



A LOCAL MAN REPORTS LOSS OF HKD340,000 IN A CRYPTOCURRENCY INVESTMENT SCAM, THE JUDICIARY POLICE INFORMED

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TRAVEL PRACTITIONERS YEARN FOR GBA TOURISM TO STAY AFLOAT

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THE POLICE APPROVED THE REQUEST OF LAWMAKER AU KAM SAN TO PROTEST AGAINST THE CONSUMER E-VOUCHER SCHEME COMING SUNDAY

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India At least four policemen were killed and 14 wounded in a roadside bombing carried out by Maoist rebels in their stronghold in the country's east, police said. The policemen were returning from an anti-Maoist operation when the bus they were traveling in was targeted in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh state. Two of the wounded were in critical condition.



Myanmar Hundreds of people imprisoned for protesting last month's coup in were released yesterday in the first apparent gesture by the military to try to placate the protest movement. Witnesses outside Insein Prison in Yangon saw busloads of mostly young people, looking happy with some flashing the three-finger gesture of defiance adopted by protesters. State-run TV said a total of 628 were freed.



Bangladesh Searchers recovered at least 15 charred bodies after a devastating fire destroyed thousands of shelters at a Rohingya refugee camp in southern Bangladesh, officials said. At least 400 people were still missing and around 560 were injured by the fire, according to Louise Donovan, a spokesperson for the United Nations' refugee agency. The UNHCR said around 45,000 people were displaced by the fire, which broke.

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LISBON PROTESTS

Portuguese foreign minister calls for Chinese authorities to comply with Basic Law after TDM's 'patriotic' editorial guidelines led six journalists to resign P2



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LISBON CALLS FOR COMPLIANCE WITH BASIC LAW IN TDM'S PATRIOTIC EDITORIAL LINE CASE

RENATO MARQUES

THE Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Augusto Santos Silva, has called on his counterparts in the People's Republic of China to scrupulously respect and apply the rules established by the Macau Basic Law.

The call comes in the light of recent events involving the public broadcaster Teledifusão de Macau (TDM) which according to several reports has recently established new editorial rules where journalists need to refrain from disclosing and broadcasting news that is contrary to China's policies, urging them to strictly follow the principles of patriotism and love for mainland China and Macau.

In a statement collected by Lusa news agency in Brussels on the sidelines of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Foreign Ministers' summit, Santos Silva said, "The [Macau] Basic Law is very clear in guaranteeing freedom of the press and, therefore, in the same way, that Portugal scrupulously respects the implementation of the Basic Law in Macau, Portugal [also] hopes that the People's Republic of China will also scrupulously respect the Basic Law in Macau, namely, in the area of press freedom."

He added that the same law clearly establishes the transition process of Macau since the handover from the Portuguese to Chinese administration in 1999 and that establishes the continuation of the

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



"way of life" and general rules for a period of 50 years (until 2049).

According to what the Times could ascertain, in consequence of the enforcement of the new guidelines in TDM, a total of six journalists from TDM's television and radio channels in the Portuguese language have resigned in protest with the new editorial line.

The Times has managed to contact four out of the six people involved in the case who confirmed that they have resigned from the company, but they declined to make any further comments on the matter.

The resignation letters were handed in after a meeting between TDM's Executive Committee and the journalists from the Portuguese

and English channels in which the broadcaster's administration reaffirmed that the new guidelines were to be followed without exceptions.

The same guidelines were also criticized by several journalism-related professional associations including the Macau Portuguese and English Press Association (AIPIM), the Macau Journalists Association, which represents reporters from the Chinese-language media, as well as Portugal's Journalists Trade Union.

Meanwhile, Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng denied that the new guidelines by TDM have been in any way imposed by the local government, claiming that the government is not imposing any res-

trictions on press freedom and did not "tighten the control over media outlets."

Ho also added that TDM, as a public broadcaster, "does love the country and Macau, certainly."

MACAU TO BE NOTED ON PRESS FREEDOM RANKING

INTERNATIONAL organizations have been alerted about the current press freedom situation in Macau, with the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) saying that Macau will be under the group's ranking separately, Asia's RSF representative Cédric Alviani told Lusa. Previously, Macau was considered on the ranking created by the international non-profit and non-governmental organization

with the aim of safeguarding the right to freedom of information together with the neighboring region of Hong Kong. However, since the recent developments, the RSF decided to rank Macau separately henceforth. In last year's ranking, Hong Kong was placed 80th among the 180 countries and regions while mainland China placed 177th, just three places from the bottom.

Guangzhou establishes school for students from SARs

RENATO MARQUES

THE first school solely dedicated to enrolling students from Hong Kong and Macau is ready to operate from September this year, China Daily reported.

Located in the city of Guangzhou, the schools expect to enroll its first group of students in September this year, noting that some 300 students have already applied to be part of this first batch.

"The school will try to create a diversified campus

atmosphere and help its students achieve all-round growth," said Lucas Deng, executive director of the Affiliated School of Jinan University for Hong Kong and Macau Students.

Deng noted that the school aims to become "an international school with Chinese characteristics" that will represent the development trend of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA) in the coming years.

Covering about four hectares in the city's Tianhe dis-

trict, the non-profit international school will be able to accommodate more than 1,200 students in preschool, primary school, junior and senior high, Deng said.

In addition to students from Hong Kong and Macau, the school will be able to enroll some students from Taiwan as well as foreign countries.

The school is jointly created by Guangzhou-based Jinan University, Hong Kong Victoria Harbour Education Group, Aoyuan Group, and Eton House Dongguan and it

is the first school for students from Hong Kong and Macau under the direct guidance of a mainland university.

Zheng Jianmin, deputy director of the Guangdong Provincial Office of Hong Kong and Macau Affairs, said he expects the school will become a benchmark of cooperation between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau in basic education, a base of patriotism education for students from Hong Kong and Macau and a cradle for talent nurturing in the GBA.



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SARs temporarily suspend BioNTech vaccine amid 'packaging defects'

LYNZY VALLES

THE Macau SAR government suspended the BioNTech vaccination from yesterday following a request made during an online meeting with Fosun Pharma. The suspension requested by Fosun Pharm on the batch of the Covid-19 vaccines was due to packaging defects.

The region has immediately suspended, as a precautionary step, any vaccination from the batch numbered 210102 to ensure the safety of the local vaccination program.

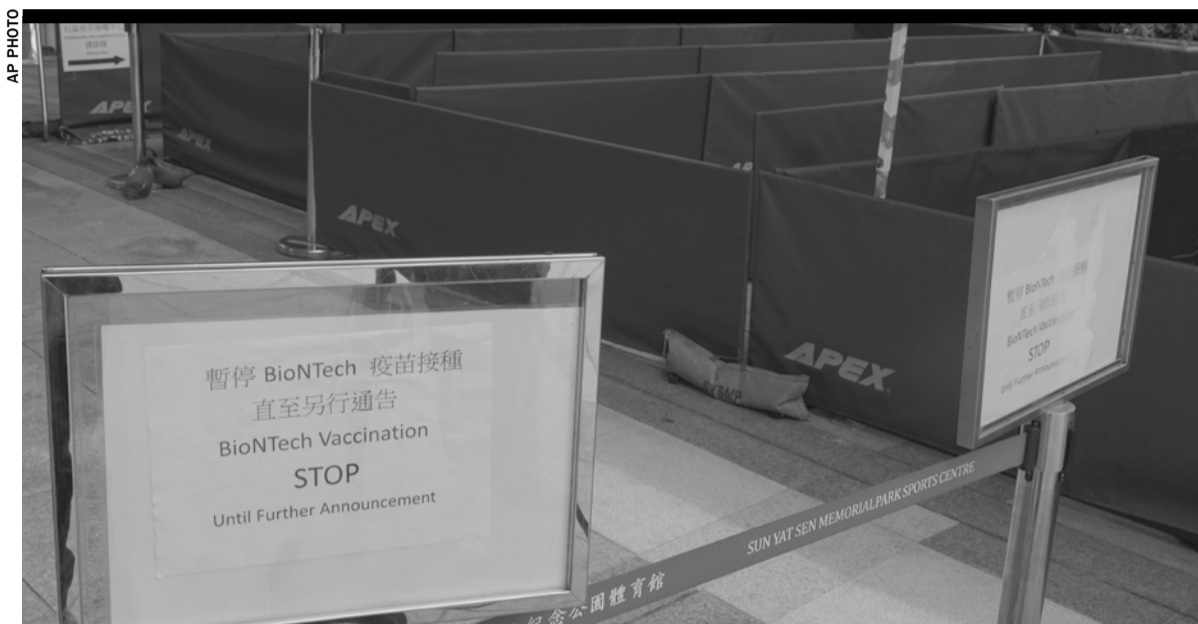
Hong Kong also received vials with the lot number of 210102 and has suspended administration of the vaccines.

