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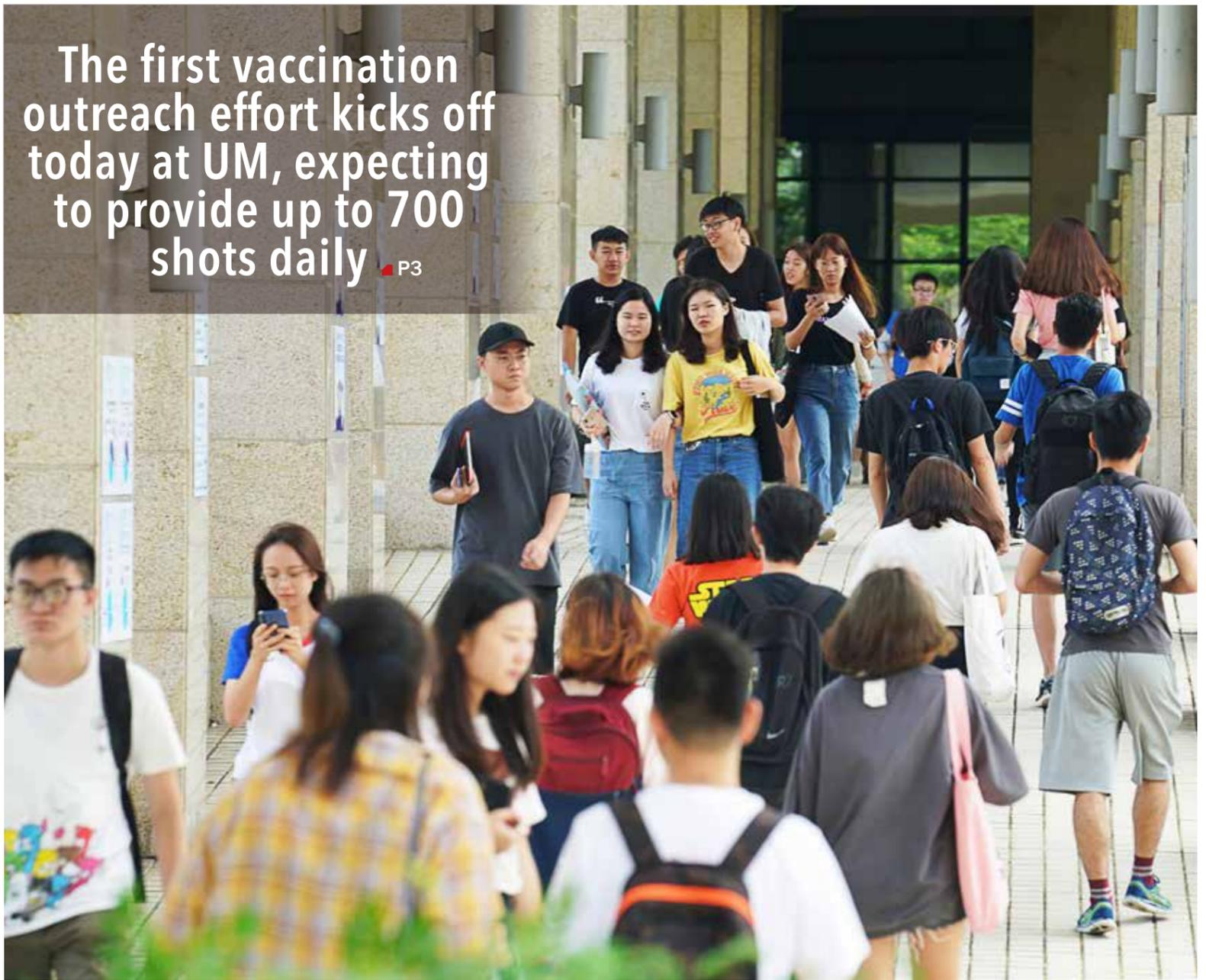
**MOBILE PAYMENT PLATFORMS PARTICIPATING IN THE NEW ROUND OF CONSUMPTION SCHEME HAVE ANNOUNCED THEIR RESPECTIVE PROMOTION PLANS TO ATTRACT USERS** P4

**LOCAL WOMAN LOSES MOP220,000 IN ONLINE DATING SCAM** P2

**SIN FONG GARDEN: THE COURT OF FIRST INSTANCE HAS ORDERED COMPANIES INVOLVED IN THE CONSTRUCTION TO PAY A COMPENSATION OF OVER MOP38 MILLION** P2

# JABS IN REACH

The first vaccination outreach effort kicks off today at UM, expecting to provide up to 700 shots daily P3



**Japan** Japan's ruling party lost all three parliamentary by-elections, loosening Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's grip on power ahead of national elections later this year. Suga said he takes seriously the results that are seen as reflecting voter discontent with his government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic as well as scandals involving his ruling Liberal Democratic Party.



**Indonesia** A brigadier general was killed in an ongoing clash between security forces and a rebel group in restive Papua province, authorities said yesterday. The clashes started April 8 in Indonesia's easternmost Papua province after rebels set fire to three schools and shot to death a teacher in Beoga village in Puncak district. Another teacher was also killed a day later as rebels fired at teachers' housing complex and burned down a house of a tribal chief in Beoga. Police, military and intelligence forces joined Operation Nemangkawi to find the attackers.



**Thailand** Authorities are imposing fines of up to 20,000 baht (\$640) for people who fail to wear face masks in public in 48 provinces, as the government struggles to cope with a new wave of coronavirus cases that is straining the medical system. The capital, Bangkok, which has the largest number of cases, is also closing more than 30 types of businesses and services, including cinemas, parks, zoos, bars, pools and massage parlors. Gatherings of more than 20 people are banned. Shopping malls and department stores may continue operating, but with abbreviated hours.

More on backpage

**HISTORY, GLAMOUR AND A WEIRD ENDING AT THE OSCARS** P6-7



CRIME

# LOCAL WOMAN LOSES MOP220,000 IN ONLINE DATING SCAM

RENATO MARQUES

A female resident of Macau in her 40s has reportedly lost around 220,000 patacas in a scam conducted through a social media platform, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported yesterday during the regular joint press conference of the police forces.

According to the PJ report, the married woman claimed she met an individual through an online platform in March this year and they had been chatting for over one month.

This man told the woman he was an airline pilot based in the U.S. but that he was soon to travel to Turkey to collect an inheritance from his mother that was valued at USD17 million (about

136 million patacas).

On April 13, this person again contacted the woman saying that upon arriving in Turkey, he had been robbed and injured, losing all his possessions. He requested she help him by transferring USD7,000 to an account in a bank in Thailand, which she did.

Five days later, the same man called once more for help, saying that the account in which the inheritance was deposited had been frozen, and that to reactivate it and handle the process of retrieving the money, he needed to spend about USD20,000.

Again, the woman agreed to help and transferred the amount to the same bank account in Thailand. But, on April 23, and already being in possession of

the alleged inheritance, the man claimed he needed an extra USD15,000 to be able to make his return to the US.

This time, the woman found the request suspicious and assumed she had been involved in a scam. She decided to report the case to the PJ.

In total, she claimed to have lost the equivalent of MOP 220,000. She also noted to police that the lost money belonged to both she and her husband, as she is a housewife and does not have a salary.

Although the PJ is continuing to investigate the case, the force noted that, as in almost all cases of this kind, it is often impossible to identify and bring the perpetrators to justice.



PRATIK GUPTA

CRIME

# NEW SCAM USING HONG KONG, TAIWAN PRO-INDEPENDENCE MESSAGES TARGET STUDENTS

A new type of phone scam was reported by the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday during its regular press conference. Although the modus operandi is well-known – making use of phone calls to people from criminal groups impersonating police officers from Beijing – this case has an added twist.

According to the PJ report, the targets of the scamming phone call are university students from the mainland studying at the University of Macau. They are confronted with the claim that a mobile phone number, allegedly registered under their name, has been tracked by the national police and detected sending messages supporting the independence of Hong Kong and Taiwan.

As with previous similar scams, the perpetrators call on victims to disclose all their personal data and after that, request they transfer money into an account on the mainland.



