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**MGTO INTENDS TO FORGE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL ENTERPRISES TO AUGMENT MACAU'S OVERALL TRAVEL EXPERIENCE: SENNA FERNANDES** P5

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**ECONOMY CHIEF CLAIMS LACK OF SPACE IS HINDERING MACAU DEVELOPMENT, POINTS HENGQIN AS THE ONLY OPTION: AL PLENARY** P4

**Taiwan** The president of the Pacific island nation of Palau was visiting Taiwan yesterday along with the U.S. ambassador to his country, a show of solidarity as China increases diplomatic, economic and military pressure on Taiwan. China has banned its citizens from visiting Palau, but Taiwan has responded by introducing a travel bubble between the two.  
More on p8



**North Korea** called South Korea's president "a parrot raised by America" yesterday, resuming its trademark derisive rhetoric against its rivals amid renewed animosities on the Korean Peninsula. Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, issued the latest verbal salvo after South Korean President Moon Jae-in criticized the North's missile launches last week. She said Moon's "illogical and brazen-faced" comments echoed the U.S. stance.

**Thailand's** prime minister denied yesterday that his country's security forces forced villagers back to Myanmar who had fled from military airstrikes, saying they returned home on their own accord. Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, nevertheless, said his country is ready to shelter anyone who is escaping fighting, as it has done many times in recent decades.



**Afghanistan** Attackers yesterday gunned down three women working to administer the anti-polio vaccine, officials said, a day after authorities launched a new campaign against the crippling children's disease. The women were killed in two separate attacks in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province.  
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# XI FINALIZES HONG KONG ELECTION CHANGES, CEMENTING CHINA CONTROL

P3,10



## HO IAT SENG REAFFIRMS IMPORTANCE OF SAFE ELECTION THIS YEAR

P3



## CHINA'S VACCINATION PLAN COULD LIFT GDP GROWTH TO 9.3%

P7

## G2E ASIA ONLINE EXPO TO CONVENE ON MAY 25

HONEY TSANG

**G**LOBAL Gaming Expo (G2E) Asia — considered to be a key annual casino fair for Asia's gaming and entertainment industry — has made up lost ground and is set to convene an online Expo & Conference, aimed at helping global industry professionals to transcend travel restrictions and showcase their products and network digitally on May 25.

The online event, titled G2E Asia Online Expo & Conference, will focus on the iGaming sector. It will function as a lead-off activity for the forthcoming in-person event, scheduled to take place at The Venetian Macao from August 17-19.

"This [G2E Asia Online Expo & Conference] will serve as an engagement opportunity as the industry gets ready for an exciting return to Macau with G2E Asia taking place in August 2021," the official website states.

The digital conference will serve as a one-stop platform for industry professionals to market themselves, build fresh connections, and keep tabs on up-to-date global gaming trends.

G2E Asia, traditionally held yearly in Macau in May, was postponed twice last year due to Covid-19 — first to July 2020; then to December 2020 — before the organizers Reed Exhibitions and the American Gaming Association announced its full cancellation in August last year.

"We look forward to bringing the gaming community together at G2E Asia, as the industry continues to recover from the devastating impacts of Covid-19," Josephine Lee, chief operating officer of Reed Exhibitions China said previously.

G2E Asia made its first appearance in Macau at the Macau Tower in 2007.

# EDUCATION OFFICIALS RECEIVE BRIEFING ON YOUTH APPS

ANTHONY LAM

**M**ACAU'S education officials, among other social icons, have been briefed about which mobile apps are currently popular among the younger generations, officials from the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) revealed yesterday after a Youth Affairs Committee plenary.

They were introduced to such apps by Lee Kwok Hoo, Director of the Macau Social Services Office of the Sheng Kung Hui (SKH); Un Lai Mui; SKH's Service Coordinator and Iao Meng Lei, SKH's Social Worker. The entity is an organizational member of the Committee.

However, the officials refrained from revealing what those apps are.

Cheong Man Fai, Chief of the Youth Department of the DSEDJ, admitted that the use of mobile apps to make new friends is inevitable in today's world. However, she stressed that these apps may pose risks to young people because there may be incorrect values or traps associated with the apps.

The comment aligns with the opinion of one of her superintendents, Secretary for Social Affairs



and Culture, Elsie Ao Jeong U, who replied to lawmaker Sulu Sou's spoken inquiry on Monday regarding youths obtaining negative views, values and opinions on the Internet.

Some members of the Committee demanded that the SKH steps up its work in this respect.

The representatives from the SKH also discussed and exchanged opinions with members on promoting the development of young people's physical and mental health.

The members expressed that they paid close attention to the development of youths' mental

and physical health and hoped to bring together the strengths of the various social sectors in order to safeguard their well-being.

Wong Ka Ki, Chief of the Department of Non-Higher Education of the DSEDJ, expressed hope that services can be more appropriate, with conversations involving frontline workers and the policies and training programs set forth afterwards.

Subsequently, Wong presented work related to the "Working group for monitoring the mental and physical health of young people - Transporting love." This working group was founded

in January 2021 in the hopes of achieving a mechanism for joint collaboration in prevention, control and action, to provide joint support for spiritual development among youths.

At the press conference following the committee plenary, the official refrained from going into detail on the topics that were discussed. So far, with regards to young people's psychological needs, the DSEDJ relies on non-government organizations' efforts, including the Caritas Macau's Life Hotline, as well as the SKH.

On the other hand, the DSEDJ will focus on policy making, including the injection of life education into the curriculum in the hopes of disseminating self-caring values. Cross-departmental administration, according to the DSEDJ officials, is also a priority.

Lao Wan Seong, Deputy Commander-General of the Unitary Police Services (SPU), presented on the public recruitment of civil protection volunteers. Lao said that the SPU is recruiting between March 29 and April 27 for 80 vacancies in supplementary civil protection work. Locals aged between 18 and 55 years are eligible to apply.

## MGTO to partner with local enterprises to foster tourism

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is intending to forge a tighter partnership with local enterprises and co-create a diverse range of tourism offerings and products to augment Macau's overall travel experience, director of MGTO Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said.

The proposed endeavor will be consistent with the "Tourism+" concept — which is a strategic focus of merging the city's tourism industry with other sectors in order to foster the development of Macau's tourism and economy.

"Tourism intrinsically is a highly compatible industry, which can be blended into many other elements [or industries]," Fer-



nandes said in an interview with TDM earlier.

Fernandes also called on the local creative and arts industry to capitalize on Macau's distinctive

cultural elements and transform them into innovative tourism offerings to intrigue global tourists.

The MGTO has been collaborating with many local brands

or products, such as local-branded beer.

The novel "Tourism+" strategy was first announced by Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong in November last year.

In the annual media briefing held in February this year, which outlined the MGTO's work plans for the year, the MGTO confirmed that "deepening 'Tourism+' cross-sector integration" would be one of its five goals in 2021.

The authorities from the MGTO will hone in on tightening the integration between tourism and several focus industries, such as culture and creativity, e-commerce, sports, the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) sectors, and so on.

The blending with other industries is to "promote extensive growth of the tourism industry chain," and enhance the competitiveness of Macau tourism industry, an official statement states.

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# China sharply reduces elected seats in Hong Kong legislature

**C**HINA has sharply reduced the number of directly elected seats in Hong Kong's legislature in a setback for the territory's already beleaguered democracy movement.

The changes were announced yesterday after a two-day meeting of China's top legislature.

The legislature will be expanded to 90 seats, and only 20 will be elected by the public. Currently, half of the 70-seat legislature — 35 seats — is directly elected.