The vaccines from the batch in Hong Kong comprise a total of 585,000 doses, with the other batch number 210104 holding 758,000 doses.

A statement issued by the Health Bureau (SSM), BioNTech and Fosun Pharma presented information advising there was no reason to doubt the safety of the vaccine.

Currently, Fosun Pharma has only requested suspension of use of the one batch, with immediate effect, until their investigation is concluded. The batch is not being recalled.

According to the SSM, the government remains in close contact with the vaccine supplier, to discuss other alternatives, including transferring another batch from Hong Kong, or shipping newly-produced doses from Germany



A notice of vaccine suspension is placed outside a vaccination center for BioNTech in Hong Kong, yesterday

as an emergency, in order to resume the use of the vaccine as part of Macau's vaccination program.

"The government learnt the packaging defects mainly involved loose aluminium caps on vaccine bottles. Macau has never administered vaccines from bottles in such condition. Before administering a vaccine, medical staff would carefully examine the vaccine package, and if there were signs of any abnormality, it would not be used in Macau," the SSM clarified.

Official data shows that as of Tuesday, a total of 6,215 BioNTech doses had been administered in the SAR. In addition, 5,393 individuals had appointments pending for the vaccination. Of those, 1,520 were scheduled to have a first dose, and 3,873 had a booking for a second dose.

The SSM has already sent messages to the people who have opted for the BioNTech vaccine and are awaiting a jab, informing them that the use of this vaccine is suspended until further notice.

The SSM has called on individuals who have not received a Covid-19 jab to choose the other vaccine currently available in Macau, which is produced by Sinopharm.

As cited on SSM's website, the recommendation is for two shots to be taken of the same vaccine to achieve the expected efficacy as in the clinical trial.

150,000 DOSES ADMINISTERED IN HK FROM BATCH 210102

Although about 150,000 doses from the batch 210102 have been administered in the city so far, Hong Kong officials said during a press briefing yesterday

that the vaccines were safe to use despite the packaging defects, and that suspending the vaccination was a precautionary measure. Batch number 210104 remains in the warehouse and has not been used.

According to Hong Kong's director of Health Constance Chan said that there were over 40 instances when medical personnel found defective packaging, such as cracks on the vaccine bottles or leakages when the vaccine was diluted with saline before being administered, as cited in a report by the Associated Press.

None of these vaccines was given to residents and they were thrown away, officials said.

"Fosun has promised to carry out an immediate investigation so they are going to approach the manufacturer in Germany

to look into their plant," Chan said. "When the vaccines arrive in Hong Kong, they will have a review of the whole logistics chain to see if that's the cause of the current situation."

She said that officials are urging manufacturers to give a report as soon as possible to check if the batches of vaccines in Hong Kong can be used, otherwise the manufacturers will have to deliver another batch of shots as soon as possible.

Residents who are slated to receive their second BioNTech dose starting on Saturday should get the second shot administered as soon as possible, if new vaccines arrive in Hong Kong after the recommended 19- to 42-day window following the first dose.

BioNTech could not be immediately reached for comment.

Fosun Pharma said in a filing to the Hong Kong stock exchange that it received notice from BioNTech regarding the packaging defects on Tuesday night and informed Hong Kong and Macau authorities yesterday to temporarily suspend the vaccines.

The suspension of the Pfizer jab means the only vaccine currently offered to Hong Kong residents is China's Sinovac. As of 8 p.m. Tuesday, 403,000 people have received vaccines in the city, of which 150,200 had received the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine, compared with 252,800 who had taken the Sinovac jab.

Junket denies link with fraudulent website

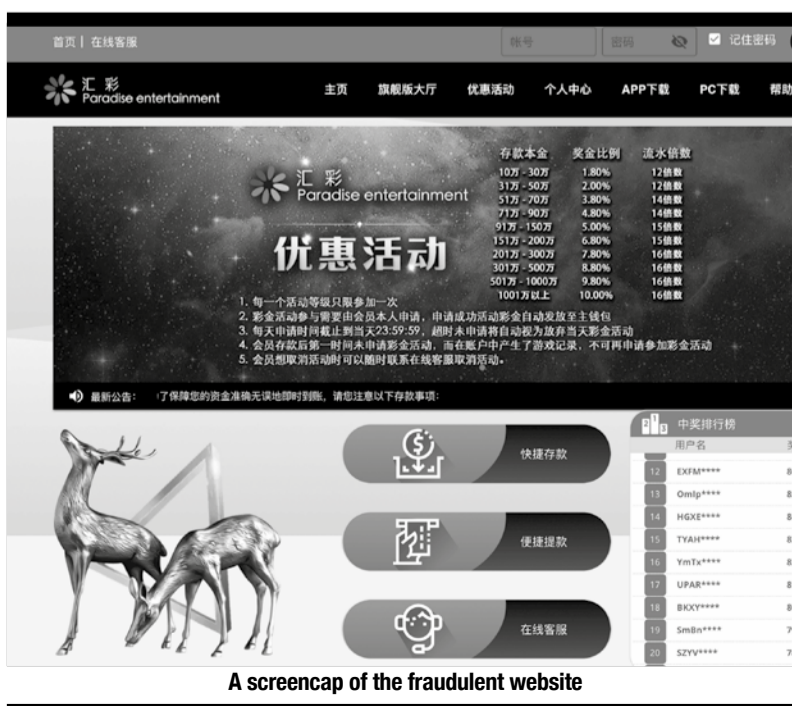
PARADISE Entertainment Limited denied its link to a fraudulent website which used certain information of the company and claimed that it was the online lottery gaming platform operated by Paradise and licensed by a lottery regulatory authority in Hong Kong and the World Lottery Association.

In a statement, the company said that certain organisations and persons have been using the name and photo of Jay Chun, the chairman and managing director of Paradise Entertainment Limited to establish a fraudulent social media platform account in "QQ." This

was an attempt to defraud members of the public – mostly in mainland China – by opening accounts in the said fraudulent website for alleged investment purposes which they falsely claim that such purported investments were recommended by Chun.

The gaming promoter clarified that it does not operate any gaming operations, lottery, or any betting games online.

"We are paying close attention to this incident and have taken relevant actions to prevent the acts of impersonation and other fraudulent activities," the firm said in a statement. **LV**



A screenshot of the fraudulent website

3 RETURNEES TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 ANTIBODIES

Three returnees from Europe and the U.S. who returned to Macau via Taipei on March 7 tested positive for Covid-19 antibodies, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre announced last night. Yesterday's test results showed that these residents had already been infected before they traveled to Macau. They were sent to Conde de São Januário for additional tests.

FIRST CENTER FOR DEMENTIA PATIENTS TO OPEN IN Q4

Macau's first center for people suffering from dementia is set to open in the fourth quarter this year. The Social Welfare Bureau will commission a local organization to operate the center, which will be located in Fai Chi Kei. The center will offer 100 service quotas, 50 for in-patient services, and another 50 for daily care services.

CEM TO SELECT ELIGIBLE BUILDINGS FOR ELECTRICITY FACILITY UPGRADE

HONEY TSANG

THE preparatory works of the Safety Upgrade Subsidy Program for Communal Electrical Installations in Low-rise Aging Buildings (Program), launched by the Companhia de Electricidade de Macau (CEM) are now underway, the public utility company disclosed yesterday.

During yesterday's TDM radio program, Macau Forum, CEM revealed that it is now surveying around 3,000 old buildings in Macau to single out — through a rating system — those bearing potential safety hazards in their communal electricity systems.

