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China has sentenced a former education official and a former legal official in the northwestern region of Xinjiang to death with a two-year reprieve on charges including separatism and bribe taking. Sattar Sawut and Shirzat Bawudun are the latest of Xinjiang bureaucrats, almost all members of the Turkic Uyghur, to be sentenced on national security charges in what China calls a campaign against “two-faced officials” who are seeking to undermine Chinese rule from within the system.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has acknowledged his country was facing the “worst-ever situation” as he addressed thousands of grassroots members of his ruling party during a major political conference in Pyongyang, with North Korea’s coronavirus lockdown unleashing further shock on an economy devastated by decades of mismanagement and crippling U.S.-led sanctions over his nuclear weapons program.



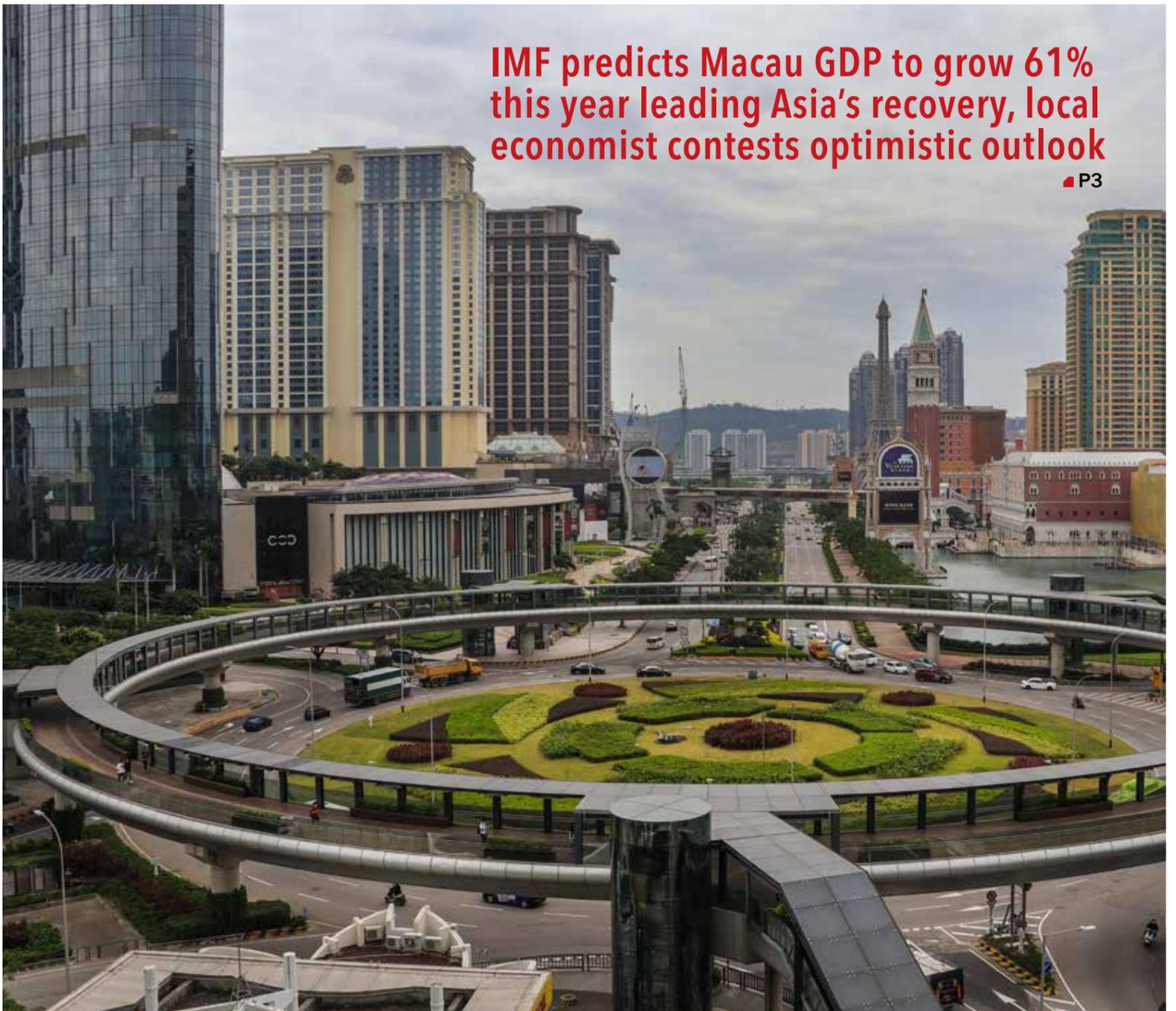
Japan The Tokyo Olympic torch relay will not run through the streets of Osaka prefecture next week because of rising COVID-19 cases. The move is a setback for Tokyo organizers, who began the relay two weeks ago from northeastern Fukushima prefecture with 10,000 runners planning to crisscross Japan over the course of four months. The Olympics open in just over 100 days on July 23.

Iran shattered its daily record for new infections for the second consecutive day yesterday as cases soared to 20,954, a worrisome trend after more than a year of the country battling the worst outbreak in the Middle East. Iran’s severe surge triggered new movement restrictions in major cities following a two-week public holiday for Nowruz.

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FASTEST RECOVERY

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



IMF predicts Macau GDP to grow 61% this year leading Asia’s recovery, local economist contests optimistic outlook

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DOMESTIC TRAVEL SCHEME SHOULD BE EXTENDED TO WEEKDAYS: ASSOCIATION

HONEY TSANG

THE MOP120 million domestic travel program is instrumental in helping local tour guides take home some earnings, but its scope should be extended to help them stay afloat, Wu Wai Fong, chairman of the Macau Tourist Guide Association, told the Times yesterday.

“The current scheme only covers tours run on weekends. I think it should be extended to weekdays to create more job opportunities for local tour guides who are deep in financial difficulties,” Wu explained.

Wu stressed that the city’s tour guides have been tapped out for a long time with international travel coming to a halt due to the pandemic. Upcoming domestic tours can relieve their financial hardship to a certain extent, but, she



said, not enough to get them out of the woods. As of 4 p.m. yesterday, over 500

local tour guides had signed up for the scheme, over 100 more than registered for the previous

version titled “Macao Ready Go! Local Tours,” launched in June 2020.

Wu expected the final tally would be even higher after midnight last night: the application deadline for eligible tour guides.

This round of the domestic travel program, part of the third round of stimulus organized by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), will consist of six itineraries.

Unlike “Macao Ready Go! Local Tours” which focused on 15 theme-based routes, the forthcoming scheme will broaden its scope to several localities in Macau.

“The six itineraries covered in the scheme this time will be categorized geographically. Each route will zero in on one locality, such as the Macau Peninsula, Taipa, Coloane,” she added.

The concept behind organizing

tour itineraries geographically is to capitalize on the domestic tourism momentum to reinvigorate particular districts in Macau, she said.

Wu revealed that new tourist hotspots will be incorporated into the six routes, such as Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Coloane, the new Grand Prix Museum and others.

Some lesser-visited places and temples will be featured as well. The helicopter ride, a popular activity from the previous scheme, will be retained.

Eligible tour guides who participate in the program will be responsible for guiding the tours. Before that, they will be enrolled in training programs to acquaint themselves with information about the locations.

Through the domestic travel program, a Macau resident can enjoy a subsidy of MOP280 for domestic tours and MOP200 for local accommodation. The move, the government explained, is to encourage domestic travel by local residents and to foster the city’s tourism industry.

49TH COVID-19 CASE RECORDED

A local resident who arrived in Macau yesterday via Taiwan is the city’s 49th case, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre announced last night. The 23-year-old male resident flew from Portugal to Paris on April 4. On April 6, he boarded a flight to Taiwan and arrived in the city yesterday. The case was classified as an imported case. The patient was admitted to the public hospital for treatment. Yesterday, 15 residents returned to Macau from Europe and the United States via Taipei.

ISLAND HOSPITAL ESTABLISHMENT WORK GROUP INAUGURATED

To prepare for the construction of the Island Hospital, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture has recently appointed members to form the Island Hospital Establishment Work Group, with immediate past director of the Health Bureau, Lei Chin Ion, as coordinator. The work group shall determine the mode of operation and location of the future medical facility. The work group shall also act as an advisory body for the government on the construction, procurement, human resources and other matters concerning the Island Hospital.

