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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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**NEW MACAU ASSOCIATION SAYS THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REDEFINE RULES FOR UNPAID LEAVE, SALARY DEDUCTION**

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**THE VENETIAN MACAO LEADS SANDS CHINA UNIVERSE RECOVERY LAST QUARTER**

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**MACAU SAW A CONTINUING DOWNWARD TREND IN THE NUMBER OF LICENSED JUNKET PROMOTERS IN 2021, DOWN 10.5% FROM 95**

P4



**Philippines** has protested a new Chinese law that authorizes its coast guard to fire on foreign vessels and destroy other countries' structures on islands it claims, Manila's top diplomat said. Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said in a tweet that the new Chinese law "is a verbal threat of war to any country that defies" it.



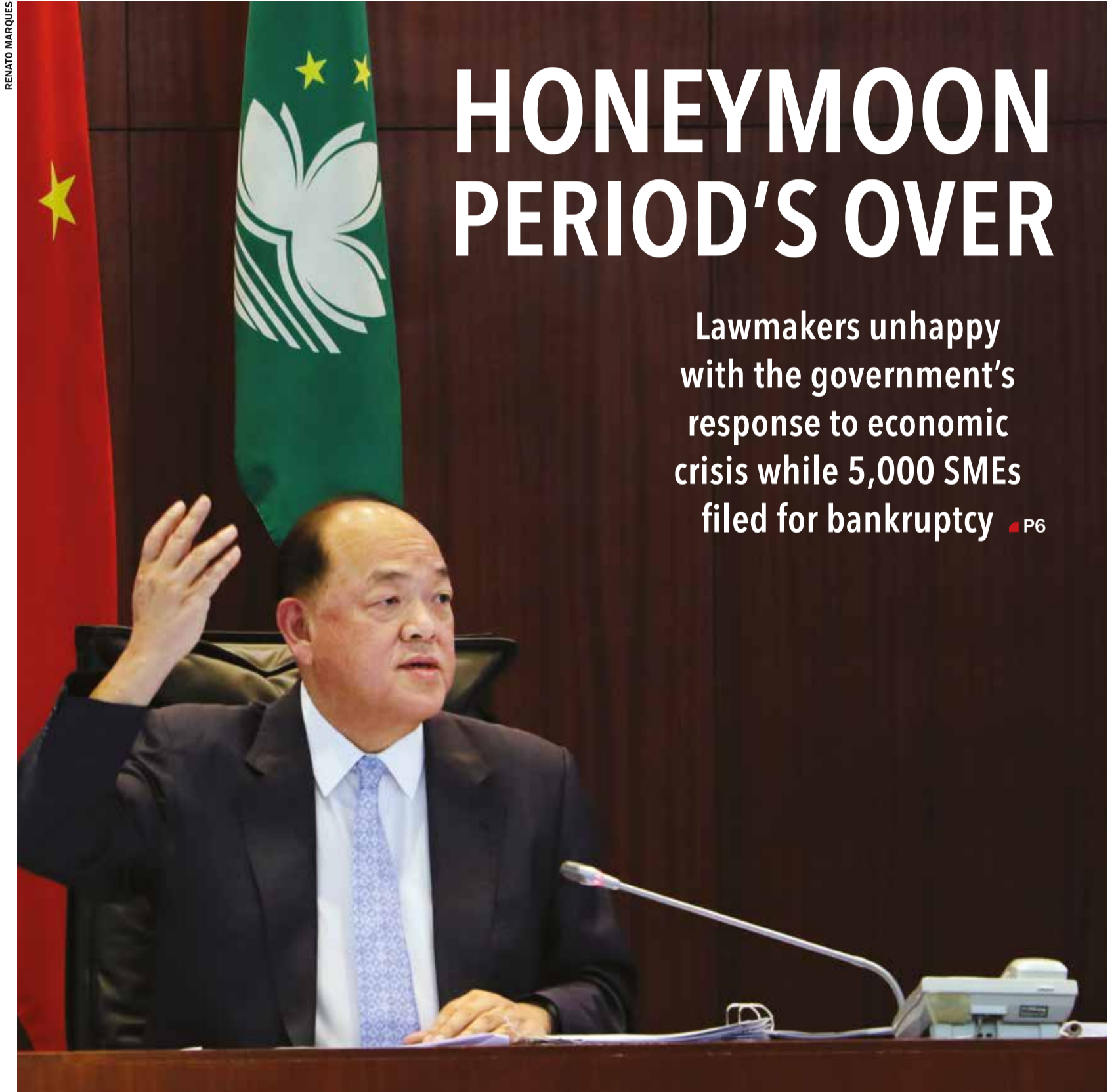
**Indonesia** Two men in Indonesia's conservative Aceh province were publicly caned each 77 times after neighbors reported them to Islamic religious police for having sex. Dozens of people witnessed the caning at Banda Aceh's Tamansari city park. It's the third time that Aceh has caned people for homosexuality since the Islamic law was implemented in 2015.

**Singapore** Authorities have detained without trial a 16-year-old student who made detailed plans and preparations to carry out "terrorist attacks" on two mosques with a machete. The Singaporean teen was inspired by an Australian white supremacist who killed 51 worshippers at two mosques in New Zealand in 2019, the Internal Security Department said.



**Thailand** Police raided a party at a bar on a popular resort island and arrested 89 foreigners for violating coronavirus regulations, officials said. The raid on the Three Sixty Bar on Koh Phangan also netted 22 Thais, including one identified as the bar's owner and another who sold drinks there, said police Col. Suparek Pankosol, superintendent of the provincial immigration office.

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RENATO MARQUES

## HONEYMOON PERIOD'S OVER

Lawmakers unhappy with the government's response to economic crisis while 5,000 SMEs filed for bankruptcy P6

**COVID-19**  
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AP PHOTO

**WHO TEAM IN WUHAN STARTS COVID ORIGINS STUDY**

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### LAO KUAN LAI APPOINTED DSASG DIRECTOR

Lao Kuan Lai has been appointed director of the Government Headquarters Affairs Office (DSASG). The appointment will be valid for one year starting from February 1. Lao's academic credentials range from linguistics to business administration. He has been working for the Government Head Office Auxiliary Bureau since 1999. In addition, the Chief Executive has appointed Lei Ut Mui as the deputy director of DSASG.

### SHI KEHUI TO OVERSEE SARS' ANTI-CORRUPTION MATTERS

The central government has transferred Guangdong province's anti-corruption chief, Shi Kehui, to take a similar role in its top office overseeing Hong Kong and Macau affairs. According to reports, Shi spent most of his career in Zhejiang province. Shi was transferred to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection in 2014 and was promoted shortly to become the deputy secretary general and director of the commission's general office, working under Wang Qishan, now China's vice-president. He was appointed as Guangdong's disciplinary chief in 2017.

### COVID-19

# ZHUHAI TO FINISH VACCINATING FRONTLINERS BY FEB. 5

JULIE ZHU

**ZHUHAI** expects to finish vaccinating frontline workers and those at higher risk before February 5, according to a statement released recently by the Hengqin government.

The city expects to conclude vaccinating "those most at risk and key groups." The vaccination process is expected to continue for "those most at risk" even after February 5, however.

These two categories include first responders, frontline workers at Zhuhai's designated medical organizations commissioned by the government, frontline workers at quarantine locations, public transit workers, people in direct contact with imported frozen food, nurses performing Covid-19 tests, and cross-border drivers.

Last December, mainland China officially started administering Covid-19 vaccines to its citizens. Zhuhai officially started administering vaccines on December 3 at two government hospitals in the city by holding an "urgent round" of vaccinations, according to an article posted on the official WeChat account of Zhuhai's Municipal Health Commission.



