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**THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTION WILL TAKE PLACE ON SEPTEMBER 12, THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ANNOUNCED IN AN EXECUTIVE ORDER**

**CHINA GRANTS VISA TO A FOREIGN RESIDENT AFTER YEAR-LONG SUSPENSION**

**WOMEN'S DAY: FEMALE LEADERS AT THE HELM OF TOP CORPORATIONS IN MACAU CAME TOGETHER INSPIRING OTHER WOMEN WITH THEIR EXPERIENCES**



**Hong Kong** leader Carrie Lam yesterday said the city's government "fully welcomes" changes to the city's electoral system that will substantially increase central government control over Hong Kong politics and exclude critics of Beijing. Chinese authorities have said the draft decision before China's National People's Congress would mean the largely pro-Beijing committee that elects Hong Kong's leader would also choose a large part of the legislature to ensure the city is run by "patriots."

**Philippine** police backed by military forces killed nine people over the weekend in a series of raids against suspected communist insurgents, with authorities saying the suspects opened fire first. Others, however, said those killed were unarmed activists. Police said yesterday that all of those killed were associated with "communist terrorist groups" and had shot at officers while they were serving search warrants.

**Thailand** Prosecutors charged 18 pro-democracy activists with sedition yesterday, while lodging additional charges of insulting the monarchy against three of them. The sedition charges, which carry a maximum penalty of up to seven years in prison, stem from an antigovernment rally in September, though details on the alleged offenses were not immediately clear.



**Iraq** Pope Francis yesterday wrapped up his historic whirlwind tour of Iraq that sought to bring hope to the country's marginalized Christian minority with a message of coexistence, forgiveness and peace. The pontiff and his traveling delegation were seen off with a farewell ceremony at the Baghdad airport, from where he left for Rome following a four-day papal visit that has covered five provinces across Iraq.

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# VACCINATION OPENS FOR BLUE-CARDS



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# FEMALE LEADERS HONORED INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

HONEY TSANG

**I**n commemoration of the International Women's Day on March 8, some female leaders at the helm of the top corporates in Macau came together yesterday, galvanizing other women worldwide with their management experience during the challenging Covid-19 era.

In yesterday's panel discussion, themed "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a Covid-19 world," four revered businesswomen called for a push for gender equality and encouraged females to be "brave, bold and calm" when faced with daunting issues amid Covid-19.

Hong Yan Wen, senior vice president of Human Resources Department at Sands China Ltd. was among the speakers. She said that the pandemic had created financial challenges for the group, the likes of which it "had never experienced before."

"For Covid-19 situations, you have basically nothing for which you can plan ahead. Everything is ad-hoc. [It's like you] make it and then move on and see what will happen," Hong said, addressing the audience.

Christine Choi, president of the Architects Association Board of Directors and co-founder of



JWCC Architecture echoed Hong's remarks. She admitted that the ever-changing nature of the pandemic had prompted her to act and think fast, and be "mobile" by tapping into technology to solve everyday problems for her businesses.

## FEMALE LEADERS HANDLED COVID-19 BETTER

At the height of the pandemic, a study — which examined 194 countries and was published in 2020 by the Centre for Economic Policy Research and the World Economic Forum — observed that countries and cities led by women had "systematically and significantly better" Covid-19 outcomes than others steered by their male counterparts.

The research weighed female-led economies against male-led economies with similar socio-demographic and economic characteristics, such as annual health expenditure per capita, tourist arrivals and gender equality, and found that female-led territories had relatively fewer Covid-19 cases and deaths.

For instance, Hong Kong fared better when compared to Singapore. The same pattern was also found pronounced when comparing Norway to Ireland, Taiwan to South Korea, and other similar comparisons.

Researchers suggested that the distinctive "interpersonally-oriented" leadership style adopted by women and their tendency to be comparatively more risk-a-

verse than males played important roles to contribute to the difference.

The director and designer of the JML Property, Juliet Risdon, who was one of the guest speakers, shared her take on the study, saying that females, in general, are "compassionate and understanding" so that they can better cope with the stress during the crisis.

"We [females] wear so many hats on a daily basis," which may lead to better handling of the life-changing pandemic, another speaker named Michele Ho, president and chief executive of the Golden Burger added.

Hong cited a particularly resonant experience of hers that female leaders have better communication skills when it comes to the promotion of mask-wearing. Female leaders centered the focus on the purpose of wearing-mask to not just protect oneself but also the health of others in the community. It was a stark contrast to the "task-oriented" leadership approach adopted by males, she added.

"We [females] give a purpose to what we do, instead of [seeing it as] tasks," Hong added.

Choi, who prioritized her staff's mental health and granted them a week off to take at the onset of the

pandemic, is another exemplar of an empathetic female leader.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Eileen Stow, director and chief executive of Lord Stow's Bakeries & Cafes and vice-chairman of the Britcham, also attended the event yesterday. She told the Times that she has striven for gender parity in her workplace, which, she thinks, has demonstrably advanced in Macau over these last few decades.

"What I brought to our company is the understanding of equality," Stow stated, adding that she values equal opportunities for all regardless of gender.

"I don't see men and women in my company. I just see qualified people — as in, they are able to do the job. And [embracing] equal pay too, no employee is paid less because they are a woman."

Yesterday's event was co-hosted by the British and Australian Chambers of Commerce in Macau, namely the BritCham and AustCham.

The International Women's Day has been observed on March 8 every year since the early 1900s. It celebrates women's achievements and raises global awareness about female equality. The theme for 2021 is "Choose to Challenge."

The proceeds of the Women in Leadership panel will be donated to Good Shepherd Sisters to support their work uplifting the welfare of women and girls, especially those marginalised by society.

## ELECTIONS 2021

# Legislative race on September 12

ANTHONY LAM

**T**he city's parliamentary election will take place on September 12 this year, the Chief Executive announced in an Executive Order yesterday.

Pursuant to the law, it is within the government head's sole authority to determine the election date.

Meanwhile, in a separate Executive Order, the Chief Executive also determined the budget ceiling for each campaigning list. The amount has been set at slightly more than MOP3.5 million, meaning that no

list should spend more than this amount for election purposes.

Nomination forms will be available soon and must be submitted by June 15. The campaign period will be between August 28 and September 10.

On the other hand, the Electoral Affairs Committee had a meeting yesterday before it briefed the press on their latest decisions.

President of the committee, Justice Tong Hio Fong, emphasized at a press conference yesterday that according to the law, ballots

must be cast in persons at a polling station. It means that if eligible voters who are currently out of Macau want to exercise their rights, they need to be mindful of any potential quarantine requirements upon arriving in Macau.

The judge issued a reminder for any eligible voters who are currently outside of Macau to leave sufficient time for quarantine.

For the time being, the committee has deemed it necessary for voters to wear facemasks throughout the voting process and have their temperature taken at

the entrance of a polling station.

However, should conditions change prior to the election day, amendments to existing epidemic control measures may be implemented, Tong added.

Complaints have also been heard that residents living at the same address have, in previous elections, been assigned to vote in different polling stations. Tong believed it was caused by the residents not updating their residential addresses. He reminds voters to update their residential address with the committee.