China’s travel surged in Ching Ming; MGTO eyes more visitors in May

HONEY TSANG

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is set to mount a series of online-and-offline promotions in mainland cities before Golden Week in May to entice more mainland holidaymakers to visit Macau, MGTO director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said.

Fernandes’ remarks came after China saw some bullish tourism statistics during the Ching Ming Festival.

According to data released yesterday by Trip.com Group, one of China’s largest online travel agencies, the group’s total domestic travel bookings for the Ching Ming Festival, April 4, surged 300% year on year.

Moreover, domestic air ticket booking during the festival saw a double-digit increase compared to 2019. These statistics indicate a strong recovery in travel sentiment among mainland tourists.



On the back of China’s robust tourism performance last week, Fernandes is looking to boost visitor numbers over the Golden Week holiday from May 1 to 5.

Fernandes said the MGTO is planning to launch a series of promotions in various mainland cities. The campaigns will promote Macau as a safe and healthy destination using a hybrid format of both online

and offline activities.

“These promotional campaigns can be deemed the first to touch base with mainland residents face-to-face since the outbreak of the pandemic,” Fernandes told TDM.

Fernandes thinks that a hybrid format of advertising will be the principal approach for MGTO to promote Macau’s tourism brand in the future.

The offline, in-person pro-

motion is considered more constructive to build a deeper connection with residents in China, she said.

Fernandes is anticipating an uptake in tourist numbers in the May Golden Week, traditionally a peak travel season for mainland tourists. However, it will be predicated on a stable pandemic situation in China, she added.

Apart from the MGTO, the international investment bank, JP Morgan, is also expecting Macau’s gross gaming revenue (GGR) to ramp up during Golden Week in May, partly due to a continuously improving travel sentiment and the release of pent-up travel demand among mainland tourists.

“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 and travel easing,” the bank stated earlier.

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ECONOMY

IMF predicts 61% growth, local economist believes otherwise

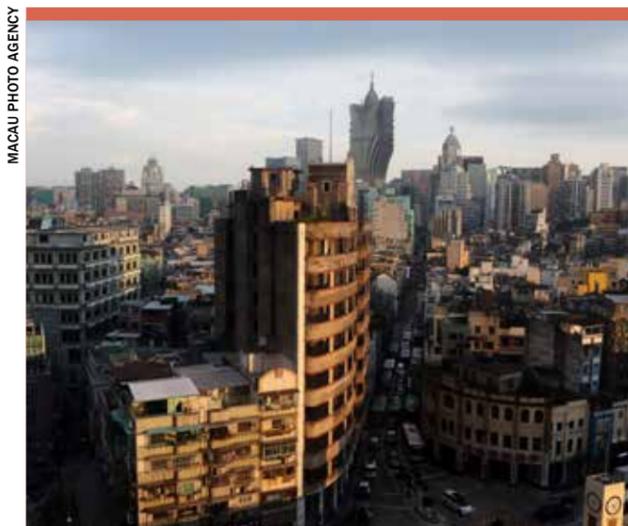
LYNZY VALLES

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted that the Macau SAR's economy is expected to record a staggering growth of 61.2% year-on-year this 2021, after last year's economy fell 56.3% due to the pandemic outbreak.

In the financial institution's World Economic Outlook report, the city suffered the most significant decline of any economy in Asia.

The figure is also higher than its previous expectations, since it had earlier announced a forecast growth of 32% for 2021.

Previously, the IMF predicted that the economy was likely to contract by 52.3% in 2020, representing a dramatic update on the last predicted scenario which,



MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

ch, in April 2020, pointed to a contraction of only 29.6%.

The local economy depends heavily on the city's casinos, whose revenue was badly damaged last year, partly due to the 15-day lockdown in February 2020. Visitation restrictions on the mainland last year,

which have made travel to Macau impractical for most people, was also a factor in the decline.

However, economist Albano Martins believed that the city may even see a recession this first quarter of the year, predicting a -10% plunge.

"If the gaming industry continues this way, we may see a growth, but not that size. [It could be] less than 20%," Martins told the Times.

He admitted that economic forecasts are difficult to predict since the variables can change quickly.

"But [I'm] almost sure the IMF forecast may not be logical, as a recovery in second [half] may not change to more than triple," he said.

The expert implied that the IMF may have based the forecasts on the recovery of the city's gaming sector.

Macau's gross gaming revenue last month totaled MOP8.31 billion, a record monthly high since the Covid-19 outbreak.

Brokerage JP Morgan said that the figure "bodes well for further recovery," where the drivers 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, some gaming experts have remarked that it is still too early to tell if the figure constitutes a recovery, sentiments Martins has echoed.

"I am being more cautious not expecting any big recovery as there are many clouds over the industry. So, [there] may be a recession in first quarter and no more than 20% growth all year," Martins added.

GDP GROWTH (%)

	2020	Projections	
		2021	2022
Asia	-1.5	7.6	5.4
Advanced Asia	-3.1	4.1	3.0
Japan	-4.8	3.3	2.5
Korea	-1.0	3.6	2.8
Australia	-2.4	4.5	2.8
Taiwan	3.1	4.7	3.0
Singapore	-5.4	5.2	3.2
Hong Kong	-6.1	4.3	3.8
New Zealand	-3.0	4.0	3.2
Macau	-56.3	61.2	43.0
Emerging and Developing Asia	-1.0	8.6	6.0
China	2.3	8.4	5.6
India	-8.0	12.5	6.9

SOURCE: IMF

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INCOME SUBSIDY FOR THE DISABLED TAKES APPLICATIONS

The Labour Affairs Bureau is now taking applications for this year's income subsidy scheme for disabled residents. The application period will end April 30. Eligible residents must hold the disability registration issued by the Social Welfare Bureau, work less than 128 hours per month, as well as earn less than the minimum wage of MOP32/hour or MOP6,656/month. Besides the disability registration, applicants should also submit copies of their ID and bank account details. Application forms must be signed by both the applicant and the employer.

NEARLY 40% MORE ROAD ACCIDENT INJURIES IN FIRST TWO MONTHS Y-O-Y

The Public Security Police Force has recently announced that in the first two months of the year, nearly 40% more injuries incurred by traffic accidents were recorded compared to the same period last year. With 2,117 traffic accidents recorded in the period, there was a 47% increase. Some 700 cases of failing to obey the red light were recorded, amounting to a 46% rise. As for speeding, 25 cases took place on the Amizade Bridge and 184 on the Sai Van Bridge.

410,000 MACAU FACEBOOK USERS INVOLVED IN DATA LEAKS

HONEY TSANG

MORE than 410,000 Facebook accounts in Macau have had their personal information leaked in the tech giant's data breaches saga, according to the Office for Personal Data Protection (GPDP).

The GPDP said authorities have not received any complaints and inquiries regarding the case, but will closely monitor the situation, according to a report by TDM.

The 410,000 concerned local Facebook accounts have been among the 533 million Facebook users worldwide who have fallen victim to personal data leaks.

Their personal information, including phone numbers, full names, email addresses, locations, was posted on an obscure hacking forum.

The incident was first reported by Insider, a news website, on April 3. It is suspected that the leaked data may be used by hackers to impersonate people and commit fraud.

Alongside the 410,000 local accounts being affected, the incident also involves data from

BLOOMBERG



over 32 million accounts in the United States, 11 million in the United Kingdom, and 6 million in India, CNN reported.

In an announcement published by Facebook on April 6, the data were stolen in 2019.

"It is important to understand that malicious actors obtained this data not through

hacking our systems but by scraping it from our platform before September 2019," Facebook stated.

Facebook spokesperson Andy Stone told CNN earlier that the firm already "found and fixed this issue in August 2019."

Facebook vows to work to detect and stop similar breaches,

but also calls on users to make regular privacy checkups to protect themselves from such breaches.

GPDP also calls on Macau's residents to be vigilant against data leaks in the digital world. It advises local residents not to expose too much personal information on the internet.

Organizer hints at loss of June 4 exhibition this year

REPRESENTING the Macau Democratic Development Union, lawmaker Au Kam San said the group will decide within this week whether the annual June 4 exhibition will be held this year.

