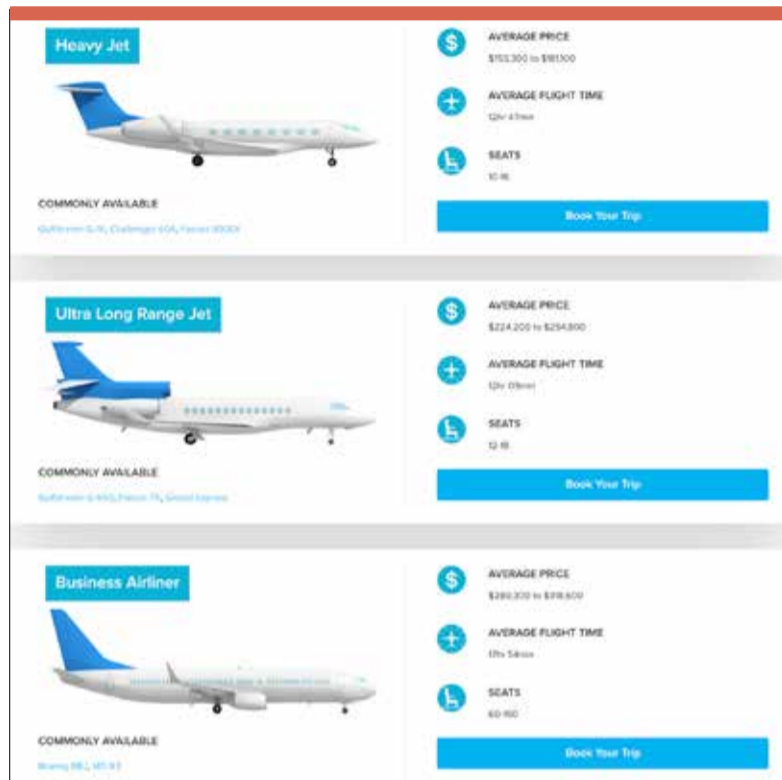
**I**N light of exiguous Macau-bound flight options, some edgy flyers overseas have taken it upon themselves to arrange a charter flight, hoping to return to Macau from Portugal by mid-January.

A social media post regarding the arrangement of a direct charter flight from Lisbon to Macau — scheduled to take off on January 11 — was published yesterday on the Facebook page of the International Ladies Club of Macau (ILCM).

Luisa Empis de Bragança, a Macau citizen who has been living in the city for 19 years but is now stranded in Europe, initiated the plan. She has been asking for a quotation for a private jet since December last year, when she went to Europe for personal matters.

"I want to get back to Macau, that's where I've lived," she told the Times about the rationale for deploying a charter flight yesterday in a phone interview.

She also reserved two seats on the Amsterdam-Tokyo route for January 20 and the Tokyo-Ma-



Screenshot of a private jet operator's estimate for a Macau-London flight in January

cau route operated by Air Macau on January 21 — one of the few routes by far for stranded passengers in Europe to come back to Macau by this month, according to the Tourism Crisis

Management Office (GGCT).

Bragança said that around 20 people were interested in taking the charter flight, but they are now prioritizing this route the government recommended earlier this

week, predominately driven by its relatively lower price.

"We gathered some friends. We had a Whatsapp group and we discussed alternatives [to return to Macau]," Bragança spoke of their challenging moments after Taiwan decided to suspend all transit flights through its airports since January 1, in response to a discovery of the first imported case of mutated coronavirus strain within the territory.

Ever since, she and many more suddenly found themselves stranded in Europe, without practical flight options to come back — as Taiwan no longer functions as a transit hub for returnees.

Bragança is now regarding the charter flight as a "Plan B," just in case the "Plan A" of Amsterdam to Macau routes falls through.

"In these pandemic times, we always have to have Plan A and Plan B on hand," she said.

According to Bragança, the

charter flight, if it comes to fruition, will accommodate a total of 32 passengers and charge every passenger around USD7,100, or MOP57,000, for the one-way journey — which Bragança said is not a "big difference" compared to the MOP45,000 she paid for business class seats on the flights from Amsterdam to Macau via Tokyo.

### Around 20 people were interested in taking the charter flight

According to the website of evoJets, another provider offering charter flights, a direct flight for 35 passengers from Lisbon to Macau would cost up

to USD280,700.

Meanwhile, the Times is aware that similar initiatives were also launched by a few more residents.

The GGCT confirmed with the Times earlier this week that they will soon touch base with people in Europe, and advise them of the flight arrangements of the Amsterdam-Tokyo and Tokyo-Macau flights, a circumvention that will take passengers around 24 hours.

# Retailers eyeing an influx of mainland tourists to drive revenue in mid-Jan

HONEY TSANG

**R**etailers are pinning hopes on an influx of Chinese visitors to Macau in the middle of January, most of whom are expected to come for Lunar New Year shopping activities, to push receipts to new heights.

The rosy picture anticipated by local retailers comes after the government released promising tourist statistics on January 5. Macau registered a record daily number of 30,747 visitor arrivals over the last 11 months, as of December 31.

Lo Wang Chun, Vice Director of the Macau Association of Retailers



& Tourism Services, told TDM yesterday, "Receipts generated from local retail industry increased by over 20%, month to month, in December last year."

He attributed the uptick in retail performance to the city's numerous

discounts and promotions towards the end of last year, as many retailers were eager to "clear the stock."

"We saw so many attractive deals in the malls with up to 70% discounts, or even, buy-one-get-one-free deals," he added.

He anticipates that the retail business will be given a stronger shot in the arm in mid-January, as he projects that there will be an influx of tourists coming to the city to purchase gifts or groceries to gear up for the Lunar New Year in February.

He forecasts that mainland arrivals in mid-January will be around 15% to 20% more than those registered during the New Year holiday.

"The spending power of mainland tourists to Macau has not reduced. The only change is that they are more cautious about what they spend

on," Lo stressed.

There are still many tourists in China who have not been on a vacation for a long time since the Covid-19 outbreak. Given the lowered room rate and stable Covid-19 situation in Macau, Lo believes Macau

will be top of the mind for most Mainland holidaymakers.

Macau drew an average daily volume of 21,242 visitor arrivals during the New Year holiday, with the majority of them, or 19,629, being mainland visitors.

## THE WORST IS OVER FOR LOCAL F&B INDUSTRY

**T**HE worst has likely passed for Macau's food and beverage (F&B) industry as it is experiencing a robust rebound, with some vendors even claiming that their business revenues are already at 60-70% of pre-pandemic levels. Businesses no longer need to resort to reducing manpower to save their operation from going under. President of the Macau Catering Industry Association Lei lam Leong told TDM that

the termination of the subsidy program has not been considered as the last straw for the city's F&B businesses, however. "The monthly payroll for employees' salary could easily surpass the total amount of the financial aid [granted by the government]," he explained, adding that the scheme was only playing a "support" role to help local small and mid-size enterprises (SMEs) ride out the storm.

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CITIZEN OF CHINA

# Majority foster sense of affinity with the motherland: survey

JULIE ZHU

A record number of teenage students at the secondary school level say they have a sense of affinity with the motherland, according to a survey recently conducted by the General Association of Chinese Students of Macau and the Macau Youth Research Association.

In 2020, the two organizations interviewed 1,333 middle school students, all of whom were studying in full-day programs, having eventually collected 1,258 valid questionnaires.

By carrying out the survey, the two associations found that an increased number of local middle school students have a sense of affinity with the motherland and with Macau, heightening their sense of national pride and identity.

"Approximately 85% of Macau secondary school students highly agree or agree with the expression 'I am a citizen of China,' the highest percentage in the past 10 years. 99.9% of Macau students highly agree or agree with the expression 'I'm a citizen of Macau.' This figure is the highest ever since the first edition of the survey," the poll concluded.

The interviewees were asked to



give an opinion on the following statements: 'national identity is very important to me;' and 'Macau identity is very important to me.' Over 70% of the respondents said that they "highly agree" or "agree" regarding the two statements, both also have high records since 2007, when the first

survey of this kind was conducted.

"Nearly 70% of the secondary school students said that they would execute their right to vote. It is the first time that this specific index increased historically, representing an 8% growth compared to 2019," the

associations concluded.

