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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

SANDS CHINA WILL BE THE TITLE SPONSOR OF THE CITY'S FIRST 10KM FOOT RACE THAT WILL TAKE PLACE ON APRIL 11
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FORMER WEATHER BUREAU DIRECTOR WINS CASE AGAINST CHUI
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GAMING TAX REVENUE STOOD AT MOP3.21 BILLION IN JANUARY, A BILLION SHORT TO FULFILL THE CITY'S GOAL OF COLLECTING MOP50 BILLION FOR 2021
P3

AP PHOTO

China Calls for a boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics on human rights grounds are "doomed to failure," a Chinese government spokesperson said yesterday, as lawmakers and political advisers began converging on China's capital for the biggest annual gathering of the political calendar. The spokesperson, Guo Weimin, also denounced speculation that Beijing was seeking diplomatic gains by providing COVID-19 vaccines and other global assistance to help fight the pandemic.

AP PHOTO

Chinese leaders are shifting focus from the coronavirus back to long-term goals of making China a technology leader at this year's highest-profile political event, the meeting of its ceremonial legislature, amid tension with Washington and Hong Kong over trade, human rights. The National People's Congress, which opens tomorrow, has no real power. But the ruling Communist Party uses the gathering of 3,000-plus delegates to showcase economic and social plans.

AP PHOTO

Japanese coast guard personnel were searching yesterday for five crewmembers missing from a Chinese fishing boat that capsized near disputed waters. A patrol plane that was dispatched after a distress call spotted the capsized 105-ton Shen Lian Cheng 707 about 330 kilometers north of Ishigaki Island, a southern island near the Japanese-controlled Senkakus.

LEAVING LAS VEGAS

LVS is slated to sell its Las Vegas properties for USD6.25 billion as it focuses on the 'backbone' of the company: Macau and Singapore
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GAMING

CONCESSIONAIRES PLAY PIVOTAL ROLE IN ERADICATING TRIAD ACTIVITIES: EXPERT

HO IAT SENG TO ATTEND NPC OPENING SESSION IN BEIJING

JULIE ZHU

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng will attend the opening of the fourth session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing tomorrow. In addition to Ho, many more Macau elites are also visiting Beijing for the NPC, as well as the annual Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

During Ho's absence, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong Weng Chon, will take on the role of Acting Chief Executive.

The CPPCC and the NPC will take place in Beijing today and tomorrow, respectively.

Last year, Beijing delayed its annual parliamentary meeting as authorities struggled to contain the Covid-19 outbreak – the first time it had been deferred in decades.

The meetings were then held later on in May 2020.

Meanwhile, many of Macau's elites who are set to attend the conferences have already expressed that their focus is on how Macau will integrate into the 14th Five-Year Plan, as well as the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area.

Several Macau delegates have taken the inactivated Covid-19 vaccine in light of taking part in the proceedings, prior to the arrival of Sinovac vaccines in the city. These delegates received their jabs in Zhuhai.

DELEGATES BID TO BOOST GBA RELATIONS

Chui Sai Peng, a Macau delegate of the NPC who is also a lawmaker, stated that, for his visit to Beijing, in addition to reflecting upon the results of Macau's pandemic prevention measures, he is also considering putting forward suggestions for the recovery of Macau's tourism.

Chui is also attaching impor-

tance to Macau's participation in the 14th Five-Year Plan of mainland China as well as the specific future of the in-depth cooperation and development of the Hengqin-Macau and Guangdong-Macau relationships.

Ng Siu Lai, Macau delegate at NPC and director of the General Union of Neighborhood Association of Macau, is concerned about the measures that make it convenient for Macau residents to live in the Greater Bay Area.

Leong Lai, Macau delegate at CPPCC, wishes to discuss topics related to youth patriotic education.

Another CPPCC Macau delegate concerned about the Greater Bay Area integration is Cham Kam Meng. He expressed that the master plan of the Greater Bay Area had already been launched two years ago. He is concerned about how Macau will integrate into the country's future development, including the



Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng speaks at a seminar on the 2020 NPC and CPPCC meetings

development of "characteristic finance" or "special finance" and the health industries.

Chong Sio Kin, member of CPPCC and chairman of the Macau General Association of Real Estate, thinks that the modern financial industry is an important breakthrough channel if Macau wishes to diversify its economy.

Chong proposes that, in the area between Hengqin and the campus of the University of Macau, the country could establish a financial center managed by Macau's law, so that Macau and Hengqin mutually benefit from each other's advantages, in turn promoting the development of the Greater Bay Area.

COVID-19

REGISTERED SENIOR CITIZENS FOR INACTIVATED VIRUS JAB TRANSFER REQUESTS TO MRNA VACCINE

HALF of approximately 100 senior individuals have transferred their vaccine requests to the mRNA vaccine, which rolled out yesterday, due to suitability concerns, Dr Tai Wah Hou, coordinator of the Health Bureau's Covid-19 vaccination operation, said yesterday.

The other half, meanwhile, have not made follow-up bookings.

Last month, following the latest guidelines on the application of the Sinopharm inactivated virus jab, the SAR government is only allowing individuals aged 60 or above who pass a medical screening to take the Chinese jab.

Other senior individuals shall choose, for the time being, BioNTech's mRNA

vaccine if they wish to receive a vaccination.

On recent reports from neighboring cities that side effects were observed in relation to some inactivated virus vaccine recipients, Tai said they were not necessarily connected. He added that further investigations are needed to determine the correlations.

Although both are providing inactivated virus vaccines, Macau and Hong Kong have sourced from different manufacturers.

Yesterday, cases of post-vaccination side effects were reported in Korea, Japan and Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the medical doctor said that there was no scientific evidence proving the existence of severe side effects related to

the administration of the mRNA vaccine. Meanwhile, he said that the possibility of such side effects relating to the Sinopharm vaccine is one out of 1 million.

As of noon yesterday, about 40,000 bookings have been made to receive the vaccination. Among them, about 10% booked to receive the mRNA vaccine. Meanwhile, 6,500 reservations were made for individuals of age 60 or above, of whom nearly 1,500 opted for the mRNA vaccine.

Tai considered that the relatively light condition of the pandemic in Macau has not presented an urgent need for residents to take the vaccines. The government will continue its work in encouraging residents to receive the jab. **AL**

FORMER SMG HEAD WINS COURT CASE AGAINST GOV'T

FONG Soi Kun, the former director of the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG), has had his successful challenge of his dismissal by the government upheld at the Court of Final Appeal (TUI), with the court dismissing the government's appeal from a ruling of the middle court, Portuguese public broadcaster Rádio Macau reported.

The weather bureau ex-director originally filed an early retirement application following Typhoon Hato in 2017, which claimed 10 lives. He was criticized for not acting responsibly enough as the cyclone, the strongest storm in half a century prior to that point, approached the city. The cyclone caused major acute flooding in most coastal parts of the city.



Later, then-Chief Executive, Chui Sai On, imposed a dismissal on him. If the act were to be finalized, it would affect parts of the former weather chief's retirement benefits, with his pension amounted to about MOP80,000 per month.

Filing an appeal to the middle court based on the government's decision,

that same court ruled in favor of the SMG ex-director in 2019. The court deemed the penalty excessive.

The government then filed an appeal to the top court, which upheld the ruling of the middle court.

A previous investigation by the Commission Against Corruption found flaws in the SMG's administration. **AL**

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GAMING

LVS to sell properties in USD6.25b deal, focus on Asia

LYNZY VALLES

LAS Vegas Sands Corp. (LVS) yesterday announced that it has entered into definitive agreements to sell its Las Vegas real property and operations, including The Venetian Resort Las Vegas and the Sands Expo and Convention Center, for an aggregate purchase price of approximately USD6.25 billion.

Market shares of the upscale resort and casino company founded by the late Sheldon Adelson rallied 3% in its premarket trading yesterday after the announcement that it has agreed to sell its property and operations to Apollo Global Management and VICI Properties, Inc.

Under the terms of the deal, Apollo will acquire the operating company of The Venetian, which includes the Venetian Resort and the Sands Expo and Convention Center, for USD2.25 billion, while VICI will buy the land and real estate assets of The Venetian for USD4.0 billion.