The lawmaker hinted at the admittedly likely possibility of it not being held despite ongoing deliberations.

The exhibition has been held for three decades. It was suspended while it was on tour in the city by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) last year.

Last year, the vigil was forced to run online.

The reason the authority gave was to safeguard public health given the Covid-19 pandemic. They noted that both the exhibition and the vigil would, if approved, break of infection control.

Au recently told local Chinese paper Cheng Pou that usually the application for use of the venue would be submitted to the government around this time of the year.

Last year, the IAM initially

RENATO MARQUES



gave a green light to the exhibition, but later revoked its decision, saying that the exhibition did not fall within the areas of culture, leisure, environment and health.

In response, the organizer only filed an appeal to the IAM but not to the court. Au explained that searching for judicial arguments would have taken much time and money because a lawyer would be required.

"It wasn't worthwhile," he said.

In contrast, an appeal against political assembly, for example, can be filed directly to the top court and will be processed with priority, explained Au.

As for the June 4 vigil, Au said he hopes that it can be held as it has for the last three decades. He also hopes that it can return to the Senado Square. **AL**

UM FORECASTS UNEMPLOYMENT RATE TO DROP UP TO 3.3%

HONEY TSANG

MACAU'S unemployment rate among local residents is forecast to drop from 3.6% in 2020 to the range of 3.2% and 3.3% this year. The University of Macau (UM) unveiled the macroeconomic prognosis for the city yesterday.

The overall unemployment rate is forecast to fall between 2.2% to 2.3%, vis-à-vis 2.5% in 2020, the UM Centre for Macau Studies and Department of Economics said yesterday.

The scholars gauged the projected numbers by contemplating four various scenarios for Macau's visitor arrivals in 2021 — 13.8 million (35% of the number in 2019), 17.7 million (45%

of 2019's), 19.7 million (50% of 2019's), and 21.7 million (55% of 2019's).

Macau went through a severe economic contraction last year but will see a recovery in 2021. However, the projected GDP is expected not to reach the level of 2019, with the income of many residents falling, the UM scholars pointed out.

The researchers call on the government to continue to make good use of public resources to help local residents ride out the storm during the pandemic.

Apart from the jobless rate, UM scholars also released other projected barometers for this year, including 21.4%-33.5% for economic growth, and 53.4%-82.1% for export growth.

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



COVID-19

Vaccination opens for stranded workers, TNR family members

RENATO MARQUES

FROM tomorrow (April 9), the Covid-19 vaccination plan established by the local health authorities will include all stranded workers as well as family members of non-resident workers (TNRs), the coordinator of Vaccination Plan, Tai Wah Hou, announced yesterday at the weekly Covid-19 press briefing.

According to Tai, the extended plan also includes all students in Macau, regardless of their residency status.

Expanding upon the details of the plan, Tai said that from 9 a.m., April 9, it will be possible for people in these categories to schedule their vaccination for as early as the next day (April 10) if they choose to be vaccinated with the Sinopharm vaccine and as early as Monday (April 12) if they opt for the mRNA vaccine, produced by BioNTech.

Tai noted that residence in Macau for at least three months in the last half-year would be a further condition of inoculation.



For all students, access to the vaccines will be free of charge, while stranded TNRs and family members of TNRs will have to pay as much as 500 patacas for the two doses of the vaccine, Tai explained in a reply to a question

from the media.

The measure solves a problem that has arisen since the central government's requirement that, to get a visa to enter the mainland, foreign workers would have to first be vaccinated with the Si-

nopharm vaccine. This condition was impossible to meet because most of the stranded workers were former TNRs that had their permits (blue cards) canceled or expired and so had lost TNR status, ultimately denying them access to all vaccines.

This issue had been raised several times since the central government authorities revealed the condition, which has turned out to be incompatible with the new law for the hiring of TNRs. This law, in force since October last year, states that to be hired as

a TNR, the person needs to be outside Macau when the employer makes the application, and enter Macau only after such a request is approved by the immigration authorities.

Several lawmakers raised the issue at the Legislative Assembly last week, calling on the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, to find a solution for the problem: a problem that, in the opinion of many lawmakers, was created as a result of the new law concerning the hiring of TNRs not considering exceptional cases.

Avoiding such controversy, however, Tai only referred to this new vaccination measure as a way to effectively protect society and increase the vaccination rate which, according to health authorities, is still much lower than the current target to date of about 6% of the population.

Tai also added that until 4 p.m. yesterday, a total of 108,000 people had booked to take vaccines, while 58,600 had already been vaccinated.

The coordinator also noted, "We have currently 12 vaccination posts active which have a daily capacity of inoculation of 5,000 vaccines. At the moment, the average vaccination rate is a thousand inoculations per day, which leaves us with a lot of room to expand the vaccination plan to these new groups."

Also replying to a media question, the coordinator of Macau's Center for Disease Control, Leong Iek Hou, added that adjustments were made to the vaccine scheduling platform to accept documents from the stranded TNRs and their families. Instructions on which document to submit would also be supplied for each category of persons.

VACCINE PASSPORT: MACAU CAN ONLY NEGOTIATE WITH MAINLAND

THE possibility of a Covid-19 vaccine passport system being established in Macau to ease travel restrictions was under discussion yesterday at the regular Covid-19 press briefing.

To the questions from the media on the topic, the coordinator of Vaccination Plan, Tai Wah Hou said, "In Macau, we already have made some preparations [for this] and we have a card that records the inoculations. We hope that eventually this card can be used as a passport to cross the borders, but on these matters, we also depend on decisions from the other side of the border."

"Currently we can only negotiate with mainland China for the passport," Tai added, advancing that such negotiations are still ongoing and there is no date set for a final decision.

He was also questioned on whether a Covid-19 vaccine passport would ease the border restrictions, such as exempting vaccinated people from presenting negative Nucleic Acid Tests (NAT) results, the same official noted that the two things are completely separate and unrelated.

"These are two different things. Vaccinations and the NAT are not connected in any way. All people arriving into Macau, and especially those coming from areas of high incidence [of the disease] need to be tested and to continue to undergo all the procedures [that include quarantine in isolation]," Tai said. "Vaccination does not mean they can't get infected. What the vaccine does is to reduce the risks of infection and a lot of the risk of serious consequences, including death, in the case of infection," he explained. **RM**

OVER 17,000 PEOPLE COMPLETE VACCINATION

A total of 17,559 people have already received the two doses that comprise the Covid-19 vaccination plan, the Coordinator of Vaccination Plan, Tai Wah Hou said yesterday in reply to a media question during the weekly health authority's press briefing. According to Tai, from the total

figure, 16,442 have received two doses of the Sinopharm vaccine, while 1,117 have received the vaccination for the BioNTech vaccine. The official also added that another 41,000 people have received the first dose of the vaccine and are currently waiting for the right period of time before the second dose.

Free Covid jab for Macau residents with mainland residence card

MACAU residents who reside in mainland China and hold the mainland residence card are eligible to get vaccinated against Covid-19 free-of-charge, the State

Council has announced. Previously, the injection was only made available to mainland residents.

Macau residents can apply for the mainland

residence card under certain circumstances, such as having a job or by being covered under mainland general medical insurance.

Now with the residen-

ce permit, residents can consent to receiving the vaccination on the mainland without the need for payment. This arrangement is identical to that for mainland residents.

In addition, they may also get the jab free-of-charge with proof of mainland general medical insurance cover.

As for Macau residents working or studying in schools in mainland China, regardless of the level of education, the inoculation scheme has been established in a manner similar to that for mainland teachers

and students.

Other Macau residents, on the other hand, cannot avail themselves of the vaccination – either paid or unpaid – for the time being. The State Council added that should a paid vaccination scheme become available, other categories of Macau residents will be able to pay for and receive the jab. **AL**

AP PHOTO

US MILITARY CITES RISING RISK OF CHINESE MOVE AGAINST TAIWAN

ROBERT BURNS, WASHINGTON

THE American military is warning that China is probably accelerating its timetable for capturing control of Taiwan, the island democracy that has been the chief source of tension between Washington and Beijing for decades and is widely seen as the most likely trigger for a potentially catastrophic U.S.-China war.

