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“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

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AP PHOTO



China renewed its criticism yesterday of Japan's decision to release treated radioactive water from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian called the decision to release the water over the next two years a money-saving measure that is "extremely irresponsible."

Indonesian police said they shot dead one and arrested 17 other people as they broke up a major drug ring attempting to smuggle more than 2.5 tons of methamphetamine originating from Afghanistan. Police found the first load of more than 1,278 tons aboard a ship that docked in Aceh Besar district on April 10.

Pakistan A powerful roadside bomb went off near a police vehicle in southwestern Pakistan yesterday, killing an officer and wounding five others, police said. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack in the town of Qilla Abdullah in Baluchistan province. Police officer Abdullah Achakzai said the victims were taken to a nearby hospital.

AP PHOTO



US An American warship fired warning shots when vessels of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard came too close to a patrol in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. Navy said yesterday. The Navy released black-and-white footage of the encounter in international waters of the northern reaches of the Persian Gulf. In it, lights can be seen in the distance and what appears to be a single gunshot can be heard, with a tracer round racing across the top of the water.

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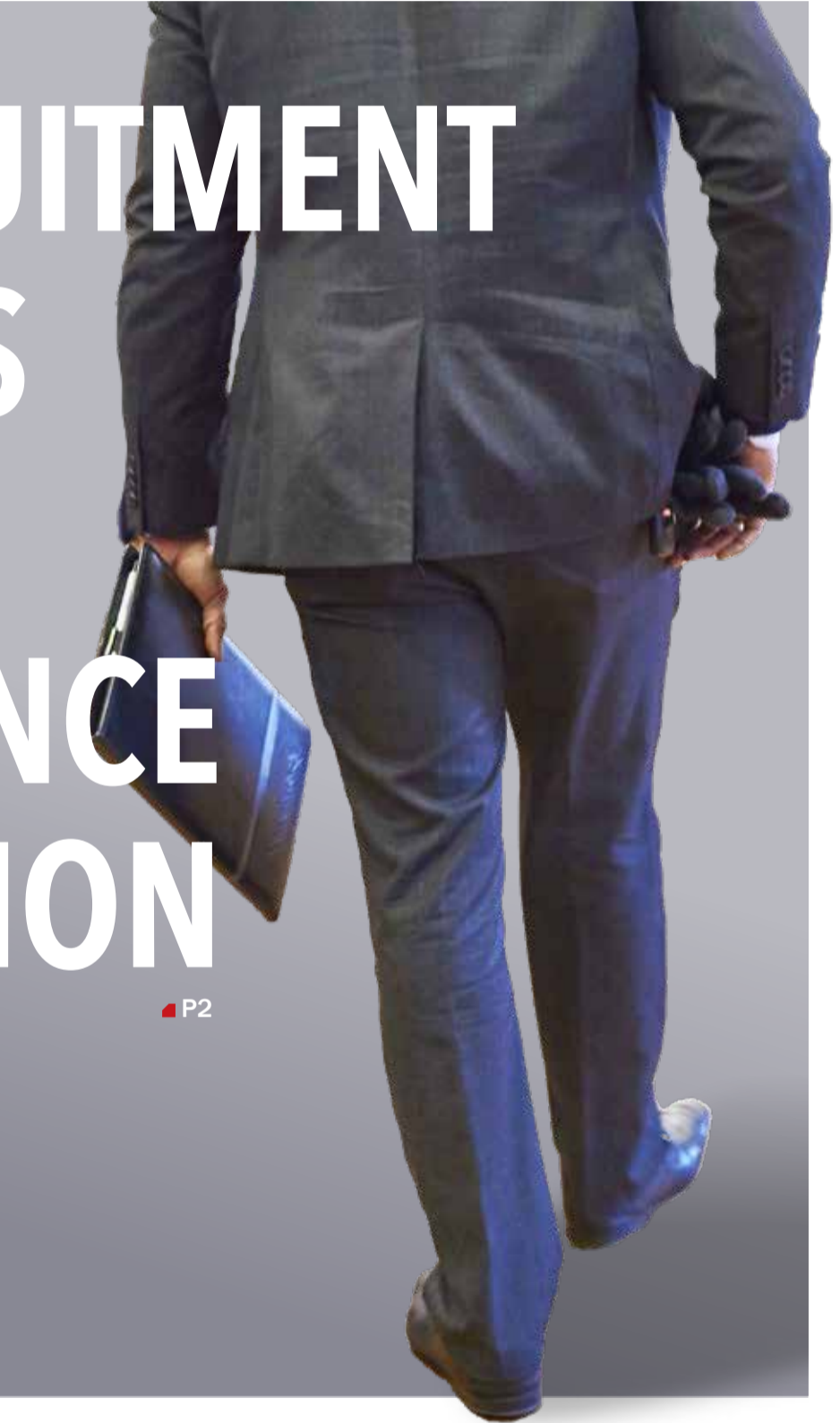
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14 EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES TO GO UNDER DUE TO PANDEMIC: DSAL

HONEY TSANG

SINCE the beginning of this year, a total of 14 licensed employment agencies have applied to cancel their agency licenses, the spokesperson of the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) told the Times.

When asked whether the new Employment Agency Law, effective since March 2020, was the driver of the significant number of shutdowns in the industry, the DSAL clarified that the closures were "predominantly due to the pandemic."

Meanwhile, there were five new applications for the Employment Agency Activity License from January to April 22. One was approved and the remaining four applications are still being processed.

The Employment Agency Law was approved by the Legislative Assembly on September 4 last year. It came into force on March 15 this year.

As stipulated in the new



regulation, all practitioners working in employment agencies in Macau are legally obliged to provide license-related information, such as names and license numbers.

They are required to secure a license before running an operation and retain a physical business location that is not in a residential, industrial, hotel, parking, or public building.

The license applicants, after being vetted and qualified by the DSAL, have to provide a guarantee of MOP 300,000 issued by local banks. The beneficiary entity is to be the DSAL.

In terms of referral fees, the agencies cannot charge employers in excess of the amount listed on their fee listing, which needs to be published and sent to the DSAL. Meanwhile, the fees charged to job-seekers must not exceed 50% of their first month's salary. The new regulation is designed to safeguard the entitlements of employees who seek the employment service.

The restrictions are intended to safeguard the entitlements of both employers and employees seeking the referral service.

Macau currently has a total of 134 licensed employment agencies, according to the data provided by the DSAL.

In an email reply to the Times, the DSAL reaffirmed its commitment to "continuing to monitor the practice of Macau's employment agencies through regular inspection and education."

To ensure a smooth implementation of the Employment Agency Law, the DSAL carried out a series of publicity endeavors, such as hosting explanatory sessions, setting up a dedicated webpage to elucidate the details of the new regulation, and more.

New photo book depicts life in city's nursing homes during Covid-19 outbreak

RENATO MARQUES

TITLED "DESVELO關愛 ZEAL," the new photography book from photojournalist Gonçalo Lobo Pinheiro will launch today at Livraria Portuguesa (Portuguese Bookshop).

This book, the third from the Portuguese author who has been living and working in Macau for the past decade, depicts the life of elderly people living in Macau's nursing homes in 2020, a particularly complex year due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

"In a totally atypical year, it became a huge challenge to photograph: creating stories in a small town, where - fortunately - there were few cases of Co-

vid-19. However, it was necessary to portray the problem in Macau and [my idea was to] make different stories related to people's daily lives, after the voluntary confinement we were subjected to in February and March," Pinheiro said, explaining the idea behind the project.

The album is divided into two sections documenting daily life in two nursing homes in Macau during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Each story contains 15 color photographs, a total of 30 in the album: photographs that were previously published in the newspaper Plataforma.

