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CTM 40th ANNIVERSARY

**CASINO EARNINGS TO DROP 23% IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2021 DESPITE A GROWTH IN MASS SECTOR: MORGAN STANLEY**

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**HONG KONG, GUANGDONG AND MACAU JOINTLY LAUNCH THE GBA INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION**

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AP PHOTO



**China** Telecommunications equipment firm Huawei said yesterday that it has reached an agreement with HSBC in Hong Kong to obtain documents that its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou hopes will help prevent her extradition to the U.S. Meng, who was detained in Canada in 2018 at the behest of U.S. authorities, has been fighting a legal battle over the last two years as the U.S. seeks to extradite her over allegations of bank fraud and violations of sanctions against Iran.

## EVENTFUL: IN CHARGE OF THEIR OWN LIVES

P4-5



AP PHOTO



**Cambodians** yesterday continued to condemn an Irish photo restorer for altering photographs of victims of their country's 1970s genocide to show them smiling, saying his decision and that of an international media group to publish them showed horrible judgement. Matt Loughrey had colorized photos taken of prisoners of the Khmer Rouge's notorious S-21 prison in Phnom Penh, where an estimated 17,000 people suspected of being enemies of the communist regime were jailed and tortured before being executed.

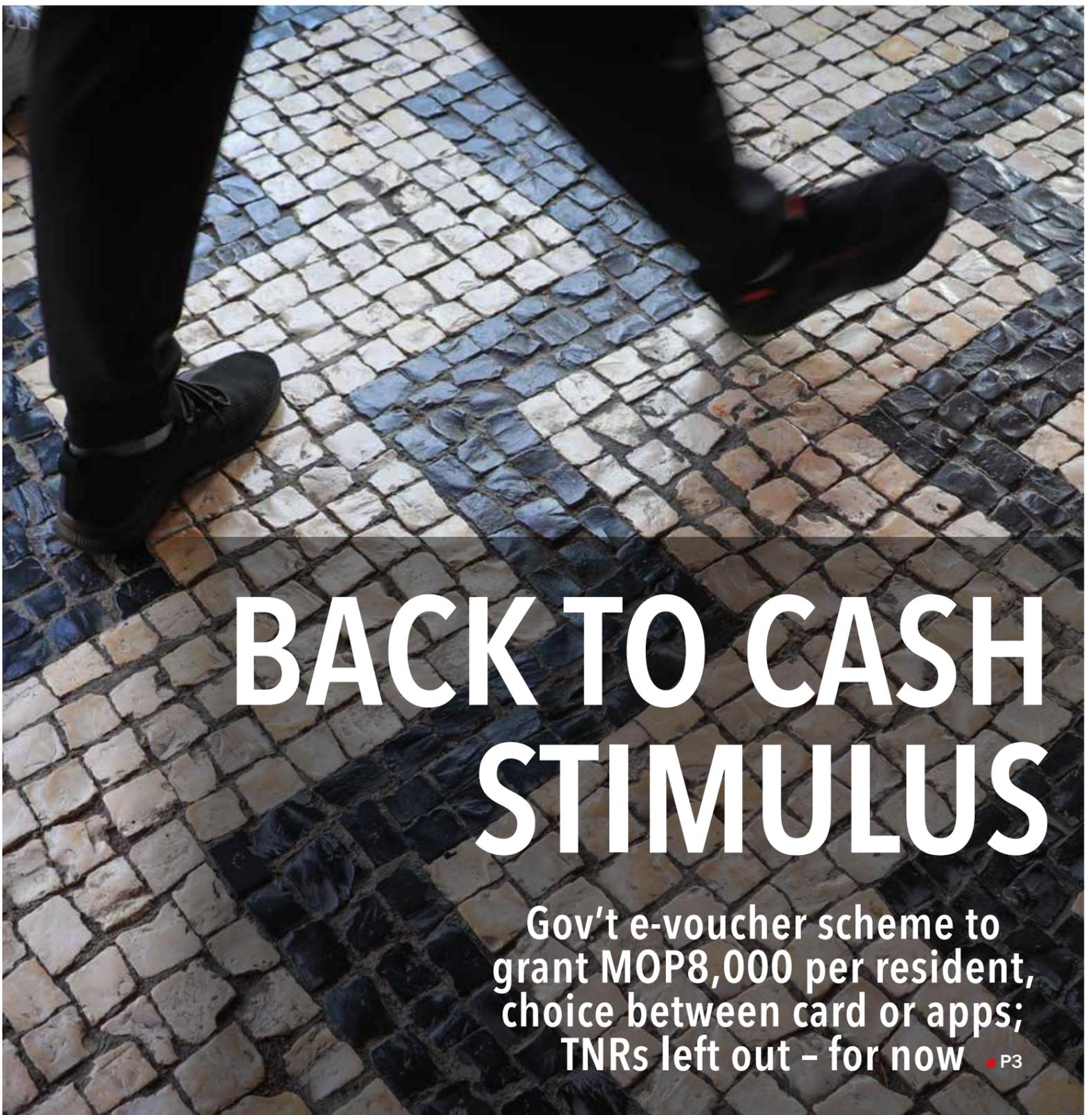
AP PHOTO



**Kyrgyzstan's** national elections commission says voters have overwhelmingly approved a new constitution that substantially increases the president's powers. The commission said results from 90% of the polling places showed 79% approval of the constitution in the referendum which came three months after Sadyr Zhaparov was elected president, following the ouster of the previous president amid protests.

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MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



# BACK TO CASH STIMULUS

Gov't e-voucher scheme to grant MOP8,000 per resident, choice between card or apps; TNRs left out - for now

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COVID-19

# RESIDENTS FORBIDDEN TO ALTER VACCINATION RECORD FOLLOWING EARLIER INCIDENT

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE government will no longer allow local residents to alter any information relating to their vaccination record, in order to preclude any recurrence of the incident in which a person mistakenly received two different types of vaccines, Dr. Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of the Health Bureau's Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, confirmed yesterday at the regular Covid-19 media briefing.

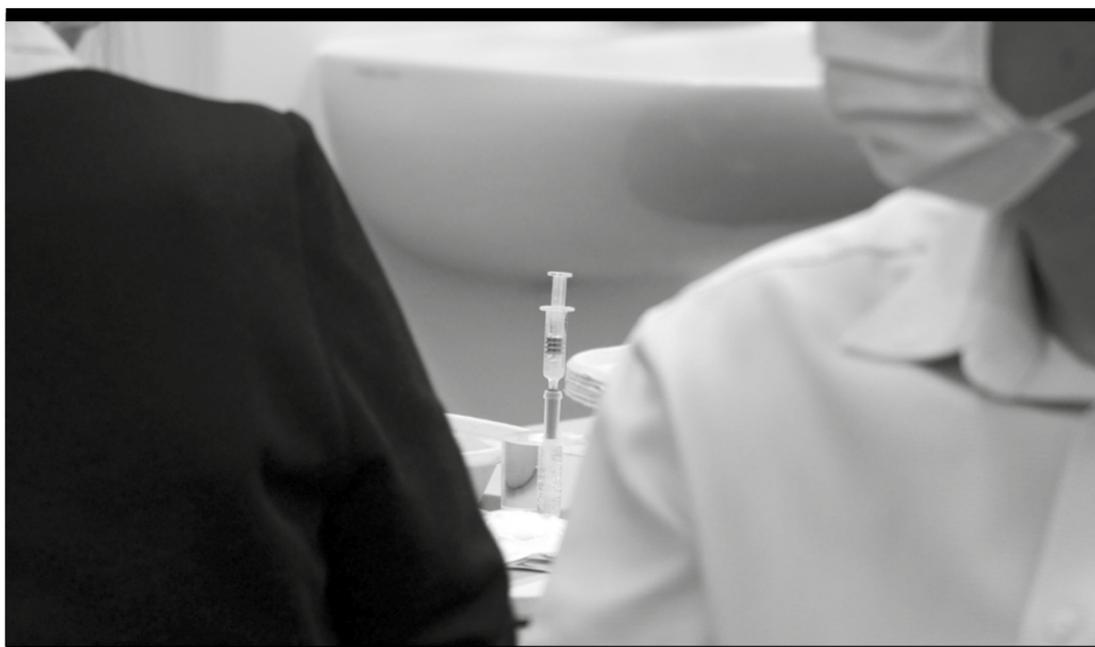
Tai's remarks came after the Health Bureau (SSM) received a report on April 9 stating that an individual took the first dose of the Sinopharm vaccine on March 11, and then changed their online vaccination record to state that they had been given the mRNA vaccine. As a result, they were given a second dose of a different vaccine; an mRNA vaccine, on April 9.