The students were asked to describe their attitude towards the statement "country should [be] establish[ed] first then families can be established; no country, no families."

"75% of Macau secondary school students strongly endor-

sed the statement or moderately endorsed the statement, with only 12% of Macau secondary school students disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement," according to the report.

About 70% of them endorse the SAR government's protection of national security, and 3.2% disagree or highly disagree regarding the topic.

"In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic swept the world. Generally speaking, secondary school students in Macau highly praise the country's anti-pandemic effectiveness, anti-pandemic spirit and the state's correct leadership. In the prospects for the economic recovery of countries around the world, Macau secondary schools' students have the most confidence in our country's economic recovery and the confidence is far more than that of other countries.

The students are highly satisfied with the efficiency of the government's pandemic countermeasure effects and highly praise the administration's pandemic countermeasures," the report says.

According to the two associations, through data analysis, researchers suggest that the Macau government and other concerned departments should unremittingly maintain and continue creating a patriotic and Macau-loving environment in the city.

Other suggestions include for Macau to continue fostering students' independent thinking, rational judgement and social responsibility to the country and to the SAR.

## ROLLOUT: Online section contributes to larger, broader audience

RENATO MARQUES

THE biennial dance film festival in Macau, ROLLOUT, which was inaugurated in 2016, is currently hosting its third festival.

This edition was the first to include a program with both online and offline activities in a bid from the organizers to avoid the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which makes the physical participation of people not based in Macau almost impossible.

The co-curator of the Festival, Mary Wong, told the Times that the inclusion of online activities in this year's edition had a positive effect upon the Festival, as it meant organizers were able to include not only a larger audience but also a broader one, allowing the participation of people physically very

far from Macau, who under normal conditions would not have been able to join the screenings and other events.

According to Wong, the screenings that were already held were attended mainly by local audiences, comprised of artists, practitioners and students in the fields of dance and filmmaking.

"We are still tabulating the statistics of the online and offline attendees, as the festival is still ongoing, but we are happy to say that the online screenings we held this year certainly allowed more interactions with our international submitters and audience, which was not as prominently shown in our previous editions," Wong said. "With our online screenings taking place this year, our international submitters, finalists, and selections have brought



in [to the Festival] a whole new global audience online. We are expecting both online and offline audiences to grow as more options are available. We also expect more discussions from the audience, as the Festival already reached [some maturity] in the third edition, but we will only know the outcome as the Festival proceeds," she added.

The unexpected increase in online audiences has already promoted developments in the Festival, unveiling that it has inspired the organizers to create an

online archive of ROLLOUT, which will gradually develop starting from February this year.

The co-curator noted that the biggest challenge of this year's festival was thinking about how the influence of the pandemic shifted communications within the art sphere online and how the Festival could accommodate such transformations.

"With geographical restrictions already in place before the festival took place, we planned to take our usual sharing and discus-

sions online. For this festival, we call them Satellite Events [...] we will showcase dance films made by Macau artists in some of them," she explained.

The organizers have already hosted an online exchange screening with DanceScreen Collective Taiwan, and will be having an online conversation with Cinemovement Singapore and another exchange screening with "Today's Special" from Guangzhou.

"These events prove that even with border restrictions, the work of Macau dance filmmakers can still be shown in other cities, and can also [encourage] the local audience to interact more with the international dance film scene," Wong remarked.

The third edition of ROLLOUT is taking place until January 31. According

to the organizers, this year, the Dance Film Festival received over 1,100 submissions from a total of 89 countries and regions.

Together with 36 dance films selected from the special collections curated by ROLLOUT's network partners, a total of 151 films will be screened at Casa Garden from January 1 to January 10.

On the last of the series of screenings at the Casa Garden venue, the 28 awards finalist films short-listed for the ROLLOUT Jury Award, Jury Recommendation Awards, Audience Choice Award, and Innovation Award will be listed for the final awards.

Besides the Casa Garden, the Festival program makes use of two other venues, including the historical Cinema Alegria and the Macau University of Science and Technology Movie Hall.



**NAM VAN PLAN**

# GOV'T TO PROCEED WITH CONTROVERSIAL COURT HOUSE PROJECT

ANTHONY LAM

**O**NLY one out of 23 members of the Urban Planning Committee called for reconsideration of the recently proposed Nam Van Lake development plan, marking a landslide victory for the government to go ahead with the construction of a new 50-meter-tall court house.

The Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) released the draft plans for land plots C1-C4 and C12-C14 on Nam Van Lake for public consultation before the Christmas long weekend.

The release stirred up public debate right away. Ultimately, the DSSOPT received a total of 144 files of public opinion on the two projects, from which only one was for the C1-C4 land plot. All the others were against the development plans.

At the Urban Committee Plenary yesterday, when presenting

the number of public opinions received, the DSSOPT official presented part of the picture and avoided stating the respective numbers of comments for and against.

Instead, he said, "There are comments from both sides."

Some 78 opinions were received on the land plot C1-C4, while 66 were received for C12-C14.

Vice President of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), Leong Wai Man, said, when presenting the bureau's comments, that the coastline of the city is not part of the Historic Centre of Macau, implying that measures are not as strict as those governing the World Heritage site should apply.

She added that her bureau has already conducted a visual analysis on the impact of the proposed development on the

World Heritage site.

Although the Chapel of Our Lady of Penha is not within the Historic Centre of Macau, which was listed as a World Heritage site in 2005, it has been listed as a local heritage site.

## The IC had already conducted a visual analysis on the impact of the proposed development on the World Heritage site

In addition, the IC second chair made two contradictory comments. She said that the proposed development plan would not have any impact on the view from the Penha Hill to the sea, but that "after the construction, the sea shall not

be viewed in whole."

Moreover, an official from the DSSOPT's Urban Planning Department stressed that the proposals align with the Master Urban Plan. His justification is that the proposed buildings will not surpass the Penha Hill in height.

The Master Urban Plan, meanwhile, had its public consultation period wrapped up on November 2. Its conclusive report has not been released, let alone the plan being passed by the legislature.

Furthermore, the buildings are arranged in a staircase style, given their respective heights. It means that there will be descending heights from the hill to the coast.

It was also pointed out that the proposed constructions will cover the piers of the Nobre do Carvalho Bridge.

Architect and Heritage Architect (Architecte du Patrimoine), Lui Chak Keong, who was the only member opposing the

plans, questioned the value of the Penha Hill in Macau's future development.

He pointed out that as Macau wants to develop maritime tourism, the view from the seaway to the Penha Church must be preserved.

He also questioned whether the proposed heights would obstruct the visual corridor connecting the sea and the hill.

Moreover, he called for a three-dimensional analysis of the impact.

Majority of the other members were for the proposed development. However, member Loi Man Keong revealed that he had viewed some of the public opinions right before the plenary and found them "similar to children's play."

"They are identical opinions," Loi said. "Should we revoke our plan just because of these repetitive opinions?"

It is worth pointing out that the DSSOPT requires the public to provide their basic identity information when submitting their opinions.

Many other committee members referred to the "improvements" made as scrapped plans from before 1999, where the constructions of buildings up to 90 meters in height was approved. Other members also emphasized the need for a consolidated Court location, highlighting "the dignity of the judiciary."

Some members also stressed the importance of the government saving on rent.

As another agenda item, the committee also discussed a land plot opposite the Macao Cultural Centre, which will be used for a government office building.

Member Choi Wan Sun of the committee expressed her concerns over the existence of auxiliary facilities within or near the building, as the government has planned the NAPE area as a cultural and leisure precinct. The Municipal Affairs Bureau is about to finish the construction of a coastal promenade running from the Macao Science Center to the Kun Iam Statue.

"Experientially, the area is less populous on weekends and holidays," Choi noted. "Has the government planned any facilities to support the nature of the area and make it as useful on holidays as is on weekdays?" The government representative responded by confirming that such facilities will be built nearby.

**P**ORTUGUESE sculptor João Cutileiro has died aged 83 in a hospital in Lisbon, Portugal, due to health complications related to a chronic lung condition (pulmonary emphysema).

The artist had visited Macau on several occasions over his long career of works, of which the artwork on display at the garden of the Macao Cultural Centre, titled "Stone ship and warriors ready to war," is the most highlighted.

