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A COURT IN TAIWAN RULED IN FAVOR OF A MACAU-TAIWANESE COUPLE WHO WERE BARRED BY A LOCAL REGISTRY FROM GETTING MARRIED

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CHINA'S CRITICISM OF HONG KONG LEGAL LUMINARY A WARNING FOR LAWYERS IN THE TWO SARs TO BE MORE DIPLOMATIC: ALMEIDA CORREIA

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China An online message from the U.S. Embassy in Beijing has prompted anger online in China. The message sent out on Chinese social media said applications were being accepted for study at American universities and those wishing to go should “jump at the chance like little puppies.” That description triggered hundreds of thousands of comments calling the post, along with a video of puppy striving to cross a fence, racist.



South Korean police yesterday raided the office of an activist who said he had floated hundreds of thousands of propaganda leaflets toward North Korea by balloon in defiance of a new, contentious law that bans such activities. The issue of propaganda leaflets has emerged as a new source of animosities between the two Koreas, with Pyongyang calling it a provocation and threatening to retaliate.



Afghanistan The Taliban has issued a threat to Afghan journalists they accuse of siding with Afghanistan's intelligence agency in Kabul, a warning that came amid a U.S. troop pullout and rising fears of more violence in the war-wrecked country. In a statement, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid warned those Afghan journalists who give “one-sided news in support of Afghanistan's intelligence” service to stop or “face the consequences.”

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COLD WAR

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CRIME

TWO ARRESTED OVER FORGED IDS FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

RENATO MARQUES

TWO men have been arrested by the Judiciary Police (PJ) in connection with a case regarding the forgery of Macau resident identification cards and construction industry occupational safety cards, the PJ reported yesterday.

According to the police force, the identification documents were forged to help workers from the mainland be granted illegal jobs in construction sites in Macau.

According to a PJ spokesperson, the case came to light back in July 2019, when the PJ received a communication from the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL).

According to the DSAL, a person in charge of a local construction company reported to the bureau that several people had used forged Macau resident ID cards and construction industry occupational safety cards to work in construction sites.



After investigation, the PJ managed to identify several people involved in the case and, on April 23 this year, one of the men working illegally was intercepted by the PJ. He was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for further investigation and charged with the crime of forging documents.

As the investigation continued, the PJ intercepted one local man and one male resident

from the mainland on May 5, both of whom were suspected to be also involved in the case.

Through questioning, the PJ found that the construction company had requested that the local resident find local workers and encourage them to work at the construction site. Instead, the suspect conspired with a third man, currently on the run, to find mainland workers with forged IDs to

apply for the job posts.

The two main suspects expected to profit significantly from the scheme, as they were receiving from the construction company a daily salary ranging from 1,200 to 1,400 patacas for each worker they recruited, while paying an undisclosed amount to normal non-resident workers.

According to PJ calculation, they should have earned no less than 48,000 patacas from the wage difference.

The PJ also discovered that the mainland suspect would pay the sum of RMB350 for each set of forged documents, acquired in the mainland.

The two men now detained have been transferred to the MP to be charged with the crimes of document forging, fraud, and illegal employment.

The police will continue to investigate the case, searching for the suspect still at large along with any other people potentially involved in the case.

VACCINATION RATE ONLY AT 10%

The Health Bureau (SSM) laments that the vaccination rate against Covid-19 is only at 10% despite the advertising and promotional works that it conducted. According to the bureau, the current vaccination rate in Macau has not yet reached a "satisfactory level." The vaccination program kicked off on February 9. The SSM has also commenced its earlier promised vaccination outreach activities to boost the city's vaccination rate. The authorities have contacted around 60 associations in Macau to discuss the inoculation arrangements for their members.

LOCAL VIEW POWER TO SHOWCASE 13 FILMS IN JUNE

The Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) will present the 13th Local View Power (LVP) from June 10 to June 13, showcasing a selection of thirteen local films giving the latest cinematic impressions of the city. Besides experimental stories and new visual tales inspired by the Covid-19 pandemic, ranging from documentaries to short features and animations, each motion picture depicts a particular connection between the directors and their own visions of the city. Tickets will be on sale at CCM's box office and Macao Ticketing Network outlets at MOP60 from May 9.

LOCAL MAN WINS LAWSUIT IN TAIWAN TO MARRY TAIWANESE BOYFRIEND

A court in Taiwan ruled yesterday in favor of a Macau-Taiwanese couple who were barred by a local registry from getting married because Macau does not recognize same-sex marriage.

Originally from Macau, Guzifer Leong's application to marry his boyfriend, Shinchi Ting, was not accepted by a registry in Taiwan in 2019. The reason given was that, according to inter-jurisdiction marriage regulations in Taiwan, the two participants must be from a place that recognize same-sex marriage.

To support his eligibility, Leong argued that he relocated to Taiwan in 2017 and has since considered Taiwan his



Guzifer Leong (right) and Shinchi Ting

home. He added that he has been living and operating a pastry shop with his partner in Taiwan, making it his habitual residence.

Macau's Civil Code was also cited during the hearings. The lawyers representing Leong and Ting pointed out that marriage regulations in Macau are personal laws, meaning that there is a focus on a person's ha-

bitual residence. On this foundation, the lawyers believe Leong's marriage should only concern Taiwanese laws.

This ruling is not generally applicable.

Appeal is still possible and permitted at this stage.

Taiwan passed Asia's first same-sex marriage law on May 22, 2019. The law was enacted two days later. **AL**

SSM MARCH REPORT ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES SHOWS CHANGE IN PATTERNS

RENATO MARQUES

A recent statistical report published by the Health Bureau (SSM) on the infectious diseases from the mandatory report has shown a change in the pattern of some conditions, the SSM noted.