The closing of the transactions is subject to customary closing conditions, including regulatory approvals.

Sands executives said that while selling The Venetian, the property that helped to establish Sheldon Adelson and his company at the top of the gaming industry, would be bittersweet, the opportunities for the company to pursue new growth prospects are robust.

"The Venetian changed the face of future casino development and cemented Sheldon Adelson's legacy as one of the most influential peo-

BLOOMBERG



ple in the history of the gaming and hospitality industry. As we announce the sale of The Venetian Resort, we pay tribute to Mr Adelson's legacy while starting a new chapter in this company's history," said LVS chairman and CEO Robert Goldstein, as cited in a statement issued last night.

Goldstein succeeded company founder Sheldon Adelson, who died on January 11 from complications related to treatment for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Goldstein noted that Asia remains the "backbone" of the company and that its developments in Macau and Singapore remain the "center of [their] attention."

"This company is focused on

Asia remains the 'backbone' of the company and its developments in Macau and Singapore are the 'center of our attention'

growth, and we see meaningful opportunities on a variety of fronts. [...] We will always look for ways to reinvest in our properties and those communities," he said, adding that there are also potential development opportunities domestically, which the company believes to be of significant capital investment.

Patrick Dumont, the company's president and chief operating officer, echoed the sentiment, noting that its long-held strategy of rein-

vesting in its Asian operations and returning capital to the company's shareholders will be enhanced through this transaction.

"Our company's history will always be traced to the opening of The Venetian in Las Vegas. Today, Sands is the most valuable gaming company in the world, with an established track record of success in developing and operating large-scale integrated resorts in Asia and the United States," Dumont added.

Goldstein, who once served as the president and chief operating officer of The Venetian and the connected Palazzo Resort, said that it would be difficult saying goodbye to many long-time colleagues, but

that he was confident the property will continue in its great success. He also said Apollo and VICI were the right companies to lead the property into the future and that additions such as the MSG Sphere, a live performance venue

being developed by Madison Square Garden, will create new growth opportunities for the property.

"The property is a best-in-class asset with a talented team of people operating it. I am confident Las Vegas will soon return to a more normal operating environment and The Venetian's hard-working and dedicated team members will continue delivering a world-class experience to guests eager to enjoy it. I know I will be rooting for them," he said.

AUTHORITIES FIND 50 SUSPECTED ILLEGAL WORKERS

A total of 50 suspected illegal workers were found last month on construction sites, in private flats, and within commercial and industrial establishments, according to a statement issued by the Public Security Police Force. In a joint operation with the Labour Affairs Bureau and other authorities, the authorities inspected a total of 383 locations in January.

APPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH GRANT OPEN

Applications for the Academic Research Grant, launched by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), are now open and will remain so until May 31. The grant aims to encourage original academic research into the culture of Macau and into the cultural exchange between Macau, mainland China and other countries. The grants, valued to an amount between MOP250,000 to MOP280,000, will be awarded according to the applicant's academic background and in consideration of the content of the project, and are subject to IC's decision under the proposal of its Selection Panel.

OM TO PRESENT EASTER CONCERT ON APR 1

The Easter Concert, one of the annual highlights of the Macao Orchestra (OM), will be held on April 1 at 8 p.m., with programs altered due to some performers not being able to travel to Macau. The venue will be relocated to the Macao Cultural Centre Grand Auditorium, where the orchestra's music director Lu Jia will present the work "Stabat Mater" with renowned Chinese soprano Yuanming Song and mezzo-soprano Niu Shasha.

GAMING

Gov't records MOP3.2b in gaming tax revenue

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU SAR's tax revenue from the gaming industry stood at MOP3.21 billion for the first month of 2021, plunging an aggregate of 63.3% year-on-year.

In the government's current budget plan for the fiscal year, it aims to gather some MOP50 billion from gaming revenue, which means that the city should acquire a total of nearly MOP4.2 billion in taxes per month.

Last year, the SAR government received approximately MOP29.8 billion from gaming tax in the

whole of 2020, a drop of 73.6% year-on-year. The actual receipts generated from the gaming industry in the full year of 2020 fared modestly better than the government's previous forecast of MOP29.46 billion announced in December 2020 — which was the second amendment to, and a 42.2% decline from, the original forecast of MOP45.5 billion anticipated by the government in April last year.

The SAR government taxes casinos in Macau for 39% of gaming revenue — which includes a direct tax

of 35% and other types of taxes for social and welfare purposes.

Gross gaming revenue (GGR) in January stood at MOP8.02 billion, revealing a year-on-year drop of 63.7%, while GGR surged 136% year-on-year to MOP7.3 billion in February, the month that last year saw casinos shut down for 15 days as the Covid-19 outbreak reached Macau following its initial appearance in the city in late January. However, revenue fell 8.9% from the previous month, and is still down 71% from February 2019 levels.

AP PHOTO



SPORTS

SANDS CHINA TITLE-SPONSORS CITY'S FIRST-EVER 10KM RUN

ANTHONY LAM

Local gambling concessionaire Sands China Ltd. will be the title sponsor of the city's debut 10km run contest, which is being jointly organized to take place on April 11 by the Sports Bureau and the General Association of Athletics of Macau.

It will be the city's initiative to hold a major sports event each month in 2021 to not only encourage regular exercise in Macau, but also boost tourism and the economy in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Announced at a press conference yesterday, the event will officially be known as the 2021 Sands China Macao International 10K. Two race categories will be held, namely the 10K and the Fun Run, with a total of 10,000 places available.

By title-sponsoring the event, the gambling concessionaire has invested MOP8 million. Wilfred Wong, president and executive director of Sands China, highlighted the company's efforts in promoting sports in Macau. Not only has it held sporting events in its nearly two decades of operation in the city, it has also chosen renowned English soccer player David Beckham as the company's celebrity



endorser.

In addition, director of the Sports Bureau, Pun Weng Kun, said that the event is being held in the hopes of injecting positive energy into society. The date was picked, he added, in order to distinguish the event from the annual Macao International Marathon. The director also disclosed that the new event is expected to become a recurring one.

Describing the new run, Ma Iao Hang of the Association said

that it will offer more options to enthusiastic runners. He said a growing population of runners has been seen around the world, so he believes the new event will be attractive.

REGISTRATION OPENS FROM MARCH 6

Registration opens from March 6 for the 10K race and from March 7 for the Fun Run.

For online registration, registrants may visit www.macao10k.com

to start the registration process. Macao International Marathon account holders must use their existing account to register for this event. Users who have already opened an account but have forgotten their username and password may reset the password on the event's website.

New registrants who do not have an existing account may open one on the website. Participants should input their personal information as well as an electro-

nic copy of their identification document for registration purposes.

Registrants who opt for on-site registration may proceed to Pavilion B of the Tap Seac Multisport Pavilion from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on March 6 and 7 and should bring along the completed registration form, a copy of their identification document and the registration fee. For trouble-free on-site registration, each person may submit a maximum of 15 registration forms each time.

The Fun Run race will start at 7 a.m. and the 10K race at 7:30 a.m. at the Sai Van Lake Square. The 10K course runs along Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Kun Iam Ecumenical Centre and Sai Van Bridge, with the finish line located inside the Olympic Sport Centre Stadium. Around 6,000 places are available for the 10K race and 4,000 for the Fun Run.

EVENT WILL FOLLOW ANTI-PANDEMIC GUIDELINES

In order to provide safe conditions for the participants, the Organizing Committee will follow the anti-pandemic guidelines issued by the Health Bureau and request participants to show proof of a valid negative Covid-19 test result on the race day. Further details relating to this arrangement will be announced in due course.

In addition, the Organizing Committee will pay close attention to the Covid-19 pandemic situation and will adopt preventive measures according to the guidelines issued by the Health Bureau.

Zone A to have an automated water consumption metering system

RENATO MARQUES

Zone A of the new landfill sites will be the first area in Macau to have a new water metering system installed by Macao Water, the company's executive director, Nacky Kuan, said yesterday on the sidelines of its Media Spring Luncheon.

According to Kuan, the new system allows the metering of water consumption from the users in real-time, without the need for deploying staff to carry out readings on water meters of every unit.