The art installation was commissioned to Cutileiro by the then Portuguese

**MACAU REMEMBERS**

# Portuguese sculptor João Cutileiro passes at 83

administration of Macau. It took about three years to complete and was inaugurated by the former Portuguese president Jorge Sampaio just a few months before the handover in 1999.

The artwork had the purpose of celebrating the handover. It was built with Portuguese marble stone from Estremoz and was inspired by the terracotta warriors of Xian and the boat on Bei-

jing's summer palace lake.

Besides this work, Cutileiro also had a sculpture piece on public display in the lobby of the Conde de São Januário Hospital, nowadays stored away from public eyes.

According to local Architect Carlos Marreiros, there are many more art pieces crafted by the artist in the possession of both individuals and governmental institutions in Macau. **RM**



ANTHONY LAM

NAM VAN PLAN

**T**HE New Macau Association has criticized the government for "skipping steps" by using an unlegislated consultation plan to institutionalize the urban planning for Nam Van Lake.

After the Urban Planning Committee Plenary session yesterday, Sulu Sou, Deputy Director-General of the Association, responded to comments made by government officials and committee members at the meeting.

Present at the meeting was Leong Wai Man, Vice President of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), as well as Chan Pou Ha, Director of the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT), who presided over the meeting.

Sou slammed the IC Vice President for using proposals made in the draft Master Urban Plan, the public consultation period for which concluded November 2, to justify the contentious planning for the land plots in Nam Van.

"It is not a law for the government to follow," Sou remarked. "It is not even a conclusive report of the public consultation."

He said that the comments of the IC made at yesterday's Committee Plenary session were "sealed in history."

He cited the DSSOPT head's request of the public to trust the design team to do a good job in conserving the landscape, as well as the authorities in supervising the development.

"This is a complete rule of man," Sou said. "Even today we're rationalizing the trust in the design team to safeguard

# New Macau criticizes gov't for 'skipping steps'



the visual elements of the district."

He pointed out that before, the group has trusted the DSSOPT and the IC, instead of the system, but that it had yielded a disappointing outcome.

"We are discussing a courthouse project, for goodness' sake!" Sou stressed.

Meanwhile, on the comment of "children's play" made by a committee member on

the public opinion submission, Rocky Chan, Deputy Director-General of the Association, argued that this was an embodiment of the committee member's complete detachment from long-term public opinion on preservation of the Penha Hill and its view.

"Members of the public are giving their opinion for the members' reference," Chan explained. "But we can see that the members didn't base their

discussions on public opinion."

He stressed that public opinion is not banning development on the sites; rather, the public is asking for a balance between conservation and development, "which we didn't see during the plenary," Chan said.

The association handed a petition letter to the DSSOPT before the commencement of yesterday's committee plenary session.

## VALIDITY PERIOD OF COVID-19 TEST CERTIFICATE SHORTENED

The validity period of a negative Covid-19 test certificate will be shortened to three days from seven days as part of the government's response to the worsening pandemic outbreak. The Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre announced last night that travelers arriving Macau by air from foreign countries must submit a negative nucleic acid test report issued within 72 hours prior to the flight's departure time. The new measure will be implemented on January 13 at 12 a.m. and will be calculated based on the flight departure time for Macau.

## DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF GAMING WATCHDOG RESIGNS

The Gaming Inspection and Co-ordination Bureau (DICJ) has announced in a dispatch that its Deputy Director, Leong Man Ion, has resigned his post effective today. Leong is set to return to his previous position as the bureau's senior technical advisor. The official has also been granted unpaid leave from March 25 to October 20.

## CPTTM DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S SERVICE TERM RENEWED

The Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong has renewed the service term contract of Shuen Ka Hung as Vice President and Director-General of the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer (CPTTM) until March 31, 2022. The Secretary has also appointed six members to the directive council of the Macau consumers' arbitration and mediation center and three members to the executive council of the same center.

# More amalgamations of gov't departments expected from Feb

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE city's Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has made it clear in his 2020 Policy Address that he would set the restructuring of various government departments into motion from the start of this year.

The move, he stressed, is intended to streamline administrative processes and enhance the government's departmental structure.

The first to lead off Ho's shakeup plan is the then Energy Sector Development Office (GDSE), which already merged with the Envi-

ronmental Protection Bureau (DSPA), effective from January 1.

GDSE's then Director Hoi Chi Leong is now Deputy Director at the DSPA, which has added a new department, namely the Department of Energy Development and Management, responsible for energy policies and products.

Starting from February 1, the city will see more blending of multiple departments within the government.

These will include the amalgamations of the Higher Education Bureau and the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau; the

Economic Bureau, the Science and Technology Development Fund and the Transferência Electrónica de Dados - Macau EDI VAN, S.A.(-TEDMEV); and the Government Head Office Auxiliary Bureau and the Protocol, Public Relations and External Affairs Office.

In addition, the operational functions of the Office of the Government Spokesperson will be incorporated into the Government Information Bureau, and meanwhile, the Tourism Crisis Management Office will be combined into the Macao Government Tourism Office.



HONG KONG

# Police arrests 53 activists under national security

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

**H**ONG Kong police arrested 53 former lawmakers and democracy proponents yesterday for allegedly violating the new national security law by participating in unofficial election primaries for the territory's legislature last year.

The mass arrests, including of former lawmakers, were the largest move against Hong Kong's democracy movement since the law was imposed by Beijing last June to quell dissent in the semi-autonomous territory.

"The operation today targets the active elements who are suspected to be involved in the crime of overthrowing, or interfering (and) seriously destroy the Hong Kong government's legal execution of duties," John Lee, Hong Kong's security minister, said at a news conference.

He said those arrested were suspected of trying to paralyze the government, via their plans to gain a majority of the seats in the legislature to create a situation in which the chief executive had to resign and the government would stop functioning.

In a video released by former lawmaker Lam Cheuk-ting on his Facebook page, police turned up at his house and told him he was "suspected of violating the national security law, subverting state power." Police told those recording the video to stop or risk arrest.

The legislative election that would have followed the unofficial pri-



Former law professor Benny Tai, center, a key figure in the Occupy Central protests and also was one of the main organizers of the primaries, sits in a car after being arrested



In this image taken from a video, Democratic Party member and arrested by police officers at his

maries was postponed by a year by Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam, who cited the public health risks during the coronavirus pandemic. Mass resignations and disqualifications of pro-democracy lawmakers have left the legislature largely a pro-Beijing body.

Lee said the police would not target those who had voted in the unofficial primaries, which were held in July last year and attracted more than 600,000 voters even though pro-Beijing lawmakers and politicians had warned the event could

breach the security law.

All of the pro-democracy candidates in the unofficial primaries were arrested, according to tallies of the arrests being reported by the South China Morning Post, online platform Now News and political groups.

At least seven members of Hong Kong's Democratic Party — the city's largest opposition party — were arrested, including former party chairman Wu Chi-wai. Former lawmakers Lam, Helena Wong and James To were also arrested, accor-

ding to a post on the party's Facebook page.

Benny Tai, a key figure in Hong Kong's 2014 Occupy Central protests and a former law professor, was also arrested, reports said. Tai was one of the main organizers of the primaries.

The home of Joshua Wong, a prominent pro-democracy activist who is serving a 13 1/2-month prison sentence for organizing and participating in an unauthorized protest last year, was also raided, according to a tweet pos-

ted from Wong's account.

American human rights lawyer John Clancey was also arrested yesterday. Clancey was the treasurer of political group Power for Democracy, which was involved in the unofficial primaries.

"We need to work for democracy and human rights in Hong Kong," Clancey said as he was being led away by police, in a video posted by local online news outlet Citizen News.

Police also went to the headquarters of Stand News, a prominent pro-democracy online news site in Hong Kong, with a court order to hand over documents to assist in an investigation related to the national security law, according to a livestreamed video by Stand News. No arrests were made.

Lee also pointed to a "10 steps to mutual destruction" plan among those arrested, which included taking control of the legislature, mobilizing protests to paralyze society and calling for international sanctions.