The statistics release, concerning March, shows that the SSM recorded a total of 163 reports on this kind of medical condition.

One highlight is the incidence of norovirus infections, of which the bureau recorded a total of 17 cases. This figure represents an increase of 750% compared to the same period of the previous year, where only two cases were reported.

When compared month-on-month with the previous month, the March figure accounts for a drop of 45.2%, as in February there were 31 no-



rovirus infections recorded.

For the same period, the SSM recorded three cases of bacterial food poisoning, a significant drop month-on-month as, in February, 17 cases were recorded.

There were 31 cases of chickenpox, an increase of 181.8% year-on-year and an increase of 106.7% month-on-month.

Diagnosed infections of enterovirus have also been growing in March this year, with a total of 26 cases recorded - a spike of 136.4% year-on-year and 36.8% month-on-month.

The flu trended in the

opposite direction, as infections of influenza registered a drop as much as 85.7% year-on-year to just one case in March, the same figure recorded in February.

There were also fewer cases of pulmonary tuberculosis, which dropped by 63.6% to a total of 36 cases.

Macau also recorded a total of 11 new infections of HIV.

Currently, there are a total of 44 medical conditions included on the mandatory report scheme, which aims for rapid updates for the measures of prevention and control of said diseases.

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Urban Master Plan final report in CE's hands by September

RENATO MARQUES

THE final report on the Urban Master Plan will be ready to be delivered to the Chief Executive (CE) by September this year. The status of the plan's final edition was acknowledged by the director of the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT), Chan Pou Ha, after the fourth plenary meeting of this year of the Urban Planning Council (CPU) on Wednesday.

Chan told the media that all council members, having gathered opinions from the public consultation, need to submit their individual perspectives on the plan by June 5.

After this, the DSSOPT will develop a final report that (according to the regulations) must be completed within 90 days, or by early September. It must then be submitted to the CE, which will then forward it for final drafting



and delivery to the Legislative Assembly (AL) for discussion and approval.

As the Times reported in late March this year at the AL, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, conveyed that the government was aiming for approval of the Urban Master Plan to happen by the end of this year. Rosário promised to move forward promptly with the detailed plans for the project once the plan is approved.

"By the end of this year, we will have the Urban Master Plan finalized and ready for

approval. We will do everything in our capacity to have it approved within this year," Rosário said in reply to an inquiry from lawmaker Ng Kuok Cheong. "After that, we will work immediately on the detailed plans," he added.

At the CPU meeting, members were also presented with the findings of the general public consultation that took place between September and November last year.

The results showed that the 10 topics of greatest concern to the public were related to: residential areas, ecological

reserves, public facilities, marine usage, green and public outdoor areas, transport, industrial areas, commercial areas, scenery, and cultural heritage preservation.

Highlighted among these concerns was the preservation of the three main hill areas of Guia, Penha, and Coloane.

The public was not convinced with the scientific grounds of the study, with the plan garnering 52 out of a total of 70 comments opposing the government's literature on the Plan, with only one comment in favor.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Chan also informed the media that the results of the study on the installation of a floodgate to prevent major flooding in the Inner Harbor area is already with the DSSOPT. She stated that the results will be presented as soon as "some technicalities are completely finalized."

GOV'T TO CLARIFY FUTURE OF RED MARKET IN 2H

THE announcement of the future of the Red Market was delayed due to the difficulties in looking for a provisional substitute during its proposed revamp, Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong said yesterday.

Built in 1936, the red-brick structure is under the protection of the Cultural Heritage Law. Its age has incurred various problems, including a dripping ceiling. The structure was also flooded when severe Typhoon Hato hit in 2017.

Cheong explained that the market is located in the heart of the city and is, at the same time, a crucial shopping facility for residents in that district. He admitted that there were not many places to which the government could temporarily relocate the Red Market.

He hinted that the substitute will likely be the Patane Provisional Market. Negotiations have been conducted with vendors and Cheong hopes residents will be mentally prepared for the temporary relocation.

The government first proposed the refurbishment of the Red Market in January 2018. It was set to commence in September 2018 at the earliest. However, difficulties in achieving consensus between the Municipal Affairs Bureau and the Cultural Affairs Bureau regarding the market's internal structure halted the project.

In 2019, the two bureaus agreed to use reinforced concrete to support the market's internal structure. **AL**

AD

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CHINA'S CRITICISM OF HK LEGAL LUMINARY A WARNING FOR LAWYERS IN THE TWO SARs

STAFF REPORTER

THE central government's denunciation against the chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association Paul Harris may be a "clear intrusion in the sphere of the legal profession [in Hong Kong]," but its impact on Macau's legal community remains uncertain or minimal, local lawyer Sérgio de Almeida Correia told the Times.

The deep-rooted patriotism of Macau's legal community, which Correia regarded as "very obedient and dependent on political power and business tycoons", may prevent professionals in the region from being targeted by the Liaison Office for quite some time.

Correia's remarks came after the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong SAR issued a statement on April 25, decrying Paul Harris as an "anti-China politician," and warning that his continuing tenure would "make the biggest irony to the Bar Association."

The fierce criticism by the Liaison Office urging Harris to step down was intended as retaliation



Paul Harris (left) and Sérgio de Almeida Correia

against Harris, following his earlier remarks in which he stated that he advocated the right to a peaceful protest. This speech was made after Hong Kong's High Court sentenced 10 activists, including media tycoon Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, for their roles in the illegal assemblies on August 18 and 31 in 2019.