"Following the [above] incident, we modified the online registration system immediately afterward. It no longer allows users to alter any information of their first dose of vaccine taken," Tai stressed.

Although the mistake was made by the user, Tai acknowledged that the medical staff also bear some accountability for failing to confirm the individual's vaccination data through their internal system before giving the shots.

"There was indeed a negligence of medical staff [involved in the accident] when it comes to the verification process," Tai stressed, offering an apology to the public.

He confirmed that the individual concerned is not required



to take another dose of the Sinopharm vaccine — there is currently no medical study on whether taking two different types of vaccines for the whole course of treatment might increase the risk of side effects, or compromise the vaccines' efficiency against Covid-19.

"There are even some medical studies saying that taking a cocktail of vaccines may help increase the efficiency [against the disease]. I know the University of Hong Kong is now conducting a study related to this," he added.

The original intention of allowing people to fill in and edit their own vaccination information online was to help the SSM track the inoculation history of residents who did not receive their first jabs in Macau, Tai explained.

Prior to the incident, the SSM had already identified a certain degree of risk in allowing users to

modify their own records. However, authorities did not make any amendments because the operation was working well at that stage, he added.

Tai urged locals to pay more heed to the locations of the inoculation sites where they had registered for their upcoming second doses, stressing that Macau has only three centers to carry out the inoculation of BioNTech-produced mRNA vaccines. The other centers will be reserved for the Sinopharm-manufactured vaccines.

Noting the location where they received their first inoculation may help residents to easily distinguish which vaccine they received in order to avoid confusion, he suggested.

Regarding the case of a 77-year-old local resident who evaded quarantine measures and vacated the Pousada Marina Infante Hotel on April 9, the individual was captured 10 hours after his escape in the lobby of a building around Rua do Campo, Ma Chio Hong, head of the Division of Operation and Communications of the Public Security Police Force (PSP), told the press yesterday.

According to official information, the male was placed under mandatory quarantine upon his return to Macau after an earlier attempt to enter Hong Kong.

Apparently he refused to undergo quarantine in Hong Kong when he arrived at the Hong Kong border at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge.

The man had previously claimed that he did not enter Hong Kong and therefore should not be put under quarantine in Macau. It is believed that this is the reason he did not want to stay and why he later escaped the quarantine hotel, Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), said.

However, Leong said that the man stayed at the Hong Kong border for some time and had contact with local people there. Consequently, he must undergo medical observation as well.

The representative of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Lau Fong Chi, stated that authorities have stepped up efforts to avoid similar incidents from happening again.

These measures include strengthening the patrolling service inside and outside the quarantine facility to ensure that no one can escape via the fire emergency exit again. They will also relocate the surveillance positions of each security guard on every hotel floor to cover as many as possible of the blind spots that were missed before, Lau said.

## THIRD STIMULUS GOV'T PROMISES CLOSE SCRUTINY OF PRICE HIKES, UNLAWFUL COMMERCIAL PRACTICES

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE economic authorities will closely monitor and control price hikes and other potentially unlawful commercial practices during the implementation of the third round of government stimulus (e-vouchers), the director of the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED), Tai Kin Ip said during yesterday's press conference to announce the amended plan.

According to Tai, following the experience gathered primarily during the first phase of the government support last year, the Consumer Council (CC) will be paying close attention to unjustified price hikes as well as other unlawful practices that might arise during the implementation of the third round, due to occur between June and December this year.

According to Tai, the CC and the DSED will conduct "constant inspections, supervision and control activities over the situations of usage of the consumption benefits [e-vouchers] as well as the prices [of] goods and services in the market."

Tai also said that in the past, authorities inspected over 6,000 establishments and over 60,000 products. Additionally, the CC has a system that allows citizens to immediately report cases of price hikes or unlawful practices through the CC website or dedicated hotline.

The director called on residents to follow the rules, recalling that the government subsidy cannot be converted into cash nor used for the payment of services such as water and electricity bills, or any kind of health-related services.

### SINOPHARM JABS TAKING THE LEAD IN VACCINATION

AS of 4 p.m. yesterday, a total of 69,149 vaccine doses were administered in Macau. Of this figure, 58,931 were Sinopharm-manufactured inactivated vaccines, constituting around 85% of total doses taken. The remainder, 10,218, or 15% of the total share, were BioNTech-produced mRNA vaccines. Dr. Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of the Health Bureau's Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, said yesterday.

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

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

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**ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

**OFFICE MANAGER** Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com  
**ADDRESS** Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR **Telephones:** +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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THIRD STIMULUS

# Gov't e-voucher scheme to grant MOP8,000 per resident

RENATO MARQUES

**Y**ESTERDAY, the government presented the amended measures related to the electronic consumption vouchers (e-vouchers) as part of the third round of economic stimulus.

The new plan, unveiled by the government in a press conference held at the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSEDT), will grant every resident of Macau a total of 8,000 patacas, to be made available in two parts: 5,000 patacas as a spendable balance, and 3,000 patacas as an automatic direct discount.

Under the new scheme, residents can opt to receive the funds on their old consumption cards or via one of the eight mobile payment applications (apps) in use in Macau.

The government is investing a total of MOP5.88 billion in the scheme, aiming to boost internal consumption as a way to support economic stability and employment, the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong said.

Although the scheme is ready to go into effect, it still needs to pass the Legislative Assembly (AL) since the budgetary appropriation requires legislative approval, Lei noted in a reply to the media. However, the Secretary is confident that all the legislative procedures to support the new plan will be concluded before June this year, the scheme being expected to run from June until the end of the year.

Questioned on whether the government thinks this amended scheme has the broad community support, Lei said he believes this to be the case since the government has adjusted the scheme following public consultation.

"After the first publication and disclosure of the previous plan, we heard many opinions from the different sectors of society. Citizens [called for] a way to simplify the process and some other opinions also expressed the wish of having a starting balance, so this [new plan] is based on a scientific decision after hearing the opinions from the public, and following the prevalence of the intentions and will of the society. All those opinions we collected helped us to arrive at this measure [plan] for 2021," Lei remarked.

Presenting details on the plan, the DSEDT director Tai Kin Ip noted that as in the previous scheme, there will be a daily spending cap of 300 patacas. However, he noted, this cap is calculated after the discount, which is always 25%.



Tai explained that if a resident wants to acquire a product that costs 400 patacas, they can use both provisions of the scheme, since 25% (100 patacas) would be immediately deducted from the direct discount funds, while the remaining 300 patacas would be deducted from the spending balance.

The director also said that all of these details, as well as both balances, will be displayed in the mobile app and printed on the receipt after any purchase of goods or services.

Tai noted that use of both the

consumption cards and the mobile apps will be restricted to services or entities such as gaming companies, hospitals, banks and insurance companies to ensure that the money will be effectively injected into the private sector in Macau.

Questioned by the media if people using Alipay mobile app could make use of the subsidy to acquire products outside Macau, such as via the Taobao.com website, the director said, "We have excluded any [possibility of] payment outside Macau. We have ensured that such

use would not be possible."

Registration for the new scheme will be available from May to December through a dedicated page hosted by the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM). Currently residents must choose one of the two systems to receive the funds, either the consumption cards or registration via mobile apps. According to the government officials, AMCM will verify the identities of applicants to ensure that the application is from a resident and that it is not in any way duplicated.

## TNR INCLUSION ON E-VOUCHER SCHEME REQUIRES FURTHER CONSENSUS ACROSS SOCIETY

**F**OR the time being, non-resident workers (TNRs) will be excluded from any government support; the economic support plan presented yesterday only included residents of Macau.

Questioned on the topic, acknowledged this, saying that potential inclusion of the TNRs in a government plan would require more community consultation and greater consensus.

However, Lei left the door open for the possibility of including the TNRs in future measures.