Concurrently with this new system, Macao Water will also enforce, from this year, a new online water quality monitoring system, which will allow the company to monitor the quality of the water being supplied across all districts in real-time.



Nacky Kuan

"[As new projects are being launched this year,] we are going to launch an online monitoring system to monitor the water quality in real-time in the different districts of Macau. We plan to install several online sensors [that will collect, analyze and send the data in each area]. We believe that, with this system, we can [enhance] on the water supply service because

if we are aware of the water quality supply [in every place in real time], we can respond immediately to any emergency situation," Kuan said.

WATER RECYCLING PILOT PROJECT

Another area Macao Water is currently working on is the pilot project that aims to test a system for recycling and reusing water. The pro-

ject has no implementation date as of yet, but this would be tentatively done through a partnership with the University of Macau (UM) and will take place at the university campus in Hengqin.

"For the time being, we are negotiating with the UM; maybe we will do a pilot project regarding water reuse in the campus. But the [start of this project] is not yet confirmed," Kuan said, adding that the company aims to continue developing this type of project in the future to "inspire students for innovation."

COMPANY PROFITS DROP 20%

Macao Water has recorded a drop in the company's profits by 20% in 2020 compared to the year before, Kuan acknowledged in a response

to the media.

According to the figures quoted, the water supply company's profits have declined by MOP70 million.

The executive director noted that this is the result of the significant reduction registered by the hospitality sector, with hotels, restaurants, and food & beverage establishments recording less consumption due to the lack of visitation to Macau last year.

"There was a significant drop in the commercial sector of some 24% [in 2020, when compared with 2019]. However, if tourist numbers recover to the

same level [of 2019], we believe that the water consumption will go back to the [previous] level," Kuan said. "We are expecting a water consumption [recovery] rise of about 3% this year but it will take us at least two or three years to return to the levels of 2019," she added.

According to Kuan, the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused the drastic drop in the tourist numbers in Macau, brought the latest results to the levels in 2016 or 2017. Nevertheless, she expressed hopes of an immediate recovery as soon as the tourist figures rise.

SEAC PAI VAN PLANT ALREADY SUPPLYING ISLANDS DISTRICT

The new water treatment plant located at Seac Pai Van has been operating since the beginning of this year. It is supplying water to both Taipa and Coloane Islands at a rate of 390,000 to 520,000 cubic meters per day, Macao

Water announced. In 2021, the company will also focus its attention upon replacing old water meters as well as on continuing the work of updating the street piping systems to improve capacity.

Gaming operators play pivotal role in suppressing organized crime: SVA

LYNZY VALLES

GAMING operators should be encouraged to eliminate triad and organized crime elements in order to assist the Macau SAR government in suppressing the violence arising from such crimes, according to Steve Vickers, CEO of Steve Vickers and Associates (SVA).

In a talk with RTHK, Vickers noted that Macau has generated vast revenue for organized crime over the last 10 years, paving the way for the central government to conduct a major crackdown on capital outflows.

China's move to eradicate online gambling in order to suppress illegal capital outflows has hit liquidity in the SAR's VIP segment, as Beijing identified the cross-border flow of funds for gambling as a national security risk.

In June last year, Beijing cracked down upon 257 cases and arrested more than 11,500 suspects since launching a campaign against cross-border gambling and related crimes on February 28. Authorities have apprehended a total of 368 gambling platforms involving over RMB229 billion.

The central government's Ministry of Public Security previously stated in a release that it has a "zero tolerance" policy for cross-border gambling and related crimes.

The recently enforced criminal

DYLAN GILLIS



code of China on March 1, which makes it illegal for anyone to assist others in cross-border gambling, meanwhile, will require more time to elapse for authorities to see whether illegal activities will be further reduced.

The Times questioned whether the recently enforced law will significantly affect activities of the triads in the city's gaming sector, to which Vickers remarked, "The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. The goal is not to damage the legitimate casino business

and the significant tax revenue which well-run casino's provide to government: it is to eliminate illegal activities."

"However, as long as the ambiguity over [...] border capital flow issues remains, there will likely be problems," he told the Times.

Vickers clarified that Macau did not in any way intentionally generate revenue for organised crime. However, the boom which followed the enormous expansion of Macau gaming concessions and subsequent problems with junket

activities, especially concerning VIP room side-betting and related scams, offered a major opportunity for triads and organised crime to generate off-book revenue.

"The ambiguity and previous 'acquiescence' as to breaches of capital controls by junkets and others from the mainland to Macau provided them with huge opportunities. It remains illegal for all but quite small amounts to leave the mainland for the purposes of gaming: it is illegal to raise funds in mainland China for

gaming and gaming debts should not be collected on the mainland," the expert explained.

Therefore, in such circumstances, triad societies fill a role, which was not intended, "but is still a reality."

Vickers, who previously spent 18 years in the Royal Hong Kong Police Force and commanded the force's Criminal Intelligence Bureau, noted that triad activities in Hong Kong during the 1990s moved to the mainland and to Macau, as these are the regions where the money is.

He remarked that despite the significant amount of gaming revenue being recorded in the SAR over the previous several years, there was still some money that was not being taxed.

According to the expert, in casinos' VIP rooms, there is off-book betting or side betting with a multiple of at least six times the registered numbers that was not going to the Macau government in terms of taxation. This money is being bet in these VIP rooms, not with the agreement of the casinos, but "they are kind of aware." He described the side betting as a "massive issue."

"Triad societies are, of course a fact of life – Macau has however made significant strides in suppressing the more obvious and violent ones. It is a tough job," he said.

"The casinos must be 'encouraged' to eliminate the triad and organized crime element – not just to comply on a 'tick the box' level. This requires a real will to do so and also needs lots of support and encouragement from police and government," the SVA CEO added.

SVA is a specialist political and corporate risk consultancy.

TSI: THE VENETIAN'S 'GONDOLA RIDE' SUBJECT TO TOURISM TAX

THE famous gondola rides at The Venetian Macao are subject to the payment of 5% of tourism tax to the government, the judges of the Court of Second Instance (TSI) have ruled.

According to the court ruling published yesterday, the company that provides the touristic entertainment named "Gondola Ride," which includes gondola rides at The Venetian Macao, has lost an appeal from the decision of the director of the Financial Services Bureau (DSF) that called for the late payment of the tourism tax over the service between 2013 and 2014.

The property will have to pay nearly MOP19 million in tourism taxes referring to 2013 and 2014.

In the ruling, the TSI notes that the gondola ride is an ad-

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



ditional service provided to the hotel and, due to such a fact, is subject to the tourism tax of 5%, agreeing integrally with a previous legal opinion from the Public Prosecutions Office on the case.

The court notes that laundry and the telecommunica-

tions services are the only two exceptions to the hotel services that are not subject to such charges.

The ruling also notes that such a service aims to attract clients to the hotel and is an inseparable part of the reputation of the hotel. **RM**

POLICE: WHITE POWDER FOUND ACROSS CITY NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR DEAD CATS

PUBLIC Security Police Force (PSP) has ruled out the suspicion that cats have been killed by white powder scattered across the city over the past two days.

Such powder was seen being spread throughout various districts in Macau on the morning of February 28, while in the afternoon a dead cat was seen lying next to the white powder on the staircase of an industrial building on Avenida de Venceslau de Morais.

The next day, white powder was spotted on Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga in the morning and a dead cat was found near Fai Chi Kei in the afternoon.

An autopsy by the Municipal Affairs Bureau found that the cat lying in the industrial building was not poisoned to death. On the other hand, the cat found near Fai Chi Kei died from a fall. The bureau discovered that the owner had not, as required by the law,

installed window obstructions.

Later, the PSP identified that some of the white powder was scattered by a man conducting an urban orienteering activity. He was fined for littering.

As for the origins of the other white powder, it was either leftover by a food manufacturing factory or furniture relocation workers.

This year, the PSP started investigating two out of 29 discoveries of dead animals. **AL**

YARD SALE FIND TURNS OUT TO BE ARTIFACT WORTH UP TO \$500,000

TALK about your yard sale finds. A small porcelain bowl bought for \$35 at a Connecticut yard sale turned out to be a rare, 15th century Chinese artifact worth between \$300,000 and \$500,000 that is about to go up for auction at Sotheby's.