The accusation also pointed up Harris' close ties with foreign organizations. Before serving as a chairman at the Bar Association he was a member of the Liberal Democrats in the U.K., and a Councillor for St Margaret's Ward, Oxford. He resigned from these two positions before and after he took the post at the Bar Association in Hong

Kong.

In the wake of the Liaison Office's blunt accusation, Harris cleared up the misconception, reaffirming that he is not an anti-China politician, and he firmly supports the Basic Law and "One country, two system" principle and opposes "any violent behavior."

He also said he wishes to meet with representatives of the Liaison Office in Hong Kong to clarify these matters in person.

Harris' case has raised thorny questions about freedom of speech and the rule of law for some lawyers in Hong Kong.

Correia echoes this viewpoint, saying that the event "again calls into question the margin of au-

tonomy of the legal profession, the rights enshrined in the Basic Law and the principles inherent to the rule of law."

"The credibility of the Hong Kong and Macau legal systems lies on its independence, on its autonomy vis-à-vis political power, and it is based in the rule of law," he said.

"If the courts, the judges and the lawyers are all [subject] to the political power of the government, no matter if it is local or central, and everybody is forced to follow political instructions for reasons of "patriotism" or something similar, there are no distinctive factors between the two SARs and the mainland legal system," he added.

Rodolfo Ávila returns to TCR China this weekend

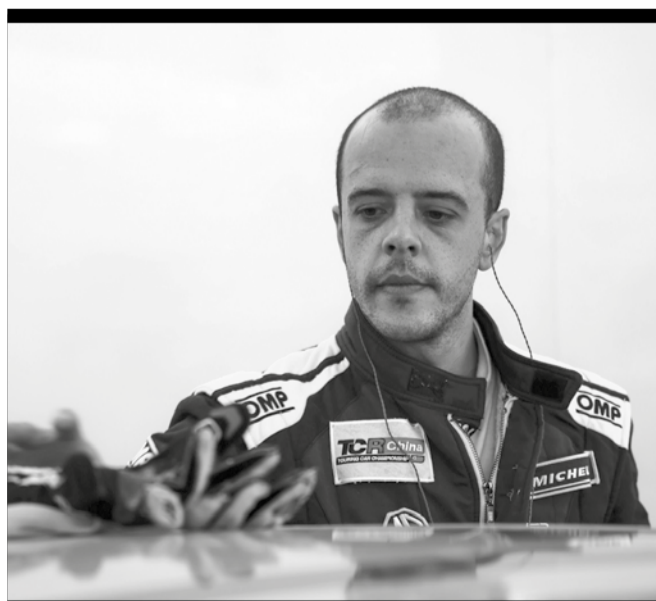
RENATO MARQUES

MACAU race driver Rodolfo Ávila has announced his return to competition at TCR China Touring Car Championship.

Ávila finished last year's championship in second position and will return this year, representing the colors of MG Xpower for the third consecutive year.

The first race of the 2021 season is scheduled to take place at Shanghai's International Circuit this weekend, where Ávila is taking the driving seat of one of the four MG 6 XPower TCR that the team will take to the championship.

This is the very same car



with which the local driver won nine podium positions last year and the first ever

win for the Sino-British manufacturer in the TCR racing category.

The last time Ávila drove the MG 6 XPower TCR was last November, during the event hosted at the Macau Grand Prix.

"I am very pleased with the confidence that MG XPower Racing has placed in me again. Last year, when no one expected it, we managed to [remain in contention for] the drivers' championship until the very last race and we won the team championship. This year, we will try to please the fans of the brand all over the world and, who knows, maybe we can be again battling for both titles [drivers' and team]," the driver said.

The championship event will consist a total of 12 races to be hosted in the circuits of Shanghai, Ningbo, Jiangsu, and Zhuzhou from the first weekend of May and until mid-October.



PHOTOGRAPHER COLLABORATES WITH EXIT ON 'MY CITY' COLLECTION

PORTUGUESE photographer Gonçalo Lobo Pinheiro is collaborating with local skate shop EXIT to launch the 'My City' collection: a combination of local and Chinese-Portuguese elements.

According to the photographer, the 'My City' collection contains three photographs in black and white.

"These three photographs of Macau were taken at different times. I usually work in color, but I love to photograph Macau in black and white," he said.

The photos are shots of the Ruins of São Paulo, the Grand Lisboa taken from among the old buildings of Rua da Nova à

Guia, and a lonely man with a face mask walking the Calçada Portuguesa on Largo do Senado in the heart of the historic center of Macau.

"In this series of three photographs, I tried to choose iconic situations or places in this territory that welcomed me in 2010," said Pinheiro.

Prints of the photographs are available for sale on skateboards and t-shirts.

EXIT is a local skate shop in Macau established in 2019. The skate shop aims to boost Macau's skateboarding culture.

Late last year, EXIT also partnered with artist Konstantin Bessmertny. LV

RETAILERS PLAN ON COUPONS TO BOOST RETURNING SPENDING

To further encourage spending alongside the third round of government stimulus, some businesses are hinting they will issue coupons to spending customers to generate repeat consumption.

The registration period of the stimulus starts today. Local business operators are confident that the subsidy will help boost the economy in the second half of the year, particularly during the summer holiday period.

These business operators are considering offering extra benefits to consumers using the government subsidy. They added that local consumers have become more cautious when spending.

To cope with the situation, some busi-

ness operators are pondering rebating with MOP100-worth of coupon when a customer spends MOP400, which is the combined daily spending and discount caps of the stimulus scheme.

Another goal of the promotion is to work with nearby businesses to generate consumption, such as giving out merchandise made by a neighbor to customers who spend certain amounts.