The worry about Taiwan comes as China wields new strength from years of military buildup. It has become more aggressive with Taiwan and more assertive in sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea. Beijing also has become more confrontational with Washington; senior Chinese officials traded sharp and unusually public barbs with Secretary of State Antony Blinken in talks in Alaska last month.

A military move against Taiwan, however, would be a test of U.S. support for the island that Beijing views as a breakaway province. For the Biden administration, it could present the choice of abandoning a friendly, democratic entity or risking what could become an all-out war over a cause that is not on the radar of most Americans. The United States has long pledged to help Taiwan defend itself, but it has deliberately left unclear how far it would go in response to a Chinese attack.

This accumulation of concerns meshes with the administration's view that China is a frontline challenge for the United States and that more must be done soon — militarily, diplomatically and by other means — to deter Beijing

as it seeks to supplant the United States as the predominant power in Asia. Some American military leaders see Taiwan as potentially the most immediate flashpoint.

"We have indications that the risks are actually going up," Adm. Philip Davidson, the most senior U.S. military commander in the Asia-Pacific region, told a Senate panel last month, referring to a Chinese military move on Taiwan.

"The threat is manifest during this decade — in fact, in the next six years," Davidson said.

Days later, Davidson's expected successor, Adm. John Aquilino, declined to back up the six-year timeframe but told senators at his confirmation hearing: "My opinion is, this problem is much closer to us than most think."

Biden administration officials have spoken less pointedly but stress the intention to deepen ties with Taiwan, eliciting warnings from Beijing against outsider interference in what it considers a domestic matter.

Yesterday, Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu said the military threat against the island is increasing, and while he said it was not yet "particularly alarming," the Chinese military in the last couple of years has been conducting what he called "real combat-type" exercises closer to the island.

"We are willing to defend ourselves, that's without any question," Wu told reporters. "We will fight a war if we need to fight a war, and if we need to defend our-

selves to the very last day, then we will defend ourselves to the very last day."

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin calls China the "pacing threat" for the United States, and the military services are adjusting accordingly. The Marine Corps, for example, is reshaping itself with China and Russia in mind after two decades of ground-focused combat against extremists in the Middle East.

Col. Ren Guoqiang urged Washington to 'abandon zero-peace thinking' and do more to build mutual trust and stability

Hardly an aspect of China's military modernization has failed to rile the U.S. military. Adm. Charles Richard, who as head of U.S. Strategic Command is responsible for U.S. nuclear forces, wrote in a recent essay that China is on track to be a "strategic peer" of the United States. He said China's nuclear weapons stockpile is expected to double "if not triple or quadruple" in the next 10 years, although that goes beyond the Pentagon's official view that the stockpile will "at least double" in that period.

Taiwan, however, is seen as the most pressing problem.

U.S. officials have noted People's Liberation Army actions that seem designed to rattle Taiwan. For example, Chinese aerial incursions, including flying arou-

nd the island, are a near-daily occurrence, serving to advertise the threat, wear down Taiwanese pilots and aircraft and learn more about Taiwan's capabilities.

Chinese officials have scoffed at Davidson's Taiwan comments. A Ministry of Defense spokesman, Col. Ren Guoqiang, urged Washington to "abandon zero-peace thinking" and do more to build mutual trust and stability. He said that "attempts by outside forces to use Taiwan to seek to restrain China, or the use by Taiwan independence forces to use military means to achieve independence, are all dead ends."

The implications of a Chinese military move against Taiwan and its 23 million people are so profound and potentially grave that Beijing and Washington have long managed a fragile middle ground — Taiwanese political autonomy that precludes control by Beijing but stops short of formal independence.

Predictions of when China might decide to try to compel Taiwan to reunite with the mainland have long varied, and there is no uniform view in the United States. Larry Diamond, a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, said last week he doubts Chinese leaders are ready to force the issue.

"I don't think it's coming soon," he said.

The Trump administration made a series of moves to demonstrate a stronger commitment to Taiwan, including sending a Cabinet member to Taipei

last year, making him the highest-level U.S. official to visit the island since formal diplomatic relations were severed in 1979 in deference to China. The Biden administration says it wants to cooperate with China where possible but has voiced its objections to a wide range of Chinese actions.

Last week, the U.S. ambassador to the Pacific island nation of Palau, John Hennessey-Niland, became the first serving U.S. ambassador to visit Taiwan since Washington cut ties with Taipei in favor of Beijing.

China is a frequent target of criticism in Congress. Concerns about countering its growing military might are reflected in passage of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, funded at \$2.2 billion for 2021. Davidson wants it to support, among other initiatives, establishing a better air defense system to protect the U.S. territory of Guam from Chinese missiles and preserving U.S. military dominance in the region.

Rep. Adam Smith, a Washington Democrat and chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, is skeptical of the military's fixation on dominance.

"Given the way the world works now, having one country be dominant is just hopelessly unrealistic," he said in a recent online forum sponsored by Meridian, a nonpartisan diplomacy center. He said the U.S. military can maintain sufficient strength, in partnership with allies, to send the message: "China, don't invade Taiwan because the price you're going to pay for that isn't worth it." **MDT/AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

HONG KONG

Activists plead guilty to joining democracy rally

THREE veteran Hong Kong pro-democracy activists, including well-known publisher Jimmy Lai, pleaded guilty yesterday to taking part in an unauthorized rally that led to violence between police and participants. The charges carry prison terms of up to five years.

Lee Cheuk-yan, an ex-legislator, and Yeng Sum, a former chairman of the Democratic Party, were released on bail. Lai was returned to jail as he is already being held on other charges related to his outspoken opposition to China's crackdown on civil liberties in the former British colony.

Walking out of the courthouse in Wanchai district, Lee said that despite pleading guilty, he and the others saw no fault in their actions.

"Today we plead guilty to the charges, but we have done no wrong. This is an act of civil disobedience. We want to reclaim our right to demonstration and we affirm the right of people, that we have the right to come out to march," Lee said.

"And we believe that history will absolve us, because we believe that any political progress, and the progress, and rights of the people, have to be reclaimed by the people, by exercising their rights to come out to march," Lee said.

AP PHOTO



Lee Cheuk-yan (left)

The court was shown footage of the three at the Aug. 31, 2019, event that led to clashes in various parts of the cramped city of more than 7 million that was being roiled by anti-government protests

at the time.

The pleas appear to be another blow against the opposition movement after seven of Hong Kong's leading pro-democracy advocates, including Lai and an

82-year-old veteran of the movement, were convicted last Thursday for organizing and participating in a march during the 2019 protest movement.

The governments in Hong

Kong and Beijing have been relentlessly pursuing opposition figures in order to exert greater control over the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

Hong Kong had enjoyed a vibrant political culture and freedoms not seen elsewhere in China during the decades it was a British colony. Beijing had pledged to allow the city to retain those freedoms for 50 years when it was handed control of the territory in 1997, but recently it has ushered in a series of measures that many fear are a step closer to making Hong Kong no different from cities on the mainland.

The 2019 protests were sparked by opposition to a bill that would have allowed suspects to be extradited to mainland China to face long periods of detention, possible torture and unfair trials. While the legislation was eventually withdrawn, the protesters' demands expanded to include calls for full democracy.

Beijing ignored them and responded by clamping down even harder, including imposing a draconian new national security law and changes last month that will significantly reduce the number of directly elected seats in Hong Kong's legislature. As a result, most of Hong Kong's outspoken activists are now in jail or in self-exile. MDT/AP

AD

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VIRAL THOUGHTS

Why Covid-19 conspiracy theories persist

DAVID KLEPPER,
PROVIDENCE (R.I.)

DANIEL Roberts hadn't had a vaccination since he was 6. No boosters, no tetanus shots. His parents taught him inoculations were dangerous, and when the coronavirus arrived, they called it a hoax. The vaccine, they said, was the real threat.

So when the 29-year-old Tennessee man got his COVID-19 shot at his local Walmart last month, it felt like an achievement. A break with his past.

"Five hundred thousand people have died in this country. That's not a hoax," Roberts said, speaking of the conspiracy theories embraced by family and friends. "I don't know why I didn't believe all of it myself. I guess I chose to believe the facts."

