

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

# MacauDaily 澳門每日時報® Times

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Air Quality Bad

“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

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**AUTHORITIES ARE PREPARING A MEGA OPERATION TO RECEIVE AN AIR MACAU FLIGHT FROM TOKYO BRINGING BACK 115 RESIDENTS FROM 13 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

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**LIAISON OFFICE DIRECTOR URGES MACAU RESIDENTS TO DO THEIR BEST TO FIGHT COVID-19**

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**MGM, WYNN, MELCO ANNOUNCED A DISCRETIONARY BONUS FOR ITS TEAM MEMBERS, EXCLUDING SENIOR EXECUTIVES**

P5

AP PHOTO



**North Korea's** rubber-stamp parliament has passed decisions made by a major ruling party meeting where leader Kim Jong Un vowed to bolster his nuclear deterrent and established plans to salvage the country's battered economy. Members of the Supreme People's Assembly during the meeting unanimously supported the development plans for the next five years.

AP PHOTO



**South Korea** Billionaire Samsung scion Lee Jae-yong was sent back to prison yesterday after a South Korean court handed him a two and a half-year sentence for his involvement in a 2016 corruption scandal. The Seoul High Court found Lee guilty of bribing then-President Park Geun-hye and her close confidante to win government support for a 2015 merger between two Samsung affiliates.

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AP PHOTO

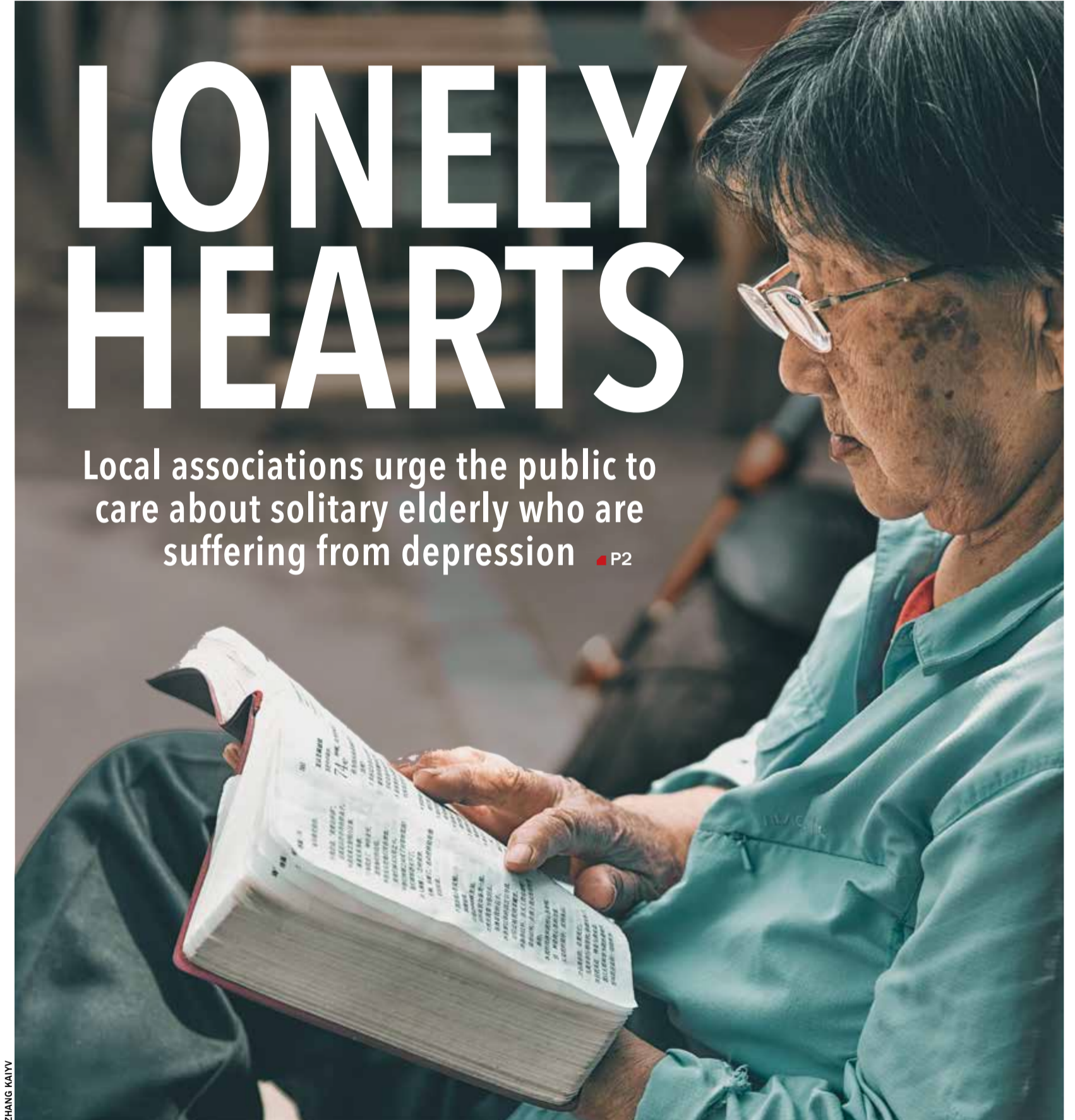


**Japan's** foreign minister, Toshimitsu Motegi, accused South Korea yesterday of worsening already strained ties by making "illegal" demands for compensation for the sexual abuse of 12 South Korean women who were sexually abused in Japanese military brothels during the war women and use of forced laborers during World War II.

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# LONELY HEARTS

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ZHANG KAIYU

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**AO IEONG U  
URGES LOCALS TO  
STAY IN MACAU  
DURING CNY**

The Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Ao Ieong U called on residents to spend the Lunar New Year in Macau to help keep Covid-19 at bay. Ao delivered her remarks in an interview with TDM, which aired on January 17. She regards the tightening of control measures against Covid-19 as "appropriate" when considering the deteriorating pandemic situation in China and other countries and regions worldwide. She also impelled residents to avoid unnecessary travel and crowded gatherings.

**BIB GOURMAND  
SELECTION  
INCLUDES SEVEN  
EATERIES IN TOWN**

Ahead of the full release of the Michelin Guide Hong Kong Macau 2021 on January 27, Michelin has announced that its Bib Gourmand selection will award seven establishments in Macau. The local establishments include Chan Seng Kei, Cheong Kei, Din Tai Fung (COD), IFT Educational Restaurant, Lok Kei Noodles, Lou Kei (Fai Chi Kei) and O Castiço. The Bib Gourmand distinction is awarded to venues that offer high-quality food at budget-friendly prices, meaning diners can enjoy a quality three-course meal for a maximum price of MOP400.

**RESIDENTIAL  
PROPERTY  
TRANSACTIONS  
DECREASE 17%**

Residential real estate transactions in 2020 have recorded a decrease of 17.4% year-on-year to 6,394 property deals, according to data published by the Financial Services Bureau. Similarly, the average price per square meter also dropped by 6.3% to around MOP102,141. The largest number transactions were again recorded in the Macau Peninsula, which totaled 4,674, while the average price per square meter dropped by 5.8% to MOP99,502.

# ASSOCIATIONS URGE THE PUBLIC TO CARE ABOUT SOLITARY SENIOR CITIZENS

HONEY TSANG

**T**he ongoing pandemic has been taxing on the mental health of local residents, especially senior citizens who live alone and have no one to talk to, according to the city's local associations.

In the midst of Covid-19 and ensuing economic downturn, older adults have faced a string of new challenges and problems, including the need to adapt to the new normal era and associated financial hardships.

"The dramatically-changed environment caused by Covid-19 has put many locals under pressure, especially for the elderly who are living on their own. This may result in them developing some emotional issues," said Ng Siu Lai, the Chairman of the General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macao (UGAMM), at a charity event on January 17.