Pinheiro explained that he has chosen to portray the elderly because "they

are one of the most vulnerable groups to the pandemic," adding that the launch date of the book is also of deep significance to the stories it contains.

"The first story was captured on April 29, 2020, precisely one year before the book's release date," Pinheiro said, explaining that the documentary work began the day he visited Our Lady of Mercy Nursing Home, a nursing home run under the Macao Holy House of Mercy Mission, for the first time.

"The home opened its doors to me and I was able to witness how caregivers are, more than ever, dedicated to supporting the elderly, many of them with various disabilities," the photographer noted.

As for the second section, captured in early May last year, it portrays the life at Asilo de Santa Maria (Holy Mary Asylum), run by Caritas Macau, a non-governmental charitable organization.

"Mother Louis Mary Sesu Ratnam took me on a tour of the asylum, exclusively dedicated to elderly women. Louis Mary told me what is like to help in the home during the pandemic. She explained that caregivers are essential, especially in these times. If it weren't for the caregivers, these elderly people would be helpless," Pinheiro noted. He explained that he also highlighted this fact in the report, since "caregiver's work of-



ten goes unnoticed, but it is essential for improving the quality of life of the elderly," adding that such work helps give the elderly a feeling of peace, and confidence that their lives will not be threatened by the Covid-19.

"The stories you will be able to see [in the book] speak of people, the elderly and their caregivers," he remarked.

The album that will be available at the book shop is published in three languages: Portuguese, traditional Chinese, and English. The album is published by Ipsis Verbis, and is also partially sponsored by the Banco Nacional Ultramarino and has the institutional support of the Consulate General of Portugal in Macau and Hong Kong.

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Times

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Travel bubble discussions between HK, Macau on table

HONEY TSANG

HONG KONG has put travel bubble discussions with Macau on the table. However, roadblocks remain and need to be tackled before the two SAR regions forge a quarantine-free travel scheme, Hong Kong's Chief Executive (CE) Carrie Lam proclaimed yesterday.

In the question and answer session at the Legislative Council yesterday, Lam disclosed she had spoken with Macau's CE Ho Iat Seng at the Boao Forum in Hainan earlier on the possibility of ushering in a travel bubble to expedite travel flows between the two cities.

"I have discussed and explored the topic with him. Now we are working towards launching a travel bubble, or at least, facilitating travel measures between the two places, she declared.



Considering Macau and China have fully resumed cross-border travel, the biggest problem arising from the potential travel bubble, she said, would be how to prevent Hong Kong residents who visit Macau through the scheme from

skipping quarantine measures and entering China.

Earlier this month, Ho Iat Seng reaffirmed that the Hong Kong-Macau travel bubble would only be realized if Hong Kong registered no locally-transmitted Covid-19 cases for

14 consecutive days.

Yesterday, on April 28, Hong Kong recorded seven new confirmed Covid-19 cases — six of which are imported cases, while the last is considered a locally transmitted case.

Despite Lam's confirmation about the travel bubble plan with Macau being afoot, the representative of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Lau Fong Chi confirmed at the Covid-19 media briefing this Monday that Macau has not yet engaged in any discussions about creating a travel bubble with other destinations.

Starting from today, Hong Kong has eased social-distancing restrictions for food and drink, and entertainment businesses, provided that the staff and patrons are inoculated with at least one jab.

The move is to promote a "vaccine bubble" locally to safeguard public health.

WATERFRONT PROMENADE OPENS TODAY

The Leisure Area of Kun Iam Statue Waterfront will commence trial operation today following a delay in opening due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) built the leisure area with a total area of about 15,000 square meters last year on the waterfront, extending from the Macao Science Center to the Kun Iam Statue. It has a waterfront walking trail, multi-functional court, gateball court, roller skating rink, and other fitness and leisure facilities. The children's playground of about 2,700 square meters is equipped with parent-child play facilities and other novel amusement facilities, and is divided into several areas for children.

DSPA, CEM DRILLS ON SUDDEN INCIDENT RESPONSE

The Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) and the Macau Electricity Company (CEM) have conducted four drills this year to test the system's immediate response to sudden incidents. The drills were conducted in preparation for the upcoming tropical cyclone season. In the drill, conducted this month, the two entities simulated setting up water blockers, the announcement of a power cut, and the immediate repair and restoration of power supply. The two entities held meetings afterwards to fine-tune any areas necessary.

TOURISM

Hotel guests leap 160% in March

THE number of guests checked into hotels & guesthouses increased by 160.2% year-on-year to 622,000 in March, with mainland guests (539,000) soaring by 216.5%, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service.

Attributable to a rise in overnight visitors in the SAR, the average occupancy rate of guest rooms stood at 55.3%, representing a growth of 16.9 percentage points month-to-month and an upsurge of 32.1 percentage points year-on-year.

The average length of stay of guests shortened by 0.1 night year-on-year to 1.7 nights.

In the first quarter of 2021, the average occupancy rate of guest rooms was 44.9%, up by 3.6 percentage points year-on-year. The number of guests in hotels and guesthouses dropped by 1.2% year-on-year to 1,454,000, whereas their average length of stay went up by 0.1 night to 1.7 nights.

Meanwhile, 4,400 visitors joined local tours. Outbound residents using the services of travel agencies totaled 10,000, and 9,900 (97.1%) of them went to mainland China. In the first quarter of 2021, visi-



tors joining local tours decreased by 29.1% year-on-year to 6,600, and outbound residents using the services of travel agencies declined by 78.0% to 19,000.

Meanwhile, local overnight tours will become more attractive during the summer holidays, Wong Fai, executive director of the Travel Industry Council of Macau, has forecast.

Officially known as "Stay, Dine and See Macao," the overnight tours will see more appealing hotel packages for local "tourists" to choose from, Wong added when justifying his expectation.

In addition, to cope with the anticipated popularity during the summer holidays, Wong

expects more groups will be set up to offer the tours.

Discussing people's choice of hotels, Wong disclosed that 60% of participants have chosen hotels and resorts in Cotai. Most properties in Cotai focus on attracting families through their facilities, although some have also chosen to integrate external elements, such as the helicopter tour, into their packages. For the time being, Wong pointed out, hotel prices have remained stable, while hotels are willing to keep offering special offers to customers.

Latest data shows that nearly 1,600 sets of overnight tours have been booked or sold for the weekend. This equates to nearly 4,000 local residents. LV/AL

MACAO FOUNDATION'S SUPPORT DROPS 44% IN Q1

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao Foundation (FM) has spent 83.4 million patacas less in the provision of financial support to associations, institutions, and people in Macau, in the first three months of this year (Q1) than in the same period last year, the official report published on the government's official gazette has stated. This sum represents a year-on-year drop of 43.7%.

This year, the government fund paid only 107.6 million patacas in financial support to sponsored activities, a figure that contrasts even more when compared with the last quarter of 2020, when the FM spent a total of 290.5 million patacas in the provision of financially supported activities.

In Q1 of 2021, the largest sum was attributed to the Macao Science Center, with a total of 44,750,000 patacas referable to the first installment for

this year's operating expenses.

Large sums were also spent on the second installment of special merit scholarships from the 2020/2021 academic year (18.8 million patacas related to 153 scholarships) and on the payment of the subsidy for the participation of local race drivers in racing events outside Macau in 2020 (8.2 million patacas spent on 36 drivers).

In terms of single attributions, the second largest slice, after the science center, was for the Foundation of the Macau Portuguese School, which received 4 million patacas as financial support related to the first installment of the school's annual plan from the academic year 2019/2020 and for Animal welfare organization ANIMA, which received 2.5 million patacas as the first installment of financial support to go towards operation expenses.