The move is part of a two-phase effort to rein in political protest and opposition in Hong Kong. China imposed a national security law on Hong Kong last year and is following up this year with a revamp of the electoral process.

The crackdown comes in the wake of months of pro-democracy protests in 2019 that brought hundreds of thousands to the streets and turned violent as the government resisted the movement's demands.

China's top legislature, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, amended Hong Kong's constitution to pave the way for the changes. The Hong Kong government is now tasked with revising its electoral laws and holding an election.

In the current 70-member legislature, voters elect half the members and the other half are chosen by constituencies representing various professions and interest groups. Many of the constituencies lean pro-Beijing, ensuring that wing a majority in the legislature.

The new body will have 20 elected members, 30 chosen by the constituencies and 40 by an Elec-



From left: HK Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, Chief Executive Carrie Lam and permanent Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Roy Tang

tion Committee which also chooses the city's leader.

The committee, which will be expanded from 1,200 to 1,500 members, is dominated by supporters of the central government in Beijing.

Election hopefuls will undergo vetting by the national security police and a committee that oversees national security in the city.

A new separate body will also be established to review the qualifications of candidates for office in Hong Kong to ensure the city is governed by "patriots," in the language of the central government.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said at a news conference yesterday that the new committee to vet candidates will consist of a few government officials who are also trusted by the central government.

Lam dismissed concerns that the changes will affect plans for the city to achieve universal suffrage and allow residents to vote

for their leader.

"I may as well say this very categorically that the central government is very sincere to give Hong Kong people so-called more democracy, that is, universal suffrage," Lam said.

She blamed pro-democracy lawmakers for objecting in 2014 to a proposal that would have allowed residents to vote for the chief executive on the condition that Beijing

would vet the candidates.

"It's a very sad day for Hong Kong. The election system is completely dismantled," said former lawmaker and Democratic Party member Emily Lau.

"They are going to get rid of opposition voices because under this new system ... I don't think any self-respecting individual will want to take part," Lau said. **MDT/AGENCIES**

## FULL SUPPORT FROM MACAU AUTHORITIES

**BOTH** of the Macau SAR government and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau Special Administrative Region yesterday released statements to express their full support for the passage of amendments to Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. According to the release published by the government, the approved amendment can "safeguard [the]

prosperity and stability of Hong Kong in the long run."

The Macau SAR government will work strictly in line with the principle of "One Country, Two Systems" and ensure the firm implementation of the principle of "patriots governing Macau."

It also pledges to ensure that the Legislative Assembly Election, scheduled on September 12 this year, proceeds safely.

## HEALTH BUREAU TO RETAIN ESSENTIAL SERVICES DURING EASTER HOLIDAY

During the Easter holiday between April 2 and 6, the Health Bureau will retain regular services at the A&E Department, as well as regular Covid-19 vaccination services at the government hospital and all Health Centers, which will also provide flu jabs in the morning. The Coloane Health Center will provide on-call medical services. The Blood Transfusion Service will take holidays from April 2 to 4. Nucleic acid testing services will remain regular at the government hospital.

## VEHICLE OWNERS SHOULD PAY CIRCULATION TAX BY TONIGHT TO AVOID FINE

The payment period for the annual Vehicle Circulation Tax is set to end today. Owners are reminded to make timely payment to avoid getting fined. As of Monday, over 20,000 cars still had their taxes unpaid. Owners are encouraged to make payment online at the Transport Bureau's website by 6pm, or at over 120 bank outlets or 25 government e-kiosks across the city. Government Service Offices, Post Offices, and the Financial Service Bureau counters are also providing the service.

## MACAU SEES 17% YOY REDUCTION IN CARGO EXPORTS IN FEBRUARY

Macau's cargo export in February totaled MOP730 million in value, down 17% year-on-year (YoY). It saw a value of MOP640 million in re-exports, down 21% YoY. Casino-related merchandise saw the greatest decrease of 87%. Local product exportation rose by 30% to about MOP91 million. Imports, meanwhile, doubled to MOP776 million. The trade deficit in February amounted to about MOP7 billion. In the first two months of 2021, the Mainland remained Macau's top import origin location, while Hong Kong was the top export destination.

# CE reiterates importance of safe election this year

**T**HE government must ensure that the Legislative Assembly (AL) elections, scheduled for September this year, will run smoothly, Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng reiterated during the first plenary of the year of the National Security Defense Commission. Ho is also the president of the Commission.

At various occasions prior to this, including some taking place in the country's capital city, the head of the Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government has reiterated the importance of ensuring a safe election that is not influenced by ex-



ternal powers.

Ho remarked that the uncertainty regarding the global environment caused by the pandemic and its consequences has shown that the impacts and non-traditional threats in the area of security are no less damaging than tra-

ditional areas.

Ho also warned that such concerns may even undermine the national security in the traditional context. Therefore, the SAR must firmly pursue the general concept of national security, as presented by President Xi Jinping.

Vice-President of the Commission and Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, and members, Secretary for Administration and Justice, Cheong Weng Chon, and Director of the Judiciary Police, Sit Chong Meng, reported on the most up-to-date work and complementary

legislation related to the defense of National Security, as well as the state of operation of the national security defense enforcement bodies.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the CE identified several risks and challenges that could affect general security, as well as giving members important guidance in relation to this year's work, such as ensuring that the new enforcement entities for the defense of National Security come into full operation by the year's end and make progress in complementary legislation in the area of National Security. **AL**

# GOV'T HAS NO SOLUTIONS FOR REPATRIATION AND HIRING OF TNRS

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE government has no other solutions for the resolution of the problems related to the number of former non-resident workers (TNR) currently stranded in Macau due to Covid-19.

This acknowledgment was made by the lawmakers at the Legislative Assembly (AL), where the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, yesterday replied to inquiries on several topics.

The topic raised by lawmakers Chan Hong and Wong Kit Cheng was namely the continuation of problems related to the stranded TNRs and the difficulties in hiring of new TNRs, particularly for domestic work.

Lei could not provide any new solution from the government side other than the ones previously known, which involve the repatriation of the stranded workers to their countries.

"The government has been providing help in finding repatriation flights for these workers, so they can return to their countries," Lei said, adding that the city's Civil Aviation Authority has been working on this matter.

For the hiring of new workers, mostly for domestic work, the Secretary said that families must resort to hiring workers from the mainland.

Such responses did not please the lawmakers who grilled the Secretary and other government officials present at the AL.

The lawmakers wanted to hear the position of the government on the possibility of either amen-



ding the recently approved law for hiring non-resident workers or the establishment of extraordinary measures that could circumvent it to solve the problems.

Helping give replies from the government side, the representative from the Public Security Police Force (PSP) said, "At the time when the law [for the hiring of TNRs] was approved, it did not consider any provision that allowed any exceptions," a fact that led the official to conclude, "We have no grounds to support extraordinary measures." He noted that the PSP is adopting an exception system that allows the stranded former workers as well as tourists to renew their visas to stay in Macau until a solution for their exit from Macau can be found.

According to the same representative from the PSP, "a total

of 41 repatriation flights [organized] helped over 4,000 people stranded in Macau to return to their countries." He further noted that the majority of the requests came from people from the Philippines, Myanmar, and Vietnam.

According to lawmaker Chan, there are still more than 1,000 people in Macau stranded in a situation that can pose serious risks to themselves as well as to society, as "these people have no income, no means of sustainable livelihoods. They can only dedicate themselves to illegal work or criminal activities to survive."

Addressing the rules recently enforced by the mainland authorities that could open slightly the door to help on this problem, lawmaker Wong noted that it is impossible for any of the stranded workers to comply with the requirements to obtain a visa

for the mainland, since with the cancellation of their "blue cards," their status as workers, were revoked and so they cannot even be vaccinated against Covid-19 with the Chinese vaccine.