The disease control commission ruled that the first group of people to be vaccinated during the "urgent round" included those belonging to the abovementioned groups, in addition to those who travel cross-border for business or urgent business.

As of December 29, over 30,000 people in Zhuhai have received vaccinations.

There have been no unusual side effects from the Co-

vid-19 vaccine reported either, according to health authorities. Among those who have received the vaccine, 608 are workers from companies involved in frozen food importation. These employees work at 129 refrigerated warehouses, one logistics company, and four food manufacturers.

Lawmaker Vong Hin Fai is reportedly one of the Macau politicians who has received the

vaccine in Zhuhai under the arrangements of the Liaison Office of the SAR.

Delegates of the National People's Congress (NPC) and members of the Chinese People Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) have also received the jabs.

Vong and the others who have received the shot are preparing for a series of political events in Beijing which typically take place in March.

According to the Zhuhai government, more of its residents will become eligible for vaccination as supply increases. The Zhuhai government is vaccinating residents for free and so is the rest of mainland China, as the mainland government regards doses of the vaccine as public assets.

On the Macau side, local authorities expect to start administering vaccines to members of the public within the first quarter of this year.

The local government has made it clear that both local residents and non-residents who hold study visas or work visas will not be charged for the vaccine.

The government has estimated it will cost MOP500 to administer each dose of the vaccine.

## ZHUHAI ENTERPRISES OFFER CNY INCENTIVES TO KEEP STAFF IN TOWN DURING HOLIDAYS

HONEY TSANG

**SEVERAL** enterprises in Doumen District, Zhuhai, just doled out special allowances for their employees to encourage them to stay in Zhuhai during the upcoming Spring Festival, according to a report by TDM. The moves aligned with the municipal government's travel entreaty, which strongly advises residents and workers from other provinces in Zhuhai to avoid unnecessary travel during the festival.

Various financial incentives were rolled out by Zhuhai's companies. They included an allowance of RMB300 for every

employee working eight hours a day during the Lunar New Year. Some employees are entitled to a one-year extension of the validity period of annual leave. The Zhuhai government has urged the city's enterprises to go the extra mile to compel their staff to stay put and also keep manufacturing processes going during the Spring Festival. Some staff reportedly did not leave Zhuhai during the previous Spring Festival due to Covid-19. This year will mark the second consecutive year they will not spend the festival with the family in their hometowns.

The enterprises in Zhuhai said that most staff have been

supportive of and positive towards the proposal.

Earlier this month, the SAR government also released a travel advisory, urging foreign workers to spend the festival in Macau.

However, some local associations argued that a mere advisory would not be enough and suggested that more should be done to urge foreign workers to stay in Macau during the holidays.

Given that the cost of living and accommodation is relatively higher in Macau than in other mainland cities, some have suggested that local enterprises could offer accommodation subsidies as an incentive.

## TWO TNRS FALL DURING WORK

**YESTERDAY** morning, two non-resident workers (TNRs) working at different locations were injured after falling. Both did not sustain fatal wounds and are now hospitalized.

Both incidents took place at about 9:30 a.m. yesterday. In one of the cases, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) received a report about a workplace accident, in which a security guard was reported to be injured during a vocational operation.

The injured man is 29 years old, from mainland China and works as a security guard at a Taipa residential building. He was conducting a check on the rooftop water

tower when he fell from 5 meters. He suffered abrasions to the left side of his body.

In the other case, a 46-year-old male worker from the mainland, fell from a height of 8 to 10 meters within an hour as the first case and fractured his left hand and chin. He was conscious when he was taken to the hospital.

The accident occurred at a construction site next to Macau International Airport.

After previous workplace accidents, the Labour Affairs Bureau has reminded employers and employees to comply with workplace safety and health guidelines issued by the government body. **AL**

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GAMING

# Sands China posts positive EBITDA for Q4 2020

HONEY TSANG

**S**ANDS China Ltd. (SCL) closed out 2020 by releasing its last quarterly financial report yesterday, in which the conglomerate posted a positive adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) of USD47 million in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2020.

The adjusted EBITDA in Q4 2020 was a sharp uptick compared to the EBITDA loss of USD312 million and USD233 million in the second and third quarter of 2020 respectively. Yet it also represented a significant decline from the USD811 million that was posted in Q4 2019.

For 2020, SCL's adjusted EBITDA loss was USD431 million, an astonishingly contrast compared to the adjusted EBITDA gain of nearly USD3.2 billion in 2019.

"While the pandemic continues to impact our business adversely, we have achieved positive EBITDA in both Macau and Singapore



during the fourth quarter. There is no doubt in my mind that our business will rebound to pre-Covid levels in the future," Robert Goldstein, the chairman and chief executive officer of Las Vegas Sands Corp (LVS), the parent company of SCL, stated in the report.

The report also disclosed that The Venetian Macao generated a

positive USD73 million adjusted EBITDA in Q4 2020 —the highest among SCL's five hotel brands in Macau.

Another brand, The Plaza Macao, posted a positive EBITDA of USD38 million in Q4 2020. The other three brands, namely The Londoner Macao, The Parisian Macao, and Sands Macao repor-

ted a negative EBITDA of USD34 million, USD7 million, USD18 million, respectively.

According to the report, SCL's total net revenue was USD672 million in Q4 2020, down 69.9% year-to-year. Meanwhile, the net loss that same quarter totalled USD246 million, a stark contrast compared to the net income of USD513 million in Q4 2019.

In 2020, SCL posted a net revenue of USD1.69 billion, representing a significant decline of 80.8% from 2019. On the other hand, the net loss for 2020 amounted to USD1.52 billion, in comparison with the net income of USD2.04 billion in 2019.

Despite reporting a hefty net loss in the last quarter of 2020, the figure demonstrated an advancement of around USD316 million from the USD562 million net loss reported in the third quarter of 2020.

The recently-released quarterly financial report is also the company's first release since the passing of Sheldon Adelson, the foun-

der of LVS and SCL, on January 11.

"These last few weeks since Sheldon's passing have been difficult for all of us, but his commitment to investing aggressively to build iconic resorts that deliver economic benefits to our host communities, the core of the company's operating strategy, remains firmly in place," Goldstein confirmed.

Earlier, SCL announced that the opening of the first phase of The Londoner Macao would kick off on February 8.

On January 27, LVS also published a performance report for Q4 2020, in which LVS posted a net revenue of USD1.15 billion, down 67.3% year-on-year, and a net loss of USD376 million. The full-year operating loss in 2020 for LVS totalled USD1.69 billion.

LVS also operates Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, which generated USD144 million in adjusted EBITDA in Q4 2020 and came to be the most profitable LVS casino during Covid-19.

"We remain optimistic about the eventual recovery of travel and tourism spending across our markets. We are fortunate that our financial strength supports our previously announced capital expenditure programs in both Macau and Singapore, as well as our pursuit of growth opportunities in new markets," said Goldstein.

AD



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# NMA CALLS FOR SUSPENSION CONDITIONS ON FURLOUGHS



NATHAN JOHN

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE government should refine conditions for unpaid leave, and salary deduction and their suspension, Rocky Chan, deputy director-general the New Macau Association, recently said.

Furloughs should be practiced in accordance with the law, meaning that they should only be conducted following a mutual consensus between the employer and the affected employees, Chan commented in an interview with local Chinese newspaper Cheng Pou.

However, Chan equates unpaid leave and pay deduction. When an employee is required to take unpaid leave, their salary will reduce. In Chan's view, this is a derivation of salary cut.

