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CTM 40th ANNIVERSARY

SANDS CHINA POSTED AN EBITDA OF USD100 MILLION IN THE FIRST QUARTER, UP 112.8% FROM THE PREVIOUS QUARTER

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TWO MORE CASES OF ADVERSE EFFECTS RECORDED AFTER COVID-19 JABS

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A TOTAL OF 222 DISPATCHES FOR FIRE CASE WERE RECORDED DURING THE FIRST QUARTER, A RISE OF 19% YEAR-ON-YEAR

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AP PHOTO

Hong Kong journalist was found guilty yesterday of making false statements in obtaining information for an investigation into an attack on anti-government protesters, in the latest blow to press freedom in the city as authorities continue their crackdown on dissent. Choy Yuk-ling, also known as Bao Choy, was arrested in November on charges of falsely declaring why she was obtaining license plate information from a publicly accessible database.



AP PHOTO

Japan Tokyo Olympics organizers said yesterday that a policeman tested positive for Covid-19 a day after his assignment last week at the Olympic torch relay. It is the first positive test connected to the relay since it began March 25 from northeastern Fukushima prefecture. Organizers say the policeman, who is in his 30s, was assigned to control traffic on the April 17 leg in southwestern Kagawa prefecture.



AP PHOTO

Laos locked down its capital and closed its international borders to most traffic yesterday after identifying a Covid-19 cluster connected to its bigger neighbor Thailand. Residents of the capital Vientiane are barred from leaving the city and outsiders must get permission to enter. Its international borders were closed except to trucks carrying goods and in cases allowed by the nation's Covid-19 taskforce.

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QUARANTINE NO MORE

The Hong Kong government is launching Come2hk Scheme in mid-May allowing residents in Guangdong and Macau to enter quarantine-free

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BLOOMBERG

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BLOOMBERG

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

IC2 COMMEMORATES EARTH DAY WITH TREE PLANTING CEREMONY



HONEY TSANG

THE event called "Inclusive, healthy and sustainable lifestyle on World Earth Day," was successfully hosted by Macau IC2 Association (IC2), a non-profit organization founded by people with disabilities, yesterday at Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau.

The event was held yesterday to coincide with World Earth Day. It was designed to promote a sustainable lifestyle and equal participation for people with disabilities.

Yesterday's celebration culminated in a tree planting ceremony. It is a ritual passed down from IC2's long-term partner China Shenmo Star River Public Welfare Alliance (Shenmo), a mainland alliance established in Beijing 23 years ago and dedicated to offering support to people with disabilities.

Joe Chan, vice chairman of Ma-

cau Green Future, a local organization upholding green lifestyles, was the man behind the tree planting yesterday.

Tapping into his extensive planting knowledge, Chan picked a species of plant with lifespan of around 300 years named Podocarpus Macrophyllus to be planted in the Garden at Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau.

"It is a humble plant, not eye-catching in appearance, but one that has so much potential and strength within. It bears this characteristic that resonates so much with IC2 members," Chan said.

The event was organized by a total of eight members of IC2, who either have autism or intellectual disabilities, alongside Ada Lo, a well-known figure in Macau recognized for her long-time advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities.

Lo told the Times that people

with intellectual disabilities are always being stereotyped and underestimated. They can achieve big feats that no one thought they could. This event is an exemplary opportunity to prove their capabilities.

Rutger Verschuren, general manager of Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau, told the Times that he is pleased Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau participated in the event, helping promote both sustainability and inclusiveness.

Verschuren said he was amazed by the members of IC2, who are rookies in event management. He admired their ability to pull off such a massive event in spite of their inexperience and disabilities, with "so many elements going on within just two hours."

During the event, Macao Dragon Sport Association's athletes were invited to demonstrate pickleball games to instill extra excitement to the day. Members of Shenmo also attended the event.

Macau Daily Times is the official media partner of the event

Staycation booking volumes expected to grow in Summer holiday

HONEY TSANG

AT present, Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau has registered around 1,000 bookings under the government-initiated domestic travel scheme "Stay, Dine and See Macao," Rutger Verschuren, general manager of Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau, told the Times yesterday.

"I have to say there's a big boost for the first week of May [the May Golden Week from May 1 to 5]," he disclosed. Verschuren is also Area vice president for the Macau Operation at Artyzen Hospitality Group.

Considering that each resident in Macau is only granted one subsidy of MOP200 for accommodation under the scheme, Verschuren suspects that a significant number of people have been saving the one-time quota for the summer holiday.

He expects that the staycation booking volumes will



grow noticeably in July and August.

When asked about the prospect of tourism, he said,

"I'm quite positive. I hope we will be cease to be making monthly losses by the end of this year."

HOTEL HITS 70% OCCUPANCY RATE AT MAY GOLDEN WEEK

THE May Golden Week is just a week away, but the occupancy rate for Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau has already hit 70%, peaking from May 1 to 3 during the holiday week. "Last month [in April], we had Easter Holiday, which [also had pretty good occupancy rates]. But this May will be even better than Easter," Verschuren disclosed.

Verschuren is also expecting the occupancy rate to continue to pick up from May. Earlier on April 20, Cheng Wai Tong, sub-director of the Macao Government Tourism Office, said he is feeling hopeful about the tourist arrivals during the coming May Golden Week, which he expects will hit a record high since the outbreak of coronavirus.

Meanwhile, Verschuren is pinning hope on the reinstatement of Tourist Group Visa for trips into Macau by the Chinese government, and the reopening of Hong Kong-Macau border, to further boost visitation.

But he suggests the Macau government give local hoteliers a heads-up prior to the border opening with Hong Kong, if it happens, to give them time to deploy sufficient manpower and lay the groundwork for a surge in demand.

TOURISM

VISITOR ARRIVALS FOR MARCH UP 77%

OFFICIAL data released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicates that visitor arrivals to Macau in March totalled 754,541, a significant increase of 76.7% month-to-month compared with February this year.

Given that March 2020 represented one of the most significant declines in tourists for that year, the figure for 2021 represents a surge of 255.4% year-on-year.

From the total figure recorded in March 2021, the higher number includes 404,936 overnight visitors, which soared by 221.6%.

Concurrently, the number of same-day visitors (349,605) rose even further - an increase of 304.6% year-on-year.

Although there were more visitors to Macau, the length of their stay

reduced. The average stay was 1.6 days - slightly more than half of the average stay recorded the previous year, 3.0 days.

The border restrictions in force meant that citizens from mainland China were one of few groups allowed to visit Macau as tourists. Consequently, they account for almost all of the visitors in March, with the number of people traveling through the Individual Visit Scheme (268,302) rocketing by 3,838.1%.

Visitors from the nice cities that comprise the Greater Bay Area totaled 388,094, of whom 48.5% came from the neighboring city of Zhuhai.

58,953 visitors entered Macau on Hong Kong identification documents, and 7,183 with Taiwanese travel documents. **RM**

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COME2HK

Non-Hong Kong residents exempted from quarantine from mid-May

HONEY TSANG

THE Come2hk Scheme is set to be launched in mid-May, a scheme proposed by the HKSAR government that allows non-Hong Kong residents in Guangdong province and Macau to enter Hong Kong quarantine-free.

The above statement was confirmed by the Secretary for Food and Health, Sophia Chan Siu-chee, at the Legislative Council on April 21 in her reply to lawmaker Chow Ho-ding's query.

The proposed move is part of the measures designed "to gradually resume the cross-boundary flow of people amongst Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macau in an orderly manner," Chan said.