"Not even [if they are] paying [for the vaccines] can they get vaccinated. The government and the health authorities have not even considered this possibility," Wong said, adding that there is a clear and obvious lack of communication and cooperation between different government departments contributing to the deadlock of the issue.

Sulu Sou, Agnes Lam, Song Pek Kei, Angela Leong, Mak Soi Kun, José Pereira Coutinho, Ip Sio Kai, Ella Lei, Zheng Anting, and Wang Sio Man were some of the lawmakers that joined in on the discussion, all in favor of the need for the government to find a fast

and efficient solution to this problem.

Assuming that their vote contributed to the approval of the law that is currently in force, the lawmakers called on the government to state clearly their position about what can be done to change the situation.

On this topic, Sou said, "I never thought that the government would be so stubborn [in not acting on this problem]. I always thought that with some administrative procedure things could be done," he said.

Sou's point was complemented by Song, who added, "We are in a dilemma. The AL approved [the law] but now due to its limitations the government cannot do anything. What are we going to do about it? Just wait? This cannot be the only possible solution. Something must be done!" she said, adding that the solution given by the Secretary of hiring mainland domestic workers is unacceptable.

"We know that TNRs from the mainland can't solve the problem of the local families. The salaries are much higher [than those from South Asian countries]. They need to pay at least 7,000 to 8,000 [patacas] and families can't support those expenses, especially now," she said.

Lam also said, "There are no [domestic workers from the mainland] wishing to come to Macau. We have this experience from the employment agencies that have no offer. If it's needed [we should] revise the law. I hope the government can admit that and express that will. We hope that we can find effective measures that can help the families and I hope the government clearly marks its position."

Despite the many positions in favor of a solution, Lei could not advance anything regarding the intentions of the government.

# Hengqin as solution to Macau's limited space: Economy chief

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE lack of land resources in Macau is curtailing Macau's economic development, the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, said in a reply to a lawmaker inquiry at the Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday.

"The lack of space is the element that is stopping our development," Lei said in a reply to lawmaker Au Kam San, who was questioning the high investments being made by the local government on Hengqin Island.

According to the Secretary, Macau's land resources and space are very li-

imited and that is why the government must resort to regional cooperation to diversify the economy. He also noted that the participation from Macau in the development of Hengqin is not only an expectation of the central government but is also in line with the local government policies that aim at "a bilateral business model."

Lei said that in this field, Macau has received requests from the medicine and logistics sectors seeking land-space in Hengqin to develop their businesses.

Lei also replied to Au that one of the main factors taken into account in the approval of requests

for land in Hengqin is precisely the contribution that such industry or economic activity will have for the development of Macau and, further, how linked the company is with the SAR, noting that the government will continue to pursue such goals.

However, Au was criticizing the idea of using 400 billion patacas of government resources to develop an area located outside of Macau's territory and of which "we can't perceive what are the real benefits."

Au commented that such money would be channeled out of Macau and out of reach from Macau's laws and regulations,

adding, "our rules do not apply for the companies based outside Macau."

The lawmaker said that, in his opinion, the government should work harder at finding "at least one" of those projects that can be implemented in Macau to effectively be under the scope of the local authorities and be able to contribute to the creation of jobs locally.

Responding to Au's opinion, Lei insisted that the collaboration with the neighboring city of Zhuhai in Hengqin "is giving us opportunities," adding that in the future, the government will develop policies regarding the movement of capital across the border.



# MGM hosted Two Sessions explanatory event to educate staff

HONEY TSANG

**F**OLLOWING the conclusion of the Two Sessions, MGM China Holdings Limited (MGM) earlier hosted a "Sharing Session on National People's Congress (NPC) and National Political Consultative Conference" to help its staff keep abreast of China's development.

According to the group's statement released on March 29, the event, which took place at MGM Cotai, was part of the group's National Education Series.

MGM invited the city's big names from local alliances and unions to expound on major policies set out at the "Two Sessions." The speakers gave in-depth insights into the impact of these directions on the city's economy.

Chui Sai Peng, a member of NPC, deputy delegation leader of Macau's NPC delegation, and a member of the Legislative Assembly of Macau, was among the speakers at the event. He said the Two Sessions brought out new concepts designed to foster the development of the city, including Macau's development of



Chinese medicine, financial services and high-tech industries, and more.

Chui said Macau should proactively explore and grasp every opportunity. It is also essential for Macau to support the nation's policies and stay innovative, he said.

Ho Sut Heng, a member of NPC and President of Macau Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM), said that China has focused on high-quality development in the future. She suggested that Macau enhance its competitiveness across different aspects and push forward with works regarding economic diversification.

Ho Teng Iat, Deputy Director

of the Committee for Liaison with Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Overseas Chinese under the National Committee of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a member of the Standing Committee of the All-China Women's Federation and President of the Women's General Association of Macau, called on the women in Macau to grasp opportunities brought about by the 14th Five-Year Plan.

Ho's remarks came after President Xi Jinping said earlier that the nation's women should be builders of great causes, advocates of civilization and go-getters who dare to realize their dreams.

"Our nation has embarked on a new journey to reach the second centenary goal, which coincides with the momentous post-pandemic economic recovery. MGM will join hands with team members to align with the nation's development directions, and we pledge to contribute by making the best of our resources," Pansy Ho, Co-chairperson & Executive Director of MGM, affirmed.

The event was also attended by Zuo Xianghua, Deputy Director General of Economic Affairs Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau SAR, and key members of MGM.

## GRAND LISBOA PALACE TO OPEN IN H1 2021, ANGELA LEONG CONFIRMS

HONEY TSANG

**G**RAND Lisboa Palace (GLP) is slated to open in the first half of 2021 as scheduled, Angela Leong On Kei, executive director and co-chairman of SJM Holdings Ltd, confirmed on the sidelines of an event hosted by the group on Monday.

When addressing the media, Leong called on the SAR government and travel industry to step up efforts in promoting Macau in a bid to draw more visitors into the city.

The HKD39 billion GLP, which marks the group's first venture on the Cotai Strip, was originally scheduled to open in the first quarter of this year but was pushed back to the second quarter.

Earlier, JP Morgan said it is forecasting an opening of GLP around the May-June period.

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# YOUTUBE REFUSES TO REMOVE ANTI-ASIAN SONG, DRAWING STAFF IRE

NICO GRANT

**YOUTUBE'S** refusal to remove a song some employees find racist to people of Asian origin has caused a fracas inside the company, the latest clash in a growing national debate about anti-Asian hate.

Workers at Google's YouTube recently posted on internal message boards to criticize executives who decided against taking down videos featuring the rap song "Meet the Flockers," which debuted in 2014 from recording artist YG. The track, about a burglary, includes lyrics that encourage the targeting of neighborhoods where Chinese people live.

Over the past year, there's been a surge in violence against members of Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities, culminating in the fatal shooting of eight people, including six Asian-American women, at three Atlanta area spas on March 16.

The disagreement over "Meet the Flockers" began when some YouTube employees asked the company's Trust & Safety team to purge the song from the video platform. An executive from that



department, and another content policy leader, denied the request in an email to staff on March 22.

"We find this video to be highly offensive and understand it is painful for many to watch, including many in Trust & Safety and especially given the ongoing violence against the Asian community," the executives wrote. While the lyrics may otherwise violate the company's hate speech policy, they said YouTube makes exceptions for clips that have an Educational, Documentary, Scientific or Artistic (EDSA) context.