In fact, the Labour Relations Law has provisions governing salary deductions. Item 5, clause 10 of the law forbids employers from cutting employees' basic salaries, unless

under conditions provided in the law.

However, these is an exemption for when it is conducted under consensus between the employer and employee.

For either of the special arrangements, the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) should be notified within a legally stipulated period of time.

"The DSAL has the authority to oversee these situations," Chan stressed. "My understanding is that the bureau should scrutinize if employers have abided with the law."

Meanwhile, DSAL has recently disclosed that last year the authority received a total of 214 salary deduction notices from 156 companies concerning 2,450 workers.

In addition, DSAL further disclosed that out of the 2,000 or so employees affected by the action, 1,102 were affected by direct salary deductions, meaning their regular pay was cut by a certain proportion.

As for unpaid leave, not including the six gambling concessionaires, which have furloughed most of their employees across many departments, DSAL has received related notices from four companies concerning 160 employees.

## GAMING

# NUMBER OF LICENSED JUNKET PROMOTERS CONTINUES TO FALL IN 2021

HONEY TSANG

**M**ACAU saw a continuing downward trend in the number of licensed junket promoters in 2021. The latest official data shows that there were 85 licensed junket promoters in January, down 10.5% from 95 in the same month last year.

The full list of licensed junket promoters was released on January 27 by the industry watchdog, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ).

This is the eighth consecutive year Macau has registered a yearly contraction in the number of licensed junkets.

As of now, Macau's VIP sector has around 77 gaming rooms and 1,566 tables. The Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong brought this additional information to light during yesterday's Legislative Assembly.

Lei stressed that the industry has to brace for change in the ratio of mass and VIP gaming markets caused by Covid-19. He vowed that the government would provide vocational training schemes to upskill those who are unemployed and help them to engage in other careers.



BLOOMBERG

In Macau, a junket promoter, either a company or an individual, acts as middleman for high rollers, especially those from China, to engage in gaming activities in Macau.

The prospects for the city's VIP sector has been discouraging ever since the Chinese government sanctioned an amendment to the national criminal law with regard to overseas gambling activities.

The amended law, which will come into force on March 1, criminalizes anyone who "organizes [for] citizens of Mainland China to participate in gambling outside the

country (or border), which involves a hefty sum or cases with serious consequences."

"Obviously, the city's VIP sector and also premium mass will be severely depressed," Ben Lee, the managing partner of IGamiX Management & Consulting, told the Times earlier.

In the fourth quarter of 2020, VIP baccarat recorded MOP7.63 billion of profit, up 226% from MOP2.34 billion in the previous quarter.

The annual gross revenue for VIP baccarat in 2020 was MOP26.3 billion, an 81% drop from MOP135 billion in 2019.

# AIPIIM BACKS DECISION OF PUBLIC BROADCASTER ON CONTEST PARTICIPATION RULES

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Macau Portuguese and English Press Association (AIPIIM) back up the decision of the public broadcaster Televisão de Macau (TDM) executive committee to call for journalists to abide by the rules regarding the submission of stories to journalism award contests, the president of the AIPIIM, José Carlos Matias, told the Times.

"Generally speaking, it is suitable and desirable that the authors and those involved in the production of the awarded works receive the respective awards as a way to create an additional incentive for the whole team and further highlight the achievement," Matias said in a reply on the topic.

The statement is consistent with internal memorandums provided by TDM's executive committee dating back to 2013, in which it was stated that, "bonuses or cards with monetary value for acquisitions belong to the company" while,

"symbolic prizes (such as diplomas, certification plates, and trophies) and other prizes belong to the production team."

The same memorandum also notes that journalists and other staff members of the public broadcaster should always obtain approval and authorization from the executive committee before submitting any of the broadcaster content to contests, presentations, or exhibitions. Applications should also always be made on behalf of the company and include identification of the production team and the company logo.

The executive committee also reserves the right to select and appoint participants and participating stories to contests, adding that all expenses associated with the submission of work will be at the company's expense.

According to a report from the Portuguese language newspaper Tribuna de Macau, such facts were recently hi-

ghlighted in an e-mail sent to both the radio and television channels, notifying them that the abovementioned rule is still in effect. The email further stated that TDM journalists must comply with the rules by handing any prize money received from past awards to the company. Non-compliance with such rule would result in disciplinary actions, the same e-mail states.

For instance, the Journalism Awards granted by the Orient Foundation that have already been attributed to journalists from the public broadcaster on six different occasions since 2013 are on the line. Recipients of these awards were given a personal and non-transferable monetary award of 50,000 patacas.

According to Tribuna de Macau, which broke the news, a previous reply from the chairperson of the executive committee of TDM, Lorman Lo Song Man, stated that the executive committee was not aware of such a case within the broadcaster.



**LOCAL TALENT DEVELOPMENT**

# 36,000 Melco FAP experiences prepare colleagues for non-gaming career possibilities

**A** S one of Macau's largest employers, Melco Resorts & Entertainment's colleagues form its most valued and important asset. As part of the Company's Whole Person Development strategy for talent development, it supports colleagues with a multitude of training and talent nurturing opportunities for professional and personal growth. The strategy promotes lifelong learning—encouraging colleagues to acquire new technical and career skills while working, to continue developing a breadth of knowledge for well-rounded advancement and the building of successful career paths.

A key program of the Whole Person Development strategy is Melco's signature Foundation Acceleration Program (FAP). Launched in 2015, the unique system was created with the vision that training and development for colleagues should extend beyond classroom training and that service excellence requires a broad spectrum of exposure.

FAP offers short and long-term cross-functional placements and assignments to fine-tune Melco colleagues' business acumen and provide opportunities to see the world from multiple perspectives. A variety of assignments offer

exposure beyond one's specialty, both in terms of knowledge and experience, and plays a key role in enhancing employee confidence—broadening their skill set and enabling engagement with persons from all walks of life.

Lengthier FAP placements include Table Games' Dealers working for six months in Hotel Operations, or Hotel Front Office Managers spending one year on rotation through various departmental and cross-functional roles ranging from the Contact Center, Reservations, Revenue Management, F&B, to Marketing and Public Relations. Shorter placements may include Human Resources professionals spending a day in the business units they normally support, or specific assignments to enhance proficiency in skills such as public speaking.

As of mid-January, a cumulative total of over 36,000 FAP experiences have been offered to Melco colleagues; 95% of whom are from Table Games.

Ms. Adelina Lok from City of Dreams' Table Games and who joined Melco's Gaming Training department for FAP, said, "I am really appreciate of the opportunity to join FAP's Gaming Training department. FAP has allowed me to improve skills in word processing, computer applica-



tions, presentations and course planning. In addition, during the FAP program, I had the opportunity to liaise with the Labor Affairs Bureau, the Macao Federation of Trade Unions, Gaming Employees Home and other local organizations to broaden my horizons and gain enhanced knowledge on responsible gaming. I hope to participate in more FAP opportunities in the future."