CPA CODE TO TAKE EFFECT IN AUGUST

The Code of Ethics of Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) will take effect this coming August. The document stipulates that the aim of CPAs is to defend the public interest and that CPAs are required to fulfil corresponding social responsibilities. CPAs should also uphold several principles, such as integrity, subjectivity, impartiality, independence and professionalism. Relevant exemptions to the duty of confidentiality are also stipulated, under which a CPA can make disclosures under certain conditions such as required by the law or with the consent of their clients.

IPIM TRAINS MICE INDUSTRY ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute has recently invited Marlieke Kemp-Janssen, founder of online marketing firm Aureum Hospitality Advisers, to lead a workshop in the hopes of teaching local MICE professionals on how to pick the right social media platform, how to integrate online and traditional marketing strategies and expand the effectiveness and efficiency of their online marketing input. The main concerns of participants were related to pinpointing their target audience and picking the right platform for different marketing needs.

IC DIGITIZATION LIBRARY COLLECTION A CONSTANT TASK

Converting physical library collections to electronic copies is the Cultural Affairs Bureau's (IC) constant task, Loi Chi Pang, chief of the Department of Public Library Management of the bureau has said. Last year, the IC established four databases for the task, and will source suitable collections for the databases. It will also establish an audiobook project targeting children, in the hopes the project can help children reduce their screentime.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON ELEVATORS LEGAL REGIME STARTS TODAY

RENATO MARQUES

PUBLIC consultation on a new legal regime to regulate the maintenance and inspection of elevators, escalators and similar devices commenced today.

The new regime that the government wants to implement aims to attribute added competencies to the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) as it supervises the entire process.

As the director of the DSSOPT, Chan Pou Ha, explained yesterday in a press conference to announce the launch of the public consultation process, this will be the first legally binding regime to regulate such a sector, as the previous guidelines issued in 2013 "were just instructions and not a juridical regime. [Under such guidelines,] we could only encourage people to follow such instructions," Chan said.

Two of the major differences between the current guidelines and the legal regime that the government wants to enforce are the legal capacity of the government to enforce the rules, supervise compliance and apply penalties, as well as a clarification regarding the different competencies between the maintenance and inspection of the different kinds of elevator equipment.

Regarding the second difference, the legal regime aims to create a system in which accredited companies performing the equipment



annual inspection are completely separate from the maintenance companies, so the different entities can act "independently and impartially," added Im Hok Meng, a higher technician for the Urbanization Department of DSSOPT.

According to Chan, the focus of the legal regime is that in the future, the "utilization of the elevators will be safer, due to systematic and standardized management, namely of the regular maintenance and repair of the elevators [performed] by accredited technicians and by having annual inspections."

Chan also explained that currently, multiple entities share responsibility over the elevators,

including the owner, the tenant, and building administration, the entities responsible for the maintenance and repairing, and the inspecting and supervising entity. In the new regime, the general supervision of the whole process will pass to the DSSOPT, "to be more effective," the director remarked.

The regime establishes penalties for non-compliance with the rules, including fines ranging from 10,000 to 400,000 patacas, as well as other assessor penalties in more serious cases.

Out of the scope of this new legal regime will be all the elevator equipment located in private single-house units as well as lifts used

for the transportation of food or other items in restaurants or shops, Im explained, noting that in such cases, the equipment will continue to be under the old administrative regulation and will be the responsibility of its owners or tenants.

According to the figures cited by Im, there are over 9,200 elevators in Macau, of which 1,600 are escalators. Around 5,200 are located under private properties and ownership.

When questioned on the topic, Chan said that currently, compliance with the rules of inspection and maintenance, even without the legal regime, reaches about 60% to 70% of all elevators, a figure she considered "acceptable" as it is a non-mandatory system or is recommended.

Chan Wai Hong from the Department of Public Constructions also noted that in the last couple of years, there had only been one case recorded in Macau of a serious accident that occurred with an elevator.

The public consultation period on the new regime will last for 48 days, between April 29 and June 15, and opinions can be sent online via a dedicated website (www.dssopt.gov.mo/pt/elevator) and in person, by filling in of a form to be delivered to the DSSOPT.

During the period of public consultation, the DSSOPT will also organize five public sessions to provide clarification and receive opinions from the public.

Amendments to water supply regulation to enter legislation

HONEY TSANG

PREPARATIONS ahead of the amendment to the city's Water Supply and Sewerage regulations — to uplift Macau's water quality — have concluded and the government is now set to embark on the legislation stage.

The above confirmation was delivered by Chan Hou Wo, director of the Department of Planning and Development at the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) at TDM's broadcast program Macau Forum yesterday.

The DSAMA commenced the amendment work two years ago and has completed collecting opinions and advices from profes-



sional scientific organizations.

Regarding the content of the amendment, Chan said the authorities have heightened the requirements for local water qualified as drinkable and clean,

in accordance with the standards provided by the European Union and the World Health Organization (WHO).

"We have narrowed the upper limit for [the concentration of] heavy metal

level [in waters], such as lowering the tolerable lead level in water to stay in line with WHO's recommendation," He said.

"We also enhanced and updated the standard for analyzing and monitoring water quality," he added.

Wong Man Tou, director of the Department of Water Resources Management at the DSAMA, also attended yesterday's program. He gave reassurance to the public that the city has a sound mechanism in place to guarantee the good quality of water.

However, he urged residents and water companies to work closely to ensure that the tap water coming out from the piping system of buildings is suffi-

ciently hygienic.

In September 2018, the DSAMA launched the water safety scheme to encourage local building owners to conduct regular check-ups and maintenance of their water piping systems. As of now, a total of 510 mansions have signed up for the program, accounting for around 40% of high-rise buildings in Macau.

Oscar Chu, deputy general Manager of Macao Water, disclosed yesterday that the water tanks of a local building had not been cleaned for over 20 years, with the bottom of the tank found to possess a thick layer of sediment.

"Fortunately, there has been no reported case of serious health issues associated with this event," Chu said.

The case is a wake-up call for all building owners, Chu warned. He called on them to conduct regular cleaning of the water tanks.



Wynn actively promotes the integration of local young people into China's overall development

THIS year marks the beginning of China's "14th Five-Year Plan," setting a new stage for the comprehensive establishment of a modern socialist country. To enable team members to gain a deeper understanding of the country's overall development and facilitate the united effort to work together towards the implementation of the "14th Five-Year Plan," for three consecutive years Wynn has hosted sharing sessions focusing on the spirit of the National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), commonly known as "Two Sessions", for team members and local youths. In April of this year, Ms. Linda Chen, Vice Chairman and Executive Director of Wynn Macau, Limited, led the management team to participate in two rounds of sessions, which were attended by more than 350 Wynn team members.

The first session offered a general overview of the topics discussed throughout the Two Sessions, and featured an in-depth exploration of the country's policies on economic development, industrial and commercial sectors, and the assistance given to small and medium-sized enterprises. The second sharing session engaged



Wynn team members on topics including the Two Sessions, the national work report, the "14th Five-Year Plan," and patriotic education.

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE THE ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL YOUTH

To improve English proficiency among Macau youth, Wynn enthusiastically supported the GBA English Debate Championship. Through competitions and an exchange platform which brought together 50 teams of university and senior college students from across the GBA and Asia, participants exchanged ideas and learned from each other, while also strengthening their understanding of world trends.

Wynn also supported the

Macau Elite Competition of the "2021 Youth Model United Nations Winter Conference," focusing on the nurture of talents in international relations, outstanding students were selected to represent Macau to compete in the national competition, so that local youth could broaden their horizons. Wynn's support of the conference helps discover even more new and upcoming talents and improve their education and training.