"While we debated this decision at length amongst our policy experts, we made the difficult decision to leave the video up to enforce our policy consistently and avoid se-

ting a precedent that may lead to us having to remove a lot of other music on YouTube," they added in the email, a copy of which was obtained by Bloomberg.

"YouTube has an open culture and employees are encouraged to share their views, even when they disagree with a decision," a YouTube spokeswoman said in a statement. "We'll continue this dialogue as part of our ongoing work to balance openness with protecting the YouTube community at large." The company asked Bloomberg to keep the executives' names confidential for security reasons.

In the final quarter of 2020, You-

Tube said it removed more than 97,000 videos and over 46 million comments for violating the company's policies on hate speech.

The debate at YouTube is the latest example of Silicon Valley workers and executives being at loggerheads over the societal or moral implications of a company's business decisions. Alphabet Inc.'s Google has previously faced worker outrage over an effort to build a censored search engine for China, an AI contract with the U.S. military and a giant exit package for an executive accused of sexual misconduct.

## The track, about a burglary, includes lyrics that encourage the targeting of neighborhoods where Chinese people live

While the YouTube decision on "Meet the Flockers" underscores a belief in artistic expression, music is a significant revenue stream for the platform because much of it

is ad-supported, including some songs by YG.

In response to the memo from executives, an employee comment on an internal message board racked up more than 430 up-votes from colleagues: "This is your perfect opportunity to demonstrate your leadership as a lead for 'Racial Justice Initiative.' Which side of the Edmund Pettus Bridge do you want to be on?" The latter statement refers to Bloody Sunday, when Black civil rights activists marching from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery were brutally attacked by police in 1965.

The YouTube executives pledged to hold a special townhall, coordinated with YouTube's head of diversity and inclusion, to discuss the issue. That happened last week and employees left the virtual meeting unsatisfied. They took to Memegen, Google's internal meme generator page, to ridicule their bosses.

Workers especially criticized one executive's statement that his wife is Asian-American during the townhall.

"Asian wives are not a credential," one employee wrote. The message was superimposed on a photo of woman wearing a T-shirt that read, "I don't need to know about your Asian wife." MDT/BLOOMBERG

AD

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ECONOMY

# Vaccination plan could lift GDP growth to 9.3%

CHINA'S ambitious plan to vaccinate 40% of its population by the end of June could pave the way for lifting the economy's growth rate to 9.3% this year, Oxford Economics forecast.

Business confidence and consumer spending will improve should China be able to achieve its targeted rate, which Oxford Economics estimates will require inoculating 10 million people a day - twice the current pace. If Beijing is able to maintain that rate in the quarter through September as well, it could translate into some form of herd immunity, with 60%

to 70% of the population vaccinated.

This would translate into a 0.4 percentage point gain to the gross domestic product growth rate from Oxford Economics's 8.9% baseline scenario, which assumes five to six million doses are administered per day, according to its report released yesterday.

Household consumption this year could increase by 7% from its pre-Covid level in 2019, while export of tourism services will recover to about 50% of its 2019 level in the second half of the year, and imports of tourism services will recover around 70%. Fixed investment will also

improve, the research institution said.

China's vaccination drive has so far lagged the U.S. and European countries, with only 107 million of its residents, or 3.8% of the population, being administered the shots. The government's successful containment of the virus had previously made it cautious about pushing for vaccination.

Read More: Facing Resistance, China Pushes Back 50 Million Vaccine Target

In a worse-than-expected scenario, where only 40% of population will be vaccinated by the end of the year, economic growth

could end up 0.2 percentage points lower from the baseline case at 8.7%, the report said.

"While China's economic outlook depends less on the speed of vaccine rollout than other countries' do, it does matter for a 'full' return to normalcy domestically and to close the immunity gap with other countries, which will allow China to open its borders safely," Tommy Wu, lead economist at Oxford Economics, wrote in the report.

Economists expect China's GDP to expand 8.5% this year, based on median forecast of a Bloomberg poll. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**



Palau President Surangel Whipps (right) and Taiwan VP William Lai

STRAIT TENSIONS

# Palau president visits Taiwan despite Chinese pressure

THE president of the Pacific island nation of Palau was visiting Taiwan yesterday along with the U.S. ambassador to his country, a show of solidarity as China increases diplomatic, economic and military pressure on Taiwan.

Palau President Surangel Whipps said during a meeting with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen that he and his delegation "feel like home when we are here."

In her welcoming statement, Tsai noted Whipps was the first foreign leader to visit Taiwan since the beginning of the pandemic and said a travel bubble established between the two sides would be a

"model for safe two-way travel that has been closely watched not just by our own people but also by the entire world."

China has banned its citizens from visiting Palau, but Taiwan has responded by introducing a travel bubble between the two that will allow visitors to avoid being quarantined.

The presence on the trip of the U.S. ambassador to Palau, John Hennessey-Niland, was a further sign of Washington's support for Taiwan, despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations between the two.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory to be

brought under Beijing's control by force if deemed necessary and it has worked to internationally isolate the island.

Taiwan has just 15 formal diplomatic allies but operates a network of trade offices around the world that act as de-facto embassies, including in the United States, Japan and most other major nations.

China has blocked Taiwan's participation in international organizations including the United Nations and sought to scupper the island's relationships with other countries by threatening to withdraw its own diplomatic presence and eco-

nomic support.

In Beijing yesterday, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying repeated China's opposition to formal exchanges between Taiwan and the U.S.

"We hope the U.S. will pay great attention to China's concerns and act prudently on the issue of Taiwan so as to avoid further damage to China-U.S. relations," Hua told reporters at a daily briefing.

Chinese warplanes have increasingly been entering Taiwan's southern airspace, with 10 aircraft reporting flying through the area on Monday. China has also protested over an agreement to boost cooperation between the U.S. and Taiwanese coast guards that follows visits by U.S. Cabinet officials to Taiwan and new sales of warplanes and other defensive equipment.

Beijing severed direct contacts with Taiwan's government after the election of Tsai and her independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party administration in 2016. Tsai was reelected last year to a second four-year term.

Taiwan still enjoys strong U.S. support, however, and the Trump administration last year sent the highest-level U.S. government delegation since the U.S. switched relations from Taipei to Beijing in 1979. **MDT/AP**

ADVERTORIAL

# GREAT TIMES

Easter Surprises at MGM

EASTER Surprises flashing at MGM! Grab hold of the chances for a family-friendly weekend at MGM MACAU and MGM COTAI this Easter. Easter is one the most exciting holidays of the year to spend with kids and an opportunity to eat plenty of chocolate, but the celebration is never completed without some Easter Egg fun and games! Bring your kids, family and friends to MGM and go on a festivity with a variety of pop-up Easter surprises. Let's bounce around, make crafts, and savor delicacies all at once!

It is never a festival without a feast! Easter weekend kicks off on Good Friday and running through till Monday, a perfect long weekend to gift yourself to go large with an Easter Brunch Extravaganza at ABA and Grill 58, or relish the Easter Buffet at Rossio and Coast, and dig in the Easter themed delights at Pastry Bar and Anytime! Let's bring home some chocolate eggs, easter bunny and lovely chick pastries for friends and family to continue with the celebration!



It wouldn't be Easter without an egg hunt, however, if you want something other than a stale Easter egg hunt, hop off to MGM now! Stand tall at the Grande Praça at MGM MACAU and the Spectacle at MGM COTAI, we have the Easter Surprise waiting for you, with each Easter egg a guaranteed offer, allowing you to explore MGM inside and out, however you want it.