As the world struggles to break the grip of COVID-19, psychologists and misinformation experts are studying why the pandemic spawned so many conspiracy theories, which have led people to eschew masks, social distancing and vaccines.

They're seeing links between beliefs in COVID-19 falsehoods and the reliance on social media as a source of news and information.

And they're concluding COVID-19 conspiracy theories persist by providing a false sense of empowerment. By offering hidden or secretive explanations, they give the believer a feeling of control in a situation that otherwise seems random or frightening.

The findings have implications not only for pandemic response but for the next "infodemic," a term used to describe the crisis of COVID-19 misinformation.

"We need to learn from what has happened, to make sure we can prevent it from happening the next time," said former U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona, who served in George W. Bush's administration. "Masks become a symbol of your political party. People are saying vaccines are useless. The average person is confused: Who do I believe?"

About 1 in 4 Americans said they believe the pande-



Daniel Roberts

mic was "definitely" or "probably" created intentionally, according to a Pew Research Center survey from June. Other conspiracy theories focus on economic restrictions and vaccine safety. Increasingly, these baseless claims are prompting real-world problems.

In January, anti-vaccine activists forced a vaccine clinic at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles to close for a day. In Europe, dozens of cell towers burned because of bizarre claims that 5G wireless signals were triggering the infection. Elsewhere, a pharmacist destroyed vaccine doses, medical workers were attacked, and hundreds died after consuming toxins touted as cures — all because of COVID-19 falsehoods.

The most popular conspiracy theories often help people explain complicated, tumultuous events, when the truth may be too troubling to accept, according to Helen Lee Bouygues, founder and president of the Paris-based Reboot Foundation, which researches and promotes critical thinking in the internet age.

Such theories often appear after significant or frightening moments in history: the moon landing, the Sept. 11 attacks, or the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, when many found it difficult to accept that a lone, deranged gunman could kill the president. Vast conspiracies involving the CIA, the mob or others are easier to digest.

"People need big expla-

nations for big problems, for big world events," said John Cook, a cognitive scientist and conspiracy theory expert at Monash University in Australia. "Random explanations — like bats, or wet markets — are just psychologically unsatisfying."

This drive is so strong, Cook said, that people often believe contradictory conspiracy theories. Roberts said his parents, for instance, initially thought COVID-19 was linked to cell towers, before deciding the virus was actually a hoax. The only explanations they didn't entertain, he said, were the ones coming from medical experts.

Distrust of science, institutions and traditional news sources is heavily associated with stronger beliefs in conspiracy theories, as is support for pseudoscience.

Trust in American institutions has been further eroded by false statements from leaders like President Donald Trump, who repeatedly downplayed the threat of the virus, suggested bleach as a treatment, and undermined his administration's own experts.

An analysis by Cornell University researchers determined Trump to be the greatest driver of false coronavirus claims. Studies also show conservatives are more likely to believe conspiracy theories or share COVID-19 misinformation.

Carmona said he was addressing a group of executives about the coronavirus recently when one man declared that the pandemic

was created by the Chinese government and Democrats to hurt Trump's reelection bid.

"When people start believing their own facts and rejecting anything the other side says, we're in real trouble," he said.

A shared distrust in American institutions has helped to unite several groups behind the banner of COVID-19 conspiracy theories. They include far-right groups upset about lockdowns and mask mandates, anti-vaccine activists and adherents of QAnon, who believe Trump is waging a secret war against a powerful cabal of satanic cannibals.

Besides gaining insight into COVID-19 conspiracy theories, researchers are thinking about what works — and what doesn't — when it comes to talking to friends and family who have embraced baseless claims.

And they are finding possible solutions to the broader problem of online misinformation. They include stronger efforts by social media companies and new regulations.

Facebook, Twitter and other platforms have long faced criticism for allowing misinformation to flourish. They have acted more aggressively on COVID-19 misinformation, suggesting the platforms could do more to rein in misinformation about other topics, such as climate change, Cook said.

"It shows it is a matter of will and not a matter of technical innovation," Cook said.

Addressing our species' attraction to conspiracy theories might be more challenging. Teaching critical thinking and media literacy in schools is essential, experts said, since the internet will only grow as a news source.

In recent years, an idea called inoculation theory has gained prominence. It involves using online games or tutorials to train people to think more critically about information.

One example: Cambridge University researchers created the online game Go Viral!, which teaches players by having them create their own misleading content. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1986 EASTWOOD VOTED MAYOR BY LANDSLIDE



Residents of the Californian town of Carmel have overwhelmingly voted for actor Clint Eastwood as their mayor.

The turnout was double the norm in the picturesque seaside town, 80 miles (128 kilometres) south of San Francisco.

The 55-year-old Hollywood star got nearly three-quarters of the vote.

He polled 2,166 against the 799 votes cast for current mayor Charlotte Townsend, a former librarian.

Two of Clint Eastwood's supporters were also elected on to Carmel's local council, giving him control of the five-member body.

Mr Eastwood, a resident of Carmel for 14 years, decided to run for mayor after a series of clashes with the council.

After being refused planning permission to renovate his restaurant, the movie star took legal action and had the decision overturned.

His campaign centred on relaxing the strict controls on business in the town of 4,000 residents.

His famous Dirty Harry movie catchphrase "Make my day" was put to good use on bumper-stickers and T-shirts urging voters to back him.

The millionaire actor spent more than \$40,000 on his campaign compared to the \$3,000 spent by Mrs Townsend who has been the town's mayor for four years.

After his victory, Clint Eastwood said his first priority would be to restructure some of the "punitive" by-laws in the town, such as those against fast-food restaurants and frisbee throwing.

But he said he was not aiming to emulate Ronald Reagan and make the transition from acting to US president.

Mr Eastwood said being mayor of Carmel was his highest priority.

"I'm taking a two year hiatus from films. This is one politician who doesn't have ambitions to leave Carmel. This is where I belong," he said.

Clint Eastwood takes over as mayor on Tuesday.

The monthly \$200 (£133) salary is a big pay cut from the \$6m per movie he usually commands.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In spite of a promise to devote himself full-time to Carmel, Clint Eastwood made two films while serving as the town's mayor.

He decided not to run for a second term and stepped down in 1988.

Other US celebrities to enter public office since Ronald Reagan include former singer Sonny Bono who became a congressman in 1994 and movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger who was elected governor of California in 2003.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Thursday's skies call for an inward escape, Aries. You need time to rest and relax in solitude to restore your energy levels, so don't worry if you're not moving at top speed.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

As a Taurus, you look for cosmic guidance from your ruling planet, beauty-cherishing Venus. Thursday's skies find Venus in good shape, as it forms a supportive pact with uplifting Jupiter.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You're ready to kick things into high gear workwise, Gemini. The moon slides through visionary Pisces all day, helping you focus your efforts on getting ahead with your current ambitions.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Luna spends the first half of the day in a stimulating connection with surprise-bringer Uranus, potentially bringing unexpected news around friends or long-term goals.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

It's a good day for therapeutic experiences and deep cleans. Luna's supportive link with change-bringer Uranus may bring unexpected career opportunities.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

The moon's placement in Aries helps you hone in on your resources - particularly those you share with another. It's an ideal day to discuss future plans for partnership matters.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Thursday's skies help you find equilibrium through leveling out your mind, body, and spirit - as the sensitive Pisces moon directs your attention towards any imbalances.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

It's a great day for reconnecting with your own personal passion projects. Luna's link to surprise-bringer Uranus can allow for sudden insights in the partnership arena.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

It's an ideal day for a deep clean at home, catching up on rest, or reconnecting with family members. Luna's link with surprise-bringer Uranus can bring sudden opportunities on the work front.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Self-expression is the key to your contentment today, so focus on projects that activate your voice. Luna's connection with shake-it-up Uranus helps you tap into fresh creative insights.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

The visionary Pisces moon directs your attention towards your untapped skills and abilities, helping you bring them out into the light and use them in your day to day.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

As a Pisces, it's easy for you to overextend your energy, helping out the people around you. Let yourself reclaim your right to take care of yourself today, as the moon glides through your sign.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

7		3					5	
2	9				7	4		
		6		5	1			
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MEDIUM

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7				4			6	

HARD

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7							3	
		5				8		
		1						
5	8							
								4
								7