"After hearing the opinions of the society, we improved this plan and we included the initial spending balance. At this time, we focused our attention more on the residents of Macau but this is a pilot project. I think that after we hear more opinions from society, we can launch further measures in the future. We do not discard this possibility," Lei said when questioned on the inclusion of TNRs in the government's plans.

"But for the time being, and as a pilot project, we need to carefully observe its enforcement and execution. I think through this plan of benefits we can already fully satisfy the needs of the population and also ease the pressure felt by part of the population," Lei

added, noting that the plan presented yesterday is expected to "stabilize the employment and the economy of Macau."

The Secretary concluded by saying that if this objective is achieved, the plan that might be made available for the TNRs would only include the discount program, not the financial contributions from the government.

"TNRs will for sure not have a starting balance, but there is a possibility of including them in the discount

**"TNRs will for sure not have a starting balance, but there is a possibility of including them in the discount [program] at a later stage."**

LEI WAI NONG  
SECRETARY FOR ECONOMY AND FINANCE

[program] at a later stage. This may be possible," Lei said, adding that the different mobile payment application platforms are also willing to provide different discounts and benefits to residents and non-residents.

The exclusion of the TNRs from the e-vouchers scheme was a notable difference between the first plan presented by the government and the amended

plan just announced.

Speaking to the Times on a previous occasion, representatives of several groups of migrant workers in Macau expressed disappointment at such a change, expressing fears that their exclusion from any government support will increase their financial burdens. **RM**

## CRAFT MARKET STARTS THIS WEEKEND

The Tap Seac Craft Market will be held at Tap Seac Square for two consecutive weekends, from Friday to Sunday, April 16 to 18 and from April 23 to 25. Themed "life aesthetics," the market includes a total of 110 booths featuring cultural practitioners and creative artists from mainland China and Macau. In addition, food stalls will be present, and 36 creative handicraft workshops will be held.

## APPROVED MORTGAGE LOANS PLUNGE 25%

In February, new residential mortgage loans (RMLs) approved by Macau banks fell by 24.9% month-to-month to MOP2.13 billion. Of the approved loans, new RMLs to residents, representing 99.7% of the total, dropped by 23.9% to MOP2.13 billion; the non-resident component also decreased by 85.6% to MOP6.2 million. Commercial mortgage loans, meanwhile, shrank by 54.4% month-to-month to MOP1.64 billion.

## EXHIBITION ON CITY'S HISTORY EXTENDED

The "Memory of the Past – Exhibition of the Macao Museum Postcards Collection" will be extended until May 30, the Cultural Affairs Bureau has announced in a statement. The exhibition, which commenced in September last year, displays more than 180 selected postcards and associated items from the museum's collection. The exhibition seeks to represent the glory days of Macau, chronicling the period between the late 19th century and the 1980s.



Members of the Macau IC2 Association conducted a site visit at the event's venue - Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau

# IN CHARGE OF THEIR OWN LIVES

HONEY TSANG

**F**ROM afar, Ms. Cheng was looking at her daughter, Jackie, as she attended a lecture about event management.

Cheng had never seen Jackie, currently in her 30s, so upbeat and self-motivated until last month, when she started a public campaign honoring the principles of sustainability and inclusivity.

For most event organizers, putting a large-scale event together is no mean feat — let alone Jackie and her seven other teammates. The group are event planning rookies and are also people with developmental or intellectual disabilities.

Jackie went through a harsh childhood, having been bullied mercilessly by her classmates. Many times she came home with her hair glued together with chewing gum — just because she was “different” from the other kids. Even more traumatizing was the fact that teachers often turned a blind eye to the bullying. Later at Primary 5, Jackie was diagnosed with autism and dropped out of the school, which only catered to people without disabilities.

“I wanted to prove them wrong. I don't want to be labeled as incapable [just because I have autism]. I want others to

know that I can also be competent as long as I work hard,” Jackie once told her mother.

Cheng always knew that Jackie, in spite of her disability, could rise far above the limits that other people placed on her.

Cheng and Jackie's passion for the fair treatment of people with autism drove them, alongside other parents of children with autism, to set up an organization titled Macau IC2 Association (IC2) in 2016, promoting equality in Macau. Over the past five years, IC2 established itself as a received NGO that has been sending humanitarian aid to other disabled individuals in Macau and beyond.

In 2021, members of IC2 are determined to take the challenge up another notch and host their very first event, titled “Inclusive, healthy and sustainable lifestyle on World Earth Day.”

The idea of launching an event began growing just a month ago on March 1, when parents of IC2 had their habitual breakfast meeting. Together, they came up with the idea of establishing an annual ritual of “tree-planting”. This came from IC2's long-term partner China Shenmo Star River Public Welfare Alliance, a mainland organization that has been established in Beijing for 23 years and is dedicated to

offering support to people with disabilities.

They timed the event to take place on April 22 in order to coincide with World Earth Day, to promote a sustainable lifestyle and equal participation for people with disabilities. They bundled the tree-planting activity with “pickleball” games, a sport similar to tennis commonly played in the US, to make the event more enticing.

Though they are newcomers to event management, Jackie and her teammates have remained resolute, as they have had a professional back up-turned-coach for this project — Ada Lo. Lo is a beloved figure in the arenas of charity and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions (MICE).

For many years, Lo, founder and managing director of a MICE consultant agency, has also served in many important roles in Macau, including prominent member of the SAR government's Rehabilitation Affairs Committee, secretary-general of Special Olympics Macau, and more.

Lo is recognized in Macau for her long-time advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities. Since hearing about the IC2 parents' idea of hosting a tree-planting event at the breakfast meeting, Lo has championed their good cause without hesitation. She intends to convert their

intention into action by tapping into her expertise. Lo now helms the event.

## LEARN TO DECIDE

“For the past 17 years, I have been undertaking endeavors for people with intellectual disabilities [in Macau],” Lo told the Times.

“But it dawned on us one day that these individuals were usually not up to participating in the events that were put together by us. I learned that I should let them control their own life, let them decide the services they desire and let them host an event they like,” she remarked.

Maintaining individuals with disabilities in a position in which they are in charge of their lives is an increasingly popular trend among rehabilitation services nowadays, Lo pointed out. Just like every member of society, people with autism and intellectual disabilities are capable of making informed decisions through learning and practice.

Decision-making is an empowering experience that enables people with disabilities to be more confident, independent and well-positioned to resist bullying.

Supporting disabled people to make responsible choices is also the underlying motivation for the parents who set up IC2 in the first place, Lo noted.

## BUDDING MOVERS & SHAKERS

In a group interview with the Times, nine IC2 members who are engaging in this project agreed that the event would have never happened if it were not for their instructor Ada Lo, who has instructed them with her knowledge about event management.

Lo has moulded them into shape as capable event organizers, who have gotten the hang of design and branding, forging partnerships and sponsorships, and coordinating the logistics of an event.

Most of the proposals put forward were the result of their own “decisions,” Lo said, ranging from the designs of the poster to the invitation letter and the event site.

Acting as a supporter and facilitator, Lo leveraged her expertise and well-connected network across Macau to help make the event go from good to great.

In just a few days, Lo secured a partnership with Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau, who agreed to provide venues and supporting services for the World Earth Day Event. Also, as a president of Macao Dragon Sport Association, Lo invited the association's young athletes to demonstrate a pickleball game to bring a dose of energy and excitement to the day.

She also brought in Green Future, a local NGO that advocates for green lifestyles as the event's partner to plant trees in the garden at

### E-MEDICAL VOUCHERS TO PUT INTO USE FROM MAY 1

The MOP600 electronic medical voucher will be available for use from May 1. The validity period of each voucher will last until April 30th, 2023 for a period of 2 years. As approved by the Executive Council, the medical vouchers will continue to be issued electronically. It is estimated that the total subsidy of medical vouchers for 2021 will be around MOP428 million.

### PRIVATE CAR REPLACEMENT QUOTAS FOR HZMB STARTS TODAY

The online application period for the quotas allocated for private cars in Macau traveling to and from Hong Kong and Macau via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge in 2021 has concluded. A total of 232 applicants had their applications rejected as they had failed to complete the application before the deadline. The Transport Bureau (DSAT) commenced the quota replacement works today April 13. Applicants on the waiting list will receive confirmation from DSAT. They should apply for the quota online by 6 p.m. June 3.