The pandemic has heightened the sense of loneliness and depression among solitary seniors, many of whom have been forced to stay at home alone for long periods of time due to social distancing measures.

Paul Pun Chi Meng, secretary-general of Caritas Macau, told the Times yesterday that some elderly residents with depression were not even aware of their own mental



health and hesitated to seek help.

"A mental [health] problem, left untreated, will result in lost appetite and worsening of some physical conditions," Pun added.

Caritas Macau has held outreach activities to visit and tend to the feeble seniors who are living alone on a regular basis. Pun also said that the number of elderly residents with low mobility seeking Caritas Macau's services to get around the city has been on the rise during the pandemic.

"Getting out of the house for a change of scenery and fresh air is always beneficial for mental health," the official stressed.

An earlier report published by TDM points out that some older people in Macau are also concerned about financial uncertainties during the pandemic. This has prompted them to cut down their living expenses to retain more money for a rainy day.

Back in July 2020, Macau saw an alarming increase in the number of suicide cases in the elderly, which has been a wake-up call for the community to pay closer attention to the impact of Covid-19 on the mental state of older adults.

On January 17, the UGAMM teamed up with the charity association of the Lin Fung Temple to

distribute approximately 4,000 food packages to older adults living alone and raise public awareness about the need to attend to that demographic.

Pun urged the general public and especially family members to visit solitary older adults more frequently and check on their emotional welfare.

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) encourages residents to be aware of their psychological and emotional state as well as that of their relatives and friends. In case of need, residents can call Caritas' Life Hope hotline (28525222) or IAS' counseling hotline (28261126).

**COVID-19 VACCINES**

## Authorities working on distribution system

**G**overnment authorities are currently working on a platform that will ensure the fair distribution of Covid-19 vaccines as soon as they arrive in the region, Dr Alvis Lo, medical director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital said in reply to a media inquiry at yesterday's press briefing on Covid-19.

According to Lo, the local health authorities are developing a system that will schedule the distribution of vaccines according to priorities established by the government. The official

reaffirmed that the number one priority will be residents who are considered high-risk due to their age and the presence of chronic health conditions, followed by residents within the general population.

Lo also noted that the population should remain calm, adding that there will be enough vaccine to meet the needs of the whole population, including non-resident workers who live and work in Macau.

Lo reaffirmed that they will kick off the distribution during the first quarter of

this year, but did not specify a tentative date.

Addressing the recent deaths in Norway, the Coordinator of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center Dr Leong Iek Hou highlighted that cases of death occurring after receiving a vaccination can have multiple causes and usually only occur due to existing complications.

Nevertheless, Leong said that the local authorities are paying close attention to worldwide developments on the topic. RM



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# Gov't preparing 'mega' operation to repatriate 115 residents

RENATO MARQUES

**L**OCAL authorities are preparing a "mega" operation to receive a flight from Air Macau arriving from Tokyo that will bring back 115 residents to Macau from 13 different countries, the health authorities confirmed yesterday during the weekly press conference from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

As the Times previously reported, the flight will arrive on the evening of January 21 and is the only possible means for Macau residents who are not Chinese nationals to return to the SAR due to the border restrictions in force.

According to Dr Alvis Lo, medical director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital, local authorities are carefully preparing the operations to receive this flight.

Questioned by the media as to why the flight requires such careful attention, the Coordinator of the center, Leong Iek Hou, responded that most of the passengers on this flight are arriving from very high-risk areas, including places where a new strain of the virus has been detected.

"These residents are coming from countries where the [pandemic] situation is worsening and there are already cases with a new mutation of the virus, so we have decided to increase our protective measures even further

and plan an operation that will be all done in a closed circuit," Leong explained.

Common protocols were enforced last year during the peak of the pandemic when flights with returnees arrived in Macau, such as governing the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for all passengers and crew and restrictions, the consumption of food and drinks onboard and even toilet usage.

Local authorities is slated to conduct similar protocols again.

Authorities are now aiming to create a protective bubble from the point that passengers board the plane until the point in time when they are placed under medical observation in quarantine at the designated quarantine hotel - Grand Coloane Resort.

## Most of the passengers on this flight are arriving from very high-risk areas, including places where a new strain of the virus has been detected

"We have been preparing this operation for about one week with several interdepartmental meetings. We will adopt rigorous control measures in all phases so that even if there are cases of infection [among the passengers], this will happen during the period of medical observation and

during the closed-circuit management so there is no community contagion. [This ensures that any transmission] does not affect the population [in general] and will also not force us to suppress the current mechanism of entry and exit of people from the mainland," Lo said.

The measures highlighted by Lo include the need to organize the seating plan on the plane from Tokyo to Macau by group, according to the passengers' place of origin and previous flights to reduce the risk of cross-infection.

Passengers are also requested to minimize eating, drinking or using the toilet. Air Macau will place "dry food" on the seats to avoid the need for the crew to have contact with the passengers.

On this particular matter, the representative of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Lau Fong Chi, has clarified to the media that passengers will not be forced to use a diaper during the flight, as has been alleged over social media.

Lau noted that diapers are part of the PPE set for both adults and children and are included in the international regulatory practices from airlines during flights during the pandemic period, but clarified that their use is not mandatory "unless, by some necessity, the onboard authorities decide to ban the access to the restrooms."

Lo also noted that other measures include the facilitation of two Covid-19 tests on all passengers upon their arrival in Macau.

"We will collect two samples simultaneously - one to conduct a fast test (with results within two hours) and another routine test. If the fast test result returns a negative result, the passenger is directed to the hotel where they will be quarantined for 21 days. During this period, each passenger will be subjected to four tests (on the first, fifth, twelfth, and twentieth days). If the fast test result is positive, the passenger will be sent to the Public Health Clinical Centre in Coloane to initiate treatment," Lo explained.

### GOV'T WARNS PEOPLE TO NOT APPROACH PASSENGERS

Due to concerns that over 50% of the 115 passengers flying back to Macau are residents under 25 years old, most of whom are students, the authorities have specifically requested family members in Macau to refrain from approaching the passengers from the flight.

"Taking into account the restrictive measures in force at the airport and the hotel, I urge the parents or guardians not to go to the airport or the hotel [to attempt to approach the passengers]. The process will be managed in a closed-circuit so the parents will not be able to have any contact with their children," the representative of the MGTO said during the press briefing. "I know that parents will be worried about their children [...] but they should not worry because after being lodged in the hotel they will receive hot meals and, when necessary, parents can deliver other goods to the hotel the next day," Lau remarked.

The same official also noted that besides the majority of the passengers aged under 25 years old, the list of passengers includes two children aged under 2 years old and several adults and senior residents.

To avoid any breach of the restrictive measures, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) will be also cooperating with other authorities to ensure that all procedures are followed on arrival, oversee transportation to the hotel, and maintenance of public order at the airport, the PSP representative added.

## ALMOST HALF OF THE REQUESTS FROM TNRs TO RETURN TO MACAU REJECTED

**NEARLY** half of all requests received by the local authorities from non-resident workers (TNR) stranded outside the region who wish to return to Macau to work have been rejected, the health authorities informed in response to a media inquiry. Local authorities received 288 requests involving 354 people, approximately 150 of which have been denied. Authorities explained that in most cases, the decision not to approve

applicants' return to Macau was due to inaccurate information received from the TNR. In most cases, further investigation revealed that the documents in their possession (blue cards and working contracts) had already expired or were terminated, putting the workers outside the criteria that permit a return by special order of the Chief Executive. In the meantime, the requests of the 128 TNRs have been green-lighted by the government.