The white bowl adorned with cobalt blue paintings of flowers and other designs is about 6 inches (16 centimeters) in diameter. An antiques enthusiast came across the piece and thought it could be something special when browsing a yard sale in the New Haven area last year, according to Sotheby's.

The piece, one of only seven such bowls known to exist in the world, will be up for auction in New York on March 17 as part of Sotheby's Auction of Important Chinese Art.

The buyer, whom is not being named, paid the \$35 asking price and later emailed information and photos to Sotheby's asking for an evaluation. The auction house's experts on Chinese ceramics and art, Angela McAteer and Hang Yin, get many such emails

AP PHOTO



every week, but this was one of the kind they dream about.

"It was immediately apparent to both of us that we were looking at something really very, very special," said McAteer, Sotheby's senior vice president and head of its Chinese Works of Art Department. "The style of painting, the shape of the bowl, even just the color of the blue is quite characteristic of

that early, early 15th century period of porcelain."

They confirmed it was from the 1400s when they were able to look at it in person. There are no scientific tests, only the trained eyes and hands of specialists. The bowl was very smooth to the touch, its glaze was silky and the color and designs are distinctive of the period.

"All the characteristics and hallmarks are there that identify it as a product of the early Ming period," McAteer said.

McAteer and Yin determined the bowl dates back to the early 1400s during the reign of the Yongle emperor, the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, and was made for the Yongle court. The Yongle court was known to have ushered in a

new style to the porcelain kilns in the city of Jingdezhen, and the bowl is a quintessential Yongle product, according to Sotheby's.

The bowl was made in the shape of a lotus bud or chicken heart. Inside, it is decorated with a medallion at the bottom and a quatrefoil motif surrounded by flowers. The outside includes four blossoms of lotus, peony, chrysanthemum and pomegranate flower. There are also intricate patterns at the top of both the outside and inside.

McAteer said only six other such bowls are known to exist, and most of them are in museums. No others are in the United States. There are two at the National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan, two at museums in London and one in the National Museum of Iran in Tehran, according to Sotheby's.

How the bowl ended up at a Connecticut yard sale remains a mystery. McAteer said it's possible it was passed down through generations of the same family who did not know how unique it was.

"It's always quite astounding to think that it kind of still happens, that these treasures can be discovered," McAteer said. "It's always really exciting for us as specialists when something we didn't even know existed here appears seemingly out of nowhere." AP

Microsoft: China-based hackers found bug to target US firms

CHINA-BASED government hackers have exploited a bug in Microsoft's email server software to target U.S. organizations, the company said yesterday [Macau time].

Microsoft said that a "highly skilled and sophisticated" state-sponsored group operating from China has been trying to steal information from a number of American targets, including universities, defense contractors, law firms and infectious-disease researchers.

Microsoft said it has released security upgrades to fix the vulnerabilities to its Exchange Server software, which is used for work email and calendar services, mostly for larger organizations that have their own in-person email servers. It doesn't affect personal email accounts or Microsoft's cloud-based services.

The company said the hacking group it calls Hafnium was able to trick Exchange servers into

AP PHOTO



allowing it to gain access. The hackers then masqueraded as someone who should have access and created a way to control the server remotely so that they could steal data from an organization's network.

Microsoft said the group is based in China but operates from leased virtual private servers in the U.S., helping it avoid detection.

The company based in Redmond, Washington, declined to name any specific targets or say how many or-

ganizations were affected.

Reston, Virginia-based cybersecurity firm Volexity, which Microsoft credits for helping to detect the intrusions, said its network security monitoring service began picking up on a suspiciously large data transfer in late January.

"They're just downloading email, literally going to town," said Steven Adair, Volexity's president, who said the targets have included "defense contractors, international aid and deve-

lopment organizations, the NGO think-tank community."

Adair said he's concerned that the hackers will accelerate their activity in the coming days before organizations are able to install Microsoft's security upgrades.

"As bad as it is now, I think it's about to get a lot worse," he said. "This gives them a limited amount of opportunity to go and exploit something. The patch isn't going to fix that if they left their backdoor behind." AP

COVID-19

ASTRAZENECA'S VACCINE ARRIVES IN TAIWAN

THE first batch of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine has arrived in Taiwan.

Taiwan has signed contracts securing 10 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, 5.05 million doses of the Moderna vaccine and 4.76 million doses of vaccines through COVAX. Yesterday's delivery had 117,000 doses, which was transported from the airport with a police escort.

Health care workers, especially those who have direct contact with suspected or confirmed

COVID-19 cases, will be the first to get the shots, Taiwan's Health Minister Chen Shih-chung said at a news briefing. The island has yet to announce a mass vaccination campaign for the general public.

The island is planning to give the first dose to 117,000 individuals, the minister said, with the first dose providing an efficacy rate of 71%. The second dose is meant to be given eight weeks later, boosting effectiveness to 81%.

MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



AP PHOTO



Bawi Cung, right, seated with his children at home, before he and his two sons were stabbed in an anti-Asian attack last March 2020 at Sam's Club in Midland, Texas

As virus-era attacks on Asians rise, past victims look back

TERRY TANG

NEARLY a year after they were almost stabbed to death inside a Midland, Texas, Sam's Club, Bawi Cung and his two sons all have visible scars.

It's the unseen ones though that are harder to get over. Cung can't walk through any store without constantly looking in all directions. His 6-year-old son, who now can't move one eyebrow, is afraid to sleep alone.

On a Saturday evening in March, when COVID-19 panic shopping gripped the nation, Cung was in search of rice at a cheaper price. The family was in the Sam's Club meat section when Cung suddenly felt a punch to the back of his head. A man he didn't know then slashed his face with a knife. The assailant left but soon returned to stab the boys. He wounded the 3-year-old in the back and slashed the 6-year-old from his right eye to a couple of inches past his right ear.

The grisly encounter brought home the dangerous climate Asian Americans have faced since the coronavirus entered the U.S., with racially motivated harassment and assaults occurring from coast to coast.

Now, just over a year and thousands of incidents later, some of the early victims find moving

forward has been difficult or, at best, bittersweet. A recent wave of attacks on elderly Asian Americans — including the death of an 84-year-old San Francisco man — has fueled worries that hostilities have only worsened.

In Cung's case, the man responsible for the attack believed the Myanmar man and his children were Chinese and spreading the virus, according to the FBI.

Cung said he's not sure what would have happened had a Sam's Club employee, Zach Owen, not intervened.

"Maybe I might kill him. Maybe he might kill all of my family. I don't know," Cung said. "God protected my family, God sent Zach to protect my family right there at the right time."

Owen, who was stabbed in the leg and deeply cut in his right palm, and an off-duty Border Patrol agent detained the suspect, Jose Gomez, 19.

Verbal attacks have also made a lasting mark.

In April, a confrontation in a Richmond, California, park left an irrevocable impact not just on Kelly Yang, 36, but her children. She was forced to discuss anti-Asian racism with her son, 10, and daughter, 7 — a talk she didn't think would happen for a few more years. An elderly white couple, upset over her unleashed dog, called Yang, who is Chinese

American, an "Oriental" and said the words many Asian Americans dread: "Go back where you came from."

Her children thought the couple meant for them to go home. Torn, Yang eventually explained they meant "for us to go back to Asia."

"It means that we're not welcome here."

Her son burst into tears.

Yang believes the couple felt emboldened by then-President Donald Trump's use of racially charged terms like "Chinese virus." She applauded President Joe Biden's recent executive order condemning anti-Asian xenophobia as a good start. But Yang is afraid a lot of non-Asians have already shrugged off the issue as though it ceased when Trump's presidency did.

"I don't know what can be done," said Yang, who writes young adult novels and plans to weave her experience into her next book. "But I do know talking about it, acknowledging it, remembering — that's what we do with wars — we have to remember what happened."

Douglas Kim, 42, chef and owner of Jeju Noodle Bar in New York City, is certain COVID-19-fueled racism was behind the April vandalizing of his Michelin-starred, Korean restaurant. Someone used a Sharpie to scrawl on the winter

vestibule "Stop eating dogs," referring to a stereotype about Asian cuisines. Ultimately, Kim decided not to report it.

