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**TIS ENGLISH DEPT HEAD DOINA TONNER PUBLISHES PICTORIAL BOOK, A SELF-REFLECTION OF HER PERSONAL JOURNEY TOWARDS A DISCOVERY OF CREATIVITY** P5

**BIONTECH VACCINATION RESTARTS NEXT WEEK SAID NEW HEALTH CHIEF ALVIS LO** P2

**GRAND PRIX 2021 LIKELY TO RETURN TO ORIGINAL 4-DAY FORMAT WITH TWO FORMULA RACING EVENTS, THE CHINESE F4 AND THE F3 WORLD CUP** P4

**Hong Kong** will resume administering the coronavirus vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech next week following a 12-day suspension over packaging defects detected in one batch, officials said. An additional 300,000 doses of the vaccine are expected to arrive today. Health officials said an investigation by BioNTech found no safety issues in the batch with packaging defects for some vials, as well as in a separate, unused batch of the vaccine.



**Taiwanese** tourists are headed for the tiny Pacific island nation of Palau following the launch of a coronavirus travel bubble, a recognition of their success in stamping out the pandemic locally. Passengers must take a PCR test before being allowed to board their flights but will not be required to undergo quarantine.



**Japan** The organizers of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics started 10 days of testing yesterday for the hockey and other indoor venues. A curling mixed doubles competition was held at the refashioned "Water Cube.", Men's hockey players drilled at the nearby National Indoor Stadium and figure skating and speedskating venues will also be given a run-through during the test events.

**India** Rebels fighting against Indian rule in Kashmir on yesterday fatally shot a policeman guarding the home of a local politician in India's ruling party, police said. Militants opened fire after storming the house belonging to Mohammed Anwar Khan in the region's main city of Srinagar, senior police officer Vijay Kumar told reporters. He said the attackers ran away with the policeman's rifle. Bharatiya Janata Party said the politician was unhurt and condemned the "brutal" attack.

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## SCENT OF RECOVERY

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MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

## GOV'T UNUSUAL HARDLINE STANCE TO USA MAY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE: LAW EXPERT

P3



BLOOMBERG

**HONG KONG TYCOONS EMERGE AS LOSERS FROM ELECTION REVAMP** P6

# ALVIS LO TAKES OFFICE AS SSM DIRECTOR, SETS PANDEMIC CONTROL AS PRIORITY

RENATO MARQUES

**A**lvis Lo was inaugurated yesterday as the new director of the Health Bureau (SSM). During the ceremony held at the government's headquarters, Lo noted in his speech that his priority and main duty is to "consolidate the results gained from the prevention and control of the epidemic."

Lo acknowledged that the positive effects obtained until now were not easy to achieve. He went on to add: "Our team will continue to work, [never slowing down], in the area of prevention and control of the epidemic."

To achieve his goal, the newly inaugurated director of the SSM designated the vaccination of all residents as the task to be pursued first and foremost. He stated explicitly his desire for the population of Macau to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Lo speculated that the positive results achieved in Macau in pandemic prevention and control may have had the unforeseen negative consequence that



Alvis Lo

the population does not feel the need to be vaccinated.

"We were successful in prevention works during the pandemic, therefore the population thinks that it can leave the vaccination for later," Lo said. He explained that "From the public

health point of view, we must call for the residents of Macau to get vaccinated because we don't know if there will be any more outbreaks."

Lo - a medical doctor who specializes in pulmonology - also reminded the public that

the vaccination process needs time until it can have a preventative effect. This includes the hiatus in between the two inoculations. "I urge the population to get the vaccine as soon as possible to create a community immunization barrier. It will have positive effects not only for an individual but also for their families and the community in general," Lo said.

As for the upcoming work from the SSM, Lo said that he aims to increase the number of

vaccination points to facilitate a more efficient process.

Lo did not exclude the possibility of launching a new external service for vaccination in collaboration with other entities but said that there is no concrete plan as yet.

"For the time being this is just an idea. There isn't yet a real plan. The enforcement [of such measures] will depend on the general situation," he concluded, leaving the discussion open.

## DECISION ON PUBLIC PROTEST HAD NO POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS, LO CLAIMS

**LO** was questioned by the media on the SSM's decision to deauthorize the public protest planned for last Sunday at Tap Seac Square against the government's decision regarding the third round of financial support. He reaffirmed that the SSM's decision had no political motivations, but was simply based on public health policy.

"The decision was not political; it had no political motivations. It was only due to public health reasons that the SSM did not authorize the activity," Lo said. He did not deny the possibility of future decisions of the same kind being made. "Each decision is based on the analysis of the conditions and all the context. I can't guarantee it won't happen again," he said.

## APRIL FOOLS

### THE SUEZ CANAL MACAU-BOUND LIVESTOCK

**F**ollowing a millenary tradition, Macau Daily Times yesterday didn't forget to put up an April Fools joke as is common on this day across the world of media.

Our story on the back page yesterday titled "Coffee, Ikea furniture, livestock among the Macau-bound objects stuck at the Suez Canal" was obviously made-up, inspired by a major world news story.

There is no such website as shiphappens.news that "lists all the objects stuck in one of the most traveled maritime canals worldwide."

In the last paragraph, there was the "giveaway"

where we wrote that ships carrying livestock "will eventually end up in Macau's fine restaurants."

Although a "considerable amount of Macau-bound goods" was actually stuck in the Suez Canal, as reported by the Macao Daily News this week, our "list" was totally made-up in order to keep this funny tradition in journalism alive.

The origins of April Fools' Day are not clear but it is known that the tradition of practical joking and mischief-making dates back to Ancient Roman times. The Press has been its gatekeeper over the centuries. PC

# BioNTech vaccination expected to start next week

RENATO MARQUES

**A** shipment of 20,000 BioNTech-produced mRNA Covid-19 vaccines is set to arrive in Macau within days and the mRNA vaccination will recommence next week at the earliest, the new director of the Health Bureau (SSM), Alvis Lo confirmed.

Given the uncertainties regarding shipment, Lo said he could not give a specific time for its arrival.

"Once the batch arrives in Macau and is confirmed safe to use, [the government] will commence the inoculation early next week at the earliest," he said.

According to the official, the new batch will allow



"ongoing vaccination of those that have already taken the first dose of the vaccine. It will also allow those that have previously booked to take it to initiate and complete the process across two doses."

Lo was speaking to the media on the sidelines of his inauguration ceremony as the new head of the SSM,

held at the government's headquarters yesterday.

According to Lo, the new batch containing 20,000 doses of the vaccine will not carry any added cost for the government as it will be supplied by the manufacturer without any extra charge.

Lo was questioned about the prospects of the batch

that was found to have packaging defects on the vial covers. He said, for the time being, the batch will be sealed until the SSM receives further instructions, as the local health authorities and the vaccine manufacturer are still discussing the best approach for treating it.

"When we have a final decision [on what will be done with the batch found to have packaging issues] we will disclose it to the public," he said. "What is important is that the public understands clearly that the government is... ensuring all safety [concerning the vaccination process]."

According to the preliminary results of the investigation launched by the manufacturer, "environmental factors" during the course of the delivery process from Germany to Macau may be among the causes of the problem.