Second from left: President of the Electoral Affairs Committee, Tong Hio Fong

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (DIRECTOR) Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com  
ASSISTANT EDITOR Lynzy Valles SENIOR WRITER Honey Tsang  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Daniel Beitler, Emilie Tran, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Julie Zhu, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Viviana Segui  
DESIGNERS Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES Associated Press, Bloomberg, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua  
SECRETARY Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR

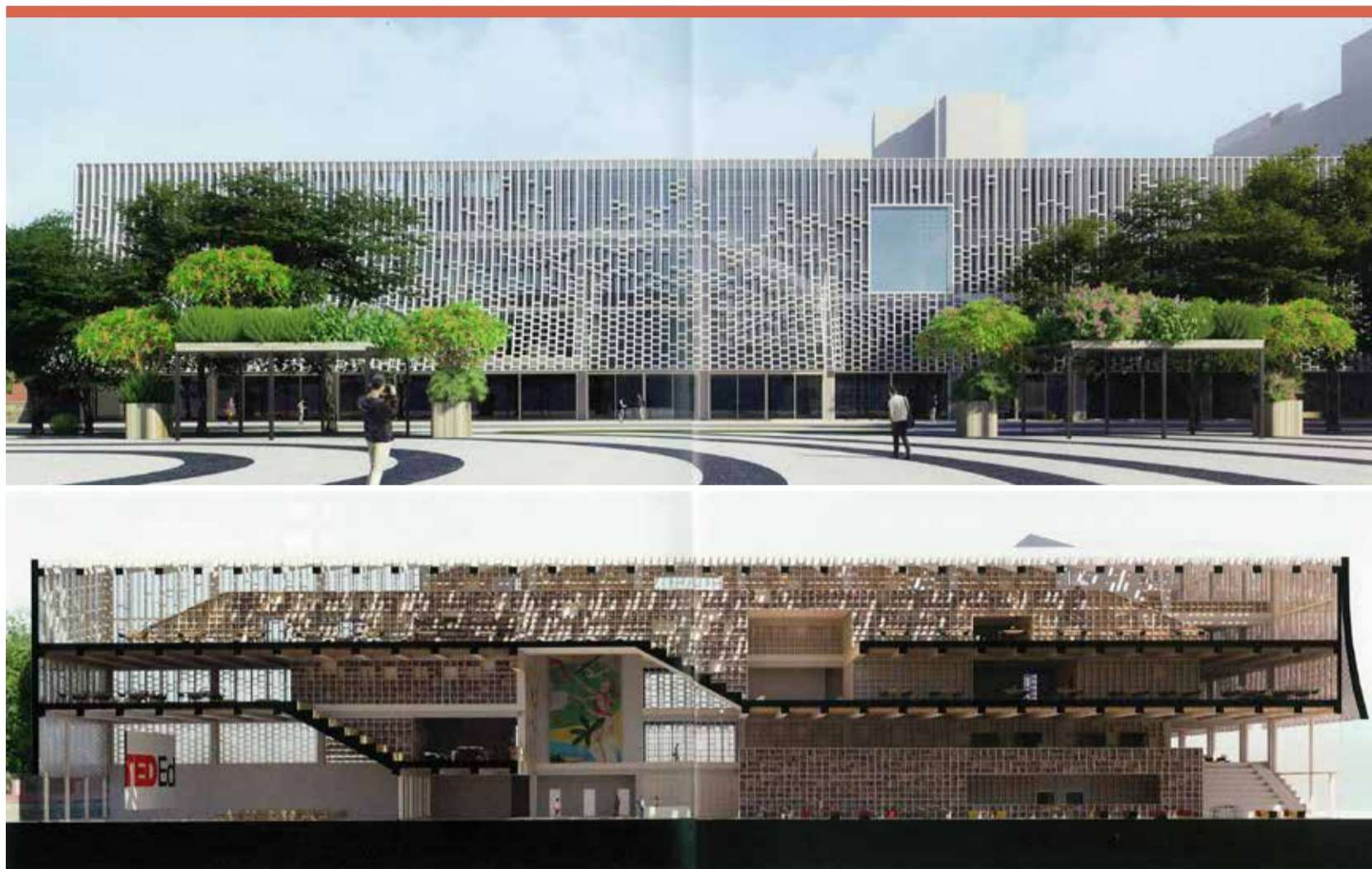
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## MACAO CENTRAL LIBRARY

# Dutch architects win design, IC bids to keep project within budget

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE proposal from the Dutch architecture firm Mecanoo is the winning proposal out of the four proposals received for the construction of the new Macao Central Library that will be built on the land plot of the former Hotel Estoril at Tap Seac Square, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced yesterday in a press conference.

"After comprehensive consideration, including of experts' opinions, overall cost, and difficulty of construction, energy conservation and maintenance, functional design and cost of design, the proposal of Dutch design team Mecanoo was selected, [having fulfilled] all aspects of the criteria," the IC president, Mok Ian Ian, announced during her speech.

Questioned by the media on the topics, Mok also said that the IC expects to complete the construction within the previously announced estimated budget of MOP500 million, although noted that this amount was a general estimate for the cost of the construction that was made before the final design was decided upon.

"We will control the expenses as much as possible and try to keep them within this [budgeted] amount of 500 million [patacas].

But this [figure] is just an estimate as we do not yet have a final budget [for the construction]," Mok said.

Mok added that, in line with previously suggested dates for completion, the IC "hopes to be able to open the library doors at the end of 2024 or at that start of 2025," adding, "At this point, it's difficult to say as the process has just started or is about to start. What I can say is that we hope we can do it as fast as possible."

### PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL COMPANIES A REQUIREMENT

Some questions were raised during the press conference regarding the involvement and role of local architecture companies in the new library construction project.

During her speech, Mok said, "For the follow-up works of the new Macao Central Library, the selected team will collaborate with a local team to carry out the project. IC will work with the Public Works Department to promote the next phase of works."

The IC president explained that the collaboration with local architecture firms comes as a government requirement.

"Government has this demand that foreign companies need to collaborate with local companies for these large scale projects. This has to do with the fact that architectu-

re projects [to be submitted to the Land, Public Works, and Transport Bureau] need to be signed off by locally registered architects," Mok explained, adding, "It's the Dutch team that will select who their local partners going to be. I believe they have already made some contacts with local teams but we just don't know who they are [at this moment]."

### THE 'MOSAIC' OF DISCONTENT

Although in her speech, Mok noted on several occasions that the "IC attaches great importance to the opinions of the industries and the public, and seeks opinions from representative organizations specialized in local bibliographic information and engineering and construction industries," one fact stood out – out of the four proposals considered, the Mecanoo proposal is the one that aesthetically veers furthest away from the design characteristics of the former Hotel Estoril building. It is also the only proposal that does not include the preservation of the old mosaic in its façade, moving it to an interior area of the building instead.

Questioned on the topic, Mok said, "Each company presented its design that has unique and special characteristics. [To decide on the winning proposal] we have consulted the opinions of experts and

also took into account the public opinion as well as the local needs." Mok added that the advantages of the new building, its integration within the local environment, as well as the services that will be provided will surpass other particular design aspects.

According to the president of IC, based on expert and public opinion, it is also important that the new building has the characteristics expected of a modern facility in the 21st century. Accordingly, Mok added that a new parking level will be added to the original project.

"Considering the public's opinion on [the need to facilitate] transport, in addition to the provision of parking spaces in the original plan, there will be an additional car park in the future plan, allowing the public to easily reach this landmark of the city in the future.

The vice president of IC, Deland Leong, also noted that in the opinions and submissions gathered during the consultation period, "around 50% were related to functionality and interior spaces."

The IC also acknowledged receiving public expressions of support for the winning design, saying, "Most of the people that expressed a preference for a certain building design were in between this design and the one from Swiss architecture firm [Herzog & de Meuron]."

## IPIM HOLDS BUSINESS TRIPS FOR MICE REPRESENTATIVES

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) organised around 30 representatives of the local MICE sector for a business trip to Guangzhou and Shenzhen, where they met with the MICE industry practitioners from these places and discussed the future prospects and opportunities of the industry. The purpose of the exchange was to publicise the SAR as MICE stage and foster co-operation between its MICE industry participants and their counterparts in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

## CROSS-BORDER TRAFFIC RECORDS DECREASE

Cross-border vehicular traffic in January 2021 decreased by 14.3% year-on-year to 364,057 trips. Official data shows that light automobile trips (331,915) dropped by 12.5% year-on-year, whereas heavy automobile trips (30,064) rose by 26.3%, which led to a 13.2% growth in the gross weight of containerized cargo by land (2,608 tonnes). Vehicular traffic (146,653 trips) and containerized cargo (2,544 tonnes) passing through the Checkpoint of Macao Port Administration Area of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge constituted the largest shares among all land border checkpoints, at 40.3% and 97.5% of the respective total.