Mr. Lam Un, also from City of Dreams' Table Games, took the opportunity to join FAP under Melco's Property Services department. He said, "I worked as a decorator before I joined Melco, and the FAP allowed me to play fully to my strengths. During the program, apart from taking care of daily maintenance requests, I also needed to do on-proper-

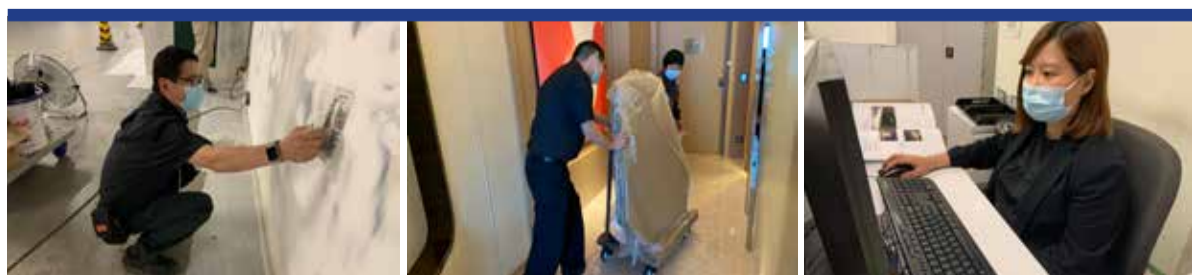
ty repairs and painting work. I have also learnt newer and more advanced maintenance skills. It's been great to cooperate with colleagues from the Property Services team, and I hope to have the opportunity to join the marketing department FAP in the future."

Ms. LG Chu of Studio City Table Games, said, "I have participated in the Housekeeping FAP for almost seven months now. I first joined to organize guest rooms and am now acting as supervisor. The process has been memorable and thoroughly enjoyable. I would like to thank all the supervisors and colleagues of the department for their tolerance and care, so that I can continue to learn and improve all aspects of knowledge during the FAP, in areas as broad as room hygiene management, communication skills, management skills, etc. I really hope my FAP can be further extended so that I can continue to acquire more knowledge."

Another recent FAP enrollee from Altira Table Games, Ms. Fong Sut Ieng, said, "FAP provided me with a great opportunity to better understand the opera-

tions of the Wardrobe department. I've learnt that Wardrobe colleagues are faced with a super busy work environment and that the role requires empathy while working with colleagues. I'm glad to be applying some of the skills that I've learnt from Laundry and Wardrobe back at home-- such as how to take better care of my family's laundry."

Ms. Akiko Takahashi, Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff to Chairman & CEO, said, "Melco believes that the future of Macau is about local talent being prepared for a multitude of jobs and opportunities. This requires a proactive, aggressive and systematic process to enable our colleagues to learn not only their jobs, but other functions also. This philosophy is enabled as a culture because the top leadership at Melco is invested and committed to the development of local talent. We will continue to develop the Company's lifelong learning philosophy through Whole Person Development via the in-house Learning Academy, including Melco YOU-niversity and Back-to-School programs."



### GOV'T TO START CONSTRUCTING DOCUMENT STORAGE IN Q3

The local government expects to start constructing its document storage building in the third quarter of this year. The project, located at land plot O4 in Pac On, will be a 13-story building with 4,366 square meters of floor space and a 55,600 square meter construction area. The design and the construction are expected to go for a maximum of 700 work days.

### LOCAL HOTEL GUESTS RECORD 15.7% INCREASE

A total of 579,000 guests checked into hotels & guesthouses in December 2020, indicating a decline of 52.5% year-on-year, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service. Guests from mainland China fell by 40.0% year-on-year to 492,000, while local guests increased by 15.7% to 61,000. The average occupancy rate of guest rooms last month was 53.1%, representing a month-to-month growth of 9.1 percentage points and yet a year-on-year decrease of 38.9 percentage points.

### MAN ACCUSED OF INDECENT EXPOSURE

A 31-year-old local man has been accused of indecent exposure in public. At approximately 11 a.m. on January 18, a local woman spotted the man near a bus stop close to the Border Gate. The man had taken all of his clothes off in public. On January 25, the police authority found the man at his apartment near the Border Gate. The man denied the accusation.

### MAN ARRESTED FOR ALLEGEDLY ABDUCTING A WOMAN

Early in the morning on January 24, the Public Security Police Force received a report about a suspected abduction in Taipa. It was reported that the woman being abducted was yelling for help when she was pulled into a white seven-seater vehicle. Later, police officers managed to rescue the woman. The police discovered that the male suspect and the woman were previously in a relationship. The suspect was seeking to reconcile but the woman had objected, so he abducted her.

### HONEYMOON PERIOD'S OVER

# LAWMAKERS UNHAPPY WITH GOV'T'S RESPONSE TO ECONOMIC CRISIS

RENATO MARQUES

**LAWMAKERS** are not happy with the approach taken by the government regarding the ongoing economic crisis resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Their disappointment was clear yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL) plenary session, where Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong was grilled by lawmakers questioning the lack of government measures to mitigate the difficulties of both citizens and companies.

Lei was at the AL to respond to a series of inquiries from lawmakers on different topics. They were all directly related to social difficulties in dealing with the Covid-19 economic crisis, which has already gone on for over a year with no foreseeable end in sight.

The Secretary was only able to respond to the many questions and suggestions by saying that the government is actively following up on most of the issues mentioned and enforcing measures according to what was established in the Policy Address for 2021. This did not go down well with most of the lawmakers, who insisted that the Secretary and the government need to take a more proactive attitude and enforce a series of measures to stabilize the economy, and secure the employment of residents and the survival of many local companies, especially those that are directly related to the tourism and gaming sectors, as soon as possible.

### THIRD ROUND OF ECONOMIC STIMULUS UNLIKELY TO 'MOBILIZE FINANCIAL RESERVES'

Contrary to what the director of the Economic Bureau, Tai Kin Ip, said earlier this month when responding to an inquiry by lawmaker Leong Sun Iok, the Secretary for Economy and Finance said that the government's financial reserves, "will only be utilized in [case of] a very special situation." Lei made the statement yesterday in reply to lawmaker Sulu Sou's calls for the urgent rolling out of the third round of economic stimulus measures.

Lei noted that use of the reserves was only authorized in exceptional cases, adding, "in the next few years [we already know] that we will not be having a surplus in the reserve. Since we need to face all these vital expenses, we need to do a [precise] evaluation to see when [the financial reserve] can be used."

The reply came after several lawmakers, including Leong Sun Iok, José Pereira Coutinho, Ella Lei, Ip Sio Kai, Zheng Anting and



Song Pek Kei, asked the Secretary to present the concrete measures included on the package and a timeline for the release of the third round of stimulus which is aimed at providing economic relief for residents.

In reply to the questions, Lei said that the current focus of the government is solving the problems arising from the decline in visitors to Macau by firstly guaranteeing that the region continues to be a safe place for locals and tourists, and secondly, promoting Macau's safety amongst mainlanders to attract them to resume traveling to Macau, revitalizing the local economy as a consequence.

For Lei, a factor that will influence these measures is how the pandemic is lasting an unexpectedly long length of time. This will influence the length of time that will take to achieve economic recovery.

"The [economic] recovery will take longer [than expected] as some sectors also suffered a structural change. We have hope as we are soon going to have the vaccines to be able to control the pandemic," Lei concluded.

### MECHANISM TO REPLACE TNRS WITH LOCALS DISCUSSED AGAIN

Another topic that was raised by several lawmakers was the enforcement of the so-called "mechanism of exit of non-resident workers (TNRs)," to allow unemployed or underemployed local residents to take over their jobs.

The topic was first raised by lawmaker Leong Sun Iok, to which the Secretary for Economy and Finance said, "The government will follow up closely on the evolution of the number of these workers as well on an analysis re-

garding the job posts that have a larger demand from local workers to develop a plan for the exit of the TNRs, fostering access to the jobs for locals."

According to Lei, until December 2020 the number of TNRs in Macau was around 176,000, a figure that constituted a decrease of 18,000 when compared with the same period in the previous year. The Secretary added that the reduction in the number of these workers was more significant in the hotel industry, which registered a decrease of 8,903 workers last year.