CHI LOK TSANG

In the case reported that occurred on April 24, a 23-year-old student – a resident from the mainland – was caught by the scam, losing RMB10,000. RM

SIN FONG GARDEN

# CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES ORDERED TO PAY COMPENSATION TO GOV'T

RENATO MARQUES

THE Court of First Instance (TJB) has ruled in favor of the government in the case against the companies involved in the construction of the Sin Fong Garden building.

In the ruling, the TJB ordered the companies involved in the construction as well as those with the duty of supervising the construction to pay compensation of over 38 million patacas.

According to a statement from the Office of the President of the Court of Final Appeal (TUI), all of the involved, including the company that performed construction works in the land plot contiguous to Sin Fong (Soho Residence), were considered to be responsible for the structural damages caused to the



RENATO MARQUES

building, leading to the subsequent need to demolish it.

The court noted that the penalty enforced on the contractor of the Soho Residence was determined by the fact that the concrete used in Sin Fong was of inferior quality, and came to the conclusion that the method of placing piles in the Soho Residence building lot also contributed to the structural problems of Sin Fong, which was believed to

be at risk of collapsing.

Due to such risk, the authorities have required the residents of the building to abandon their houses and to be relocated to other places at the government's expense, since 2014.

The judgment from TJB noted that it took into account the approximately 13 million patacas that the government has spent in consolidation works to prevent the Sin Fong building from collapsing and put

the residents and other citizens at risk, as well as 25.4 million patacas spent by the Social Welfare Bureau to relocate the residents from the building over the years.

The courts also noted that, in addition to the government, several property owners of the building have jointly submitted a legal action in the courts against the builders of the Soho Residence lot seeking compensation for the damage caused to six housing units and four parking spaces.

The court notes that such a process is still pending.

In the same statement, the Office of the president of TUI also remarked that no lawsuit has yet been filed at the TJB regarding compensation for the cost of rebuilding the Sin Fong building.

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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\_Albanos 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

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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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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For subscription and general issues:

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COVID-19

# First vaccination outreach offers up to 700 doses daily

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE debut vaccination outreach effort was started by the Health Bureau (SSM) today, April 27, at the University of Macau (UM), where inoculation services were offered for the institution's staff and students across three days.

Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of the Health Bureau's (SSM) Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, announced the debut at yesterday's regular Covid-19 media briefing.

The outreach will last from April 27 to 29 — during which time, Sinopharm's inactivated vaccines will be available on the first two days, and the BioNTech-produced mRNA vaccine will be offered on the last day.

A hyperlink enabling local institutions or associations to make an appointment for a group vaccination session has been embedded onto the official registration system.

As of yesterday, around 1,600 people from the UM had registered for their vaccinations, Tai remarked.

A dedicated team of 30, comprised mainly of medical staff, assistants, registrants and techni-



cians, will be responsible for the outreach, which is expected to offer around 600 to 700 doses daily at the UM, Tai added.

"The members of the team had already completed training and mock practices to gear themselves up for the task," he confirmed.

During the three days, walk-in services will be offered to staff and students of the UM who have not made an appointment online.

Tai affirmed that it is possible that the SSM will perform a second outreach session for the UM in-

dividuals to receive their second doses.

So far, the SSM has commenced discussions with five organizations regarding the arrangement of vaccination outreach. The UM is among them.

"There are many considerations factored in as to whether to roll out a vaccination outreach or not, including the capacity of the vaccination venues offered by the associations, inoculation intent of the members, and their working schedules," he stressed.

Discussions with other

tertiary institutions and large-scale enterprises such as casino operators and Chinese firms based in Macau are underway as well. The updates of the relevant outreach programs will be announced in due course, Tai added.

The plan for the vaccination outreach program was initially mentioned by Tai at a Covid-19 media briefing on March 23.

The object of the scheme is to extend the vaccination service beyond the city's current 13 designated centers to boost the city's inoculation rate.

## NO TRAVEL BUBBLE PLAN IN MACAU YET

**A**S of now, Macau has not yet engaged in any discussions about creating a travel bubble with other destinations, the representative of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Lau Fong Chi, confirmed yesterday at the Covid-19 media briefing.

Her remarks came on the same day that the HKSAR government unveiled the details of the Hong Kong-Singapore

travel bubble, which was inked by the two economies and is set to roll out on May 26.

Both governments announced out details and requirements for would-be travelers, with Hong Kong saying people must have had two vaccine doses at least 14 days before flying. The agreement limits each flight to 200 travelers.

"The prerequisite for Macau to start planning

a quarantine-free travel bubble with other places is that the destinations share a similar Covid-19 situation when compared to Macau's," Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, stated.

Before now, China has been the only place that has met such a precondition, Leong affirmed.

When asked about the possibility of such a

travel bubble with Hong Kong, Leong — citing Macau's Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng's earlier promises — said that it would only be possible if Hong Kong sees no locally-transmitted Covid-19 cases for 14 consecutive days.

Lau also pledged that the MGTO would continue to step up promotional efforts to draw more mainland holidaymakers to Macau. **HT**



COVID-19

# Seven-day self-health management scrapped for Hong Kong visitors

HONEY TSANG

**S**INCE yesterday, the Health Bureau (SSM) relaxed quarantine requirements for Hong Kong visitors, who now no longer need to observe a seven-day self-health management following their 14-day mandatory quarantine at a designated facility.

In yesterday's Covid-19 press conference, Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, announced the good news about the relaxed measures for Hong Kong residents seeking to enter Macau.

This exemption is also applicable to all Hong Kong ID holders who had already commenced the 14-day quarantine and are now staying at local quarantine venues.

When questioned by the media as to why those who entered Macau prior to the enactment of the measure will also enjoy the exemption, Leong said the SSM has been making "fluid adjustments" on quarantine measures based on the pandemic situation of the countries and regions of origin.

"Considering that Hong Kong has registered single-digit confirmed cases daily, lately, and it has implemented stringent anti-pandemic measures, including the strict tracing methods, compulsory testing at restricted areas. As a result, we decided to make such a relaxation," she confirmed.

### EXPEDITED CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL

Cross-border travel between Macau and China may be further eased soon, Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of the Health Bureau's (SSM) Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, hinted yesterday.

As mentioned by Ho Iat Seng earlier, the Macau SAR government has been engaged in proactive discussions with the Chinese government to set up a mutual vaccine recognition mechanism in a bid to expedite cross-border travel for residents from both sides.

"The approach is to incentivize more locals to get inoculated by promising them an easier way to travel into China," Tai added.

"We hope that the good news will be announced very soon," he hinted.

## 'UNCERTAIN' NOT EQUIVALENT TO NO CONCLUSION IN FIRST PARALYSIS CASE

**O**N April 22, a dedicated investigation team concluded that the linkage between the city's first facial paralysis case and the mRNA vaccine is "uncertain."  
"The team has not found any evidence to prove the association between the

two events. Thus, we cannot confirm whether the two events are interrelated," Tai said.  
However, he stressed that "uncertain" is not equivalent to the team being unable to draw any conclusions from the investigation.



Rendering of Macao pavilions in Hangzhou

MACAO WEEK

# MGTO TO PROMOTE CITY IN JIANGSU PROVINCE

ANTHONY LAM

**F**OLLOWING two roadshows held in Beijing last September and in Hangzhou this March, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) will host Macao Week in Jiangsu between May 13 and 16 in Nanjing.

Similar to its two preceding events, the "Macao Week in Jiangsu" will showcase travel experiences and commercial opportunities to locals and visitors at the Nanjing Fuzimiao.

The MGTO will use the opportunity to promote to mainland residents who are living or traveling in Nanjing that Macao is a "healthy, safe and quality destination," in the hopes of expanding the ci-

ty's source of tourists.

As the city's tourist sector now only relies on a domestic market, the tourism bureau has been rolling out a series of events to increase the number of visitors from the mainland.

The upcoming roadshow in Nanjing will be integrated across fields such as "Tourism + MICE, Tourism + Culture and Creativity, Tourism + E-commerce and Tourism + Sports," the bureau stated.

The roadshow will also feature booths with themes such as: an overview of Macau; events and cultural tourism; Macau's World Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage; cultural and creative industries; sport events; as well made in Macau and products from local brands.

Although further details have not yet been announced, judging from previous sessions, integrated tourism enterprises and airline companies will present a series of special travel offers for air tickets, hotel accommodation, dining and more, equivalent to over MOP90 million in value during the event.

Earlier this year, the MGTO released its five strategic foci to accelerate the city's tourism recovery, aiming for a target of six to 10 million tourist arrivals this year.