The Come2hk Scheme was first mentioned by Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam on April 12, the day the city registered no Covid-19 cases with unknown sources for three consecutive days.

Carrie Lam stated at the time that the Come2hk Scheme would benefit non-Hong Kong residents residing in China, but did not specify which mainland cities.

Chan's statement on April 21 clarified for the public that the program would only be applicable to foreigners in Macau and Guangdong province.

Non-Hong Kong residents can be exempted from mandatory quarantine provided that they "fulfill specified conditions under the scheme," Chan stressed.



Hong Kong Secretary for Food and Health Sophia Chan Siu-chee

On November 23, the HKSAR government implemented a scheme dubbed the Return2hk Scheme. This initiative eased travel restrictions for Hong Kong residents returning to the city from Guangdong Province and Macau by welcoming them back without a compulsory quarantine.

As of April 18, Hong Kong saw over 130,000 journeys made via the scheme.

The Return2hk Scheme will be extended to returnees from all other places in China by the end of April, Chan confirmed.

The HKSAR government pledges to maintain close communication with the authorities in the mainland and Macau to explore opportunities to resume cross-boundary travel between the

three locations.

However, concerns have been raised in response to the government's ongoing plan to ease travel restrictions, as a 46-year-old fe-

male who had returned to Hong Kong from Dongguan on April 6 via the Return2hk Scheme was confirmed to have come down with coronavirus on April 20.

HKSAR, SINGAPORE CALL OFF AIR TRAVEL BUBBLE

SINGAPORE and Hong Kong called off an announcement planned for yesterday on an air-travel bubble, according to people familiar with the matter, the second time in five months the highly anticipated arrangement for quarantine-free travel between the two financial hubs has run into obstacles. No reason was immediately provided on why the announcement - which Bloomberg had reported was ex-

pected as soon as yesterday - was postponed and a new date hasn't been set, said the people, who asked not to be identified as they're not authorized to speak publicly. The cancellation was initiated by the Singapore side, one of the people said. Singapore and Hong Kong have been trying to revive their bubble plans after a previously scheduled November start was shelved due to a virus flareup in Hong Kong.

CHAN TAK SENG FIRST TO STEP UP IN AL ELECTIONS

RENATO MARQUES

Representatives from the District Development Promotion Association were the first to submit a list of 500 signatures endorsing the group's candidacy for September's Election for the Legislative Assembly (AL).

The group, led by the seasoned Chan Tak Seng, was the first to submit candidacy to the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly Election (CAEAL), aiming for a seat at the AL from the 12 available seats from the direct elections.

After the presentation of the list to the CAEAL, Chan asserted that the association's political platform will focus on several issues that affect the population and the development of Macau, such as urban planning, illegal inns and fake marriages, among others.

The group presented a list of candidates and supporters comprised of professionals from the legal sector and others, as well as civic leaders rooted in the community.

The association was started in 2018 as a think-tank aiming to present solutions to local matters, often urging the government to change or establish new policies to improve residents' daily lives.

In the past few years, Chan has taken on a prominent role as one of the most active members of the Urban Planning Committee.

This will be Chan's return to the electoral process, having been involved in the 2013 campaign of former lawmaker Chan Meng Kam.

Chan, as director of the Macau Institution of People's Alliance, was in the spotlight at the time when he openly criticized the Commission Against Corruption for investigating and arresting two people who worked on the campaign for unlawful campaign activities.

US lists Macau as Level 4 in travel warning

IN a recent travel warning list issued by the U.S. government, Macau has been ranked "Level 4 - do not travel" alongside at least 149 other jurisdictions.

Days ago, Macau was ranked "Level 1 - exercise normal precaution." The drop in rank has placed it below Hong Kong, now ranked "Level 3 - reconsider travel," which has new cases every day.

At least 116 jurisdictions have been newly ranked "do not travel." The jurisdictions in this category include some European countries with significant Covid-19 outbreaks.

For the time being, only the Central Asia country of Bhutan is ranked in Level 1. Taiwan has also been moved from Level 1 to Level 3.

Travel Advisory April 21, 2021 **Macau - Level 4: Do Not Travel**

Do not travel to Macau due to COVID-19.

Read the Department of State's [COVID-19 page](#) before you plan any international travel.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) has not issued a Travel Health Notice for Macau due to COVID-19, indicating an unknown level of COVID-19 in Macau. There are restrictions in place affecting U.S. citizen entry into Macau. Visit the [Consulate General's COVID-19 page](#) for more information on COVID-19 in Macau.

Part of the justification given by the U.S. authorities is the travel and border restrictions related to Covid-19.

Jurisdictions on Level 2 travel warning include: Singapore, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, Vietnam, and others. Those on Level 3 include mainland China,

Hong Kong, Japan, and more.

Alongside Macau, the countries on Level 4 include Mongolia, Kenya, Brazil, Argentina, Russia, and Indonesia. Newly added to the ranking are the U.K., France and Germany.

The U.S. authorities have stressed that the update is mostly

concerned with the overall Covid-19 pandemic condition in these jurisdictions. They have referred to and abided by the standards issued by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the process of compiling and updating the list of travel warnings. **AL**

GAMING

SANDS CHINA SAW 112.8% UPTICK IN EBITDA, STRONG RECOVERY IN PREMIUM MASS

HONEY TSANG

SANDS China Ltd. (SCL) posted positive adjusted property earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA), of USD100 million in the first quarter (Q1) of 2021, up 112.8% and 49.3% from USD47 million in the previous quarter and USD67 million in Q1 2020, respectively.

The group's fiscal result for this year's first quarter was released yesterday on April 22. The EBITDA of SCL was considered by JP Morgan, the international investment banking group, to be "solid profits."

The aggregate net revenues for SCL totaled USD771 million in Q1, up around 15% quarter-to-quarter, yet down 4.6% year-on-year.

The quarterly revenue increase was predominantly driven by the increase in casino receipts.

The gaming gross revenues (GGR) generated by SCL displayed a significant advancement in the first quarter. It stood "strong" at USD703 million, up 21% quarter-to-quarter, yet down 13% year-on-year, the brokerage commented.



Among the aggregate GGR, the VIP segment generated USD177 million, with a solid increase of 209% attributed to "strong luck."

Meanwhile, the mass market raked in USD486 million, staying flat when compared to last quarter - within which premium mass market increased 12% from the preceding quarter to USD336 million, equivalent to, JP Morgan stated, "around 50% of pre-Covid levels."

"I think you've clearly seen the mass and VIP segments have diverged in terms of the recovery," said Grant Chum, SCL's chief operating officer, at yesterday's earnings call.

Chum confirmed the premium mass segment has made "a very significant recovery," and reach around "50% of pre-pandemic levels," while the VIP segment is still struggling at "sub-20% of pre-pandemic levels" Such patterns for both are expected to "continue for the time being," he added.

The premium mass GGR has outplayed unfavorable factors that arose in Q1 2021, namely the nationwide travel advisory to avoid unnecessary travel prior to Chinese New Year. Indeed, premium

mass GGR has been on a growth trajectory in spite of such factors.

"The result probably reflects solid initial feedback on the launch of all-suites towers, including Four Seasons Grand Suites (290 suites) [in] 4Q20 and Londoner hotel (600 suites) [in] 1Q21," JP Morgan's analysts DS Kim, Derek Choi and Livy Lyu stated.

However, the base mass GGR went down by 20% quarter-to-quarter to USD151 million, dropping significantly by 20%. The base mass market has been the hardest hit by pandemic-related travel restrictions. Its sharp drop-

off for the quarter was mainly due to "weak visitation in Q1 2021 amidst Covid resurgence in China," the brokerage explained.