EMPLOYEES SUPPORT VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES IN GBA

The Wynn Care Foundation was eager to continue to support the Salvation Army (Macau) Education Centre's Morning Light Volunteer Programme, providing valuable experience

for GBA youth volunteers under the theme of "Love and Social Inclusion." By arranging various training sessions, volunteers had the opportunity to interact and exchange with schools in Macao, Hong Kong and Foshan, which provided support for local students with special educational needs, and strengthened the interconnected relationship and bond within the community.

SUPPORT THE YOUTH INTEGRATION INTO GBA

In response to the nation's call for "mass entrepreneurship," Wynn diligently supported "The 3rd Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau GBA Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition - Macau Section." Seeking to uncover entrepreneurial projects among the youth of Macau,

the event helped to provide a platform and resources for entrepreneurs to showcase their successes and explore more opportunities in the GBA, in order to participate in this era of mass entrepreneurship and innovation.

To further assist Macao companies to seize the huge number of opportunities in the GBA, Wynn also organized the "2020 Wynn Local SME Procurement Partnership Meeting and E-Commerce Forum" last year. Through inviting representatives from two world-renowned enterprises, Douyin and Alibaba Cloud, to share views on how local SMEs can further digitalize their businesses as well as develop beyond Macao, the event offered insights into business innovation and promoted the transformation of local industries through technology, thereby enhancing their future competitiveness and alignment with the country's broader development path.

EMPLOYEES VISIT THE NATIONAL SECURITY EXHIBITION

Rooted in Macao, Wynn fully understands the responsibility enterprises shoulder in supporting and maintaining national security. To that end, Ms. Linda Chen, Vice Chairman and Executive Director of Wynn Macau, Limited, led members of the management team to visit the "National Security Education Exhibition" on its opening day for the third consecutive year. The exhibition offered a unique opportunity for team members to learn about national security as well as the related work and achievements being carried out in all sectors of Macao.



E-CNY

DIGITAL YUAN EXPECTED TO SHORE UP GBA INTEGRATION: ECONOMIST

HONEY TSANG

THE Greater Bay Area (GBA) may enter an era of more robust financial integration, should there be a common currency adopted in the region. The digital yuan may be the possible coinage, suggested Florence Lei, assistant professor of the Faculty of Business and Law at the University of Saint Joseph (USJ).

In yesterday's seminar, titled "The Greater Bay Area Financial Integration: Towards a Single Market?" hosted by the France Macau Chamber of Commerce, Lei expounded her views to the audience on the status-quo of and outlook for GBA's economy.

Lei suggested that whenever there is a change from traditional payments to digital payments, the velocity of money flow is faster, resulting in more transactions achieved at any given time.

It seems like the possible roll-out of digital yuan in Macau is inching closer to its launching — especially after Macau's Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng declared on April 13 that the Macau SAR government and the People's Bank of China (PBOC) have already begun examining the feasibility of bringing digital yuan into this city.

The utilization of digital yuan, also known as digital RMB, Ho stressed, is targeted to more effectively combat money-related unlawful acts, such as money laundering, tax evasion and the financing of terrorism.

Ho proclaimed that the government has plans in place to amend relevant legislation to better regulate the issuance of digital legal tender.



When queried by the audience as to whether now is the right time to invest in the electronic payment-related business after seeing digital yuan is on the horizon, Lei suggested, "I would say wait a bit, since the experiment [of digital yuan] is still going on. But I would say there is a trend towards that."

While some are concerned that patacas may give way to digital yuan after it has been implemented for some time, Lei clarified that digital yuan — to be exact — is more of a form of payment, and that habitual elements in the way people undertake the transaction would be the most important consideration.

She said that the digital yuan is unlikely to cause inflation. "From an economic perspective, money is liquidity. Digital currency is still creating liquidity. We're not creating wealth. We are talking about the form of payment," she explained.

The most likely negative impact of digital RMB in Macau will be on the city's junket business. Some

casino experts speculated that the traceable digital currency would heavily slacken the local junket sector, which has been reeling from economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic and China's more intense suppression of overseas gambling.

Whilst the timeframe of digital RMB being ushered into Macau remains unclear, the Digital Currency Electronic Payment (DCEP) scheme, which has been implemented by the Chinese government since 2019, is now in full swing.

By October 2020, digital yuan trials will be extended to six more places, namely Shanghai, Hainan province, Changsha of Hunan province, Xi'an of Shaanxi province, Qingdao of Shandong province and Dalian of Liaoning province.

Besides, the PBOC's digital currency research institute and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority have already begun the technical testing of digital RMB in Hong Kong, Wang Xin, head of the PBOC's research bureau, confirmed earlier this month.

acting chief of Tourism Product and Activity, Lei Wan Wai, said that the reservation tickets for the Grand Prix Museum in the first three days of May were already sold out.

It is expected that more than 300 visitors will be received every day and that 90% of the visitors will be local residents.

Although the number of visitors to the revamped museum has been gradually increasing, the anti-epidemic measure is still in place, meaning that it can only accommodate a certain number of visitors per day.

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY

14 MUSEUMS TO PARTICIPATE IN UPCOMING CARNIVAL

LYNZY VALLES

THE Macau International Museum Day Carnival 2021 on May 9 will feature a total of 14 participating museums to commemorate International Museum Day, themed as "The Future of Museums: Recover and Reimagine."

With a budget of MOP250,000, director of the Cultural Affairs

Bureau's Department of Exhibition and Museums, Sam Hou In, said that the bureau expects the event will be attended by some 1,000 residents.

Sam also noted that authorities are considering integrating VR technology into museum exhibitions to attract more visitors.

The Grand Prix Museum is slated to be one of the local museums to

participate in the upcoming carnival at the Macao Science Center.

The Grand Prix Museum, under the management of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), will hold two workshops at the carnival, namely a "plaster model car painting" workshop and a "motorcycle keychain by shrink plastic" workshop.

Meanwhile, MGTO's



Academic proposes 'Macau ambience' for Hengqin success

ANTHONY LAM

INNOVATIVE social administration of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone will be required to make it successful, an academic at the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) said yesterday, among other suggestions.

The MUST held a Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Development Forum yesterday at which professor Lin Guang Zhi, the university's director of Institute for Social and Cultural Research, made the suggestion.

Lin proposed that in order for the cooperation zone to thrive, there are six areas in which innovation can take place. Among them, he suggested the innovation of how the zone is managed. He believes that a "Macau ambience" will be advantageous to the development.

On that foundation, he proposed that permitted Macau vehicles be able to enter Hengqin without pre-review.

Moreover, a Macau structure should be introduced in Hengqin, with the academic proposing that an Internet connection similar to that in Macau and Hong Kong should be established.

He added that areas such as education, healthcare and social work from Macau should gradually be connected to the GBA through Hengqin.

One of his other suggestions concerned the expansion of Zhuhai's power. He noted that the city's power should be expanded to implement a free harbor system — similar to that in Macau — in Hengqin, so that various factors can flow freely.

Lin also proposed a two-tier top management structure for the cooperation zone, in order to achieve co-administration and sharing of resources. To

achieve that, a Guangdong-Macao coordination board, as well as a management committee that would be incorporated in a manner similar to a company should be established. In such a structure, Macau should have a leading position.

The two cities should also make plans regarding cooperative industry development, which, according to Lin, can help Macau achieve economic diversification. The two cities should also jointly set up companies, from which returns and investments should be borne proportionally.

It was also proposed that professionals bearing valid certifications or accreditations should be allowed to practice their professions freely in Hengqin. Macau residents should also be allowed to open duty-free shops on the island.