## ACADEMIC TRACK AND FIELD COMPETITION BROKE RECORDS

The 44th Academic Track and Field Competition broke six general records and two Macau records. It was co-hosted by the Education and Youth Development Bureau and the General Association of Athletics of Macau. The three-day competition was held from March 5-7, with a total of 2,200 contestants from five education institutions.



ANTHONY LAM

COVID-19

# TNRs ALLOWED TO BOOK VACCINES FROM TODAY

**NON-RESIDENT** workers (TNRs) will be able to make bookings for Covid vaccinations from 9 a.m. today and receive the vaccination from tomorrow, the Health Bureau (SSM) announced yesterday.

TNRs will only be allowed to take Sinopharm's inactivated vaccine on the first day of vaccine administration. As for the mRNA vaccine, slots will only be opened from March 14.

The health authority will have a quota of 1,000 from the total of 5,000 per day for TNRs. This allotment will not jeopardize the rights of local residents receiving the vaccine. As explained by Dr Tai Wah Hou, coordinator of the SSM's vaccination operation, "For the time being, we have only seen about 2,000 vaccine administrations per day, so we believe the quota will be sufficient."

Similar to local residents, TNRs will not need to pay for the vaccine. The arrangement has also been announced in a previous Executive Order on the grounds of "ensuring public health."

In addition, TNRs taking the vaccine will be insured.

The government is also trying to streamline the vaccination process by separating the type of vaccine available at each of the 12 inoculation stations across the city. The BioNTech vaccine will only be available at three stations: the blood sample collection room at the Conde de São Januário Hospital (CHCSJ), the Ilha Verde Health Center, and the Ocean Garden Health Center. The other stations



will only provide Sinopharm's inactivated vaccine.

Meanwhile, the health authority is making special arrangement for senior vaccine recipients. Older recipients who are aged 60 years and above will only be catered to at the CHCSJ.

In addition, following a previous Executive Order, unless under special conditions, this senior group will only be allowed to receive the mRNA vaccine. Older vaccine recipients can only receive the Sinopharm vaccine if they have their health condition approved by a government medical

professional immediately before receiving the vaccine and if they have a higher risk of contracting the virus in their daily life.

Tai stressed that seniors will be treated in a dedicated manner even at the time of booking. "At the time of booking, they will be brought to a special page for preliminary evaluation of their suitability," Tai explained. "Following that, at the hospital before they take the vaccine, their health condition will be assessed by doctors-on-duty."

For example, doctors at the stations will ask questions to assess patients' health condition and ba-

ckground. If available, the doctors may also refer to medical records for a more informed assessment, Tai said.

As of 4 p.m. yesterday, nearly 50,000 bookings have been made to take either of the two brands of vaccines, with about 43,000 for the Sinopharm vaccine and about 6,200 for the BioNTech vaccine.

Out of these numbers, as of March 7, about 21,000 vaccines have been administered so far across the city, with nearly 20,000 being the Sinopharm vaccine and about 1,700 being the mRNA type.

Residents who have completed the two doses of Covid-19 vaccine will have their records shown on their health code.

## SSM CLARIFIES ON 'SIDE EFFECTS'

When questioned how the public medical team can ensure the safety of job takers, Tai stressed that the jabs available in Macau has had their safety scientifically proven. However, he remarked that the vaccines being safe does not equate to the total absence of adverse events following immunization (AEFI), a term officially used by the WHO.

"The rate of natural mortality exists," Tai said. "Regardless of the act of vaccination, the society sees death during a given period of time."

He added that so far, the health authority was not convinced that mortality elsewhere was closely related to the vaccine. He admitted that senior individuals and those with chronic diseases do not have the urgency to take the jab, given Macau's current condition.

Meanwhile, Dr Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, stressed that medically, AEFI is different from side effects from vaccination. The former describes any medical happenings following inoculation, which may not be related to the inoculation itself.

Leong added that a taskforce has been set up to respond to AEFI related to the new vaccine.

For the time being, 21 cases of AEFI have been recorded on the Sinopharm jab and three on the BioNTech shot.

## FORMER IEC LONG FIRECRACKER FACTORY TO OPEN TO PUBLIC IN 2022

RENATO MARQUES

**THE** former Iec Long Firecracker Factory in Taipa will open to the public in 2022, Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) officials said yesterday on the sidelines of the press conference that presented the results on the winning design proposal for the new Central Library.

The vice president of IC, Deland Leong, noted that the IC officially received the former Iec Long Firecracker Factory to proceed with rehabilitation works in December last year, and is currently preparing the works related to the partial opening plan of the site.

Leong noted that Iec Long is the only existing large structure that can represent the old firecracker industry in detail, which



will be taken into account in the revitalization plan "so it retains its architectural structures and original layout, including the ponds, waterways, trees and other principal elements."

The official also added that before the most significant part of the preservation works moves forward, it is necessary to conduct studies relating to the ecology and geology of the area, which will

include data collection and improvement of water resources.

After that, IC will proceed with structural reinforcement works and elimination of any risks. In the last phase, the bureau will finally build a wooden walkway for visitors and an exhibition hall that will feature the history and developments of the firecracker industry.

Leong also informed that an important part of the IC's work relates to reinforcing and securing some of the building structures, as well as replacing of some of the materials in use that include asbestos.

Such work is expected to last for about two years, with the opening of the 25,338 square meters space expected before the end of 2022.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

# TOTAL POPULATION STANDS AT OVER 683,000

**MACAU'S** total population at the end of last year was 683,100, representing an increase of 300 compared to end-September 2020 and a year-on-year growth of 3,500.

According to data from the Statistics and Census Service, the city's population continued to age, with the aging ratio rising to 97.1 percent. For the whole year, a total of 5,545 live births were delivered, down by 434 year-on-year.

Local population, excluding non-resident workers and non-local students living in Macau, increased by 1.6% year-on-year to 564,100.

The number of non-residents workers plunged to 177,663 at end-2020, a decrease of 18,875 year-on-year, with those en-

gaged in hospitality activities dropping by the largest amount.

Workers in the hotels, restaurants and similar establishments dropped by 10,193 to 44,555, while those working in the construction sector went down by 2,403 to 26,984.

The drop could be attributed to the pandemic outbreak which caused layoffs from different employers due to the economic downturn.

Last year, the number of new arrivals from mainland China with a one-way permit reduced by 784 year-on-year to 2,973, with those coming from Guangdong Province falling by 491 to 2,110. The number of individuals granted right of abode decreased by 237 year-on-year to 730 in 2020. **LV**



# China resumes visa issuance to foreign local residents

**T**HE Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the SAR has recently granted an F-type visa to a foreign national living in Macau.

To highlight the act, the visa was personally presented to the visa applicant by Deputy Commissioner Wang Dong.

Following a nearly year-long suspension of visa issuance to foreign nationals, the People's Republic of China has recently issued visas to foreign local residents residing in Macau.

Priority is given to applications for M and F visas, where applicants should submit an invitation letter from a trade partner in China, or from trade fairs for M visa or an invitation letter issued by a relevant entity or individual in China for an F visa.

The resumption of Chinese visas in Macau started on March 1, and was rolled out as the mainland authorities



saw improving health conditions in both the mainland and Macau.

Despite living in Macau and many being holders of Macau ID cards, foreign nationals have not been able to enter mainland China since

the outbreak of Covid-19.

As for Chinese nationals holding Macau ID cards, they are allowed to enter mainland China – even under the stricter conditions during the early phase of the outbreak – with a dedicated type of travel

document, namely the “home-visiting card”.

Recently, six local delegates to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) urged Beijing to open its borders Macau-based foreigners, highlighting that such move would boost trade and recovery.

The members of the CPPCC called on the central government to lift visiting restrictions on foreign nationals holding a Macau ID card and foreign non-resident workers in Macau.