### BUILDING MAINTENANCE FUND APPROVES 200 APPLICATIONS IN Q1

In the first quarter of 2021, the Building Maintenance Fund has approved 198 applications, comprising about MOP12 million in public funds. Compared to the same period last year, the Fund has approved 3.2 times more this year. The Housing Bureau (IH) interprets this as constituting a general improvement in concerns over building repair and management. Three applications were not approved by the fund, on the grounds of self-revocation or being outside the applicable coverage of the subsidy.



Ada Lo giving a lecture about event management for the eight IC2 members

the Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau. Representatives from the Shenmo Star River Public Welfare Alliance, the brainchild of the tree-planting endeavour, are also invited to attend the event to commemorate World Earth Day.

#### ICANDO IT TOO

"The members of IC2 are some skilful and competent individuals. Despite their disabilities, they have had a series of remarkable accomplishments for the past five years since IC2 was established," Lo commented.

Her remarks were bolstered by a previous IC2's project, in

which the members went to a suburb in China and helped establish a dedicated center catering to people with disabilities in the community.

"They have had lived up to their long-established ethos, which is to reach out to and improve the lives of others in need by passing down their experiences and knowledge," Lo told the Times.

She has complete confidence in the members of IC2, believing they can pull the upcoming World Earth Day Event off on their very own.

When asked whether they felt intimidated about bringing toge-

ther such a massive public event, they all said "no" in unison.

"It is not intimidating. I would say it is exciting, as the event is just around the corner," Tam Kai Kei, a board member of IC2 and MC for the event, told the Times.

'IC2' is an acronym for "I can do it, too" - a tagline that has been exemplified by the members' determination and ability to fight for a more equal community in Macau.

Jackie and her mother Cheng knew this upcoming event would be one of the many supposed impossibilities they would soon overcome.

"I wish that one day Jackie can learn to be self-sufficient so that she can take care of herself even when I'm not around anymore," Cheng said as she looked at her daughter, who was enraptured by Lo's lecture.

This may likely not happen in the coming days. But Cheng is certain that Jackie will be fully independent one day by starting as small, and learning how to make her own decisions.

IC2 currently has upwards of 150 members.

\*Macau Daily Times is the official media partner of the event.

## Greater Bay Area establishes international IT association

HONG Kong, Guangdong and Macau have jointly launched the Greater Bay Area (GBA) International Information Technology Association, holding an inauguration ceremony to celebrate the occasion.

The association aims to boost the information technology (IT) development and application by leveraging the combined advantages of the overall GBA region. It plans to undertake related policy research work, set up communication and cooperation platforms

for enterprises to enhance the regional connectivity in the IT sector, and nurture young IT engineers and talents in the region. To push for cross-boundary data and digital renminbi in GBA, the association announced the establishment of the big data and financial technology expert group for discussing related policies, technology research and development and applications, and international cooperation for the GBA. Leung Chun-ying, vice chairman of the National Committee

of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, who is also chairman of the association, emphasized cross-boundary data as the top priority for the GBA integrated development.

Regardless of whether it benefits economic and industrial operation, or the livelihood of local people, Leung said that the interconnectivity with the cross-boundary data between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau will play a "decisive role" in the integrated development of GBA cities. MDT/XINHUA



Leung Chun-ying, chairman of the association

GAMING

# CASINO EBITDA TO DROP 23% IN Q1: MORGAN STANLEY

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) of Macau's casino sector is forecast to reach USD181 million for the first quarter (Q1) of 2021, representing a 23% drop from the fourth quarter of 2020, the global financial corporation Morgan Stanley stated in a release published on April 11.

According to a report by GGR Asia, the analysts ascribed the quarter-to-quarter decline in EBITDA to seasonal variation, including a weaker performance seen in retail, hotel, and food and beverage revenues, and "higher operating expense quarter-on-quarter as a result of uneven recovery in first quarter of 2021."

The financial group is expecting the daily operational expenditure of



Macau casino operators to increase by 5 to 8% in Q1 2021 from the previous three-month period. However, they project that this will still be down 27% year-on-year. The earnings for 2021 will remain "negative", the group said, forecasting the EBITDA for the city's casino industry to drop by another 20% or so. According to the official data by the Gaming

Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), the combined gross gaming revenue (GGR) from January to March 2021 amounted to MOP23.64 billion. The Q1 tally showed an increase of 8.27% from the fourth quarter of 2020, yet a 22.5% drop year-on-year. Morgan Stanley attributed the increase in GGR in the first quarter of this year to the improved performance in the mass-market sector. The group anticipates that

the GGR from the mass revenue will increase by a significant 11%, quarter-on-quarter to USD2.3 billion in Q1 2021. Meanwhile, the VIP sector in Q1 2021 is expected to show a downward trend, dropping 3% to USD0.6 billion. It is worth noting that the government's data regarding gaming revenue between VIP and mass markets for Q1 2021 has not yet been published.

## TWO NEW NURSERIES UNDERWAY IN NORTHERN DISTRICT

**T**wo new nursery schools are expected to open in the third quarter of this year at Ilha Verde and Mong Ha, which are expected to provide an additional 348 places for incoming students.

According to the head of the Social Welfare Bureau's Children and Youth Service Division, Lao Kit Im, the new places will alleviate the demand for nursery schools in the Northern District.

Currently, nursery

schools can accommodate 58% of the city's three-year-old children.

Also, Lao said that the bureau will cancel half-day services in subsidized nurseries in July this year.

Meanwhile, the official also noted that in terms of the situation of inclusive childcare services, the two funded nurseries have provided a total of 17 inclusive slots. So far, only 12 places have been applied for and allocated. LV



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吳霆鋒 Ng Teng Fong

**法律專家 JURISTS:**  
羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues  
潘卡莉 Candice Pun  
斐彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo  
羅嘉慧 Emily Lo  
陳子健 Chan Chi Kin



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AP PHOTO

COVID-19

# Low efficacy of shots sows concern on global rollout



**C**ONCERN is mounting that China's Covid-19 vaccines are less effective at quelling the disease, raising questions about nations from Brazil to Hungary that are depending on the shots and the country's own mammoth inoculation drive.

While vaccines developed by Pfizer Inc., Moderna Inc. and even Russia's Sputnik shot have delivered protection rates of more than 90%, Chinese candidates have generally reported much lower efficacy results. Research released Sunday showed the rate for Sinovac Biotech Ltd.'s vaccine - deployed in Indonesia and Brazil - was just above 50%, barely meeting the minimum protection required for Covid vaccines by leading global drug regulators. The other Chinese shots have reported efficacy rates of between 66% to 79%.

Anxiety over that disparity spilled into the open at the weekend when George Fu Gao, head of the Chinese Center for Disease Prevention and Control, said at a forum that something needed to be done to address the low protection rate of the Chinese vaccines, according to local news outlet the Paper.

The rare admission by a senior official appeared to go viral on social media.

Gao then backtracked, telling state-backed newspaper the Global Times that his remarks were misinterpreted, and were only meant to suggest ways to improve the efficacy of vaccines.

In a message to The Associated Press, Gao said late Sunday night he was speaking about the effectiveness rates for "vaccines in the world, not particularly for China." He did not respond to further questions about which vaccines he was referring to.

He directed the AP to the interview Global Times, which has published several articles raising doubts about the safety of Pfizer's mRNA vaccine.

The concerns put a question mark over a vast swathe of the global vaccine rollout, particularly in the developing world, with richer countries' domination of supplies of the highly effective mRNA vaccines seeing nations like Turkey and Indonesia turn instead to China's shots.

Beijing, which is also donating vaccines to some nations, has been ramping up its own inoculation drive. It aims to vaccinate 40% of China's population - or 560 million people - by the end of June, an ambitious effort that will require it to move at twice the pace of the U.S.

"They don't really trust it themselves," said Therese Hesketh, an expert on China's healthcare system at University College London. "They really did a rush job on the vaccine and the clinical trials have never been properly scrutinized. I'm aware from colleagues in China that there's huge vaccine hesitancy anyway."