The master development plan of Hengqin should also be amended, as suggested by Lin, so that the island can be appropriately expanded to satisfy a cooperative form of development. He proposed that the two governments should establish a leisure tourism destination including the Wanshan Island, Macau and Hengqin.

Following Lin's presentation, the forum also saw two other presentations featuring chair professor Zhang Ke Ke, director of the State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Sciences and professor Liu Cheng Kun, Director, The Institute for Sustainable Development.

Prior to the forum, the university unveiled a book, titled "The Development Report on the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area," which compiled articles by more than 20 academics from both mainland China and the two Special Administrative Regions. The MUST described the book as a yearly think-tank report.

HUIZHONG WU, TAIPEI

Chinese companies consider mixing vaccines, booster shots

CHINESE vaccine makers are looking at mixing their jabs and whether a booster shot could help better protect against COVID-19.

Sinovac and Sinopharm, the two Chinese manufacturers that combined have exported hundreds of millions of doses all over the world, say they're are considering combining their vaccines with those from other companies.

Earlier this month, the head of China's Center for Disease Control, Gao Fu, said that current vaccines offer low protection against the coronavirus and mixing them is among strategies being considered to boost their effectiveness.

Gao later tried to walk back his comments, saying he was talking in general about improving vaccine efficacy.

China National Biotech Group has a plan for future "sequential use" of their vaccines, Li Meng, the head of international cooperation for the company, said yesterday at an international conference.

The company, a subsidiary of state-owned Sinopharm, made two inactivated COVID-19 vaccines and a third in clinical trials.

Sinovac, a private company based in Beijing, also said they were in preliminary discussions with investigators, including China's Center for Disease Control, about

AP PHOTO



combining the doses of their vaccine, CoronaVac, with others.

Sequential immunization means mixing different vaccines and it is a strategy that could boost efficacy rates, said Ashley St. John, an immunologist at Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore.

"They are trying to tweak the

schedule to really find the best point to give people's vaccines," St. John said. "What's the best combination and time point?"

Sinopharm's vaccines, from its Beijing Institute of Biological Products and the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products, are 79% and 72% effective, respectively, the

company said. It has not publicly revealed more data from the final stage of its clinical trials.

The practice is being considered in other countries as well. British scientists are studying a combo of the AstraZeneca and Pfizer shots. The study is also looking to test different intervals between

doses, four weeks and 12 weeks apart.

The results of such investigations may have public health implications worldwide as governments around the world face delays in getting their vaccines in a timely manner and logistical hurdles in rolling out the shots.

Researchers in Brazil who conducted Sinovac's clinical trials in the country released new data this month that reconfirmed the company's previously announced 50% efficacy rate. The paper, which has not yet been peer reviewed but was published on a website for scientists, showed that the Sinovac vaccine was 50.7% effective against symptomatic COVID-19 cases and much stronger against severe disease.

CanSino, another Chinese company that has created an adenovirus-vector vaccine, said they were looking at the effects of a booster shot of their own vaccine six months after the first dose. The shot, which uses the same technology as the AstraZeneca shot, is 65.3% effective. **MDT/AP**

AD

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USA

What to watch during Biden's first big speech to Congress

PRESIDENT Joe Biden is putting the finishing touches on his first address to a joint session of Congress, a prime-time speech today on the eve of his 100th day in office. Biden will use the speech before lawmakers and a broader viewing audience to talk about what he's accomplished in the opening months of his presidency and to lay out his other domestic and foreign policy priorities.

WHEN AND WHERE CAN I WATCH OR LISTEN?

The speech is set for 9 a.m. [Macau time] and will be broadcast by the major networks and cable news TV channels. The White House plans to stream it at WH.gov/live, as well as on its YouTube, Facebook and Twitter pages. Live coverage will also be provided by C-SPAN, C-SPAN Radio and C-SPAN.org. NPR is streaming the speech on its website, npr.org, and on its app, in addition to offering live coverage to its member radio stations.

HOW WILL THE SETTING BE DIFFERENT?

Attendance is limited to allow for social distancing, meaning there won't be any visuals of lawmakers and others

sitting shoulder to shoulder during the address. Just about 200 of the 535 members of Congress received tickets to attend and they aren't allowed to bring guests.

With the House out of session, many Republicans from that chamber are expected to skip the event, making it more likely that Biden will end up addressing a mostly friendly Democratic audience. Senators are in town, but some Republicans from that chamber are expected to skip the speech, too. Sen. John Cornyn, a member of the GOP leadership from Texas, said he plans to watch from his couch. Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise, a member of House GOP leadership, said he was giving his ticket to a freshman lawmaker.

The majority of Biden's Cabinet members will listen from home. Just Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will be on hand to represent the executive branch of government. Chief Justice John Roberts will represent the judicial branch, with other Supreme Court justices similarly staying away.

With guests banned this year, some

lawmakers — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi among them — have invited "virtual" guests.

Everyone will wear a mask, a current requirement for the House chamber. Biden will wear one for the president's traditional walk down the center aisle to the rostrum, but he'll take it off to deliver the speech, the White House said.

WHAT WILL WE LEARN ABOUT PRIORITIES?

Biden is expected to outline details of his American Families Plan, another big piece of legislation he wants Congress to pass.

The plan is expected to focus on so-called human infrastructure — child care, health care, education and other ways to support households. Biden wants to pay for it by hiking taxes on very high-income households.

The president is also expected to discuss his ideas for getting the pandemic under control and putting people back to work. He'll also talk about changes to policing in America, immigration and gun safety, among other topics, in addition to his foreign policy vision. Legislators are waiting to hear how Biden prioritizes his goals.

WHAT ABOUT THE FIRST LADY?

First lady Jill Biden will attend, but don't expect the president to look toward her box in the gallery and give shout-outs to special guests seated with her to help humanize particular policies. That tradition has been set aside due to limits on the number of people who can be in the House chamber.

Instead, Jill Biden's guests — all with personal ties to her husband's policies or plans — will be watching remotely after being honored in the afternoon with a virtual reception. The White House will livestream that event at 4 p.m. EDT.

Doug Emhoff, the spouse of Vice President Kamala Harris, will also attend Biden's speech.

WILL THERE BE ANY ANTICS?

Partisan tensions have deepened at the Capitol since the Jan. 6 insurrection, but it's impossible to know who might throw decorum to the wind and misbehave.

Who expected Republican Rep. Joe Wilson of South Carolina to shout "you lie!" at Democratic President Barack Obama during a 2009 speech to a joint session of Congress? Or Pelosi to tear up her copy of President Donald Trump's State of the Union speech after he finished last year and she stood behind him on the rostrum?

SPEAKING OF THE ROSTRUM ...

History will be made there when, for the first time, two women will form the backdrop for a presidential address to Congress.

Pelosi will return to her seat on the rostrum. Joining her will be another California Democrat — Harris in her role as president of the Senate. Harris is the first woman, Black person and Indian American to be vice president.

WHICH REPUBLICAN DELIVERS A REBUTTAL?

The task was assigned to South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, the Senate's only Black Republican. Scott, 55, who joined the Senate in 2013, has become a leading GOP voice on race and criminal justice reform issues, two issues Biden is expected to discuss. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1992 LA IN FLAMES AFTER 'NOT GUILTY' VERDICT



Fierce rioting has broken out in Los Angeles following the decision by a jury to acquit four white police officers accused of beating black motorist Rodney King.

The decision, made by an all-white jury, caused a political outcry, and provoked fury in the predominantly black neighbourhoods of south-central Los Angeles.

An angry crowd, chanting "Guilty! Guilty!", tried to storm police headquarters in the business district, before setting fire to shops and vehicles.

Motorists were dragged from their cars and beaten, cars were overturned and set alight, and at least five people were shot dead.