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# March GGR hits record high since pandemic, boding well for future recovery

HONEY TSANG

**M**ACAU'S gross gaming revenue (GGR) in March is music to the ears - it totals MOP8.31 billion, a record monthly high since the Covid-19 outbreak. The figure "bodes well for further recovery" in the coming two months, JP Morgan commented on a statement released yesterday.

The GGR figure of March is in line with the earlier brokerage's forecast of somewhere between MOP8.1 - 8.4 billion.

A daily run-rate of MOP268 million in March also demonstrated a "consistent sequential recovery from MOP250-260 million/day in the past three months," JP Morgan analysts DS Kim and Derek Choi said.

The two analysts ascribed the encouraging advancement to several factors: improving travel sentiment and the release of pent-up travel demand. These conclusions were derived from the city's recent arrival statistics — Macau registered the highest daily record of 32,647 visitor arrivals on March 26 since the onset of the pandemic.



Another driver could be the recent lifting of some gaming restrictions, which included scrapping the ban on standing bets and Covid-19 test requirements for casino entry.

However, Ben Lee, managing partner of IGamiX Management & Consulting, has a different take on March GGR. He told the Times, "It's just normal volatility as usual. It's too early to tell if it's a recovery."

March GGR displayed a 13.6% increase from MOP7.31

billion last year, and a 58% up-tick from MOP5.26 billion from the same month in 2020, according to data released yesterday by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ),

As of now, the month-to-date GGR — the accumulated figures from January to March 2021 — amounted to MOP23.6 billion, down 22.5% year-on-year.

In the first quarter of 2021, JP Morgan expects the mass GGR to have already recovered to

around 40% of pre-pandemic levels, or of 2019's averages. Meanwhile, the GGR from the VIP sector returned to around 20% of pre-crisis levels.

"We expect GGR to keep improving sequentially in April (MOP8.4-9.0 billion) and May (MOP11 billion), with the pace of recovery ramping-up from the May Golden Week, and to further accelerate into 2H with more re-opening & travel easing," JP Morgan stated.

The brokerage estimates the city's GGR would recover to more than "70%/85%" of pre-pandemic levels in the third or fourth quarter of 2021, before being fully recovered by 2022.

	Monthly Gross Revenue			Accumulated Gross Revenue		
	2020	2019	YoY Variance	2020	2019	YoY Variance
<b>Oct</b>	7,270	26,443	-72.5%	45,875	246,740	-81.4%
<b>Nov</b>	6,748	22,877	-70.5%	52,623	269,617	-80.5%
<b>Dec</b>	7,818	22,838	-65.8%	60,441	292,455	-79.3%
	2021	2020	YoY Variance	2021	2020	YoY Variance
<b>Jan</b>	8,024	22,126	-63.7%	8,024	22,126	-63.7%
<b>Feb</b>	7,312	3,104	+135.6%	15,336	25,229	-39.2%
<b>Mar</b>	8,306	5,257	+58.0%	23,642	30,486	-22.5%

UNIT: MOP million

## GOV'T UNCOMMON HARDLINE STANCE TO US MAY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE: LAW EXPERT

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE Macau Government's uncompromising reply to the U.S.'s 2020 Human Rights Report was a "stark contrast to its previous approaches." This suggests that "it was very likely the reply was written by more than one hand," a former senior law officer told the Times yesterday in an exclusive interview.

The SAR government released a hardline statement on the night of March 31, in which it denounced the U.S. as dealing with "serious internal problems" concerning human rights. As such, it has "no authority to make the groundless and baseless accusations," mentioned in the report titled "2020 Country Reports on Human

Rights Practices: China (Includes Hong Kong, Macau, and Tibet) - Macau."

"The Macao SAR Government urges the U.S. to abandon [its] Cold-War mentality and stereotype bias, and stop interfering in Macao's internal affairs and China's domestic affairs," the statement said.

The former officer, a law expert who wants to stay anonymous, told the Times that such an aggressive stance was inconsistent with the Macau government's usual "super scrupulous" approach towards foreign affairs.

"The direct criticisms pointed towards the US government indicates that very likely this reply was written by more than one hand," the law

expert suspects, without elaborating.

He also commented that the government coming down heavily on the report is "counter-productive," as it may bring more unwanted global attention to the report.

However, the government's strong words directed at the States offer compelling evidence for Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng's earlier declaration of "daring to hit back" at any foreign interference.

Ho's powerful remarks were made earlier in an interview with Chinese media during the Two Sessions, in which he reaffirmed his full support for the Central Government's decision to overhaul Hong Kong's electoral system.

"As far as Macau goes,

it has been disturbed by foreign interference too. But if they dare to come at us, we dare to hit back too," Ho said earlier in an assertive tone.

The Chief Executive also emphasized that Macau has been well-positioned to guard itself against any foreign interference, given that the passage of Article 23 of the Macau Basic Law in 2009. This law provided the legal system with a shield to safeguard national security in Macau.

In the 2020 Human Rights Report, the US government raised several human rights problems the city is facing, such as interference with the rights of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and restrictions on political participation.

"The law provides for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, but the government limited the freedom of peaceful assembly," according to the report issued this week.

## MELCO POSTED HUGE LOSS FOR 2020, REMAINS OPTIMISTIC FOR 2021

HONEY TSANG

**M**ELCO International Development Limited (Melco) posted a net loss of HKD12.38 billion for the full year of 2020, according to the group's financial report released on March 31.

The group's net revenue showed a sharp plunge of 70.2% to HKD13.42 billion. Its adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) registered a negative value of HKD1.2 billion.

Lawrence Ho, Group Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Melco, commented that Covid-19 and ensuing travel restrictions significantly impacted the group's financial performance throughout 2020.

Despite the drop in finances, the company and its integrated resorts were experiencing a "moderate recovery"

towards the fourth quarter of 2020. This was borne out by the "positive Property EBITDA for the Macau operations, as well as our global operations as a whole in the fourth quarter of the year," Ho said.

Melco is still optimistic about its business prospects for 2021, taking into account the lifting of quarantine restrictions for visitors coming from all mainland cities since February this year, and the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines.

"The Group remains optimistic on the recovery of Macau and expects increased visitation in the near term," the statement said.

Melco reaffirmed its commitment to continuing development programs in Asia and globally, saying the construction of Studio City Phase 2 is now underway.

Meanwhile, a new water park at Studio City in Cotai is expected to launch on May 22.



## MOTORSPORT CALENDARS HINT F3 AND F4 RACES FOR 2021 GP

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Macau Grand Prix (GP) is likely to return this year to its original 4-day format. Several recently released motorsport calendars have indicated its return, during which Macau would host two formula racing events, the Chinese F4 and the

FIA F3 World Cup.

According to the provisional calendars made available by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), the FIA World Touring Car Cup (WTCR), Macau would see the return of the F3 cars, with the FIA F3 World Cup event to take place from November 19-21 of this year.

During the same dates, the local GP would also feature another international event. The WTCR, this year's "Season Finale," would be returning to the Race of Macau for the first time since 2018.

The Chinese Formula 4 championship has also released the provisional calendar for

this year. It includes rounds in Zhuhai, Wuhan, Ningbo, and Macau, with the final races to take place between November 18 and 20.