In terms of non-gaming aspects, SCL's retail market showed solid signs of revival, with tenant turnover returning to over 60% of pre-pandemic levels, the analysts said.

"We remain confident in the eventual recovery in travel and tourism spending across our markets." Robert G. Goldstein, chairman and chief executive officer of the U.S.-based Las Vegas Sands Corp (LVS), the parent company of SCL, said in the statement.

Goldstein added that the demand for SCL's offerings from those able to visit Macau remains robust, but "pandemic-related travel restrictions, particularly in Macau and Singapore, continue to limit visitation and hinder our current financial performance."

LVS released its overall financial statistics for the fiscal first quarter of 2021 on April 22 as well.

According to LVS's statement, the property EBITDA of its Macau operations was outperformed by its Singapore unit, Marina Bay Sands, which posted a positive USD144 million in Q1.

GEG clarifies voluntary resignation programs

ANTHONY LAM

GALAXY Entertainment Group (GEG) is purported to have asked its team members to resign voluntarily and agreed to pay special compensations to them, according to information spreading on social media platforms.

Questioned by the Times on the matter, the company attributed the need for the initiative to its team members' "[realizing] the need to pursue a more diversified development on a personal and professional level."

The realization, according to the company's reply, came from "Macau's tourism and gaming industry [...] undergoing a structural change [as] Covid-19 continues to impact businesses globally."



Recently, the company has launched the IR-LEAD Career Diversification Program for local gaming team members, "giving our team members more choice with their careers."

According to the gaming operator, voluntary participants will have on-the-job training across different departments. Through this training,

they can further develop their professional skills and knowledge, improve their workplace flexibility and competitiveness, and continue to be the talents of the integrated resort industry and for GEG's new development projects in Cotai.

In addition, the company has launched a voluntary New Life Starter

Program for Pit Supervisors from GEG's Table Games Department, in which eligible team members who participate and resign voluntarily will receive a one-off ex-gratia payment of MOP380,000. This one-off ex-gratia payment will be paid together with their final payment.

"With regard to their employee benefits, including related insurance benefits and pension contributions, those will remain unchanged until their last employment date." Earlier, GEG had also launched the program for Pit Mangers from the Table Games Department, which was "positively received."

The company did not disclose how many team members had already signed up for the aforementioned programs.

"Over the years, GEG has launched a variety of career development and training schemes with the objective of bringing our team members to new heights," the company added.

FURTHER DELAY ON QINGMAO BORDER CHECKPOINT

THERE has been a further delay on the completion of the Qingmao Border Checkpoint Building, Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, admitted yesterday. The completion had originally been set for April. The senior official admitted that the work "has fallen behind slightly," but stressed that it is "mostly finished." He hopes that it can be completed in May.

When questioned about the peripheral facility at the border control building, Rosário disclosed that the footbridge connecting the building and the bus terminus at Ilha Verde/Toi San has been accepted by the government.

He stressed that the necessary facilities has been built around the building, such as the bus terminus and taxi stand. He believes in the future it would be

convenient for users because they "can either take a bus or walk" after disembarking the footbridge.

Regarding security, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak has previously expressed his confidence that the border checkpoint will come into service in the second half of this year.

Nonetheless, he stressed that the eventuality is subject to the fruits of negotiations between the Macau and Zhuhai governments, as well as the approval from the government in Beijing.

Wong has previously hinted that the new 24-hour border checkpoint will have 100 self-clearance channels. Users will only get their ID checked once in each direction.

To support the new border checkpoint, a provisional Fire Service Operation Station will be completed before the end of this year. AL

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



THE “Made in Macao” enterprise, Beansmaster, was chosen by Sands China Ltd. in 2012 to be one of its suppliers. The company is valued for its smooth and delicate bean pudding and bean curd. With its cooperation with Sands China, the local SME rapidly grew and has thrived over the last decade from its small booth beginnings to a shop and factory. The founder has now passed the torch to the next generation.

Founded by Mr. Chou Kai Lam in 2002, Beansmaster is a genuine “Made in Macao” brand. From raw material selection to packaging, the whole production procedure is done in Macau. It began with a “front shop, back factory” model initially in the Praia do Manduco district. As the business grew and the government’s requirements for food hygiene standards increased, the production line was transferred from the shop premises to industrial buildings in 2011.

Beansmaster has grown from two people to a current staff of 10, supplying fresh soybean products to integrated resort operators, supermarkets and local restaurants.

Second generation ‘Made in Macao’ enterprise thrives

“After working for my father a few years, I noticed how hard he works. I hope my father can now step back and enjoy his life in retirement,” said Ryan Chou, assistant general manager of Beansmaster. The young entrepreneur has now taken over his family’s tofu business. He believes that Macau’s soy manufacturing industry has great potential. He recognizes that few people can do it well “but if few can do it, and if we do it well, the business will excel.”

Ryan said the raw ingredients for the soy products are high-quality soybeans from Canada. What’s more, they use health-enhancing ingredients during the production process. The price is therefore higher than that of its peers because of both the high quality and cost structure.

Sands China has always been supportive of local small and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs) and micro-enterprises. In the past six years, Sands’ local procurement volume has surged. Even during the epidemic, overall purchase orders did not decrease. For this SME indeed, Sands China has become a driving force for growth.

In response, Beansmaster has continued to improve its facilities and products. At the same time, to meet Sands China’s hygiene and freshness requirements, different types of packaging have been introduced. In addition, Beansmaster visited similar enterprises in mainland China to learn about new production technologies and thus has been able to continuously develop new soy products to meet clients’ supply demands. The cooperation with Sands China has improved the capabilities of the SME at different levels.

“We are happy to witness the increase in Beansmaster’s

business. Although tofu is not an expensive ingredient, it has strict standards of production, temperature control, transportation and storage. It was no small task for Beansmaster to respond quickly and transform their facilities according to clients’ needs,” said William Chan, director of procurement and supply chain for Sands China, and Rachel Zheng, the team’s senior manager.

Rachel, together with senior officer Sardonna Lei from Sands China’s procurement and supply chain department, recalled the time Beansmaster sent experienced staff to Sands’ restaurants to teach the skills to make tofu pudding. “Their enthusiasm and positive attitude impressed us,” they said.

The advantages of choosing a “Made in Macao” supplier include timely coordination, punctual delivery, stable prices and logistics. Sands management commented: “To ensure food hygiene and safety, there are strict requirements in the making and handling of tofu and general bean products. To import from the mainland, transportation time is relatively long, and it is difficult to ensure that there are no mistakes along the way. In comparison, the whole process involved in supplying fresh tofu products locally can be controlled during the two to

three hours from production to delivery to the restaurant. In addition, we are happy to see the SME continue to expand into new products, increase manpower, improve their facilities, and provide different types of packaging to cater to the market.”

The young entrepreneur Ryan hopes to maintain cooperation with Sands China and purchase the production facilities when the economic situation improves. He plans to keep renovating and upgrading equipment, and to continue improving standards of hygiene and product categories. In addition, he intends to obtain M-Mark certification through the Macao Product Quality Certification Program, which would be helpful in strengthening clients’ confidence in Beansmaster.

Sands China suggests that SMEs develop professional skills. Meanwhile, it will be helpful for SMEs to communicate and share ideas and developments with each other.

As a pioneer in starting local supplier support programs in Macao, Sands China Ltd. has been investing back into the community by helping more SMEs thrive and grow. Meanwhile the program allows Sands China to benefit from having local expertise, timely customer service and flexible delivery.