CRIME

# DUO OF MARIJUANA GROWERS ARRESTED

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday arrested two men who live together in an apartment, on allegations of illicit production, transaction and possession of apparatuses affiliated with the plantation of marijuana.

The two suspects have been passed to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for further investigation.

The two men, one from Taiwan, surnamed Cheng and aged 28, and a local, surnamed Chan aged 22, told the police that they are friends. The former reported that he works as a junket customer service agent, while the latter works as a salesperson.

It is a collateral discovery, as the police only accidentally unearthed the case during the process of investigating another illicit substance case. Both suspects were caught yesterday; Cheng at the apartment in which he lives and Chan in a Cotai shopping mall, believed to be his workplace.

In the apartment, the PJ seized four plastic pots of marijuana plant, marijuana seeds, a tent for indoor plantation, nutrition liquid, warming lamps, as well as consumption and packaging tools.

Although the two have been charged with drug dealing, neither suspect was selling the plant when they got arrested and the PJ refrained from disclosing whether additional charges would be laid against the duo. Nonetheless, the PJ noted that the existence of pa-



ckaging tools suggests that the end products were intended for sale.

Both admitted to the police to having a marijuana smoking habit. They also confessed that the seeds were sent from abroad by their friends, while the four plants are about two months old. No end product was found in the apartment.

The PJ did not rule out the possibility of other suspects.

The last case of cultivating marijuana in a home was busted in 2001, the PJ recalled.

## 'PEEPING TOM' IN THE MEN'S ROOM

A man aged 31 was caught red-handed on January 16 for taking surreptitious videos of another

man in his 30s using the toilet.

The suspect reported to the Public Security Police Force (PSP) that he was an insurance agent. He was alleged to have taken similar videos in the past year.

When he was caught, he was taking an illicit video in a facility at a Cotai hotel. According to the victim, at the time he was using the facility, he suddenly realized a cellphone was above him from next door.

He yelled out immediately before chasing after and catching the suspect.

When checking the suspect's residence in the Northern District, the PSP discovered and seized 24 pictures and two video clips depicting a male sexual or-

gan. The suspect denied that these images and videos are related to the incident; and said that it was screen capture from when he was conducting nude calls with people.

The suspect was transferred to the MP for further investigations.

## MAN BLACKMAILS ANOTHER MAN AFTER NUDE CALL

After conducting a half-an-hour nude call with a man, a local man was blackmailed for money with clips captured during the call by the other party.

On January 10, the victim, who is a student aged between 18 and 20 as the PJ disclosed, met a man on an app. The new acquaintance suggested that they continue cha-

tting over another mobile app.

At about 11:30 p.m. the next day, the other party suggested a nude call be conducted over the second app, and the victim agreed.

At about 6:30 p.m. on January 15, on yet another mobile app, the victim received two clips from his nude call partner.

The other party blackmailed him for 20,000 in an undisclosed currency using the clips, threatening that if the victim refused or failed to transfer the money, the clips would be disseminated to all the numbers on the victim's phone contact list.

The victim reported the case to the PJ. He did not lose any money due to the blackmail.

# CCAC busts syndicate that defrauded banks through fake mortgage loans

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) has uncovered a case involving several bank workers who colluded with a crime syndicate to fraudulently obtain mortgage loans from banks amounting to MOP770 million, of which the illicit gains totaled to almost MOP220 million.

In a statement yesterday, the corruption watchdog disclosed that a total of nine persons, including the mastermind and the core members of the syndicate and several bank workers, allegedly conspired with over 370 borrowers to falsify documents in order to



fraudulently obtain mortgage loans from 2010 to 2020.

The case involves 11

banks that approved 362 fraudulent loan applications.

The CCAC received a

report alleging that a scam syndicate, masterminded by a man surnamed Chan, colluded with workers at

local banks who were responsible for handling loan applications and others to forge documents and thereby defraud the banks into approving mortgage loan applications.

Following an in-depth investigation, it was found that the team provided personal loans and charged the borrowers high interest. However, when the borrowers were unable to repay the loans, the syndicate requested that they participate in document forgery to facilitate bank mortgage loan applications, which would serve as the repayments for the loans on which they had defaulted. In addition, those borrowers were charged large handling fees.

CCAC explained in the statement that the syndicate also looked for citizens who desperately needed money in casinos through third parties or

through newspaper advertisements for "speedy loan approvals" in an attempt to defraud the banks into approving the fraudulent mortgage applications with falsified evidence of income and passbook copies.

The graft buster also added that one bank manager even falsified documents on his own and used them to apply to different banks for loans, which were then invested into the operation of the syndicate and purchase of borrowers' properties at a price below the market value.

The case has been referred to the Public Prosecutions Office upon completion of the investigation. Following the suggestion of the prosecution office, the judge of the Criminal Investigation Court has ordered that the departure of certain syndicate members be prohibited.

# Liaison official urges locals to guard against Covid-19 to stabilize economy

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE central government's top liaison official in the Macau Special Administrative Region urged those from all walks of life in Macau to do their best in the battle against Covid-19, in a bid to accelerate the city's economic recovery.

Fu Ziyang, the Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau SAR, delivered his speech at yesterday's Chinese New Year cocktail reception, saying, "considering the pandemic is still sweeping worldwide, Macau has to continue to guard [against Covid-19] to stabilize the economy, safeguard the job market and protect the livelihood of grassroots."

Following Fu's remarks, Macau's Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng addressed guests, saying that Macau has achieved a hard-won triumph in the fight against coronavirus, largely thanks to the strong backing of the central government and the concerted effort of everyone in society.

Ho also stressed that the 2021 year also marks the commencement of China's 14th Five-Year Plan



(2021-2025).

"[Given the 14th Five-Year Plan,] The country has entered a new stage of development, which is sure to usher in a lot of opportunities for Macau," Ho said at the reception.

In the ceremony, Macau's top leader vowed that the SAR government will continue to go the extra mile to keep Covid-19 at bay and accelerate the city's economic rebound, foster economic diversification, safeguard the public livelihood and strengthen patriotism in the community through education.

Ho also pledged that the city will "proactively participate" in the development of the Greater Bay Area

and the Belt and Road Initiative.

The CE highlighted the importance of safeguarding national security and social stability and ensuring that the seventh legislative council election, which will be held this year, takes place.

Due to safety concerns during the pandemic, the liaison office in Macau scaled down this year's new year cocktail reception.

The event was also attended by Edmund Ho Hau Wah, vice-chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Consultative Conference; Fernando Chui Sai On, Macau's former CE; and authorities from Macau and China.

## LAWMAKERS' AGENDA

### SULU SOU QUESTIONS CRITERIA FOR HIRING NON-RESIDENT CIVIL SERVANTS

ANTHONY LAM

**L**AWMAKER Sulu Sou recently sent a written question to the executive branch to request clarification on the hiring criteria for non-resident civil servants.

He recalled that in 2017, local Chinese media reported that a graduate from the Macau Polytechnic Institute said she had been hired by the government through "special channels" under the recommendations of the institute.

It was reported that she was hired within government to work as translator, which, at that time, yielded a monthly income exceeding MOP40,000. Meanwhile, local residents had to struggle for a role against thousands of applicants, even when they were applying for a position paying MOP24,000 per month.

Sou cited Law 12/2015 for giving the green light to the practice, but only where there is a shortage in the professional workforce of appropriate candidates or when the particular non-resident candidate has special talents.

However, he remarked that the criteria for hiring non-resident civil servants lacks transparency in relation to the justification behind the employment decision, salary level and dismissal mechanisms.

After making three consecutive requests, the lawmaker eventually obtained data that showed that, as of May 31 2020, the government had hired 141 non-resident civil servants, with seven of them holding consultant positions.

As such, the lawmaker is now asking the government if it has plans to publish data on the number of non-resident civil servants, their origins, résumés, salary levels and reason for employment.