A caterer, on the other hand, is considering a plan to issue MOP500-worth of coupons to a customer spending MOP400. The caterer hopes that the initiative will be able to further energize the market by 20%. AL

Studio City granted extended construction deadline beyond gaming license

HONEY TSANG

MACAU'S government has granted Studio City International Holdings Ltd a seven-month extension to its land concession contract for its integrated resort Studio City on Cotai — several months past the property's current expiry date.

The news was announced by the group's statement released on May 5.

Given official permission, the deadline for the development period under Studio City's land concession contract is postponed from May 27, 2022 to December 27, 2022. The gaming license for the

group is due to expire on June 26, 2022.

The extension is intended to buy the group more time to complete Studio City's Phase 2 expansion project.

The postponement seems to be of great benefit to Melco Resorts & Entertainment, the group's largest shareholder, which had previously stated that it would be quite unlikely to meet the proposed deadline for the Phase 2 construction on May 31, 2022.

In an SEC filing dated July 7, 2020, Melco ascribed the construction delays to the Covid-19 outbreak.

"With the disruptions from the Covid-19 outbreak, the construction period [of Phase 2 of Studio City] has been

delayed and is expected to extend beyond the estimated 32 months and the current development period," Melco stated in the release.

According to the financial result for 2020 released by Melco in March this year, the construction of Studio City Phase 2 "is progressing."

Upon completion, Phase 2 of Studio City will offer around 900 luxury rooms and suites — approximately a 60% increase to Studio City's current hotel room inventory. It will also provide "one of the world's largest indoor/outdoor water parks", a cineplex, restaurants, and MICE venues.

The new water park is slated to open on May 22.

BLOOMBERG



GAMING

SJM PROPOSES TO RAISE NOTES IN HKD AND MOP

HONEY TSANG

SJM Holdings Ltd (SJM) would raise HKD1.25 billion notes and MOP300 million notes, according to a statement delivered by the group to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on May 5.

The group said it and the issuer — Champion Moments Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the SJM — would seek a listing of the Notes, both HKD and MOP, on Chongwa (Macao) Financial Asset Exchange Co., Ltd, a local financial entity offering bond services.

The proposed notes of HKD1.25 billion in 3.9% senior notes are to be issued on May 12 and due on the same day in 2026. The issue and maturity date will be the same for MOP300 million Notes.

SJM estimated that the net proceeds from the offering of the notes — after deducting discounts of the Initial Purchasers and estimated offering expenses payable by SJM — will stand at around HKD1.24

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



billion and MOP298 million.

Around 90% of the net proceeds will be used by SJM for "refinancing the Syndicated Credit Facilities and the balance for general corporate purposes," according to the statement.

The said "Initial Purchasers" in the undertaking predominantly include banking groups based in Macau, such as: Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Macau) Limited; Bank of China Limited (Macau Branch); Bank of Communications Co Ltd (Macau Branch); and China Construction Bank Corp (Macau Branch).

During the previous

earning calls on May 4, the representative of the SJM said that the upcoming Grand Lisboa Palace, SJM's first investment project on Cotai, is slated to open partially by the end of the second quarter of 2021.

The premium segments, also including VIP, are expected to be the new resort's target consumers.

Upon its initial opening, the new property will offer approximately 300 gaming tables, 1,034 slot machines, 300 hotel rooms, food and beverage (F&B) and retail outlets.

The property will feature two luxury boutique hotels — Palazzo Versace Macau and Karl Lagerfeld Hotel.



TOURISM

GOV'T TO PROMOTE MACAU IN JIANGSU

THE government will be promoting Macau in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province during the Macao Week in Jiangsu between May 13 and 17.

The event will showcase Macau by featuring: a mega roadshow, Macau tourism and MICE presentation seminar, business matching and networking, cuisine promotion, and other cultural highlights.

The event seeks to expand the spectrum of visitor sources, attracting mainland visitors for travel and spending in Macau for its economic revival, the government articulated.

Similar to previous editions of the Macao Week, this roadshow will involve entities from both public and private sectors of the city, such as the organizer the Macao Government Tourism Office and the six resort operators.

They will focus on promoting Macau as a destination for integrated tourism - for instance MICE tourism and sports tourism.

The event program will see a Macau tourism and MICE presentation seminar, business matching and networking, as well as food promotion on May 13, followed by the Macao Week in Jiangsu's opening ceremony and roadshow

unveiling the next day.

As a major highlight of the Macao Week in Jiangsu, the mega roadshow will unfold along the Pedestrian Street at Confucius Temple in Nanjing for four days from May 14. There will be a variety of themed zones and booths to showcase Macau's World Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and other commercial and tourist attractions.

During the event, pertinent integrated tourism enterprises and airline companies will present a total of over RMB90 million special travel offers on air tickets, hotel accommodation, dining and more for sale at the roadshow and their platforms. The organizer will also roll out an extensive promotional campaign for the Macao Week in Jiangsu through various online and offline platforms, while leveraging the wide influence of different travel influencers from the mainland. **AL**

29 LOCAL TOURS SET OFF FROM MAY 1-2

AS of May 5, a total of 29 local tours set off during the week-end of the May Day holiday from May 1 to 2, according to the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO). The tours were a part of the domestic travel package "Stay, Dine and See Macao."

The total number of participants for the 29 tours during

the two days stood at 858.

The MGTO is expecting to see around 1,326 locals joining the local tours from May 8 to 9. According to the data from yesterday, the accumulated number of hotel packages sold was 2,556, involving 6,394 guests. Meanwhile, the overall number of locals signing up for the local tours is 5,701.