If these calendars are confirmed, this means that the GP event is set to return to the original format with two Formula racing events (one junior, one

senior) featured alongside. This would follow last year's 3-day reduced version disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and border restrictions.

Although the Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee has not yet released this year's event dates, the Macao Government Tourism Office has outlined the 4-day motorsport festival starting on November 18 (Thursday) and closing on November 21 (Sunday) in its yearly events calendar.

### MOTORCYCLE RACE MIGHT STAY OUT AGAIN

One of the racing events canceled from last year's edition was the Macau Motorcycle GP. The inclusion of two formula racing events racing alongside in the 2021 program, with the Junior one (F4) taking place on Saturday, may mean that the two-wheeled race will remain out of the program in 2021.

Started in 1967 (13 years after the car racing event), the motorcycle races in Macau generated interest and renown worldwide for being one of the few places on the planet where motorcycles raced on a street circuit.

The Macau GP was also regarded globally as the only international-scale event with both motorcycles and cars racing in the same program.

## Businesses overall satisfied with unified mobile payment

**B**USINESS owners and shopkeepers are happy with unifying all local mobile payment methods and have said that the impact was most obvious during peak hours.

Local mobile payment methods have recently been unified with government-led Simple Pay initiatives. The technology supports payments in two ways, differentiated by how the payment QR code is scanned.

Last month, the government finalized the unification of the scan-by-seller payment method. This Wednesday, it consolidated the scan-by-payer method.

A snack shop owner told local Chinese paper Macao Daily News that the consolidation makes operations smoother and easier, because they



will no longer need to look for a particular payment console to facilitate the payment.

Moreover, if their payment consoles are all in use, they can ask the consumer to scan the printed code to make payment. This process makes it easier for the consumer as well.

Another business owner thinks that scan-

by-customer is more convenient during peak hours. When there are several customers making payment at the same time, mistakes can be possible while keying in the amount on the payment console. With customers keying in their own amount, the business owner expects it will be more accurate. **AL**

## GROUP CALLS FOR ASSEMBLY AT TDM TO DEFEND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

**N**EW Macau Association (ANM) has called for an assembly at the entrance of public broadcaster TDM this coming Sunday in defense of freedom of the press, the group announced on its social media channels.

In addition to the motion, the group also demands the broadcaster clarify the matter of alleged persecution of press freedom, while requesting TDM to abide by the law to ensure freedom of the press.

However, in an interview with local media All About Macau, Deputy Director-General of the group, Rocky Chan, expressed his worries that the government will obstruct the event using health concerns as the reason.

Last weekend, lawmaker Au Kam San's protest over the government's third round of stimulus was called off last-minute by the Health Bureau. The Bureau cited Covid-19 as the justification, though the Macao Government Tourism Office has been promoting the city as "safe" in Mainland China.

The ANM assembly was



called in response to nine suspected new guidelines. These included promoting and advancing patriotism, as well as not spreading information against policies made by Mainland China or the Macao Special Administrative Region.

Chan said that if the suspected new guidelines were to be proven real, they would amount to an apparent act of intervening in the freedom of the press. He added that the group saw confusion from within the public broadcaster, judging from the fact that

several non-Chinese journalists have recently resigned from their posts in the company.

Although the public broadcaster has issued statements to clarify that the editorial statute had not been altered, Chan found it unconvincing because TDM has the duty to provide a clear picture to the public as it is operated with 100% public funds.

The public broadcaster's latest statement reiterated that it has been abiding with the Basic Law on the protection of press freedom. **AL**

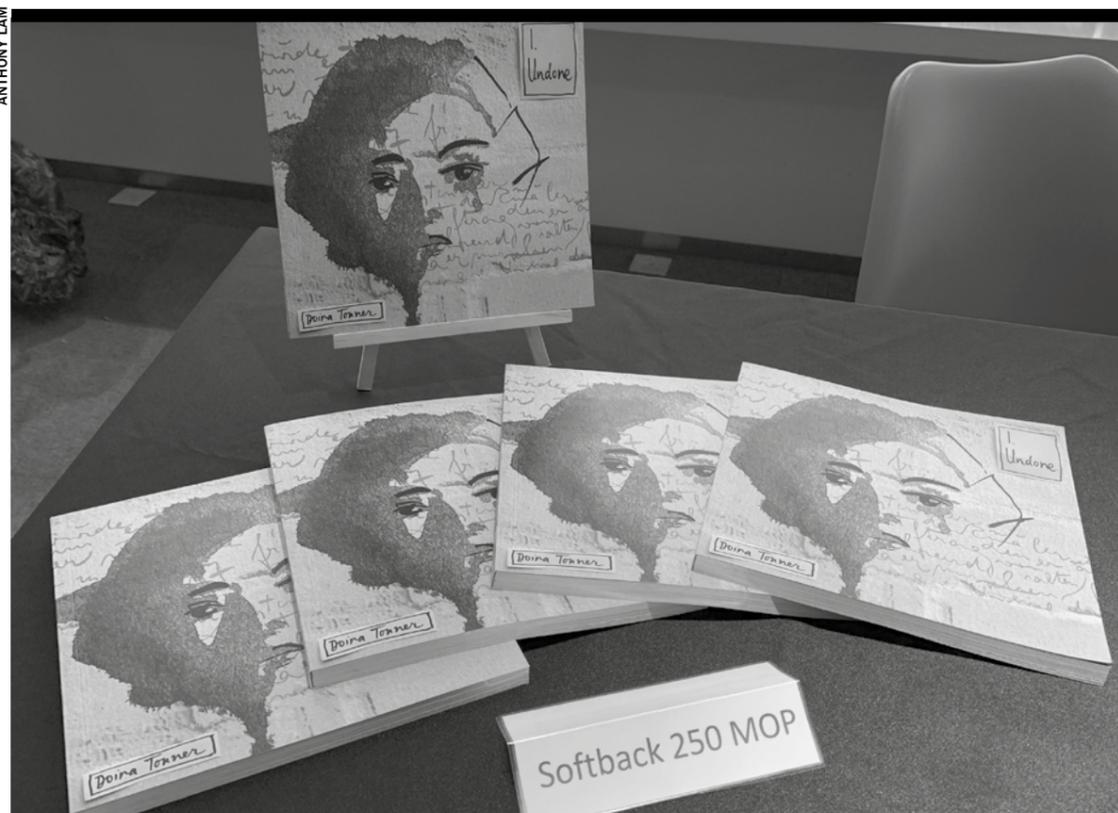
# TIS English Dept head publishes pictorial that coincidentally soothes souls

**T**ELLING her own story in a book is a way to allow readers to relate themselves to similar personal experiences and get emotionally soothed, Doina Tonner, Head of the English Department at The International School of Macao (TIS), said yesterday prior to the launching ceremony of her first pictorial.

Tonner's book, titled *I.Undone*, is a self-reflection of her personal journey towards a discovery of her creativity. The piece includes her mixed-media artwork and photography.

When she was small, Tonner's artistic talent was not recognized by her family. She felt a great desire in exploring creativity and arts, but her parents hoped she could rather focus on academic realms.