Chinese vaccine developers have been repeatedly criticized for a lack of transparency and lag fo-

reign peers in publishing full trial data in peer-reviewed medical journals. The weekend study out of Sinovac vaccine's late stage trial in Brazil came three months after its first efficacy readouts, while state-owned Sinopharm has yet to publish full data from Phase III trials for its two inactivated Covid vaccines.

While a separate Sinovac study involving more than 10,000 people in Turkey put the vaccine's efficacy at 83.5%, it just added to questions about the shot's efficacy. The company has said that differences in the severity of outbreaks, various Covid strains in circulation and the definition by which virus cases are identified

in studies have all contributed to different results across several trial sites.

"The confusion that has arisen highlights the importance of full transparency with publication of results of trials in the peer-reviewed literature," said Martin McKee, professor of European Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Bloomberg has reported.

One reason for the low efficacy in the Brazil trial, according to the study's researchers, was that the two doses of the vaccine were administered at a short interval of 14 days. The researchers noted "a trend to higher efficacy" among a limited number of participants who got their second dose in no less than 21 days.

Home to the world's second-worst Covid outbreak after the U.S., the stakes are high for Brazil's vaccination rollout. The country is relying on both the Sinovac shot, known as CoronaVac, and the booster from AstraZeneca Plc and Oxford University which has encountered controversy after some people experienced blood clots.

At home, China is already walking a tightrope in trying to keep its vaccination rates on par with some other countries, especially the U.S., to avoid a delay in lifting border restrictions and resuming international travel.

While China is working on more effective vaccines, including shots that deploy mRNA technology, it should continue to roll out those that have been approved for now, said Benjamin Cowling, head of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of Hong Kong.

"They can provide a high level of protection, particularly against severe Covid," he told Bloomberg.

Fearing a heavy-handed approach could draw a backlash, officials in China have so far refrained from making shots mandatory, and have spoken out against forced inoculation. Officials have instead dangled rewards and applied peer pressure among workers in the massive state sector to significantly raise vaccination rates, and are now issuing nearly 4 million doses a day from less than 1 million at the start of the year. **MDT/AGENCIES**

## CDC DIRECTOR REFUTES INTERPRETATION OF 'LOW PROTECTION RATE' OF CHINESE VACCINES: GLOBAL TIMES

**T**HE Director of the Chinese Center of Disease Control (China CDC) refuted claims by some media outlets and overseas social media platform users that the director "admitted" Chinese COVID-19 vaccines have a low protection rate, saying that "it was a complete misunderstanding."

In an exclusive interview Sunday with the Global Times, Gao Fu, head of the China CDC, said as scientists around the world are discussing vaccine efficacy, he offered a scientific vision: that to improve the efficacy, adjustment of vaccination procedures and sequential inoculation of different types of vaccines might be options.

"The protection rates of all vaccines in the world are sometimes high, and sometimes low. How to improve their efficacy is a question that needs to be considered by scientists around the world," Gao said. "In this regard, I suggest that we can consider adjusting the vaccination process, such as the number of doses and intervals and adopting sequential vaccination with different types of vaccines."

Gao stressed that as it is the first time human beings have encountered COVID-19, there are many scientific problems to be studied when it comes to vaccinations.

"This is also the first time that humans have been vaccinated with a novel coronavirus vaccine. All the vaccination procedures we have adopted so far have been based on previous extrapolations of other virus vaccines inoculation, and that extrapolation has worked pretty well," Gao said. "But in the future, if we need to make improvements, we can make adjustments based on the characteristics of the novel coronavirus and the vaccination situation."

"If we go with the traditional way of developing a



Gao Fu, director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention

vaccine, we wouldn't have had a vaccine within a year. But scientists all over the world developed COVID-19 vaccines within a few months, which is the first time in the world's history. There are many scientific questions that need to be addressed," Gao told Global Times.

The WHO requirement for the efficacy of a COVID-19 vaccine is 50 percent or above, and the qualified threshold for most vaccines in the world to be marketed is about 70 percent or above. China has published the first edition of guidelines on COVID-19 vaccination and "this is the best approach at present," Gao noted.

Gao called for people to get a shot as the benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risks. "Vaccines have to be used fairly and the world should share vaccines. If the world doesn't share vaccines, the virus will share the world," he said as quoted by Global Times.

AP PHOTO



Devotees take holy dips in the river Ganges during Shahi snan or a Royal bath at Kumbh mela, in Haridwar in the state of Uttarakhand, yesterday

INDIA

# Huge gatherings at Hindu festival as virus surges

NEHA MEHROTRA & SHEIKH SAALIQA  
NEW DELHI

**T**ENS of thousands of Hindu devotees gathered by the Ganges River for special prayers yesterday, many of them flouting social distancing practices as the coronavirus spreads in India with record speed.

The Kumbh Mela, or pitcher festival, is one of the most sacred pilgrimages in Hinduism. The faithful congregate in the northern city of Haridwar and take a dip in the waters of the Ganges, which they believe will absolve them of their sins and deliver them from the cycle of birth and death.

The Kumbh Mela, which runs through April, comes during India's worst surge in new infections since the pandemic began, with a seven-day rolling average of more than 130,000 new cases per day. Hospitals are becoming overwhelmed with patients, and experts worry the worst is yet to come.

government isn't willing to anger Hindus, who are the party's biggest supporters.

With the surge showing no sign of slowing, India's confirmed infections since the pandemic began surpassed Brazil's total on Monday to make it the second-worst hit country in the world.

The current surge has hit hardest in Western Maharashtra state, home to the financial capital Mumbai. The state has accounted for nearly half of the country's new infections in the past two weeks.

Amid concerns the Kumbh Mela festival could turn into a superspreader event, Uttarakhnad state's chief minister, Tirath Singh Rawat, last week said "the faith in God will overcome the fear of the virus."

Health experts had appealed for the festival to be canceled, but the government went ahead saying safety rules would be followed. There are concerns that pilgrims could get infected and then take the virus back to their cities and villages in other parts of the country.

Authorities in Haridwar

said the length of the festival has been shortened from previous years, but it has been extremely difficult to implement social distancing measures. Coronavirus tests are mandatory for those entering the area.

"We are continuously appealing to people to follow COVID-19 appropriate behavior. But due to the huge crowd, it is practically not possible," senior police officer Sanjay Gunjyal said.

## The current surge has hit hardest in Western Maharashtra state, home to the financial capital Mumbai

Government critics have compared the government's response to the festival to the response last year when Indian Muslims faced rising Islamophobia following accusations that an initial surge in infections was tied to a three-day meeting of an Islamic missionary group, the Tablighi Jamaat, in New Delhi.

Some leaders from Modi's party and India's freewheeling TV channels, which have long favored

the government's Hindu-nationalist policies, labeled Muslims as "jihadis" and "super spreaders" in March 2020 when the seven-day rolling average of coronavirus cases in the country was not even 200 per day. The blame triggered a wave of violence, business boycotts and hate speech toward Muslims.

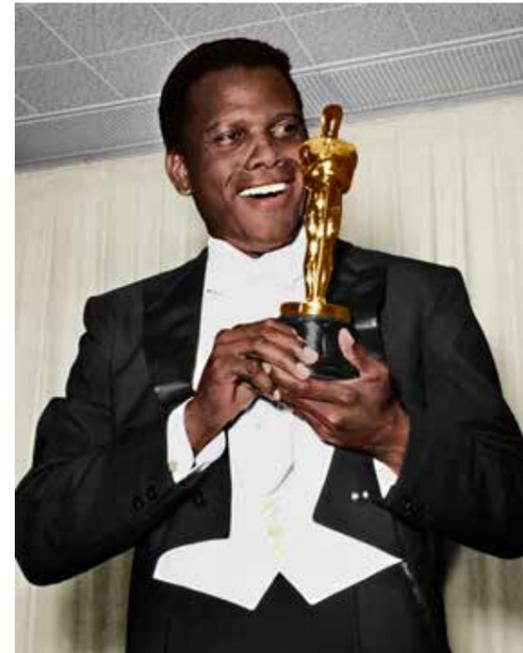
India's 200 million Muslims account for 14% of the population and are the largest minority group in the Hindu-majority nation.

The surge in India comes as the country's vaccination drive appears to be struggling. Multiple Indian states have reported a shortage of doses even as the federal government has insisted that there's enough in stock.