GOV'T TO INTRODUCE ELDERLY E-CARD

The face of the Elderly Card has been updated and renewal should roll out soon. The government is about to introduce an electronic version of the card, stressing that the e-card and the physical card will be equally valid. Current bearers of the physical card can apply for the e-version on the Social Welfare Bureau's WeChat account, where a user manual for the e-card will also be available. New applicants for the card can apply for the e-card directly.

FIRMS ENCOURAGED TO DEVELOP 'MADE IN MACAU' BRANDS

The Economic and Technological Development Bureau and the Industrial Association of Macau have recently co-hosted an orientation session to familiarize the latter's members with the bureau's enterprise upgrading incentive program. The orientation was held to encourage local industrial enterprises to upgrade themselves and develop the "Made in Macau" brand. At the session, the bureau briefed local entrepreneurs about meeting eligibility of the program, financial details, type of subsidies, application procedures, and the duties taken on by the applicants.

FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICE, CHINESE CENTRAL BANK MEET ON MONEY LAUNDERING

A delegation from the city's Financial Intelligence Office (GIT) has met with officials from the Anti-money Laundering Department of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank. At the meeting, the two parties exchanged experience and insights on the matter, and the Macau delegation briefed the mainland officials about local laws and regulations. The mainland officials were satisfied with Macau's efforts in combating money laundering, while promising to offer the Special Administrative Region continuous their support and insights into the area.

COVID-19

AUTHORITIES REPORT TWO MORE CASES OF ADVERSE EFFECTS AFTER JABS

RENATO MARQUES

TWO more people in Macau have reportedly suffered from adverse effects after being inoculated with Covid-19 jabs, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre announced in a press statement.

In one of the two cases, a local 34-year-old man was the second person within a week to be diagnosed with Bell's palsy.

According to the report from the center, the adverse events following immunization (AEFI) occurred after he received his first dose of a Sinopharm jab at a public healthcare center on Sunday.

This follows the first case reported of an AEFI involving a diagnosis of Bell's palsy which occurred last week, affecting a 27-year-old male who had received a BioNTech jab late last month.

The second case involves a local 34-year-old woman who has now been diagnosed with rhabdomyolysis - a medical condition that involves damage to skeletal muscle due to degeneration. She was diagnosed after receiving her second dose of a BioNTech mRNA jab early this month.

Health authorities explained that the woman suffered pain in



MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

her thighs last Friday after exercising on a stationary bicycle. The symptoms then worsened in the following days, leading her to seek help at the University Hospital at Macao University of Science and Technology on Monday.

Results of blood testing, performed on April 20, revealed a significant increase in creatine kinase. These tests were performed at the Emergency Department of the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center, where she was admitted to the ward with a diagnosis of acute rhabdomyolysis.

This is the first case of rhabdomyolysis reported in Macau after the Covid-19 vaccination and raises

the total number of AEFI in the Special Administrative Region to 387.

Rhabdomyolysis is a serious syndrome caused by a severe muscle injury. It results from the death of muscle fibers and the consequent release of their contents into the bloodstream. This can lead to serious complications, such as renal failure, as the kidneys cannot remove the high concentration of cell materials.

In contrast with their approach to the first case of Bell's palsy, health authorities decided to classify this second case as a "light" AEFI. They did the same for the case of rhabdomyolysis, leaving the current total number of severe cases

reported at two.

As in previous cases, the new AEFI cases have been transferred to the Health Bureau's special working group currently assessing adverse events after Covid-19 vaccinations, as both were viewed as "unusual."

The same group has also concluded that the causal relationship between the Bell's palsy case announced last week and his Covid-19 vaccination was "inconclusive." A direct relationship has not been established between the health condition and the vaccine.

As of 4 p.m. yesterday, there was a total of 88,292 inoculations concluded.

HOTEL BUSINESS LAW GUESTS' DATA MAY BE PROVIDED TO GOV'T

IN the future, hotels may be required by law to provide civil protection data to the government when the city enters certain civil protection states.

The latest version of the bill of the Hotel Venues Business Law submitted by the government to the parliament has proposed the aforementioned requirement. Wednesday the parliament's Second Standing Committee, presided over by local catering mogul and lawmaker Chan Chak Mou, revealed that if the legislation is enacted, hotels will need to meet the requirement when the city faces "sudden public events", as stipulated in the Civil Protection Law, and when the government so requests.

Chan added that it was implementing the request by the parliamentary commit-

tee that the Administration change the wording from "request" to "require," meaning that the provision would become a legal duty.

The requirement can apply in a wide variety of situations, according to Chan. He said that a fire drill is an example in which hotels are required to provide more data than just the number of hotel guests registered. Failure to comply with the requirement will incur a fine between MOP10,000 and MOP20,000.

Furthermore, if the legislation passes the parliament, guest data will have to be retained for five years so that the authorities can review the data when necessary.

Chan added that he hopes the bill can be brought to the parliamentary plenary for debate and voting by the end of next month. **AL**

19% RISE ON FIRE SERVICE DISPATCHES RECORDED IN Q1

THE Fire Services Bureau (CB) released data yesterday on the first quarter of this year. According to the data, 222 dispatches for fire cases were recorded, a 19% rise year-on-year.

In the same quarter, ambulance services have been dispatched nearly 9,100 times, with slightly more than 9,200 counts of vehicle dispatch. However, when compared with the same quarter last year, there were 106 fewer cases, or a drop

of about 1%. As for the counts of dispatch, there was also a drop in number of about 1% as well.

The main reasons for an increased number of fire cases were irresponsible disposal of cigarette butts, as well as burning rubbish and paper offerings. They accounted for 25 of the risen number.

Meanwhile, forgetting to turn off the stove, leaving open fire unattended and machinery malfunction contributed

to the main causes of fire overall. A total of 113 such cases, which accounted to about 51% of all fire cases, have been recorded.

Discussing the drops in ambulance dispatch, the CB reiterated that residents should take the service seriously and use it only in necessary and emergency situations. Resources should be saved for the needy. Moreover, giving way on the road to ambulances is encouraged. **AL**



LYNZY VALLES

JASON SCOTT

Gov't blasts Australia's decision to cancel belt and road deal

CHINA has slammed Australia's decision to cancel agreements between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Victoria state government, signaling a worsening of ties between the nations.

The Australian federal government scrapped both the memorandum of understanding and framework agreement signed between Victoria and China's National Development and Reform Commission, Beijing's top economic planning body, Foreign Minister Marise Payne said in an emailed statement Wednesday. She described the deals as "inconsistent with Australia's foreign policy or adverse to our foreign relations."

The step "is another unreasonable and provocative move taken by the Australian side against China," the Chinese embassy in Canberra said in an emailed statement. "It further shows that the Australian government has no sincerity in improving China-Australia relations -- it is bound to bring further damage to bilateral relations, and will only end up hurting itself."

Australia "basically fired the first major shot against China in trade and investment" conflicts, Chen Hong, director of the Australian Studies Center at East China Normal University in Shanghai, told the Communist Party-backed Global Times. "China will



Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne

surely respond accordingly."

China has lodged stern representations with Australia over the issue and reserved the right to take more action, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a regular press briefing yesterday in Beijing.

Relations between Australia and its largest trading partner have been in freefall for a year after the government called for an independent probe into the origins of the coronavirus. Beijing has since inflicted a range of trade reprisals, including imposing crippling tariffs on Australian barley and wine while blocking coal shipments.