That plan was previously outlined by former law professor Tai. He predicted that between 2020 and 2022, there would be 10 steps to mutual destruction, including the pro-democracy bloc winning a majority in the legislature, intensifying protests, the forced resignation of Lam due to the budget bill being rejected twice, and international sanctions on the Chinese Communist Party.

The concept of mutual destruction — in which both Hong Kong and China would suffer damages — is popular among some protesters and pro-democracy activists.

"The plot is to create such mutual destruction that if successful ... will result in serious damage to society as a whole," said Lee. "That

EXPLAINER

## MASS ARRESTS CHILL DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

**T**HE sudden arrest of dozens of pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong, in the most sweeping use of a new national security law to date, is a clear sign of Beijing's determination to rein in political opposition in the former British colony.

The roundup, widely condemned by Western government officials and human rights groups, will likely further chill an already dwindling protest movement in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Police detained about 50 people, far more than in previous cases under the 6-month-old national security law. Those targeted appeared to include all candidates who had run in an unofficial opposition primary last year ahead of an expected election for Hong Kong's legislature. City leader Carrie Lam later scrapped the election, citing the coronavirus pandemic. Activists called her move a thinly veiled attempt to thwart expected opposition gains.

HOW CAN A PRIMARY BE A THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY?

Security Secretary John Lee said those arrested were suspected of trying to gain



Pro-democracy activists who were elected from unofficial pro-democracy primaries in mid July 2020

control of the legislature to paralyze government business. The subversion section of the national security law criminalizes "seriously interfering in, disrupting, or undermining the performance of duties and functions" of the Chinese or Hong Kong governments.

Lam said at the time of the primary that if its purpose was to resist every government initiative, it could amount to subverting state power. The central government labeled

the primary illegal and a "serious provocation" to Hong Kong's electoral system.

WHAT'S THE LIKELY IMPACT?

The arrests will remove more activists from the scene, reducing the possibility of renewed protests and eliminating many as future candidates for office. They warn a

younger generation that formed the backbone of protests in 2014 and 2019 that even holding an unofficial primary can result in legal action that can seriously impact their futures.

Human Rights Watch said of the move that repression generates resistance, but the tightening restrictions on opposition activity and the lingering effects of the coronavirus on public life and the economy could delay or permanently discourage the emergence of a new generation willing to take on Beijing. **MDT/AP**

# Security law



Former lawmaker Lam Cheuk-ting, center, is home

has jailed several pro-democracy activists, including Wong and Agnes Chow, for their involvement in anti-government protests, and others have been charged under the national security law, including media tycoon and outspoken pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai.

The security law criminalizes acts of subversion, secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers to intervene in the city's affairs. Serious offenders could face up to a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

Lam had said at the time of the unofficial primaries last year that if their aim was resisting every policy initiative by the Hong Kong government, the election may fall under subverting state power, an offense under the national security law.

Beijing had also called the primaries illegal and a "serious provocation" of Hong Kong's electoral system.

Following the handover of Hong Kong to China by the British in 1997, the city has operated on a "one country, two systems" framework that affords it freedoms not found on the mainland. In recent years, Beijing has asserted more control over the city, drawing criticism that it was breaking its promise of Hong Kong maintaining separate civil rights and political systems for 50 years from the handover.

The sweeping arrests drew condemnation from Anthony Blinken, the U.S. Secretary of State nominee for the upcoming Biden administration, who said on Twitter that it was an "assault on those bravely advocating for universal rights."

"The Biden-Harris administration will stand with the people of Hong Kong and against Beijing's crackdown on democracy," Blinken wrote in his tweet.

Human Rights Watch said the arrests suggest Beijing has failed to learn that repression generates resistance. HRW senior China researcher Maya Wang said in a statement that "millions of Hong Kong people will persist in their struggle for their right to vote and run for office in a democratically elected government."

In further remarks to The Associated Press, Wang said it wasn't clear what provisions of the law were being cited to justify the arrests, but that local authorities seem less concerned with legal substance.

"The very nature of the national security law is as a draconian blanket law allowing the government to arrest and potentially imprison people for long terms for exercising their constitutionally protected rights," Wang said.

"The veneer of rule of law is also applied in mainland China stripped of any meaning. Hong Kong is looking more like mainland China but where one ends and the other begins is hard to discern," she said. AP

is why police action today is necessary."

Senior Supt. Steve Li from the national security unit said that 53 people were arrested in an operation that involved 1,000 officers. The 45 men and eight women were aged between 23 and 79, according to a police statement.

Six were arrested for subverting state power by organizing the unofficial primaries, while the rest were arrested for allegedly participating in the event, Li said. He said more arrests could be made and investigations were ongoing.

Alan Leong, chairman of the pro-democracy Civic Party in Hong Kong, said at a news conference held by the pro-democratic camp that plans to exercise voting rights to veto the budget and eventually oblige the chief executive to step down are rights enshrined in the Basic Law.

The arrests were an "affront to the constitutionally protected rights to vote" in Hong Kong, Leong said.

"We don't see how by promising to exercise such rights could end them up as being subversive," he added.

Beijing supports Hong Kong police in their carrying out of "their duties in accordance with the law," said Hua Chunying, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"The rights and freedom Hong Kong people enjoyed have not been affected in any way," Hua said at a daily briefing with journalists. "What was affected was that some external forces and individual people in Hong Kong colluded with each other in an attempt to undermine the stability and security of China."

In recent months, Hong Kong

## Beijing criticizes US order against dealing with Chinese apps

CHINA'S government yesterday accused Washington of misusing national security as an excuse to hurt commercial competitors after President Donald Trump signed an order banning transactions with payment services Alipay and WeChat Pay and six other apps.

The order escalated a conflict with Beijing over technology, security and spying accusations that has plunged U.S.-Chinese relations to their lowest level in decades. It followed confusion in financial markets after the New York Stock Exchange announced last week it would remove three Chinese phone companies and then withdrew that plan Monday.

"This is another example of the U.S.'s bullying, arbitrary and hegemonic behavior," said a foreign ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying. "This is an example of the United States over-generalizing the concept of national security and abusing its national power to unreasonably suppress foreign companies."

Beijing will take unspecified "necessary measures" to protect Chinese companies, Hua said, repeating a government statement made following previous U.S. sanctions announcements. It rarely has been followed by action.

Trump's order cites unspecified concerns about apps collecting Americans' personal and financial data and turning it over to China's communist government.

Hua ridiculed that argument,



pointing to U.S. government intelligence gathering.

"This is like a gangster who wantonly steals but then clamors to be protected from robbery," Hua said. "How hypocritical and ridiculous it is."

Chinese smartphone apps face similar opposition in neighboring India, which has blocked dozens of them on security grounds amid a military standoff over a disputed section of border between the two countries.

Trump in August issued orders banning dealings with the popular Chinese-owned video app TikTok and the WeChat messaging app.

Those and this week's order take effect after President-elect Joe Biden is due to be sworn in Jan. 20, leaving open the question of whether the government will go ahead with it.

Alipay is part of the empire of billionaire Jack Ma, founder of e-commerce giant Alibaba Group and financial platform Ant Group. WeChat Pay is operated by rival tech

giant Tencent. The others named in the order are CamScanner, QQ Wallet, SHAREit, Tencent QQ, VMAte and WPS Office.

The Trump administration also has imposed curbs on access to U.S. technology for Chinese telecom equipment maker Huawei and some other companies. A November order bans American investors from buying securities issued by companies deemed to be linked to China's military.

U.S. tech companies worry Beijing might retaliate by making it more difficult to do business in the world's second-largest economy.

Political analysts expect Biden to try to resume cooperation with Beijing on issues such as climate change and the coronavirus. But few expect big changes due to widespread frustration with Beijing's trade and human rights record and accusations of spying and technology theft.

Trump administration officials indicated they hadn't consulted with the president-elect's team before the latest order. MDT/AP

### COVID-19

## DATES, PLANS OF WHO EXPERT VISIT TO CHINA UNDER NEGOTIATION

CHINA said yesterday it was still negotiating with the World Health Organization the dates and itinerary for a visit by international experts looking into origins of COVID-19, after the head of the agency criticized Beijing for not finalizing permissions for the mission.

China's position on the hunt for the origins of the pandemic "has always been open and responsible," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told a daily news briefing in Beijing.