According to reports, permission would only be granted if they have been staying in the city for over 28 days before their intended trip and also have a negative Covid-19 test certificate.

The proposal was raised by Chong Sio Kin, Tina Ho Teng lat, Leonel Alberto Alves, Ung Pui Kun, Wan Nang Hon, and Eddie Wong Yue Kai, who are attending the ongoing annual session of the CPPCC National Committee in Beijing. **AL**

## UA CINEMAS IN HK WENT UNDER AMID COVID-19

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE UA Cinema, a cinema chain in Hong Kong, announced yesterday that the group has ceased operations with immediate effect due to the devastating impacts brought about by the pandemic.

Owing to the measures imposed by the HKSAR government to combat Covid-19, UA Cinema, as well as other theaters, had been forced to suspend their operations for over 190 days in 2020.

The forced closure has been one of the last straws for the UA Cinema.

In a memo released on the group's official website, the group ascribed its going-under to “unavoidable and devastating pressure faced by our operations since the outbreak of the coronavirus.”

However, the group's subsidiary business in Macau, UA Galaxy Cinemas, will maintain operations as usual, according to TDM.

The 36-year-old UA Cinema was established by late American businessman Ira Kaye in Hong Kong in 1985.

The group had six theatres across Hong Kong, which were located in Causeway Bay, Mong Kok, Tsing Yi, Tung Chung, and Kowloon Bay.

In February, the group ceased the renewal of the lease on its premise in K11 Musea shopping center in Tsim Sha Tsui.

UA Cinemas had commenced winding-up proceedings with the Hong Kong court, according to its statement.

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# FURTHER GROUP OF STRANDED MIGRANT WORKERS PLEAD FOR REPATRIATION FLIGHTS

LYNZY VALLES

A group of stranded non-resident workers are calling on their government to assist them in seeking repatriation flights, as a number of them are slated to give birth in the coming months while others battle critical health conditions.

A total of 38 Malaysians and Singaporeans have sought the assistance of their governments in Hong Kong, since the two countries do not have consulate headquarters in the Macau SAR.

The distressed citizens are eyeing flights back to Malaysia on April 8 via AirAsia. However, the low-cost carrier requires the confirmation of at least 60 flying passengers to be able to charter a flight.

Agnes Goh, representative of the group and coordinator of the flight, told the Times that there is a substantial number of Malaysians and Singaporeans who are residing in temporary lodging would also need a notice period to terminate their lodging, failing which their rental deposit may be forfeited.

According to Goh, she had al-



ready pleaded to both the Malaysian and Singaporean consulate to assist their citizens in returning to their home country, as many of them are in distress.

The lack of flights returning to countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines are causing misery among the non-resident workers, as many of them have already been laid off, and the high living cost in the city makes it more difficult for them to continually reside in town without income.

In the hopes of allaying their fear and apprehension, Goh has volunteered to coordinate charte-

red flights to help the Malaysians and Singaporeans go back home.

The coordinator listed cases of people who needed urgent medical help, such as a Malaysian man who is suffering from a cataract who would need at least MOP100,000 to receive surgical treatment.

"I really hope that the Malaysian and Singaporean government can help fund this AirAsia chartered flight (because), unfortunately, we do not meet the requirement of Air Asia flight of minimum 60 passengers for a private chartered plane."

"The clock is ticking and we

feel that as though they are racing against the clock if their illness is not being treated urgently," Gou added.

Meanwhile, she has also been in contact with AirAsia. In an email to which the Times has been privy, Gou was informed by the management in the Macau office that the carrier proposal includes allowing the Indonesian migrant workers to pay MOP3,500 per person – if the flight is confirmed.

Once the total number of passengers is finalized, AirAsia shall then decide the airfare for the Indonesians and other nationalities joining the flight.

Indonesian and Singaporean passport holders are not required to undergo quarantine upon arrive in Kuala Lumpur if their next transit flight is within 24 hours. They are required to present a negative nucleic acid test.

Goh has also assisted in coordinating chartered flights for these migrant workers, the first one taking place in October 2020.

If the April 8 flight takes place, it will be the third chartered flight bound for Kuala Lumpur.

There are still hundreds of stranded migrant workers in the

Macau SAR, as many of them have lost their jobs due to the impact of the pandemic outbreak.

As of December 2020, there were a total of 177,663 non-resident workers registered in town, down, 11%, or 18,875 fewer year-on-year, according to official statistics. The decline was mainly driven by the reduced number of non-resident workers from China. Non-resident workers from the Philippines and Vietnam also fell significantly, by 2,553 and 2,313, respectively, to 31,228 and 12,491, respectively, in December 2020.

In a reply to TDM Radio, the Public Security Police Force indicated that as of February 22, there were 1,229 stranded former blue card holders in Macau requesting visa extensions due to the absence of flights.

Yesterday, some 100 Myanmar nationals returned home via a chartered flight organized by the Myanmar Consulate General in Hong Kong.

The Philippine Consulate General of Macau has so far repatriated a total of 2,838 Filipino citizens since March 2020, arranging its 15th repatriation flight on February 25.

AD

## 合夥人 PARTNERS:

官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha<sup>o</sup>  
山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues<sup>o</sup>  
馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata<sup>o</sup>  
趙魯 Zhao Lu<sup>o</sup>  
馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

## 大律師 ASSOCIATES:

高文軒 Adelino Correia<sup>o</sup>  
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues<sup>\*</sup>  
白秀蘭 Susana Batalha  
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques  
陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo  
白穎怡 Icília Berenguel  
冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves  
薛明恩 Maria Antónia Giestas  
飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira<sup>o</sup>  
杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo  
馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins  
宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção  
巴慧雅 Vera Bastos  
莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura  
安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos  
歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo  
陳芷喬 Joana Chan  
顏曉蓉 Teresa Xiaorong Yan  
諾瑪莉 Maria Noras  
康靜雅 Viviana Hong  
梁淑嵐 Ana Leon

## 實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:

黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong  
張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong  
李莉 Lei Lei  
陳健雄 Eurico Chan  
吳霆鋒 Ng Teng Fong

## 法律專家 JURISTS:

羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues  
潘卡莉 Candice Pun  
斐彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo  
羅嘉慧 Emily Lo  
陳子健 Chan Chi Kin



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STRAIT TENSION

## Taiwan's Tsai visits naval base amid Chinese threats

**TAIWANESE** President Tsai Ing-wen visited a naval base yesterday to thank sailors and marines for their dedication to protecting the island amid renewed threats from China, vowing not to allow the loss of "any single inch" of territory.

In remarks during her visit to the 131st Flotilla in the northern port of Keelung, Tsai saluted the bravery of servicemembers for their "determination."

China accuses Tsai and other members of her pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party administration of undermining security in the Taiwan Strait. Beijing cut off contacts over her refusal to recognize the island as a part of China and has sought to pressure her through diplomatic isolation and economic measures.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Sunday also demanded the Biden administration in the United States reverse former Presi-

dent Donald Trump's "dangerous practice" of showing support for Taiwan, saying China's claim to the self-governing island democracy is an "insurmountable red line."

Following Wang's remarks, the U.S. State Department expressed concern about Chinese attempts to intimidate Taiwan, stating "Our support for Taiwan is rock-solid."

Separately, Wu Qian, a spokesperson for China's Defense Ministry, reiterated that China would not "renounce the use of force and reserve the right to take whatever measures are necessary."

Tsai has made boosting Taiwan's indigenous defense capacity a central pillar of her defense policy, while also buying billions of dollars in weapons from the U.S., including F-16 fighter jets, armed drones, rocket systems and missiles capable of hitting both ships and land targets. **MDT/AP**

## Beijing vows to expand legal 'toolkit' to fight US sanctions

**BEIJING** pledged to speed up legislation aimed at countering U.S. sanctions, as it seeks to narrow Washington's advantages in disputes after the Trump administration levied waves of penalties against China.