Furthermore, he also asked about the specific process and standards on which the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau and the Chief Executive – both of whom are supervising agents on decisions to hire non-resident civil servants – approve such employments.

He also asked for the reasoning as to why specific bureaus need to hire so many non-resident civil servants.

# MGM, Wynn, Melco announce discretionary bonus to employees

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HREE gaming operators including MGM China, Wynn Macau and Melco Resorts & Entertainment yesterday announced that a discretionary bonus will be paid to eligible non-management team members.

Traditionally, gaming operators offer two discretionary bonuses each year, equivalent to one month's salary per bonus period. The concessionaires usually announce these bonuses every January and July to all eligible full-time employees in recognition of their contributions to the company.

Under this bonus scheme, over 90% of MGM team members and 98.5% of Wynn's em-



ployees can be rewarded.

At Wynn, the bonus payment will be a combination of both cash (70%) and a stored value 'Wynn Care Macau Pass' consumption card (30%).

Meanwhile, in a statement issued by MGM, Pansy Ho, co-chairper-

son and executive director of MGM China Holdings Limited, was quoted as saying, "2020 was a year full of challenges. We thank our team members from the bottom of our hearts for staying united, as well as being loyal and contributing their best to the company."

Last year, due to the economic effect of Covid-19, payment of the second bonus, which is usually given in July and August, was suspended.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the city's casino workers have been propelled into financial hardship, with many workers being laid off or furloughed.

Meanwhile, Lawrence Ho, chairman and CEO of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said, "The year 2020 has certainly been challenging; affecting businesses and communities all around the world. We appreciate our colleagues' every contribution during this difficult time."

Earlier this month, SJM handed its discretionary bonus to its eligible employees.

## DSAL PLEDGES TO EXPLORE POTENTIAL JOBS FOR LOCALS

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) has vowed to continue exploring possible job opportunities offered by the city's big enterprises in order to boost the city's employment rate.

In order to safeguard the job market for local residents, the DSAL will refer local candidates to said enterprises and require the companies to prioritize hiring locals if they are deemed fit for the specific position, the Director of DSAL Wong Chi Hong said in a written reply to the earlier query of Lawmaker Leong Sun Lok with regard to the local job market.

The head of DSAL also promised to organize more training workshops and job-matching events to help locals and graduates secure jobs.

In a bid to safeguard the employment opportunities of locals, the bureau will prohibit foreign workers from applying for certain positions.

In December 2020, the DSAL indicated that its employment support measures — launched to bolster the local job market upended by the pandemic — have yielded positive outcomes.

From January until the end of December of last year, the bureau assisted 3,700 locals land jobs.

According to the latest figures provided by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the unemployment rate of local residents was 4.0% from September-November 2020, down by 0.1 percentage point, compared to the previous period from August-October 2020.



## ECONOMY GROWS IN 2020 AS REBOUND FROM VIRUS GAINS

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINA eked out 2.3% economic growth in 2020, likely becoming the only major economy to expand as shops and factories reopened relatively early from a shutdown to fight the coronavirus while the United States, Japan and Europe struggled with rising infections.

Growth in the three months ending in December rose to 6.5% over a year earlier as consumers returned to shopping malls, restaurants and cinemas, official data showed yesterday. That was up

from the previous quarter's 4.9% and stronger than many forecasters expected.

In early 2020, activity contracted by 6.8% in the first quarter as the ruling Communist Party took the then-unprecedented step of shutting down most of its economy to fight the virus. The following quarter, China became the first major country to grow again with a 3.2% expansion after the party declared victory over the virus in March and allowed factories, shops and offices to reopen.

Restaurants are filling up while cinemas and retailers struggle

to lure customers back. Crowds are thin at shopping malls, where guards check visitors for signs of the disease's tell-tale fever.

Domestic tourism is reviving, though authorities have urged the public to stay home during the Lunar New Year holiday in February, normally the busiest travel season, in response to a spate of new infections in some Chinese cities.

Exports have been boosted by demand for Chinese-made masks and other medical goods.

The growing momentum "reflected improving private consumption expenditure as well as

buoyant net exports," said Rajiv Biswas of IHS Markit in a report. He said China is likely to be the only major economy to grow in 2020 while developed countries and most major emerging markets were in recession.

The economy "recovered steadily" and "living standards were ensured forcefully," the National Bureau of Statistics said in a statement. It said the ruling party's development goals were "accomplished better than expectation" but gave no details.

2020 was China's weakest growth in decades and below 1990's 3.9% following the crackdown on the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement, which led to China's international isolation.

Despite growth for the year, "it is too early to conclude that this is a full recovery," said Iris Pang of ING in a report. "External demand has not yet fully recovered. This is a big hurdle."

Exporters and high-tech manufacturers face uncertainty about how President-elect Joseph Biden will handle conflicts with Beijing over trade, technology and security. His predecessor, Donald Trump, hurt exporters by hiking tariffs on Chinese goods and manufacturers including telecom equipment giant Huawei by imposing curbs on access to U.S. components and technology.

"We expect the newly elected U.S. government will continue most of the current policies on China, at least for the first quarter," Pang said.

The International Monetary Fund and private sector forecasters expect economic growth to rise further this year to above 8%.

China's quick recovery brought it closer to matching the United States in economic output.

Total activity in 2020 was 102 trillion yuan (\$15.6 trillion), according to the government. That is about 75% the size of the \$20.8 trillion forecast by the IMF for the U.S. economy, which is expected to shrink by 4.3% from 2019. The IMF estimates China will be about 90% of the size of the U.S. economy by 2025, though with more than four times as many people average income will be lower.

Exports rose 3.6% last year despite the tariff war with Washington. Exporters took market share from foreign competitors that still faced anti-virus restrictions.

Retail spending contracted by 3.9% over 2019 but gained 4.6% in December over a year earlier as demand revived. Consumer spending recovered to above the previous year's levels in the quarter ending in September.

Online sales of consumer goods rose 14.8% as millions of families who were ordered to stay home shifted to buying groceries and clothing on the internet.

Factory output rose 2.8% over 2019. Activity accelerated toward the end of the year. Production rose 7.3% in December.

Despite travel controls imposed for some areas after new cases flared this month most of the country is unaffected.

Still, the government's appeal to the public to avoid traditional Lunar New Year gatherings and travel might dent spending on tourism, gifts and restaurants.

Other activity might increase, however, if farms, factories and traders keep operating over the holiday, said Chaoping Zhu of JP Morgan Asset Management in a report.

"Unusually high growth rates in this quarter are likely to be seen," said Zhu. AP

## 12 workers trapped week ago in Shandong mine blast are alive

CHINESE state media say 12 out of 22 workers trapped for a week by an explosion in a gold mine are alive, as hundreds of rescuers seek to bring them to safety.

The Xinhua News Agency said yesterday a note passed through a rescue shaft Sunday night reported the fate of the other 10 remains unknown.

The handwritten note said four of the workers were injured and that the condition of others was deteriorating because of a lack of fresh air and an influx of water.

Managers of the operation were detained after they failed to report the accident for more than a day. The mine in Qixia, a jurisdiction under the city of Yantai in Shandong province, had been under construction at the time of the blast, which occurred Jan. 10.

More than 300 workers are seeking to clear obstructions while drilling a new shaft to reach the chambers where the workers were trapped and expel dangerous fumes.

"Keep on with the rescue efforts. We have hope, thank you," read the note, written in pencil on notebook paper and posted on Xinhua's official website.

China's mining industry has a reputation for skirting safety requirements amid massive demand for coal and precious minerals, although increased supervision has reduced the frequency of accidents that used to claim an average of 5,000 miners per year.