She said that China has a close cooperation with WHO. However, the dates and itinerary need to be finalized, she said.

"The origins problem is very complex. To ensure that the work of the glo-



WHO's Tedros A. Ghebreyesus

bal experts group in China is successful, we need to carry out the necessary procedures and relevant concrete plans. Currently both sides are still in negotiations on this," Hua said. "I understand that it's not just a visa problem and the actual date and itinerary. Both sides are still in close communication."

China's disease experts are currently busy with multiple small-scale clusters and outbreaks reported in the past couple of weeks, she added.

"Our experts are wholeheartedly in the stressful battle to control the epidemic," she said.

An international team of experts had been due to visit the central city of Wuhan in January, where the pandemic first appeared a year ago.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Tuesday that members of the international scientific team began departing from their home countries over the last 24 hours as part of an arrangement between WHO and the Chinese government.

"Today, we learned that Chinese officials have not yet finalized the necessary permissions for the team's arrival in China," Tedros said during a news conference in Geneva on Tuesday.

"I'm very disappointed with this news, given that two members had already begun their journeys and others were not able to travel at the last minute, but had been in contact with senior Chinese officials," he said.

The Chinese government has been strictly controlling all research at home into the origins of the virus, an AP investigation found, and state-owned media have played up reports that suggest the virus could have originated elsewhere. AP



London in lockdown: the city financial district this week

COVID-19

# Pandemic haunts new year as virus growth outpaces vaccines

**D**ESPITE growing vaccine access, January is looking grim around the globe as the coronavirus surges and reshapes itself from Britain to Japan to California, filling hospitals and threatening livelihoods anew as governments lock down businesses and race to find solutions.

England headed back into lockdown. Mexico City's hospitals hold more virus patients than ever. Germany reported one of its highest daily death tolls to date yesterday [Macau time]. South Africa and Brazil are struggling to find space for the dead. Even pandemic success story Thailand is fighting an unexpected wave of infections.

And as doctors face or brace for rising numbers of COVID-19 patients after end-of-year holiday gatherings, more and more countries are reporting cases of a new, more contagious variant that has already swept across Britain.

January is going to be "a tough one," said Dr. Margaret Harris, a spokeswoman for the World Health Organization. "This idea that seems to be 'Ah, we're all sick of it. We want to look at something else. Oh, this doesn't apply to me' [...] that's got to go away. It really is all hands on deck."

While Britain rolled out a second vaccine this week

and some U.S. states are starting to give the second round of shots, access to inoculations globally is sharply unequal. The supply isn't remotely close to meeting the epic demand needed to vanquish a foe that has already killed over 1.85 million people.

"We are in a race to prevent infections, bring cases down, protect health systems and save lives while rolling out two highly effective and safe vaccines to high-risk populations," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "This is not easy. These are the hard miles."

England is facing a third national lockdown that will last at least six weeks, as authorities struggle to stem a surge in COVID-19 infections and relieve hospitals, where some patients are left waiting in ambulances in a parking lot for access to overcrowded wards.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's tough new stay-at-home order for England took effect at midnight. It will shut schools, restaurants and all nonessential stores and won't be reviewed until at least mid-February. Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon imposed a lockdown that began this week.

The two leaders said the restrictions are needed to protect the National Health

Service amid the emergence of the new variant that has sent daily infections, hospitalizations and deaths soaring.

The NHS "is going through probably the toughest time in living memory," said Siva Anandaciva, chief analyst of the King's Fund think tank.

Elsewhere in Europe, Italy and Germany extended their Christmastime lockdowns, Spain is restricting travel, and Denmark lowered the number of people who can gather in public from 10 to five. France is likely to announce tougher measures Thursday, and Ukraine is closing schools and restaurants starting Friday.

In Latin America, some warn the worst is yet to come.

"The boost we are experiencing here in Brazil is much more serious than what was happening months ago," said Domingos Alves, an adjunct professor at the University of Sao Paulo.

Brazil's number of patients in intensive care reached its highest level since August, just as the nation reopened shops and offices after the end-of-year holidays — and the vast country still hasn't approved or received any vaccines. Some Brazilian hospitals reinstalled refrigerated containers outside to hold the corpses of COVID-19 victims.

Mexico's capital has more virus patients than at any point in the pandemic and is flying in doctors from less hard-hit states. Its beach resorts are readying for more cases after thousands of U.S. and European tourists visited over the holidays.

"Probably in the third week of January, we are going to see the system stressed more, that there will be more ambulatory cases and cases requiring hospitalization," said Dr. Mauricio Rodriguez of Mexico's National Autonomous University. He blamed the rise on fatigue with social distancing, mixed messages from public figures and Mexicans lowering their guard during the holidays.

Zimbabwe reintroduced a curfew, banned public gatherings and indefinitely suspended the opening of schools. In South Africa, which is seeing yet another fast-spreading variant of the virus and is the continent's hardest-hit nation, authorities re-imposed a curfew, banned liquor sales and closed most beaches.

South Africa's undertakers are struggling to cope with the rise in deaths, National Funeral Practitioners Association of SA President Muzi Hlengwa told state broadcaster SABC.

"It is something that you have never seen before. [...] We have run out of coffins, we have run out of space at the mortuary," he said. "We normally have cremations during the day, but now we have cremations even at night."

The pandemic is even reaching countries that seemed to have the virus under control.

Thailand is facing a surge that has infected thousands in the past few weeks, blamed on complacency and poor planning. The government is locking down large parts of the country, including the capital, Bangkok, and considering tougher measures.

Japan is getting ready to declare a state of emergency this week, beefing up border controls and speeding up vaccine approval after a surge of cases around New Year's Eve.

And holiday worries aren't over now that 2021 has arrived.

Yet India offers a glimmer of hope. Its infection rate is down significantly from a September peak, and the country is kicking off one of the largest inoculation programs in the world, aiming at vaccinating 300 million people by August. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1976 ICELAND AND BRITAIN CLASH AT SEA



A British naval frigate has been involved in another collision with an Icelandic gunboat in the Atlantic.

HMS Andromeda was dented when the gunboat, Thor, sailed close to the bow. Thor sustained a hole in its hull.

British defence officials said the collision represented a "deliberate attack" on the British warship without regard for life.

The Icelandic coastguard insisted Andromeda had rammed Thor by overtaking the boat and then swiftly changing course.

Less than ten days ago Andromeda was involved in a similar incident with another Icelandic boat, Tyr. Icelandic officials claimed the Andromeda had deliberately rammed the Tyr - a claim rejected by the Ministry of Defence.

Since November last year, Iceland has attempted to enforce a 200 mile exclusion zone for foreign trawlers instead of the 50 miles established in the expired 1973 fishing rights agreement.

It is unclear whether today's incident was deliberate but spokesman for UK naval operations Captain John Cox said that it was certainly dangerous.

Captain Cox explained that warships are especially vulnerable to collision damage because they were not armoured along the sides.

The Icelandic Prime Minister, Hr Hallgrímsson, warned of possible confrontation in his New Year message at the end of 1975: "Once (Britain) put an end to their military presence in Icelandic jurisdiction and their trawlers stop illegal fishing, a solution can be found - but the British government will have to show its willingness towards this end."

Captain Cox was equally clear about the purpose of the British Navy's presence: "What we're doing is protecting fishery trawlers on the high seas in international waters and we are told specifically: no aggressive manoeuvres, no provocation at all."

The Icelandic Government says it is applying the 200 mile fishery limit agreed by over 100 nations, including Britain, at the 1974 Law of the Sea Conference.

It is concerned that overfishing could lead to a dramatic decline in the number of cod. Some marine biologists have even suggested there could be no cod left by 1980.

But Britain says Iceland has no right to unilaterally enforce a 200-mile limit until it becomes law. It has deployed its navy to protect the 40 trawlers fishing in the contested waters.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

This was the third of the 'Cod Wars' that took place between Britain and Iceland over their fishing rights in the Atlantic. The first was in 1958 and the second ran from 1972 to 1973.

Britain deployed a total of 22 frigates against 16 Icelandic vessels. There were numerous skirmishes and Iceland threatened to close the Nato base at Keflavik. The US offered to mediate but it was Nato that negotiated an agreement on 6th June 1976.