To facilitate access to the jobs, the government will "continue to reinforce the professional training of locals and help those that wish to change their career path by providing the needed support for this [change]," Lei remarked.

Lawmakers Song and Zheng urged the government to pay special attention to the workers and companies operating in the "Gaming Promotion sector," which is also the commonly known as the junket sector.

Song said that the number of workers dismissed from this sector could even constitute a danger to society.

During his turn, Zheng highlighted the contribution over

the years of the junket sector to "healthy financial reserves and Macau's prosperity," adding that now is the time for the government to compensate them for their "great contribution." He urged the government to take measures to "transmit confidence to the sector."

According to Lei, there are around 85 licenses in Macau for the exploration of VIP gaming involving over 1,000 gaming tables. Aside from the effects of the pandemic, these are also suffering from "market changes related to offering and demand," Lei said, noting that there are topics that "are not convenient for the government to address at this time."

Previously, lawmaker Song had urged the government to act fast on the matter and to "not let the situation fall to the lowest possible point, from which will be very complicated to recover from."

Secretary Lei tried to add some positivity to the discussion by suggesting that the new unemployment rate, which was officially announced today, has contracted from 4.1% at the end of the third quarter to 3.8% in the last quarter of 2020. This figure is not ideal, according to Lei, but does provide a positive outlook.

### BANKRUPTCY INCREASED 20% LAST YEAR

**THE** number of bankruptcy filings last year reached almost 5,000, a 20% increase, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong said yesterday at the Legislative Assembly in reply to a query from lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho. Attempting to diminish the importance of the figure, Lei added that on the other hand there was around

1% of growth in the creation of new companies in Macau. Pereira Coutinho also wanted to know how many workers had been affected by long-term unpaid leave. The director of the Labour Affairs Bureau, Wong Chi Hong, responded to this by noting that the bureau does not have figures on this as "it is not of mandatory communication."

# WHO team in Wuhan departs quarantine for Covid origins study

EMILY WANG FUJIYAMA,  
WUHAN

A World Health Organization team emerged from quarantine in the Chinese city of Wuhan yesterday to start field work in a fact-finding mission on the origins of the virus that caused the COVID-19 pandemic.

The researchers, who were required to isolate for 14 days after arriving in China, left their quarantine hotel with their luggage — including at least four yoga mats — in the midafternoon and headed to another hotel.

The mission has become politically charged, as China seeks to avoid blame for alleged missteps in its early response to the outbreak. A major question is where the Chinese side will allow the researchers to go and whom they will be able to talk to.

Yellow barriers blocked the entrance to the hotel, keeping the media at a distance. Before the researchers boarded their bus, workers wearing protective outfits and face shields could be seen loading their luggage, including two musical instruments and a dumbbell.

Hotel staff waved goodbye to the researchers, who were wearing face masks. The bus driver wore a full-body white protective suit. They drove about 30 minutes to a lakeside Hilton resort-like hotel.

Former WHO official Keiji Fukuda, who is not part of the team in Wuhan, has cautioned against expecting any breakthroughs, saying it may take years before any firm conclusions can be made about the virus's origin.

"This is now well over a year past when it all started," he said earlier this month. "So much of the physical evidence is going to be gone. The memories of people are imprecise and probably the physical layouts of many places are



Journalists gather outside the hotel where a team of experts from the World Health Organization are quarantined in Wuhan

going to be different than they were."

Among the places they might visit are the Huanan Seafood Market, which was linked to many of the first cases, as well as research institutes and hospitals that treated patients at the height of the outbreak.

It hasn't been disclosed whether they will leave Wuhan. One possible source of the virus is bats in caves in rural Yunnan province, about 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) southwest of Wuhan.

## The mission has become politically charged, as China seeks to avoid blame for alleged missteps in its early response to the outbreak

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the experts would have talks, visits and inspections in China to carry out virus-tracing exchanges and cooperation. He did not provide any details.

The mission only came about after considerable wrangling between the two sides that led to a rare complaint from the WHO that China was taking too long to make the final arrangements.

China, which has strongly opposed an indepen-

dent investigation it could not fully control, said the matter was complicated and that Chinese medical staff were preoccupied with new virus clusters in Beijing, Shanghai and other cities.

While the WHO was criticized early on, especially by the U.S., for not being critical enough of the Chinese response, it recently accused China and other countries of moving too slowly at the start of the outbreak, drawing a rare admission from the Chinese side that it could have done better.

Overall, though, China has staunchly defended its response, possibly out of concern over the reputational or even financial costs if it were found lacking.

Chinese officials and state media have also tried to cast doubt on whether the virus even started in China. Most experts believe it came from bats, possibly in southwest China or neighboring areas of Southeast Asia, before being passed to another animal and then to humans.

The origins search will try to determine where and exactly how that happened.

White House Press Secretary Zen Psaki expressed concern Wednesday about what she called "misinformation" coming out of

China, adding that the U.S. supports a robust international investigation.

"It's imperative that we get to the bottom of the early days of the pandemic in China," she said.

Zhao responded that

any negative speculation and politicized interpretation of the mission is inappropriate.

"We hope the U.S. can work with the Chinese side in a responsible manner, respect facts and science,

and respect the hard work of the international expert team in tracing the origin of the virus," he said, "so that they can conduct scientific research on the virus tracing without any political interference." AP

AD

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AP PHOTO



UK

# Johnson hopes schools in England can reopen on March 8

PAN PYLAS, LONDON

**B** RITISH Prime Minister Boris Johnson indicated yesterday [Macau time] that the coronavirus lockdown in England will remain in place until at least March 8 as he ruled out any imminent return to school for most students.

In a statement to lawmakers, Johnson also confirmed new restrictions for travelers arriving in England from countries where the government thinks there is a risk of known variants of the coronavirus.

He said the U.K. remains in a "perilous situation" with more than 37,000 patients hospitalized with COVID-19, nearly double the number during the country's previous peak in April.

While dashing hopes of a return to classrooms after a mid-February school break, Johnson cautioned that the March 8 target is an aspiration dependent on progress on the vaccination front and ongoing reductions in the prevalence of the virus in the community. He said a "roadmap" for the "gradual and phased" easing of the lockdown will be unveiled in the week commencing Feb. 22.

"The first sign of normality beginning to return should be pupils going back to their classrooms," he said.

England's schools are closed to all students bar those deemed to be vulnerable and children of key workers, such as doctors and delivery drivers. The same applies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Johnson said he hoped that by Feb. 15, the four most vulnerable groups, including those over the age of 70 and nursing home residents, will have gotten a first vaccine jab that would give them a level of immunity within three weeks.

"We hope it will therefore be safe to begin the reopening of schools from Monday, March 8 with other economic and social restrictions being removed thereafter as and when the data permits" he said.

Johnson's announcement points to shops selling non-essential items and pubs and restaurants remaining closed until well into March at least.

Johnson also toughened border rules to limit the chances of new variants of the coronavirus being seeded in England. He confirmed plans for a 10-day quarantine in hotels or other government-provided accommodation for anyone arriving from 22 hotspot countries, including South Africa, Portugal and all in South America.

Given travel bans are already in place for these countries, the quarantine measures will largely apply to British residents, who will also have to pay for their hotel stays.

"They will be met at the airport and transported directly into quarantine," he said.

In addition, he said anyone leaving England will be asked the reasons behind their trip and will be instructed to go home if they do not have a valid reason. Under lockdown restrictions, holidays abroad are not allowed. He said discussions are taking place so the rules apply across the U.K.

Further details will be unveiled next week. Critics are saying the government should be mandating quarantines for every arrival.