INTERVIEW

US GENERAL SAYS CHINA'S AFRICA OUTREACH POSES THREAT FROM ATLANTIC

LOLITA C. BALDOR,
WASHINGTON

THE top U.S. general for Africa is warning that a growing threat from China may come not just from the waters of the Pacific, but from the Atlantic as well.

U.S. Gen. Stephen Townsend, in an interview with The Associated Press, said Beijing is looking to establish a large navy port capable of hosting submarines or aircraft carriers on Africa's western coast. Townsend said China has approached countries stretching from Mauritania to south of Namibia, intent on establishing a naval facility. If realized, that prospect would enable China to base warships in its expanding Navy in the Atlantic as well as Pacific oceans.

"They're looking for a place where they can rearm and repair warships. That becomes militarily useful in conflict," said Townsend, who heads U.S. Africa Command. "They're a long way toward establishing that in Djibouti. Now they're casting their gaze to the Atlantic coast and wanting to get such a base there."



Then-Army Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend (left) with Iraqi officers during a tour north of Baghdad in 2017

Townsend's warnings come as the Pentagon shifts its focus from the counterterrorism wars of the last two decades to the Indo-Pacific region and threats from great power adversaries like China and Russia. The Biden administration views China's rapidly expanding economic influence and military might as America's primary long-term security challenge.

U.S. military commanders around the globe, including several who may lose troops and resources to bolster growth in the Pacific, caution that China's growing assertiveness isn't simply happening in Asia. And they argue that Beijing is aggressively asserting economic influence over countries in Africa, South America and the Middle East, and is pursuing bases and footholds there.

suing bases and footholds there.

"The Chinese are outmaneuvering the U.S. in select countries in Africa," said Townsend. "Port projects, economic endeavors, infrastructure and their agreements and contracts will lead to greater access in the future. They are hedging their bets and making big bets on Africa."

China's first overseas naval base was built years ago in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa and it is steadily increasing its capacity. Townsend said as many as 2,000 military personnel are at the base, including hundreds of Marines who handle security there.

"They have arms and munitions for sure. They have armored combat vehicles. We think they will soon be basing helicopters there to potentially include attack helicopters," said Townsend.

For some time, many have thought that China was working to establish a Navy base in Tanzania, a country on Africa's eastern coast, that has had a strong, longstanding military relationship with Beijing. But Townsend said it appears there's been no decision on that yet.

He said that while China has been trying hard to get a base in Tanzania, it's not the location he's most concerned about.

"It's on the Indian Ocean side," he said. "I want it to be in Tanzania instead of on the Atlantic coast. The Atlantic coast concerns me greatly," he said, pointing to the relatively shorter distance from Africa's west coast to the U.S. In nautical miles, a base on Africa's northern Atlantic coast could be substantially closer to the U.S. than military facilities in China are to America's western coast.

More specifically, other U.S. officials say the Chinese have been eyeing locations for a port in the Gulf of Guinea.

The Defense Department's 2020 report on China's military power, said China has likely considered adding military facilities to support its naval, air and ground forces in Angola, among other locations. And it noted that the large amount of oil and liquefied natural gas imported from Africa and the Middle East, make those regions a high priority for China over the next 15 years. **MDT/AP**

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- 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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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

HONG KONG

ACTIVIST JOSHUA WONG SENTENCED FOR TIANANMEN VIGIL

PROMINENT pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong was sentenced to more jail time yesterday for participating in an unauthorized vigil to commemorate the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, as Hong Kong authorities exert more control over dissent in the city.

For years, Hong Kong was the only place in China where people were allowed to mark the anniversary of Beijing's crushing of the Chinese democracy movement.

Despite the commemoration being banned for the first time last year, thousands of protesters defied authorities and proceeded to Victoria Park to light candles and sing songs. Police who were present at the vigil warned the protesters they may be breaking the law but

made no arrests on the day itself.

Wong and three district councilors had pleaded guilty to knowingly taking part in an unauthorized assembly, and could have faced a maximum of five years in prison. Twenty other people face charges over the Tiananmen vigil but have not entered pleas.

Wong, who rose to prominence as a student activist and was the face of the 2014 pro-democracy protests, is already in jail after being convicted of illegal assembly in other protests and was sentenced to an additional 10 months. Councilors Lester Shum, Jannelle Leung and Tiffany Yuen received sentences that range from four to six months for the Tiananmen vigil. **MDT/AP**

JOE MCDONALD & ROD MCGUIRK, BEIJING

CHINA yesterday suspended an economic dialogue with Australia, stepping up a pressure campaign that began over Australian support for a probe of the coronavirus and has disrupted exports to the country's biggest foreign market.

Relations have plunged to a multi-decade low since Beijing blocked imports of Australian coal, wheat and other goods over the past year. But it has failed to force Prime Minister Scott Morrison's government to offer concessions.

Yesterday's suspension "signals a deterioration of the diplomatic relationship" but is largely symbolic, said Caitlin Byrne, a specialist on Australia's diplomatic relations in the Asia-Pacific region. She said officials haven't met since 2017.

"It's certainly an important and symbolic move, but in terms of substance, the impact here is limited," said Byrne, director of the Griffith Asia Institute at Australia's Griffith University.

The Chinese government accused Australia of taking steps "to disrupt normal exchanges" due to a "Cold War mindset and ideological discrimination."

Beijing will "indefinitely suspend all activities" under the China-Australia Strategic Economic Dialogue, said a statement by the Cabinet's planning agency, the National Development and Reform Commission.

China holds such dialogues with Australia, the United States and some other

AP PHOTO



China suspends economic dialogue with Australia

governments to discuss trade disputes and other economic issues.

"This is unfortunate. We do need dialogue with China," said Australian opposition leader Anthony Albanese in Sydney. "It can't be just on their terms, though. It's got to be on both countries' terms."