No matter how you are celebrating, a few traditional activities can always make the festivity even more special. From March 27 to April 2, come over to the Spectacle at MGM COTAI and wow at the LIVE Chocolate Display Crafting every day from 2pm to 5pm. Let's keep the vibe going! Bring your little ones over to unleash their creativity with the Chocolate Egg Painting Workshop, from watercolor to polka dots, the painting techniques are perfect for kids of all ages, even adults! Next, hop on over to the Grande Praça at MGM MACAU and join us at the Easter Jar Decoration for loads of fun.

Easter is a fantastic time for everyone to take a short break as spring is springing with pleasant weather. Spend your Easter holiday as a family at MGM MACAU and MGM COTAI and create happy memories for everyone! For more details, please visit [mgm.mo](http://mgm.mo)



AP PHOTO



European Council President Charles Michel, displayed on screens, speaks during an online joint press conference with WHO's Tedros A. Ghebreyesus in Brussels yesterday

# World leaders call for pandemic treaty, but short on details

MARIA CHENG, LONDON

**M**ORE than 20 heads of government and global agencies called in a commentary published yesterday for an international treaty for pandemic preparedness that they say will protect future generations in the wake of COVID-19.

But there were few details to explain how such an agreement might actually compel countries to act more cooperatively.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and leaders including Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain, Premier Mario Draghi of Italy and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda proposed "a renewed collective commitment" to reinforce preparedness and response systems by leveraging the U.N. health agency's constitution.

"The world cannot afford to wait until the pandemic is over to start planning for the next one," Tedros said during a news conference. He said the treaty would provide "a framework for

international cooperation and solidarity" and address issues like surveillance systems and responding to outbreaks.

International regulations governing health and implemented by WHO already exist — and can be disregarded by countries with few consequences. Despite an obligation for nations to share critical epidemic data and materials quickly with WHO, for example, China declined to do so when the coronavirus first broke out.

And with no enforcement powers, WHO officials had little means of compelling them to share details, an AP investigation last year found.

Steven Solomon, WHO's principal legal officer, said the proposed pandemic treaty would need to be ratified by lawmakers in the participating countries.

"Specifics about enforcement will be up to member states to decide on," Solomon said.

European Council President Charles Michel first laid out the idea of a pandemic treaty at the U.N. General Assembly in De-

ember. Joining Tedros at yesterday's briefing, Michel said the global community needs to "build a pandemic defense for future generations that extends far beyond today's crisis. For this, we must translate the political will into concrete actions."

Gian Luca Burci, a former WHO legal counsel who is now a professor at the Graduate Institute of international affairs in Geneva, described the proposal as an attempted "big fix" involving information sharing, preparedness and response, saying the concept is "like a Christmas tree, frankly."

"But to me, the risk is that it diverts attention from the tool that we have" — WHO's existing International Health Regulations, Burci said recently. He said his fear was those regulations would get short shrift and receive "cosmetic improvements, but fundamentally remain a weak instrument."

Although the 25 signatories of the commentary called for "solidarity," and greater "societal commitment," there was no indi-

cation any country would soon change its own approach to responding to the pandemic. China, Russia and the United States didn't join in signing the statement.

WHO legal officer Solomon said the pandemic treaty might also address issues such as the sharing of vaccine technology and vaccine supplies, but gave no indication how that might happen. Despite WHO's calls for patents to be waived during the pandemic, rich countries have continued to oppose efforts by poor countries to compel them to share vaccine manufacturing technology.

Tedros pleaded with rich countries last week to immediately donate 10 million COVID-19 vaccines so that immunization campaigns could start in all countries within the first 100 days of the year. Not a single country has yet publicly offered to share its vaccines immediately. Of the more than 459 million vaccines administered globally, the majority have been in just 10 countries — and 28% in just one. WHO didn't identify the countries. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1986 GREATER LONDON COUNCIL ABOLISHED



Thousands of people have taken part in festivities to mark the historic final hours of 97 years of local rule in London.

A throng of 250,000 people have gathered on the South Bank in London, home to the Greater London Council, which will not exist from midnight tonight.

Festivities will end with the largest display of fireworks ever seen in the city after a week of events costing £250,000.

Six other Labour-led metropolitan county councils will come to an end today ending 12 years of the strategic administration of the metropolitan county councils.

These are the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Tyne and Wear, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire councils.

The disbanding of seven of the largest councils in Europe was ordered by the government to cut bureaucracy and increase efficiency, amid a swathe of criticism across the political spectrum.

The government insisted transferring their powers to local councils and quangos would create greater electoral accountability.

But hopes of achieving 7,000 job cuts in London, with a corresponding saving of £50 million, have proved an overestimate as most have moved to jobs within the new organisations.

In the metropolitan districts some 32,000 staff and 600 councillors are affected by the changes, with the same number of councillors and 20,000 staff affected in London.

Despite job cuts staff are out supporting the festivities around the country and in London there are giant screens bearing farewell messages from celebrities.

The last GLC concert to be staged at the festival hall will include Haydn's Farewell Symphony, by the Philharmonic Orchestra, lit with candles until the final one is blown out by its leader Ken Livingstone.

Many people are wearing badges bearing the message "we'll meet again", mirroring a banner on the GLC's building County Hall, where flags are flying at half-mast, opposite the Houses of Parliament.

Despite the taunts from the GLC to Mrs Thatcher's government over its forced closure, the building will become the property of the London Residuary Body.

It is one of the quangos charged with completing the dismantling of the councils as more power passes to Whitehall.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Once Labour regained control of the GLC from the Tories in May 1981 the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was determined to abolish the council.

There began a four year political battle to remove the council, run by the Labour politician Ken Livingstone, whose far-left policies earned him the title Red Ken.

An initial attempt was defeated, but a Bill published in 1984 precipitated the end of the GLC.

In May 1997 Labour was elected to power with a manifesto commitment to allow Londoners a referendum on whether they wanted a new mayor and a Greater London Authority. They overwhelmingly voted for a council which came into existence in July 2000 with Ken Livingstone as mayor.

He won the mayoral election as an independent after Labour expelled him for not supporting the party's official candidate. He was re-admitted into the party in January 2004 after Prime Minister Tony Blair admitted he was wrong about his prediction that Mr Livingstone would be a "disaster" for London.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It's easy to make progress beneath today's cosmic landscape, Aries. The deep-feeling Scorpio moon aligns with the visionary pairing of mental Mercury and inspired Neptune.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You're moving forward at the same time that you're shedding old skin, so even if you're feeling tender and raw in this transitory time, know that you're on the right track.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

It's an ideal day for sharing your work on a larger platform. Elsewhere, the sun locks arms with self-disciplined Saturn, helping you feel grounded, capable, and ready to explore new horizons.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

The creatively fertile Scorpio moon spends the day in a pleasant connection with mental Mercury and dreamy Neptune, helping create inspired visions to pour into passion projects or other leisurely activities.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

This pairing gives you a warm but serious approach towards relationship matters - one that benefits from future-oriented conversations concerning commitment and plans.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

As a Virgo, your ruling planet is the communicative, trickster planet Mercury. Today's skies find Mercury on the move, as it transitions from highly sensitive Pisces into courageous Aries.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

It's easy to jump back into a steady workflow today, Libra. The moon slides through laser-focused Scorpio, harmoniously aligning with messenger Mercury and inspired Neptune.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

The moon remains in your sign all day, linking arms with mentally sharp Mercury and visionary Neptune. This energy makes it an ideal day for working on creative passion projects.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

The moon slinks through privacy-seeking Scorpio all day, encountering a variety of challenging aspects. Keep yourself sane by focusing on activities that help you restore internal balance.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

The path before you is starting to light up, Capricorn. Today's skies witness the helpful alignment of the illuminating sun and your ruling planet, self-disciplined Saturn.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

It's an ideal day to enter into promising new commitments. The Scorpio moon's connection to expressive Mercury and visionary Neptune boosts your visibility on the work front.



### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

This pairing brings style and panache to your self-expression and makes you hard to miss. Meanwhile, the sun and stable Saturn form a pact to help you bring your talents out into the light of day.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

### EASY

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

### EASY+

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

### MEDIUM

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

### HARD

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

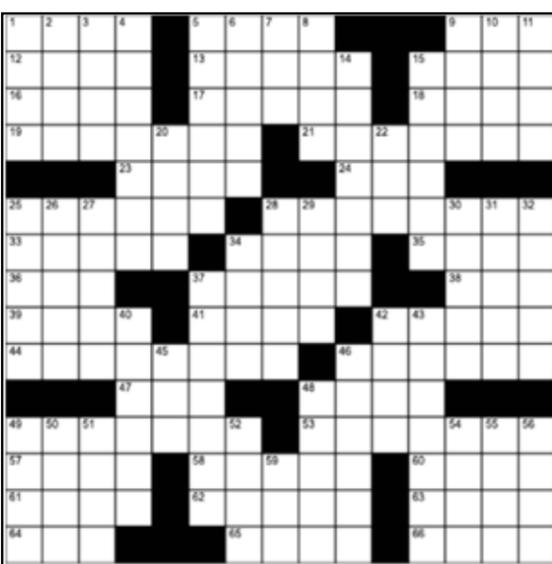
## WEATHER

|              | MIN | MAX | CONDITION     |
|--------------|-----|-----|---------------|
| <b>CHINA</b> |     |     |               |
| Beijing      | 6   | 21  | cloudy        |
| Harbin       | 2   | 11  | cloudy        |
| Tianjin      | 9   | 22  | clear         |
| Urumqi       | -1  | 8   | snow storm    |
| Xi'an        | 10  | 22  | overcast      |
| Lhasa        | 3   | 15  | cloudy        |
| Chengdu      | 17  | 24  | drizzle       |
| Chongqing    | 18  | 27  | cloudy        |
| Kunming      | 14  | 25  | cloudy        |
| Nanjing      | 16  | 23  | overcast      |
| Shanghai     | 14  | 19  | overcast      |
| Wuhan        | 17  | 21  | moderate rain |
| Hangzhou     | 15  | 21  | drizzle       |
| Taipei       | 20  | 25  | drizzle       |
| Guangzhou    | 23  | 31  | cloudy        |
| Hong Kong    | 24  | 29  | cloudy        |
| <b>WORLD</b> |     |     |               |
| Moscow       | 0   | 5   | drizzle       |
| Frankfurt    | 4   | 22  | clear         |
| Paris        | 6   | 22  | cloudy        |
| London       | 5   | 19  | clear         |
| New York     | 4   | 15  | clear         |

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Coal-rich region; 5- Wise one; 9- Permit; 12- As it happens; 13- Chaplin persona; 15- Architect Saarinen; 16- Citrus coolers; 17- "Steal This Book" author Hoffman; 18- Lawless character; 19- Dizziness sensation; 21- Duped; 23- Above; 24- Put into service; 25- Gazes fixedly; 28- Skin preparation; 33- Roofing items; 34- Raines of film; 35- Morse element; 36- Far out; 37- Coral island; 38- Month after avril; 39- Neck of the woods; 41- Yemen's capital; 42- Baked dough; 44- Slipper; 46- Compel by intimidation; 47- -la-la; 48- "The Time Machine" race; 49- Ghastly; 53- Mafioso; 57- Long poem, such as those attributed to Homer; 58- Out of line; 60- Body of an organism; 61- Social standing; 62- Severe; 63- "Topaz" author; 64- Able was I \_\_\_ I saw Elba; 65- 24 hour periods; 66- Tombstone lawman;

DOWN: 1- Croat, e.g.; 2- Adjutant; 3- Affirm solemnly; 4- Bring back; 5- Phases; 6- Shady recess; 7- Shoot the breeze; 8- Expel gas or odor; 9- Vichyssoise ingredient; 10- Sea-going eagle; 11- Tailless amphibian; 14- Scrutiny; 15- Overstep; 20- Folk singer Burt; 22- Belief; 25- Leash; 26- Ornamental coronet; 27- Pilgrim John; 28- Doppelganger; 29- Earthen pot; 30- Circus employee; 31- Son of Abraham; 32- Reproach; 34- Catchall abbr.; 37- To the extent that; 40- Set upon; 42- Simpleton; 43- Publish again; 45- Heavenly body; 46- Buffoons; 48- Abrasive mineral; 49- Nothing more than; 50- On \_\_\_ with; 51- Motion picture; 52- Cornerstone abbr.; 54- When said three times, a 1970 war movie; 55- Foreign dignitary; 56- Coarse file, angry tone of voice; 59- New Zealand parrot;



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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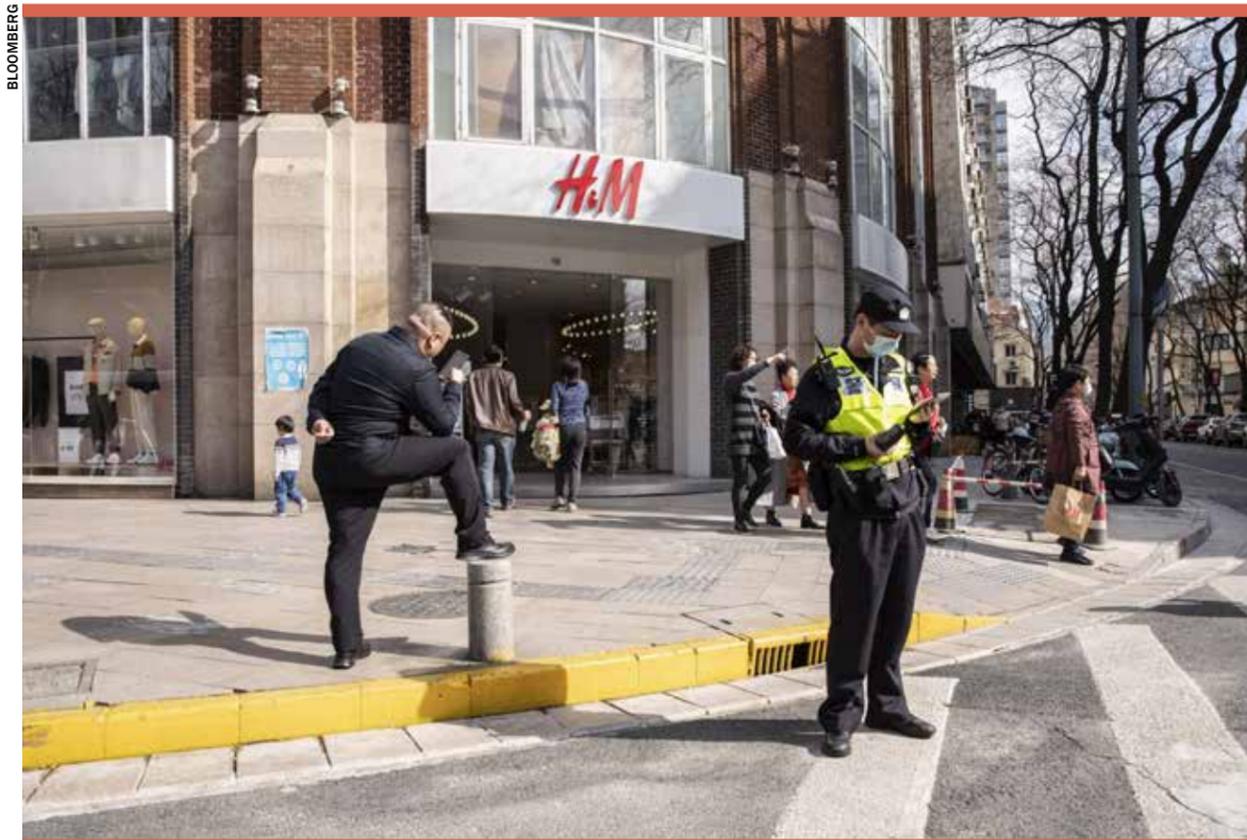
MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

# XI'S SHIFTING CHINA IS COMPELLING INVESTORS TO RUN, HIDE OR HIRE

**F**OR any company doing business in China, the choice is now clearer than ever: Avoid commenting on any controversial subjects or risk losing access to the world's second-largest economy.