The program, launched in early March 2021, is intended to subsidize concerned property owners to upgrade the time-worn communal electrical installations in the old buildings they are residing in.

The electrical capacity of outmoded communal electrical installations in some old buildings is not sufficient for modern use. The cases necessitate an upgrade, rather than just a renewal, in the system to rectify the chronic issues, Charles Leong, senior manager of CEM Customer Services Department, stressed during a media briefing yesterday.

"Yet upgrading warrants the submission of building plans, which will also require higher legal requirements [for the maintenance projects]," Leong said.

In each project, CEM will fund up to 80% of the overall project costs, whilst the remaining costs will be borne by the property owners.

"The maintenance cost incurred on each involved household is expected to not exceed

MOP3,000," Leong stressed.

According to a statement issued by CEM earlier, the program is projected to fund 150 to 200 buildings and benefit around 3,000 households.

Only resident buildings aged 30 years or above, that have no more than seven storeys and no lifts, and have not received any subsidies related to communal electrical installations from the Housing Bureau (IH) over the past three years, are eligible for the program.

The shareholders of CEM invested MOP30 million into the Program in 2020. CEM will commission third-party contractors to carry out the upgrade projects.

Previously, Macao Water also committed MOP10 million as subsidies for owners residing in buildings aged over 20 years to recondition their water facilities. Forced maintenance will be carried out if the project is not approved from two-thirds of the building's dwellers.

However, Leong said the current operating contract does not give CEM the right to impose maintenance fees into the household's electricity bills. As a result, the company cannot demand an enforced modernization project.

However, a member of the advisory council from the northern district Kou Ngon Fong warned that this is a "ticking-time-bomb" issue, and urged the government to amend the law to empower authorities to oversee the situation.

Some locals also voiced their concerns during the radio program, saying the worn-out electrical system would pose perils to residents, but there is no regulation in place to monitor and enforce the renovation.

PETITION ON E-VOUCHER SCHEME TO PUSH THROUGH THIS SUNDAY

LYNZY VALLES

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) has approved lawmaker Au Kam San's request to protest the consumer e-voucher scheme on Sunday.

The demonstrators will assemble at Tap Seac Square at 3 p.m., and the protest will start at 4 p.m., at which time participants will walk to the Macau Government Headquarters to submit a petition demanding that the criticized scheme be scrapped.

Last Saturday, Au, together with the president of the New Macau Gaming Staff Rights Association, Cloee Chao, gathered at the Border Gate with residents to collect signatures for the petition.

Au previously told the press that by collecting signatures from residents, the government could be urged to improve the scheme.

"The government had reiterated that it aims to help the poor but this method only supports the merchants. The general public cannot receive any help [through this measure]. The government is making a regressive move," he added.

The new stimulus package, since its announcement on March 15, has attracted widespread criticism, mostly on the "spend first; redeem later" e-voucher scheme



having complicated regulations. The MOP5 billion digital voucher scheme, included in the MOP56.87 billion domestic spending facilitation scheme, was described by the general public as complicated, with some noting that it would not benefit those who are underemployed.

Different from the previous electronic consumption voucher schemes launched last year, the forthcoming digital voucher scheme, slated to launch from May to the end of 2021, requires an individual to spend first before being granted an e-voucher.

Local residents, non-resident workers and international students have to spend MOP14,400 between May and December to obtain the MOP4,800 worth of e-voucher coupons, which has a maximum limit of MOP600 per month.

CE PAYS ATTENTION TO OPINIONS

Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng admitted that the government is still unsure of the publicly criticized e-voucher scheme, stressing that it generated different opinions among residents which they will pay attention to.

"We thought that this plan would help Macau. [...] Our purpose is to reach consensus, instead of creating chaos," Ho told the press at the sidelines of the reception ceremony on Tuesday for the new Commissioner of the Ministry of Fo-

reign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macau Special Administrative Region, Liu Xianfa.

However, he admitted that the program has caused a lot of dissatisfaction. The e-voucher scheme, he explained, was designed to boost local consumption rather than be a welfare measure or subsidy for all.

Despite the public criticism, the top official ruled out the use of the first voucher scheme with the use of MacauPass, explaining that, "the consumer card ended a long time ago and going back to the beginning, with zero balance, involves a lot of work. It is not easy."

To gather further opinions from the public regarding the e-voucher proposal, the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, recently met with representatives of community associations, Ho noted.

The government acknowledged some members of the public had commented on several occasions that the e-voucher proposal appeared complicated in terms of the vouchers being used via locally-registered electronic payment platforms, and that the scheme was insufficiently user-friendly.

Also, Ho said that the government noted some senior citizens might not be familiar with e-payment. This resulted in the proposal of the scheme's benefits being made available to them via their "Senior Citizen

Personalised Macau Pass Card."

The launch of the entire 2021 stimulus scheme involved a set of administrative procedures, including submission of law proposals to the Legislative Assembly for approval, the CE clarified.

EXPEDITING CROSS-BOUNDARY TRAVELS

The CE said that the government is in close communication with the health authorities on the mainland in order to expedite measures relating to boundary-crossing facilitation. Such measures would be adopted on a bilateral basis, and some arrangements might require consensus within the community.

Currently, a valid nucleic acid test certificate is still compulsory for boundary-crossing journeys in both directions. Therefore, he explained such a measure was in place because it would take some time to analyse how long it would take for antibodies against the novel coronavirus to be built up in vaccinated individuals. Vaccination schemes in Macau and the mainland were still in the second phase of the two-jab process.

Ho added that the government would keep in close touch with the mainland authorities to review the progress on vaccination and on the situation regarding the pandemic. This was with a view to eventually enable boundary-crossing movement so as to return to pre-pandemic levels.

AD

Acknowledgement

The family of **Aida Rafaela da Rosa de Jesus**, who passed away on 17th March, would like to thank everyone who sent wreaths, donations to church and messages of condolence.

May she RIP

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



MACAO has been recognized as UNESCO-designated Creative City of Gastronomy. To reflect the diversified catering characteristics and rich choices available in Macao, ingredients and seasonings of high quality are the keys to authentic and special cuisine. As the largest integrated resort operator in Macao, Sands China owns a series of feature restaurants at its properties with various cuisines, which all require ingredients and seasonings from all over the world.

AN IDEA THAT TOOK SHAPE

Established in 2017, Ipalate Macau Ltd was among the suppliers that observed the unique need for special ingredients and seasonings in the Macao market. Choi Kam Lun, Ipalate's product development and account manager, explains how his business idea took shape: "In the past, there were few imported Indian ingredients in Macao; the source was mainly from Hong Kong. When we realized the gap in the market, we decided to introduce premium ingredients and seasonings from India. As our business expanded, we increased the num-

Unique users and products make SME stand out

ber of goods to over 50, and explored the mainland market."

Aware of the existence of an Indian restaurant at a Sands China property, Ipalate Macau actively approached Sands and introduced their products and services. Ipalate participated in Sands China's yearly invitational matching session in 2017. The invitational matching sessions are part of Sands China's F.I.T. (Financial Support, Invitational Matching, and Training and Development) programme, which is aimed at continually increasing and strengthening procurement between Sands China and local SME suppliers. During the session, Ipalate Macau's products attracted the attention of Sands China's chefs.

"In the past, Sands China's Indian food ingredients were mainly purchased from Hong Kong and then shipped to Macao, but the delivery was not always timely. After becoming

aware of Ipalate Macau's connections with suppliers in India, we continued to explore their products and samples," said Sands China's procurement and supply chain senior supervisor Alex Mok and assistant manager Bella Pun. The two parties began cooperating in July 2017. At first there was a run-in period as both sides adjusted to delivery times and service requirements. After becoming familiar with the operations, the cooperation progressed smoothly.

Management from Sands China pointed out that it is the professional team and efficient logistics that make Ipalate Macau stand out. "The company has a team who can function in Chinese, English, and Hindi, and can communicate directly and smoothly with Indian suppliers. What's more, the source of goods is directly shipped from India to Macao, saving transportation time and reducing costs."

CHANGE AND CHALLENGE

For Ipalate Macau, working with a large-scale enterprise like Sands China means the SME needs to be sensitive to market changes and adapt quickly. The sales volume increased significantly in 2019. Apart from supplying the Michelin-starred Indian restaurant with Indian products, the SME has been providing more product types.