"What we have to wait for now is how Beijing will react materially" to Payne's move, Clive Hamilton, a professor at the Charles Sturt University, said in a Bloomberg Television interview yesterday. "The Belt and Road is Beijing's strategic tool to advance Beijing's influence around the world."

The bans are the first under laws passed by the national parliament in December that give the foreign minister the ability to stop new and previously signed agreements between overseas governments and Australia's eight states and territories, and also with bodies such as local authorities and universities.

NO THAW

Payne's announcement, which included bans on two other deals between Victoria and the governments of Iran and Syria, came the same day a Chinese diplomat indicated that there will be no immediate thaw in ties between Beijing and Canberra.

"We have done nothing intentionally to hurt this relationship, and we have seen too many incidents over the past few years in which China's interest has been hurt," Wang Xining, the Chinese Embassy's deputy head of mission, told reporters in Canberra.

The BRI deals with Victoria, the nation's second-most populous state, aimed to increase Chinese participation in new infrastructure projects. They were signed between October 2018 and a year later.

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

The laws allow Prime Minister Scott Morrison's government to block or curtail foreign involvement in a broad range of sectors such as infrastructure, trade cooperation, tourism, cultural collaboration, science, health and education, including university

research partnerships.

Payne said Wednesday she had been alerted to more than 1,000 arrangements between foreign governments and Australia's states and territories, local governments and public universities since the laws were enacted.

The law may still allow the federal government to review and overturn memorandums of understanding between Beijing and the state governments of Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania in sectors ranging from investment, science cooperation and access to the Antarctic.

"I will continue to consider foreign arrangements," Payne said. "I expect the overwhelming majority of them to remain unaffected."

Wang Huiyao, an adviser to China's cabinet and founder of the Center for China and Globalization, described Australia's move as unwise.

Victoria's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative was a "huge benefit" for Australia, and "if they abandon that, it's going to take more time for China-Australia relations to recover," he said.

BLOOMBERG

AD

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BLOOMBERG

US

Momentum grows in congress for legislation confronting China

DANIEL FLATLEY

CONGRESS is moving with increasing urgency on bipartisan legislation to confront China and bolster U.S. competitiveness in technology and critical manufacturing with the Senate poised to act within weeks on a package of bills.

As part of the package, Senator John Cornyn, a Texas Republican, plans to push for incentives to strengthen domestic semiconductor manufacturing through his CHIPS for America legislation, according to a person familiar with the matter. The bill became law earlier this year but was never funded. President Joe Biden has called for as much as \$50 billion for the initiative.

Cornyn and other lawmakers want what Congress has already passed to be fully funded.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on a 21-1 vote yesterday (local time), approved a bill aimed at China on a number of fronts, including by more closely scrutinizing foreign donations to U.S. colleges and universities.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a regular press briefing yesterday in Bei-

jing that U.S. lawmakers are hyping up their "China threat theory."

"It grossly interferes in China's affairs and reeks of a Cold War and zero-sum mentality," he said. "It reflects the U.S.'s hegemonic mentality of self-supremacy. We reject and deplore that."

The panel's action came shortly after Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Republican Senator Todd Young formally introduced their Endless Frontier Act that, among other things, would authorize \$100 billion over five years to strengthen research and development in technology, computing, artificial intelligence, manufacturing and other areas.

"It's a big, bold, bipartisan initiative" to propel the U.S. "into the 21st century," Schumer said on the Senate floor.

The Senate Commerce Committee is expected to put together the legislation next week and Schumer has said he expects to combine it with other bills dealing with China and U.S. competitiveness on the Senate floor as soon as next month.

The developments are an indicator of the broad, bipartisan sentiment in Congress to counter China's growing economic and strategic power and

to make a statement about the country's treatment of its Uyghur population and pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong.

The Strategic Competition Act approved by the Senate committee included an amendment to prohibit the U.S. from sending a government delegation to the Winter Olympics in Beijing next February. American athletes would still be allowed to compete.

Other concerns are also influencing lawmakers. A global shortage of semiconductors has already caused economic pain in the U.S., as auto plants have been forced to shut down because of a lack of chips for cars and trucks. Other industries are also affected, and the shortage has led to added new urgency to efforts to increase chip manufacturing in the U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo told senators on Tuesday that the production deficiencies amounted to "a national security risk and an economic security risk."

Representative Michael McCaul, a Texas Republican said he and other sponsors of the CHIPS Act "look at Endless Frontier as our response to counter the Chinese Communist Party when it comes to technology, whether it's ar-

tificial intelligence, quantum computing, 5G versus Huawei."

"And the chip manufacturing falls right in place with that because it's such a big part of our military apparatus," McCaul said in an interview.

Young said last week that some of his colleagues were asking to slow down the legislation so that they could review it and that it could be weeks before it would be introduced. Then things sped up significantly.

"Right now, the Chinese Communist Party is emphasizing to the world that the United States is a divided nation," Young said in a statement. "This is a rare opportunity to show the authoritarians in Beijing, and the rest of the world, that when it comes to our national security, and most importantly our China policy, we are united."

The legislation has 14 sponsors, including Schumer and Young. The list of co-sponsors is evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats and includes some of the most prominent names in both parties. Democrats Maggie Hassan, Chris Coons, Tammy Baldwin, Gary Peters, Chris Van Hollen and Mark Kelly have signed on, as have Republicans Susan Collins, Rob Portman, Lindsey Graham, Steve Daines, Roy Blunt and Mitt Romney.

Representatives Ro Khanna, a California Democrat, and Mike Gallagher, a Wisconsin Republican, have introduced a companion bill in the House.

"This is transformative legislation," Khanna said in an interview. "It increases the science and technology funding in a way that we haven't seen since the Cold War and it focuses on distributing the benefits in the funding across the Midwest, across the South, that I think is truly a new approach to research and development."

Khanna said that White House officials have told him it's a priority and he's discussed with House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer how to move it forward quickly.

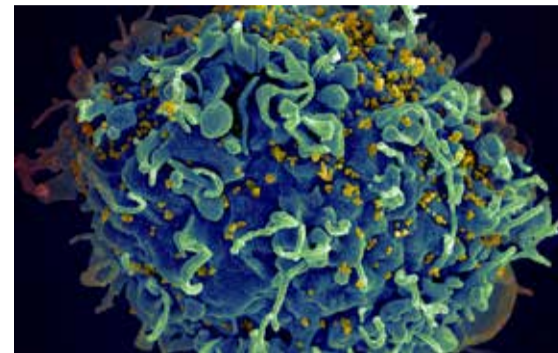
"Given that you're going to get this passed in the Senate, given that this is a priority for the president, given that it's a priority for leadership, they'll figure out a way to make it work."

MDT/BLOOMBERG

this day in history



1984 SCIENTIST FINDS AIDS VIRUS



The discovery of a virus which may cause Aids, the fatal disease sweeping through America, has been hailed as a "monumental breakthrough" in medical research.

The development was announced in Washington by US Health Secretary Margaret Heckler.

She said the virus was a variant of a known human cancer virus called HTLV-3. A blood test has also been developed, which, she said, would be available within six months, preventing the tragedy of transfusion patients contracting the disease through tainted blood products.

She also suggested that a vaccine to prevent Aids might be ready for testing in two years' time.

"Today's discovery represents the triumph of science over a dreaded disease," she said.

Aids, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, weakens the immune system, leaving its victims open to a series of wasting diseases. Those people who appear to be more at risk of contracting Aids include homosexuals, haemophiliacs, drug users and those who have received blood transfusions.

It has been causing widespread panic in the United States, where 4,000 people have been infected since the discovery of the disease in 1981. Almost half have died.