"At the time it pissed me off, but I have more important things to worry about," Kim said. "Maintaining a business is more important."

He shared a picture of the graffiti on Instagram to call attention to hate crimes. There was a groundswell of support, but he feels like much of it has faded.

Yet, Kim is hopeful fewer people are stereotyping Asian Americans as foreigners who don't belong in the U.S.

"I think it's all about education," Kim said. "If you raise your children that way, they're gonna learn that way. I think things are changing but it's not 100% yet. That's why somebody obviously wrote that on our door."

More than 3,000 incidents have been reported to Stop AAPI Hate, a California-based reporting center for Asian American Pacific Islanders, and its partner advocacy groups, since mid-March 2020. What's frustrating is that the encounters don't often rise to the legal definition of a hate crime. Still, police in several major cities saw a sharp uptick in Asian-targeted hate crimes between 2019 and 2020, according to data collected by the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism, California

State University, San Bernardino. New York City went from three incidents to 27, Los Angeles from seven to 15, and Denver had three incidents in 2020 — the first reported there in six years.

A rash of crimes victimizing elderly Asian Americans in the past two months has renewed outcry for more attention from politicians and the media. Yesterday, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed off on legislation allocating \$1.4 million to Stop AAPI Hate and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. The funding will go toward community resources and further tracking of anti-Asian hate incidents.

Local officials and citizens have also taken notice. Initiatives like increased police presence, volunteer patrols and special crime hotlines are coming to fruition. Big-name brands like the Golden State Warriors and Apple, based in the Bay Area, have promised to donate to the cause.

Cynthia Choi, of Stop AAPI Hate, wishes news cycles would focus not just on the latest crimes but the solutions being discussed. Policing and prosecution aren't necessarily the answers, she said. COVID-19 vitriol is rooted in more than a century of anti-Chinese and anti-immigrant attitudes. She and other advocates think more investment in education and community resources could help get at those root causes. Anti-Asian xenophobia should be part of the ongoing conversations on racial reckoning, Choi added.

"Our work to address anti-Asian racism is inextricably tied to fighting anti-Black racism," Choi said. "That's gonna take all of us, it's gonna take public education efforts, it's gonna take racial solidarity efforts that really bring our communities together."

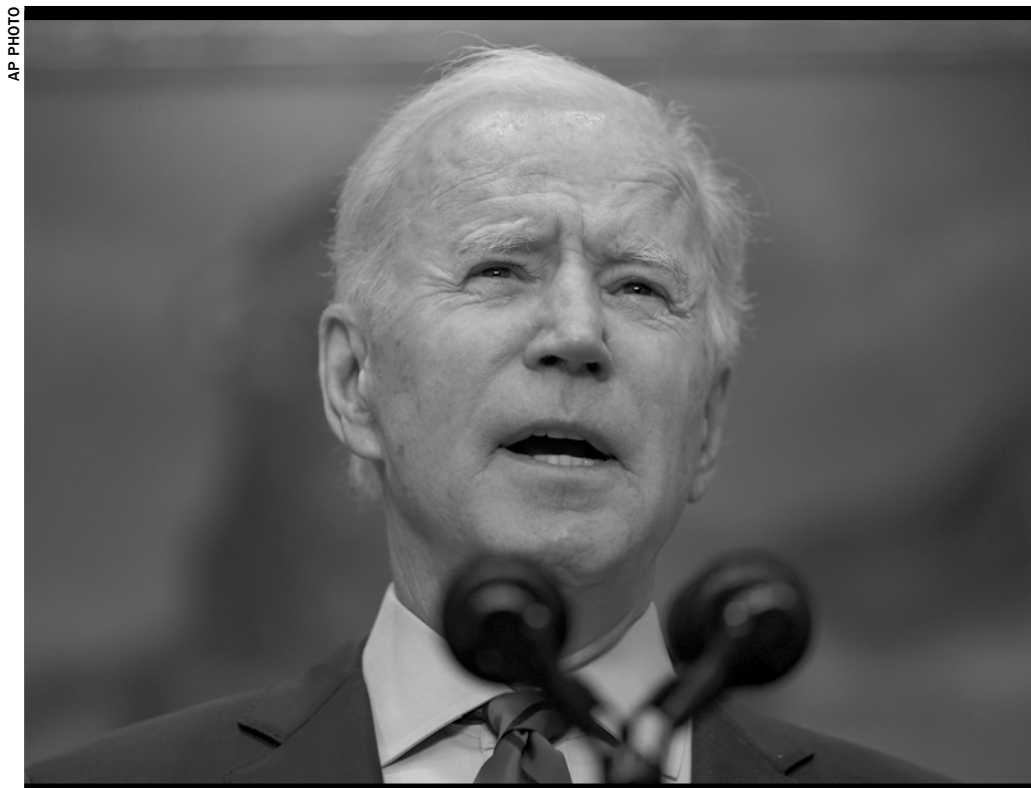
Before immigrating to the U.S. six years ago, Cung, the Texas hate crime survivor, had never encountered racism. Now, it's difficult for him to hear stories about anti-Asian American violence. Initially after the attack, Cung wrestled with how Gomez tried to kill him simply because of how he looked. Now, he prays for his attacker.

As for what should happen to Gomez, who remains jailed on three counts of attempted capital murder, Cung said that's up to the courts.

"I can forgive him, but we cannot accept racism or that kind of terrorist attack," said Cung, who received more than \$20,000 in online donations.

One thing he is looking ahead to — life as a newly naturalized U.S. citizen in a country where "they respect people." Cung remains unbothered that he may not fit some people's idea of what America looks like.

"Maybe personally they have racism," Cung said. "I don't care. I'm proud of being Asian and Asian American." **AP**



Biden brings no relief to tensions between US and China

PRESIDENT Joe Biden took office promising to move quickly to restore and repair America's relations with the rest of the world, but one major nation has yet to see any U.S. effort to improve ties: China.

From Iran to Russia, Europe to Latin America, Biden has sought to cool tensions that rose during President Donald Trump's four years in office. Yet, there have been no overtures to China.

Although the Biden administration has halted the ferocious rhetorical attacks and near daily announcements of new sanctions on China that had become commonplace under Trump, it has yet to back down on any of Trump's actions against Beijing.

This persistent state of low-intensity hostility has profound implications. China and the United States are the world's two largest economies and the two largest emitters of greenhouse gases. Their power struggle complicates global efforts to deal with climate change and recover from the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Biden's tough stance has its roots in the competition for global power, but

it's also a result of the 2020 presidential election campaign in which Trump and his allies repeatedly sought to portray him as soft on China, particularly during the pandemic that originated there. There's also little appetite from lawmakers in either party to ease pressure on China.

Thus in their first month in office, Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have reaffirmed many of the Trump administration's most significant steps targeting China, including a determination that its crackdown on Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in western Xinjiang region constitutes a "genocide" and a flat-out rejection of nearly all of China's maritime claims in the South China Sea.

Nor has the new administration signaled any let-up in Trump's tariffs, restrictions on Chinese diplomats, journalists and academics in the U.S. or criticism of Chinese policies toward Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong. It's also critical of Beijing's attempts to further its increasing global influence through telecommunications technology, social media and educational and cultural exchanges.

Biden's nominee to head the CIA, William Burns,

was explicit about his concerns over many of these issues at his confirmation hearing yesterday. And, the newly confirmed U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, made a point of highlighting her unease with the state of affairs and pledged to combat Chinese attempts to exert undue pressure on other countries at the U.N.

The backdrop is clear: The United States is convinced that it and China are engaged in a duel for global dominance. And neither is prepared to back down.

China has sounded at times hopeful that Biden will reverse what foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said were Trump administration actions that "caused immeasurable damage to the relationship between the two countries."

Those remarks followed a speech in which China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, demanded that Biden's administration lift restrictions on trade and people-to-people contacts and cease what Beijing considers unwarranted interference in the areas of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet.

Wang urged the U.S. to "stop smearing" the re-

putation of China's ruling Communist Party. "We hope that the U.S. policy makers will keep pace with the times, see clearly the trend of the world, abandon biases, give up unwarranted suspicions and move to bring the China policy back to reason to ensure a healthy, steady development of China-U.S. relations," he said.