China blocked imports of most Australian goods last year after its government called for an investigation into the coronavirus, which emerged in central China in late 2019.

Chinese ministers refuse to take calls from their Australian counterparts.

Australian Trade Minister Dan Tehan expressed disappointment in a statement.

"We remain open to holding the dialogue and engaging at a ministerial level," Tehan said.

China is Australia's No. 1 foreign market, but the sanctions impact has been limited because Chinese steel mills still buy Australian iron ore, the country's most valuable export.

Last month, Australia canceled two deals signed by the state government of Victoria with Beijing's multibillion-dollar "Belt and Road" construction initiative on "national interest" grounds.

The Australian foreign minister said the step didn't target "any one country," but Beijing warned it might retaliate. **MDT/AP**

AD

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DUBAI

Luxury home market soars as world's rich flee pandemic

ISABEL DEBRE, DUBAI

AFTER nearly three decades in London, Christophe Reech was fed up with the city's pandemic lockdowns. This spring, he sold his luxury townhouse and jetted off to the desert sheikhdom of Dubai to start a new life with his family.

There was no turning back, he said. The French business magnate's super wealthy foreign friends were doing the same, driving an unprecedented surge in sales of Dubai's most-exclusive properties.

"Here in Dubai, there's only one strategy: Business as usual," said Reech, the chairman of an eponymous group that owns real estate and financial technology companies. The philosophy is simple: "Let's make sure everyone's vaccinated and keep everything open."

"Of course that attracts people like me," he said.

As vaccines roll out unevenly worldwide and waves of infections force countries to extend restrictions, foreign buyers flush with cash have flooded Dubai's high-end property market, one of the few places in the world where they can dine, shop and do business in person. They're snapping up record numbers of luxury villas and penthouses, sending prices

rocketing in this boom-and-bust market.

Sales of Dubai's upscale properties, once slow, soared 230% in the first quarter of 2021, compared to the same period last year. Prices in some top-end areas rose as much as 40%, according to Property Finder, the country's largest real-estate website.

A record-breaking 90 properties worth 10 million dirhams each (\$2.7 million) changed hands last month, on top of 84 in March, surpassing heights hit eight years ago, according to real estate consultancy Property Monitor. For comparison, there were 54 such transactions in all of 2020.

"Tons of people are coming in and buying multi-million dollar properties on the spot, with no due diligence time whatsoever," said Matthew Cooke, a partner at consultancy Knight Frank, who manages penthouse sales on Dubai's Palm Jumeirah artificial archipelago.

As with previous cycles, cash buyers started snatching up homes at bargain prices and flipping them for profits. Analysts say that will continue until prices rise too high and returns diminish.

How long the craze lasts and what awaits the skyscraper-studded city then remains unclear. Home prices are still falling in the middle

tiers of the city's saturated property market, which has seen values drop sharply since peaks reached seven years ago due to overbuilding. Average residence sale prices in the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, collapsed to \$400 per square foot this month from \$1,300 in 2013.

"The market is going through a boom time ... but people are very aware that Dubai can run too quickly and it all falls apart," said Jackie Johns, partner at Premier Estates, an affiliate of Christie's International Real Estate, referring to the debt-driven crisis that brought the city to its knees in 2008.

The hot streak in the luxury market isn't unique to Dubai, as ultra-low interest rates and families' desire for more space has seen the wealthy in cities like New York and Paris decamp to suburban mansions. But there are other factors at play in the glitzy emirate, home to the long-haul carrier Emirates and tallest tower on Earth.

Since first reopening to tourists last summer, Dubai has pitched itself as the world's pandemic-friendly vacation spot. With no mandatory dayslong quarantines, foreign visitors now party in Dubai's bustling bars and on its beaches, their selfies at hotel-resorts and helicopter pads stirring resentment back home.

The tourist influx helped drive the country's dramatic surge in coronavirus cases in January, prompting the U.K. to suspend flights. But the United Arab Emirates, with its young population and low mortality rates, has fared relatively well during the pandemic. The country of over 9 million, which relied heavily on the Chinese state-backed Sinopharm vaccine for its inoculation campaign, has administered 10.6 million vaccine doses.

A global financial center known as an oasis in the volatile Middle East, Dubai long has benefitted from capital flight. Homeowners on the Palm Jumeirah — which saw 43% of all April transactions — include Afghan warlords and the political elite from countries like Nigeria, Syria and Lebanon, all searching for a safe place to park their savings.

Now, a big share of wealthy buyers on this man-made archipelago, popularly known as the Palm, and in other exclusive villa communities in Dubai come from Europe, India, China and Russia, seeking a better quality of life as the pandemic rages. In March, the Palm logged its second-highest residential sale ever when a Swiss family bought a waterfront mansion for \$30.2 million. Last month, an unidentified European family bought the city's third-most expensive home ever for \$28.6 million.

Plentiful vaccines underpin that demand. Although questions surround the efficacy of the Sinopharm shot, Dubai offers other options, including Pfizer-BioNtech and Oxford-Astrazeneca. To get a job, all one needs is a residence visa — which the city already extends to high-end property buyers and investors.

Reech, who plans to buy land in Dubai to build his dream home, booked a Pfizer appointment immediately after he received his residency. In the U.K., he said, he'd have to wait another four months.

New initiatives to lure affluent foreigners include remote work visas, retirement visas and long-term, renewable "golden" visas. In an unprecedented move, authorities are even offering Emirati citizenship to a select group of foreigners. To boost its brand as a cosmopolitan city, the UAE also has altered its strict Islamic legal code, allowing unmarried couples to live together and noncitizens to follow foreign laws for divorce and inheritance. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

2001 THOUSANDS GREET POPE IN SYRIAN VISIT



Thousands of people have turned out to greet Pope John Paul II on his historic visit to Syria.