This includes bolstering the "Tourism+" cross-sector integration to create a stronger synergy between Macau's tourism industry and MICE, culture, e-commerce and sports industries.



# Tourism board to start regular 'boutique tours'

**A**FTER the May 1 holidays, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) will commence regular boutique tours, that is, tours with a tailor-made itinerary, Maria Helena

de Senna Fernandes, director of the MGTO, recently disclosed.

Senna Fernandes also disclosed that although the Covid-19 situation in both Macau and mainland China

has significantly eased, national authorities do not yet have any plans to restart group tours to or from Macau.

The director also said that the MGTO was aware of local group

tours offered by travel agencies in Macau in the hopes of attracting mainland tourists already in Macau. This has inspired the authority to offer similar products on a more personalized level.

However, for the time being, Fernandes did not have much to disclose in terms of details of the tours. She stressed that negotiations have been held with tourism groups. It is hoped that the new product will be helpful to the revival of the tourism industry.

The industry had also hinted at the possibility of the new product, but emphasized that they were only acting in an auxiliary position.

As for the outlook for the May 1 period, Fernandes foresees a possible daily tourist arrival count surpassing 40,000. **AL**

# MOBILE PAYMENT PLATFORMS ANNOUNCE PROMOTIONS



**W**ITH the impending new round of consumption stimulus, the eight mobile payment platforms participating in the scheme have announced their respective promotion plans to attract users.

The government has already announced that this upcoming round of stimulus will take two forms: either the Macau Pass card issued last year as the consumption card, or one of the eight mobile payment platforms available in Macau.

Differing from the government's initial plan, the actual stimulus scheme is a mutually exclusive plan, meaning that each user can only receive the subsidy on one single platform. They will not be able to obtain the consumption subsidy repeatedly.

As a result, the eight platforms

have decided to offer promotions or rebates to attract users. This practice has been approved by the government.

Some platforms offer simpler and immediate rebates, whereas others offer more gradual incentives. Further platforms still offer a hybrid scheme, which may need more time for consideration.

For example, the Bank of China's platform will offer random users an instant discount of MOP5,000 maximum. At the end of the year, there will be a lucky draw, with a luxury sedan as the top prize.

The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, meanwhile, offers red packets for a maximum of MOP10,000 each. The year-end lucky draw features travel vouchers as the top prize. There will also be instant discounts. **AL**

# WONG SIO CHAK CONFIRMS QINGMAO PORT COMPLETION NEXT MONTH

**S**ECRETARY for Security Wong Sio Chak confirmed the Qingmao Border Checkpoint Building will likely be completed next month, on the basis of information available to him, the senior official disclosed on the sidelines of a parliamentary committee meeting.

Wong additionally said that internal tests had already commenced.

With that said, he expressed confidence that the building can be opened for public use in the second half of the year. Factors determining the opening date include progress of décor works, joint simulations and, most importantly, approval from the Central Government.

Following previous announcements, Wong reiterated that the new border checkpoint building will be equipped with 100 e-border

channels, meaning that no police or immigration officers will be needed to check IDs.

As such, Wong stressed that human resources on the Macau side are ready. Simulations and fine-tuning can only commence after the installation of the e-border channels.

A recent government proposal to collect biometric data of border users in Macau has raised public concerns over personal data privacy. When questioned about that the issue, Wong emphasized that it is not mandatory for the law-enforcement authority to collect the data, but that the law permits it to do so.

He added that when Macau residents apply for the ID, they will have had their fingerprint, which is a type of biometric data, collected by the government. **AL**



EMPLOYMENT

# 765 job hunters referred to DSAL for job-matching

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) has referred 765 job hunters to the Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL), which affirmed it will offer a vocational matching service to the group within one month.

The majority of these job seekers have been classified as being underemployed, previously engaged in construction, tourism, and retail industries.

"We [the FAOM] had compiled the data [of these 765 people who are seeking jobs] as we are striving to boost the successful matching rate of the current job-matching mechanism," Choi Kam Fu, director of the Rights Committee of the Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM), told the press on the sidelines of an event yesterday.

In terms of follow-up efforts, authorities of the DSAL will soon set up categories of demarcation between the individuals along classifications of age, salary ex-

pectation and qualifications, and arrange for them to be matched with jobs that match their aspirations and skills within one month.

In yesterday's media briefing, Chan Un Tong, Deputy Director of the DSAL, urged local job seekers to be more open to taking on jobs in other industries.

When questioned by the media as to whether such a suggestion would deepen the mismatch in Macau's job market, Chan disagreed with the statement, stressing that most young job seekers have significant potential and range, and should take on new challenges.

"We noted that the job applicants, especially the fresh graduates, have recently adapted their attitude whilst job hunting. The adjusted attitude displayed a tendency to [have] some positive sentiments," he said.

According to data provided by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the unemployment rate of local residents stood at

3.9% from December 2020 to February 2021, up 0.2 percentage points from the previous period of November 2020 to January 2021. Most job hunters were employed in gaming and junket activities and in the construction sector, DSEC stated.

As of end-March, Macau had registered a total of 173,113 blue-card holders, down over 2,000, or 1.2%, from 175,196 month-to-month.



MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

## OPTIMIZED SUBSIDIZED TRAINING PROGRAM APPLICATIONS OPEN MAY 12

**DSAL'S** refined and extended Subsidized Training Program, comprised of the Skill-oriented Training Program and the Employment-oriented Training Program, is set to open to applications on May 12. The Skill-oriented Training Program will be extended to employees in the gaming industry, and those who are on unpaid leave, even without a referral from their

employers. Additionally, the quota-based mechanism was scrapped with no limit set on the number of participants for the coming round.

The scope of the Employment-oriented Training Program will also be extended to students who graduated in 2020 or later.

Eligible applicants can now sign up for the two types of programs two

times each. DSAL has also relaxed preconditions for completing the courses. It now accepts justifiable reasons for absences provided that the total absence hours do not exceed 20% of the total training hours. The optimized training program is part of the government's third round of stimulus to boost the city's employment rate.

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## THE ASIAN HOUR

# China mutes reaction to Zhao's Oscars as S. Korea lauds Youn

HUIZHONG WU

**CHLOÉ ZHAO'S** history-making Oscars sweep, winning best director and best picture, is being met with a muted response in her country of birth, and even censorship.

Zhao's "Nomadland" is the second film directed by a woman to win a best picture Oscar. She is the first woman of color and second woman ever to win the Oscars for best director.

Yet, in China, where Zhao was born, her history-making success has not been trumpeted or celebrated. State media in China remained silent as of yesterday afternoon, with no mention of her win by either CCTV and Xinhua, the two main state-run outlets.

Instead, there was even censorship. A post announcing Zhao's directing win by film magazine Watch Movies, which has over 14 million followers on the ubiquitous Weibo microblog, was censored a few hours after it appeared yesterday morning. A hashtag called "Chloe Zhao wins Best Director" was also censored on the platform with users coming across an error message saying, "according to relevant laws and regulations and policies, the page is not found."

Some users resorting to using "zt" to post about Zhao, using the initials of her full name in Chinese, Zhou Ting. Typing in Zhou's name in Chinese on Weibo brought up only unrelated posts from the beginning of April. A search for "Oscars" showed only official

posts from the South Korean and U.S. embassies.

Douban, an app popular with film buffs, banned searches for "Nomadland" and "Zhao Ting" saying that "the search results could not be displayed in accordance to relevant laws and regulations." Multiple discussion threads about Zhao's win were deleted on the app as well. A news article on WeChat was also deleted.

Still, the news of her wins spread onto the Chinese internet, with individual web users and bloggers cheering Zhao. Many took note of her acceptance speech, in which Zhao quoted a line from a poem written in the 13th century that she, like many other Chinese children, had memorized as a child, which translates as, "People are good at birth."

In stark contrast, South Korea's Youn Yuh-jung, who won over audiences playing the grandmother in "Minari" could still be searched on the Chinese internet. Youn nabbed best supporting actress award, becoming the first Korean performer to win an Oscar.