Measures were announced by National People's Congress Standing Committee Chairman Li Zhanshu as part of his annual report to the Chinese legislature yesterday. "We will upgrade our legal toolkit for meeting challenges and guarding against risks in order to oppose foreign sanctions, interference and long-arm jurisdiction," said Li, using language Beijing often employs to criticize American sanctions.

While the U.S. and China traded several rounds of sanctions against each other's officials and com-



Li Zhanshu, NPC Standing Committee Chairman

panies, Beijing's measures have yet to be felt across the Pacific due to the dollar's dominance in international finance. By the time President Donald Trump left office, the U.S. had sanctioned at least 45 Chinese officials over their role in policies involving Hong Kong and Xinjiang, including 15 NPC members.

China has in recent

months signaled a desire to level the playing field, an effort that could force multinationals to pick a side. In January, its Ministry of Commerce issued rules that would allow Chinese courts to punish global companies for complying with foreign sanctions, although it gave few details.

The report by Li - the Communist Party's No.

3 leader - also included a nod of support for a more confrontational diplomatic tone, vowing to "promptly voice our views on major issues and matters involving China's core interests." On Sunday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi warned President Joe Biden's administration not to interfere in its internal affairs and called on the U.S. to end penalties on Chinese companies.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said yesterday that the onus to repair ties was on the U.S. after actions that "undermined the bilateral relationship severely" under Trump. "The U.S. has a bigger responsibility to take the initiative in terms of taking action," spokesman Zhao Lijian told a regular news briefing in Beijing. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

FILM

## Chinese director of 'Nomadland' faces controversy at home

**CHLOE** Zhao's success — she's the first Asian woman and the second woman ever to win a Golden Globe for best director for her film "Nomadland" — has not been met with universal applause in her country of birth.

The Beijing-born filmmaker, now a leading Oscar contender, instead finds the news of her success overshadowed by a nationalist backlash regarding her citizenship and her identity. Censors have removed some social media posts about the film, which has raised questions about whether it will still be released in China.

Over the past week, Chinese web users questioned whether Zhao, who was educated in the U.K. and the U.S., was still a Chinese citizen and if she could be counted as Chinese given a critical comment she made about the country in 2013. Even as some cele-

brated her win, others dug up two interviews where Zhao said things that they considered an "insult to China."

Now publicity about the film has been removed from social media, and at least two hashtags related to it have been disabled.

Searching for the hashtags "Nomadland has a release date" and "No land to rely on" (the film's Chinese title) on popular microblog platform Weibo results in a message: "According to the relevant laws, regulations and policies, the page is not found."

A post on Weibo from the government-backed National Arthouse Alliance of Cinemas that had featured a poster for the film no longer displays the poster.

On Douban, a popular app where many urban Chinese users discuss books, films and TV shows,



the official Chinese poster for the movie as well as a release date in China were deleted Friday, according to Variety. The app's landing page for the movie, with comments and its English-language poster, remain visible.

At the heart of the controversy are two quotes from previous interviews done by Zhao. Online users circulated screenshots from a 2013 interview

with Filmmaker magazine where Zhao said, "It goes back to when I was a teenager in China, being in a place where there are lies everywhere." The interview no longer shows the quote, but archived versions of the webpage showed the original.

The second quote came from an interview Zhao did with an Australian website, news.com.au, in December last year where

she said "the U.S. is now my country." Although the news site updated the story on March 3 to say they had misquoted Zhao, and that the article "has been updated to reflect she said (the U.S. is) 'not her country,'" the uncorrected version of the story was the one circulating widely on the Chinese internet.

It is unclear if the film will still be released in China. It was slated to be released on April 23, according to Chinese media. The China Film Administration did not immediately respond to phone calls seeking comment.

The online debate has been split. Nationalist commentators say Zhao betrayed her country, calling her "two-faced" and saying she left the country based on her father's wealth as a former CEO of a state-owned enterprise. Other obser-

vers called for the debate to remain focused on her movie, which follows the story of a woman who lives in a van after the company that was the economic engine of her town in Nevada shut its doors.

A popular film critic, Chu Mufeng, praised Zhao and her film on his Weibo where he has 3 million followers, noting that "not only was she the first ethnically Chinese female director to win best director, she was also the first Asian woman."

However, one of the top comments underneath his post said: "An American female film director, thanks, don't praise her too much."

Chu responded to the comment, saying, "If an ethnically Chinese chef was great at cooking, would you ask him where he was from? Treat a good movie as if it's a feast, all you need to do is enjoy." **MDT/AP**





Prince Harry and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, speaking about expecting their second child during an interview with Oprah Winfrey

UK

# Royals absorb shock of revealing Harry, Meghan interview

JILL LAWLESS & DANICA KIRKA, LONDON

**B** RITAIN and its royal family absorbed the tremors yesterday from a sensational television interview by Prince Harry and Meghan, in which the couple said they encountered racist attitudes and a lack of support that drove the duchess to thoughts of suicide. In a two-hour soul-baring interview with Oprah Winfrey, the couple painted a deeply unflattering picture of life inside the royal household, depicting a cold, uncaring institution that they had to flee to save their lives.

Meghan told Winfrey that at one point "I just didn't want to be alive anymore" and had uncontrollable suicidal thoughts. She said she sought help through the palace's human resources department, but was told there was nothing they could do.

Meghan, 39, admitted that she was naive at the start of her relationship with Harry and unprepared for the strictures of royal life.

The former television star, who identifies as biracial, described that when she was pregnant with son Archie, there were "concer-

ns and conversations about how dark his skin might be when he's born."

Harry confirmed the conversation, saying: "I was a bit shocked." He said he would not reveal who made the comment.

The pair, known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, announced they were quitting royal duties last year, citing what they said were the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media. That split became official earlier this year, and the interview was widely seen as their first opportunity to explain their decision.

The implications for the interview — which was broadcast yesterday [Macau time] in the United States and will air in Britain on today — are only beginning to be understood. Emily Nash, royal editor at Hello! Magazine, said the revelations had left her and many other viewers "shell-shocked."

"I don't see how the palace can ignore these allegations, they're incredibly serious," she said. "You have the racism allegations. Then you also have the claim that Megan was not supported, and she sought help even from the HR team within the household and was told that she couldn't seek help."

Anti-monarchy group Republic said the interview gave a clearer picture of what the royal family is like — and it's not pretty.

"Whether for the sake of Britain or for the sake of the younger royals this rotten institution needs to go," Graham Smith of the campaign group said. "Some people will say 'well you would say that,' but this interview has only served to highlight what a lot of people have known for years: The monarchy is rotten to the core and does not reflect British values."

Harry, born a royal prince, described how his wife's experience had helped him realize how he and the rest of the family were stuck in an oppressive institution.

"I was trapped, but I didn't know I was trapped," Harry said. "My father and my brother, they are trapped."

Meghan, he said, "saved me."

The younger royals — including Harry, Meghan, Harry's brother, Prince William, and William's wife, Catherine — have made campaigning for support and awareness around mental health one of their priorities. But Harry described a royal family completely unable to offer that su-

pport to its own members.

"For the family, they very much have this mentality of 'This is just how it is, this is how it's meant to be, you can't change it, we've all been through it,'" Harry said.

The couple had faced severe criticism in the United Kingdom during the run-up to the interview. Prince Philip, Harry's 99-year-old grandfather, is in a London hospital after recovering from a heart procedure, and critics saw the decision to go forward as being a burden on the queen — even though, CBS, rather than Harry and Meghan, dictated the timing of the broadcast.

In the United States, sympathy for the couple poured in after the interview. It will be shown today in Britain, where some see Meghan and Harry as a couple who put personal happiness ahead of public duty.

Meghan — then known as Meghan Markle, who had starred on the American TV legal drama "Suits" — married Harry, a grandson of Queen Elizabeth II, at Windsor Castle in May 2018. Their son, Archie, was born the following year.