After a sluggish start, India is now vaccinating 3.6 million people on average daily, which is more than the United States. It has so far administered more than 103 million shots, the most in the world after the U.S. and China, but much lower than many countries per capita — still less than 6% of India's population of nearly 1.4 billion people. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1964 POITIER BREAKS NEW GROUND WITH OSCAR WIN



The acting profession's top award has gone to a black actor for the first time.

Sidney Poitier won the best actor Oscar for his role in *Lilies of the Field*.

In the film, released last year, he played construction worker Homer Smith whom a group of nuns believe was sent to them by God to build their church.

The only other black person to win an Oscar was the best supporting actress award given to Hattie McDaniel in 1939 for her role in *Gone with the Wind*.

Alongside 'Rat Pack' actor Sammy Davis Jr and, earlier, Paul Robeson, Poitier is one of only a handful of black men to gain recognition in Hollywood for roles not involving singing or dancing.

It was the second time he had been in the running for an Oscar after losing out in 1959 when he was nominated for his part in *The Defiant Ones*.

"It has been a long journey to this moment," the actor said after he was presented with the prized statuette by actress Ann Bancroft.

Sidney Poitier's early life seemed unlikely to spawn a Hollywood star.

He grew up in poverty in the Bahamas in the Caribbean where his father was a tomato farmer.

In his first months in New York he was so poor he slept in the toilets of a bus station.

He was hampered in his efforts to break into acting by his strong Bahamian accent and was initially rejected by the American Negro Theatre.

His first film was *No Way Out* alongside Richard Widmark in 1950 in which he played a doctor.

But his big breakthrough came five years later in *The Blackboard Jungle*.

His roles have been a big move away from the stereotypical dim-witted Negro characters made famous in the 1930s and 1940s by Stepin Fetchit.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Much of America was scandalised by the chaste congratulatory peck on the cheek Ann Bancroft gave Sidney Poitier when presenting his award.

Three years later the actor took part in the first on-screen interracial kiss in the film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*

The film was among a string of hit movies Sidney Poitier starred in during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

They included *In the Heat of the Night* and the role for which Poitier is probably most famous, *Detective Virgil Tibbs*.

In 2002 Denzel Washington and Halle Berry won the best actor and best actress Oscars - the first black actors to win since Poitier.

At the same ceremony Sidney Poitier was given a lifetime achievement award.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

 <b>ARIES</b> Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Make those phone calls and pay your bills. Your reputation will be affected. Keep your feelings to yourself if you want to avoid embarrassment.	 <b>TAURUS</b> Apr. 20-May. 20 Obstacles may stand in your way where career and success are concerned. They may cost you dearly. You will have no problem getting your point across to those in a position to help you.
 <b>GEMINI</b> May. 21-Jun. 21 Reevaluate your position and make decisions about your future goals. You can find out interesting information if you get a chance to talk to people you respect. You may find it difficult to communicate.	 <b>CANCER</b> Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Arguments with employers or colleagues will be to your detriment. Home improvement projects will enhance your residence and bring the family closer together. Friends and relatives can give you good advice.
 <b>LEO</b> Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Relatives may not be telling you the whole truth about a family situation. You can enjoy your involvement in organizations that make charitable contributions. Be sure to pay attention to your bank account.	 <b>VIRGO</b> Aug. 23-Sep. 22 You may want to take another look at the investment you are about to make. You need to be careful not to make promises that you can't fulfill. Don't torment yourself. Disharmony in the home will be extremely stressful.
 <b>LIBRA</b> Sep. 23-Oct. 22 You may find that doing odd jobs around the house will be successful and appreciated by loved ones. Your involvement in groups will be favorable for meeting new and exciting individuals.	 <b>SCORPIO</b> Oct. 23-Nov. 21 You will enjoy travel and getting together with peers. Don't make any drastic changes or begin new projects today. Opportunities will come through long term investments.
 <b>SAGITTARIUS</b> Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You could pick up valuable knowledge through conversations with experienced individuals. You are best not to retaliate if members of your household are trying to pick a fight.	 <b>CAPRICORN</b> Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Socializing or travel will lead to partnerships. Your generous nature could be taken advantage of. Your stability will aid you in getting support from your fellow workers.
 <b>AQUARIUS</b> Jan. 20-Feb. 18 You will be entertained and intrigued by the logic foreigners possess. Secret enemies will be eager to spread rumors about you. Unexpected visitors are likely. Be prepared to do your chores early.	 <b>PISCES</b> Feb. 19-Mar. 20 Be professional, and you will advance much more quickly. You may want to take a trip; however, before you do, make sure that your car is serviced properly.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

MEDIUM					HARD														
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			4	5						4	8								
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9							3				3	8	7						
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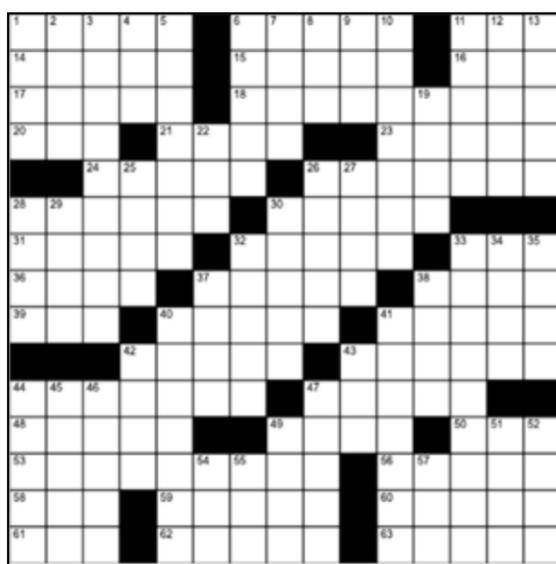
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	8	17	clear
Harbin	-4	5	cloudy
Tianjin	10	16	clear
Urumqi	6	18	clear
Xi'an	11	22	cloudy
Lhasa	3	15	cloudy
Chengdu	14	21	drizzle
Chongqing	16	22	overcast
Kunming	12	27	clear
Nanjing	13	21	cloudy
Shanghai	15	20	overcast
Wuhan	12	23	cloudy
Hangzhou	15	21	overcast
Taipei	20	24	drizzle
Guangzhou	20	30	cloudy
Hong Kong	23	29	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	7	13	cloudy
Frankfurt	-3	5	clear
Paris	1	9	drizzle
London	-2	9	clear
New York	6	11	drizzle

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Leaden; 6- Former Russian rulers; 11- Paris possessive; 14- Blast from the past; 15- Up; 16- Metal container; 17- Umbilicus; 18- Ornate; 20- Hydrocarbon suffix; 21- Final; 23- Fuel transport; 24- Churns up; 26- Seaport on San Francisco Bay; 28- Relaxing; 30- Give consent; 31- Jargon; 32- Hue; 33- Vigor; 36- Cutty \_\_\_; 37- Termagant; 38- Mal de \_\_\_; 39- Jazz trombonist Kid \_\_\_; 40- Castle water pits; 41- English royal house; 42- Animal life; 43- Wide of the mark; 44- Try; 47- Unpaid; 48- Composer Ned; 49- Disaster \_\_\_; 50- Pay stub?; 53- Process of forming conclusions; 56- Intolerant person; 58- Dadaist Jean; 59- Outer coat of a seed; 60- Singer Frankie; 61- Grads-to-be; 62- Macho guys; 63- Host;

DOWN 1- Sharpen; 2- Gusto; 3- Opponent; 4- Go head to head; 5- Shouting; 6- Long lock of hair; 7- Riverbank component; 8- Al Jolson's real first name; 9- Graycoat; 10- Variety of pool; 11- Milan's La \_\_\_; 12- Devoured; 13- Dummy Mortimer; 19- Irritate; 22- Math subj.; 25- Hog sound; 26- Leers at; 27- Get one's ducks in \_\_\_; 28- Canadian gas brand; 29- Banned apple spray; 30- Trunk line; 32- Repeat rhythmically; 33- Pertaining to teaching; 34- School founded in 1440; 35- Like a mix; 37- Liquid food; 38- Go sour; 40- Enormous; 41- Subject to court proceedings; 42- Dues; 43- She's a she; 44- Tapestry; 45- Start of a saying on forgiveness; 46- Snares; 47- Church instrument; 49- Start the pot; 51- Single; 52- To \_\_\_ (perfectly); 54- Society page word; 55- Belief; 57- Cartesian conclusion;

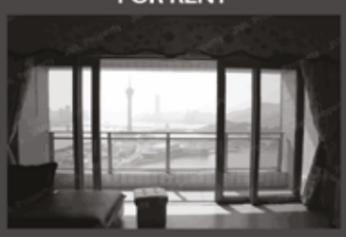


Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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



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AD



BACK IN BUSINESS?