But the anti-China rhetoric hasn't eased. Top Biden administration officials have vowed to use American power to contain what many Democrats and Republicans see as growing Chinese threats to U.S. interests and values in the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

They have all repeatedly referred to China as a strategic rival or foe, not a partner or potential friend, and have also evinced their belief that America must "outcompete" China.

"Outcompeting China will be key to our national security in the decades ahead," Burns said at his confirmation hearing. "China is a formidable authoritarian adversary, methodically strengthening its capabilities to steal intellectual property, repress its own people, bully its neighbors, expand its global reach, and build influence in American society."

"It is hard for me to see a more significant threat or challenge for the United States as far out as I can see into the 21st century than that one. It is the biggest geopolitical test that we face," he said.

At least some Asia hands in the United States see Biden as moving slowly toward potential reengagement with China in part because he wants to shore up his domestic position and make clear the U.S. is not a victim of Chinese predation.

"They are restraining themselves from the normal syndrome of a new administration running into problem-solving with China," said Danny Russel, who was assistant secretary of state for Asia during the Obama administration and is now vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute.

Russel said Biden is "sending out messages that have the effect of showing he's not soft on China, that he's not a patsy for China, that he isn't so desperate for a breakthrough on climate change that he's going to trade away our national security interests." **AP**

this day in history



1976 GUILTY VERDICT FOR 'MAGUIRE SEVEN'



A 40-year-old Irish born mother has been jailed for 14 years for possessing explosives at her London home.

Five other members of her family and a close friend were also found guilty of the same offence and jailed.

Anne Maguire, from Willesden, North London, was convicted of possessing nitro-glycerine, which was then passed on for use by IRA terrorists to make bombs.

Throughout the six-week trial at the Old Bailey all seven have continually protested their innocence.

As Mrs Maguire was carried kicking and screaming from the dock she shouted: "I'm innocent you bastards. No, no, no."

Her husband, Patrick Maguire, 42 was also sentenced to 14 years imprisonment. Her two younger sons, Vincent, 17, and Patrick, 14, were given five and four years respectively.

Mrs Maguire's brother, William Smyth, 37, brother-in-law Patrick "Giuseppe" Conlon, 52, and family friend Patrick O'Neill, 35, were each sentenced to 12 years imprisonment.

Passing sentence, Judge Justice Donaldson said: "There can be no greater offence than this, for it strikes at the very root of the way of life for which generations have fought and, indeed, died to preserve."

Chief Constable Peter Matthews, of Surrey police, who led the investigation, said: "We are delighted with the verdicts. These are the people we were after."

"We have cut off a major supply pipeline to the terrorist."

"We are only sorry we did not find the bombs."

Police were first led to the Maguire family in Willesden when they followed Giuseppe Conlon to their home in December 1974.

Mr Conlon had arrived in London from Ireland for talks with solicitors who were defending his son Gerry, under arrest on suspicion of carrying out the Guildford pub bombings.

Anne Maguire, too, was implicated in the Guildford bombings and was also arrested in December 1974 and charged with the murder of 18-year-old WRAC recruit Caroline Slater, who died in the attacks.

The murder charge was dismissed by Guildford magistrates' court the following February but the police had become suspicious of the Maguire family.

In a raid on their home in Willesden, evidence of nitro-glycerine was found. Swabs were taken from the hands of several male members of the family and evidence of the substance was detected.

Mrs Maguire has always denied the offence. During her trial she said: "There were never any explosives in my house. I would never have any explosives there. I am the mother of four children."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

All the members of the 'Maguire Seven' served their sentences and were released with the exception of Giuseppe Conlon who died in prison in 1980.

In 1991 the Court of Appeal quashed their convictions after it was ruled the original evidence against them was unsafe.

But Lord Justice Stuart-Smith, sitting with Lords Justice Mann and McCowan fell short of ruling the convictions had been a miscarriage of justice.

They laid no blame on the scientists who conducted the tests which led to the discovery of nitro-glycerine but did concede the suspects could have become unknowingly contaminated with the substance.

On 9 February 2005 Prime Minister Tony Blair issued a public apology to the Maguire Seven and the Guildford Four for the miscarriages of justice they had suffered.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

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



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

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



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

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



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

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



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

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



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

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



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

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



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

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



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

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



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

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



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

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



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

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

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	2	11	cloudy
Harbin	-4	6	sleet
Tianjin	4	16	clear
Urumqi	-5	2	cloudy
Xi'an	3	19	cloudy
Lhasa	2	17	clear
Chengdu	9	15	overcast
Chongqing	9	18	cloudy
Kunming	11	22	cloudy
Nanjing	5	16	cloudy
Shanghai	10	16	drizzle
Wuhan	6	18	cloudy
Hangzhou	8	17	cloudy
Taipei	17	20	drizzle
Guangzhou	17	23	drizzle
Hong Kong	19	23	shower

WORLD

Moscow	0	2	sleet
Frankfurt	4	12	drizzle
Paris	7	13	drizzle
London	6	12	drizzle
New York	4	8	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- To a greater extent; 7- ___-Magnon man; 10- Child's bed; 14- Soap ingredient; 15- Atmosphere; 16- Sharpen; 17- Regular customer; 18- Cal. pages; 19- Charisma, atmosphere; 20- Limber; 23- Violently intense; 26- Historic time; 27- Wanting; 28- Lotion ingredient; 29- Hot tub; 30- Guy's partner; 31- Vagabond; 33- Fell; 34- Tempe sch.; 37- Big bird; 38- ___-disant (self-styled); 39- Affirmative reply; 40- Metal container; 41- Mayday; 42- Summer Games org.; 43- Mental; 45- CPR expert; 46- Any person; 47- Hades; 48- Africa's most populous city; 51- Guadalajara gold; 52- "Siddhartha" author; 53- Destitute; 56- Tailless amphibian; 57- Ruckus; 58- Light cotton fabric; 62- Limerick language; 63- ___ Aviv; 64- Gave a speech; 65- Cong. meeting; 66- Just the Way You ___; 67- Emphasis;

DOWN: 1- Cleaning implement; 2- Pay stub?; 3- Not emp.; 4- Prior; 5- Lost a lap; 6- Vintner's prefix; 7- Photographic device; 8- Dry red wine; 9- Estimator's phrase; 10- French fashion designer; 11- Path; 12- How some losses are shown; 13- Small and round, as eyes; 21- Infected; 22- Sort of; 23- All-night parties; 24- 1836 siege site; 25- Counterfeit; 29- Snob; 30- Farm birds; 32- "I, Robot" author; 33- Greek god of sleep; 34- Pains; 35- Leaves port; 36- Quitter's cry; 44- Cheese; 45- Washes away; 46- New World songbird; 48- Quotes; 49- Dean Martin's "That's ___"; 50- Bridge declaration; 51- Cry from the bench; 52- Compassion; 54- I could ___ horse!; 55- Med. care providers; 59- Road with a no.; 60- DDE's rival; 61- Radical '60s grp.;



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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The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the world's Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views. But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.

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ENERGY

China turns the screws on renewables just when it needs them

AFTER shortchanging renewable energy developers for years to the point where it owes billions of dollars in unpaid subsidies, the Chinese government is now proposing that those companies may have to cancel part of the debt if they want to keep building new projects.