Choi advised, "Our company started by supplying Indian seasonings and gradually expanded to basmati rice, soybeans, curry powder and other products. Soon after, we reached into the mainland seasoning market in response to Sands China's need for special spices and herbs to supply its new Chinese restaurants." He added, "The monthly order amount grew from between MOP20,000 and MOP30,000 in early 2018 to MOP200,000 in 2019."

Choi revealed that working with Sands China proves the SME's products are well-recognized, which is helpful when expanding cooperation with other companies.

As the year of 2020 witnessed the outbreak of Covid-19, many restaurants in Macao had to stop business during the first half of last year. The demand for ingredients and seasonings dropped sharply. Ipalate Macau, of course, was affected. It was not until the individual visit scheme to Macao gradually resumed in the second

half of 2020 that demand from restaurants started to recover.

The business of food ingredients from the mainland has recovered to approximately 80% of pre-epidemic levels. In terms of Indian food ingredients, transportation has been hindered due to the impact of the epidemic, and India-based employees could not go out to source goods, hence the import of products was suspended. With the support of its mainland business, Ipalate Macau barely managed to maintain its operations. However, their office was relocated from a commercial building to an industrial building to reduce costs.

According to Mok, Sands China understands that it was not easy for SMEs to do business during the epidemic, so it called and communicated with them to understand the needs of its suppliers, assisting SMEs to deal with overstocked inventory and provide financial support, so that SMEs could get through the difficult time.

Both Mok and Pun advised that products with unique users that fulfill unique demands are an advantage for SMEs. Sands China encourages SMEs to take the initiative to contact and provide them with a clear product catalog with detailed product information, including product photos, manufacturer information, and wholesale and product prices.



TRAVEL PRACTITIONERS YEARN FOR GBA TOURISM TO STAY AFLOAT



HONEY TSANG

SOME of Macau's tourism practitioners — especially those who offer outbound trips — have called on the government to introduce Greater Bay Area (GBA) multi-destination travel packages to help them stay afloat.

Some tourism practitioners pointed out that the MOP120 million domestic travel program, part of the third round of stimulus, does not cover the outbound market.

According to a report by TDM, Manuel Iok Pui Ferreira, vice-president of the Associação dos Profissionais da Indústria de Viagens e Turismo de Macau, suggested the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) enter a closer partnership with other cities

in the GBA to launch cross-border tourism packages to further boost the city's tourism industry.

"For instance, is it possible [for the government] to launch tours to Hengqin [soon]?", Ferreira questioned.

The MGTO should draw on the promotional synergy of the city and other GBA cities to create more job opportunities for local outbound tourism operators, he said, but stressed that they should abide by safety protocols to avoid contagion risk.

The domestic travel program, announced by the government in recent days, is intended to encourage locals to undertake domestic trips and support the city's tourism industry. Through the program, a Macau resi-

dent will be granted a subsidy of MOP280 and MOP200 to spend on domestic tours and local accommodation, respectively, from April to December.

Some travel industry professionals applauded the scheme for offering much-needed succor to help drive higher occupancy rates in the local accommodation industry. On the other hand, some criticized it for not being sufficiently inclusive.

According to the latest official data, tourist arrivals to the city stood at 427,122 in February, down 23.3% month-to-month, yet up 173.1% year-on-year.

MGTO's deputy director Cheng Wai Tong told the media yesterday that he is optimistic about a possible upward trend in tourist numbers over the coming months, predicated on the smooth rollout of the vaccination scheme and the largely controlled Covid-19 pandemic situation in China.

CRIME

Man reports loss of HKD340,000 in a cryptocurrency investment scam

RENATO MARQUES

A local man has reported a loss of a total of HKD340,000 in an online cryptocurrency investment scheme, the Judiciary Police (PJ) informed yesterday during the regular joint press conference of the police forces.

The victim told the PJ that he had met a woman at the beginning of December last year through an online dating mobile application and began chatting with this person through social media.

Later, the alleged woman told the man that she had made good profits by investing in cryptocurrency online and suggested for him to invest in the same scheme.

The man agreed to the idea and downloaded the software to invest.

On December 22, the victim contacted the investment app's customer service and invested USD200 (HKD1,580) by remitting the money to a Hong Kong account. However, a few days later, the customer service told him that the money was returned to him but did not provide any fur-

STANISLAW ZARVICHTA



ther explanation.

He then sought more information from the woman who had provided him with the investment opportunity. She told him that the investment was rejected because the amount was too small and asked him to invest at least USD5,000 (HKD39,850).

On January 9, he made the investment as suggested and had reportedly profited from it. This resulted in him deciding to invest about HKD280,000 more.

On February 26, the victim made a final investment of HKD48,000 and, as usual, made the remittance to the

Hong Kong account. But this time the customer service claimed that the money was not received. At the same time, the victim realized that he could no longer login into the investment software.

After several attempts to enquire with the customer service, which used several excuses such as software update to justify the problem, the victim was not able to contact the app service and the alleged woman anymore, making him realize that he had been scammed.

He filed a case with the PJ and reported a total loss amounting to HKD340,000.

46 GRADUATED FROM PROGRAM ORGANIZED BY UM AND SANDS CHINA

HONEY TSANG

TWO cohorts of graduates from the one-year business management diploma program, jointly organized by the University of Macau's (UM) Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) and Sands China Ltd, received their credentials concurrently yesterday.

"Abreast with government's pandemic prevention measures last year, the graduation ceremony of the fifth intake has been suspended and so we are having the graduates of both fifth and sixth intakes of this program here," vice-rector of UM Michael Hui King Man said at yesterday's gra-

duation ceremony.

A total of 46 graduates who enrolled in the fifth (2018-2019) and sixth (2019-2020) intakes (2019-2020) of the program, hailed from various departments at Sands China, such as table games, facilities, and concierge.

Sean McCreery, Sands China's senior vice president of resort operations, attended the ceremony held at the UM.

The program is beneficial to both employees and the company. It was intended to help Sands China's staff to enhance their professional knowledge and nurture their talents, McCreery said.

He stressed that Sands China will conti-

nue to work closely with universities in Macau in a bid to breed more local talents.

"We made friends, we learned solid business knowledge and professional skills that enhanced our work performance and equipped ourselves for career development," one of the graduates Joanna Chao delivered her speech at the ceremony.

In the ceremony, Hui also reaffirms his commitment to constantly promote continuing education in the city.

Founded in 2014, the diploma program has cultivated over 200 graduates. The next program is being planned, and is expected to begin in September 2021.



China bashes US over racism, inequality, pandemic response

CHINA lashed out yesterday at the U.S. over racism, financial inequality and the federal government's response to the coronavirus in an annual report that seeks to counter U.S. accusations of human rights abuses by China's ruling Communist Party.

The report issued by China's Cabinet said the U.S. in 2020 "saw its own epidemic situation go out of control, accompanied by political disorder, inter-ethnic conflicts, and social division."

The document released by the State Council Information Office also highlighted the Jan. 6 insurrectionist attack on the Capitol as well as gun violence and health disparities.

China issues the report each year in response to U.S. criticism of its record on issues such as abuses against minority groups in the western regions of Xinjiang and Tibet and a crackdown on



The recent meeting in Anchorage between top China and U.S. diplomats

opposition voices in Hong Kong.

"To defeat the epidemic requires mutual help, solidarity and cooperation among all countries. However, the United States, which has always considered itself an exception and superior, saw its own epidemic situation go out of control, accompanied by political disorder, inter-ethnic conflicts, and social division," the report

said.

"Vulnerable groups became the biggest victims of the government's reckless response to the epidemic," it said.

The Chinese report is based on open-source material, as opposed to the U.S. document, which is largely drawn from work by diplomats, journalists and human rights activists who cannot always reveal their informa-

tion because of threats of retaliation from the ruling Communist Party.

The report comes after the European Union joined the U.S., Britain and Canada in imposing sanctions on Chinese officials over accusations they abused ethnic minorities. Beijing retaliated by announcing it would penalize four European legislators, a German researcher and European-based rights organization with bans on travelling to Chinese territories or having financial interactions with Chinese institutions.