"I wrote the book at a point in my life when it became a necessity for me to acknowledge my creative side, when it was more difficult to suppress the need to create than to feel unsure about the outcome," the artist said. "I used to think that as soon as I pressed 'submit' and sent the



file off to be published, I would finally feel like a writer and an artist."

The fact is, according to the

writer-artist, the journey was more emotionally appealing than she had originally thought.

"In truth, whenever I get messa-

ges from readers who have never met me, but who feel a deep connection with my words and art, my first thought is, 'Do you really

mean it?'" she disclosed.

Tonner also described the feeling as "surreal somehow."

When asked about what impact she was trying to make on her readers, Tonner said inviting them to experience resonant moments is the most important.

"I think that's probably the most important thing when somebody feels that 'Oh, I recognize myself in the story!' but also giving them permission to share their own story to share it without being afraid," explained Tonner.

It touched her so much when she received feedbacks, sometimes sentimental, from her readers. "Once I published my book and people began to read, they started sending me messages about how it had touched them; how it had touched their lives; how they felt less lonely; how they felt understood; how much they found themselves in my book," Tonner added.

Apart from the TIS, the book is also available on Amazon. *I.Undone* is currently #2 on Amazon.ca's list of new releases in Mixed Media books. **AL**

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
Editorial, China Daily

**ORIGINS OF  
POLITICAL VIRUS  
PUT IN SPOTLIGHT  
BY REPORT**

It is no surprise those in the West who hoped to find evidence of guilt in the findings have felt disappointed about the World Health Organization report on its joint mission with China to trace the origins of the novel coronavirus.

The report, released late Tuesday and a product of a joint research trip by the WHO and Chinese scientists to Wuhan last month, shed some light on the potential pathways of the virus.

Among other things, the 123-page report described the likelihood of the virus being introduced to humans via an intermediate animal host as "likely to very likely", that of it reaching humans via cold food chain products as "possible", that of it directly infecting humans as "possible to likely", and that of it being spread to humans through a lab accident as "extremely unlikely".

In other words, the report gives no credence to the unfounded speculation that the pandemic was caused by a leak from a lab in Wuhan. And it highlights the significance of international collaboration on origin-tracing research in a global context.

It also stands as a powerful repudiation of the shameless lies some Western politicians and pundits have churned out to slander China over the months, and a sobering reminder that more hard work is needed to determine the pandemic's history.

Now that science has spoken, the international community needs to take it as an opportunity to recognize COVID-19 origin-tracing for what it is: scientific research, not a political game.

These are crucial initial findings that may help clear the ground and pave the way for future probes. But just as WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, "No single research trip can provide all the answers."

Of course, the findings are not extensive, or conclusive enough. It is common-sense and a broad consensus in the medical science community that identifying the origin of a virus takes time, possibly years, perhaps decades. Therefore, the report the expert team just submitted is the beginning, by no means the end of that process.

Countries around the world need to reach a consensus that origin-tracing missions should not be probes that are based on the presumption of guilt. The aim of the missions should be about getting to know the virus better and understanding how it has evolved so as to help beat the virus at an early date as well as prevent future disease outbreaks.

But a conspicuous ramification of the origin-tracing research so far has been its rampant politicization, which has not only seriously disrupted scientific endeavors aimed at finding the true origin of the virus, but also undermined international collaboration in the fight against the pandemic.

Some Western politicians and media have incubated and spread the political virus targeting China. As COVID-19 origin-tracing is underway, this political virus should be traced back to the perpetrators so that the malice behind it can be clearly seen and science can prevail.



Li Ka-shing

**ANALYSIS**

**HONG KONG TYCOONS  
EMERGE AS LOSERS FROM  
XI'S ELECTION REVAMP**

SHIRLEY ZHAO

**W**HEN China regained control of Hong Kong more than two decades ago, the Communist Party entrusted the city's wealthiest tycoons with enormous influence over local politics.

This week President Xi Jinping took his most dramatic step yet to grab some of that power back.

Xi's sweeping overhaul of Hong Kong's electoral system will curtail the clout of billionaires such as Li Ka-shing and Lee Shau-kee who used to wield effective control over a quarter of the seats on the 1,200-member Election Committee that decides Hong Kong's chief executive.

Under the new system, the moguls will lose more than 10% of their votes to smaller businesses and mainland Chinese companies. The committee will also add 300 more seats filled mostly by Beijing loyalists, further diluting the tycoons' power.

It's the latest sign of a fall from grace for Hong Kong's wealthiest families, who have been blamed by some Chinese officials and state media for failing to prevent anti-government protests in 2019 or fix deep-rooted problems like housing affordability.

"The biggest loser in the overhaul is Hong Kong's pro-democracy camp; the second-biggest loser is large property tycoons," said Ivan Choy, who teaches politics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. "Beijing no lon-

ger wants to negotiate with them at key elections."

**LEAST AFFORDABLE**

One of the biggest sources of friction is Hong Kong's property market, the world's least affordable. The city's sky-high home prices stem from a colonial system that limits land supply while auctioning available plots with a government-decided floor price. Local property moguls, who control the bulk of the city's buildings, have long been viewed as the biggest beneficiaries of the system and most opposed to any reforms.

Hong Kong's top 19 wealthiest people have a combined net worth of about \$272 billion, which is equivalent to 74% of the territory's gross domestic product, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Most of them made money starting out in the property business.

In an interview this week, Leung Chun-ying, who served as the chief executive of the city for five years through June 2017, said the new electoral system will help the government tackle livelihood issues, including a shortage of housing. "This is the root of a lot of social and economic problems in Hong Kong, housing shortage," Leung told Bloomberg Television this week.

The comments by Leung, who is now the vice chairman of China's top political advisory body, mean Beijing wants the local administration to focus on resolving longstanding problems afflicting the former British colony.

Some of the tycoons came under fire at the height of the 2019 protests. For instance, the 92-year-old Li - Hong Kong's richest person - drew Beijing's ire after he published a vague message in local newspapers that was widely interpreted as a call for not only halting the violence on Hong Kong's streets, but also stressing freedom, tolerance and the rule of law. China's top law-enforcement body accused the tycoon of "encouraging crime."

**CALL FOR 'PATRIOTS'**

The electoral revamp signed off by Xi allows national security police to vet candidates for the city's Legislative Council, a step that would snuff out all pro-democracy voices and align with Xi's call for "patriots" to run Hong Kong. The U.S., U.K., Japan and the European Union have all condemned China's moves.

The change "is more balanced and serves the fundamental and long-term interests of Hong Kong" and "reflects their aspiration for good governance," China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a briefing yesterday.

In the previous system, top tycoons controlled key votes in deciding the chief executive, Chinese University of Hong Kong's Choy said. While they had traditionally voted for the candidate favored by Beijing, there were times when they came close to defiance, he said.

During the 2012 election, Beijing's favored candidate Leung won with only 61% of

the votes - the lowest among all chief executives - with many tycoons showing support for their peer billionaire Henry Tang, siding with the pro-democratic opposition camp. Local press widely reported at that time that China's liaison officers in Hong Kong had to step up their efforts to rally support for Leung.

**SUPPORTING CHINA**

Besides Li and Lee, who founded two of Hong Kong's best known business empires, Adam Kwok, from the family behind the city's largest developer, and Adrian Cheng, whose family owns a jewelry-to-property conglomerate, were also on the last committee for the 2017 chief executive elections.