The violence is the worst in the city since the Watts riots of 1965, in which 34 people died. The Governor of California, Pete Wilson, has declared a state of emergency, and called in reinforcements from the California Highway Patrol.

In a brief televised statement, President Bush said the "murder and destruction" on the streets of the city must be stopped. He also spoke of his concern at excessive use of force by the police.

The case centred on a video, taped by an amateur cameraman in March last year, which caught the scene as the four police officers beat, kicked and clubbed unemployed labourer Rodney King for 81 seconds while other officers looked on.

The tape was on television networks across the world a day later, and became a focus for accusations of racist brutality against the LAPD.

Throughout the two-month televised trial, the four accused police officers - Laurence Powell, Stacey Koon, Timothy Wind and Theodore Briseno - argued that they acted in self-defence to restrain Mr King, who they said was aggressive and resisted arrest.

Following the verdict, Mr King's lawyer said his client was "speechless - in a state of shock and outrage". He plans to go ahead with his \$56 million private suit against the city and police force.

State Senator Ed Davis, himself a former city police chief, said he was "shocked and flabbergasted" by the verdict. "Having seen the video, like millions of other people," he said, "I cannot accept this as police conduct for California."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The riots in Los Angeles lasted several days. The violence killed 55 people, and included revenge attacks against whites and Asians. About 2,000 were injured, with a further 12,000 arrested. Property damaged cost an estimated \$1bn to repair, and the National Guard was deployed to restore order. The four acquitted police officers faced a second trial a year later, on federal charges of violating Rodney King's civil rights. Stacey Koon and Laurence Powell were found guilty; each served two years in jail. Timothy Wind and Theodore Briseno were cleared. All four left the police force, and have since found it difficult to get work elsewhere. Rodney King won \$3.8m damages from the City of Los Angeles. Much of it went to pay his lawyers, but he used the rest to found a rap record business, the Straight Alta-Pazz Recording Company.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Today's skies highlight this story, as the visionary Sagittarius moon supportively aligns with Saturn. This pairing makes it easy to apply stamina and follow-through on long-term projects.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Today's skies help you hone in on this narrative, as the Sagittarius moon's harmonious link with Saturn encourages subtle but transformative action to achieve forward movement.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Luna's harmonious alignment with the path-guiding sun and electric Uranus helps you make better sense of yesterday's insights - especially when you share them with a partner, a therapist, or a trusted friend.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Today's skies highlight this story, as the optimistic Sagittarius moon supportively aligns with Saturn. This energy allows active efforts to be taken towards healing old wounds.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
It's easy to feel in sync with yourself today, Leo. The moon glides through capable Capricorn. It forms a supportive connection with your ruling planet, the sun, and change-bringer Uranus.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Today's skies encourage you to continue chipping away at your workload and devote energy to bettering your health. This is all as the enthusiastic Sagittarius moon aligns with Saturn.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
The moon spends the day gliding through security-seeking Capricorn, forming smooth connections with the illuminating sun and excitable Uranus. This is making it an ideal day to quietly process yesterday's insights.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
This is far from easy work, but the rewards outweigh the difficulties down the line. The Sagittarius moon's supportive alignment with Saturn helps you make solid steps towards exploring this narrative today.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Today's skies help you break down any walled-off parts around openly sharing your perspective. This is all as the moon in your sign harmoniously aligns with Saturn.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You're in need of some TLC beneath Saturday's skies, Capricorn. The moon glides through your sign and helps you focus your attention back on your own needs as an individual.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Today's skies highlight this story, as the playful Sagittarius moon aligns with serious Saturn. Look for steady avenues forward that help you achieve your goals.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
It's far from easy work, but it's necessary for the next step in your personal evolution. Steady Saturn has been encouraging you to sort through your ancient history and heal self-made wounds.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	10	22	clear
Harbin	0	14	cloudy
Tianjin	13	22	cloudy
Urumqi	12	28	clear
Xi'an	11	29	clear
Lhasa	4	17	cloudy
Chengdu	12	28	clear
Chongqing	16	29	cloudy
Kunming	13	21	moderate rain
Nanjing	13	27	cloudy
Shanghai	18	28	clear
Wuhan	14	27	clear
Hangzhou	16	28	cloudy
Taipei	19	22	moderate rain
Guangzhou	19	27	cloudy
Hong Kong	22	27	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	1	8	drizzle
Frankfurt	9	17	drizzle
Paris	6	16	cloudy
London	3	11	drizzle
New York	16	24	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Homecoming guest; 5- Sudden convulsion; 10- Course list?; 14- Director Wertmuller; 15- Sao ___; 16- Assist, often in a criminal act; 17- Enter; 18- Fabric woven from flax yarns; 19- Bird of peace; 20- Against; 21- Mediate; 23- Prince Valiant's son; 25- Starchy dish; 26- Capital of West Bengal; 31- Drew to a close; 35- Flurry; 36- Drat!; 38- Alleviates; 40- Poi source; 42- Gives a 9.8, say; 44- High-ranking NCO; 45- Get the better of; 47- Rice dish; 49- Car club; 50- Available; 52- Activator; 54- Scoundrel; 56- One ___ million; 57- Lunchroom; 62- Career golfers; 66- Polo of "Meet the Parents"; 67- Harsh; 68- Trigonometric function; 69- Brio; 70- Artificial waterway; 71- Pop singer Brickell; 72- Old cloth measures; 73- Singly; 74- Fast fliers;

DOWN: 1- Pond organism; 2- Hero; 3- Apartment; 4- Zealot; 5- Sliver; 6- Physical suffering; 7- Em, e.g.; 8- Bed down; 9- Doctrine maker; 10- Created; 11- Black, in poetry; 12- Campbell of "Scream"; 13- U of U athlete; 22- Grape plant; 24- Flee; 26- Roman censor; 27- Hersey's bell town; 28- Sophia of the screen; 29- Pitfall; 30- Room at the top; 32- Hoover, for one; 33- Short literary composition; 34- Impressionist Edgar; 37- Actress Ward; 39- Sports figure; 41- Not at home; 43- Capable of being appeased; 46- Step; 48- Devoted follower; 51- Monetary unit of Macao; 53- Passes by degrees; 55- Sticker; 57- Prison room; 58- Shrinking sea; 59- Fish appendages; 60- "All The Way To ___", song by REM; 61- Ayatollah's land; 63- Frees; 64- Put a lid ___; 65- Goes out with; 66- Driving peg;

Yesterday's solution

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
14				15					16					
17					18				19					
20				21					22					
23				24					25					
26	27	28		29	30		31		32	33	34			
35				36			37		38			39		
40		41		42			43		44					
45				46			47		48			49		
				50			51		52			53		
				54			55		56					
				57	58	59		60	61		62	63	64	65
66				67					68					
69				70					71					
72				73					74					

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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- 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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Sands Cares Ambassadors Maintaining Spirit of Service in 2021



Sands China's Sands Cares Ambassadors continue the spirit of care, love and sharing in the year 2021, as part of the company's efforts to give back to the local community. They have contributed more than 130,000 hours of voluntary community service since the programme's founding in 2009.

The Ambassadors showed love and care for a total of 100 live-alone elderly residents of the neighbourhoods near Rua da Praia do Manduco before Chinese New Year, through an annual spring-cleaning volunteer service activity that includes free haircuts, as a way to welcome the Year of the Ox.

Sands China continued its yearly support of Macau Holy House of Mercy's Welfare Shop to assist in providing support to low-income families in Macao. Sands Cares Ambassadors carried on the tradition by helping distribute over 360 Chinese New Year food hampers the week before the Year of the Ox. Sands China also donated MOP 300,000 to the organisation to support its year-round food hamper initiative.