China has taken an increasingly hard line against any criticism of its domestic politics or what it sees as attempts to impede its rise as a global leader. In recent days it has placed two Canadian citizens on trial in apparent retaliation for Canada's detention of an executive of the telecoms giant Huawei, who is wanted in the U.S. on fraud charges. **MDT/AP**

AIRBNB ASKED TO DROP OLYMPIC TIES OVER RIGHTS ISSUES

AIRBNB Inc. is being asked to drop its sponsorship connections to next year's Beijing's Winter Olympics by a coalition of 150 human-rights campaigners.

The coalition is headed by groups that oppose rights violations in China including the detention of Muslim Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region.

Airbnb is one of the International Olympic Committee's leading 15 sponsors. Included in the group are companies like Coca-Cola, Samsung, Visa, Toyota, Alibaba, Panasonic, Intel, and Procter and Gamble.

Airbnb, the home-sharing business, is being targeted because of repeated claims about the "social responsibility" it practices in its business model.

Associated Press received the open letter

sent this week to Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky. The letter argues that Airbnb is trying to drive tourism in China at the expense of Uyghurs and Tibetans who cannot travel freely in the country.

The top 15 sponsors paid the IOC about \$1 billion in cash or services in the last complete, four-year Olympic cycle, to be associated with the games. Airbnb signed up in November of 2019.

Rights groups are trying to pressure IOC sponsors and are pushing for a diplomatic boycott of the games.

The Beijing Winter Olympics open on Feb. 4, 2022.

China says "political motives" underlie the boycott effort. The Chinese describe the detention camps in Xinjiang as vocational centers. **MDT/AP**

AD



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AP PHOTO



Katherine Tai, a Taiwanese American, was picked by Biden as his top trade envoy

USA

Asian Americans seek greater political power after shootings

WILL WEISSERT & PADMANANDA RAMA, WASHINGTON

SPEAKING on the floor of the Georgia state Senate last week, Michelle Au implored her colleagues to “stand up” to the hatred aimed at Asian Americans that’s increased during the pandemic. A day later, a gunman shook the Atlanta area by killing eight people, including six women of Asian descent.

For Au, who joined the state Senate in January as its first Asian American woman, the attack was a heartbreaking validation of her fears. It’s also spurring her and other Asian Americans to push for greater political influence in Washington and other power centers.

“People in our communities are hungry for representation that looks like them,” Au said in an interview. “I don’t think people can see problems if they haven’t lived it in the past.”

There are at least 160 Asian American and Pacific Islanders in 33 state legislatures nationwide, according to the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies. A whopping 51 of those sit in Hawaii’s legislature. And, out of the 535 members of Congress, just 17 are of Asian or Pacific Islander descent, according to the Congressional Research Service. There are also three nonvoting delegates who are Asian American and Pacific Islanders.

President Joe Biden and his aides have been repeatedly pressed to include Asian Americans in his Cabinet. Yesterday [Ma-

cau time], two Democratic senators, Mazie Hirono of Hawaii and Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, threatened to oppose any upcoming nominees who don’t enhance the administration’s diversity.

“I’ve been talking to them for months and they’re still not aggressive,” Duckworth said. “I’ll be a no on everyone until they figure this out.”

Later, the two senators set aside their blockade after talks with the administration. White House press secretary Jen Psaki announced late Tuesday the addition of a senior-level Asian American Pacific Islander liaison “who will ensure the community’s voice is further represented.”

Biden did pick Katherine Tai, who is Taiwanese American, as his top trade envoy. She was confirmed last week, becoming the only Asian American to hold a Cabinet-level post in the new administration. Vivek Murthy, the son of Indian parents, Biden’s nominee for surgeon general, a sub-Cabinet position, was confirmed Tuesday.

Many Asian Americans say feelings of being marginalized politically will take years to fully overcome. Last week, an emotional congressional hearing cast a national spotlight on combating racism among the community — but major legislation addressing it isn’t likely forthcoming.

“I think symbolism and representation matters, but only up to a point,” said Aarti Kohli, executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice. “What’s more important is actually doing the work.”

There are signs of change.

Kamala Harris, whose mother was born in India, is the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent to become vice president. More than 300 Asian American and Pacific Islanders ran for office up and down the ballot in 2020, according to the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies.

More appear to be preparing campaigns for the future. Madalene Xuan-Trang Mielke, the group’s president and CEO, said her organization recently held a training for people interested in joining municipal and state legislative races and had about 30 attendees. She also encourages members of the community to join local boards and commissions.

“We are subject matter experts in a wide array of industries, and we should have that be a reflection of our democracy by having people like us and others be a part of any sort of public policy conversation,” Mielke said.

Asian Americans are eyeing other major offices across the country.

In New York City, former Democratic presidential candidate Andrew Yang is gaining attention — and campaign cash — in a bid for mayor. And in California, home to the nation’s largest Asian American community, elected officials are urging Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom to appoint an attorney general of Asian descent as a successor to Xavier Becerra, who was picked as Biden’s health and human services secretary.

Still, Stop AAPI Hate, an activist group that formed as shut-downs related to the pandemic

were taking hold across the U.S., had received nearly 4,000 self-reported incidents of bias or discrimination from all 50 states as of last month. And nearly 3 in 10 Asian Americans said they’d been subjected to racial slurs or jokes since the coronavirus outbreak began, according to Pew Research Center data released last summer.

Janelle Wong, the director of the University of Maryland’s Asian American Studies Program, has researched how acts of discrimination can affect political participation. She said such incidents can sometimes alienate members of the affected community — but more often, they increase political activity.

Wong pointed to California’s stringent, Republican-backed anti-immigrant laws of the 1990s that helped mobilize Latinos to vote Democratic and turned the state fiercely blue within a generation. Democrats hope a similar shift may have begun more recently in Arizona.

Wong said the Asian American population began to boom in the mid-1990s with the creation of the H1-B visa program, which made it easier for employers to hire immigrants in specialty professions. Many of those people have now been in the country for more than 20 years, and they, or second-generation immigrant families, are starting to come into their own politically, registering to vote and casting ballots at higher rates.

In November’s election, 70% of Asian American voters supported Biden, according to AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of the electorate. Asian Americans now represent the nation’s fastest-growing ethnic minority, accounting for nearly 5% of eligible voters in last year’s election, according to the Pew Research Center.

U.S. Census data showed that the community had one of the largest increases in voting rates of any group in the 2018 midterm elections as compared with the 2014 midterms, jumping from an estimated 27% of eligible voters who actually voted in 2014 to 40% in 2018. But the largest Asian American communities are still mostly concentrated in non-swing presidential states, which means neither political party has focused significant resources on voter outreach.

“There’s not the same incentive for parties to mobilize them, and it’s much harder because it takes some resources, it takes some attention to outreach and language to understand Asian American issues as well,” Wong said. “Those things all contribute to lower rates of political participation among Asian Americans, but people — mistakenly, I think — assume that Asian Americans are somehow less interested in U.S. civic life.” **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1975 SAUDI’S KING FAISAL ASSASSINATED



King Faisal of Saudi Arabia has died after a gun attack in Riyadh despite the efforts of doctors to save him.

The king was rushed to hospital still alive and doctors massaged his heart and gave him a blood transfusion but they were unable to save him.

King Faisal was fatally wounded when his nephew Prince Faisal bin Musa’ed allegedly fired three bullets at him with a pistol at point blank range during a royal audience.

According to eyewitnesses, Prince Musa’ed was waiting in the ante-room and talking to a Kuwaiti delegation who were waiting to meet the king.

King Faisal had bent forward to kiss his nephew but Prince Musa’ed was reported to have pulled out a pistol and shot him under the chin and then through the ear.

One of the king’s bodyguards hit the prince with his sword, although it was still sheathed.

Oil minister Sheikh Yamani is reported to have shouted to the guard not to kill the prince.

Prince Faisal bin Musa’ed was seized immediately after he attacked his uncle and is being questioned by Saudi police about the assassination.

Doctors and psychiatrists have confirmed that they believe he is “mentally unbalanced”.

Both before and after the assassination Prince Musa’ed was reported to be calm.