While representatives for Li, Lee, Kwok and Cheng didn't respond to requests for comment, many of the tycoon electors have rallied behind the new system. Li's CK group, Robert Ng's Sino Group, Lee's Henderson Land Development Co., Kwok's Sun Hung Kai Properties Ltd. and Cheng's New World Development Co. placed advertisements expressing their support in pro-Beijing newspapers in Hong Kong this week.

Hang Lung Properties Ltd., whose Chairman Ronnie Chan was on the Election Committee in 2017, said the group is supportive of China's move "to improve Hong Kong's electoral system." Ng of Sino Group, which owns properties including the Far East Finance Centre and the Conrad Hong Kong hotel, expressed enthusiasm in a statement sent to Bloomberg News through a representative.

Ng fully supports the change "as it enhances the one country, two systems principle and adds greater stability and prosperity to the livelihood of H.K. people," according to the statement.

**MDT/BLOOMBERG**





From left: Peter Wittebrood-Lemke, Frank Wittebrood, Ton Jansen, Louis Rogmans, Helene Faasen and Anne-Marie Thus cut the wedding cake after exchanging vows at Amsterdam's City Hall early Sunday, April 1, 2001

LGBTQ

# The Dutch went first in 2001; who has same-sex marriage now?

**T**WENTY years ago, just after the stroke of midnight on April 1, the mayor of Amsterdam married four couples in City Hall as the Netherlands became the first country in the world with legalized same-sex marriages.

"There are two reasons to rejoice," Mayor Job Cohen told the newlyweds before pink champagne and pink cake were served. "You are celebrating your marriage, and you are also celebrating your right to be married."

Same-sex marriage is now legal in 28 countries worldwide, as well as the self-governing island of Taiwan. That includes most of Western Europe. Yet its spread has been uneven — Taiwan is the only place in Asia to take the step; South Africa is the only African country to do so.

"If you had told me 20 years ago that today same-sex marriage would be a reality in 29 countries, I would not have believed you," said Jessica Stern, executive director of the global LGBTQ-rights group OutRight Action International.

But she noted how polarized the world is regarding LGBTQ acceptance, with nearly 70 countries continuing to criminalize same-sex relations.

"The progress has been great, no doubt. But we have a long road ahead," Stern said.

In many countries, even

outside of Asia and Africa, opposition to marriage equality remains vehement. In Guatemala, some lawmakers have proposed a bill that would explicitly ban same-sex marriage. In Poland, President Andrzej Duda was reelected last year after a campaign depicting the LGBTQ rights movement as more harmful than communism.

Poland is among a solid bloc of Eastern European countries that have resisted same-sex marriage, while 16 countries in Western Europe have legalized it.

Switzerland is on track to become the 17th — its parliament approved legalization of same-sex marriage in December. But the law hasn't taken effect, and opponents are trying to collect enough signatures to require a referendum on whether to overturn it.

Elsewhere, same-sex marriage is legal in the United States, Canada and Costa Rica; five South American countries; a majority of Mexico's 32 states; Australia and New Zealand.

Added together, those countries are home to about 1.2 billion people, roughly 15% of the world's population. Legalization came in various ways: through court rulings, legislation and — in the case of Ireland — a resounding endorsement by voters in a 2015 national referendum.

Several countries in Europe — including Italy, Greece and the Czech Republic — provide civil unions for same-sex couples. Just two weeks ago, the Vatican's orthodox office declared that the Catholic Church won't bless same-sex unions since God "cannot bless sin."

In the Netherlands, there have been more than 18,000 same-sex marriages since 2001 — about 53% of them between two women, according to the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics. Each year about 400 same-sex marriages break up, the bureau says.

Amsterdam will be celebrating the April 1 anniversary with an online symposium and a "rainbow walk" route along 20 sites considered important in the struggle for LGBTQ rights.

"There are still causes for concern," the city said. "Because equal rights don't automatically lead to everybody being treated the same."

One of the couples married 20 years ago, Gert Kassteel and Dolf Pasker, told The Associated Press they'd been warmly accepted by their neighbors and associates, though they're aware that anti-LGBTQ sentiment persists elsewhere.

"For most people, it is no issue any more," Pasker said. "Oh happy day."

In contrast to the Netherlands, there was an 11-year gap in the United States be-

tween the first legal same-sex marriages in Massachusetts in 2004 and the 2015 Supreme Court ruling that extended legalization nationwide. According to the Williams Institute, a think tank at the UCLA School of Law that specializes in research on LGBTQ issues, there were 513,000 married same-sex couples in the U.S. in 2020.

As in other countries legalizing same-sex marriage, popular support for the concept has risen steadily in the U.S. since 2004. Back then, 42% of Americans thought same-sex marriage should be legalized, according to the Gallup Poll. By last year, that figured had reached 67%.

In Africa, where religious and cultural traditions often frown on homosexuality, no country appears on track to soon join South Africa in legalizing same-sex marriage.

The situation is more fluid in Asia. A same-sex partnership bill has been proposed in Thailand's parliament. In Japan, where some local governments recognize same-sex unions, a court recently ruled that same-sex marriage should be allowed under the constitution. The ruling has no immediate legal effect, but activists say it could influence other court cases and boost their quest for parliamentary debate on allowing same-sex marriage.

India struck down a colonial-era law in 2018 that made gay sex punishable by up to 10 years in prison, and there are some openly gay celebrities. But same-sex marriage remains illegal; the government says gay and lesbian couples don't warrant the status of "family unit."

As the marriage equality movement took shape in Europe and the Americas over the past 20 years, opponents worldwide offered some basic counter-arguments.

One common warning related to religious freedom, with some faith leaders predicting repercussions for religions that disapprove of same-sex relationships.

For the most part, faiths in the same-sex marriage countries have been able to maintain their own rites of marriage. There have been some highly publicized legal cases, however, such as one that reached the U.S. Supreme Court involving a conservative Christian baker who refused to make a wedding cake for a gay couple.

Another argument was that legalizing same-sex marriage would undermine the institution of marriage itself. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1986 BOMB TEARS HOLE IN AIRLINER OVER GREECE



Four people, including an eight-month old baby, have been sucked out of a TWA passenger jet after an explosion ripped a hole in its side.

The Boeing 727 was flying at 11,000 feet (3,350 metres) over Greece, on its way to Athens, when the bomb went off.

It blew a hole six feet by three feet (2m x 1m) wide under a window in front of the starboard wing.

It is believed the explosion happened at floor level in the passenger compartment itself.

The four bodies of the victims were retrieved from a site 87 miles (140 km) southwest of Athens.

Three were from the same Greek-American family, believed to have been a grandmother, her daughter and her granddaughter.

Police also found the body of a male passenger identified as a Colombian-born American, sucked out of the plane with his seat.

The remaining 118 passengers and crew survived. The pilot, Captain Richard Petersen, made an emergency landing, telling Athens control tower that the pressurisation in the cabin was failing.

He is being hailed as a hero. "We are proud of him," said a TWA source.

Just seven passengers were taken to hospital, and only three were kept in for treatment.