To strengthen family bonding and to celebrate the new flagship property of Cotai, The Londoner Macao, Sands Cares Ambassadors hosted about 80 members of the Women's General Association of Macau at the integrated resort mid-March for a special guided tour of the newly launched British-themed integrated resort, where they had an enjoyable afternoon.

The volunteer group held another initiative to support the underprivileged on a Sunday in April, when they hosted 30 deaf Catholics based at St. Joseph the Worker Church for a guided tour of the immersive art space of teamLab SuperNature Macao at The Venetian Macao as part of its effort to promote social inclusion. The day before, the Sands volunteers attended a special sign language workshop at St. Joseph the Worker Church to get prepared for hosting their guests.

Sands China Ltd. President Dr. Wilfred Wong remarked: "Community outreach activities like these are part of Sands China's commitment to the local Macao community and to the promotion of social integration, and we are grateful to our Sands Cares Ambassadors for their continued dedication and spirit of service to our community."



TALES AZZONI, MADRID

FOOTBALL

R MADRID 1, CHELSEA 1

With a dominant start and a milestone goal by Christian Pulisic, Chelsea showed its strength against Real Madrid in the Champions League semifinals.

Chelsea took control early in yesterday's [Macau time] first leg to hold the Spanish powerhouse to a 1-1 away draw, with Pulisic becoming the first U.S. international to score in the tournament's last four. He also surpassed DaMarcus Beasley to become the top American scorer in Champions League history with five goals.

A red-hot Karim Benzema equalized for a lackluster Madrid squad on a rainy night at the Alfredo Di Stéfano Stadium in the first Champions League match since the controversial Super League folded last week amid widespread criticism.

The largely closed breakaway competition would have had Real Madrid as one of its leaders, and Chelsea also was among its founding members before dropping the idea along with the other English clubs. Madrid didn't officially back out of the Super League but had downplayed the possibility of retaliation by UEFA in its Champions League matches. There were no refereeing controversies in yesterday's match.

The second leg is on May 5 in London. Manchester City hosts Paris Saint-Germain in the other semifinal on Wednesday.

Chelsea got off to a fast start



Chelsea's Christian Pulisic avoids Real Madrid's goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois to score the opening goal

and had chances to add to its lead after Pulisic opened the scoring with a nice finish in the 14th minute off a high pass by Antonio Rudiger inside the area. Pulisic calmly got past goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois before hitting the net past the Madrid defenders trying to block his shot at the goal line.

"It was a great finish, great composure," Chelsea captain César Azpilicueta said of the 22-year-old Pulisic, who has been thriving after being marred by injuries early in the season. "He's an amazing player, he's a young player, he's growing and improving. I'm very pleased with his goal be-

cause he's an important player for the team."

Pulisic is the second U.S. international to play in a Champions League semifinal after Beasley for PSV Eindhoven in a first-leg game against AC Milan in 2005.

Madrid evened the match on Benzema's volley from inside the area in the 29th, and there were few significant chances either way during the rest of the game.

Benzema's goal came a few minutes after he clipped the post with a long-range shot. The French striker controlled a loose ball with his head before turning and firing a volley into the top of the net for his 13th goal in his last 14 matches. It was Benzema's 16th goal in his last 17 home games with Madrid.

Chelsea gave little space to Madrid and was the more dangerous team early on at the Di Stéfano in Madrid's training complex. The hosts struggled defensively with their setup of three central defenders.

"We started the game very, very well — very aggressively, with a lot of quality," Chelsea coach Thomas Tuchel said. "We deserved to win the first half. We had a lot of chances. We should have scored at least one

more when the chances and half-chances were there."

Not long before Pulisic's opener, Timo Werner had his strike from in front of the goal stopped by a superb reflex save by Courtois, a former Chelsea player.

"It's true that it was a complicated first half," Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said. "But we are still alive going into the second leg. We are happy with the result in general."

Former Chelsea forward Eden Hazard, coming off a long injury layoff, entered the match in the second half but couldn't find spaces to spark Madrid to victory.

Madrid, making a record 14th semifinal appearance, won three straight Champions League titles from 2016-18, before Cristiano Ronaldo left, but the 13-time champion was eliminated in the round of 16 in the last two editions.

Chelsea won the European title in 2012 and returned to the semifinals two years later, but hadn't been back to the last four since. Tuchel is trying to make it to a second consecutive final after a runner-up finish with Paris Saint-Germain last season. Chelsea has only two losses since the German coach took over in January. **MDT/AP**

RUGBY

NZ union debates selling All Blacks share to US investors

NEW ZEALAND Rugby will face a momentous decision on the future of the All Blacks at its annual meeting today, when it debates whether to sell a stake in the commercial value of the national team to American investors.

New Zealand's 26 provincial unions will vote on a recommendation from New Zealand Rugby that it should bundle its commercial interests into a new entity and sell a 12.5 percent stake in that entity to California-based Silver Lake Partners for 387.5 million New Zealand dollars (US\$279 million).

If the recommendation is carried, it will mark the first time in more than 115 years that the All Blacks — the most successful

team in world rugby — do not wholly belong to New Zealanders.

Rugby officials argue the sale is necessary to secure the future financial sustainability of New Zealand Rugby after its finances were battered last year by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In documents to be presented to the annual meeting, NZR proposes transferring its commercial assets to a new company to be called Commercial LP and to transfer NZ\$43.75 million (\$31.5 million) from the sale price to that entity as operating capital.

A further NZ\$39 million (\$28 million) will be distributed to stakeholders, mainly the provincial unions, who are also cash-strapped after last year's

disrupted season.

NZR said it will also establish a legacy fund for "longer-term strategic initiatives to ensure the sustainability of all levels of rugby in New Zealand."

Silver Lake Partners was launched in 1999 and has focused mainly on investment in the technology sector with holdings in companies such as Airbnb, Twitter and Dell Technologies. It also holds a stake in City Football Group which owns the English Premier League club Manchester City and which it lists in its Content and Entertainment industry vertical.

NZR embarked on a nationwide "roadshow" tour to sell the Silver Lake deal to provincial unions.

But the concept faced



push-back from professional players who have sought assurances that important traditional and cultural symbols such as the silver fern and the All Blacks' haka will not be sold and commercialized. The All Blacks have won the Rugby World Cup three times and were also runners-up in 1995,

making them the most successful team at the sport's global showpiece and confirming their long standing as a premier team in the game.

The recent, failed Super League in European soccer has also caused a tremor of concern among some New Zealand Rugby fans.

Those fans fear the attitudes of owners shown in the attempt to establish the Super League — an apparent indifference to history and to fans' close attachment to their clubs — might also be reflected in the rugby deal.

Opponents say the American investors are unlikely to be interested in the grassroots level of New Zealand's national sport, and likely to press for the All Blacks to play more matches in high-value markets overseas.

Silver Lake will seek to grow the value of its investment by enlarging the All Blacks' fan base around the world but also by increasing income from current revenue streams such as broadcast deals, ticket sales and merchandise. **MDT/AP**

OPINION

World Views

Tae Kim, MDT/Bloomberg



GOOGLE'S AD RESURGENCE IS JUST GETTING STARTED

Google's parent Alphabet Inc. is turning out to be one of the biggest winners of the economic reopening trade. On Tuesday, the company posted first-quarter sales results that were significantly higher than expected. Underlying the impressive performance were clear signs that the strength in the internet giant's search advertising business may be sustainable for some time to come. Its resurgence may be just getting started.