Two accidents in the southwestern megacity of Chongqing last year killed 39 miners, prompting the central government to order another safety overhaul. AP



Rescuers drill a new channel at the explosion site of a gold mine in Qixia City, Shandong Province

HONG KONG

# Experts back Pfizer shots, clearing way for approval

A panel of experts said they have recommended that Hong Kong approve the Pfizer Inc.-BioNTech SE coronavirus vaccine for use, clearing the way for a regulatory greenlight as the city tries to stamp out a winter outbreak that appears to be worsening.

It's the first vaccine on track for approval in the Asian financial city, which likely means that the vulnerable groups which the government has prioritized like health-care workers and the elderly will receive this shot. The vaccine is being marketed by Shanghai Fosun Pharmaceutical Group Co. in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau.

In a sign of growing global concern over reports of vaccine-related deaths in Norway, the panel is seeking more information from Norwegian authorities and Fosun, and will ask the government to stop administering the shot "as soon as we receive information that tips the balance ratio of risks and benefits," said Wallace Lau, the panel's convenor, at a press briefing yesterday.

The panel also wants more information on which groups to prioritize in administering the vaccine, said Lau. Although most countries are planning to vaccinate their elderly first, the Norway deaths indicate that the side effects or allergies from the

BLOOMBERG



shot may be potentially deadly in the old and frail.

After the endorsement by the 12-person vaccine advisory panel, Secretary for Food and Heal-

th Sophia Chan will make a final decision on approving the vaccine for use. Officials said that the city's vaccine rollout will start around the Chinese New Year ho-

liday, which this year begins on Feb. 12.

The progress on vaccines is likely to soothe Hong Kong residents who have seen places like

mainland China and Singapore kick off vaccination drives earlier. While the city's coronavirus cases haven't risen as dramatically as in western countries, strict social distancing rules like the closure of schools and some businesses have been in place for nearly two months.

Hong Kong's government said it has purchased enough doses - including from Sinovac Biotech Ltd. and AstraZeneca Plc - to cover its 7.5 million residents, and plans to offer people a choice of which vaccine to take, though that also depends on availability.

Government advisers have defended their relatively slower rollout as due to caution. That stance - shared by many Asia-Pacific economies - may seem strange given the urgency to resume normal life, but low infection rates mean that Asian governments are able to wait to see how the unprecedented vaccination drives play out elsewhere.

The city has seen 163 deaths from Covid-19 - still roughly half of the total death toll inflicted on Hong Kong from the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, pandemic which killed nearly 300 people in the early 2000s. Despite almost two months of social distancing, the city's infection curve appears to be ticking back up after mass testing was conducted among some housing estates. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

AD




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**Manuel Wu** - Urban Planner, member of the Macao SAR Heritage Committee & Managing Director of Macao Explorer Cultural Travel

**Moderator:**  
**Norris Au** - Urban Planner & founding member of Asia Placemakers

**Business Luncheon**  
**Date:** 20 Jan 2021 (WED)  
**Venue:** The Vista, MGM Cotai  
**Time:**  
 12:00: Registration  
 12:30: Luncheon, presentation & panel discussion  
 14:00: Close

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National Guard troops reinforce security around the U.S. Capitol

USA

# FBI vetting Guard troops in DC amid fears of insider attack

**U**.S. defense officials say they are worried about an insider attack or other threat from service members involved in securing President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration, prompting the FBI to vet all of the 25,000 National Guard troops coming into Washington for the event.

The massive undertaking reflects the extraordinary security concerns that have gripped Washington following the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by pro-Trump rioters. And it underscores fears that some of the very people assigned to protect the city over the next several days could present a threat to the incoming president and other VIPs in attendance.

Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy told The Associated Press that officials are conscious of the potential threat, and he warned commanders to be on the lookout for any problems within their ranks as the inauguration approaches. So far, however, he and other leaders say they have seen no evidence of any threats, and officials said the vetting hadn't flagged any issues that they were aware of.

"We're continually going through the process, and taking second, third looks at every one of the individuals assigned to this operation," McCarthy said in an interview after he and other mi-

litary leaders went through an exhaustive, three-hour security drill in preparation for tomorrow's inauguration. He said Guard members are also getting training on how to identify potential insider threats.

About 25,000 members of the National Guard are streaming into Washington from across the country — at least two and a half times the number for previous inaugurations. And while the military routinely reviews service members for extremist connections, the FBI screening is in addition to any previous monitoring.

Multiple officials said the process began as the first Guard troops began deploying to D.C. more than a week ago. And they said it is slated to be complete by Wednesday. Several officials discussed military planning on condition of anonymity.

"The question is, is that all of them? Are there others?" said McCarthy. "We need to be conscious of it and we need to put all of the mechanisms in place to thoroughly vet these men and women who would support any operations like this."

In a situation like this one, FBI vetting would involve running peoples' names through databases and watchlists maintained by the bureau to see if anything alarming comes up. That could include involvement in prior investigations or terrorism-related concerns,

said David Gomez, a former FBI national security supervisor in Seattle.

Insider threats have been a persistent law enforcement priority in the years after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. But in most cases, the threats are from homegrown insurgents radicalized by al-Qaida, the Islamic State group or similar groups. In contrast, the threats against Biden's inauguration have been fueled by supporters of President Donald Trump, far-right militants, white supremacists and other radical groups. Many believe Trump's baseless accusations that the election was stolen from him, a claim that has been refuted by many courts, the Justice Department and Republican officials in key battleground states.

The insurrection at the Capitol began after Trump made incendiary remarks at the Jan. 6 rally. According to McCarthy, service members from across the military were at that rally, but it's not clear how many were there or who may have participated in the breach at the Capitol. So far only a couple of current active-duty or National Guard members have been arrested in connection with the Capitol assault, which left five people dead. The dead included a Capitol Police officer and a woman shot by police as she climbed through a window in a door near the House chamber.

Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, has been meeting with Guard troops as they arrive in D.C. and as they gather downtown. He said he believes there are good processes in place to identify any potential threats.

"If there's any indication that any of our soldiers or airmen are expressing things that are extremist views, it's either handed over to law enforcement or dealt with the chain of command immediately," he said.

The insider threat, however, was just one of the security concerns voiced by officials yesterday, as dozens of military, National Guard, law enforcement and Washington, D.C., officials and commanders went through a security rehearsal in northern Virginia. As many as three dozen leaders lined tables that ringed a massive color-coded map of D.C. reflected onto the floor. Behind them were dozens more National Guard officers and staff, with their eyes trained on additional maps and charts displayed on the wall.

The Secret Service is in charge of event security, but there is a wide variety of military and law enforcement personnel involved, ranging from the National Guard and the FBI to Washington's Metropolitan Police Department, U.S. Capitol Police and U.S. Park Police.

Commanders went over every aspect of the city's complicated security lockdown, with McCarthy and others peppering them with questions about how the troops will respond in any scenario and how well they can communicate with the other enforcement agencies scattered around the city.

Hokanson said he believes his troops have been adequately equipped and prepared, and that they are rehearsing as much as they can to be prepared for any contingency.

The major security concern is an attack by armed groups of individuals, as well as planted explosives and other devices. McCarthy said intelligence reports suggest that groups are organizing armed rallies leading up to Inauguration Day, and possibly after that.

The bulk of the Guard members will be armed. And McCarthy said units are going through repeated drills to practice when and how to use force and how to work quickly with law enforcement partners. Law enforcement officers would make any arrests. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1966 INDIRA GANDHI TAKES CHARGE IN INDIA



Indira Gandhi, only daughter of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, is to become the country's next leader.

She was chosen at the end of a bitter leadership battle with former finance minister Morarji Desai.

Following her win, Mrs Gandhi pledged herself to serve the Congress Party and the country, and said she would "strive to create what my father used to call a climate of peace."