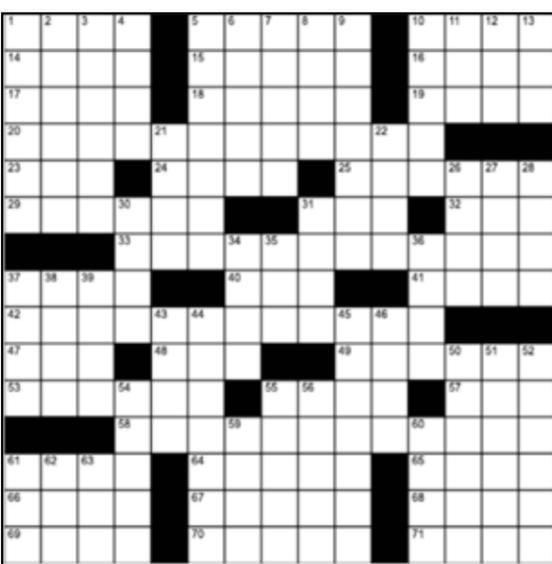
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	5	20	clear
Harbin	-5	7	clear
Tianjin	8	20	clear
Urumqi	7	16	clear
Xi'an	8	24	cloudy
Lhasa	3	15	cloudy
Chengdu	14	19	drizzle
Chongqing	14	22	overcast
Kunming	11	22	cloudy
Nanjing	10	19	cloudy
Shanghai	12	18	clear
Wuhan	10	19	cloudy
Hangzhou	10	14	drizzle
Taipei	18	23	drizzle
Guangzhou	19	23	moderate rain
Hong Kong	22	25	thundershower
WORLD			
Moscow	3	8	sleet
Frankfurt	-1	4	sleet
Paris	2	8	sleet
London	1	6	cloudy
New York	9	19	clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Attic; 5- Measured with a watch; 10- Nota ___; 14- Ersatz butter; 15- Japanese mushroom; 16- Hero; 17- Lady's escort; 18- Nostrils; 19- Word processing command; 20- Bible climbing implement seen in a dream; 23- Packed away; 24- Greasy; 25- Surprise attack; 29- Breed of sheep; 31- Direct a gun; 32- Outback hopper; 33- Religious group; 37- Sneaker or loafer; 40- Actor Beatty; 41- Bone; Prefix; 42- Equitation; 47- Female sheep; 48- Farm enclosure; 49- Place in bondage; 53- Ready to go; 55- Went through, as the paper; 57- Classical beginning; 58- Seesaw; 61- Archipelago part; 64- Big name in copiers; 65- Rampant; 66- Nothing, in Nice; 67- Piece of music written for a solo instrument; 68- Greek war god; 69- Too; 70- More urgent; 71- Vivacious;

DOWN: 1- Bottleneck; 2- Soap ingredient; 3- Swordsman; 4- Dorothy's dog; 5- Mental strain; 6- Total; 7- Tropical eel; 8- ___ out a living (barely got by); 9- Scorn; 10- Brief advertisement; 11- Ich bin ___ Berliner; 12- Silent assent; 13- Brian of rock; 21- Tibia, e.g.; 22- Jane Austen classic; 26- "Topaz" author; 27- Chimney residue; 28- Sharpen; 30- Roman date; 31- Helps; 34- Son of Judah; 35- Chess pieces; 36- Outstanding; 37- Queens stadium; 38- Mournful cry; 39- Hurler Hershiser; 43- Blunted blade; 44- Like some mail; 45- Low shrub; 46- ___-European; 50- Full; 51- Joint; 52- Land covered with trees; 54- Dictation taker; 55- Happen again; 56- Eat away at; 59- South American monkey; 60- Pitfall; 61- One of the Gershwins; 62- Part of RSVP; 63- Bandleader Brown;



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
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- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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MARKETS

SPAC BUBBLE FEARS LEAD HONG KONG, SINGAPORE DOWN CAUTIOUS PATH

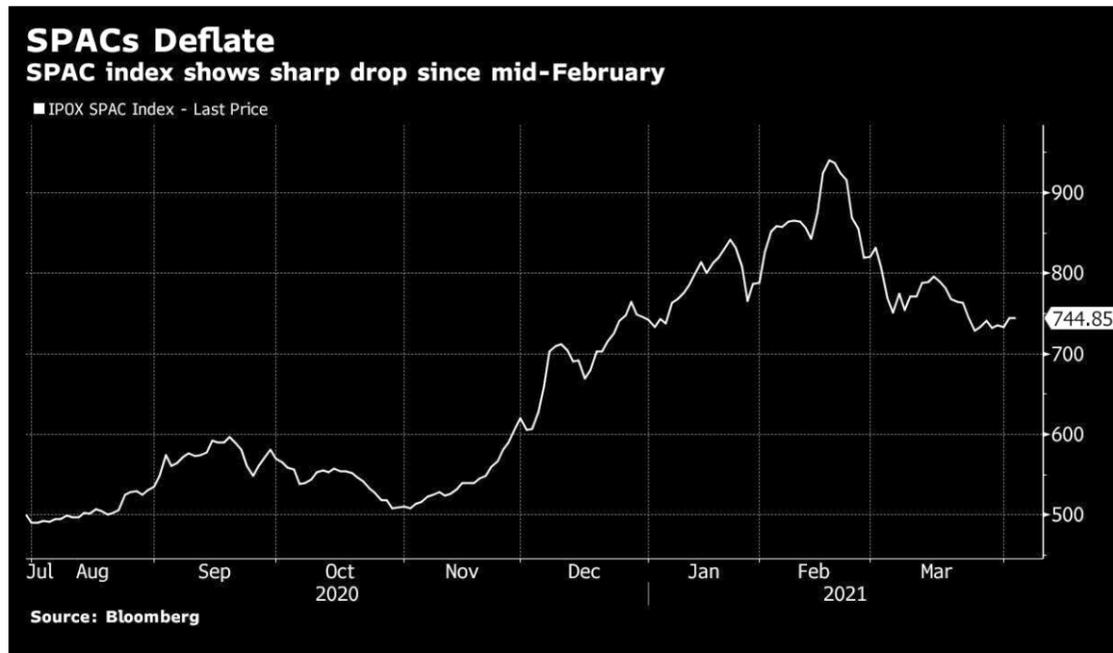
HONG Kong and Singapore are trying to get in on the boom in blank check company listings, while safeguarding investors from what some say is a bubble about to burst.

Authorities in the Asian financial hubs are mulling tighter frameworks than in the U.S. for listings of special purpose acquisition companies. The U.S.-led dealmaking boom has raised about \$100 billion so far this year even though it's now showing signs of fizzling amid increased scrutiny by regulators.

"They are a bit too late to the party so it's good that they are cautious," said Justin Tang, head of Asian research at United First Partners in Singapore. "The euphoria in this space means that caution is highly warranted."

Pushed by the government, Hong Kong is said to target having its regime in place by the end of the year. The plan, which is still being formulated, would set special conditions for sponsors of SPACS (Special Purpose Acquisition Companies), including having a track record of managing money, and that SPAC acquisitions will have to meet the existing standards for initial public offerings.

It's in a race with Singapore, which is now further along after last week releasing a consultation paper on its plan. Singapore Exchange Ltd.'s regulatory arm is proposing a minimum S\$300



million (\$225 million) market capitalization. The U.S. has no such floor. It's also proposing stricter criteria for warrants and share redemptions.

Investors and dealmakers in both cities are now questioning whether the tighter scrutiny will hamper their ability to attract SPACs.

Marcia Ellis, a partner in Hong Kong at Morrison & Foerster LLP, said too many "safeguards" in the framework "could kill flexibility, which may render it unattractive to SPAC sponsors."

Singapore's minimum market value implies a valuation of the target company of more than \$1 billion, which is relatively hard to find among Southeast Asian companies, said Stefanie Yuen Thio, joint managing partner at legal firm TSMP Law Corp.

PRICE TAKER
"The market expects and has priced in U.S.-style SPAC terms," she said. "We need to be a 'price taker' on this or risk missing the boat entirely."

Depending on market feedback on the consultation, which is open until April 28, Singapore aims to have its framework in place by midyear, Tan Boon Gin, chief executive officer of SGX RegCo, said at a briefing last week. Hong Kong, meanwhile, is looking to have a consultation paper ready for feedback by June at the earliest, people familiar have said.