And in Youn's home of South Korea, "Actor Youn Yuh-jung" topped Twitter's trending list while other South Korean celebrities quickly offered their congratulations. Lee Byung-hun, a South Korean actor known abroad for his role as "Storm Shadow" on the "G.I. Joe" series, posted a photo of Youn clutching an Oscar trophy. "Impossible is just an opinion," he wrote on the post. Bae Doona from the acclaimed Netflix series "Kingdom" and a

well-known South Korean actor Kim Hye-soo also congratulated Youn on their social media accounts.

Zhao faced a nationalist backlash in March when she won a Golden Globe for best director, with internet users in China questioning whether she could be called Chinese and some saying she had insulted her home country in comments on the political system.

Before the backlash in March, the film was slated for an April 23 release in China according to local media, but it did not open last week and there was no official word on a release. Employees at two cinemas in Beijing said they did not know of any upcoming showings of the film.

Offline, however, some celebrated Zhao's win and offered congratulations.

"Wow that's incredible—winning a world's top award as a Chinese person," said Zhou Lu, 35, who worked at a publisher in Beijing. She said she had not heard of Zhao before, however, but would plan to watch the film.

Others pointed out that the nationalism should not have a place in the discussion about the film.

"Her win is deserved, and it has nothing to do with her country or her ethnicity," said Victory Dong, a 19-year-old college student who uses Douban.

But Dong did not feel any particular connection with Zhao just based on her country of birth. "She is a global citizen, I am not." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTOS



Frances McDormand (left) and Chloe Zhao

OCELYN NOVECK, MDT/AP

**WAIT. WHAT?**  
 If that's what you yelled at the TV during the final

moments of Sunday's Oscars, you weren't alone. In what may have been the most abrupt ending since that closing shot of "The Sopranos," TV audiences expecting an emotional finale crowning the late Chadwick Boseman as best actor were left to ponder a huge upset, an absent winner, and a quick "see ya" from the Oscars.

It was one more unusual moment in the most unusual of all Oscar telecasts, one that defied convention in so many ways. Some of it was good: In a pandemic year when award shows faced unprecedented challenges, the Oscars brought back red-carpet glamour. And though many nominees weren't able to attend in person, it was truly heartening to see those who were.

The nominees represented a huge advance in diversity, with more women and more actors of color nominated than ever before—but one oft-predicted outcome was not meant to be: a sweep of the acting categories by actors of color. Though supporting prizes went to Daniel Kaluuya ("Judas and the Black Messiah") and Youn Yuh-jung ("Minari"), the best actor and actress categories went unexpectedly to Anthony Hopkins and to Frances McDormand, winning her third trophy in the category, for "Nomadland."

But history was made nonetheless, especially by Chloé Zhao, the China-born director of "Nomadland" who became just the second woman to win best director, and the first woman of color.

And in a year when there was so much pain for all, her words

MOMENTS

# History, g

were a balm — perhaps just what a battered world needed. "This is for anyone who has the faith and the courage to hold on to the goodness in themselves," she said. "And to hold on to the goodness in each other."

Some key Oscar moments:

**AMID THE GLAMOUR, REAL-WORLD REMINDERS**

Oscars may be about Hollywood-style escapism, but in her opening moments, Regina King kept it real. The talented actor and director of "One Night in Miami" immediately reminded the world both of the scourge of the pandemic and the scourge of police violence. "We are mourning the loss of so many, and I have to be honest, if things had gone differently this past week in Minneapolis I may have traded in my heels for marching boots," she said, a reference to the guilty verdict against Derek Chauvin in the murder of George Floyd. She noted that some viewers prefer their Oscar ceremonies not to dwell on such things: "I know that a lot of you people at home want to reach for your remote when you feel like Hollywood is preaching to you." But, she added, "as a mother of a Black son I know the fear that so many live with, and no amount of fame or fortune changes that, OK?"

**A 'PROMISING' SHOWING FOR WOMEN**

There was a wealth of history to be made this Oscar night, and much of it came for women. First



From left: Yuh-Jung Youn winner of the award for best actress in a supporting role for "Minari," Daniel Kaluuya, winner of the award for best actor in a supporting role for "Judas and the Black Messiah," and Frances McDormand, winner of the award for best actress in a leading role for "Nomadland"



Daniel Kaluuya



Youn Yuh-jung



Emerald Fennell



A scene from the documentary "My Octopus Teacher."



H.E.R.



Anthony Hopkins

# Love ... and what a weird ending

off was Emerald Fennell, who won the night's first award — best original screenplay — for the fierce and provocative revenge thriller, "Promising Young Woman," her directorial debut. The busy Fennell, who also found time for an acting role in "The Crown," became the first woman in 13 years to win a screenwriting Oscar. Fennell, who is pregnant, joked that she was also pregnant when she shot "Promising Young Woman," and thanked her son for waiting until the shoot was over to arrive: "I was crossing my legs."

## A SAD TRIBUTE

One of the benefits of the telecast leaving more time for speeches this year — with no play-off music — was that some were deeper and more heartfelt. This was especially true of director Thomas Vinterberg, who, in a heartbreaking moment, dedicated his win for "Another Round" (international feature) to his late daughter Ida, who was supposed to be in the film but was killed at age 19 in a car crash by a driver looking at a cell phone, four days into shooting. "Ida, this is a miracle that just happened, and you're part of this miracle," the director said, in tears. "Maybe you've been pulling some strings somewhere."

## HISTORY, IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

History had already made in the directing category before

the envelope was opened. For the first time, two women were nominated, Zhao and Fennell. It was quite simply a monumental night for Zhao, the China-born director who became only the second woman in Oscar history to win the directing prize, after Kathryn Bigelow, and the first woman of color. Her lyrical "Nomadland" went on to win best picture — an emphatic triumph for the elegant filmmaker. Next up for Zhao is something very different from this film made for less than \$5 million: a Marvel film with a budget around \$200 million.

## THANKS, MOM — FOR HAVING SEX WITH DAD!

It's always a good idea to pay tribute to one's Mom when winning an Oscar. Maybe not to talk about her sex life, though — especially when she's sitting in the audience. Daniel Kaluuya gave a stirring speech when he won best supporting actor for his charismatic performance in "Judas and the Black Messiah" as Black Panther leader Fred Hampton. Waxing rhapsodic, he then said: "My mum met my dad, they had sex. It's amazing. I'm here. I'm so happy to be alive." His mother, in her seat, could clearly be seen asking what the heck he was talking about. Backstage, Kaluuya explained: "She's got a sense of humor."

## MAN AND CEPHALOPOD

Many a buddy film has triumphed at the Oscars over

the years. This was presumably the first about a human and ... an octopus. "My Octopus Teacher" from Netflix rode a wave of fan enthusiasm to the best documentary feature prize. With stunning visuals, the film tells the tale of filmmaker Craig Foster, who became attached to a female octopus. Noted James Reed, co-director with Pippa Ehrlich: "If a man can form a friendship with an octopus, it does sort of make you wonder what else is possible."

## OH HEY, BRAD

Youn Yuh-jung has charmed Western audiences since she broke through in "Minari," and the prominent South Korean actress did not disappoint Sunday as she won the best supporting actress award — only the second Asian actress to do so. In her speech, she joked about how often her name is mangled, and marveled at how she could possibly defeat fellow nominee Glenn Close. Youn, 73, also dared to tease her presenter, Brad Pitt, whose company was involved in the production of "Minari," for not visiting the set in Oklahoma. "Mr. Brad Pitt, finally!" she said. "Nice to meet you."

## BYPASSED AGAIN, CLOSE MAKES HER MARK

It probably wasn't the kind of Oscar history she wanted to make: Close is now 0-8 at the Oscars, tying Peter O'Toole for most nominations without

winning. Surely she will win one day, but for Sunday's telecast at least, she had to make her mark another way. She did it with humor, in a rare comedy bit. Playing a game where Questlove would play a song and a celebrity would guess if it was ever nominated for or won an Oscar, Close was given E.U.'s "Da Butt." In what appeared a scripted moment, she exclaimed: "Wait a second. Wait a second. That's Da Butt." She then jumped out of her seat and, well, gyrated her butt, providing a needed moment of levity.