Under this treaty Britain was limited to using 24 trawlers within a 200 mile zone at any one time for an annual catch of up to 50,000 tonnes.

Iceland claimed that it was economically dependent on fishing, but fish from the Atlantic were worth £23.1m to the UK and the new restrictions caused 8000 jobs to be lost.

The number of cod has continued to decline and there have been calls for a total ban on cod fishing in the North Sea.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Aren't you curious to know what that is? Give them some but not all of your time. Make it clear that you have boundaries that you have no intention of crossing for them, at least not yet.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Call a spade a spade. People will respect your honesty and give you more responsibility because of it. If someone is bragging a bit too much, tell them not to be so pompous.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Whether or not you have a good day totally depends on your attitude this morning. If you're feeling up for a challenge, then you're going to be well pleased with how the day unfolds.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Be wary of extravagant gifts from co-workers or casual acquaintances. They could be giving you something with the expectation that they'll be getting something in return.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

It will be surprisingly simple to do, and it will give you one more achievement to celebrate. Ask around and you'll find out that a few of your friends have something to celebrate too!



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Your growing confidence is helping you impress all the right people now, but too much action might cause you to get overwhelmed all over again. Do yourself a favor and scale back on your plans for the day.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

When it comes to making new friends, you're going to be absolutely unstoppable today. Everyone wants to be on your team, and they won't be shy about letting you know it!



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Your ego is growing, and that is nothing but a good thing! Now might be the right time to take that risk that has intimidated you for so long. You may finally have the faith in yourself that you need to prevail.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

That grouchy person who tries to steal your parking space, the overbearing boss who spends more time breathing down your neck than doing their own job, the roommate who never cleans up their messes.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

They'll be flattered by the attention, which will encourage them to keep on going with this lifestyle renovation. Don't be afraid to let someone know you're proud of them.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

This day could unfold in some unpredictable directions, but not knowing exactly what's going to happen next might be a very good thing for you right now.



### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Someone you care deeply about has been living in a bit of a fantasyland lately, and it's going to be up to you to give them the reality check they need. It's never fun to burst someone's bubble...

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

### EASY

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

### EASY+

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

### MEDIUM

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

### HARD

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

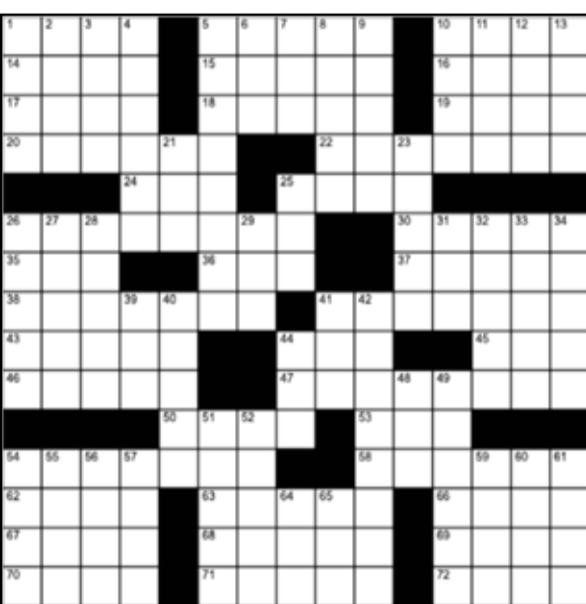
## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-19	-6	clear
Harbin	-28	-20	cloudy
Tianjin	-16	-8	clear
Urumqi	-24	-16	clear
Xi'an	-10	-3	overcast
Lhasa	-3	12	clear
Chengdu	0	3	overcast
Chongqing	5	8	drizzle
Kunming	7	19	overcast
Nanjing	-8	-4	cloudy
Shanghai	-6	3	overcast
Wuhan	-4	2	clear
Hangzhou	-4	4	overcast
Taipei	9	15	drizzle
Guangzhou	7	15	overcast
Hong Kong	13	18	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-5	-4	flurry
Frankfurt	-1	4	sleet
Paris	0	3	sleet
London	0	5	sleet
New York	0	7	overcast

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- One of the Baldwins; 5- Adlai's running mate; 10- Small amounts; 14- Den of wild animals and dragons; 15- Everyday; 16- Brio; 17- Longfellow's bell town; 18- Actress Witherspoon; 19- Delhi wrap; 20- Takes care of; 22- Most strange; 24- AOL, e.g.; 25- Silly question...; 26- Unfinished detail; 30- Golf clubs; 35- 1970 Jackson 5 hit; 36- Battery size; 37- Singer Yma; 38- Ryot; 41- Run; 43- More wan; 44- Eight-time Norris Trophy winner; 45- Photographer Goldin; 46- Apportion; 47- Digital tool; 50- Japanese wrestling; 53- Done, to Donne; 54- Shut in; 58- Checked; 62- Make angry; 63- Part of Hispaniola; 66- St. Petersburg's river; 67- Final Four org.; 68- Director Lubitsch; 69- Singer Stefani; 70- The \_\_\_ the limit; 71- Irritable; 72- Gas burner or Sicilian volcano;

DOWN: 1- Dear, dear; 2- Overdue; 3- Green land; 4- Turning point; 5- Continental inhabitant; 6- Compass dir.; 7- Datebook abbr.; 8- Relaxes; 9- Streamlined; 10- Ricky's portrayer; 11- Winglike parts; 12- Keeps out; 13- Agitated state; 21- Half a fly; 23- Elevate; 25- Nabokov novel; 26- Reindeer herders; 27- Belief involving sorcery; 28- Florida citrus center; 29- Writer Hentoff; 31- Capek play; 32- Muscat native; 33- Birth-related; 34- View; 39- Sun. talk; 40- You \_\_\_ right; 41- Man-mouse connector; 42- Precedence; 44- Lennon's love; 48- Bruce \_\_\_ was a famous kung-fu movie star; 49- Outer edge; 51- Doorkeeper; 52- Funny Anne; 54- Sea eagles; 55- Small notch; 56- Pottery material; 57- Grazing sites; 59- Salamander; 60- Level; 61- Comic Carvey; 64- Officeholders; 65- Medicinal amt.;



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



**FOR SALE**

Unique Ground Floor Loft, Central Macau  
HK\$9,990,000 2,200 ft<sup>2</sup> 2 2 2

**FOR RENT**

Houston Court, Coloane Village  
\$10,500/mth 824 ft<sup>2</sup> 1 1 1

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

Apartment in the Historical Centre  
HK\$3,900,000 840 ft<sup>2</sup> 2 1 1

**PROPERTY LIST**

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

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BLOOMBERG

### Big Sellers

China's biggest dollar bond deals sold over the last decade

2010	\$2.0B	Sinochem Overseas
2011	2.0B	CNOOC Finance
2012	3.5B	Sinopec Group
2013	4.0B	CNOOC Finance
2014	8.0B	Alibaba Group
2015	7.9B	Alibaba Group
2016	3.2B	China Cinda Asset Management
2017	7.5B	China Evergrande Group
2018	5.0B	Tencent Holdings
2019	6.0B	China MOF
2020	6.0B	China MOF

## ALIBABA PLANS TO SELL UP TO \$8B BONDS IN SHOW OF STRENGTH

INA ZHOU & REBECCA CHOONG WILKINS

**ALIBABA** Group Holding Ltd. is looking to raise as much as USD8 billion selling dollar bonds as early as next week, giving global investors a chance to bet on the Chinese e-commerce giant's long-term prospects at a time when the company and its co-founder face intense government pressure back home.

The company aims to raise at least \$5 billion but could wind up with more depending on the reception, according to people familiar with the matter who aren't authorized to speak publicly and asked not to be identified. The deal will be a multi-tranche offering, with specific tenors yet to be determined, they said. Alibaba declined to comment. Reuters earlier reported the planned sale.

Pulling off the sale as Jack Ma's

internet empire faces a regulatory crackdown and antitrust probewould be a sign of global investor confidence in the company. In recent months, officials blocked Ant Group Co.'s \$35 billion IPO, proposed new rules to curb the dominance of internet giants and fined Alibaba over acquisitions from years before. Closer scrutiny of mergers and acquisitions could add uncertainty over the growth of large internet firms.