Over the past few weeks, President Xi Jinping's government endorsed a boycott against retailers like Hennes & Mauritz AB and slapped sanctions on a range of organizations - including a group of barristers in the U.K. - over statements made on alleged forced labor in Xinjiang. Then yesterday, he signed off on sweeping changes to Hong Kong's election system to give Beijing veto power over any candidates.

China's more aggressive stance, triggered in part by collective action by the U.S. and its allies to sanction Chinese officials, is forcing companies to quickly weigh what they will do to maintain access to 1.4 billion consumers with ever-more spending power. So far, with growth in the rest of



the world anemic, most companies are either keeping their heads down or stepping up investments.

While it used to be easier for companies to operate

in China and manage corporate social responsibility, now it's difficult to show that outside influence has any impact on changing the Communist Party's actions,

according to Margaret Lewis, a law professor and China specialist at Seton Hall University.

"You end up in this dilemma of stay in and be complicit or pull out," she said. "The middle ground between those two is increasingly difficult to find. It's a starker decision now."

The best strategy for brands like H&M facing a boycott in China is to lay low and wait until the backlash "blows over," Joerg Wuttke, head of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, told Bloomberg TV yesterday. Indeed, several companies pulled statements on Xinjiang off their websites.

## COMPLICATED PICTURE

"It's a complicated picture," Wuttke said. "On the one hand, China saved the skin of many companies last year," he said. "At the same time, you have of course this kind of political pressure that is on you, and again a topic like Xinjiang is a no-win situation."

Many foreign companies with good relations are expanding their presence, particularly as Hong Kong's finance sector booms this year due to an influx of IPOs and SPAC listings. Initial public offerings in the city have already hit almost \$11 billion as of mid March, a close to 500% jump from a year earlier, with video streaming platform Bilibili

Inc. and search giant Baidu Inc. among companies bringing multi-billion dollar deals.

New York-based Citigroup Inc. plans to hire as many as 1,700 staff in Hong Kong as it seeks to tap growing links between the financial hub and rising affluence in southern mainland cities such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen. A pandemic-induced hunger for technology stocks and the threat of U.S. delistings have been a boon for the financial hub, driving a surge in initial and secondary share sales.

For some international law firms advising companies, however, the environment for working in Hong Kong just got a lot trickier. China's retaliatory sanctions against the U.K. included the Essex Court Chambers, which a prominent lawyer warned could have much bigger consequences for investors.

After being hit with the sanctions, the Financial Times reported that the chambers removed a reference from its website to a legal opinion by some of its lawyers implicating the Chinese government in alleged genocide in Xinjiang. The Communist Party-backed Global Times newspaper said the action showed that China's sanction were an "effective deterrent against rumors."

But Guy Sandhurst, formerly chairman of the Bar

of England and Wales, said the move will affect "all British companies who do business with Chinese clients" because lawyers involved in dispute resolution for Hong Kong firms could be denied access to the territory. He called for the "Western world" to insist on dispute resolution mechanisms outside China for all future contracts.

"Today it is the members of Essex Court Chambers who are sanctioned," Sandhurst wrote on the website of the Society of Conservative Lawyers. "But tomorrow it might be Clifford Chance, Freshfields or some other major city law firm or Chambers of barristers which wittingly or otherwise offends the Chinese state."

Xi's move yesterday to officially revamp Hong Kong's election system could unleash another round of criticism and potential sanctions against Western nations, which have failed to change China's behavior. The changes allow a small group of mainland and Hong Kong national security officials to vet every candidate standing for election, ensuring that only those loyal to Beijing are able to implement policy.

## DANGEROUS DECISIONS

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said the changes will help the investment climate, a position echoed by former chief executive Leung Chun-ying in an interview yesterday. "A lot of opportunities," he said when asked about Hong Kong's economic future. "It is a question of opening our minds, our eyes and ears to these opportunities and then just share with the international community."

But while Xi's actions in Hong Kong and Xinjiang may look tough and Chinese officials are talking to the world "like now they have nothing to learn," the moves could end up backfiring among companies and countries, according to Jean-Pierre Cabestan, a political science professor at Hong Kong Baptist University who's authored several books on Chinese foreign policy.

"It's a kind of nervousness, which is a sign of weakness and a sign that they don't feel secure," he said. "And that's worrisome, because when you're insecure you may embark on dangerous decisions and actions toward others."

MDT/BLOOMBERG

AD

ATHLETICS

# World champion Naser gets court date for doping rules case

**W**ORLD champion sprinter Salwa Eid Naser will have a two-day appeal hearing next month that could lead to a ban from the Tokyo Olympics for breaking anti-doping rules.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport said yesterday it will hear the case involving the 400-meter runner over two days on April 22-23.

The World Anti-Doping Agency and World Athletics both filed appeals at CAS to challenge an independent tribunal ruling last year that cleared Naser on a technicality for doping tests she missed.

A verdict could be announced urgently with the Diamond League track series set to start in May. The first women's 400 race is on May 23 in Rabat, Morocco.

The women's 400 event at the Tokyo Olympics is scheduled from Aug. 3-6.

Naser ran the fastest wo-



men's 400 since 1985 to win the world title 18 months ago in Doha, Qatar, while she was under investigation.

The 22-year-old Bahraini was allowed to keep the title despite being charged by the Athletics Integrity Unit with "whereabouts" failures — missed tests and incorrect updates on a database detailing where athletes can be found

each day by sample collection officials.

Athletes can be banned for two years if they have three failures within one year.

Naser denied wrongdoing last year when the investigation was revealed and said missed tests could happen to any athlete.

Naser was found by a tribunal in London to have three

whereabouts failures from March 2019-January 2020, but they technically counted as spanning more than one year according to anti-doping rules.

The ruling also swung on a fourth possible violation for a sample that could not be taken in April 2019 when officials went to her apartment building in Riffa, Bahrain. AP

FOOTBALL

## CRISTIANO RONALDO'S ARMBAND UP FOR AUCTION IN SERBIA

**T**HE Portugal captain's armband which Cristiano Ronaldo slammed into the ground after his apparent winning goal was disallowed in a World Cup qualifier against Serbia was put up for auction yesterday.

A charity group which is trying to collect money for the surgery of a 6-month-old boy from Serbia with spinal muscular atrophy got the armband from a stadium worker who picked it up after the match ended in a 2-2 draw on Saturday in Belgrade.

The group said the blue armband with the letter C will be in an online auction for three days.

Ronaldo walked off the field moments before the final whistle after his injury-time goal was not allowed by officials. The Juventus player dinked the ball over the Serbia goalkeeper and it apparently crossed the line before being cleared by an opposing defender.