The findings in the United States are similar to the discovery in France last week of a virus called LAV, although French researchers stopped short of saying it was definitely the one which causes Aids.

Reaction to the news among victims was philosophical. Bob Scheckey has lived with the disease for two years - far longer than his doctors predicted. He welcomed the news from Washington, but said a possible vaccine was too far off to offer comfort.

"I am working with people with Aids on a daily basis," he said. "To hear that there is a possible vaccine that could come out in two or three years is no good news for these people. Most of the people we're working with now will be dead by that time."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The HTLV-3 virus was discovered to be the same as the LAV virus discovered in France. To avoid confusion, it was re-named HIV in 1987.

An estimated 24 million people, both homosexual and heterosexual, have died of Aids since the disease emerged in the United States. It has now reached pandemic proportions in some parts of southern Africa, where two million died in 2001 alone.

No successful vaccine has yet been developed, although billions of dollars have been spent trying.

Only eight potential vaccines are currently being tested on humans, and just one, developed by US firm VaxGen, has reached end-stage trials.

The trials were held in North America, Europe and Thailand and involved thousands of volunteers at high risk from Aids. But preliminary results announced in November 2003 from the AIDS VAX trial in Thailand showed it does not work.

Nevertheless since the start of the HIV epidemic, a series of drugs have been developed which significantly prolong the lives of people who are HIV positive.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Aren't you curious to know what that is? Give them some but not all of your time. Make it clear that you have boundaries that you have no intention of crossing for them, at least not yet.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
Call a spade a spade. People will respect your honesty and give you more responsibility because of it. If someone is bragging a bit too much, tell them not to be so pompous.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
Whether or not you have a good day totally depends on your attitude this morning. If you're feeling up for a challenge, then you're going to be well pleased with how the day unfolds.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Be wary of extravagant gifts from co-workers or casual acquaintances. They could be giving you something with the expectation that they'll be getting something in return.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
It will be surprisingly simple to do, and it will give you one more achievement to celebrate. Ask around and you'll find out that a few of your friends have something to celebrate too!

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Your growing confidence is helping you impress all the right people now, but too much action might cause you to get overwhelmed all over again. Do yourself a favor and scale back on your plans for the day.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
When it comes to making new friends, you're going to be absolutely unstoppable today. Everyone wants to be on your team, and they won't be shy about letting you know it!

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Your ego is growing, and that is nothing but a good thing! Now might be the right time to take that risk that has intimidated you for so long. You may finally have the faith in yourself that you need to prevail.

SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
That grouchy person who tries to steal your parking space, the overbearing boss who spends more time breathing down your neck than doing their own job, the roommate who never cleans up their messes.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
They'll be flattered by the attention, which will encourage them to keep on going with this lifestyle renovation. Don't be afraid to let someone know you're proud of them.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
This day could unfold in some unpredictable directions, but not knowing exactly what's going to happen next might be a very good thing for you right now.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Someone you care deeply about has been living in a bit of a fantasyland lately, and it's going to be up to you to give them the reality check they need. It's never fun to burst someone's bubble...

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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			6	5			3	
	5						7	
6						2		
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	4						5	
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	3		8					4

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

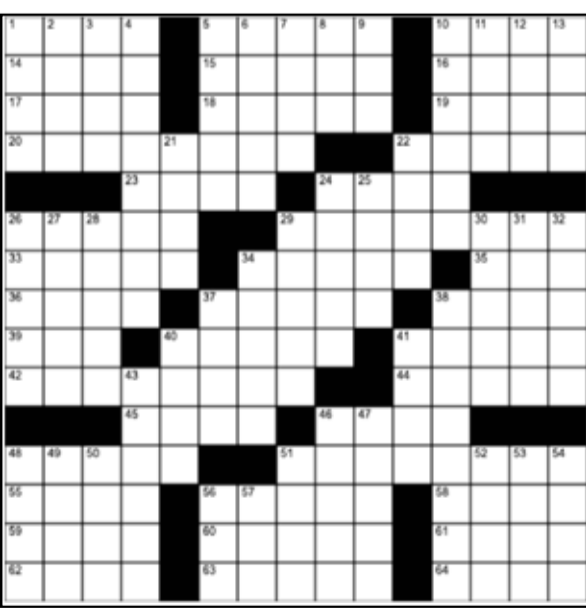
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	9	21	cloudy
Harbin	11	20	shower
Tianjin	10	18	cloudy
Urumqi	0	5	overcast
Xi'an	14	18	drizzle
Lhasa	5	19	clear
Chengdu	17	26	cloudy
Chongqing	17	26	cloudy
Kunming	15	29	clear
Nanjing	17	24	cloudy
Shanghai	19	24	drizzle
Wuhan	15	25	clear
Hangzhou	19	25	overcast
Taipei	21	25	cloudy
Guangzhou	21	32	clear
Hong Kong	24	30	clear
WORLD			
Moscow	8	17	cloudy
Frankfurt	0	14	clear
Paris	9	19	clear
London	2	15	clear
New York	6	16	clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Kodak rival; 5- Series of metal rings; 10- Charts; 14- Unit of an insurgency; 15- MetLife competitor; 16- Brain wave; 17- Horne solo; 18- First American to orbit Earth; 19- Timbuktu's land; 20- Recover; 22- Like some stadiums; 23- Method; 24- Hwys.; 26- Look for; 29- Ocean traveler; 33- Brainy bunch; 34- Mawkish; 35- ___-Wan Kenobi was a character in "Star Wars"; 36- "Is so!" rebuttal; 37- Bundles; 38- Took to court; 39- Capote, to friends; 40- Art supporter; 41- Large wave caused by tidal flow; 42- Inaction; 44- Eats to a plan; 45- Snug; 46- Faint, with "over"; 48- Wood strips; 51- Yankee Stadium pitch directed at the batter's head; 55- As well as; 56- Grannies; 58- Mayberry moppet; 59- Thick cord; 60- Angry; 61- Helps; 62- Cong. meeting; 63- Off-track; 64- Soviet news service;

DOWN: 1- Rent-___; 2- Richard of "Chicago"; 3- Dart; 4- Scaremonger; 5- Behind bars; 6- Ax handle; 7- To ___ (perfectly); 8- Tavern; 9- Photographer Goldin; 10- Brunch cocktail; 11- Economist Smith; 12- Brazilian soccer star; 13- Stated; 21- Whit; 22- Fly in the face of; 24- Drive back; 25- Knocks lightly; 26- Fine fiddle; 27- Off-the-wall; 28- Invalidate; 29- Income source; 30- Cheek cosmetic; 31- Movie critic Roger; 32- Travels on; 34- Impudent; 37- Folk singer Joan; 38- Scooter or sandbagger; 40- Seth begat him; 41- Steinbeck: East of ___; 43- Resounds; 46- "Hyperion" poet; 47- Relaxes; 48- Metallica drummer Ulrich; 49- Drug-yielding plant; 50- Dosage abbr.; 51- ___ Brith; 52- Capital city of Western Samoa; 53- Covers; 54- Not so much; 56- Vardalos of "My Big Fat Greek Wedding"; 57- Human limb;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

BOOK IT

NEW COLLECTION OF COLUMNS BY THE LATE JENNY DISKI

ANN LEVIN, MDT/AP

A lot of criticism doesn't age well because it's tied to ephemeral moments in our cultural life. Jenny Diski's is likely to stand the test of time because it offers readers a bracing mix of razor-sharp analysis and wrenchingly honest autobiography.