"We view the issuance as somewhat exploratory given the broader uncertainty around Ant/Jack Ma," said Chuanyi Zhou, a credit analyst at Lucror Analytics in Singapore. "It may well reveal how seriously global investors perceive the rapidly evolving regulatory environment in China and the potential impact on Alibaba."

Alibaba raised about \$11 billion from its Hong Kong stock

sale in late 2019, and had a cash hoard of almost \$90 billion at the end of September.

The sale comes as companies flock to global bond markets, where investors are seeking higher-yielding assets amid ultra-low interest rates and almost \$18 trillion of negative-yielding debt. Borrowers have sold more than \$65 billion of dollar bonds globally so far this year, following a record of over \$3.6 trillion in 2020, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Alibaba tapped the global debt market in 2014 for the first time to raise \$8 billion shortly after its landmark New York stock debut. It last came to the offshore market with a bumper \$7 billion bond deal in 2017 and needs to repay or refinance some \$1.5 billion of dollar debt which comes due this year, Bloomberg-compiled data show. **BLOOMBERG**

### ZHONG SHANSHAN

## China's bottled water king is now richer than Warren Buffett

VENUS FENG & PEI YI MAK

**ZHONG** Shanshan is setting new wealth records.

The chairman of Nongfu Spring Co., a bottled-water company that's ubiquitous in China, is now richer than Warren Buffett as his fortune surged \$13.5 billion since the start of the year to \$91.7 billion on Tuesday, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

Zhong, 66, is now the sixth-wealthiest person on the planet. Nongfu shares jumped 18% in the first two trading days of 2021, taking the advance since their September listing to more than 200%. They gained 0.7% on yesterday.

It's only the second time a Chinese national has broken into the world's Top 10 - property tycoon Wang Jianlin hit No. 8 in 2015 - and no one from the mainland has ever ranked this high on Bloomberg's wealth index since it launched in 2012.

Nicknamed locally as the "Lone Wolf" for avoiding involvement in clubby business groups or politics, Zhong also took vaccine maker Beijing Wantai Biological Pharmacy Enterprise Co. public in April. The stock has soared more than 2,800%.

Zhong dethroned India's Mukesh Ambani as Asia's wealthiest person last week and is close to entering the rarefied realm of individuals worth more than \$100 billion. Buffett is outside that group with an

\$86.2 billion fortune, but the Berkshire Hathaway Inc. founder has given away more than \$37 billion of stock since 2006.

Investors are snapping up Chinese consumer shares as the country demonstrates it's recovering from Covid-19, while analysts have grown increasingly bullish on Nongfu.

Zhong has also helped four relatives become billionaires. His younger sister, Zhong Xiaoxiao, and three of his wife's siblings each hold a 1.4% stake in Nongfu worth \$1.3 billion, based on the ownership listed in the company's prospectus from last year. The firm has produced dozens of millionaires, including more of Zhong's relatives and employees.

While Covid-19 upended much of the global economy in 2020, it was a good year for the world's ultra-rich. The 500 wealthiest people added \$1.8 trillion to their fortunes and were worth a combined \$7.6 trillion by year-end. Zhong, the biggest winner from Asia, amassed more than \$71 billion, the most after Tesla Inc.'s Elon Musk and Amazon.com Inc.'s Jeff Bezos.

One notable exception is Jack Ma, until recently Asia's richest person. He's not been seen in public since Chinese regulators torpedoed Ant Group Co.'s \$35 billion initial public offering. His net worth has dropped about \$10 billion since October and he's now the world's 25th-richest person. **BLOOMBERG**

## CORPORATE BITS

### Melco properties achieve health security verification



Melco Resorts & Entertainment announced that its Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star certified properties including Morpheus at City of Dreams, Star Tower at Studio City, Altira Macau and Nuwa at City

of Dreams Manila have become among the first hotels and resorts in the world to achieve the Sharecare Health Security VERIFIED with Forbes Travel Guide certification.

The facility verification assures guests can book with confidence at properties with appropriate health and safety procedures in place, the gaming operator said.

Evan Winkler, President of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said, "We are proud that the stringent operational protocols adopted by Melco to safeguard the wellbeing of our valued guests and colleagues have been recognized by Sharecare and Forbes Travel Guide. We thank our employees for their steadfast efforts towards this achievement, establishing Melco as the first integrated resort operator in Macau to receive the recognition."

### Mercedes-Benz to launch MBUX Hyperscreen



For Mercedes-Benz, 2021 marks the beginning of the next chapter in interaction between vehicle and user: the MBUX Hyperscreen takes the operation and display of infotainment, com-

fort and vehicle functions to a new level thanks to artificial intelligence (AI).

The large, curved screen unit lends the interior a unique aesthetic and extends along the entire width of the

vehicle in front of the driver and front passenger - for whom the "digital experience is as emotional as it is intuitive and effortless," the firm said in a statement.

The MBUX (Mercedes-Benz User Experience) Hyperscreen, which is for the first time optionally available in the fully electric luxury saloon EQS, is representative of the "emotional intelligence of the entire vehicle and is highly capable of learning."

Mercedes-Benz will showcase the MBUX Hyperscreen at the first-ever digital 2021 Consumer Electronics Show (CES), which takes place from January 11 to 14.

ROB HARRIS, LONDON

FOOTBALL

TOTTENHAM 2, BRENTFORD 0

**J**OSÉ Mourinho reached his first final as Tottenham manager after Son Heung-min and Moussa Sissoko clinched a 2-0 victory over Brentford in the League Cup yesterday [Macau time].

But Tottenham will have to wait 110 days before contesting the final against either of the Manchester clubs, with City playing United in the other semi-final.

Mourinho will have a chance to deliver Tottenham's first trophy since winning the League Cup in 2008. And he knows all about success in this lesser regarded competition after lifting the trophy four times across spells in charge of Chelsea and Manchester United, including when the west London club beat Tottenham in the 2015 final.

"I had to learn the meaning of the cups here and I always took it serious," said Mourinho, who was hired by Tottenham in November 2019. "I think if there is any secret it is to take it seriously."

Second-division team Brentford knocked out four Premier League sides to reach the semi-finals, but gifted Tottenham

# Spurs beat Brentford, but will wait 110 days for cup final



Tottenham's manager José Mourinho

an opening goal in the 12th minute when Sissoko was left unmarked for a header.

But Tottenham took until the 70th minute to extend its lead when Son lifted the ball into the net after Harry Kane and Tanguy Ndombele combined

for the breakaway.

Brentford had been denied an equalizer when a VAR review spotted — through a forensic examination of footage — that Ivan Toney was marginally offside with his knee before scoring.

The west London club finished with 10 men after Josh Dasilva's high studs-up challenge left Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg with a gash on his left shin.

"I'm not happy. I think we have to play better," Mourinho said. "Sometimes bad decisions, sometimes technical mistakes, many times recovering the ball and not being vertical and playing backwards."

But still the final whistle was able to be greeted with the song "Spurs are on their way to Wembley" being played at Tottenham's empty stadium. The final has been pushed from February to April 25 in the hope that fans will be allowed in — unlike any sporting event now in the country.

This semifinal was the first game since the start of England's third lockdown on Tuesday, with the toughest laws since those imposed in early stage of the pandemic last

March when even professional sport was prohibited.

A return to Wembley will be familiar for Tottenham, which used the north London stadium as a temporary home from 2017 to 2019 while its new stadium was being built.

But Spurs haven't contested a final there since that 2015 League Cup final loss to Mourinho's Chelsea.

"I know a lot of the boys have been here a long time now and we are desperate to win trophies for the club," said Tottenham defender Eric Dier, who played in that final. "It's something we're hungry to do."

The League Cup is the only trophy Tottenham has won — also in 1999 — since lifting the FA Cup in 1991. The north London side reached the 2019 Champions League final but lost to Liverpool and later in the year Mourinho replaced Mauricio Pochettino as manager. AP

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OPINION

World Views

Shuli Ren, MDT/Bloomberg



WHY CHINA IS SENTENCING A TYCOON TO DEATH

The bigamy conviction got a lot of the attention but Lai Xiaomin received a death sentence on Tuesday over a much more serious issue troubling China.