Crowds had gathered outside Parliament House while the election was held, and cheered Mrs Gandhi wildly as she went to the President's House to report.

She will not become prime minister until she submits her cabinet to the president.

Mrs Gandhi did not confirm she would be a candidate until four days ago, when chief ministers from 11 of India's 16 states let it be known they would support her to take over. [...]

It was predicted he would get less than 100 of the 526 votes from Congress MPs, but he surprised many by winning 169 votes to Mrs Gandhi's 355.

Afterwards, Mr Desai pledged to cooperate fully with Mrs Gandhi. It is the second time running he has been defeated in a leadership contest: the first time, against Mr Shastri, he withdrew his candidacy without a vote.

Mrs Gandhi, 48, was educated at West Bengal and Oxford and has two sons, Rajiv and Sanjay, who are both studying in England.

She gets her name not from Mahatma Gandhi, the legendary independence campaigner and founder of the Congress Party, but from her husband Feroze Gandhi, a lawyer who died in 1960.

The couple spent 13 months in prison for subversion after fighting against British rule in India during the 1940s.

She has played a key part in the Congress Party since 1955, and served as information minister in Mr Shastri's government.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Morarji Desai went on to form a right-wing faction opposed to Mrs Gandhi within the Congress Party.

Nevertheless, she won general election victories in 1967 and 1971.

She presided over the 1971 conflict with Pakistan which created Bangladesh, and then in 1975 she was convicted of corruption and banned from holding office for six years. She responded by refusing to resign and declared a highly controversial national state of emergency which lasted for nearly two years.

She subsequently lost the 1977 general election to Morarji Desai, who headed Janata, part of an alliance of opposition parties.

His coalition broke apart in 1979, however, and Mrs Gandhi returned to power.

In 1984 she ordered the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar to flush out Sikh militants pursuing self-rule for Punjab.

Two months later, she was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards. About 1000 people, mostly Sikhs, died in the four days of rioting which followed her murder.

Her eldest son, Rajiv, succeeded her as prime minister. He too was assassinated in 1991.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 Be prepared to lose friends or alienate loved ones due to your stubborn nature lately. Your ability to work with detail will bring recognition. You'll find it easy to upgrade your environment.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 You will be misinterpreted if you get involved in other people's problems. Your hard work and dedication will bring payoff, so stick to your guns and do your job well.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 You can do well on stage or behind the scenes, the choice is yours. You're intuitive today; however, this attribute could get you in trouble if you tactlessly say what you think.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 Get help setting up a reasonable budget. Look into ways of making extra cash. You'll stay out of trouble if you pick projects that will benefit the whole family.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 You could meet an interesting individual you'll want to get to know better. Visit those less fortunate than your self; be sure to help them with their personal problems.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Patience will be of utmost importance. Your talents are likely to be discovered. You may be tempted to spend too much on entertainment or luxury items.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 Get back to the comforts of cottage or home. This day was meant for love. Make creative changes to your residence. You can have an enjoyable time if you socialize with friends.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 Don't overspend to impress others. You may find out that someone has not been completely honest with you. Plan to get out and do a bit of travel.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 You are likely to be left alone if you aren't willing to bend just a little. You can help sort out problems that friends are facing. Enjoy some socializing today.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Your outgoing nature might work against you today. You could have a need to make some changes today. Realize that you don't have to do everything yourself.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Try not to lend or borrow money or belongings today. Be discreet about any information you uncover. You have a tendency to think that no one else will do things properly.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Don't donate more than you can afford in order to impress others. Any capricious behavior will confuse loved ones and your mood swings will result in loneliness.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

EASY					EASY+				
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		5	6	9 1					

MEDIUM					HARD				
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6		2	7			2			
	3 7			2	8				

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-6	-1	flurry
Harbin	-30	-16	clear
Tianjin	-3	3	cloudy
Urumqi	-15	-6	clear
Xi'an	-6	10	cloudy
Lhasa	-4	9	cloudy
Chengdu	2	9	overcast
Chongqing	3	11	cloudy
Kunming	2	15	cloudy
Nanjing	0	12	clear
Shanghai	3	11	clear
Wuhan	0	15	clear
Hangzhou	1	14	cloudy
Taipei	13	18	cloudy
Guangzhou	6	21	clear
Hong Kong	13	17	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-20	-14	light snow
Frankfurt	1	3	sleet
Paris	4	7	drizzle
London	6	8	drizzle
New York	1	8	cloudy

**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 war; 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.;

**Yesterday's solution**

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

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<b>Fire department</b> 28 572 222	<b>Water Supply</b> - Report 2822 0088
<b>PJ (Open line)</b> 993	<b>Telephone</b> - Report 1000
<b>PJ (Picket)</b> 28 557 775	<b>Electricity</b> - Report 28 339 922
<b>PSP</b> 28 573 333	<b>Macau Daily Times</b> 28 716 081
<b>Customs</b> 28 559 944	
<b>S. J. Hospital</b> 28 313 731	
<b>Kiang Wu Hospital</b> 28 371 333	
<b>Commission Against Corruption (CCAC)</b> 28326 300	
<b>IAM</b> 28 387 333	
<b>Tourism</b> 28 333 000	
<b>Airport</b> 59 888 88	



<p><b>FOR SALE</b></p> <p><b>Superb Studio, Old Taipa</b>              HK\$3,780,000 650 ft² 1 1 1</p>	<p><b>FOR RENT</b></p> <p><b>NEW</b></p> <p><b>Taipa Village studio</b>              HK\$8,500/mth 478 ft² 1 1</p>	<p><b>Rain Dance Property</b>              "We dance until it's SOLD!"</p> <p><b>Apartment in the Historical Centre</b>              HK\$3,900,000 840 ft² 2 1 1</p>	<p><b>PROPERTY LIST</b></p> <p>[Taipa] Buckingham 2 2 2              1,439 ft² \$11,770,000 (ref: 19045004)</p> <p>[Taipa] Ocean Garden Fragrant Court 4 3 3              3,500 ft² \$24,000,000 (ref: 20036001)</p> <p>[Taipa] Designer 2 bedroom 2 1 1              630 ft² \$11,500/mth (ref: 20121001)</p> <p>[Taipa] Nova Park 2 2 2              1,148 ft² \$14,500/mth (ref: n/a)</p>
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# TRUMP HALTS HUAWEI SUPPLY IN FINAL CHINA BLOW, REUTERS SAYS

LINLY LIN & VLAD SAVOV

**T**HE U.S. government notified several of Huawei Technologies Co.'s suppliers that it's revoking their licenses to work with the Chinese company and rejecting other applications in the last days of Donald Trump's presidency, Reuters reported, citing unidentified people familiar with the matter.

Current licensed suppliers that have been notified include Intel Corp., Reuters said. In addition, the Commerce Department indicated its intent to deny "a significant number of license requests for exports to Huawei," according to an email obtained by the news agency. Representatives for Intel and the U.S. Commerce Department didn't immediately respond to requests by Bloomberg News seeking comment.

The latest move against Huawei is probably the Trump administration's last strike to weaken the Chinese telecommunications giant and puts the spotlight on how the incoming Biden administration will approach the U.S.-China relationship. Asian chip stocks and Huawei suppliers including Samsung Electronics Co., Tokyo Electron Ltd., Advantest Corp. and Lasertec Corp. slid between 1% and 4% in yesterday's trading.

Intel was among a small group of companies that the U.S. government cleared to do business with Huawei, which it put on its so-called entity list of national security threats in May 2019. Trump administra-



tion sanctions have cut Huawei off from business-critical relationships with the likes of Alphabet Inc.'s Google, which provided the Android software on hundreds of millions of Huawei smartphones, and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. for its cutting-edge chips.