SPACS raise money from investors with a plan to acquire another company within two years. But a big concern now is that with boom in such deals, there will be few viable companies available for them to acquire down the line.

An index that tracks SPACs has slid 21% since mid-February.

Ronald Chan, founder and chief investment officer of the Hong Kong-based Chartwell Capital Ltd., said the city should avoid taking a leading role in SPACs, calling it a "massive bubble."

In Hong Kong, there's also added concern of a set back in the financial hub's efforts to tame the wilder side of its market after years of combating shell companies that were seen as a hotbed for stock manipulation.

"The last thing we wish to see is to overthrow or disrupt the long, hard-earned effort against shell and reverse takeovers," Chan said.

SPAC listings are spared from the level of scrutiny imposed in Hong Kong on a re-

gular IPO, including stringent disclosures and due diligence by sponsors that could hold the banks themselves responsible.

STAR CEOS

That's a concern for investors, said Christine Chow, a board director at London-based International Corporate Governance Network, whose members represent more than \$54 trillion in assets under management. "Without that transparency, investors might be buying into the brand name of a private equity firm or a star CEO or founder," Chow said.

Hong Kong is now losing out on deal from some of its biggest names such as Adrian Cheng, who are preparing to or have raised such funds in the U.S. Horizon Ventures, a firm backed by billionaire Li Ka-shing, this year took its three financial technology holdings - Hippo Enterprises Inc., Doma and Bakkt - public in SPACs deals valued at \$10 billion in total.

Listing through a SPAC can be completed in a matter of weeks compared with the 12 months it would take to go public in the regular way.

But Hong Kong's legal framework also offers other hurdles. In the U.S. investors are able to seek class action suits against wrongful statements, enabling market regulators there to have a lighter touch.

Chartwell Capital's Chan said Hong Kong can take a roundabout approach and still benefit from the boom.

He proposed the city should look at setting up a "SPAC Connect" system where investors could access and trade SPACs listed elsewhere, offloading the regulatory burden of accounting fraud and insider trading to the foreign venues. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

CORPORATE BITS

Melco's Easter roadshow generates nearly MOP410,000 revenue for SMEs

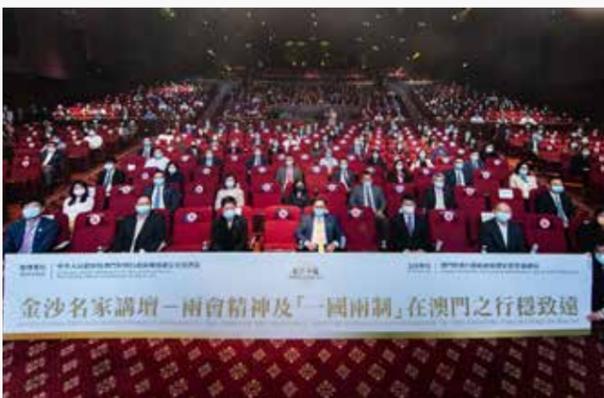


Melco Resorts & Entertainment generated close to MOP 410,000 in sales revenues for eight local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through its recent innovative Heart-of-House roadshow series ahead

of the Easter Holidays. Gifts, accessories, toys, food and beverage were among product categories made available to Melco colleagues over various sessions hosted at Melco properties including City of Dreams, Studio City and Altira Macau, the gaming operator said in a statement.

Further to promoting sustainable economic growth and prosperity for local SMEs through Heart-of-House roadshows, Melco said that its "commitment to SME success is also implemented through ongoing programs such as Melco SME Academy, the 'Knowing You, Knowing Us' campaign and Express Payment Scheme."

Sands China hosts seminar on Two Sessions



Sands China Ltd. hosted a seminar for team members and local youth last week at The Parisian Macao, about the recent sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and the One Country, Two Systems policy. According to the gaming

operator, the seminar's aim was to help participants develop an "in-depth understanding of the spirit of the NPC and CPPCC sessions." Entitled the Sands China Distinguished Speaker Forum Series - the Spirit of NPC and CPPCC, and the Sustained Implementation of 'One Country, Two Systems' in Macao, the seminar was attended by nearly 460 people, including Sands China management and youth from the community. A live feed was also provided at the back-of-house areas of Sands China's properties, offering team members a way to participate in the event remotely.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

FOOTBALL

Spain, Netherlands plan for fans at European Championship

ROB HARRIS

SPAIN and the Netherlands are now committing to having fans at the European Championship matches they are hosting in June.

They are the latest countries to offer assurances to UEFA over the return of crowds, leaving Dublin as one of the 12 cities with the most doubts about whether spectators will be permitted during the pandemic, and at risk of being cut from the hosting.

Bilbao is telling UEFA that it will guarantee the 53,000-capacity San Mamés can have up to a quarter of seats filled, Spanish authorities said yesterday.

A similar number of fans should be at games in Amsterdam, with the Dutch football federation saying authorities want to allow at least 12,000 spectators who have presented a negative COVID-19 test result into the Johan Cruyff Arena.

Both Bilbao and Amsterdam have three games in the group stage and a round of 16 match. Authorities in the Netherlands warn that if the coronavirus situation



deteriorates, then the presence of fans in the Amsterdam stadium will have to be re-evaluated.

"We look forward to welcoming 12,000 spectators to the Johan Cruyff Arena, but we are aware that the coronavirus is unpredictable and there are no guarantees," said Gijs de Jong, a tournament direc-

tor in Amsterdam. "However, we remain hopeful that, come June, the situation will have improved to the point where we can allow even more spectators to attend."

The rescheduled European Championship is due to open on June 11 in Rome after Italy said yesterday [Macau time] that it

is ready to let fans back into stadiums by then.

Fans have been banned from matches in Italy for the majority of the past year, apart from a brief period shortly after the start of the season when up to 1,000 spectators were allowed into games.

The city of Munich was less

committal in its statement, saying it is "conceivable and desirable that spectators can be in the stadium" for its four games.

There is a risk that cities could be cut from the hosting if they can't say if crowds will be allowed by June. Those guarantees are yet to come from countries including Scotland, which is due to stage four games in Glasgow, and Ireland, which has four fixtures in Dublin.

The city with the most games is London, which will stage seven fixtures at Wembley including the semifinals and final. Authorities hope the 90,000-capacity might even be full by the end of the tournament.

In Scotland, no date has been set for the return of fans but provisional proposals will be submitted to UEFA this week about what is achievable at Glasgow's Hampden Park in June.

Russia has already confirmed that St. Petersburg's 65,000-seat stadium will be filled to at least 50% capacity for its four games. Denmark is planning on up to 12,000 fans being allowed into the four matches at the 38,000-capacity Parken Stadium. A similar number could be attending games in Romania under government plans for the 55,000-capacity national stadium in Bucharest to be at least a quarter filled.

Baku, Azerbaijan and Budapest, Hungary are also due to be part of the hosting of the tournament that has been rearranged from 2020. **MDT/AP**

AD

CASA DE PORTUGAL
EM MACAU 澳門葡人之家協會



autor/作者/author: David Lopo

Escola de Artes e Ofícios

工藝美術學校

School of Arts and Crafts



Multimédia
多媒體
Multimedia

curso/課程/course

Fotografia

攝影

Photography

≥ 18 anos/歲/years old

monitor/導師:
David Lopo

nível . 級 . level I

Sábados/逢週六
Saturdays
17h00 - 19h00

total/課程時長:
22 horas/小時/hours
11 sessões/節課/sessions

propina/費用/fee: **MOP1,100**
sócios
會員
members

início/開課日期
starts:
10/04/2021
fim/結課日期
finishes:
26/06/2021
MOP1,300
não sócios
非會員
non members

nível . 級 . level II

Sábados/逢週六
Saturdays
14h30 - 16h30

total/課程時長:
22 horas/小時/hours
11 sessões/節課/sessions

propina/費用/fee: **MOP1,100**
sócios
會員
members

início/開課日期
starts:
10/04/2021
fim/結課日期
finishes:
26/06/2021
MOP1,300
não sócios
非會員
non members

língua/語言/language:
Português e Inglês/葡文和英文/Portuguese and English

patrocínio/贊助/sponsor:
Fundação Macau/澳門基金會

local/會場/venue:
Avenida do Dr. Francisco Vieira Machado n° 431- 487 Edif. Industrial Nam Fong 14° andar A, sala 3, Macau
澳門馬查度博士大馬路, 431-487號南豐工業大廈, 14樓A座 3號課室

número máximo de participantes/每班最多收生人數/maximum number of participants:
10 (Será respeitada a ordem de inscrição sendo esta efetiva mediante o pagamento de propina).
10人 (根據報名付費順序錄取).
10 (The registration order will be respected and registration is considered when payment is done).