One was Ibrahim al-Nami, from Saudi Arabia, who said he had been sitting next to the man who was sucked out with his seat.

"We heard a big bang outside the window," he said, "and then I saw the man next to me disappear and I felt myself being pulled out."

He avoided sharing the same fate by clinging on to his wife's seat.

Another passenger escaped because she left her seat only minutes earlier to go to the lavatory.

Florentia Haniotakis, a Greek-American from Ohio, praised the crew and said they had comforted passengers during the emergency landing.

The airliner, TWA flight 840, was on the same Rome-Cairo route as a similar TWA plane hijacked by Shia Muslim gunmen in June 1985 after leaving Athens for Rome.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

It emerged that the bomb had been planted under seat number 10F, probably inside a lifejacket.

A group calling itself the Ezzedine Kassam Unit of the Arab Revolutionary Cells said it was responsible, and said it was acting in retaliation for US bombing raids against Libya the previous month.

Police initially identified a Lebanon-born Palestinian woman, Mai Elias Mansur, a suspected terrorist connected with the Abu Nidal extremist group, involved in an abortive attempt to bomb a Pan American airliner in 1983.

She had travelled in seat 10F on an earlier flight of the same Boeing 727.

Ms Mansur strenuously denied any involvement. After two years of fruitless investigation, the US State Department said it considered she had carried out the bombing, operating on the orders of known Palestinian terrorist Colonel Hawari.

Nobody has ever been convicted of carrying out the bombing.

TWA filed for bankruptcy in 2001 and was taken over by American Airlines.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It's hard to stay grounded in reality under Friday's skies, Aries. The moon roams through wanderlust Sagittarius, locking into a disorienting connection with foggy Neptune.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

The reflective Sagittarius moon spends the day in a dizzying square to dreamy Neptune, making goals seem more far off than they actually are.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Relationship matters seem to stand in the spotlight of your focus today. The moon floats through your opposite sign of, sending energy towards the current partnership story in your world.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You're in the mood to take care of business. Yet, the cosmos keep pushing you out to sea mentally, as the lofty-thinking Sagittarius moon aligns with reality-dissolving Neptune.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

The moon's dizzying square to reality-bending Neptune makes for confusing feelings on the intimacy front, but fortunately her link later on with uplifting Jupiter helps get things back on track.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Luna's link to dreamy Neptune can create mixed messages in partnerships, her link with uplifting Jupiter may bring positive news on the work front.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Your mental world may feel a bit foggy today, Libra. Though you're eager to set out and accomplish things, you may feel slowed down by the sleepy atmosphere that hovers over the day.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Luna's disorienting square with Neptune can create flights of fancy around romantic matters. Later, the moon's connection with mood-boosting Jupiter brings positive exchanges with family members.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

It's hard to keep your feet planted on the ground today, Sagittarius. The moon cruises through your sign all day, locking eyes with reality-bending Neptune on her path.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Luna's harmonious link to the sun and gentle Venus offers peace to be found in solitude on the home front. Mercury's connection with potent Pluto stirs prompts conversations concerning your individual needs.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

It's an ideal day for catching up and re-establishing lines of connection. Meanwhile, mental Mercury's link with heavy Pluto stirs up healing insights around ancient issues.



### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

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

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

### EASY

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

### EASY+

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

### MEDIUM

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

### HARD

			5	2	8			
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	8			7				
			1					
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	2							

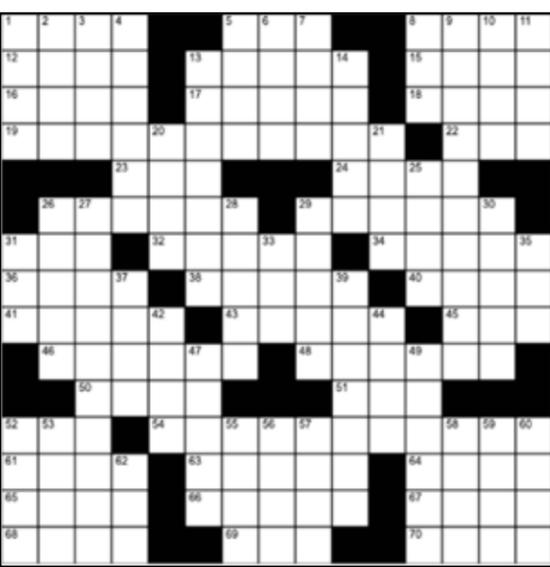
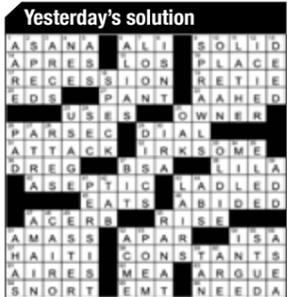
## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	12	18	overcast
Harbin	4	14	shower
Tianjin	13	15	drizzle
Urumqi	1	9	clear
Xi'an	9	11	drizzle
Lhasa	6	15	overcast
Chengdu	12	17	overcast
Chongqing	16	19	overcast
Kunming	15	26	cloudy
Nanjing	12	17	overcast
Shanghai	16	20	overcast
Wuhan	11	13	drizzle
Hangzhou	16	21	overcast
Taipei	21	26	cloudy
Guangzhou	24	32	cloudy
Hong Kong	25	30	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	2	7	sleet
Frankfurt	5	17	cloudy
Paris	8	22	clear
London	5	13	cloudy
New York	1	10	cloudy

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Does in; 5- Vespa rider, perhaps; 8- Tennis great Arthur; 12- Woody's son; 13- Bygone birds; 15- Coal-rich region; 16- Fall short; 17- Tennyson's "Arden"; 18- Highest point; 19- Large self-service retail store; 22- Apt. divisions; 23- Maui memento; 24- Molten rock; 26- Journey; 29- Blazing; 31- Hide-hair link; 32- Strike repeatedly; 34- Antagonist; 36- Actress Best; 38- Stage play; 40- Suffix with exist; 41- Giraffe's cousin; 43- Suppose; 45- French possessive; 46- Recompense; 48- Walk stealthily; 50- Sea-going eagle; 51- Russian space station; 52- Directional ending; 54- Impressive; 61- Fill to surfeit; 63- Experiment; 64- Whit; 65- Collections of anecdotes; 66- Can't stand; 67- Token taker; 68- \_\_\_ never work; 69- \_\_\_ Aviv; 70- Charts;

DOWN: 1- Big lugs; 2- German Mrs; 3- Turn over; 4- Exclusively; 5- \_\_\_ Lisa; 6- Smell or fragrance; 7- Pier; 8- Al Jolson's real first name; 9- Capital of California; 10- Soccer star Mia; 11- "\_\_\_ Tu": 1974 hit; 13- A deified mortal; 14- Ledge; 20- Get as a result; 21- Story; 25- Turbine blade; 26- Russian liquor; 27- Decorative; 28- Continental cash; 29- Allow to enter; 30- Host; 31- Classical beginning; 33- Doze; 35- You betchal; 37- Impersonator; 39- Creatures; 42- Hostelries; 44- Long poem, such as those attributed to Homer; 47- Profundity; 49- Aphorism; 52- Morales of "NYPD Blue"; 53- Tirade; 55- Quod \_\_\_ demonstrandum; 56- Quote; 57- Chinese weight; 58- "Damn Yankees" role; 59- At the apex of; 60- Phooey!; 62- Alien's subj.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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- 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
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- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



Michelle Pfeiffer (left) and Susan Coyne in a scene from "French Exit," a Sony Pictures Classics release

DRIVE IN

# MICHELLE PFEIFFER HAS A FEAST WITH 'FRENCH EXIT'

LINDSEY BAHR,  
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

IS there any living actor better at the disdainful eye roll than Michelle Pfeiffer? Her latest turn

in "French Exit" should end all debate on the matter. The film itself is a bit of an odd duckling. It's arch, cold and self-consciously contrived, works more often than it doesn't. Pfeiffer is flawless in

her most delicious performance in years as a New York society woman who has, much to her aloof annoyance, run out of money.