"Why Didn't you Just Do What You Were Told?" brings together 33 of more than 200 columns she wrote for the London Review of Books over a prolific career that included novels, short stories, memoir and travelogues. Most are book reviews, giving her a springboard for wide-ranging reflections on everyone from Jeffrey Dahmer and Denis Thatcher to Anne Frank, Princess Margaret, Martha Freud (wife of Sigmund), Roald Dahl, and many more.

In the essay on Dahl, she explains why "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and other books by the famously unpleasant author are so wildly popular with kids. "They speak to the last overt remains of the disreputable, un-socialized, inelegant parts of themselves the grown-ups are trying so hard to push firmly underground."

Here she is in 2007, reflecting on the "sentimentality and hysteria" that washed over Kensington Palace after Princess Diana died. "Ten years on ... it isn't entirely obvious what fascinated people so ... Take the bright lights away and you have a regular messy divorce ... The only remarkable thing was that he left her for an older woman."

The most gripping have to do with her own extraordinary life, including a lifelong struggle with depression, suicide attempts, psychiatric hospitalizations, and a 2014 diagnosis of inoperable lung cancer that killed her less than two years later at age 68.

Diski was born in London in 1947, the daughter of working-class immi-



"Why Didn't You Just Do What You Were Told?" by Jenny Diski (Bloomsbury Publishing)

grant Jews, who subjected her, together and separately, to neglect and abuse. As a troubled teenager, she was taken in by Doris Lessing, launching a fraught relationship with the celebrated writer that she only wrote about after Lessing's 2013 death.

The essay "A Diagnosis" is about finding out she has cancer and realizing that despite the cliché of the cancer diary, she knows she'll have to do one, too — in her own inimitably personal way.

"What else am I going to write about but how I know and don't know the world? I may not make things up in fiction, or tell the truth in non-fiction, but documentary or invented, it's always been me at the center of the will to put descriptions out into the world."

It's as good an account as any for what she's up to in these mordantly funny and brilliant essays.

tTUNES

RHIANNON GIDDENS CONSIDERS THE MEANING OF HOME

RHIANNON Giddens' new album masterfully mixes the music of Ireland, Italy, Appalachia and heaven.

A year of death and lockdown left Giddens thinking about home and all the word means. That inspired "They're Calling Me Home," a 12-tune travelogue that shrinks the world by covering lots of ground, with the great beyond always nearby.

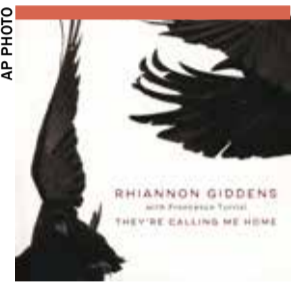
Giddens and Italian multi-instrumentalist Francesco Turrisi both live in Ireland and recorded the album near Dublin, which accounts for the set's Celtic underpinning.

Their reinvention of "Amazing Grace" possesses the gentle beauty of the Irish countryside, with Giddens' evocative humming suppor-

ted by a frame drum and uilleann pipes. On the title cut she's mournful but hopeful, contemplating transfiguration and accompanied by an accordion's drone, while the somber ballad "When I Was In My Prime" will inspire another round at the pub.

The music never stays in one place for long. "Nenna Nenna" is a charming Italian lullaby, and the 1920s fiddle tune "Waterbound" is performed as a campfire sing-along, with stellar support from Congolese guitarist Niwel Tsumbu.

Banjo, viola and whistle further connect the musical roots, as does the powerhouse instrument that is Giddens' voice, her arresting alto vibrating with amazing grace. STEVEN WINE, MDT/AP



Rhiannon Giddens with Francesco Turrisi, "They're Calling Me Home" (Nonesuch)

AD

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



TASTE OF EDESIA

A sumptuous picnic experience

IRENE SAM, MDT

As the Covid-19 situation continues to worsen around the world, there aren't many places to travel except to mainland China. For a staycation in Macau, there are indeed many choices, but for individuals who love green grasses and sunshine, why not enjoy a fun-filled picnic with delicious treats and create unforgettable memories with friends and loved ones at **Sheraton Grand Macao**?

The hotel has recently come out with "A date with spring," a limited-time accommodation package offering a delightful outdoor ex-

perience. The hotel package includes a one-night stay in a deluxe king or twin room, as well as picnic experience featuring a basket full of sweet and savoury treats that guests can enjoy on the nearby Le Jardin or elsewhere to explore the beauty of Cotai.

The picnic basket is packed with delicious afternoon tea items including charcuterie and cheese, croissants, finger sandwiches, and sweet treats including English trifle, maple and pecan tart, freshly baked scones. It also comes with a selection of refreshing beverages.

"Picnics are the perfect way to enjoy the outdoors with friends and family with some

great food, and we'll take care of everything – leaving you to enjoy a picture-perfect picnic experience. It is a great way for travellers to enjoy Macau with friends or that special someone and experience the colourful vibe and specialty cuisines that Macau has to offer in a relaxed setting," says Daniella Tonetto, General Manager of Sales and Marketing for Sheraton Grand Macao.

From now until the middle part of July, the package is only priced at HKD888. A complimentary room upgrade is possible upon check-in and guests can check out at 3 p.m., perfect for lazy picnickers who love to sleep in like there is no tomorrow.

Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



THE MONTREAL 1800 METRES TURF

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TREASURELAKEBUDDY caught the eye in his track work and preps. His recent form also suggests that he is quite ready for a good solid race in 1800 metres on turf or on the sand track. His trainer will enter him this Saturday for a turf race to suit his racing condition. His last two races also seen **Treasurelakebuddy** has been educated well in finding good tactical positions to fighting out a strong finish. In his two last outings he tried to come from behind and again led in front which was very obvious in testing his racing styles and stamina. Come Saturday he draws barrier one and with the service of the in form C.L Cheung he should get much closer to the winning stall. I am keen to place my money to win this race as well as the banker in all my exotics in this race, again he's my NAP for this Saturday's MJC's turf meeting.

Race 6 | Horse No. 2 Treasurelakebuddy Win & Place bets & Banker for Exotics



OPINION

World Views

Liam Denning, MDT/Bloomberg



BIDEN'S EARTH DAY PARTY INVITES THE WORLD BUT COURTS AMERICANS

The original Earth Day on April 22 in 1970 drew Americans' attention to their planet. This year's is designed to draw the planet's attention to Americans.

President Joe Biden's climate conference, kicking off on Thursday, aims to demonstrate that the U.S. is serious about tackling climate change, and showing it can outcompete China in the process. In doing so, though, Biden is also reaffirming his intent to transform the domestic scene with multitrillion dollar infrastructure plans. And that means courting a domestic audience, too.

The centerpiece is likely to be a new U.S. emissions reduction target that could be described as metamorphic. Halving the country's greenhouse gas output in 2030 from the level of 2005, as Biden will reportedly aim for, requires remaking swathes of the economy. Emissions peaked in 2007 and fell by 1.1% a year through 2019. Getting to the new target means accelerating that to 5%, or roughly half the estimated drop resulting from the pandemic in 2020, compounded each year over a decade.

Put another way, it means cutting 2.85 billion tonnes of gross annual emissions. Say those from power generation fall by 80% and methane emissions (mostly from agriculture and the natural gas business) are cut in half. Either is a monumental job in itself, especially on this schedule. Even so, you would still need to find almost 1.2 billion tonnes of other reductions — with transportation an obvious target.