Pré-requisitos: Câmara fotográfica DSLR ou mirrorless
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OPINION

World Views

Matthew Brooker, MDT/Bloomberg



**HONG KONG IS GIVING
 ITSELF ANOTHER
 IDENTITY CRISIS**

The Hong Kong government's proposal to let directors obscure their identities on the companies register is a retrograde step that will facilitate fraud and corruption. Don't take a journalist's word for it. Don't listen to the legal profession, which said in 2009 that ID numbers should be fully disclosed. Don't pay heed to the accountants and corporate governance experts who warn that access to such information is vital. And don't worry about the investors who say Hong Kong's public registries have helped bring transparency and accountability to official and corporate dealings.

Just take the word of the government's own advisory committee for it. Restricting access to ID numbers "may deprive the public of a means of uniquely identifying individuals, and might make it easier for the dishonest to escape creditors, or otherwise engage in fraudulent activity," the standing committee on company law reform said in a 2009 consultation paper. "The option of masking 3 or 4 digits of an identification number would not serve the purpose of identifying a person as there are cases of persons with the same name having similar identity card numbers."

That was then. Last week, a spokesman for the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau said partial ID numbers "together with the name of a director, should be sufficient to enable searchers to ascertain the identity." Independent shareholder activist David Webb, who highlighted the committee's 2009 comment in a Twitter post, called the statement "not credible."

Such information is essential to an international financial center. IPO sponsors, banks and advisers need to know with precision and reliability the identity of counterparties to a deal.

In general, transparency is the friend of honesty, accountability and good governance. As in the political realm, Hong Kong is marching in the opposite direction.

The government withdrew its proposal in 2013 in the face of opposition, but included draft sections in a reworked Companies Ordinance enacted in 2014 that would allow for these details to be withheld from the public. It is these sections that the government is now trying to bring into force. Authorities cite the risk of misuse of personal information, and point to increased reported cases of doxing.

Its justification looks flimsy. Privacy was cited as the grounds for the first push around a decade ago. Yet former Companies Registrar Gordon Jones said at the time that he had received no complaints about invasion of privacy during 14 years in the post, as Jane Moir, research director for Hong Kong at the Asian Corporate Governance Association, noted. The government says its regime will be in line with practice in the U.K. and Australia; Moir points out that the U.K. doesn't have ID cards, but provides other identifiers such as date of birth that Hong Kong doesn't collect, while in other respects its system is far more open, accessible and easy to use.

In any case, there are other ways of dealing with doxing that don't compromise the public interest. Meanwhile, the list of those who can be expected to favor this change is limited, comprising chiefly mainland officials who would prefer to keep their activities away from prying eyes, and potential fraudsters.

China's late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, defining who should be allowed to play a part in governing the city, said in the 1980s that a patriot is someone who "wishes not to impair Hong Kong's prosperity and stability." Beijing has leaned heavily on Deng's words recently to exclude political opponents for being insufficiently patriotic. Having advanced a proposal that runs so clearly against the broad interests of Hong Kong's economy and society, it's worth debating whether the administration itself can be considered patriotic. If Hong Kong still had an opposition, that's a question it might be asking.

[Abridged]

China's government warned Washington yesterday not to boycott next year's Winter Olympics in Beijing after the Biden administration said it was talking with allies about a joint approach to complaints of human rights abuses.

A Foreign Ministry spokesperson rejected accusations of abuses against ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang region. He warned of an unspecified "robust Chinese response" to a potential Olympics boycott.

"The politicization of sports will damage the spirit of the Olympic Charter and the interests of athletes from all coun-

tries," said the spokesperson, Zhao Lijian. "The international community including the U.S. Olympic Committee will not accept it."

Human rights groups are protesting China's hosting of the games, due to start in February 2022.

The U.S. State Department suggested an Olympic boycott was among the possibilities but a senior official said later a boycott has not been discussed. The International Olympic Committee and the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee have said in the past they oppose boycotts.

**VANDALS DAMAGE
 FAMOUS NORWEGIAN
 BABY STATUE IN OSLO PARK**

A Norwegian museum said yesterday [Macau time] that a famous statue of a baby boy stomping his feet in anger has been removed from a park in the capital, Oslo, for repairs after someone vandalized it by trying to saw off its left ankle.

The bronze Sinnataggen sculpture is considered a national treasure and is arguably the most famous work by Norwegian sculptor Gustav Vigeland, who died in 1943 and has also designed the Nobel Peace Prize medal.

It depicts a small angry boy and was most likely modeled in 1928, the Vigeland Museum said in a statement, adding that "someone tried to saw over the left ankle of the sculpture."

The statue was removed for conservation, and will be placed back in its original



place "as soon as possible" "This is damage to a protected cultural monument and the matter will be reported to the police," said museum director Jarle Stroemodden. "We want the audience to have close access to the art of Vigeland and it is a pity that this (has happened)."

The Sinnataggen is part of the so called Vigeland Installation — a highly popular tourist attraction in Norway — that consists of dozens of sculptures and larger structures such as bridges and fountains at the Frogner Park close to the center of Oslo. MDT/AP



Iran A ship believed to be a base for the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and anchored for years in the Red Sea off Yemen has been attacked. Tehran acknowledged yesterday. Iran's Foreign Ministry confirmed the attack on the MV Saviz, suspected to have been carried out by Israel — though Tehran did not immediately blame its regional archenemy.

Egypt. Sudan and Ethiopia failed to make progress in the latest round of African Union-led talks to resolve their years-long dispute over a controversial dam that Ethiopia is building on the Blue Nile River. Foreign and irrigation ministers of the three nations met in Kinshasa, the capital of Congo, the current chair of the African Union.



Russia Navalny has been on hunger strike for nearly a week to protest the failure of authorities to provide proper medical treatment for his back and leg pains. Doctors and supporters of the politician gathered in front of the prison and tried to get inside to meet with prison officials and see Navalny or talk to the prison medics about his condition, but were turned away.

Russia's foreign minister yesterday said Moscow and Islamabad will boost ties in the fight against terrorism, with Russia providing unspecified military equipment to Pakistan and the two holding joint exercises at sea and in the mountains. In Pakistan on the final day of a two-day trip, Sergey Lavrov's visit is the first by a Russian foreign minister in nine years.

Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis fired his health minister yesterday, the third health minister who has been ousted during the pandemic in one of Europe's hardest-hit countries. Jan Blatny was replaced by Petr Arenberger, the director of Prague's University Hospital Vinohrady, who was sworn in by President Milos Zeman.

Man, a steal! Rare Superman comic sells for record \$3.25M

ONE of the few copies of the comic book that introduced Superman to the world has sold for a super-sized, record-setting price.

The issue of Action Comics #1 went for \$3.25 million in a private sale, ComicConnect.com, an online auction and consignment company, announced yesterday [Macau time].

It narrowly bested the previous record for the comic, set in the auction of another copy in 2014 for slightly over \$3.2 million.

The comic, published in 1938, "really is the beginning of the superhero genre," said ComicConnect.com COO Vincent Zurzolo, who brokered the sale.

It told readers about the origins of Superman, how he came to Earth from another planet and went by Clark Kent.

The seller of this particular issue bought the comic in 2018 for slightly more than \$2 million.

Zurzolo said that whi-



Vincent Zurzolo, co-owner of ComicConnect, holding Action Comics first edition 1938 book marking Superman's first appearance

le there were hundreds of thousands of copies initially published, it's estimated only about 100 exist today, and in varying conditions. He said this copy is among

the best-kept ones.

"There's no comic book that you could value higher in terms of a comic book than Action Comics #1," he said. MDT/AP