## CAN WE GO BACK TO THE OLD WAY?

Yet another awkward Oscar moment for Joaquin Phoenix, who seems to specialize in them. Presenting the final award for best actor, Phoenix undoubtedly expected — as did most of the rest of the world — to give the award to Boseman, rewarding the beloved actor posthumously for his superb performance in "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom." Indeed, it seemed as if the award order was changed, with best picture presented before best actress and actor, to capitalize on the expected emotional impact. Instead, Hopkins (also deserving, of course) won the award, and since he wasn't there, it lent a bizarrely abrupt ending to the proceedings ... a la the cut-to-black in "The Sopranos". So ...next time, can we go back to the old order, please? MDT/AP

## AND THE OSCAR GOES TO...

### BEST PICTURE

Nomadland  
Frances McDormand, Peter Spears,  
Molly Asher, Dan Janvey and Chloé  
Zhao, Producers

### DIRECTING

Nomadland  
Chloé Zhao

### ACTOR IN A LEADING ROLE

Anthony Hopkins  
The Father

### ACTRESS IN A LEADING ROLE

Frances McDormand  
Nomadland

### ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Daniel Kaluuya  
Judas and the Black Messiah

### ACTRESS IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Yuh-Jung Youn  
Minari

### WRITING (ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY)

Promising Young Woman  
Written by Emerald Fennell

### MUSIC (ORIGINAL SONG)

Fight For You  
from Judas and the Black Messiah; Music  
by H.E.R. and Dernst Emile II; Lyric by  
H.E.R. and Tiara Thomas

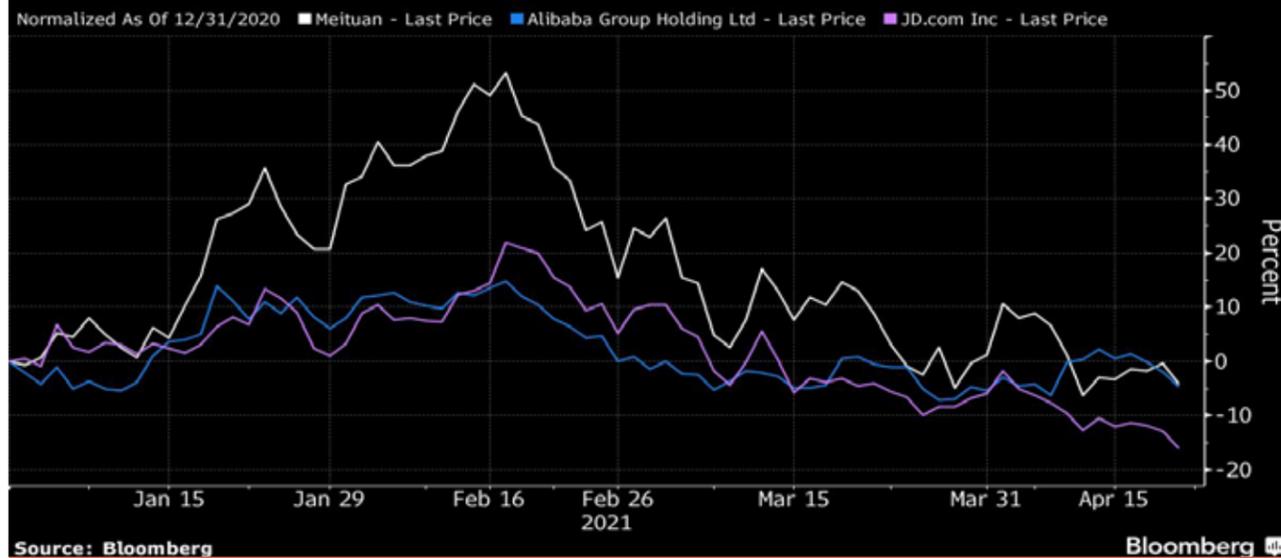
### DOCUMENTARY (FEATURE)

My Octopus Teacher  
Pippa Ehrlich, James Reed and Craig  
Foster

### INTERNATIONAL FEATURE FILM

Another Round  
Denmark

**Cost of Aggression**  
Meituan is down 32% from its 2021 peak as investors weigh its spending



**ANTI-TRUST CAMPAIGN**

# China widens internet crackdown with Meituan monopoly probe

CHINA'S government has expanded its antitrust crackdown beyond Jack Ma's technology empire, launching an investigation into suspected monopolistic practices by food-delivery behemoth Meituan.

The State Administration for Market Regulation announced the investigation, which began recently, in a statement yesterday. The antitrust watchdog is looking into alleged abuses including forced exclusivity arrangements known as "pick one of two." The company said it will actively cooperate with the probe and step up efforts to comply with regulations. Its businesses are currently operating normally, it added in a statement.

The firm's dollar bond spreads widened. The investigation into Meituan extends Beijing's crackdown beyond Ma's Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. and Ant Group Co., and threatens to chill the ambitions of founder Wang Xing, one of China's most aggressive entrepreneurs. The government has become increasingly concerned over the growing influence of titans like Alibaba, Tencent Holdings Ltd. and Meituan over every aspect of Chinese life as well as the vast amounts of data they've amassed through providing services like online shopping, chatting and ride-hailing.

The antitrust campaign has gathered pace in recent weeks, as regulators slapped a record fine on Alibaba, instructed affiliate Ant to overhaul its business and ordered 34 of its largest tech companies - including Meituan - to rectify any anti-competitive business practices within one month. Following the meeting with SAMR, the Beijing-based firm issued a pledge to abide by antitrust laws, saying it will maintain market order and won't force merchants to "pick one of two" -- forcing them to select between Meituan or a rival -- through unreasonable methods.

According to Bloomberg Intelligence, Meituan is unlikely to face penalties any harsher than Alibaba's recent \$2.8 billion fine after being slapped with a monopoly probe, a sign that the regulatory dragnet is widening on the country's tech behemoths. The interim period could be unnerving for its investors, but we think any penalty Meituan may pay will be commensurate with its smaller operational scale.

The firm, founded by 42-year old billionaire Wang, has long been criticized by rivals and merchants for alleged excesses like forced exclusive arrangements. The firm - which competes against Alibaba's Ele.me in food delivery - had previously been found guilty of unfair

competition in at least two legal cases this year and ordered to pay compensation, local media has reported. The corporation had also rejected allegations that it charged onerous commissions to restaurants during the Covid-19 outbreak last year.

Alongside Ele.me, Meituan also faced an online backlash after several delivery riders were killed or injured while trying to meet strict deadlines. It was among a handful of operators fined by the antitrust watchdog in March for giving improper subsidies to expand in the red-hot arena of community e-commerce.

Ahead of the probe, Meituan said it will raise \$10 billion in a record new share sale by a Hong Kong-listed firm as well as through an offering of convertible bonds. The firm had said it will use the funds to boost investments in new technologies like autonomous delivery as well as for general corporate purposes.

Under antitrust laws, Meituan could face a penalty of as much as 10% of its revenue if it's found to have violated regulations. Its 2020 revenue was about 114.8 billion yuan (\$17.7 billion). In contrast, rival Alibaba was fined \$2.8 billion, or about 4% of its 2019 domestic revenues.

Wang, a coding guru whose methodical obsession with data and algorithms

proved instrumental in humbling Alibaba's rival meal service Ele.me, has openly telegraphed his ambitions. In a 2017 interview with local media, he said Meituan could join Alibaba and Tencent as the third member of a Chinese internet triumvirate in five to 10 years, due to the value it creates in food, travel and other services.

The billionaire last week described in a lengthy online post how he'll funnel capital raised toward research into autonomous drones and delivery systems -- which analysts expect to fuel Meituan's foray into the red-hot community commerce arena, where buyers in a local neighborhood enjoy bulk discounts. Meituan had been expected to wage a pitched battle of subsidies and sweeteners with Alibaba, JD.com Inc. and Pinduoduo Inc. for food and produce supply.

Meituan shares nearly tripled in 2020, making it one of the best-performing Chinese technology stocks. It's dropped roughly 32% from a February record, partly as China's antitrust campaign accelerated and after the company flagged that it will incur more losses from its investments in newer businesses like online groceries.

Spreads on Meituan's dollar bonds due 2025 widened nearly 13 basis points following the announcement. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

**this day in history**

**1961 SIERRA LEONE WINS INDEPENDENCE**



Sierra Leone has become the latest West African state to win independence, after more than 150 years of British colonial rule.

The new nation was born at the stroke of midnight, when its green, white and blue flag was unfurled. A huge crowd, gathered at Brookfields Playground in Freetown to watch the historic moment, broke into tumultuous cheering.