On Tuesday, the U.K. became the fifth country to record more than 100,000 coronavirus-related deaths. The U.K. is the smallest to breach that threshold, and has one of the world's worst

COVID-19-related mortality rates.

Johnson has come under renewed fire for his handling of the pandemic, specifically for consistently being too slow in making tough decisions.

Keir Starmer, leader of the main opposition Labour Party, pointed to a series of missteps by Johnson that he says represent a "damning indictment of how the government has handled this pandemic."

For one, Johnson is being criticized for delaying the latest lockdown after scientists had informed him on Dec. 18 that a new variant of the virus first identified in London and the southeast of England was up to 70% more infectious than the original coronavirus strain.

The lockdown only came into force on Jan. 5, a delay that critics say fueled the rapid increase in new coronavirus infections around the turn of the year, and the subsequent acute pressure on hospitals and deaths.

Though there's evidence the lockdown has lowered cases, infections are still running at relatively high levels and are liable to rise sharply again if restrictions are relaxed too soon and too much. AP

## this day in history

### 1985 THATCHER SNUBBED BY OXFORD DONS



Oxford University has delivered a stunning snub to the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher by refusing her an honorary degree.

Academics have led a campaign against honouring Mrs Thatcher in protest against the government's cuts in funding for education.

The vote against the prime minister was much higher than expected 738 to 319 and was greeted with cheers by students who handed in a 5,000 signature petition.

It means she becomes the first Oxford-educated prime minister since the war to be denied the honour.

Over 1,000 academics and administrators packed into the ticket-only meeting last night.

The call to bestow an honorary doctorate of civil law on Mrs Thatcher, who obtained a second-class honours degree in chemistry at Somerville college, Oxford, in 1947, provoked a two-hour debate behind closed doors.

Academics are particularly concerned about government support for scientific research, which, they say, is now at crisis level.

The warden of All Souls, Sir Patrick Neill, was one of Mrs Thatcher's leading supporters. He was disappointed at the decision and said: "We have never given honorary degrees in the past because we approved or disapproved of someone's policies."

The principal of Mrs Thatcher's old college, also supported her nomination. Daphne Park said: "You don't stop someone becoming a fellow of an academic body because you dislike them."

But Professor Peter Pulzer, of All Souls, who led the opposition, said: "This is not a radical university, it is not an ideologically motivated university."

"I think we have sent a message to show our very great concern, our very great worry about the way in which educational policy and educational funding are going in this country."

"I hope the prime minister and the government and the country at large will take note."

Mrs Thatcher has not commented on the decision but a Downing Street spokesman said: "If they do not wish to confer the honour, the prime minister is the last person to wish to receive it."

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The prime minister was said to be deeply upset by Oxford University's decision not to award her an honorary degree. In 1999, she accepted a rare honour from Cambridge University. She was asked to become a Companion of the Elite Guard of Cambridge Benefactors.

The award was made in recognition of her fund-raising efforts for the university.

The Margaret Thatcher Foundation endowed a £2m chair in "enterprise studies" and Mrs Thatcher donated the complete record of her government papers to Churchill College.

In June 2000, Oxford University chancellor and former home secretary Lord Jenkins of Hillhead said the Prime Minister Tony Blair - who was an Oxford student - would not be getting an honorary degree from the university. His comments followed a row over elitism and university admissions provoked by the Chancellor Gordon Brown.



## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You will benefit by taking care of other people's concerns. Don't reveal anything about your personal life that could be used adversely. If you take on too much, you will find yourself in martyrdom.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You need to spend some time reflecting on past experiences and involvements. Relationships will form if you get out and do things that you enjoy. You need time to think



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Things at home may be somewhat rocky. Set the ball in motion and be relentless until you complete the project. Do not reveal personal information to those you feel may be untrustworthy.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You will enjoy socializing and unusual forms of entertainment. You need to be around friends and family. You will also encounter individuals who can help you further your goals.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Your practical approach to life may charm someone who has been observing you. You may meet that special person if you attend fundraising functions.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Your temper may get the better of you if a colleague has tried to ruin your reputation. Make alternate plans just in case you need to make a career shift. Work quietly behind the scenes.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Call siblings or old friends to catch up on recent news. Your personal life will be disrupted if you have been too busy with business. Your ability to stand out in a crowd will bring you the recognition you desire.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Social evenings at your place will be highly successful. You will need to take a look at the renovations that are necessary and try to find the cheapest way to get things done.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You will be in the mood for entertainment. You should visit a friend or relative who hasn't been feeling up to par. Take your time; do not make any decisions in haste.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Your personal partner may be less than willing to accommodate you today. Unexpected events may be upsetting. Don't let friends or relatives make you feel guilty.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You may have ignored or neglected your mate lately. Residential moves are evident. Mingle with individuals who are established and can give you some serious insight into business and future trends.



### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You may find yourself in the limelight for the wrong reasons. Relatives will be cordial. Your willingness to help others can and will lead to fatigue if you don't learn to say no.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

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

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

## 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- "Consarnit!"; 5- Bewildered; 10- Director Vittorio De \_\_\_; 14- Biblical birthright seller; 15- Kingdom; 16- Mindy of "The Facts of Life"; 17- Fountain-bottom sight; 18- Type of ray; 19- Undoing; 20- Seaward; 22- Puccini classic; 23- Numerous; 24- Arrest; 26- Oven option; 29- Speechless; 33- Verso's opposite; 34- Thaw before takeoff; 35- Obtained; 36- Ruler division; 37- Long lock of hair; 38- Stare; 39- Heat meas.; 40- Squalid; 41- Orchard; 42- Wages; 44- Covered on the inside; 45- Chooses; 46- Take down \_\_\_; 48- Swedish imports; 51- Iberian peninsula inhabitant; 55- As far as; 56- More remote; 58- Penury; 59- Crucifix; 60- Baseball manager Joe; 61- Calculus calculation; 62- Catch sight of; 63- Follows orders; 64- Bell-shaped flower;

DOWN 1- Art \_\_\_; 2- Starting; 3- Unaware one; 4- Person who makes firearms; 5- About 1% of the atmosphere; 6- Weeping; 7- Ditto; 8- Colonnade tree; 9- Doc bloc; 10- Move down the computer screen; 11- Chits; 12- Smart; 13- Editor Wintour; 21- Head light?; 22- It may turn; 24- Blasting; 25- Parentheses, essentially; 26- Influential offering; 27- Oscar de la \_\_\_; 28- Take place; 29- Garden intruders; 30- Incite; 31- Find the answer; 32- Spirited horse; 34- At the bottom of the barrel; 37- Camp sight; 38- Novel; 40- Drinks slowly; 41- Singer Campbell; 43- Little guy; 46- Mimicry; 47- Trims; 48- Free from doubt; 49- Mil. addresses; 50- At the apex of; 51- Beget; 52- Ethereal; Prefix; 53- Film spool; 54- June 6, 1944; 56- Judge in 1995 news; 57- Corn holder;

**Yesterday's solution**

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

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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	



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HK\$3,900,000 840 ft<sup>2</sup> 2 1 1

**PROPERTY LIST**

- [Macau] Duplex apartment 2 1 1 1  
1,100 ft<sup>2</sup> \$4,940,000 (ref: 20116003)
- [Macau] One Central Stylish 2 1 2 1  
1,349 ft<sup>2</sup> \$14,839,000 (ref: 19096004)
- [Taipa] Manhattan spacious 3 1 2 1  
1,720 ft<sup>2</sup> \$19,300/mth (ref: n/a)
- [Cotai] One Oasis high ceiling 3 1 2 1  
2,100 ft<sup>2</sup> \$30,000/mth (ref: 20111002)

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TASTE OF EDESIA

# Spicing it up

IRENE SAM, MDT

**T**HIS week, Starworld Hotel's signature restaurant **Feng Wei Ju** has been awarded 2 Michelin stars for the 5th year. Helmed by Executive Chinese Chef Chan Chek Keong who has more than 26 years of culinary experience, Feng Wei Ju is renowned for its tantalising Hunan and Sichuan delicacies meticulously and creatively prepared by a talented team. Chef Chan seeks to perfectly converge traditional culinary skills with diversity and innovation to harness novel ingredients, serving every epicure with the most authentic and unforgettable Hunan and Sichuan flavours in Macau.