Huawei has relied on Intel much less, primarily for its servers and consumer laptop products. A representative for the Chinese company didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump has escalated his campaign to curb China's technological rise as his term draws to a close. Xiaomi Corp., another smartphone and consumer electronics vendor, was among nine firms added to the U.S. Defense Department's list of companies with alleged ties to the Chinese military, a move that will restrict U.S. investments in its securities. Other companies include state-

owned planemaker Commercial Aircraft Corp. of China Ltd., or Comac, which is central to China's goal of creating a narrow-body plane that can compete with Boeing Co. and Airbus SE.

The profile of the companies targeted, including in the latest announcements on Thursday, is staggering. They include China's three biggest telecom firms, its top chipmaker, its biggest social media and gaming players, its top two smartphone makers, its main deepwater energy explorer, its premier military aerospace contractor, its leading drone manufacturer and its primary commercial planemaker.

While the scope of Trump's unprecedented actions has roiled markets, the full reckoning of their impact largely hinges on President-elect Joe Biden. His incoming administration will have the power to either keep the restrictions in place, remove them or tighten them further. **BLOOMBERG**

# Samsung heir sent back to prison for 30 months in bribery case

SOHEE KIM

**S**AMSUNG Electronics Co. heir Jay Y. Lee was sentenced to 30 months in prison over bribery charges, a dramatic setback for the world's biggest electronics company as it tries to move beyond a years-long scandal that inflamed outrage over the cozy relationships between government and business.

The Seoul High Court first jailed Lee in 2017 after convicting the billionaire for his role in a corruption scandal that toppled former South Korean president Park Geun-hye. The Samsung Group's de facto leader served a year in prison, but was released in February 2018 after his original five-year term was cut in half and suspended. The Supreme Court overturned that verdict and ordered a retrial in 2019. Monday's sentencing, the result of that retrial, sends the top decision maker at the country's most valuable company back to jail at a time of rising competition and global uncertainty.

In the dispute, Lee, 52, was accused of offering horses and other payments to a friend of the former president to win support for his formal succession at the corporation. The Supreme Court upheld a 20-year prison term for Park last week, citing wide-ranging charges including bri-

bery related to Samsung. Lee still faces a second prosecution related to succession.

"This is shocking news for Samsung, but Samsung should wrap up this legal wrangling and move forward," said Chae Yi-bai, a former South Korean lawmaker who has worked at a non-profit shareholder activist organization. "Since Lee already spent one year in prison, there will be one and a half years of a leadership vacuum."

Shares of Samsung Electronics fell 3.4% after the sentencing. An attorney for Lee called the decision "regrettable." Samsung Electronics declined to comment on the outcome.

Any void in leadership presents risks for the world's largest producer of memory chips, smartphones and consumer appliances as it deals with the Covid-19 pandemic, tumultuous U.S.-China relations and intensifying competition in mobile devices and semiconductors. While Samsung's daily business is run by an army of managers, Lee's absence may stall or complicate larger investments or strategic longer-term moves. The executive has played an active role at the company, frequently joining government-related and public events after he was released from the prison. **BLOOMBERG**



## CORPORATE BITS

### MGM invites artists of Fuhong Society to design CNY gifts



This Chinese New Year, MGM is collaborating with Fuhong Society of Macau, specifically its gifted autistic artists Leong Ieng Wai and Ip Chi Kin, through the integration of their artwork

to the design of its festive campaign and gifts.

This includes Chinese New Year pudding gift box packaging, red packets, red banners among others, according to a statement is-

sued by the gaming operator.

The collaboration aims to showcase the "extraordinary talent of artists with disabilities to the public."

The two artists have created "Prosperous Golden Lion 0.38" and "Jubilant Golden Lion in the House" for MGM's CNY campaign.

MGM's homemade CNY pudding gift boxes are all packaged in the design of the two artists. Pudding vouchers are available for sale from now till February 10 at Pastry Bar, Imperial Court, North and South by Square Eight at MGM Macau, and Hao Guo, Chun, Five Foot Road, Anytime and Miàn Dui Miàn at MGM Cotai.

### The St. Regis Macao presents festive culinary delights



The St. Regis Macao is offering a range of culinary delights and experiences to celebrate the Year of the Ox to share with friends and family

and welcome prosperity for the year ahead.

The latest evolution of The Manor's "Stories of the Sea – the Seventh Chapter" pre-

sents a celebration of flavors showcasing fine seafood, sourced from all four corners of the globe.

The six-course menu delights with dishes including Ten-nen madai served with cherry tomato confit and rainbow trout caviar and Alaskan king crab with avocado and white asparagus, among others. Meanwhile, The St. Regis Bar presents an afternoon tea with the all-new "The St. Regis X Royal Albert 100 Years Afternoon Tea" in collaboration with famed British fine bone china brand, Royal Albert.

Also, its mixologist at The St. Regis Bar has specially crafted a range of Baijiu cocktails inspired by the Year of the Ox.

LIVERPOOL 0, MAN UNITED 0

FOOTBALL

# Man United stays top after drawing at Liverpool

**M**ANCHESTER United stayed top of the Premier League after drawing 0-0 with Liverpool yesterday [Macau time] and extending the champion's winless run to four matches.

Liverpool hasn't gone as long without a win since 2017, but Jürgen Klopp's team still maintained its unbeaten record at Anfield since the same year thanks to Alisson Becker's late saves from Bruno Fernandes and Paul Pogba.

"We had two great chances and two great saves," United captain Harry Maguire said. "It was cagey but it was two good teams matching up. We found it difficult in the first half to get a rhythm to the game, the press was high."

Thiago Alcantara's long-range effort was well saved by United goalkeeper David De Gea in the 78th minute as Liverpool failed to score for a third successive match.

Liverpool, which had a makeshift defense due to injuries, stayed three points behind United, which is chasing its first title since 2013.

The outcome was predictable as this was the seventh draw in the past 10 meetings between these sides, who meet again in the FA Cup next weekend.

The clash between England's two most-decorated clubs never



Liverpool's Thiago vies for the ball with Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes (left)

got close to fulfilling its billing, with the best quality on show being that from Alisson.

The hope for the hosts was that Thiago, back from an injury and

making his first Anfield appearance for the club since arriving from Bayern Munich in September, would provide the creative spark.

The midfielder did dictate play in midfield but even his exquisite use of the ball could not unlock a well-drilled United formation.

But he was not helped by some

distinctly poor and wayward finishing from Roberto Firmino, Mohamed Salah, Xherdan Shaqiri — in his first league start in 13 months — and Andy Robertson.

United played well within itself, content to run holding patterns and wait for a Liverpool mistake, and as a result they did not have their first shot until the 34th minute when Fernandes whipped a free kick just wide.

Fernandes seemed to be the only United player testing Alisson, with the Brazil international saving twice in the second half — the second a good block from close range.

Thiago forced the under-employed De Gea to palm away his strike from distance before Alisson produced the stop of the evening to turn Pogba's drive for a corner.

"They were dangerous on the counterattack, they're dangerous away from home," said Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson, who was deployed further back in central defense. "We knew it would be a tough game but, like I said, I thought the performance level was really good, counter-pressing, winning the ball back quickly was good.

"They're always going to have one or two moments, but I think it's about trying to limit that and I felt as though we did that today. Overall we'll be disappointed not to take the three points." AP

AD

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OPINION

Our Desk

Renato Marques



HENGQIN THE NEW 'EL DORADO'?

History says that when Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas around 1492, the moment marked one of the first chapters of the world's clash of cultures.

Reports for those times depict a brutal confrontation of opposing cultures; opposing ways of living and systems of beliefs.

Around the same time, a myth started to circulate in Europe about a certain lost city made of gold that was waiting to be discovered by a brave conqueror somewhere in South America.