The pontiff drove in his popemobile through the narrow streets and was greeted by Syria's top Muslim cleric Sheik Ahmad Kuftaro.

Sheik Kuftaro said: "This is an occasion that goes beyond history and will begin the process of putting peace to work in the world."

The pontiff replied: "For me, too, it is a very important day. I am very happy."

Vatican and Syrian flags decorated the Umayyad Mosque in the old walled city of Damascus.

Security officers held back a crowd of curious onlookers from a nearby souk who were craning for a look at the visitor from Rome.

The Pope, who called on Muslims, Christians and Jews to work together to bring peace to the Middle East, became the first pontiff to enter a mosque.

As required by Muslim custom, John Paul II removed his shoes and put on white slippers before entering the mosque.

The 80-year-old, who has Parkinson's disease, stumbled slightly at the threshold of the mosque and again crossing the main hall.

John Paul II asked for a joint act of contrition, saying: "For all the times that Muslims and Christians have offended one another...we need to seek forgiveness from the Almighty and offer each other forgiveness."

At the tomb of St John the Baptist the Pope paused for a minute's silent meditation. He spent 95 minutes in the mosque, which was built in AD 705 on the site of a Christian church.

The pontiff also met Agnathos Hazim IV, the Syrian-Greek Orthodox archbishop, at the Church of St Paul on the Wall in the Syrian capital.

Earlier in the day, the Pope attended a four-hour Mass in a Damascus stadium.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Pope's visit to Damascus was overshadowed by a furious row between Syria and Israel. On his arrival, Syrian president Bashar Assad accused Israel of trying to "kill the principles of all religions with the same mentality in which they betrayed Jesus Christ and...the Prophet Mohammed". This sparked a stern response from Israel, who urged world leaders to "condemn" such statements.

Israel called on Roman Catholic leaders to reject such statements "with revulsion" but a papal spokesman said: "The Pope will absolutely not intervene. We are guests of this president and he has expressed his opinion."

The Pope's visit was part of a six-day pilgrimage in the steps of St Paul, whose conversion occurred on the way to Damascus. His trip also included Greece and Malta.

The Pope died on Saturday 2 April 2005 after he failed to recover from a throat operation.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Be mindful of overspending under today's skies, Aries. Money-counting Venus finds herself in a square with do-it-bigger Jupiter, which can prompt you to overextend your resources.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
The moon slides into individualistic Aries at the start of the day, signaling a strong need to pull away from the crowd to focus on your need for simplicity, rest, and recuperation.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
The moon cruises into playful Aries in the first half of the day, encouraging you to put the brakes on your tireless career grind and to reach out to the people who matter to you.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
It's an ideal day to push ahead with your personal projects and ambitions, as Luna's supportive link with expressive Mercury offers emotional balance, quick thinking, and a smooth communication style.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Friday's skies welcomingly hold little action in store, Leo. The moon cruises into excitable Aries in the first half of the day, bringing an energetic and uplifted mood to the day.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You need some time away from the world today, Virgo. The moon dives into fiery Aries, directing your awareness towards any unspoken tensions taking place in the intimacy department.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Relationship matters are absorbing your attention today, Libra. The moon floats through excitable Aries, helping you tune into the undercurrent of your partnership story.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
The moon floats through go-getter Aries today, meeting only with messenger Mercury. This makes an ideal day for important conversations on the work front.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You're feeling like yourself again with the arrival of Friday's skies, Sagittarius. The moon roams through hyperactive Aries, propelling you to seek out a creative avenue for self-expression and leisure.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Luna's supportive connection with mentally sharp Mercury makes it easy to accomplish your workload, so long as you're left to your own devices. Stay low key, order food in, and unwind in your space.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Luna's supportive link with communicative Mercury makes it easy for you to share yourself creatively, so if you have personal projects that need flair and stamina - today's your day to tackle them.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Spend some time overlooking your resources today, Pisces. The moon slips into eager Aries today, directing your immediate focus towards your talents and the reality of your finances.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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7			1		9			
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	2		3					6
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		2		6				
	5	1						2

MEDIUM

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	1							9
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				1	3			

HARD

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9								
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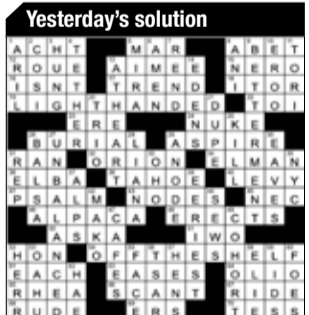
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	14	26	clear
Harbin	8	13	moderate rain
Tianjin	16	25	clear
Urumqi	17	32	clear
Xi'an	13	27	clear
Lhasa	6	19	cloudy
Chengdu	16	28	cloudy
Chongqing	17	27	cloudy
Kunming	15	26	cloudy
Nanjing	16	27	cloudy
Shanghai	20	28	overcast
Wuhan	16	28	overcast
Hangzhou	20	31	cloudy
Taipei	22	27	cloudy
Guangzhou	23	31	thundershower
Hong Kong	24	31	clear
WORLD			
Moscow	5	13	drizzle
Frankfurt	5	8	drizzle
Paris	5	11	drizzle
London	3	11	clear
New York	8	20	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Roy's "singin' pardner"; 5- Formerly, formerly; 9- Grannies; 14- Watchful one; 15- Apparatus for weaving; 16- "_____ by any other name..."; 17- Yarn spinner; 18- French cleric; 19- Fluff, as bangs; 20- Rashly; 22- Nor's partner; 24- Driving aids; 25- Perches; 26- Occupied by a metropolis; 29- Dictation taker; 31- Chosen; 32- Money-related; Abbr.; 33- Capp and Capone; 36- Actress Long; 37- Function; 40- Maui memento; 41- Pitch; 42- Lip-curling facial expression; 43- Like Fran Drescher's voice; 45- Was able; 47- Go with; 48- Oblique; 51- Test choice; 52- One-piece bathing suit for women; 54- Former; 58- Novelist Calvino; 59- Caucus state; 61- Sour; 62- Fungal infection; 63- Ireland; 64- Tattled; 65- Long; 66- Broadway opening; 67- Prefix with skeleton;