On the menu, a must-try dish would be the boiled Mandarin fish fillets in chili oil. A team of chefs spend three days choosing and mixing over 20 different types of Sichuan sauces and spices to come up with a magic recipe for this chili oil. Fish fillets

are then measured and cut to the exact same size, bathed in the chili oil and finally paired with fresh vegetables to ensure every bite is bursting with flavour. Pork neck meat with hot garlic sauce showcases highest quality pork belly carefully sliced into 2mm pieces by hand, revealing the fine texture of the meat. Then, the essence of the pork is unlocked by a mouth-watering garlic sauce. Crispy chicken fillets feature premium, cage-free chicken cooked so tender that each bite effortlessly falls off the bone. The meat is salted, deep-fried and covered in spices flown in directly from Sichuan for authentic flavour. Noodle lovers would be delighted by the sight of the Northern handmade noodles, which are hand-rolled by chefs using carefully chosen Mongolian flour. These noodles are then topped with tomato sauce, northern Chinese fresh pork and soybean paste for an irresistible combination.

## Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



### THE MEMPHIS 1800 TURF

2021-01-30 | Saturday | 15:10

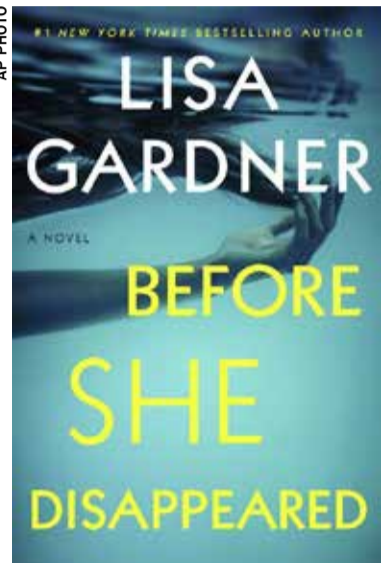
A big outsider in a race this Saturday caught my eyes in the race card. **Qian Gua** from A.K.H. Leong's yard come back to his winnable grade and in a Class 3 & 4 race. He is a force to reckon with especially he's now dropping back to Class 3 & 4 ; when he won his races last season he was in the rating of 80+, now he is at 60, clearly he got edge back to his winning marks. You can forget all his 13 defeats previously, just look at his 1800 turf and sand wins last season - how impressive those wins were , and because of his last season's glory he step into a height of 84 and his defeats were all expected . With this 1800 turf race come up on Saturday, which is his pet distance and with a gift draw in barrier two, he should take plenty of beating. **Qian Gua** will pay handsomely in his odds be it a good place bet or a win . He is my best bet this Saturday.

Race 3 | Horse no. 1 Qian Gua Win and Place bets



BOOK IT

# Lisa Gardner marks a sharply-written return



"Before She Disappeared," by Lisa Gardner (Dutton)

**F**RANKIE Elkin is a nomad. Owning only what she can carry, she wanders from town to town hunting for missing people whom the police have been unable to find.

She is neither a police officer nor a private detective. She has no training for this work and asks nothing in return for it. But in the ten years or so since it became her obsession, she has become good at it. So far, she has found 10 missing people.

Sadly, none of them were found alive.

As Lisa Gardner's "Before She Disappeared" opens, Frankie is hoping to break that string of bad luck in the lar-

gely Haitian neighborhood of Mattapan in Boston. There, 16-year-old Angelique Lovelie Badeau has been missing for 11 months, never making it home after school one day.

Frankie, who can't afford to eat unless she works, talks her way into a bartending job in the neighborhood and introduces herself to the missing girl's family and the Boston detective working the case. None of them are pleased to see her, but Frankie's unflinching honesty and her ability to ask questions that open new avenues of investigation gradually win them over.

Sometimes working alone and sometimes with the detective, she gradually uncovers a tangle of fake I.D. forgers, street-level drug dealers, counterfeit cash passers and human traffickers who may or may not have something to do with the girl's disappearance. Still worse, mid-way into the investigation the missing girl's best friend also goes missing.

This book, the best-selling author's first stand-alone novel in 20 years, is a sharply-written, tension-filled yarn full of twists readers are unlikely to see coming. The most compelling element, however, is the character of Frankie, a recovering alcoholic whose obsession with the missing is a penance of sorts for the burden of guilt and grief she carries over a past trauma that took the life of a man she loves.

BRUCE DESILVA, MDT/AP

tTUNES

# MOON TAXI, A CAB SIMPLY NOT WORTH HAILING ANYMORE



Moon Taxi, "Silver Dream" (BMG)

**M**OOON Taxi have a new album with a dozen songs, but you may be forgiven for losing track of them.

One unmemorable, formulaic tune bleeding into another leaves the listener underwhelmed by the effect. Has it been 20 minutes, really? How many bland songs have been offered?

But perhaps "Silver Dream" — the Nashville alt-rockers' sixth full-length album — is not intended for music lovers. The band has already sold the single "One Step Away" to ESPN's SEC Network for coverage of college football.

That deal is just the latest in which deep-pocketed brands have snapped

up Moon Taxi music — Maker's Mark, Jeep, Microsoft Surface Pro, BMW and McDonald's. Is this the real silver dream of the title?

We are witnessing the natural effect when a band loses the last of its edge, lured into writing mainstream fluff. They even have a song on the new album called "Take the Edge Off." It's all the musical equivalent of the gradual bleaching of coral.

After the sadly underwhelming — sonically we mean, clearly not monetarily — album "Let the Record Play" in 2018, there was a glimmer of hope in 2019 that the band had righted its course with the terrific song "Restless." But that was a false dawn.

Moon Taxi just doubled down on mediocre, dad jeans alt-rock and are now so distant from their brilliant 2012 album "Cabaret" that it's too far for a taxi to drive. "It's a long walk back from yesterday," lead singer and guitarist Trevor Terndrup seems to acknowledge on the new album.

So let's just call them what they really are right now: jingle writers.

MARK KENNEDY, MDT/AP

## BRINGING THE BEST OF LONDON TO MACAO



Do you want to travel to London without leaving Macao? The newest integrated resort is the perfect destination! Visit notable landmarks and icons at The Londoner Macao, arrive at the magnificent glass canopied Porte Cochere, designed after the famed Victoria Station. Upon entering the impressive front doors, the majestic Crystal Palace lobby greets you with breathtaking sights and sounds. Throughout the property, unique London themed accents can be seen at the turn of every corner.



Opposite the hotel receptions at Crystal Palace is one of the London-inspired restaurants, Churchill's Table. This 4-meal restaurant offers the classic British tea service throughout the week and the "Mad Hatter Afternoon Tea" on the weekends. The Instagramable tea set, pastries, sweet treats, handcrafted chocolates and roving entertainment will fill your day with delight and surprise.

First phase of The Londoner Macao will launch on Feb 8, 2021.