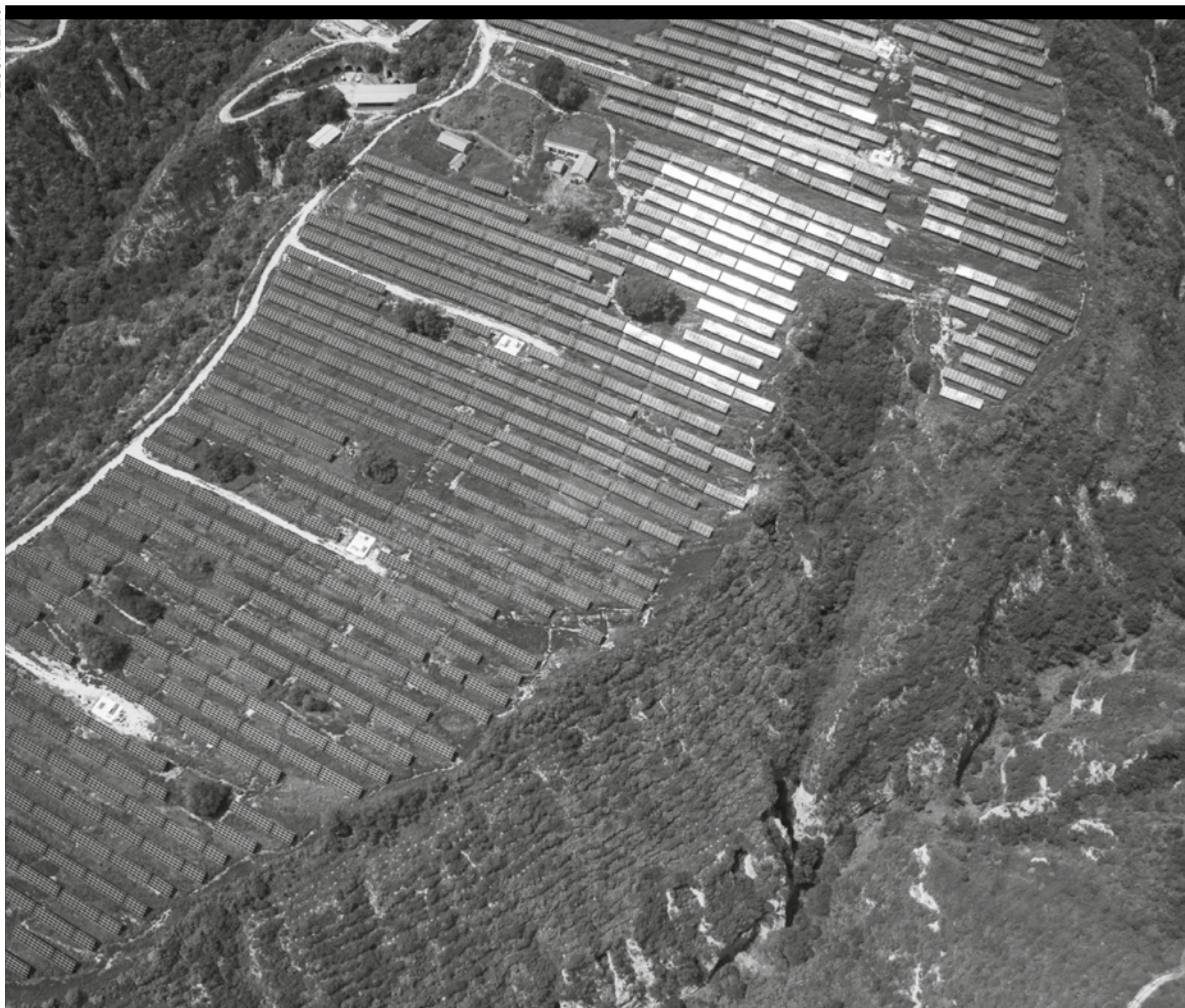
Under a draft plan by the country's National Energy Administration, provinces would auction off grid capacity for new wind and solar projects, with at least one third of the contracts going to developers who were prepared to give up money owed to them by the government, according to people familiar with the proposal. The winning bidders would get a guaranteed rate for their power.

The NEA is seeking opinions on the plan and it remains subject to change, said the people, who asked not to be identified because it isn't public. The NEA didn't respond to a faxed request for comment.

Chinese renewable developers slumped on the news, with China Longyuan Power Group Corp. falling 14% in Hong Kong yesterday, the most in seven years. The NEA proposal underscores how President Xi Jinping's push to boost clean energy and make the country carbon neutral by 2060 is constrained by a simultaneous desire to end the expensive subsidies that were designed to help wind and solar power become economically competitive with coal.

"The policy setting is too ag-

BLOOMBERG



A solar power plant co-owned by Longi Green Energy Technology Co. and China Three Gorges Corp

gressive in our view, and may actually hurt renewable development instead of nurturing it," said Tony Fei, an analyst with BOCI Research Ltd. "We expect the market to react negatively."

The problem with China's renewable subsidies dates back to the mid-2010s, when new developments started growing faster than the pool of money the gover-

ment set aside every year to pay the fees it promised them. By the end of 2019, the deficit had reached 469 billion yuan (\$66 billion) and was set to widen to almost 2 trillion yuan by 2034, before gradually falling to zero by 2049, according to BloombergNEF.

Renewable developers have built up large accounts receivable while waiting for the delayed pay-

ments. Longyuan, the largest publicly traded wind power operator in China, was owed 21.5 billion yuan as of Sept. 30, according to financial records.

Under the new plan, total capacity for guaranteed projects would be set by national targets and distributed among the regions. Local governments would auction off that capacity to firms

that either offer the lowest power rates, or forfeit the right to collect overdue subsidy payments.

Wind and solar developers would still be free to build capacity not covered by the auctions, for example to supply a large corporation or provide power during peak demand, but such projects would not get a guaranteed price from the state.

The vast majority of China's wind and solar power is developed by state-owned firms that are unlikely to bridle at new restrictions. And the new proposal may even help some clean-energy developers, said Jonathan Luan, an analyst with BNEF. Depending on how the two auction methods are weighed, a company could trade the subsidies its owed for an improved rate on a new project, shifting an uncertain revenue stream to one that's paid on time.

But ultimately, the new proposal shows that the NEA believes profits for renewable projects were set too high in the past, and that there's room to push down returns on future projects given technological advancements, Morgan Stanley analysts including Simon Lee said in a March 3 note.

"We see renewable power producers being squeezed on many fronts – including political, building new renewable projects, competitive pressure to give up previous projects' subsidies, increases in solar module prices – all pointing to declining returns of future renewable projects," Lee said. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

Robert Downey Jr. and Bill Gates bet on electric motor startup

AS much as half of the world's electricity is consumed by motors. They power everything from fans to electric cars and pumps to industrial machinery. Making them more efficient could go a long way in reducing emissions of planet-warming greenhouse gases.

That's the promise of California-based startup Turntide Technologies Inc., which has commercialized a new type of electric motor. The company said yesterday it has raised \$80 million from investors including funds led by Microsoft Corp. founder Bill Gates, Iron Man actor Robert

BLOOMBERG



Downey Jr., and co-creator of the iPhone Tony Fadell.

Electric motors convert electricity into motion by using electromagnets to generate magnetic fields

that turn a rotor around a shaft. That simple turning motion, depending on the size of the motor, can blow fallen leaves or bend sheets of metal.

But in conventional motors, much of the magnetic field is wasted and doesn't contribute to turning the rotor. Turntide has found a way to try and maximize that conversion by turning the magnets inside the motor on and off as often as 20,000 times a second. When the process works correctly, the motor can produce the same amount of work with up to 30% less electricity.

The design of the motor dates back to 1838, said Turntide Chief Executive Officer Ryan Morris. But the fine control needed to run it efficiently had to wait until computer chips got

cheap enough to run the programs.

That's what Downey likes about the technology, beyond its ability to cut emissions. "They figured out how to use a 19th century technology and use software to make it do what it always had the potential to do," he said in an interview.

Morris describes the product as "software wrapped in metal." That's why the company is able to outsource the manufacturing to India, China and Taiwan, but still control the intellectual property needed to run the motor efficiently.

Turntide is currently focused on a niche market.

It replaces the old electric motors in ventilation systems in large buildings. The cost savings from reduced electricity use means it can promise a return on investment in as little as three years. By the end of 2020, Turntide had replaced 5,000 such motors and aims to do 50,000 this year.

Next, Turntide is exploring the application of its motors in pumps and compressors. Ultimately, the company's biggest market is likely to be electric cars, though achieving the performance that electric motors in cars demand will take a few years of development.

MDT/BLOOMBERG

OPINION

World Views

Alex Webb, MDT Bloomberg



THE WHOLE WEB PAYS FOR GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK TO BE FREE

Google and Facebook make a lot of noise about how their main services are free to use. And it's true, they are. But what they don't highlight is their role in making almost everything else we consume online more expensive.