For some historians, the myth of the 'El Dorado' – the name attributed to this alleged lost city – was just a metaphor, very commonly written in texts at the time, that ultimately symbolized a certain "gold rush" that led the European maritime superpowers of Portugal and Spain to fight for as many pieces of land as they possibly could in the Southern American continent.

At the same time, most common people, who were not aware of the tricky metaphorical symbol, truly believed in the existence of an actual city made of gold waiting to be conquered.

This fact, while misleading in its essence, worked as an important driver to keep people's hopes high and, ultimately, meant that those who ran these dangerous sea expeditions across the globe never lacked motivated manpower or investors.

A similar process seems to be occurring right next door to Macau with the rising fame of Hengqin Island. Although we are not exactly discovering new land, we are in a way exploring new opportunities that an old land seems to have gained through the magical power of the Central government's newly designated roles.

The fact is, just like over 500 years ago with El Dorado, a ruler decided that a certain piece of land would have added advantages for his country and rule, and sent people to dig for that gold.

This new gold is not in a form of the precious metal, but in another kind of marketable good – real estate.

Similar to the old European times, rumors (purposely) spread faster than actual news, and the abstract ideas of a "finance center," a "high tech hub," and many others that you can find in official and (often) unofficial speeches led to a similar "gold rush" for this new El Dorado.

Historians discovered and confirmed after many years that El Dorado was not a place, but a person, a ruler so rich that he allegedly covered himself in gold from head to toe each morning and washed it off in a sacred lake each evening.

In the very same way, we also might find out a little too late that Hengqin might just be, and continue to be for many decades to come, what it is now – a construction site where hundreds of construction projects are being undertaken at the same time giving a deceptive idea of fast-paced progress.

What if Hengqin is just preparing to become another Chinese ghost city?

According to the latest unofficial figures, there are as many as around 50 municipalities in the mainland that have been classified as "ghost cities," places that, just like Hengqin, were subjected to fast-paced real estate development and where virtually nobody lives.

Abandoned after years of construction, these cities are the opposite of progress, except for the developers who completed their projects and benefited from investors' money.

According to a report from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, there are "as many as 64 million empty apartments in China."

In his book "China's Great Wall of Debt," Dinny McMahon explained the driving force behind the construction of these cities, saying that developers build housing in places that end up being ghost cities because they believe in the ability of the Chinese property market to only grow and never fall.

Eventually, some of these "ghosts" turned out just fine some 20 or 30 years after being initially built. Are the Hengqin investors aware of this time gap?

CHINA SLAMS US COVID LAB CLAIMS AS 'CONSPIRACY THEORIES'

THE BUZZ

China accused the U.S. of spreading "lies" and "conspiracy theories" after the Trump administration said it had new information suggesting the coronavirus might have emerged from a Chinese laboratory.

A U.S. State Department "fact sheet" on the virus origins released Friday was "full of fallacies," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular news briefing yesterday in Beijing. She dismissed the claims as the "last madness" of outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo.

"The so-called fact sheet is another lie sheet produced by the U.S. side," Hua said. "This fully demonstrates that some U.S.

politicians are keen on violating science, hyping up conspiracy theories, spreading political viruses for their personal gains, while paying no attention to public security and people's lives. This is also the last madness of Pompeo - Mr. Lies."

A team of WHO experts arrived in China last week and is currently in quarantine.

The State Department said it had new evidence that researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology fell ill in the autumn of 2019 - before the first identified case of the coronavirus in the central Chinese city - with symptoms consistent with Covid-19 or common seasonal illnesses.

DRAMATIC DROP IN SAUDI EXECUTIONS AFTER LAWS CHANGED IN 2020

AYA BATRAWY, DUBAI

SAUDI Arabia, for years one of the world's most prolific executioners, dramatically reduced the number of people put to death last year, following changes halting executions for non-violent drug-related crimes, according to the government's tally and independent observers.

The Saudi government's Human Rights Commission said yesterday it documented 27 executions in 2020. That's compared to an all-time high of 184 executions the year before as documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The change represents an 85% reduction in the number of people put to death last year, compared to 2019.

"The sharp decrease was brought about in part by a moratorium on death penalties for drug-related offenses," the Saudi rights commission said.

When asked by The Associated Press, the commission said the new law ordering a stop to such executions came into effect sometime last year. The new directive for judges does not appear to have been published publicly and it was not immediately clear whether the law was changed by royal decree, as is typically the case.

The AP previously reported that Saudi Arabia last year also ordered an end to the death penalty for crimes committed by minors and ordered judges to end the controversial practice of public flogging, replacing it with jail time, fines or community service.

The force behind these changes is 34-year-old Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who has the backing of his father, King Salman. In an effort to modernize the country, attract



foreign investment and revamp the economy, the prince has spearheaded a range of reforms curtailing the power of ultraconservative Wahhabis, who adhere to a strict interpretation of Islam that many Saudis still practice.

For years, the kingdom's high rate of executions was in large part due to the number of people executed for non-lethal offenses, which judges had wide discretion to rule on, particularly for drug-related crimes.

"The sharp decrease was brought about in part by a moratorium on death penalties for drug-related offenses."

SAUDI RIGHTS COMMISSION

Amnesty International ranked Saudi Arabia third in the world for the highest number of executions in 2019, after China where the number of executions is believed to be in the thousands, and Iran. Among those put to death that year by Saudi Arabia were 32 minority Shiites convicted on terrorism charges related to their participation in anti-government protests and clashes with police.

While some crimes, such as premeditated murder, can carry fixed punishments under the Saudi interpretation of Islamic law, or Sha-

riah, drug-related offenses are considered "ta'zir," meaning neither the crime nor the punishment is defined in Islam. Discretionary judgments for "ta'zir" crimes led to arbitrary rulings with contentious outcomes.

The kingdom has long been criticized by independent rights groups for applying the death sentence for non-violent crimes related to drug trafficking. Many of those executed for such crimes were often poor Yemenis or low-level drug smugglers of South Asia descent, with the latter having little to no knowledge of Arabic and unable to understand or read the charges against them in court.

Saudi Arabia carries out executions mainly by beheading and sometimes in public. The kingdom had argued that public executions and those of drug traffickers serve as a deterrent to combat crime.

"The moratorium on drug-related offenses means the kingdom is giving more non-violent criminals a second chance," the president of the government's Human Rights Commission, Awwad Alawwad, said. In a statement obtained by the AP, he said the change represents a sign the Saudi justice system is focusing more on rehabilitation and prevention rather than solely on punishment. AP



Indonesia Tens of thousands of people have been evacuated and more than a dozen have been killed in recent days in flooding on Indonesia's Borneo island, officials said. National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson Raditya Jati said floods brought by intense rains caused floodwaters as high as 3 meters.



Israel After sprinting ahead in the race to inoculate its population against the coronavirus, Israel has struck a deal with Pfizer, promising to share vast troves of medical data with the international drug giant in exchange for the continued flow of its hard-to-get vaccine. Proponents say the deal could allow Israel to become the first country to vaccinate most of its population, while providing valuable research that could help the rest of the world.



Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's arrest as he arrived in Moscow after recovering from his poisoning drew criticism from Western nations and calls for his release, with Germany's foreign minister yesterday calling it "incomprehensible." Navalny was detained at passport control at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport after flying in from Berlin.



Space Richard Branson's Virgin Orbit reached space during the weekend, eight months after the first demonstration flight of its air-launched rocket system failed, the company said. A LauncherOne rocket was released from beneath the wing of a Boeing 747 carrier aircraft off the coast of Southern California, carrying a cluster of very small satellites known as CubeSats developed and built as part of a NASA educational program involving U.S. universities.