Since the killing, Riyadh has closed down completely for three days of mourning.

King Khalid, the brother of the assassinated king, has taken his place by agreement of the Saudi royal family.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Prince Faisal bin Musa’ed was later found guilty of regicide and in June 1975 he was executed for the murder of his uncle King Faisal.

The prince was beheaded in the public square in Riyadh. This is the traditional method of execution in Saudi Arabia under Islamic law.

The prince’s motives are still not clear. There has been speculation that he sought to avenge the death of his elder brother Khalid, who died in a clash with security forces in 1966.

At the time of the assassination there were some conspiracy theories although an investigation later found that Prince Faisal bin Musa’ed acted alone. Prince Musa’ed was declared officially insane, according to a “settlement issued by the royal cabinet” following the assassination of King Faisal.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Finally, peace returns with today's cosmos, Aries! The moon spends the day prowling through playful Leo, focusing your energy on any creative passion projects you've left on the back-burner.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

As a Taurus, part of your life's work is learning not to over-complicate things. Simplicity is restorative, and Thursday's skies gently remind you of that.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

It's easy to slip into a state of mental overload today, Gemini. This is a tendency you're already used to wrestling with, but try to be extra on top of it today to avoid burnout.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

The moon prowls through self-confident Leo, helping you focus your energy on productive action. Luna's meet-up with both erratic Uranus and serious Saturn can make for stifled and unusual social interactions.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Luna's only connection is a meet-up with optimistic Jupiter, which encourages positive, hopeful interactions in one-on-one relationships. It's an ideal day for pampering and nurturing yourself.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

It hasn't been an easy week thus far, Virgo. Fortunately, Thursday's skies are something of a soothing balm for the rough patches you've had to endure.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

This narrative is highlighted today, as the moon meanders through self-confident Leo. Luna's connection to visionary Jupiter helps you feel positive and allows you to dream big with your creative potential.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You're getting closer to your calling, Scorpio. For the time being, you're asked to look deep within before you can enjoy the flourishing fruit above ground.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

The moon roams through fellow fire-sign, enthusiastic Leo, encouraging you to get out of your comfort zone and refresh your perspective through adventure and spontaneity.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Today's skies encourage you to sit with your feelings and reach a deeper understanding. You may feel drawn to shopping and spending to fill the void, but you're better off simply sitting with the reality of your emotions.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

It's not all smooth sailing though, as the moon finds herself encumbered by tough interactions with rebel Uranus and serious Saturn. This stirs up key issues around family needs.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

It's time to plant your feet back on Earth, Pisces. You're primed for self-motivated, productive efforts today, as the moon cruises through self-confident Leo.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

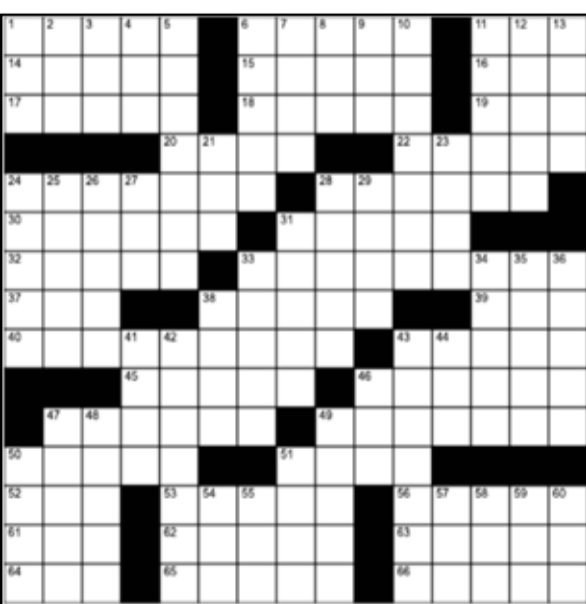
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	6	23	cloudy
Harbin	-1	9	shower
Tianjin	8	23	cloudy
Urumqi	1	11	clear
Xi'an	11	20	overcast
Lhasa	2	15	cloudy
Chengdu	13	18	overcast
Chongqing	15	22	overcast
Kunming	11	26	clear
Nanjing	10	23	clear
Shanghai	10	22	clear
Wuhan	9	24	clear
Hangzhou	9	20	clear
Taipei	14	20	overcast
Guangzhou	16	25	cloudy
Hong Kong	20	25	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-3	3	clear
Frankfurt	2	10	cloudy
Paris	4	15	drizzle
London	4	11	clear
New York	11	13	moderate rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Bogie, e.g.; 6- Make into a statute; 11- Definite article; 14- Connected series of rooms; 15- Shield; 16- Scull; 17- Moor; 18- Prince Valiant's wife; 19- Hydrocarbon ending; 20- Track numbers; 22- "Otello" composer; 24- Overture; 28- Indistinct; 30- Current; 31- Falls short; 32- ... who lived in ...; 33- Dodges; 37- Skater Midori; 38- Posters; 39- Satisfied sound; 40- Cowardly; 43- Code name; 45- With no emotion; 46- Christian festival; 47- House in D.C.; 49- Comfortably familiar; 50- Bar fare; 51- Nabokov novel; 52- Period of human life; 53- Roof overhangs; 56- Peer; 61- Animal pouch; 62- New Brunswick neighbor; 63- Nice days, usually; 64- Concorde, e.g.; 65- Cruising vessel; 66- Immerse;

DOWN: 1- Tree of the olive family; 2- Prompt; 3- Acapulco aunt; 4- Slugger Mel; 5- Give another abode; 6- Elude; 7- Guitarist Lofgren; 8- Peer Gynt's mother; 9- Portable bed; 10- Makes journeys; 11- Start of a saying on forgiveness; 12- Accessible; 13- ... saw Elba; 21- Banned spray; 23- 3:00; 24- Tartan; 25- Dreadlocks wearer; 26- Group character; 27- The Lion; 28- In an inadequate manner; 29- Falsehoods; 31- Young female horse; 33- Move sideways; 34- Third in a series; 35- Stroll; 36- Sex researcher Hite; 38- Londoner, e.g.; 41- Ike's ex; 42- Secondary school; 43- Insanity; 44- Old spy org.; 46- Yalie; 47- Long stories; 48- Chosen; 49- Beginning; 50- Back talk; 51- Phnom ...; 54- Battery size; 55- Singer Damone; 57- Status follower; 58- Burma's first prime minister; 59- Ques. response; 60- Caustic stuff;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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INTERNET

BEIJING CONSIDERS CREATING STATE-BACKED COMPANY TO OVERSEE TECH DATA

CHINA'S government has proposed establishing a joint venture with local technology giants that would oversee the lucrative data they collect from hundreds of millions of consumers, according to people familiar with the matter.

The preliminary plan, which is being led by the People's Bank of China, would mark a significant escalation in regulators' attempts to tighten their grip over the country's internet sector. It envisions the creation of a government-backed entity along with some of China's biggest e-commerce and payments platforms, the people said, asking not to be identified as the discussions are private.

The online firms would be initial shareholders in the joint venture, though top executives would need to be approved by the regulator, the people said. The central bank didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The proposal is among a slate of options being considered to crystallize Beijing's goal of gaining greater control over the data amassed by online behemoths from Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. and Tencent Holdings Ltd. to up-and-comers like ByteDance Ltd. and Meituan. Companies were encouraged this month to open up data in areas from e-commerce to social media to promote healthy development of



the sharing and online economies in a report that outlined the Communist Party's priorities.

One of the key hurdles for such a joint venture would be existing rules around data privacy, which give individuals the right to decide how their information is used, said one of the people. Putting consumer data under the oversight of a company or the government would require changes to the law, the person said.

It's still unclear what the overall scope of the new entity would be, what types of data it would manage and from what sources. A part of the proposal envisions it eventually forming strategic alliances with government-backed institutions to facilitate data sharing, one of the people said, without providing further details.

The Communist Party has recently signaled an intent to tighten its grip over the internet,

e-commerce and digital-finance spheres after decades of adopting a relatively hands-off approach that spawned a generation of billionaires.

With the development of big data analysis and artificial intelligence, the way big tech collects and uses data has become a sensitive issue for the party.