Lai oversaw China Huarong Asset Management Co. from 2012 until he ran into trouble in 2018. He was found guilty of receiving 1.79 billion yuan (\$277.3 million) in bribes, with bigamy thrown in for good measure. Still, capital punishment for this kind of white-collar crime is unusual, legal experts say. Wu Xiaohui, former chairman of Anbang Insurance Group Co., whose clean-up is costing Beijing billions of dollars, was sentenced to 18 years in jail over a \$10 billion fraud in 2018.

So what is Beijing trying to signal? Who's the intended audience of this harsh sentence? Other rich and privileged people? Should Alibaba Group Holding Ltd.'s founder Jack Ma be worried?

At first glance, it may be meant as a reminder to naughty business tycoons of Beijing's lethal legal arsenal. But the punitive measure against Lai is more likely part of the Communist Party's internal housekeeping. With Donald Trump and the Covid-19-related economic slowdown out of the way, President Xi Jinping is going back to his war on shadow banking, which he started in earnest in late 2017. Beijing wants to set an example for bureaucrats.

Unlike Anbang, Huarong is a proper state-owned enterprise. Backed by the Ministry of Finance, Huarong was established to clean up the bad debts on the books of commercial banks. As such, the distressed debt manager enjoyed many privileges.

But instead of dealing with the bad debt, Lai went rogue, dabbling in everything from private equity to junk bond trading. At the end of 2016, distressed loans accounted for only 25% of Huarong's total assets, down from 34% two years earlier. Instead, other financial products rose as a percentage of assets, including bonds, which could be easily turned around for profit.

In mainland China, Huarong established hundreds of joint venture companies, with the sole purpose of purchasing real estate, reported Caixin, an online and print business journal. In Hong Kong, Lai's company raised large amounts from dollar bond issues, in turn using the proceeds to buy junk-rated notes. Energy trader CEFC Shanghai International Group Ltd., one of its investments, has since gone bust. As part of that game, Huarong built a labyrinth of shell companies, which activist David Webb has told investors not to own.

If Lai were a mere day trader, he might not be facing such serious consequences. However, his shadow lending resulted in huge losses that ultimately go on Beijing's own books.

You can just hear Beijing's ire in Lai's sentence. He leapfrogged the reporting lines and interfered in ground-level investment projects in order to seek improper benefits for certain individuals, declared the Tianjin court that sentenced him to death. "He endangered [China's] financial stability."

In this sense, Beijing's bigamy accusation is, ironically, a perfect analogy. Lai was provided with tons of "dowry" for the sole purpose of lessening banks' bad debt load. Instead, he branched out, built other nests and sired offspring that Beijing did not want. Instead of solving a problem, Lai became a problem.

Granted, Anbang's Wu was a troublemaker too, using proceeds collected from short-term insurance products to buy long-term assets such as New York's famed Waldorf Astoria hotel. But he is a private citizen who exploited his association with Deng Xiaoping's family to open doors and perpetuate fraud. Officials like Lai, on the other hand, come with great power handed to them by the state — with plenty of room to abuse that power.

In China's sprawling state-owned financial sector, bureaucrats sometimes forget to act responsibly, giving out loans to family and friends without proper risk management. So how does Beijing ensure its bureaucrats behave? Desperate times call for desperate measures. With total debt edging to 300% of gross domestic product, China is one of the world's most indebted nations. One death sentence may be just enough of a deterrent.

[Abridged]

US ELECTION: DEMOCRATS ON COURSE FOR SENATE CONTROL

THE BUZZ

The Democratic Party of U.S. President-elect Joe Biden is on the verge of taking control of the Senate as results come in from two elections in Georgia.

Pastor Raphael Warnock is projected to win one seat. Fellow Democrat Jon Ossoff leads narrowly in the other.

If they both win, Biden will have a much better chance of pushing through his legislative agenda.

The election is being rerun because of Georgia's rule that a candidate must take 50% of the vote in order to win. None of

the candidates in November's election met that threshold.

With 98% of votes counted, U.S. TV networks and the Associated Press news agency called the first of the two races for Warnock.

Control of the Senate in the first two years of Biden's term will be determined by the outcome of the second run-off.

Warnock is set to become the first black senator for the state of Georgia — a slavery state in the American Civil War — and only the 11th black senator in the United States history.

UK

WIKILEAKS FOUNDER ASSANGE DENIED BAIL

A British judge yesterday denied bail to WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange, ordering him to remain in a high-security prison while U.K. courts decide whether he will be sent to the United States to face espionage charges.

District Judge Vanessa Baraitser said Assange must remain in prison while the courts consider an appeal by U.S. authorities against her decision not to extradite him.

The judge said Assange "has an incentive to abscond" and there is a good chance he would fail to return to court if freed.

On Monday, Baraitser rejected an American request to send Assange to the U.S. to face spying charges over WikiLeaks' publication of secret military documents a decade ago. She denied extradition on health grounds, saying the 49-year-old Australian was likely to kill himself if held under harsh U.S. prison conditions.

The ruling means Assange must remain in London's high-security Belmarsh Prison where he has been held since he was arrested in April 2019 for skipping bail during a separate legal battle seven years earlier.

Assange's partner, Stella Moris, said the decision was "a huge disappointment." WikiLeaks spokesman Kristinn Hrafnsson said "it is inhumane. It is illogical."

Lawyers for the U.S. government have appealed the decision not to extradite Assange, and the case will be heard by Britain's High Court at an unspecified date.

Clair Dobbin, a British lawyer acting for the U.S., said Assange had shown he would go "to almost any length" to avoid extradition, and it



Wikileaks spokesman Kristinn Hrafnsson, left, with Stella Moris, girlfriend of Assange

was likely he would flee if granted bail.

She noted that Assange had spent seven years inside Ecuadorian Embassy in London after seeking refuge there from a Swedish extradition request in 2012.

Dobbin said Assange had the "resources, abilities and sheer wheel-withal" to evade justice once again, and noted that Mexico has said it will offer him asylum.

But Assange's lawyer, Edward Fitzgerald, said the judge's decision to refuse extradition "massively reduces" any motivation to abscond.

"Mr. Assange has

But the judge ruled that Assange still had a strong motive to flee.

"As far as Mr. Assange is concerned this case has not yet been won," she said. "Mr. Assange still has an incentive to abscond from these as yet unresolved proceedings."

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

American prosecutors say Assange unlawfully helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal classified diplomatic cables and military files that were later published by WikiLeaks.

Lawyers for Assange argue that he was acting as a journalist and is entitled to First Amendment protections of freedom of speech for publishing documents that exposed U.S. military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The judge rejected that argument in her extradition ruling, saying Assange's actions, if proven, would amount to offenses "that would not be protected by his right to freedom of speech." She also said the U.S. judicial system would give him a fair trial. AP



Mexico Once Mexico has vaccinated its frontline medical workers against COVID-19, the government will turn its attention to the elderly living in its most remote places. President Obrador said. Ten thousand brigades made up of medical personnel and health promoters with security provided by the National Guard will target 3 million senior citizens in rural areas. The brigades will work back from isolated areas to towns and cities.



European Union's medicines agency gave the green light to Moderna Inc.'s COVID-19 vaccine, a decision that gives the 27-nation bloc a second vaccine to use in the desperate battle to tame the virus rampaging across the continent. The approval recommendation by the European Medicines Agency's human medicines committee comes amid high rates of infections in many EU countries and strong criticism of the slow pace of vaccinations across the region of some 450 million people.

Germany's health minister is defending the slow start of the country's vaccine campaign, saying he understands the desire for a faster rollout but that people should keep in mind that there is a global shortage of doses. The country authorities expect to receive more than 5.3 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine by mid-February. A further 2 million doses of Moderna shots are expected to be delivered during the first quarter.

USA Trump's extraordinary effort to overturn the presidential election is going before Congress as lawmakers convene to confirm the Electoral College vote won by Joe Biden. The typically routine proceeding today will be anything but, a political confrontation unseen since the aftermath of the Civil War as Trump mounts a desperate effort to stay in office. The president's Republican allies in the House and Senate plan to object to the election results, heeding supporters' plea to "fight for Trump" as he stages a rally outside the White House.