# HONG KONG TO EASE COVID RESTRICTIONS FOR VACCINATED PEOPLE

**H**ONG Kong plans to ease social-distancing rules for those vaccinated against the coronavirus to incentivize more people to get inoculated so the city can further reopen for business.

Now that Hong Kong's outbreak is "obviously contained," the government will consider "vaccine bubbles" that allow vaccinated people greater freedom of move-

ment, Chief Executive Carrie Lam said at a briefing yesterday. If more people get vaccinated, restaurants could extend dine-in hours to 2 a.m. and as many as eight people would be able to sit at a table, up from four now, she said. Bars and nightclubs could reopen on a limited basis if all staff and customers are vaccinated and use the government's contact tracing app.

"I hereby encourage all citizens to get vaccinated and support our new direction in fighting the pandemic to protect ourselves and family members," Lam said. "Hong Kong's vaccination rate can be improved further. In other words, it's not ideal, especially considering that we have very sufficient supply and convenient infrastructure."

Hong Kong had administered about 834,800 vaccine doses in total to the public as of Sunday. About 7.7% of the population have received at least one dose.

For now, social-distancing measures will be extended for another two weeks to April 28 as authorities monitor the virus situation following the Easter holiday.

"If suddenly Hong Kong faces a major surge as a result of the Easter holiday, then we may need to revisit and refine these measures," Lam said. Otherwise, the new measures could be introduced if preparatory work and discussions with stakeholders can be completed within the two-week period.

Hong Kong's vaccine drive has been hampered by public distrust of the Beijing-backed government and the Chinese-made Sinovac Biotech Ltd. vaccine. It suffered another blow last month when packaging defects were found on a batch of shots developed by BioNTech SE and Pfizer Inc. - the other vaccine available in the city - that led to a temporary halt in those vaccinations.

About 348,600 people have received a first dose of the Sinovac vaccine and 230,300 have had the BioNTech vaccine, the government said Sunday. Sinovac accounts for roughly 146,700 second doses, and BioNTech about 109,200. Hong Kong has a population of 7.5 million.

The government said it may also cut quarantine time for people arriving from areas deemed to be low risk and ease access for more visitors from mainland China. Such moves are key to reopening the city and boosting an economy that's been starved of big-spending tourists. Hong Kong had about 97% fewer visitor arrivals in February than in the same month last year.

Hong Kong last month cut mandatory hotel quarantine to 14 days from 21 for people coming from low-risk areas including Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. Visitors from mainland China, Macau and Taiwan also currently face 14 days compulsory quarantine. Only a limited quota of Hong Kong citizens arriving from Macau and the southern Chinese province of Guangdong have been exempt from quarantine. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

## CORPORATE BITS

### MGM finances distribution of hampers to nearly 400 households



MGM donated MOP300,000 to the Macau Holy House of Mercy's Welfare Shop project, financing the distribution of food hampers to nearly 400 local underprivileged

households. Over the past nine years in supporting this meaningful project, MGM has contributed a total of MOP2.6 million to date, the gaming operator announced in a statement.

On April 9, MGM's Golden Lion Volunteer Team visited The Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind of Macau Holy House of Mercy.

In response to the government's epidemic-prevention guidance to avoid gathering in large groups, the food hamper distribution was done over the span of three days on April 7 to 9. Over 20 MGM management team members and Golden Lion volunteers took part in packing the daily necessities that included rice, noodles, canned food, oatmeal and cooking oil, into MGM's tailor-made eco-friendly handcarts. These hampers were distributed to the underprivileged.

### Studio City Phase 2 wins BREEAM Awards 2021 regional accolade



Melco Resorts & Entertainment announces Studio City Phase 2 has been named winner of the 'Regional Award, Asia' at BREEAM Awards 2021. The international BREEAM Awards is an

annual celebration recognizing the people, projects and organizations who are leading the way with achievements in sustainable building design, development and management.

Denise Chen, senior vice president and chief sustainability officer of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said, "As part of Melco's sustainability strategy to go 'Above & Beyond', tremendous efforts have been made by the team to ensure the project meets a high level of environmental performance. We are also pleased to have XCO2 as BREEAM assessors and Accredited Professionals to guide us through the extensive framework."

Studio City Phase 2 is set to offer approximately 900 rooms and suites as well non-gaming attractions such as one of the world's largest indoor/outdoor water parks, a Cineplex, fine-dining restaurants and MICE space.

FOOTBALL

# Cavani inspires Man United comeback in win at Tottenham

ROB HARRIS, LONDON

TOTTENHAM 1, MAN U 3

**E**DINSON Cavani set up Fred's equalizer before scoring with a diving header as Manchester United beat Tottenham 3-1 yesterday [Macau Time, strengthening its grip on second place in the Premier League and dealing a further blow to former manager Jose Mourinho's Champions League qualification hopes.

Cavani's euphoria at scoring was clear as he roared in celebration at the empty north London stadium after what would have been an opener was ruled out for Son Heung-min falling after being caught by Scott McTominay in the buildup.

Even more irritating for United was Son then beating Dean Henderson at the goalkeeper's near-post to put Tottenham in front in the 40th minute.



Manchester United's Edinson Cavani scores his side's second goal

But United's comeback began in the 57th when Fred teed up Cavani for a shot that was parried by Hugo Lloris and the Brazilian followed up with his first Premier League goal since 2018.

Having denied Bruno Fernandes, Lloris was beaten again

in the 79th when the Portugal midfielder's nutmeg helped to set up Mason Greenwood for a cross that Cavani got on the end of with a header.

"Fantastic performance, we are awaiting his decision if he wants to stay or wants to move on," United manager Ole Gun-

nar Solskjaer said of Cavani. "A performance like today we as a club have missed for a few years, we have not had that number nine for a long, long spell.

"Edinson has been working so hard to get fit and we can see the boys played to his strengths as well. We have had open and honest meetings and it's no secret we want to keep him."

Greenwood put further gloss on the win in the sixth minute of stoppage time by scoring after Paul Pogba and Cavani combined to set up the English forward for a shot that Lloris got a touch to but couldn't keep out.

While United is locking down second place, Tottenham has fallen six points from fourth place with seven games remaining in an erratic season that saw a brief title bid disintegrate.

The Premier League trophy seems out of reach for United with Manchester City 11 points ahead, but Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is still on course to deliver the team's highest finish since being runners-up three years ago under Mourinho. **MDT/AP**

## SON RACIALLY ABUSED ONLINE

**TOTTENHAM** forward Son Heung-min became the latest Premier League player to be targeted with racist abuse on social media following a match.

The South Korea international was involved in an incident which saw a goal from Edinson Cavani ruled out in the first half as Tottenham lost 3-1 to Manchester United. Scott McTominay was adjudged to have fouled Son in the buildup to what would have been the opening goal of the game. Son, who scored Tottenham's goal,

was targeted with racist insults both in replies to a tweet from Tottenham's official account and in the comments section on his most recent Instagram post.

"Another matchday and more abhorrent racial abuse suffered by one of our players," Tottenham said in a statement. "This has again been reported to the platforms and we shall now undertake a full review alongside the Premier League to determine the most effective action moving forward. We stand with you, Sonny."

AD

## ACCURATE, TIMELY & COMPETITIVE TRANSLATIONS

**Languages:**  
ENGLISH, CHINESE,  
PORTUGUESE, JAPANESE,  
KOREAN, SPANISH,  
FRENCH, ARABIC,  
RUSSIAN

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Contact: Ms. Amy Yang  
Email: amy@ktranz.com.mo  
Tel: +853 2871 6081/2 Fax: +853 2871 6084

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

OPINION

World Views

The Editors, MDT/Bloomberg

EUROPE IS HEADING TOWARD A NEW FINANCIAL CRISIS

Europe faces a predicament. Even as it struggles to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, it's setting itself up for another crisis — this one financial. To ensure the viability of the common currency at the heart of the European project, the EU's leaders will have to cooperate in ways they've so far resisted.