Much like Facebook Inc. or Google, the enormous amounts of information that China's internet

giants Hoover up in real time are key to their bottom lines as well as their ability to innovate and expand. But Beijing has grown increasingly wary of the might of companies such as Alibaba and Tencent and their potential to influence public opinion.

President Xi Jinping warned this month that his government would go after so-called "platform" companies that have amassed increasing power through the data and patronage of hundreds of millions of consumers. The strongly-worded comments signaled China plans to amplify a campaign to curb the influence of its most powerful private corporations, which has so far centered mainly on Jack Ma's Alibaba and its affiliate Ant Group Co.

Xi's comments were the first time he specifically addressed platform economies, though he has previously stressed the importance of preventing monopolies.

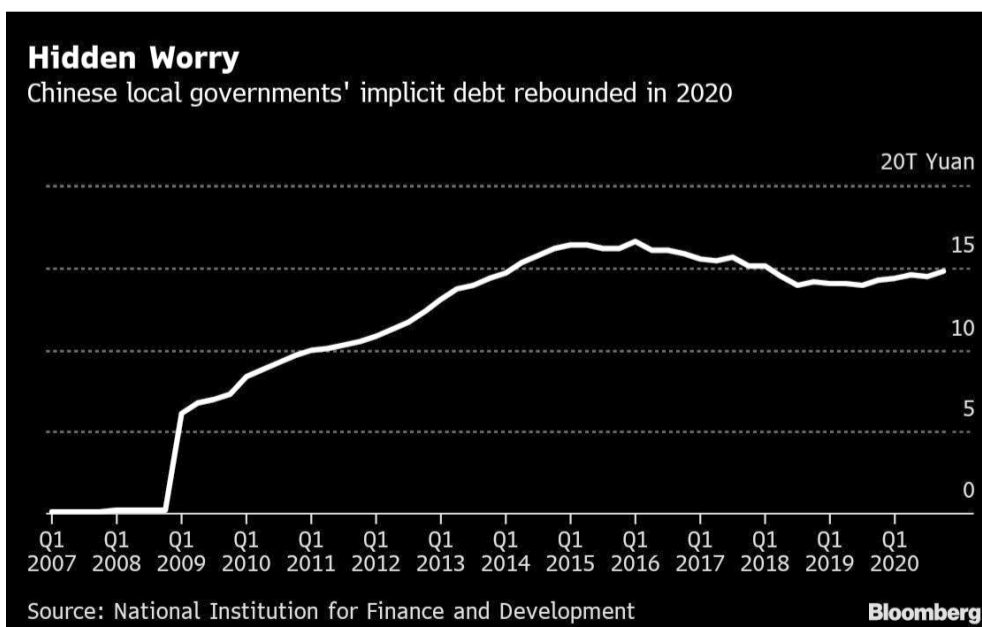
China's efforts to regulate its internet giants coincide with growing global scrutiny over the industry, as governments from the U.S. to the European Union and Australia have clashed with companies including Twitter Inc. and Facebook. That's a testament to how important the industry has become to basic infrastructure and national security. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

China's \$2.3 trillion hidden debt could climb even further

CHINA'S local governments had 14.8 trillion yuan (\$2.3 trillion) of hidden debt last year, and the figure could climb even further this year, according to a government-linked think tank.

Local governments were under pressure to increase infrastructure investment and shore up growth through the pandemic, leading to a 6% rise in off-budget borrowing from a recent low of 13.9 billion yuan in the third quarter of 2019, according to Liu Lei, a senior researcher at the National Institution for Finance and Development.

The hidden debt is comprised of funds raised by government-related entities for infrastructure and other public projects that carry an implicit official guarantee of repayment. Bonds sold by local government financing vehicles, or LGFVs, are one way provincial authori-



ties raise money to increase spending without including it on their official balance sheets.

China has vowed to stabilize its macro leverage ratio and lower the government debt ratio this year to rein in

risks. That could be hard to achieve as on-budget spending can't cover the investment needed to drive the economy's targeted growth by 2035, said Liu, whose organization is under the influential state-run Chinese

Academy of Social Sciences and advises the government.

"Local governments will find ways to increase hidden debt because they are under pressure to expand investment," Liu said in an inter-

view. "In the longer term, the economy still faces lots of headwinds, including an uncertain external environment and an aging population."

China doesn't have an official account of local governments' hidden debt, as it's technically against the law. Estimates by different institutions could vary significantly. One estimate by S&P Global Ratings in 2019 put the size at 20 trillion yuan, while another that same year from Rhodium Group put it at 41.2 trillion to 51.7 trillion yuan.

Liu's calculation includes bonds issued by LGFVs and borrowing by government-linked trust funds, insurers and other investment firms. It doesn't take into account bank loans to LGFVs, which may be used on commercial projects instead of public welfare projects.

Local government will have to repay a record high 2.14 trillion yuan worth of LGFV bonds maturing this year, Bloomberg calculations show.

The hidden debt could have led to more than 700 billion yuan a year in extra interest payments, as such borrowing is more costly to service than government bonds, he said. It also creates risks to the stability of China's financial system, as all kinds of financial institutions - including banks, brokerages and trust funds - have bought the debt, Liu added.

Last year's increase came after debt declined from a peak of 16.6 trillion yuan in 2016, as authorities transformed some of the borrowing into government bonds and moved them onto official balance sheets. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

FIGURE SKATING

US team stronger than most for recent world events

MULTIPLE medals at the World Figure Skating Championships are rare for the United States. This year's team could reverse that trend.

And there couldn't be a better time than in a pre-Olympic season.

Two-time defending champion Nathan Chen and fellow American Vincent Zhou both made the podium in 2019, the last time worlds were held. Madison Hubbell and Zach Donohue collected bronze in ice dance.

U.S. skaters have a strong chance of exceeding that total in Stockholm this week, maybe even with a possible women's medal considering the improvement by two-time national champ Bradie Tennell and some uncertainty about the normally dominant Russians. The last U.S. medal in women's competition was Ashley Wagner's silver in 2016.



Nathan Chen of the USA performs during a practice session at the Figure Skating World Championships in Stockholm

"As most skating fans know, the ladies event is all about the talent of Russia and Japan," says Johnny Weir, a three-time U.S. champion and now NBC's

analyst, along with 1998 Olympics winner Tara Lipinski. "The most important thing for Bradie Tennell and Karen Chen to do is to finish as high as possible so

Team USA might get three spots at the Olympics next February. Both U.S. ladies are impeccable in so many ways: Bradie Tennell has brilliant consistency and poise under pressure, where Karen skates with such beauty and flow. But challenging for the podium will be tough."

Not impossible, Lipinski believes.

"Going into worlds last year," she says of the Montreal event canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic, "it really looked like it was going to be a Russian podium sweep. This year, there is a little more room at the top. Japan has a solid chance at the podium with Rika Kihira. But my prediction for the gold is Anna Shcherbakova with her incredible consistency and tenacity she's shown throughout this season. As for the American ladies, Bradie Tennell is in peak form and I think she will have her best worlds result to date."

The two biggest rivalries,

friendly as they are, will involve Americans. Chen and two-time Olympic gold medalist Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan stand (and leap) high above the rest of the men's field, with Zhou in solid shape for a bronze. Hubbell and Donohue figure to be tested by Madison Chock and Evan Bates, with whom they have swapped U.S. titles in recent years.

"We have been waiting for this showdown between Hanyu and Chen for quite a while now," says Weir, who along with Lipinski and Terry Gannon will call the event from the NBC Sports studios in Connecticut, with coverage on the main network, NBCSN and the Peacock streaming service. "It's 12 months later than expected but nonetheless I expect it to be epic."

"I am excited to see Vincent compete as he tries to regain another world medal. He looked superb at nationals and is on the ascent. I wouldn't be surprised to see a set of statement-making performances from him."