Independence Day formally began as the Duke of Kent handed over royal instruments recognising Sierra Leone as an independent nation.

Sir Maurice Dorman, Governor since 1956, was then sworn in as Governor-General by Chief Justice Beoku Betts.

Messages of welcome to the new government, led by Prime Minister Sir Milton Margai, came from the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, and from the Queen.

Her Majesty is due to visit Sierra Leone during her tour of West Africa later in the year.

Independence festivities have been taking place all week, mainly centred on the harbour area of Freetown. Three days of public holiday have been declared, and the city is in party mood, with streets decorated with bunting and the new national colours everywhere.

But the build-up has been overshadowed by the state of emergency, declared ten days ago following a campaign of sabotage by the opposition All People's Congress Party (APC).

The party has been urging that independence should be postponed until free elections have been held.

The leader of the APC, Siaka Stevens, was arrested just over a week ago, along with his right-hand man, Wallace Johnston, and 16 other party members. They had been planning a general strike to coincide with the independence celebrations, and it was feared riots would break out if the strike went ahead.

The government in Freetown is insisting that elections will be held next year, as agreed under the terms of independence. Ministers say the arrests were made to protect those visiting the country for the ceremonies, and, they say, there is every intention to release those detained as soon as the ceremonies are over.

Courtesy BBC News

**IN CONTEXT**

Sierra Leone made an initially peaceful transition to independence. In 1967, the APC came to power under Siaka Stevens, who became President in 1971, and in 1978 made the APC the sole legal party. In 1985, Major General Joseph Momoh was elected President after being selected as the sole candidate. His government was dogged by corruption, and he was overthrown in a coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser in 1992. At the same time, a vicious war broke out in neighbouring Liberia, and Sierra Leone was rapidly sucked in. Ten years of savage fighting followed, marked by atrocities and punishments to terrorise civilians. Peace was finally achieved in early 2002, with the help of Britain, the former colonial power, and a large United Nations peacekeeping mission. More than 17,000 foreign troops disarmed tens of thousands of rebels and militia fighters in the biggest UN peacekeeping success in Africa for many years after decades in the 1990s in Angola, Rwanda and Somalia. A UN-backed war crimes court was set up to try those, from both sides, who bear the "greatest responsibility" for the wartime brutalities.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**



**ARIES**

**Mar. 21-Apr. 19**

As an Aries, it's easy for you to get impatient when it comes to dealing with your heavier emotions. Tuesday's skies encourage you to stay present with them, however frustrating they may feel.



**TAURUS**

**Apr. 20-May. 20**

It's not an ideal day to move forward with collaborative projects, as this fraught energy can lead to complications down the road. Work to untangle the knots happening around your partnership scenario.



**GEMINI**

**May. 21-Jun. 21**

Know that it might not be easy to stay on task, as the intense Scorpio moon moves through a series of unsettling cosmic connections and adds some turbulence to the day.



**CANCER**

**Jun. 22-Jul. 22**

The richly creative Scorpio moon spends the day sending energy towards your desire to get on a stage of your own and shine. Yet, Luna's handful of hard cosmic connections can make for a difficult day.



**LEO**

**Jul. 23-Aug. 22**

Expect some tensions to crop up around career matters and relationship concerns. Aim to keep a low social profile and gently nurture yourself behind closed doors.



**VIRGO**

**Aug. 23-Sep. 22**

Luna moves through a difficult day of encounters, which can interfere with your big-picture vision. Try to tackle one thing at a time without letting your whole to-do list overwhelm you.



**LIBRA**

**Sep. 23-Oct. 22**

You may be dealing with powerful emotional undercurrents that crave attention. And at the same time, you're trying to be productive and efficient. So, aim to strike a balance between both worlds.



**SCORPIO**

**Oct. 23-Nov. 21**

Unfortunately, the cosmic landscape is fraught with minor tensions, as the moon locks into a series of difficult contacts. Just be sure not to provide for everyone else before you've given to yourself.



**SAGITTARIUS**

**Nov. 22-Dec. 21**

Acknowledge your need to hide away from the world today, Sagittarius. You're better off if you keep a low-social profile, as the deep-diving Scorpio moon locks into a series of challenging connections.



**CAPRICORN**

**Dec. 22-Jan. 19**

It's best if you can keep your head down and plow through, lest you get snagged by tensions concerning your creative aspirations and romantic life. Don't be an island;



**AQUARIUS**

**Jan. 20-Feb. 18**

You're pining to get ahead with your ambitions today, Aquarius. The sharp-minded Scorpio moon points your attention towards career matters and helps you fine tune your current trajectory.



**PISCES**

**Feb. 19-Mar. 20**

The deep-feeling Scorpio moon pushes you to break routine and find some adventure today, yet Luna's handful of hard contact can make stress-free time away difficult to attain.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

**EASY**

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

**EASY+**

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

**MEDIUM**

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

**HARD**

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

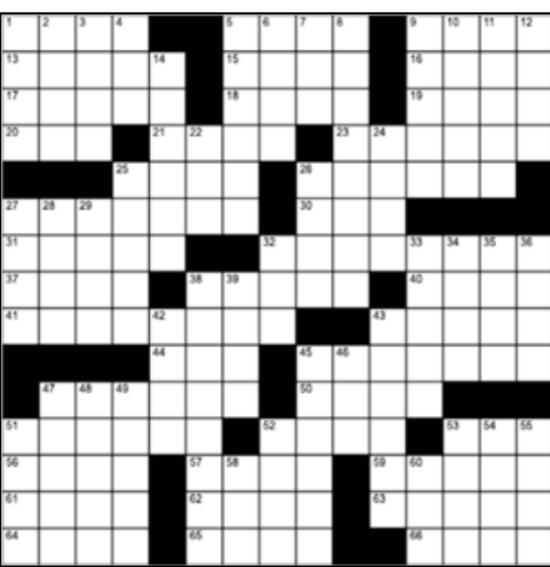
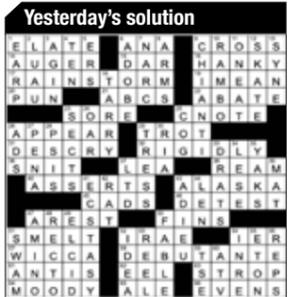
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	8	23	blowing sand
Harbin	11	19	shower
Tianjin	12	23	blowing sand
Urumqi	5	21	overcast
Xi'an	10	21	cloudy
Lhasa	3	18	cloudy
Chengdu	15	24	cloudy
Chongqing	17	26	cloudy
Kunming	15	23	shower
Nanjing	16	22	shower
Shanghai	17	19	drizzle
Wuhan	12	23	cloudy
Hangzhou	16	20	
Taipei	21	24	cloudy
Guangzhou	21	25	moderate rain
Hong Kong	23	27	shower
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	1	10	sleet
Frankfurt	4	12	overcast
Paris	6	17	cloudy
London	1	12	cloudy
New York	6	15	cloudy

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- PDQ; 5- Tirade; 9- License plates; 13- Tree with red flowers; 15- Bounce back; 16- To \_\_\_ (perfectly); 17- Snares; 18- Low-lying area; 19- Lawless character; 20- Bodybuilder's pride; 21- Noble; 23- Place of confinement; 25- Simone of jazz; 26- Midday nap; 27- Dog of mixed breed; 30- Born, in France; 31- \_\_\_ having fun yet?; 32- Spine; 37- \_\_\_-majesté; 38- Overcharge; 40- Purim month; 41- Adoption of a plant or animal as a tribal symbol; 43- Fragrance; 44- CIO's partner; 45- Venerates; 47- Rough shelter; 50- Put \_\_\_ on it; 51- Capital of Poland; 52- "Orinoco Flow" singer; 53- Mauna \_\_\_; 56- \_\_\_ Rhythm; 57- Rip apart; 59- Layers; 61- Sat on the back of a horse; 62- \_\_\_ Domini; 63- Make into a statute; 64- Belgian river; 65- Composition in verse; 66- Pad \_\_\_;