Holding hands, Harry and Meghan sat opposite Winfrey while she questioned them in a lush garden setting. The couple lives in Montecito, California, where they are Winfrey's neighbors.

Harry said he had lived in fear of a repeat of the fate of his mother, Princess Diana, who was covered constantly by the press and died in a car crash in Paris in 1997 while being pursued by paparazzi.

"What I was seeing was history repeating itself, but definitely far more dangerous — because then you add race in, and you add social media in," Harry said.

Both Meghan and Harry praised the support they had received from Queen Elizabeth II, Harry's grandmother.

"The queen has always been wonderful to me," Meghan said.

But Harry revealed he currently has a poor relationship with his brother, William, and said things got so bad with his father that at one point Prince Charles stopped taking his calls.

In a rare positive moment in the interview, Harry and Meghan revealed their second child, due in the summer, would be a girl. **AP**

## this day in history

### 1967 STALIN'S DAUGHTER DEFECTS TO THE WEST



The daughter of the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin has requested political asylum at the United States Embassy in India.

The American Mutual Radio network broke the news but the American State Department has so far refused to comment.

Since her father's death in 1953, little has been heard of 42-year-old Svetlana Alliluyeva - who prefers to be known by her mother's maiden name.

She has been living in a flat in Moscow near the British Embassy working as a researcher and translator. Svetlana is the only daughter of Joseph Stalin by his second wife Nadezhda Alliluyeva who committed suicide in 1932 when Svetlana was nine years old.

When she was just 18, Svetlana, married a Jewish fellow student at Moscow University against her father's wishes.

She had a son by him but the marriage was dissolved and her ex-husband sent to his death in a Siberian labour camp.

Her second husband was Yuri Zhdanov, the son of Andrei, a close ally of Stalin.

This marriage was also dissolved.

In 1964 she married Brajesh Singh, an Indian communist.

He died last November and Svetlana came to India on 20 December last year to bury his ashes.

She is believed to be planning to go to Geneva, Switzerland, after the Indian authorities refused her permission to stay in the country for fear of marring relations with the Soviet Union.

She leaves behind a grown-up son and daughter in Moscow.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Svetlana Alliluyeva was allowed to stay in Switzerland for three months.

She went to the United States in April 1967.

On arrival at New York, she held a press conference and astonished the world by denouncing her father's regime - much to the irritation of the Soviet leader of the time, Alexei Kosygin, who said she was a "sick person".

Later that year, she published her memoirs, *Twenty Letters to a Friend*, and another autobiography in 1969 called *Only One Year*.

Svetlana became a US citizen and changed her name to Lana Peters when she married American architect, William Peters in 1970. But they separated after their daughter, Olga, was born.

She returned to the Soviet Union in 1984 and settled in Tbilisi, Georgia - her father's homeland.

In 1986 she left the USSR for the second time to live in the US and then during the 1990s settled in England.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 A short and sweet conversation early in the day could plant the seeds for some interesting ideas in your head. These should blossom over the course of the day.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 Someone who holds some power over you might have a vested interest in discouraging you from moving forward with your goals, but they can't stop you, and that's what is important.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 If you've been playing a flirtatious game with a certain sassy someone, be aware that it might come to a screeching halt today. You could find out that they aren't exactly as available as you thought they were!

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 Parties are supposed to be places where you can relax and have fun. If you only see them as routes to get closer to someone you think can make things better in your life, then you're selling yourself short.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 One of your friends is being indecisive right now, and it could be delaying some exciting social plans. Light a fire under them today, and let them know that everyone is waiting for them.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 You can change the minds of some influential people today. All you have to do is get a little bit of face time with each of them. Use your warm charm and some cold logic to enlighten these people.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 You should just talk about new things today. The same old topics of conversation aren't cutting it, so it's time for you and your conversational skills to move into newer, greener pastures.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 This isn't a day to gloss over unusual minor details. If something raises a red flag, no matter how small it may be, you need to pay attention to it! Is your car making a funny sound? Look into it!

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 Sure, you know that you're totally right about how to fix a problem that's making everyone else freak out, but your ideas are going to fall on deaf ears right now.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Today, an average exchange of ideas could generate a sublime experience in your life, so be open to talking to anyone at any time. You should try to get a little bit more creative.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Today, you could be syncing up with a lot of different types of people. This means it's a great time for you to start building a foundation for something unique and new in your life.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 The greatest thing about the energy you feel today is that it can give you all the focus you need to take the most complicated ideas and make them simple enough for anyone to understand.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	1	15	cloudy
Harbin	-7	3	clear
Tianjin	2	16	clear
Urumqi	-1	5	clear
Xi'an	3	16	cloudy
Lhasa	-1	13	cloudy
Chengdu	11	14	overcast
Chongqing	14	18	overcast
Kunming	9	22	clear
Nanjing	8	13	cloudy
Shanghai	9	12	overcast
Wuhan	4	15	cloudy
Hangzhou	8	13	overcast
Taipei	17	20	drizzle
Guangzhou	17	24	cloudy
Hong Kong	19	23	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-13	-5	cloudy
Frankfurt	-2	3	sleet
Paris	-1	5	overcast
London	3	8	drizzle
New York	3	5	sleet

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Balkan native; 5- Arose; 10- Against; 14- Bhutan's continent; 15- Dry as \_\_\_; 16- Mindy of "The Facts of Life"; 17- \_\_\_ Crunch; 18- Tooth; 19- Brain wave; 20- Egyptian canal; 21- Confined to the berth; 23- Hole-punching tool; 25- East Lansing sch.; 26- Bliss; 31- "The Planets" composer; 35- Drs.' group; 36- Twisted expression?; 38- Grain stores; 40- Cincinnati club; 42- Where Columbus was born; 44- Fit to be tried; 45- 1957 hit for the Bobbettes; 47- Blank look; 49- Compass dir.; 50- Long; 52- Put in order; 54- New Jersey cager; 56- Galena, e.g.; 57- No problem!; 62- Apians; 66- Actress Hatcher; 67- Scarpia's killer; 68- Military group; 69- Like Death Valley; 70- Prufrock's creator; 71- Unaccompanied; 72- Cheek; 73- Slow on the uptake; 74- Helper. Abbr.;

DOWN: 1- Pouches; 2- Biblical birthright seller; 3- Ready for plucking; 4- Japanese battle cry; 5- Gaming; 6- It's blown among the reeds; 7- Tattled; 8- Render weaponless; 9- Suffer destruction; 10- Biting; 11- Network point; 12- At that time; 13- Actress Balin; 22- Couples; 24- Loos; 26- Old MacDonald's place; 27- Abrasive mineral; 28- Big dipper; 29- Driving aids; 30- Gossipmonger; 32- Fleur-de-\_\_\_; 33- Jargon; 34- 1,000 kilograms; 37- Laugh heartily; 39- Highly ranked competitor in sporting events; 41- Neptune's realm; 43- Ascribe; 46- Sea eagle; 48- Musical gift; 51- Took home; 53- Interstellar cloud; 55- Fulcrum for an oar; 57- Lab fluids; 58- "Topaz" author; 59- Disencumbers; 60- The doctor \_\_\_; 61- Sgts., e.g.; 63- Slaughter in Cooperstown; 64- Half of zwei; 65- Leave in, to an editor; 66- Univ. aides;

**Yesterday's solution**

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

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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	
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BLOOMBERG



## CHINA'S CARBON MARKET TO GROW TO \$25 BILLION BY 2030, CITI SAYS

**T**HE size of China's carbon market will expand more than 30-fold over the next decade as it covers more industries and polluting becomes more expensive, according to Citigroup Inc.

The market's physical turnover will rise from about \$800 million this year, its first in operation, to around \$25 billion by the end of the decade, analysts including Tracy Liao said in a March 8 note. The expected growth underscores both the massive potential of the emissions trading scheme, and the modest impact it's expected to have at

the outset as the government seeks to ease companies into compliance.