The U.S. ice dancers should benefit from the absence of France's Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron, who have won four world crowns. Hubbell and Donohue edged Chock and Bates in January at nationals, reversing the finish for each couple in 2019. **MDT/AP**

AD



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Speaker: Ms Ruby O, Sustainability and ESG Professional

FMCC Breakfast Meeting
Wednesday, 31 March 2021



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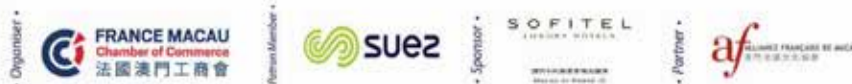
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- * Breakfast included

Date: **Wednesday, 31 March, 2021**

Time: **9:00a.m. - 10:30a.m.** (Reception: 8:45am)

Venue: **Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16**
Baccara Ballroom, 6th floor



OPINION

World Views

Rhonda Vonshay Sharpe, MDT/Bloomberg



**WHEN IS EQUAL PAY DAY
 FOR WHITE WOMEN?**

Every year, the American Association for University Women marks Equal Pay Day, illustrating how far into the new year women would have to work to make as much as men did the previous year. Today is the day for “all” women. March 9 was the day for Asian American and Pacific Islander women. African American women, Native American women and Latinas will have their days on August 3, September 8 and October 2, respectively.

Yet the AAUW doesn't feature an equal pay day for White women. Therein lies a broader problem with the way demographic data are collected and reported.

Women are not just women. They also come in a variety of races, ethnicities, marital statuses, education levels and more, all of which intersect. Reporting and analyzing the data in all its complexity is crucial to understanding what is driving outcomes, and what can be done to change them.

Most commonly, “women” is assumed to be synonymous with White women. All too often, I find myself participating in programs and gatherings dedicated to “women and minorities,” as if the former were only White and the latter weren't women. Such aggregation marginalizes all those with intersectional identities, erasing their lived experiences. This is particularly problematic in a rapidly diversifying country, where increasing shares of the population identify as Asian, Black, Native American, Hispanic — or fall into catch-all categories such as “multiracial” or “other.”

The way data are presented has consequences for White women, too, as Equal Pay Day demonstrates. How can they know where they stand if they are lumped into the “all” category? The failure to disaggregate denies them knowledge about their position relative to men and other women. It denies them information about how gender operates to oppress them and about how their whiteness provides benefits. It denies them the opportunity to see themselves in the data.

There's reason to hope that the Biden administration will improve the situation. It has taken a first step in two executive orders — one that establishes a White House Gender Policy Council, and another that seeks to “advance racial equity and support for underserved communities.” An ambitious next step would be to require all gender-equity research produced by federal offices and recipients of federal funds to disaggregate data by the characteristics believed to influence outcomes, not just by race and ethnicity intersected with gender. This would help unmask subtleties, leading to more effective public policy.

Consider how greater disaggregation could improve research on pay inequality. The AAUW laments the low relative pay of Black women. But to understand the causes, one must know more. Does the average obscure particularly low pay for Black women who did not complete high school? How about women who are both Black and Hispanic? Or Black mothers? A significant body of research — by Nina Banks, Janelle Jones and Valerie Wilson, Sarah Jane Glynn, and Jane Waldfogel — has found that race, ethnicity and marital status affect women's pay. In a forthcoming book, Michelle Holder finds that Black Latinas received lower pay — that is, outcomes are not homogenous within ethnicity.

I want to see myself in the data. Not just me, the Black woman. All of me: Black (#ADOS), highly educated, never married, no children, property owner. Done right, disaggregation allows for intersectional analysis, a theoretical framework for understanding how the complex interplay among various identities influences economic, educational and social outcomes. This, in turn, would enable entities such as the Gender Policy Council to achieve their goals. To that end, the administration needs to hold policy makers and researchers accountable. People must hold the administration accountable. People must be accountable.

So today, as we recognize the pay inequities that women endure, let's keep in mind that the word “women” includes a great diversity of lived experiences — differences that must be understood if we want to address the problem.

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu could struggle to secure enough seats in parliament to stay in power, incomplete results from Tuesday's election show.

With almost 90% of votes counted, his right-wing bloc is on course to win 59 seats - two short of the threshold, BBC reported.

In a surprise development, an Arab party which is projected to get five seats could hold the balance of power.

The final outcome will among other things determine the course of Israel's relations with the Palestinians.

The Arab party, Raam, has not declared whether it will support the efforts of Netanyahu - an unnatural ally - to form a governing coalition or those of the bloc of parties opposed to him remaining in office.

They are projected to win 56 seats, according to the latest tally, and although backing from Raam could give them a majority, they are fragmented and unlikely to be able to agree to work together.

If neither bloc succeeds, the country could face its fifth election since 2019.

AP PHOTO



**WHITE HOUSE: NORTH
 KOREA CONDUCTED
 SHORT-RANGE MISSILE TEST**

AAMER MADHANI,
 WASHINGTON

North Korea fired short-range missiles this past weekend, just days after the sister of Kim Jong Un threatened the United States and South Korea for holding joint military exercises.

The missile tests were confirmed by two senior Biden administration officials who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity. They come as North Korea has ignored offers from the new administration to resume negotiations, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken last week pressed China to use its “tremendous influence” to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear program.

The officials, however, sought to downplay the significance of the missile tests, noting that they are not covered by U.N. Security Council resolutions meant to deter North Korea from pursuing a nuclear program.

Biden himself told reporters the missile tests were not a provocation. “There's no new wrinkle in what they did,” he said.

South Korea's military said in a statement yesterday that it had detected two suspected cruise missile launches by North Ko-

rea on Sunday morning. It said the launches were made off North Korea's west coast and said South Korea is analyzing them.

The statement said South Korea is closely monitoring North Korean missile activities in cooperation with the United States, but noted it doesn't publicize all its information about North Korea.

South Korean lawmaker Ha Tae-keung said in a Facebook posting that he was told by agency officials from Seoul's spy agency that the North fired two cruise missiles off its western seaport of Nampo around 6:36 a.m. Sunday. Ha, an executive secretary of the National Assembly's intelligence committee, which regularly receives closed-door briefings from the spy agency, said he was told that the U.S. and South Korean militaries had detected the launches but had agreed not to publicize them.

The Biden administration has been open about its desire to engage the North in negotiations even as the regime has batted away calls for the two nations to talk. In North Korea's first comments directed at the Biden administration, the North Korean leader Kim's powerful sister earlier this month warned the United

States to “refrain from causing a stink” if it wants to “sleep in peace” for the next four years.

Kim Yo Jong's statement was issued as Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived in Asia to talk with U.S. allies Japan and South Korea about North Korea and other regional issues.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said Sunday's launches were North Korea's first missile firings since April 2020. U.N. Security Council resolutions ban North Korea from engaging in any ballistic activities, but not cruise missile tests. Cruise missiles fly at a lower altitude and slower speed than ballistic missiles, making them easier to intercept, but they are still considered more accurate.

Relations between the U.S. and North Korea, once hailed as potentially promising after President Donald Trump's three meetings with Kim, have been tense with no substantive contact for more than a year.

The last face-to-face talks between senior officials from the two countries were held in October 2019 and efforts by the Biden administration to resume a dialogue have been rebuffed since February. **MDT/AP**

Pakistan's top health official said his country will purchase 1 million doses of China's Sinopharm vaccine and 60,000 doses of the vaccine made by Chinese company CanSino Biologics. Faisal Sultan, a special assistant to the prime minister, said on Twitter that an order has been placed for the purchase of Chinese-made vaccines which will be delivered to Pakistan within days.

AP PHOTO



Russia Three members of a bomber's air crew died when their ejection seats accidentally activated during preflight checks, the military said. The Russian Defense Ministry said the incident happened at an airbase in the Kaluga region, about 145 kilometers southwest of Moscow. The ministry said the altitude wasn't enough for the parachutes to open and three of the four crew members died of injuries.

AP PHOTO



Egypt A skyscraper-sized container ship has become wedged across the Suez Canal and blocked all traffic in the vital waterway, threatening to disrupt a global shipping system already strained by the coronavirus pandemic. Images showed the ship's bow was touching the eastern wall, while its stern looked lodged against the western wall.

AP PHOTO



Germany Chancellor Angela Merkel dropped plans for a five-day shutdown over Easter, which had prompted confusion and criticism. She called the idea a mistake and apologized to Germans. Merkel announced the decision after calling a hastily arranged videoconference on with Germany's 16 state governors, who are responsible for imposing and lifting restrictions