Consider all the paywalls and paid services that are rolling out across the internet. News, films, music and even theatrical streaming are now available for a subscription fee. The latest example is Twitter Inc., which announced last week that it plans a paid product, dubbed "Super Follows," where users can charge followers for "premium" tweets and other content. The move is a way for the company to decrease its dependence on advertising revenue — a pot of money that's increasingly being swallowed up by just Google and Facebook.

If online power, and the ad revenue that comes with it, continues to concentrate within those two platforms, expect what you watch, read or listen to elsewhere on the web to start costing you money.

Before the internet, advertising subsidized all the media we consumed, from TV and radio to magazines and newspapers. This ad-supported model made its way to the web and conditioned us to expect online content to be free. News organizations, for example, didn't charge readers, in the misguided hope that more eyeballs on their stories would bring in more revenue from the banner ads they displayed.

In the past decade, however, that ad money has gone overwhelmingly to the search and social media giants. Last year, Google and Facebook hovered up 74% of the \$300 billion spent globally to advertise on the web, according to the World Advertising Research Council. That's left everyone else who had been reliant on ads scrambling to make ends meet.

Advertising was always more lucrative than simply selling to consumers. Back in 2006, the New York Times charged readers an average of \$534 for a subscription, while it brought in a further \$1,064 per subscriber from ads. Papers rarely had to increase their newsstand prices because they were able to eke out more money from advertisers instead, often well ahead of the pace of inflation.

Now that privilege is reserved for the tech giants. Since 2017, Facebook has almost doubled its average revenue per user in the U.S. and Canada to \$159 a year, by serving up more ads and increasing prices when it needs to. Analysts expect Facebook's total revenue to more than double again to \$176 billion by 2024.

From a consumer perspective, you could argue that search and social networking should be free — after all, they are utilities that practically everyone uses — while more specific services should have a price tag. Twitter's Super Follows and Substack Inc., which offers subscriptions to individual writers' newsletters, lets you pay for what you want: Where one person might be willing to spend on someone's tweets about currency trading, another could choose to pay for a newsletter dedicated to gluten-free cooking.

This system might be more efficient, since you are theoretically only paying for the media you want, but that doesn't mean it will be cheaper for consumers. The rise of video-on-demand services like Netflix Inc. and Disney+ has demonstrated as much. As my colleague Tara Lachapelle has pointed out, people who cut the cord on traditional cable packages have learned that the new normal of multiple subscriptions isn't necessarily any cheaper than the old world.

Super Follows are only likely to be a small part of Twitter's business, at least at first. But taken in concert with the rise of paywalls, subscription streaming and video-on-demand, the fact that even a new-ish media company like Twitter needs to add a paid layer points to a world where everything aside from Google and Facebook has a cost of entry.

That might not be a bad thing, but we should recognize the trade we've made from ad-subsidized media to ad-subsidized search and social networking. Perhaps now we can forge a better understanding of the value of content. It costs money to produce, so it should also cost money to consume.

HONG KONG PROBES DEATH OF MAN WHO RECEIVED COVID-19 VACCINE

Hong Kong authorities reported the death of a chronically ill man, two days after he received a COVID-19 vaccine and said that it is too early to conclude whether the vaccine was related to his death.

The 63-year-old man was inoculated with the COVID-19 vaccine on Feb. 26 at a government-designated vaccination site and developed shortness of breath two days later on Feb. 28. The man then admitted himself to a hospital, but died the same day, according to a statement from health authorities.

While the statement did not specify which vaccine the man was inoculated with, the vaccination program in Hong Kong currently only

uses shots from Chinese biopharmaceutical company Sinovac.

Hong Kong health authorities said that the man's death is under investigation.

"At the moment, the causal relationship with the vaccination could not be ascertained," the statement said.

The patient was suffering from chronic and respiratory diseases, according to a statement by the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Hong Kong, where he was admitted after receiving the vaccination.

An expert panel will look into the matter and its findings will be released "in a timely manner," authorities said.

WHO IS MYANMAR'S UN ENVOY? COUP OPPONENT OR REPRESENTATIVE

MYANMAR'S U.N. Ambassador, who strongly opposed the military coup in his country, insists he remains the permanent representative to the United Nations, but the foreign ministry has informed the U.N. that the ambassador has been terminated and his deputy is now in charge.

The dispute over who is recognized as Myanmar's ambassador - the representative of the generals who carried out the Feb. 1 coup or of the ousted democratically elected government - is under discussion and could end up in the General Assembly, where all 193 U.N. members have seats.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric confirmed that the U.N. received two "contradictory" letters and is reviewing them to see who is the U.N. ambassador and whether the assembly's Credentials Committee will get involved.

"We are in a very unique situation we have not seen in a long time," Dujarric said. "We are trying to sort through all the legal, protocol and other implications" and are "trying to resolve things as quickly as possible from our end."

The first letter from Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, sent Monday to General Assembly President Volkan Bozkir with a copy to the secretary-general, states that he was appointed by President Win Myint "who was then and remains the lawfully elected president of Myanmar" and by Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi on Sept. 4, 2020.

"The perpetrators of the unlawful coup against the democratic government of Myanmar have no authority to countermand the legitimate authority of the president of my country," Tun said in the letter obtained by The Associated Press. "I wish therefore to confirm to you that I remain Myanmar's permanent representative to the United Nations."

The second letter to the secretary-general from



Myanmar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which Dujarric said was received Tuesday, makes no mention of the coup.

Dated Feb. 28, the letter, obtained by AP, informs Guterres that the State Administration Council "terminated the duties and responsibilities" of ambassador Tun on Feb. 27 and will no longer recognize his accreditation to the U.N. General Assembly.

The ministry said Myanmar's deputy U.N. ambassador, Tin Maung Naing, has been assigned as the charge d'affaires of the U.N. mission.

In his dramatic speech to a General Assembly meeting on Myanmar on Friday, Ambassador Tun appealed for "the strongest possible action from the international community" to restore democracy to the country.

He urged all countries to strongly condemn the coup, to refuse to recognize the military regime, and to ask the military leaders to respect the November elections won by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party.

"It is time for the military to immediately relinquish power and release those detained," including Suu Kyi and president Win Myint, he said. "We will continue to fight for a government which is, of the people, by the people, for the people."

His speech drew loud applause from diplomats in the assembly chamber who called it "powerful," "brave"

and "courageous."

The new U.S. ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, reiterated Monday that she was "extraordinarily moved" by Tun's statement, and commended him for his "bravery" and "compassion."

She said Americans "stand strongly" with the ambassador and the people of Myanmar.

"The U.S. 'is committed to using our renewed engagement here in New York ... (and) internationally to press the military to reverse its actions and restore a democratically elected government,'" Thomas-Greenfield said.

The U.S. Mission said late Tuesday that Thomas-Greenfield held a virtual meeting with Tun and reiterated U.S. support. Diplomats said Tun also met virtually with European Union ambassadors.

The General Assembly meeting was called to hear a briefing from the U.N. special envoy for Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, who said it is time to "sound the alarm" about the coup.

"It is important the international community does not lend legitimacy or recognition to this regime," she told diplomats.

The U.N. Security Council is expected to hold a closed meeting on the latest situation in Myanmar on Friday, council diplomats said on condition of anonymity ahead of an official announcement. AP



Indonesian security forces killed two militants in a shootout that also resulted in the death of one soldier, police said yesterday. The suspects were members of the East Indonesia Mujahideen militant group, which had been attacking residents who refused to help them. Central Sulawesi Police chief Abdul Rakhman Baso said.



Myanmar security forces shot and killed at least six people yesterday, according to accounts on social media and local news reports, as authorities extended their lethal crackdown on protests against last month's coup. Videos from various locations showed security forces firing slingshots at demonstrators, chasing them down and even brutally beating an ambulance crew.

Pakistani lawmakers were choosing yesterday new members of the country's Senate, a vote that is seen as a test for Prime Minister Imran Khan's government. Khan's ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party is seeking to improve its standing in the 104-member Senate, where it lacks majority. Votes are cast by members of the National Assembly, or the lower house of parliament, and four provincial assemblies.



Iraq At least 10 rockets targeted a military base that was hosting U.S.-led coalition troops yesterday, the coalition and the Iraqi military said. It was not immediately known if there were any casualties. The rockets struck Ain al-Asad airbase in Anbar province. No one claimed responsibility for the attack.