OPINION

World Views

Tyler Cowen, MDT/Bloomberg



WHY EUROPE'S VACCINE POLITICS ARE WORSE THAN AMERICA'S

All politics is becoming vaccine politics. But vaccines are turning out to be more scarce in Europe, so the politics there will turn out to be more vicious than in the U.S.

There has been rioting in the Netherlands, mostly in protest of lockdowns, which are in place because the European Union did not order enough vaccines and there are few other tools to limit the spread of Covid-19. Portugal has been reporting a record number of Covid cases, but has few vaccines to spare beyond its health-care workers. Production glitches have slowed down the AstraZeneca vaccine, and there are rumors that the EU may impose export controls on the Pfizer doses made in Europe, which could hit the U.K. hard.

The U.S. is in a relatively favorable position, because it has two quality vaccines already being distributed and probably a third on the way. The total number of deaths is high, but often citizens judge a situation by whether they can see improvement. Currently U.S. hospitalizations are falling, and on many days more than a million Americans a day are vaccinated, with President Joe Biden having set a new daily target of 1.5 million.

So Americans can practice a politics of "Let's hold on and get through this." There will be many more casualties, but with the warmer weather approaching, there will be a general feeling that things are getting better. America won't come close to the vaccination performance of Israel or Bahrain, but it will leave the pandemic feeling relatively triumphant. The U.K., which is on a faster vaccination pace than the U.S., will be in a similar position.

When people judge how painful an experience was, they often place a high value on first and last impressions. The last impressions of the U.S. and U.K. will be pretty positive. Most of the U.S. pandemic will be over by July, even under a subpar vaccination schedule.

In most of Europe, it's hard to see much good news. It's one thing not to have a vaccine. It's far worse to turn on television or go on the internet and see people in other countries being vaccinated as their pandemics recede. Most of Europe will not be making significant vaccination progress until April, and even then shortages may remain.

At stake is the very legitimacy of the EU. Most of the vaccination contracts were handled at the EU level, although Germany sidestepped the agreed-upon procedures and cut some deals. If the EU fails at the most significant crisis in a generation, it may not maintain much legitimacy.

Failure won't necessarily come as a cascading series of Brexits. Instead, nation-states may simply realize that the EU can be ignored on most questions that matter. Hungary is now ordering the Russian Sputnik vaccine, for example, even though it does not have EU approval.

After the vaccine rollout in Rome was cut by two-thirds because of supply issues, the Italian government threatened to sue the vaccine makers. Those same manufacturers are now less keen to make future agreements with Italy. In turn, Italy may behave more desperately as the pandemic progresses, as it will be further down on the list for additional vaccines.

The German government, meanwhile, for a time appeared to be leaking that the AstraZeneca vaccine is not very efficacious for the elderly. If true, that is itself a big problem. If false (as the company says), it will have made the elderly more suspicious of vaccines. In turn, AstraZeneca will be less keen to deal with Germany moving forward.

Many European countries may end up with fewer deaths per capita than the U.S. But at the end of the pandemic many Europeans may feel like their leaders failed them, that they suffered lockdowns for many months but received little in return. Right now vaccine politics is all about momentum, and so far only a few countries have it.

[Abridged]

Efforts to dissuade Chinese from traveling for Lunar New Year appeared to be working as Beijing's main train station was largely quiet and estimates of passenger totals were smaller than in past years.

Yesterday started the roughly two-week travel rush ahead of the holiday that falls this year on Feb. 12, a time when trains and other transportation are usually packed with migrant workers taking what may be their only chance each year to travel home and see family.

Failure to restrict travel before the Lunar New Year travel period

last year was blamed for the spread of the coronavirus, especially since the central city of Wuhan, where the first clusters of the illness were detected, is a key travel hub that was used by millions of passengers.

This year, authorities have offered free refunds on plane tickets and extra pay for workers who stay put to dissuade travel for the holiday.

Officials are predicting Chinese will make 1.7 billion trips during the travel rush.

CHINESE SINGER SAYS MOTHER'S BRIBERY CHARGE DISMISSED

A Chinese-Canadian singer says a Chinese corruption charge against her mother, who has been held in custody for six years, has been withdrawn but she remains in detention.

Qu Wanting, 36, who has lived in Canada since she was a teenager, shared a social media post by her aunt saying that prosecutors in Harbin had withdrawn the charge of embezzling \$54 million (350 million yuan) in 2019, but that her mother has still not been released. A representative of Qu's management company confirmed the post.

Qu's mother, Zhang Mingjie, was the vice chair of the development and reform commission of Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province in China's northeast. Zhang went on trial in 2016 in a case widely reported by state media, but has not been convicted. Qu has repeatedly sought an end to her mother's trial.



Singer Qu Wanting

Phone calls to the Harbin People's Intermediate court were not answered.

Qu is known across China for her hit song "You Exist in My Song." She also made headlines for dating Vancouver's former mayor.

Last week, Qu shared a

post written by her aunt, Zhang Mingkun, saying that the corruption charge against her mother had been withdrawn.

Qu's aunt did not respond to a request for an interview on her social media account. AP

RARE 72-YEAR-OLD SCOTCH WHISKY TO BE AUCTIONED IN HONG KONG

A 72-year-old bottle of Glen Grant single malt whisky from Scotland is expected to fetch more than \$38,000 in an auction in Hong Kong today.

It is the first time that the 1948 Glen Grant whisky, by independent bottler Gordon & MacPhail, is being offered in an auction. It is number 88 of 290 decanters bottled by the company, and will be auctioned off by Bonhams with a book estimate of 300,000 to 380,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$38,000 to \$49,000).

Despite the economic uncertainty brought by the pandemic, interest in rare whiskies remains high. Compared to other investment commodities, collectible whisky has done well in the past 10 years with a four-fold increase in prices, said Christopher Pong,



wine and whisky specialist at Bonhams.

"We have seen huge interest from all over the world, especially from young collectors," Pong said.

He said the Glen Grant whisky being auctioned is the oldest from the distillery. It comes in a Darrington crystal decanter with an American black walnut presentation box.

Other whiskies featured in today's auction include a 50-year-old Macallan Lalique, which is expected to sell for as much as 950,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$122,500), and a 35-year-old Hibiki whisky from Japan in a Kutani ceramic decanter that is estimated to bring as much as 260,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$33,500). AP



Sri Lanka's president yesterday welcomed the first 500,000 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine from India, which has donated the shots to eight countries in the region. The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine was manufactured by the Serum Institute of India. Sri Lanka said 150,000 health workers and 115,000 selected military and police troops will be the first to be inoculated.



Vietnam reported 82 new coronavirus cases yesterday, hours after confirming the first two infections in nearly two months. Seventy-two of the cases came from an electronic company in Hai Duong province, where a 34-year-old female employee tested positive after her colleague was found to carry the virus from Osaka, Japan, several days earlier.



Iran has exceeded 17 kilograms of 20% enriched uranium within a month's time, state TV reported yesterday, moving its nuclear program closer to weapons-grade enrichment levels amid heightened tensions with the U.S.. Western nations have criticized Iran's enrichment activity and called on Tehran to adhere to a 2015 nuclear accord.

Russian authorities yesterday detained several allies of opposition leader Alexei Navalny and issued warnings to social media giants after tens of thousands of people took to the streets in over 100 Russian cities last weekend to demand his release. The detention of Navalny's brother Oleg, his top ally Lyubov Sobol, Dr. Anastasia Vasilyeva from the Navalny-backed Alliance of Doctors and Maria Alyokhina from the Pussy Riot punk collective comes as authorities try to stem another wave of protests set for Sunday.