Alphabet reported first-quarter revenue of \$45.6 billion excluding traffic acquisition costs, up 35% from a year earlier and exceeding the \$42.6 billion Bloomberg consensus. In its earnings release, Chief Financial Officer Ruth Porat cited broad-based growth in ad revenue, along with higher levels of online activity from consumers. Add to that the announcement of a \$50 billion buyback plan and you have a recipe for a post-earnings stock pop: Alphabet shares climbed 4% in post-market trading.

Alphabet's outperformance is understandable given the double dose of government stimulus and wider availability of vaccines, but the nature of the company's business model increases the chance that the strong growth trend will be durable. It comes down to the company's virtual monopoly of the search-engine advertising business. Last year, that dominant position was detrimental as it left Alphabet exposed to all areas of the economy amid the pandemic as it decimated the businesses and marketing budgets of traditional industries including travel, brick-and-mortar retail stores, restaurants and outdoor entertainment services. Now, those areas are set to rebound as daily life returns to normal — and Google's ad revenue should benefit in the process.

The shift has already begun. On Tuesday's earnings call, Alphabet's executives said retail was the company's strongest area during the quarter, adding that they are seeing more travel-related searches. I believe the transition will last awhile. As more people get vaccinated and the economy steadily reopens, there will be several quarters where the beaten-down sectors outperform.

On top of riding the recovery, there is also room for Google to improve the profitability of its search-engine business. According to Wedbush Securities, roughly 80% of searches are still not monetized with digital ads. And a Cowen survey of 52 U.S. ad buyers found that 70% of respondents said Google Search ads offered the highest return on investment. As demand improves, Google will be in the fortunate position of being able to either increase its ad inventory or raise its pricing. Google also has less relative exposure to areas of the market that are facing growth headwinds in the second half of the year: e-commerce and mobile-app install ads. Online sales are set to slow as physical stores reopen and consumers start spending more on experiences over physical goods, while the mobile ad business will be under pressure after Monday's release of Apple's new privacy feature that allows users to block data-tracking by apps on their iPhones.

Investors have already bid up Alphabet shares by more than 30% this year amid rising optimism over its prospects. However, the stock price may continue to do well. The market tends to give companies higher valuation multiples during periods when sales growth is accelerating. Alphabet fits the bill. Its revenue growth is expected to improve markedly this year. That's a contrast to 2020's pandemic winners Amazon.com Inc. and Netflix Inc. — both companies are expected to have slower growth this year.

Of course, Alphabet still remains under antitrust and regulatory scrutiny and that's no small thing. It has been sued by both the U.S. Department of Justice and dozens of state attorneys general last year for its anticompetitive business practices and the use of exclusionary distribution agreements for its search engine. But these lawsuits will take years to sort out and we may not see any new developments for some time.

For those investors who want to wager on a broad-based economic recovery now, there may be no better bet among the technology giants than Alphabet.

HUAWEI SAYS SALES DOWN 16.5% AMID US SANCTIONS

Embattled Chinese tech giant Huawei said first-quarter revenue fell after it sold its lower-priced Honor smartphone brand, but profitability improved.

Sales declined 16.5% from a year earlier to 152.2 billion yuan (\$23.5 billion) due in part to lower revenue for its consumer unit, the company said. It gave no earnings but said its profit margin improved by 3.8 percentage points to 11.1%.

Huawei Technologies Ltd., China's first global tech brand, is struggling to hold onto its global market share following U.S.

sanctions that devastated its smartphone sales, once among the world's highest. The company also is the biggest maker of network gear used by phone and internet carriers.

Washington says the company is a security risk and might facilitate Chinese spying, an accusation Huawei denies.

The sanctions bar access to U.S. processor chips and services including Google's music and other popular apps. Huawei designs its own chips, but manufacturers are barred from using U.S. technology required to produce them.

THE BUZZ

AP PHOTO



CHINA TO LAUNCH HEAVENLY HARMONY SPACE STATION CORE MODULE

CHINA plans to launch the core module for its first permanent space station this week in the latest big step forward for the country's space exploration program.

The Tianhe, or "Heavenly Harmony" module is set to be hurtled into space aboard a Long March 5B rocket from the Wenchang Launch Center on the southern island of Hainan. The launch could come as early as Thursday night if all goes as planned.

It would be the first of 11 missions to build and supply the space station for a three-person crew.

Another 10 launches will send up two more modules; four cargo supply shipments and four missions with crews. At least 12 astronauts are training to fly to and live in the station, including veterans of previous flights, newcomers and women.

When completed by late 2022, Tianhe is expected to weigh about 66 tons, a fraction the size of the International Space Station, which launched its first module in 1998 and will weigh about 450 tons when completed. Tianhe will have a docking port and will also

be able to connect with a powerful Chinese space satellite. Theoretically, it could be expanded with more modules.

Tianhe's main module will initially be about the size of the American Skylab space station of the 1970s and the former Soviet/Russian Mir, which operated for more than 14 years after launching in 1986.

China has launched two experimental modules over the past decade in preparation for a permanent station. One, Tiangong-1, which means "Heavenly Palace-1" was abandoned and burned up during an uncontrolled loss of orbit. Its successor, Tiangong-2, was successfully taken out of orbit in 2018.

China began preparations for a space station in the early 1990s as its space program gained momentum. It was excluded from the ISS largely due to U.S. objections over the Chinese program's secretive nature and close military ties.

After years of successful rocket and commercial satellite launches, China put its first astronaut into space in October 2003. It was only the third country to inde-

pendently do so after the former Soviet Union and the United States. Since that Shenzhou 5 mission, China has sent other astronauts into orbit, placed crews on the original Tiangong station and conducted a space walk.

It also has increased cooperation with space experts from other countries, including France, Sweden, Russia and Italy. NASA must get permission from a reluctant Congress to engage in such contacts.

China also has pushed ahead with crewless missions, particularly in lunar exploration and has landed a rover on the little-explored far side of the Moon. In December, its Chang'e 5 probe returned lunar rocks to Earth for the first time since the U.S. missions of the 1970s.

The Tianhe mission comes just weeks before a Chinese probe is due to land on Mars, making China the third country to accomplish that after the former Soviet Union and the U.S. The Tianwen-1 space probe has been orbiting the red planet since February while collecting data. Its Zhurong rover will be looking for evidence of life. MDT/AP

Russia yesterday ordered a total of seven diplomats from three Baltic nations and Slovakia to leave in a quid pro quo response to the countries' expulsion of Russian Embassy workers. The Russian Foreign Ministry summoned their ambassadors to order three diplomats from Slovakia, two from Lithuania, one from Estonia and one more from Latvia to leave Moscow in a week.

Turkish warplanes were continuing yesterday to strike suspected Kurdish militant targets in northern Iraq, while commando troops were conducting a search and sweep operation, Turkey's defense ministry said, as the military pressed ahead with its latest incursion into the neighboring region. Turkey's military last week launched a new ground and air offensive against militants of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK.

AP PHOTO



Vatican Pope Francis responded yesterday to reports of poor governance and moral failings in the Ecuadorian diocese of Riobamba by not only accepting the resignation of the retiring bishop, Julio Parrilla Diaz, but that of his heir apparent, Monsignor Gerardo Miguel Nieves Loja, as well.

UK Prince Charles said yesterday that he is "deeply saddened" by the surge in coronavirus deaths in India. He urged the public to back an appeal to buy oxygen equipment for the stricken nation. In a message to the people of India, the heir to the throne said: "Indian aid and ingenuity has been a support to other countries through this immensely difficult time. As India has helped others, so now must we help India."

EU leaders, their British counterparts and European businesses expressed hope yesterday that the final ratification of the post-Brexit trade deal will open a new, positive era of cooperation despite the many divisive topics remaining between the former partners. After European lawmakers overwhelmingly ratified the agreement ensuring that free trade continues between the two sides without tariffs and quotas.