China's launch means that one-fifth of global emissions will now fall under a tax or trading scheme, according to Citi. At the same time, the pressure to cut emissions is likely to be inflationary and could leave Chinese factories more expensive relative to countries without controls, the bank said.

"The Chinese national ETS as currently rolled out should play a limited role in reducing emissions at first," Liao said. "We expect a series of develop-

ments to transform China's ETS into the world's largest effective carbon trading scheme and a key building block of the country's 2030 peak emissions commitment."

China made the rules for its ETS official in February and wants online trading to begin by the end of June. The market will begin with the power sector, and will add other energy-intensive industries such as steel, petrochemicals and cement through 2025.

Citi expects an initial carbon price of \$4 a ton and emissions allowances representing about 200 million tons to be

in circulation this year. Those are expected to rise to \$25 a ton and 1 billion tons in circulation by 2030, the bank said, based on a survey.

At \$25 a ton, the carbon cost for a coal-powered aluminum smelter could rise to \$375 a ton, equivalent to current profit margins, according to Citi.

"If policies are stringent enough, this could precipitate the shifting of supply chains of emission-intensive industries from China to other countries that do not face the same regulatory costs," Liao said. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

## YUAN ERASES 2021 GAIN BUT REMAINS IN HIGH LEVELS

**T**HE Chinese yuan briefly erased its year-to-date gains versus a rebounding dollar, amid a broad rout in risk assets across Asia.

The onshore yuan weakened as much as 0.5% to 6.5290 against the greenback in Shanghai, falling past the 6.5283 per dollar level it closed at on Dec. 31, before paring the drop slightly. The Senate's approval of a \$1.9 trillion stimulus package in the U.S. and strong exports data out of China, which pointed to recovering demand in America and other major markets, helped send the benchmark Treasury yield 4 basis points higher, sparking a decline in Asian stocks and currencies.

Optimism over a global recovery from the pandemic has morphed into concerns that rising inflation and an overheating economy would trigger sooner-than-expected rate hikes. The Chinese bond market had largely escaped a Treasury-sparked rout seen in the past few weeks, but a continued pullback in Chinese equities and expectations for normalizing growth in the world's second-largest economy are beginning to dampen sentiment on the yuan.

Last week, China's government set a conservative economic growth target of above 6% for the year, as it shifts focus from recovery mode to longer-term challenges like reining in debt and reducing technological dependence on the U.S.

Even after yesterday's declines, the yuan remains higher than its average level of the past five years. It's the third best-performing emerging currency this year out of 24 major exchange rates tracked by Bloomberg.

A Bloomberg gauge of the dollar's strength gained 0.4% as of 5:06 p.m. local time to its highest in four months. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

## CORPORATE BITS

### Melco holds Chinese culture exhibition tour for employees



As part of Melco Resorts & Entertainment's "Splendors of China" learning program, 40 colleagues from the Melco management team recently toured the "Loving the Country, Loving Macau Education

Base for Young People" located at the Handover Gifts Museum of Macau. According to the gaming operator, the purpose of the tour is to strengthen Melco colleagues' national knowledge

and identity and to gain a deeper understanding of Macau's developments and achievements.

Xana Lei, director of Entertainment Development & Operations, Entertainment & Projects, Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said, "The offerings of the company's Splendors of China learning program have always been diversified. The exhibition has allowed me to gain a better understanding of the Motherland, its history, culture and recent development."

The patriotic education base aims to help people in Macau develop a deeper understanding of Chinese history and culture.

### The Ritz-Carlton to present 'Star Collaboration' menu



The Ritz-Carlton, Macau recently welcomed the Michelin-starred chef, Aiden Huang, from The Ritz-Carlton, Guangzhou for an exclusive three-

-day culinary journey alongside its Chinese Executive Chef, Jackie Ho, at Lai Heen.

From March 26 to 28, the two chefs will collaborate to

present the "first class Star Collaboration menus," the hotel announced in a statement.

Chef Jackie and Chef Aiden are the culinary leaders of the one-star Michelin restaurant, Lai Heen, in Macau and Guangzhou respectively.

"The eight-course dinner menu features the chefs' craftsmanship and their inventive creations. The duo joins forces in elevating their own signature dishes to the next level," the statement reads.

The chefs have also adopted the French confit technique and sweet basil flavors to delight palates with an international flair.



FOOTBALL

# European clubs target global fans with Champions League plan

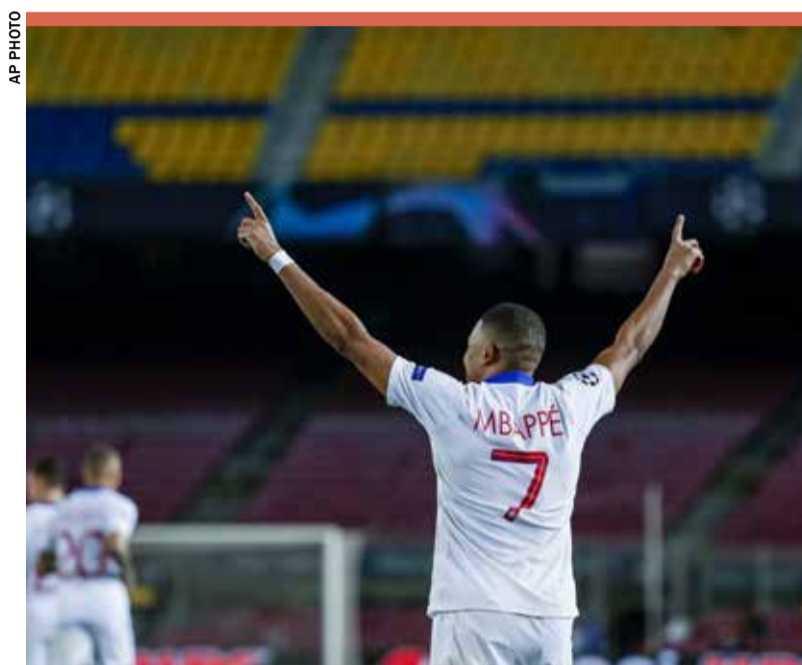
GRAHAM DUNBAR, GENEVA

**E**UROPEAN soccer clubs were urged Monday to support a Champions League expansion plan and help please a new type of global fans who have different supporting habits.

A UEFA-led proposal to change its clubs competitions in 2024 — abolishing traditional four-team groups and adding 100 Champions League games in a 36-team format — was being presented to more than 200 European Club Association members.

The deal could be finalized within two weeks, said Andrea Agnelli, the ECA chairman and Juventus president, in opening the online meeting.

"I really ask you that today we endorse this system going forward and mandate the (ECA) board to execute the last details that we will be missing," Agnelli said, singling out the unresolved issue of access for clubs to the revamped Champions League.



AP PHOTO

ECA leaders want two of the four extra Champions League places given to clubs who do not qualify on merit but are ranked highly by UEFA based on past results in Europe.

Critics see that as a safety net for clubs with global brands ra-

ther than rewarding champions from mid-ranking leagues such as Austria, the Czech Republic and Scotland.

If the historic ranking system applied this season, it would likely reward storied teams such as Liverpool and Borussia Dortmund

having a relatively poor domestic campaign.

Agnelli stated his vision of European soccer appealing to fans worldwide because "traditional assumptions" about fans' loyalties had to change.

One third of fans globally follow at least two clubs and 10% of fans follow players instead of clubs, said the Italian executive whose club signed Cristiano Ronaldo three years ago.

Agnelli cautioned that the so-called "Gen Z" demographic of 16-to-24-year-olds "have no interest in football whatsoever."

"The current system most likely is not delivering for the modern fan," he said, claiming too many domestic and international games "are simply uncompetitive."

The Champions League proposal would ensure 10 games for each of the 36 teams. Currently, only six group-stage games are guaranteed for 32 teams that share about 2 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) in UEFA prize money.

A single league table in the new format would send the top eight into the last-16 round. Teams ranked Nos. 9 to 24 would enter playoffs to complete the knockout bracket.