While heading straight into the dressing room before the final whistle, Ronaldo angrily threw down his captain armband near the touchline.

Ronaldo was publicly criticized for the action and some believe his angry display could lead to FIFA sanctions if the governing body deems his reaction to be offensive or violent conduct. AP

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**OPINION**

**World Views**

Brooke Sutherland, MDT/Bloomberg



**AIRLINE CHANGE FEES SHOULDN'T RETURN AFTER COVID**

Airline change fees are a pre-pandemic relic and they should stay that way.

In 2019, U.S. carriers generated \$2.8 billion in revenue from penalizing customers for changing a flight booking, according to the Transportation Department. Those fees often applied even if the reason for the switch was a personal or family emergency. But when the coronavirus pandemic presented airlines with the greatest emergency the industry had ever faced, it forced a reckoning over the onerous fees. United Airlines Holdings Inc. moved first, announcing in August that it would permanently drop \$200 change fees for most domestic tickets. Just one day later, Delta Air Lines Inc. and American Airlines Group Inc. followed suit. (Southwest Airlines Co. has never charged change fees.) With the pandemic dragging on, American upped the ante in November and also dropped fees for certain international flights that previously could amount to as much as \$750. Delta and United soon copied that move, too.

It was as if they remembered they were in the customer-service business.

"The only way in the long term we can be successful with customers was to eliminate change fees," United CEO Scott Kirby said earlier this month at a JPMorgan Chase & Co. conference. "That's why we did it permanently." The question, though, is what permanent really means. There's a significant amount of money at stake. Airlines need passengers more than passengers need airlines at the moment, but that dynamic is likely to flip in time and carriers' new resolve to forego these extra fees may weaken. Even so, this is one pandemic change that should — and likely will — stick.

Slapping passengers with fees again would create unneeded bad will. Morale could suffer, too. The airline employees that would have to enforce any new change fees have already had to deal with enough during the pandemic, from risking their lives to show up for work, enforcing face-mask compliance and depending on the fickle generosity of Congress for job security. Indeed, United's Kirby said the change-fee pivot was as much about the company's culture as it was about customers. "You've been there for 30 years, and you've had to see a customer come up and say, 'Hey, my grandmother passed away and I need to change my flight.' And you say 'Well thank you, sir. You can, sir, but you've got to pay \$200,'" Kirby said. "We forced our employees to defend the indefensible. That creates a jaded environment." Change fees are also just bad business: Whatever airlines make in penalties, they risk losing in market share.

Leisure travel is the game now and two low-cost carriers catering to sun-and-snow markets — Frontier Group Holdings Inc. and Sun Country Airlines Holdings Inc. — are raising fresh capital through initial public offerings.

That doesn't mean airlines won't make anything off of last-minute trip changes. Notably, Delta, United and American all exempt the cheapest "basic economy" tickets from their newly flexible policies. Flights originating from an international destination may also still be subject to penalties. Be sure to read the fine print: United, for example, is waiving change fees on international flights originating from the U.S., while Delta is eliminating them for flights out of North America and American is offering this benefit for trips out of both North and South America. Passengers are still required to pay the difference in fares, and credits usually expire after a year. Carriers may make cutbacks to other passenger amenities to make up for foregone fees. Airlines are still, well, airlines. But change fees as we knew them seem dead enough.

[Abridged]

**BIONTECH INCREASES VACCINE PRODUCTION ESTIMATES**

German pharmaceutical company BioNTech says that after ramping up its manufacturing and supply systems, it expects to manufacture this year up to 2.5 billion doses of the coronavirus vaccine it developed with U.S. partner Pfizer.

The two companies had previously spoken of being able to make 2 billion doses in 2021. Mainz-based BioNTech said yesterday that it had delivered 200 million doses of the vaccine globally

as of March 23 and signed orders for 1.4 billion doses for delivery in 2021. Discussions on further orders were ongoing, it said.

The company attributed the increased capacity to optimized production processes and the start of production at a new plant in Marburg, Germany; the expansion of its manufacturing and supply network; and regulatory approval for six doses to be drawn from each vial, rather than five.

THE BUZZ

AP PHOTO



**GERMAN STATE SUSPENDS ASTRAZENECA VACCINE USE FOR UNDER-60S**

FRANK JORDANS, BERLIN

**T**HE German state of Berlin has again suspended the use of AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine for those aged under 60 due to new reports of unusual blood clots in people who have received the shots, officials said yesterday.

The decision was taken as a precaution ahead of a meeting today [Macau time] of representatives from all of Germany's 16 states and further recommendations expected from national medical regulators, said Berlin's top health official, Dilek Kalayci.

The meeting was called after the country's medical regulator announced that it had received a total of 31 reports of rare blood clots in people who recently received the vaccine. Nine of the people died and all but two of the cases involved women aged 20 to 63, the Paul Ehrlich Institute said.

Reports of an unusual form of blood clot in the head, known as sinus vein thrombosis, prompted several European countries to temporarily halt the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine earlier this month.

After a review by medical experts, the European Medicines Agency conclu-

ded the benefits of the vaccine outweighed the risks but recommended that warnings about possible rare side effects should be provided to patients and doctors.

Most European Union countries, including Germany, have since resumed use of the vaccine.

**After a review by medical experts, the European Medicines Agency concluded the benefits of the vaccine outweighed the risks**

Earlier yesterday, two state-owned hospitals in Berlin announced that they had stopped giving AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine to female staff members aged under 55. The heads of five university hospitals in western Germany called for a temporary halt to the vaccine for all younger women, citing the blood clot risk.

Kalayci, the Berlin state health minister, said the suspension of AstraZeneca vaccines for younger people was a precautionary measure.

"We have not had a case of serious side effects in Berlin yet," she said, adding that all of those who

had received the AstraZeneca shot already could rest assured that it provides good protection against the coronavirus.

"Still, we need to treat it carefully and wait for the talks taking place at the federal level," said Kalayci.

Some 2.7 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine have been administered in Germany so far.

Meanwhile, some countries are still hesitant about giving the AstraZeneca shot to older people. In Madrid, residents aged between 60 to 65 years old started receiving the vaccine yesterday ahead of those aged between 66 to 79 because Spain has yet to revise new data provided by AstraZeneca about how well it works in the older age group.

Spain is currently using the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines for people over 80.

Spanish health authorities have said that they are hoping to speed up the rollout of vaccines with the arrival of the jab developed by the pharmaceutical company Janssen, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, which has also been approved for use in Europe and requires one shot only. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**Germany's** biggest industrial union and employers yesterday reached a deal that will give workers a one-time "corona bonus" and envisions an extra annual payment starting next year. The agreement features a 500-euro "corona bonus" for each employee to be paid out in June, with apprentices getting a 300-euro payment.

AP PHOTO



**Romania** Anti-restriction protesters took to the streets in several Romanian cities against new pandemic measures that came into force a day earlier amid rising COVID-19 infections. More than a thousand people gathered in the capital, Bucharest, sounding horns and chanting "Freedom!" as they marched to the government headquarters in central Victory Square. One man was detained by police for not wearing a face mask.

**US** suspended a trade deal with Myanmar until a democratic government is restored in the Southeast Asian country. U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai said the United States was immediately suspending "all U.S. engagement with Burma under the 2013 Trade and Investment Framework Agreement."

AP PHOTO



**Mexican** President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has proposed yet another law to weaken private gas firms and strengthen the hand of an inefficient state-owned company, the latest in a series of measures aimed at turning back private-sector involvement in the energy sector. López Obrador said the proposed law is meant to combat contraband gasoline imports.