Adopting the single currency has yielded great benefits, from frictionless trade to improved global competitiveness. But the euro also obliged member states to relinquish the independent monetary policies that can help backstop national debts and financial systems. One result is that distress at banks presents a heightened threat to individual governments' finances, and vice versa — the so-called "doom loop" that played out in spectacular fashion during the early 2010s, when the euro area nearly broke apart.

In 2012, European leaders agreed on what should have been a big part of the solution. They envisaged a full banking union, in which governments would take joint responsibility for supervising financial institutions — and, most important, for dismantling or recapitalizing banks when necessary, and for making depositors whole. Progress has been excruciatingly slow. Although the European Central Bank now oversees the region's largest banks, individual governments still bear the cost of rescues, as bailouts in Italy and Germany have demonstrated. Mutual deposit insurance remains no more than a proposal.

The pandemic has aggravated the problem, with governments taking on ever more debt in their efforts to provide economic relief. The International Monetary Fund estimates that general government debt in the euro area will exceed 98% of gross domestic product by the end of 2021, up from 84% at the end of 2019. Worse, individual countries' obligations are accumulating on the balance sheets of their banks. At the end of February, Italian banks' holdings of Italian government debt amounted to 124% of their capital and loss reserves, rendering them extremely vulnerable in the event of fiscal distress.

Aside from the financial risks they present, these sovereign exposures make banking union harder to achieve politically. Northern countries such as Germany, for example, don't want to sign on to mutual deposit insurance if it means subsidizing Italian banks' excessive holdings of Italian public debt. Governments of heavily indebted countries, for their part, worry that restrictions on banks' holdings could render them unable to borrow when they have to.

There's a way forward. To nudge banks toward diversification, the ECB could designate a "safe portfolio" of government debt, corresponding to member states' shares of the region's GDP (an idea originally proposed by German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, and elaborated by Luis Garicano, an economist and member of the European Parliament). Any divergence would entail an increase in capital requirements. This would address northern countries' concerns by giving banks an incentive to reduce home-government exposures. At the same time, it would moderate the pressure that would otherwise be imposed on heavily indebted governments: The decrease in Italian banks' holdings of their government's debt would be at least partially offset by increases in other banks' holdings.

This would be a step toward banking union in its own right. Europe's leaders ought then to go further. They should undertake a major upgrade of the Single Resolution Board, providing it with the powers and resources required to take over and liquidate or recapitalize banks anywhere in the euro area, and to compensate depositors — much as the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation does in the U.S. To make a mutual insurance fund more politically palatable, it could initially be designed to kick in only as a backstop to national funds.

During the pandemic, Europe's leaders have been willing to deepen their cooperation — most notably in pooling fiscal resources to support the union's hardest-hit economies. With increasing urgency, the same logic applies to severing the link between the health of banks and the solvency of national governments. Until this is addressed, Europe's single-currency system is dangerously unfinished work.

Microsoft, on an accelerated growth push, is buying speech recognition company Nuance in a deal worth about \$16 billion. Microsoft will pay \$56.00 per share cash. That's a 23% premium to Nuance's Friday closing price. The companies value the transaction at \$19.7 billion, including debt.

Shares of Nuance surged about 23% in yesterday's premarket trading.

Microsoft's acquisition of Nuance comes after the companies formed a partnership in 2019.

The Redmond, Washington, company said that the deal will double its total addressable market in the health care provider industry, bringing its total addressable market in health care to nearly \$500 billion.

The transaction is Microsoft's second largest deal following its \$26 billion purchase of LinkedIn in 2016. Last September, it bought for video game maker ZeniMax for \$7.5 billion.

Mark Benjamin will continue as Nuance CEO.

The transaction is expected to close this year. It still needs approval from Nuance shareholders.

SMALL BUT QUICK: BHUTAN VACCINATES 93% OF ADULTS IN 16 DAYS

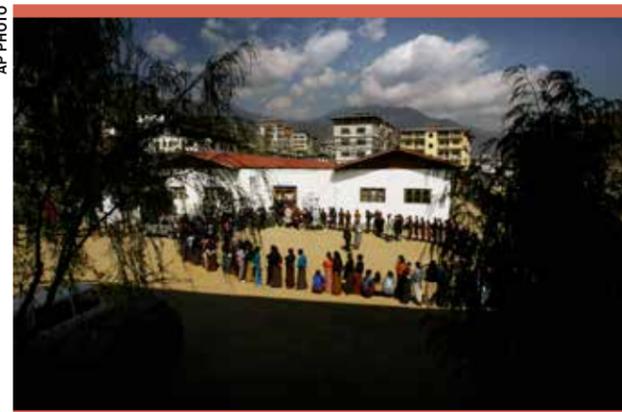
WHEN plotted on a graph, the curve of Bhutan's COVID-19 vaccination drive shoots upwards from the very first day, crossing Israel, United States, Bahrain and other countries known for vaccinating people rapidly.

Those countries took months to reach where they are, painstakingly strengthening their vaccination campaigns in the face of rising coronavirus cases. But the story of Bhutan's vaccination campaign is nearly finished — just 16 days after it began.

The tiny Himalayan kingdom wedged between India and China has vaccinated nearly 93% of its adult population since March 27. Overall, the country has vaccinated 62% of its 800,000 people.

The rapid rollout of the vaccine puts the tiny nation just behind Seychelles, which has given jabs to 66% of its population of nearly 100,000 people.

Its small population helped Bhutan move fast, but its success has also been attributed to its dedicated citizen volunteers, known as "desuups," and established cold chain storage used



during earlier vaccination drives.

Bhutan received its first 150,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine from neighboring India in January, but the shots were distributed beginning in late March to coincide with auspicious dates in Buddhist astrology.

The first dose was administered by and given to a woman born in the Year of the Monkey, accompanied by chants of Buddhist prayers.

"Let this small step of mine today help us all prevail through this illness," the recipient, 30-year-old Ninda Dema, was quoted by the country's Kuensel newspaper as saying.

Dr. Pandup Tshering, secretary to the Ministry of

Health, said jabs were still being provided to those who could not get vaccinated during the campaign period and that the country had enough doses to cover its entire population.

Bhutan has recorded 910 infections with the coronavirus and one COVID-19 death so far. It has a mandatory 21-day quarantine for all people arriving in the country. All schools and educational institutions are open and are monitored for compliance with COVID-19 protocols, Tshering said.

Bhutan is the last remaining Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas. But the country has transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a democratic, constitutional monarchy. MDT/AP

Iran blamed Israel yesterday for a sabotage attack on its underground Natanz nuclear facility that damaged centrifuges it uses to enrich uranium, warning that it would avenge the assault. Israel has not claimed responsibility for the attack. However, suspicion fell immediately on it as Israeli media widely reported that the country had orchestrated a devastating cyberattack that caused the blackout.

Libyan authorities released one of the country's most wanted human traffickers less than four months after his arrest in the capital, Tripoli, security officials said yesterday. Abdel-Rahman Milad, who was sanctioned by the United Nations' Security Council, walked free, following a decision by prosecutors late last month, they said.



Egyptian prosecutors said they found that gross negligence by railway employees was behind a deadly train crash that caused public outcry across the country. Drugs were allegedly also involved. The March 26 crash of two passenger trains in the province of Sohag was the latest in a series of deadly railway accidents in the Arab world's most populous country. At least 18 people died and 200 others, including children, were injured.



Germany The leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel's party yesterday backed party chairman Armin Laschet's (pictured) bid to become the center-right candidate for Germany's next leader, one of his deputies said — giving him an advantage after he and a rival both declared their ambitions.

Germany's biggest-selling daily newspaper, Bild, plans to launch a television channel that will go on air before the country's election in late September, its publisher said yesterday. Publisher Axel Springer said that the core of the new Bild channel's schedule will be up to six hours daily of live programming starting in the morning.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Maxim Marmur



A bird, a plane? The monument of Yuri Gagarin, the first person who flew to space is seen in Moscow, Russia. The monument built in 1980 also became a Moscow landmark. It's 42-meter high and weighs 12 tons.