Pfeiffer's Frances Price is a dying breed, literally and figuratively,

a refined and caustic socialite who Slim Aarons probably photographed a few times over the years. She's the kind who would never lower herself to something as uncouth as a certain reality show franchise. Even the word socialite is probably vile to someone like Frances. She's been coasting through her own life in the 12 years since her husband's death. And now she's found herself living out a cliché she wasn't prepared for: Her money is so old, it's gone.

She'd planned to die before it ran out, she says, but then she just kept on living. Now broke, she has no choice but to quietly sell everything for cash and flee on a transatlantic crossing to a friend's luxurious apartment in Paris with her dilettante son Malcolm (Lucas Hedges) and striking black cat, Small Frank, in tow. It's unclear how Hedges ended up as a crossing companion to older female relatives in two movies this year (including opposite Meryl Streep in "Let Them All Talk") but it's a role he wears comfortably. And Malcolm and Frances are a more eccentric bunch: They drink martinis, wine and champagne all day every day, they go to leisurely lunches, they over enunciate their consonants and use contractions sparingly and denim does not seem to be in their vocabulary or their wardrobes.

"French Exit" is a collaboration between director Azazel Jacobs and author Patrick deWitt, who adapted his own novel for the screen. As I mentioned previously, it doesn't always work, but the writing is sharp, the performers top-notch and the set designs achingly beautiful. And how can you quibble too much with a film that is such a wonderful showcase for Pfeiffer? There is unambiguous joy in watching her wage and win a silent battle with a snobby French waiter (her weapons include spray perfume and a lighter), sure, but there are subtle moments too. Frances is not just a one note rich lady and somewhere within all the artifice and pretention, there is a surprisingly moving tale about living while knowing that death is imminent. Not since Darren Aronofsky's "Mother!" has she had a such a great showing. It's truly a mystery why she missed out on an Oscar nomination for this one, but I hope it's a reminder to filmmakers out there that Pfeiffer is still at the top of her game. She just needs something to sink her teeth into.

"French Exit," a Sony Pictures Classics release in theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for language and sexual references. Running time: 110 minutes. ★★★★★

AD

合夥人 PARTNERS:

- 官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha\*
- 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues\*
- 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata\*
- 趙魯 Zhao Lu\*
- 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

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- 白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
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- 薛明恩 Maria Antónia Giestas
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- 杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo
- 馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins
- 宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção
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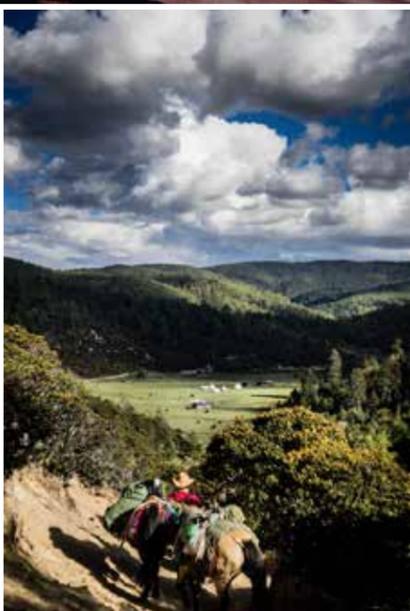
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TASTE OF EDESIA

# Grand Cru of the Himalayas

IRENE SAM, MDT

**B**ORN from a dream that began in 2008, Ao Yun is the first Grand Cru of the Himalayas, a unique, world-class fine wine in China. First of its kind, it brings a new region – Yunnan – to the world winemaking map. This year, the brand released its latest vintage of 2017. Ao Yun 2017 boasts a concentrated yet fresh and velvety blend that symbolises the wine's enhancement through a challenging climate.

Marked by challenges in climatic conditions, 2017 started with a dry and warm winter followed by a cool spring that delayed growth of the vines. The summer was cool and much too wet, and at the beginning of fall, a crucial window opened with one month of higher temperatures than average. The season's climate and newly optimised ways of working in the vineyard resulted in a generous harvest with very powerful and beautifully mature grapes. The unique climate further permits the grapes to concentrate without oxidation of tannins and aroma,

keeping the great Himalayan freshness and aging potential.

With careful consideration for the powerful maturation of the grape, the Ao Yun team had to execute a precise job of refining the tannin extraction during the delicate winemaking process. During malolactic fermentation and breeding, the team increased the levels of natural micro-oxygenation to soften these powerful textures. For the first time, the Ao Yun team added 2% of the Merlot grape variety, increasing roundness of the final blend. A more refined selection process was adopted for picking out the finest wine batches to be part of Ao Yun, before being aged for 14 months in 38% new oak and 62% older barrels.

Ao Yun 2017 exudes a deep, dark colour, and aromas on the nose consist of fresh black fruit such as blackcurrant, game, autumn forest floor, a cold fireplace, and earth. On the palate, it is more concentrated, rounder than previous vintages also thanks to the Merlot and an added velvety touch, followed by Ao Yun's signature long and salty mineral finish.

## Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



### THE LANZHOU 1200 METRES TURF

2021-04-03|Sat|16:55

**M**Y best bet for Easter is on another outsider come from K.S Wong's yard this Saturday in **Yings Fans**. **Yings Fans** caught my eyes in his morning work he does not look like a low class galloper to me in his morning works; but looking at his rating he is in modest 39, he still have some upside in my humble opinion. Looked further into his racing performance he is not that bad especially in his pet distance in MJC. In his racing career with MJC he recorded 2 wins and also five placings in the 1200 metres turf races. In his last race I watched again and again in the replay he did lead strongly in front and weaken in the final stages, but that was a 1500 metres turf race. Given this race on Saturday he draw barrier six in his pet distance, I believe he can really show his true colour and turn around his placing with his usual racing tacti. He was 38 to 1 in his last start, he would well be in the same pay-out zone this Saturday, if so I have no hesitation to back him up on the day.

Race 6 | Horse no. 6 Yings Fans Win & Place bets



**OPINION**

**World Views**

Virginia Postrel, MDT/Bloomberg



**TELEMEDICINE WILL BE GREAT AFTER COVID, TOO**

People have been predicting the ascent of telemedicine since the 1920s, but even mass broadband use wasn't enough to make it catch on. Doctors were too worried about losing income, privacy restrictions limited the utility of software and people were just too accustomed to the old ways of doing things.