"The beauty of the system has now been recognized by all," Agnelli said.

The European Leagues group has warned the plan would take broadcast revenue and fixture calendar space from its members.

Agnelli chided ECA board members who brought their domestic concerns into its talks on international matters.

He also urged them to embrace "strong progressive views, not the conservatism that has always distinguished our industry," which has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UEFA-led talks took place amid leaks that financiers are ready to back a European Super League project outside of UEFA's control.

Agnelli said he had "arguments and almost fights" with UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin last year, and suggested interest from global banks meant European soccer was "highly palatable for richer investments."

"That means if we change ourselves we can look forward to those richer investments ourselves," he said, rather than financial institutions getting a return on their money. AP

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OPINION

China Daily

Editors, Xinhua

**HONG KONG SHOULD SEIZE HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY IN CHINA'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

As China embarks on a new journey to fully building a modern socialist country, a national blueprint has provided historic opportunities to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

China's clear positioning and scientific planning for the HKSAR were reflected in a draft outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for national economic and social development and the long-range objectives through the year 2035, which was unveiled on Friday.

Hong Kong has a wide range of unique advantages in China's development. The plan stressed the HKSAR's important roles in sectors including finance, innovative technology, shipping, trade, professional services, intellectual property rights and cultural exchanges, and specifically highlighted its role in connecting domestic and international markets.

Coordinated development with the Chinese mainland will foster new growth drivers for Hong Kong. According to the plan, China will support Hong Kong in better integrating its own development into the overall national development on a larger platform, such as the joint building of the Belt and Road and the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area, to name a few.

It should be noted that Hong Kong is facing multiple difficulties and challenges, such as income disparity, a homogeneous economy, the hollowing out of industries, and few opportunities for upward mobility. These issues become even more outstanding against the backdrop of a rapidly changing global economic landscape and increasingly fierce international competition.

Besides, Hong Kong's economy was in the doldrums as a result of the turbulence over the proposed amendment bill and the COVID-19 pandemic. Its economy slipped 6.1 percent last year, with the latest jobless rate spiking to 7 percent.

For Hong Kong, the only way out is to abolish the outmoded mindset and practice and embrace and grasp the historic opportunities of China's reform and opening-up in the new era.

A harmonious and stable social environment is the primary guarantee for Hong Kong to focus on its development. Over the past few years, the anti-China, destabilizing forces and radical localists in Hong Kong have taken advantage of the loopholes in the HKSAR's electoral system, attempting to grab power and administer Hong Kong through election manipulation, but only to have brought mishaps and chaos to the metropolis.

Such actions have put China's national sovereignty, security and development interests in serious jeopardy, severely disrupted Hong Kong's social stability and harmed the well-being of its residents.

Therefore, it is imperative to improve Hong Kong's electoral system. Only when the loopholes in the system are plugged can the Hong Kong public be assured of exercising their rights, and the HKSAR government focus on developing the economy and improving the people's well-being.

The National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, has deliberated important issues related to Hong Kong for two consecutive years, which will help end political disputes, refocus on development, and protect the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong.

With the support of the motherland, Hong Kong will take more solid and firm steps to regain stability from chaos, grasp the enormous and historic opportunities and fit in the national development blueprint for an even brighter future.

**GRAMMY PERFORMERS: TAYLOR SWIFT, BTS, CARDI B, BILLIE EILISH**

THE BUZZ

Taylor Swift, BTS, Cardi B and Billie Eilish are set to perform at next week's Grammy Awards.

The Recording Academy announced Sunday that Harry Styles, Bad Bunny, Post Malone, Megan Thee Stallion and Dua Lipa will also hit the stage at the March 14 event. The show will air live from the Staples Center in Los Angeles on CBS and Paramount+.

The Grammys were originally supposed to take place on Jan. 31 but were delayed because of the coronavirus pandemic. The

academy said in a statement that "artists will be coming together, while still safely apart, to play music for each other as a community and celebrate the music that unites us all."

Trevor Noah is hosting the show for the first time. Other performers include Chris Martin, John Mayer, Doja Cat, Maren Morris, DaBaby, HAIM, Lil Baby, Brandi Carlile, Roddy Ricch, Brittany Howard, Miranda Lambert, Mickey Guyton and Black Pumas.

Beyoncé is leading nominee with nine, followed by Swift, Lipa and Ricch, who each earned six nominations.

**AFTER DELAYS, ISRAEL STARTS VACCINATING PALESTINIAN WORKERS**

**A**FTER delays, Israel started vaccinating Palestinians who work inside the country and its West Bank settlements yesterday, more than two months after launching an immunization blitz of its own population.

Palestinian laborers who crossed into Israel at several West Bank checkpoints received their first doses of the Moderna vaccine from Magen David Adom paramedics. The vaccination drive orchestrated by COGAT, Israel's military agency coordinating government operations in the West Bank, had been beset by postponements.

Some 100,000 Palestinian laborers from the West Bank work in Israel and its settlements, which are widely seen internationally as illegal and an obstacle to peace.

Maj. Gen. Kamil Abu Rukun, the head of COGAT, said in a statement in Arabic that Israelis and Palestinians "live in the same epidemiological space" and that it was a shared interest to vaccinate Palestinians.

Israel has administered over 8.7 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine to its population of 9.3 million. Over 3.7



million Israelis — more than 40% — have received two doses of the vaccine. But until yesterday, Israel had provided few vaccines for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a move that has underscored global disparities and drawn international criticism.

**Israel has administered over 8.7M doses of the Pfizer vaccine to its population of 9.3M**

Human rights groups and many Palestinians say that as an occupying power, Israel is responsible for providing vaccines to the Palestinians. Israel says that under interim peace accords reached in the 1990s,

it does not have any such obligation.

Israeli officials have said the priority is vaccinating Israel's own population first, while the Palestinian Authority has said it will obtain its own vaccines through a World Health Organization partnership with humanitarian organizations known as COVAX.

To date, the PA has acquired enough vaccine doses for only 6,000 people in the West Bank and the Gaza

Strip, which are home to nearly 5 million Palestinians. It received 2,000 doses from Israel and acquired another 10,000 doses of a Russian-made vaccine. Each is given in two doses. AP



**Iraq** A pair of B-52 bombers flew over the Mideast, the latest such mission in the region aimed at warning Iran amid tensions between Washington and Tehran. The flight by the two heavy bombers came as a pro-Iran satellite channel based in Beirut broadcast Iranian military drone footage of an Israeli ship hit by a mysterious explosion only days earlier in the Mideast. While the channel sought to say Iran wasn't involved, Israel has blamed Tehran for what it described as an attack on the vessel.

**Pakistani** security forces, acting on intelligence, raided a suspected hideout of a separatist group in southwestern Baluchistan province yesterday, triggering a shootout that killed five insurgents, the province's counter-terrorism department said. In a statement, it said police also seized a cache of weapons in the raid in the district of Mastung. The slain men were members of a separatist group that often targets police and troops in Baluchistan, according to the police.



**Lebanon** Protesters closed all major roads leading to the capital yesterday, causing traffic jams and triggering a call by the head of the hospitals union who warned that such moves are preventing oxygen supplies from reaching medical centers treating coronavirus patients. The dayslong protests come against the backdrop of a crash in the local currency, increase of consumer goods prices and political bickering between rival groups that has delayed the formation of a new government.

**Australia** has suspended its defense cooperation with Myanmar and is redirecting humanitarian aid because of the military takeover of the government and ongoing detention of an Australian citizen. Foreign Minister Marise Payne said yesterday that Australian diplomats and relatives had only been able to contact economic policy adviser Sean Turnell twice by phone since he was detained in early February. She described the access as "very limited consular support."

**THE DECISIVE MOMENT**

AP Photo/Bullit Marquez



Women's Day. A worker from the LG Towers prepares flowers to hand over to women who enter the office building as part of celebration of International Women's Day in Beijing, yesterday.