DOWN: 1- Neighbor of Sask.; 2- Novi Sad native; 3- Cries of discovery; 4- Young dog; 5- Uncover; 6- Rent-\_\_\_; 7- Rangers' org.; 8- Footwear; 9- Hire cars; 10- This is only \_\_\_; 11- Where Columbus was born; 12- Actor Connery; 14- Have high hopes; 22- Hydrocarbon suffix; 24- Stink; 25- Monetary unit of Zambia; 26- Obstacle; 27- Germinated grain used in brewing; 28- Nabisco cookie; 29- Fit snugly; 32- Derelict; 33- Uncovered; 34- Scent; 35- Driver's license datum; 36- Periods; 38- Busy department during the holidays; 39- Scandinavian capital city; 42- "Give that \_\_\_ cigar!"; 43- Fly; 45- Haphazard; 46- TV Tarzan Ron; 47- Nigerian seaport; 48- Eat away at; 49- Fall flower; 51- Lean and sinewy; 52- Feminine suffix; 53- Wife of Jacob; 54- Killer whale; 55- Piedmont province; 58- Brian of rock music; 60- CD earnings;



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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**FOR RENT**

**Ocean Gardens, Taipa**  
\$14,000/mth 1,030 ft<sup>2</sup> 2 2 2

**Rain Dance Property**  
"We dance until it's RENTED!"

**Taipa 3 bedroom apartment**  
\$17,500/mth 1,626 ft<sup>2</sup> 3 2 2



PROPERTY

# Beijing to crack down on home buying in famous school district

ONE of Beijing's most famous districts for top schools rolled out a new admission policy to crack down on housing speculation, the latest move by local authorities to keep the bubble-prone property market in check.

Parents will no longer be guaranteed to get their children enrolled in sought-after elementary schools in Beijing's Haidian district simply by purchasing properties there.

As of next year, schools in the northwestern district won't enroll a student directly based on the proximity of the resident's location to a school, if his or her so-called hukou - household registration - is moved to the area, according to a statement released last week. Instead, admission will be coordinated across the entire district, it said.

Cities like Beijing and Shan-

ghai have long grappled with frenzied buying of homes in areas near the best schools because parents must own property there for their children to attend. That inflates values of so-called "school district houses," which are often small, run down and over-priced.

The issue is contributing to a frothy residential market in major Chinese cities, where credit easing and demand from buyers who fear missing out on another rally are driving up prices. Values of existing homes in Beijing surged the most in 10 months in March, probably because of growing demand for school district houses, said Yan Yuejin, an analyst at E-House China Enterprise Holdings Ltd.'s research institute.

"Prices of such properties are very likely to stay elevated this year, as families will rush to buy before the rule takes effect

next year," said Zhang Dawei, a research director at Centaline Group in Beijing. "Whether the rule will damp the market next year depends on how it's executed."

Haidian, home to China's two elite colleges Tsinghua University and Peking University, also has some of the top-notch public elementary and junior high schools in the capital. The top five residential compounds where property owners expect price hikes this year are all from school district houses located in Haidian, according to analysis by Beike Research Institute.

To cool house price gains, Beijing's property watchdog conducted a sweeping inspection of real estate brokers to determine whether they had illegal activities including hyping school district properties. It punished 26 of them. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

BANKING

# CITIGROUP'S ASIA CHIEF CALLS RETAIL EXIT A STRATEGIC NECESSITY

CITIGROUP Inc.'s decision to exit retail banking operations in 13 markets outside the U.S. including China was crucial for its ability to redeploy capital to areas where it can make bigger profits, according to an internal memo by the bank's Asia-Pacific chief.

"This was not about any specific markets or the attractiveness of individual consumer markets," Peter Babej said in a memo to staff in the region that was obtained by Bloomberg. "It was about a strategic necessity to make additional investments in those areas where we are best positioned to differentiate over the long term."

Babej highlighted a 13% year-on-year increase of \$5.2 billion in net new inflows for the region in the first quarter. Citi's private bank delivered the best quarter ever, with revenue up 2%, the memo said. Investment banking revenue surged 84%, driven by continued momentum in equity capital markets activities.

The bank didn't break out numbers of its different Asia operations in its first-quarter earnings report. A Hong Kong-based spokesman at Citigroup confirmed content of the memo.

Citigroup announced plans to sell retail banking operations in 13 markets across the Asia-Pacific region, Europe and the Middle East as the lender forges ahead with plans to fine-tune its global branch network. The sales could fetch as much as \$6 billion, people familiar with the plan said last week.

Overall, the bank's Asia operations had \$1.3 billion net income and \$4.1 billion in revenue, contributing 21% globally. Electronic trading at its markets and securities services division increased significantly, with e-FX trading flows up 15%, the memo said.

The bank combined its private bank and wealth-management businesses in January under the leadership of Jim O'Donnell, head of global wealth division. The wealth franchise in Asia will now be led by Fabio Fontainha and Steven Lo, who currently lead the region's retail-banking and private-banking units, respectively.

The bank this month announced plans to add \$150 billion in client assets by 2025, building from the current \$310 billion. It plans to hire 1,100 relationship managers and private bankers in Asia. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**



## CORPORATE BITS

### Shine Spa by Sheraton launches new 'wellness' package



Shine Spa by Sheraton is offering the new "A Spa Day with Friends," a package that includes a 60-minute spa treatment followed with a healthy and nourishing plant-based wellness meal set for

four guests.

The package is perfect for those looking to incorporate wellness into their lifestyles, combining the "restorative nature of physical massage with the nu-

tritional benefits a meal focusing on fresh whole foods and grains," the hotel said in a statement.

Daniella Tonetto, general manager of Sales and Marketing at Sheraton Grand Macao said, "In our busy lives, relaxation and wellness often ends up losing priority, so we've tailored the 'Spa Day with Friends' package to bring friends together to take some time out as a group, spoil themselves with some pampering and then enjoy a healthy meal as a finishing touch."

The offer is available now until June 30, 2021, and priced at MOP3,399+ for four guests.

### MGM holds a seminar on cultural heritage



MGM recently collaborated with Macao Institute for Tourism Studies and Oral History Association of Macau to hold the "MGM National Education Series Seminar - Embracing

Chinese Cultural Heritage in Macau."

The seminar came with a session to celebrate the presentation of Best Practice Award to eLearning program

"Introductory Series of Macao History & Culture" by HR Tech China, an HR Technology Service Platform in China. A joint project of MGM, Macao Government Tourism Office and Oral History Association of Macao, the eLearning program enables tourism industry practitioners to gain more knowledge about the city's history. More than 10,000 people have signed up for the program since it was launched last year.

MGM said in a statement that it regularly organizes diverse programs to increase team members' affinity with the nation and Macau and "steer them to take pride in Chinese culture."

FOOTBALL

# Madrid turns focus from Super League to Champions League

**R**EAL Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane wants nothing to do with the Super League.

Last week, the Spanish club was doing everything possible to make the controversial breakaway competition happen, attracting attention to it and trying to convince everyone it was a good idea.

Now, on the eve of the Champions League semifinals against Chelsea, Zidane is working hard to steer away from it.

"What we have to do is to compete and to only think about playing soccer. That's it," Zidane said yesterday. "If we start to think about everything that is being said [...] it would make it worse. We can only think about the match. The referee will do his job. We have to compete as always. We can't control the rest, so we can't think about it."

Tuesday's first leg against Chelsea in Madrid comes after widespread backlash against the attempt to create the new Super

AP PHOTO



Real Madrid's head coach Zinedine Zidane

League, which had Madrid president Florentino Pérez as one of its masterminds. Chelsea also was among the founding members, but the team pulled out along with the rest of the English clubs immediately after the criticism surfaced.

European governing body UEFA was vehemently against

the new soccer competition and threatened to punish those involved. There was even the threat of kicking out of the Champions League the teams that didn't officially announce they were giving up on the Super League, which is Madrid's case.

"It would be absurd to think that we won't be in the Cham-

ions League next season," Zidane said. "What we have to do is to continue to stay focused on tomorrow's match. We can't control the rest. A lot will be said. My opinion is that we want to see Real Madrid in the Champions League again next year."

Madrid is playing in the Champions League semifinals

for the ninth time in the last 11 seasons, having won four titles in that period. It is coming off two consecutive eliminations in the last 16, though. Chelsea won the European title in 2012 and made it to the last four again two years later, but it hadn't been back to the semifinals since then.

"What matters is the present," Zidane said. "This Chelsea team has done its job in the Champions League and deserves to be in the semifinals. Just like Real Madrid deserves it. Chelsea also is a very experienced team. We will need to play two very good matches to advance."