Then Covid-19 arrived and everything changed. In-person doctor visits became dangerous for both patients and medical staff. By April 2020, half of U.S. physicians had adopted some version of telemedicine, up from 18% in 2018. Mount Sinai Faculty Practice in New York City reported that it had more telehealth visits on an average day that month than in all of 2019.

As the pandemic wanes, some of those visits will no doubt go back to being face to face. But many won't — and shouldn't. Telemedicine is too convenient for both patients and doctors.

Consider surgeons. They don't immediately come to mind as candidates for virtual visits. But much of their time is taken up with pre- and post-operative care that could be done over the internet. It doesn't take an in-person visit to prescribe imaging for an upcoming operation or to check in to see how a patient's knee replacement is doing. Patients can spend less time going to and from visits and sitting in waiting rooms. (I once spent four hours waiting for a busy surgeon to see me for a post-operative checkup.)

Telemedicine is also a convenient way to offer after-hours care, particularly when there's a time-zone difference. And that suggests another potential positive legacy of the pandemic: loosened regulations to let licensed medical professionals cross state lines.

Almost half of U.S. states have laws allowing out-of-state health-care practitioners to work during emergencies. Others used executive actions to enable medical practitioners from elsewhere to help out during the pandemic. But why limit such waivers to emergencies? It's not as though human health is different in Arizona and Missouri. State-by-state license requirements serve mostly to limit competition. (The same might be said for limits on internationally trained medical personnel.)

Thirty-three states and the District of Columbia already belong to a compact that allows licensed nurses to practice in any of the member states. Telemedicine services that, for example, provide after-hours triage are able to cover most of the country by hiring nurses who live in compact states.

When Covid-19 hit, compact members found it much easier to keep their hospitals staffed. New Jersey, which had just joined the group, sped up implementation to let out-of-state nurses pitch in as Covid cases soared.

"Expediting the process has absolutely enabled us to move people appropriately where they're needed," said Mary Beth Russell, vice president at the Center for Professional Development, Innovation & Research at RWJBarnabas Health, the state's largest health-care system. That sort of flexibility — for hospitals, health care professionals, and patients — shouldn't require emergency conditions.

**PFIZER SAY VACCINE EFFECTIVE UP TO SIX MONTHS LATER**

Pfizer says its vaccine continues to be effective against COVID-19 up to six months later.

Pfizer and its German partner, BioNTech, announced updated results yesterday from their ongoing late-stage study of more than 44,000 volunteers.

The companies said the vaccine was 91% effective against symptomatic disease and was even more protective in preventing severe disease. Of 927 confirmed COVID-19 cases detected through March 13, 77 were among people who received the vaccine and 850

were among people who got dummy shots.

There were no serious safety concerns and the vaccine also appeared to work against a variant first detected in South Africa, the companies said.

The U.K. and U.S. gave the emergency green light to roll out Pfizer's vaccine late last year followed by many other countries. The vaccine is authorized for ages 16 and up.

This week, the companies said the vaccine is safe and strongly protective in kids as young as 12, based on a study of 2,260 U.S. volunteers.

**CHINA FOREIGN MINISTER IN TALKS WITH SE ASIAN COUNTERPARTS**

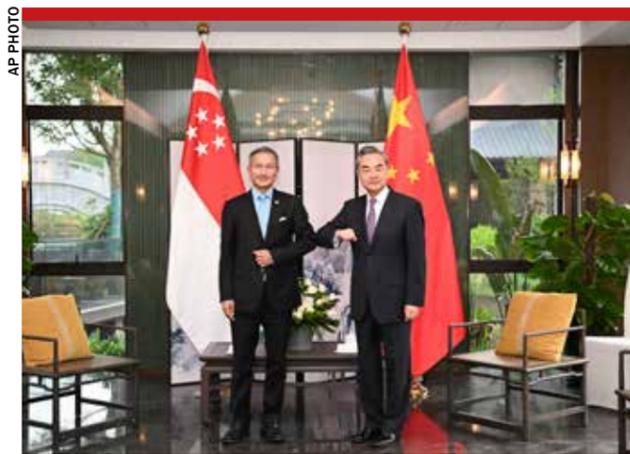
CHINESE Foreign Minister Wang Yi is meeting with counterparts from four Southeast Asian countries this week as Beijing seeks to expand its influence in the region amid a sharp downturn in relations with Washington.

Talks with Singapore's Vivian Balakrishnan, Malaysia's Hishammuddin Hussein, Indonesia's Retno Marsudi and Teodoro Locsin of the Philippines are being held over three days in the southern city of Nanping in Fujian province.

The official Xinhua News Agency said yesterday that Wang told Balakrishnan that China wants to strengthen strategic communication and make joint efforts to maintain regional peace and stability.

The two countries should work together to oppose vaccine nationalism, Xinhua quoted Wang as saying.

He also referred to the ongoing turmoil in Myanmar, telling Balakrishnan that China supports the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in upholding the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs and in helping to restore stability in Myanmar in the ASEAN way, Xinhua said.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right) bumps elbows with Singaporean Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan in Nanping City yesterday

China has sought to prevent the ASEAN bloc from taking a unified stand on China's claims to virtually the entire South China Sea, where it has territorial disputes with several Southeast Asian countries.

The Philippines demanded Wednesday the removal of more than 250 Chinese boats it has spotted near six islands and reefs in the disputed waters.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying responded yesterday that Whitsun Reef, where the vessels were first spotted more than a week ago, has long been a place for Chinese fishing boats to

shelter from rough waters, and that it is normal for them to do so.

"We know that there are some forces that keep trying to drive a wedge between China and the Philippines by all means," she said. "We hope the Philippines will be able to tell right from wrong and not be misled."

After wrapping up his meetings with his Southeast Asian counterparts today, Wang is to meet South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong in the southern port of Xiamen on Saturday amid tensions over North Korea, which relies on Chinese economic and political support. MDT/AP

Pakistan's media regulatory agency yesterday reinstated access to the Chinese video service TikTok, after a court banned it weeks ago and urged authorities to ensure that it carried no "vulgar" content. The court in Peshawar had issued the ban on March 11 following complaints about the alleged presence of "immoral and indecent content" on the popular social media app.



Slovakia's president on yesterday swore in a new coalition government to end a political crisis triggered by a secret deal to buy Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine. President Zuzana Caputova appointed the new Cabinet led by Prime Minister Eduard Heger two days after the previous government of Igor Matovic resigned. It was the first European government to collapse due to its handling of the pandemic but the move kept the same four-party coalition in power and avoided the possibility of an early election.



Niger's security forces thwarted an attempted military coup at the West African country's presidential palace overnight just two days before the newly elected president is to be sworn into office in a peaceful transfer of power, the government said yesterday. The coup attempt raises fear of more violence coinciding with newly elected President Mohamed Bazoum's inauguration today. Already his administration faces unprecedented threats from Islamic extremists near its troubled border with Mali.

**THE DECISIVE MOMENT**

AP Photo/Dmitry Serebryakov



Who brought the marshmallows? People watch a castle-shaped wooden construction burning as part of celebrations at the Maslenitsa (Shrovetide) festival at the Nikola-Lenivets art park in, Russia.

**HOLIDAY TIMES**

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the Easter holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Wednesday April 7. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.