Thus far, Biden's approach on climate has leaned more toward using a wide range of regulatory tools. We may yet see Congressional Democrats push a federal clean energy standard for the power sector, perhaps under the convoluted rubric of budget reconciliation. Indeed, 50% by 2030 would appear to demand it. Yet that target, while framed as a signal to the wider world, may also be directed at the states.

Former President Donald Trump's rollback of environmental regulations met with pushback at the sub-national level. America's Pledge, a coalition of local and business leaders backing the Paris Agreement co-founded by Michael Bloomberg (majority owner of Bloomberg News parent Bloomberg LP), encompasses states, cities, businesses and other organizations representing roughly two-thirds of the U.S. economy and population. It endorses a 50% emissions cut and estimated in a report published in December 2019 that bottom-up initiatives alone could deliver a cut of 37%. Meanwhile, at least 15 states have adopted net-zero emissions or 100%-renewable power targets and several more are actively considering such measures.

Biden's appointments to key positions appear designed to capitalize on this, not least Gina McCarthy, his chief domestic climate adviser, and her deputy Ali Zaidi. Besides other roles, both held prominent environmental positions in states — Massachusetts and Connecticut for McCarthy, New York for Zaidi — that are blue and target net-zero emissions by 2040 or beyond. With their new boss trumping those, it's a fair bet they will push their home states to follow his lead with similarly ambitious updates. That's one way of cementing Biden's climate ambitions in large parts of the U.S. even if Washington remains divided on them.

On that front, GOP counter-programming this week served to emphasize the contortions required in maintaining climate change as a wedge issue. House Republicans touted a slew of bills covering everything from shoring up nuclear energy to planting a trillion trees. Politically, this could help as younger voters, in particular, bridle at the party's longstanding opposition to meaningful action on climate change.

It's also an implicit admission that a threat the party has spent years deriding or downplaying is real. Yet the bills proposed aren't anchored by an overarching objective in terms of emissions cuts. There are further tensions.

[Abridged]

MISSILE FROM SYRIA LANDS IN ISRAEL, TRIGGERS ISRAEL STRIKE

A Syrian anti-aircraft missile landed in southern Israel yesterday, setting off air raid sirens near the country's top-secret nuclear reactor, the Israeli military said. In response, it said it attacked the missile launcher and air-defense systems in neighboring Syria.

Israeli media later described the Syrian missile as an "errant" projectile, not a deliberate attack deep inside Israel. In recent years, Israel has repeatedly launched air strikes at Syria, including at military targets linked to foes Iran and the Lebanese

Hezbollah militia, both allies of Syrian President Bashar Assad. Such strikes routinely draw Syrian anti-aircraft fire. Yesterday's exchange was unusual because the Syrian projectile landed deep inside Israel.

Syria's state news agency SANA said the exchange began with an Israeli air strike on Dumeir, a suburb of the capital of Damascus. Dumeir is believed to house Syrian army installations and batteries as well as bases and weapons depots belonging to Iran-backed militias. SANA said four soldiers were wounded.

THE BUZZ

RELICS SEIZED FROM SMUGGLERS ARE RETURNING TO AFGHANISTAN

BEN FOX, WASHINGTON

Precious relics of Afghanistan's ancient past are returning home as the nation confronts deepening uncertainty about its future.

A collection of 33 artifacts seized from a New York-based art dealer who authorities say was one of the world's most prolific smugglers of antiquities was turned over by the U.S. to the government of Afghanistan this week.

"The significance of the material is huge," Roya Rahmani, the country's ambassador to the U.S., said yesterday (local time). "Each one of these pieces are priceless depictions of our history."

Rahmani formally took control of the collection in a ceremony Monday in New York with the Manhattan District Attorney's office and Homeland Security Investigations, which recovered the artifacts as part of a larger investigation into the trafficking of antiquities from a number of countries.

Now, after briefly being displayed at the embassy in Washington, the masks, sculptures and other items, some from the second and third centuries, are en route to Kabul, where they are expected to go on display at the National Museum.

It's the same museum where members of the Taliban destroyed artifacts in 2001 as part of a cultural rampage rooted in a fundamentalist version of Islam in which depictions of the human form are considered offensive.

The Taliban is now out of power. But it controls much of the country outside of Kabul amid stalled talks with the government and the looming withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces after two decades of war. Rahmani concedes it's a delicate time.

"However, what I know



is that our security forces are determined to defend our people," she said in an interview with The Associated Press. "The government is committed to do its part for peace and stability in a way that would bring durable peace."

President Joe Biden has already said the U.S. would remove all its troops by Sept. 11, the 20th anniversary of the attacks that prompted the American invasion to dislodge the Taliban in 2001 for allowing al-Qaida to operate from Afghanistan.

Before the Sept. 11 attacks, the Taliban had already become internationally notorious for enforcing a harsh form of Islamic law that kept women out of public view and for destroying — with rockets, shells and dynamite — the famed giant, sixth century sandstone Buddha statues built into a cliff in Bamiyan province.

The destruction of the statues was on the ambassador's mind as she prepared to ship the artifacts to her homeland, not only because a mural of the sandstone Buddhas adorns the room at the embassy where visitors gathered this week to see the relics.

Rahmani, her country's first female ambassador to the United States, recalls that she wept when she first learned what the Taliban had done to the Buddhas. It was an impor-

tant moment, she says, because she had pledged never to let anyone see her cry as a way to defy the male-dominated culture of her homeland.

"I broke my vow," she said. "I really cried hard. I wept and wept."

In contrast, the items are "returning to a government and people who cherish their past" and will make sure they are preserved for future generations, Rahmani said. She doesn't expect the Taliban, if they return to power, would dare to destroy them.

"Our security forces and our government would not let that happen," she said. "We are determined not to let that happen."

Like the statues, some of the recovered antiquities depict Buddha. There's also a marble statue of Shiva and a Greek mask. The artifacts reflect the multicultural influences on Afghanistan, an important center of trade and commerce, according to Fredrik Hiebert, an archaeologist and National Geographic Fellow who studies the country.

There are at least 2,600 archaeological sites around the country, said Hiebert, who helped authenticate some of the items after they had been confiscated by federal agents and discuss the relics at a gathering Tuesday at the embassy. MDT/AP



Russia's defense minister yesterday ordered troops back to their permanent bases following massive drills in Crimea that involved dozens of navy ships, hundreds of warplanes and thousands of troops in a show of force amid tensions with Ukraine. After watching the drills, Russian Defense Minister Shoigu declared the maneuvers over and ordered the military to pull the troops.

Turkish prosecutors launched an investigation into a cryptocurrency exchange yesterday over allegations it may have defrauded some 390,000 investors of an estimated \$2 billion. The office of Istanbul's chief prosecutor said it was probing the Thodex cryptocurrency exchange following complaints from users who could not access their assets. Thodex owner Faruk Fatih Ozer deactivated his social media accounts and is believed to have fled the country.



Guatemalan prosecutors requested that former President Jimmy Morales be stripped of his immunity so he can be prosecuted for violating the mandate of the United Nations-backed anti-corruption mission then working in the country. Morales, who led Guatemala from 2016 to 2020, has immunity because after his term he immediately became a representative to the Central American Parliament. Morales assumed the presidency pledging to battle corruption but once he and family members became targets of the anti-corruption mission, he moved to push it out of Guatemala.

Mexico's defense secretary said that drug cartels have attacked police or soldiers with explosive-laden drones in at least three states. Defense Secretary Luis Crescencio Sandoval said the Jalisco New Generation cartel was behind some of the attacks. He said explosive drones had been used in the states of Jalisco, Guanajuato and Michoacan.