Zidane will likely be able to count again on Eden Hazard, the former Chelsea forward who has been marred by injuries with Madrid but will be available to play on Tuesday. He returned to action for a few minutes in the team's 0-0 draw against Real Betis in the Spanish league on Saturday, and Zidane said the Belgian player could become "very important" for the team in this decisive stage of the season.

"I talked to him and he is very motivated," Madrid defender Raphael Varane said of Hazard. "You are always motivated when you are playing in a Champions League semifinal, and even more so if it's against your former club. He knows our opponent very well." **MDT/AP**

AD

合夥人 PARTNERS:

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

大律師 ASSOCIATES:

- 高文軒 Adelino Correia\*
- 羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues\*
- 白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
- 馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
- 陶義德 António Isóo de Azevedo
- 白穎怡 Icília Berenguel
- 冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
- 薛明恩 Maria Antónia Giestas
- 飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira\*
- 杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo
- 馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins
- 宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção
- 巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
- 莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura
- 安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos
- 歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
- 陳芷喬 Joana Chan
- 顏曉蓉 Teresa Xiaorong Yan
- 諾瑪莉 Maria Noras
- 康靜雅 Viviana Hong
- 梁淑嵐 Ana Leon

實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:

- 黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong
- 張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong
- 李莉 Lei Lei
- 陳健雄 Eurico Chan
- 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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A: Av. da Praia Grande 759, 3-5 Floors  
Macau SAR, China  
地址:澳門南灣大馬路759號3-5樓  
Tel: (853) 2837 2642 / 2837 2623

Office hours:  
Mon-Thu: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:30  
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**OPINION**

**Our Desk**

Renato Marques, MDT



**THIS IS NOT A DEMOCRACY - PART 1**

**This** is not a democracy! This was a sentence I have gotten used to hearing since my early days in Macau. I confess that at the time, the sentence sounded very rough to my European ears, as I used to take democracy and democratic political systems for granted.

It did not sound good when someone would tell me “This is not a democracy,” but, soon enough, that message started to sink in and I started to understand that this was not just a way to express some form of authoritarian power, but also, and mostly, a way to make me understand the different values and culture of the place where I was settling in.

Macau is not, and never was, ruled according to a democratic system and rules. Instead, it was always, and continues to be, ruled by an “informal parliamentary system” composed of different circles: some closer to the core and the decision points, while others gravitate in the outer layer of this micro solar system.

Some of these circles, and of course, the people that form them, would like to see Macau become more democratic or, so to speak, have a higher representability of different voices among those that comprise the decision-making, nuclear groups. However, other groups would like the decision makers narrowed down to the hardcore, and to open a wider gap between the decision-makers and the “common people.”

These, and other clashing ideas, are present in any society and virtually in any place on Earth, and while democracy is “not the solution” to pursue, for many it has been difficult to name another system that works better and ultimately makes more people happy or at least not completely unhappy within society.

Of course, the position that a certain person or group of people possess in this spectrum or rather, in which layer of this group of circles you are, you will have a different perception of what is good or bad, and what is “the best for everyone.”

If you ask me, I usually find the best perceptions of what constitutes a society by finding opinions and perceptions from the middle layers. I know this is not a groundbreaking strategy, and to find the “average person” is usually seen as just a mathematic exercise.

Nevertheless, what we see nowadays in many places, Macau included, is a political battle between the opposing sides, as if the outer circles are battling the core ones and vice versa, while a huge majority, those in the middle, are either assisting. Or, if they are located at the edges of the clashing groups, they tend to side with those that they are nearer.

In both cases, what happens is the center groups tend to suffer from both sides as though this political game is just a football match between the core team and the outsiders’ team. In this case, the middle ones are the ball.

While changes in political systems are always pushed-forward from new or different interests, the maintenance for a long period of a very same system (which some call stability) undoubtedly favors the established powers and that is why we call it “the establishment.”

In reality, it is all true what has been said over the decades to put down democratic systems, as democracies are not necessarily peaceful and they are also somehow quite unstable. But it is not this instability that generates their power. The power to change, to improve, to develop, to make it better...

As someone once said, democratically elected governments might be bad governments, but it is far less painful to remove a democratically elected government than one that was not democratically elected.

A piece of copper that was struck by the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia in 1794 and was a prototype for the fledgling nation’s money was auctioned off for \$840,000, considerably more than expected, an official said.

Heritage auctions spokesman Eric Bradley said the “No Stars Flowing Hair Dollar” opened at \$312,000 when it was put up Friday evening but “in less than a minute, intense bidding quickly pushed the coin

to its final auction price of \$840,000.”

The coin, formerly owned by businessman and Texas Rangers co-chairman Bob Simpson, had been expected to sell for \$350,000 to \$500,000, Bradley said.

Known as a pattern, the front features the flowing hair portrait of Liberty and the date 1794, while the reverse side shows a small eagle on a rock within a wreath.



AP PHOTO



**HONG KONG, SINGAPORE TO LAUNCH AIR TRAVEL BUBBLE FROM MAY 26**

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

**H**ong Kong and Singapore said yesterday they would launch an air travel bubble in May, months after an initial arrangement that would allow tourists to fly between both cities without having to serve quarantine was postponed.

Flights will begin from May 26. Visitors will not have to go through the quarantine as long as they fulfill the conditions of travelling within the air travel bubble.

Hong Kong and Singapore had previously announced the launch of an air travel bubble in November last year but shelved the plan days before it was to start after Hong Kong saw a surge in COVID-19 infections.

The air travel bubble comes as both Singapore and Hong Kong seek to boost tourism amid the pandemic, which has seen various countries close borders and declining air travel.

“The two governments have reached consensus on the latest arrangement and will put in place more stringent public health protocols in response to the latest epidemic development,” said Hong Kong’s Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Edward Yau in a statement.

“Our goal remains striking a right balance between public health and travel convenience so that the public will rest assured while maintaining certainty.”

Travelers from Hong Kong will need to be fully vaccinated two weeks prior to departing for Singapore, although this requirement will not apply to those going from Singapore to Hong Kong. They are also required to have spent 14 days in each city before travelling, with compulsory quarantine periods not counting towards this period.

Under the new arrangement, the air travel bubble would be sus-

pending for two weeks if the seven-day moving average of local, untraceable coronavirus cases in either city exceed five.

It will only be resumed after the threshold of unlinked cases has been met, with three consecutive days of three or less unlinked infections and a daily moving average of not more than five such cases on the third day.

Travelers from both cities will also be expected to download the tracing apps of the destination.

“I am happy that Hong Kong got the COVID-19 situation under control. It has been a long few months, but the conditions are now ripe again to re-launch the ATB,” said Singapore’s Minister for Transport, Ong Ye Kung, in a statement.

“Both sides will need to stay very vigilant in the next one month, so that we can launch the first flights smoothly. It is a significant ATB between two aviation and financial services hubs in Asia,” he said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**Emirates** A recording of Iran’s foreign minister offering a blunt appraisal of diplomacy and the limits of power within the Islamic Republic has been leaked, providing a rare look inside the country’s theocracy. The release of the comments by Mohammad Javad Zarif set off a firestorm within Iran, where officials carefully mind their words amid a cut-throat political environment that includes the powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, ultimately overseen by the country’s supreme leader. Zarif has been suggested as a possible candidate for Iran’s June 18 presidential election as well.

**Russian** authorities yesterday ordered the offices of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny to suspend all of their activities pending a court ruling on whether to ban them as an extremist group. The injunction by the Moscow prosecutor’s office was posted on social media by Navalny’s allies.

**Germany** Two soldiers died yesterday after a tractor-trailer crashed into the vehicle they were driving in on a highway near Berlin. Brandenburg state police said the incident happened as the soldiers were driving a Unimog truck in a convoy of 27 military vehicles on a six-lane highway. Police said the tractor-trailer was in the central lane, traveling in the same direction as the convoy, when it suddenly swung to the right, pushing the heavy Unimog off the road.

AP PHOTO



**UK** A fleet of British warships and military aircraft billed as the “largest concentration of maritime and air power to leave the U.K. in a generation” will depart next month for visits to India, Japan, South Korea and Singapore, in a display of Britain’s ambition to exert a much stronger presence in Asia. New aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, the most powerful surface vessel in the Royal Navy’s history, will set sail next month for Asia with eight fast jets on board.