DOWN: 1- Where heroes are made; 2- 16th letter of the Hebrew alphabet; 3- Wife of Jacob; 4- Unpredictable; 5- In seventh heaven; 6- Judges' garments; 7- Whimper; 8- Revenuers, for short; 9- Country; 10- Playground retort; 11- ___ Ark; 12- It's a plus; 13- Prophets; 21- Take care of; 23- Upright; 26- 1/100 of a monetary unit; 27- Hip bones; 28- Drop of water expelled by the eye; 29- Brought into being; 30- Nicholas II was the last Russian one; 32- Sense; 33- What's more; 34- Cordelia's father; 35- River sediment; 38- Disney dog; 39- Result; 44- See-through material; 45- One giving a ring; 46- Borrowed; 47- Verdi opera; 48- Friendship; 49- French composer Erik; 50- Woody vine; 51- Namely; 53- ___ yellow ribbon...; 55- Clickable image; 56- Temperate; 57- Other name for taro; 60- Tolkien ogre;



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- IAM 28 387 333
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AD

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

JAKE COYLE,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

A sleepy and aimless stab at something earnestly “feel-good,” “Here Today” is a wasted pairing of Billy Crystal and Tiffany Haddish that juggles dementia, grief and family squabbles about as adeptly as a daytime soap.

“Here Today,” which opens in theaters today, is genial and gentle enough to make it mildly restive. It is, in scenes around leafy Brooklyn Heights, at least leisurely. The film, written by Alan Zweibel and Crystal and based on a short story by Zweibel, is Crystal’s first time directing in 20 years — since the Roger Maris HBO film “61(asterisk).” That, a Yankee story, was more in Crystal’s wheelhouse. The tones here, though, are more ambitious and out of reach for the limp “Here Today.”

Crystal plays Charlie Burnz, a celebrated comedy writer who remains on staff as a kind of sage veteran at “This Just In,” a sketch series styled after “Saturday Night Live.” He still knows comedy, but the scenes at the show, both writing and performing sketches, are curiously lacking any humor. Here, in “This Just In,” is an “SNL” approximation that rivals Aaron Sorkin’s “Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip” in unfunniness.

A lunch with Burnz is auctio-



Tiffany Haddish (left) and Billy Crystal in a scene from “Here Today”

DRIVE IN

BILLY CRYSTAL AND TIFFANY HADDISH IN ‘HERE TODAY’

ned off. But when he goes to the restaurant, he’s greeted not by the bidder but the bidder’s ex-girlfriend, Emma Payge (Haddish), who has come just for the free meal. A seafood allergy that sends her to the hospital brings them closer, and soon Emma — a bright

and friendly singer with seemingly nothing else to do — gradually, magically becomes close friends with Burnz, just as dementia is setting in for him. His relationship with his kids (Penn Badgley, Laura Benanti) isn’t good, but Emma’s willing to take care of him. Along

the way, there are also first-person perspective flashbacks to Burnz’s now deceased wife, a saintly woman who died years earlier in an accident.

Following an act like Anthony Hopkins (who so powerfully and rigorously captured the diso-

rientation of dementia in “The Father”) is never easy. But “Here Today,” soaked in sentiment, is a steep fall off. Crystal’s performance of the condition isn’t necessarily bad. For Burnz, clarity goes in and out. He has his kids labeled in a photograph; he forgets Sharon Stone’s name while onstage at a Lincoln Center anniversary event for a movie he wrote 30 years earlier. Mostly, it’s only an occasional issue for the character — a bit of dramatic window dressing for a story that’s mostly about the reflections of an aging writer and his unlikely friendship with Emma.

You can credit “Here Today” with never pushing too hard on conflict or comedy. Excepting the heaps of schmaltz, this is a restrained film, made with wistfulness by a comedy great. And even with an unrefined script, Haddish and Crystal have some nice moments. Their characters’ relationship never tips into romance (the closest they get is spooning). But, if anything, “Here Today” proves that the dynamic Haddish can ably downshift and still be winningly charismatic.

“Here Today,” a Sony Pictures release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for strong language and sexual references. Running time: 117 minutes. ★★☆☆

AD

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TASTE OF EDESIA

A French Celebration

IRENE SAM, MDT

IN conjunction with the “French GourMay” Festival that celebrates gastronomy à la française, **The Manor** at St. Regis Macao crafted an a la carte menu with the absolute finest ingredients that gives French cuisine its irrefutable position at the forefront of worldwide culinary excellence.

“French GourMay wine dinner” menu treats guests to a six-course degustation of dishes presented specifically to showcase the highest quality providence from the land and seas of France, as well as a matched wine selection that enhances the flavours of each dish while paying homage to France’s remarkable wine heritage.

The Manor’s Executive Sous Chef Michele Dell’Aquila believed France is renowned as one of the world’s most sought-after sources of food and produce, and the special menu celebrates that hard-earned reputation.

“French cuisine has long set the standard for world cuisine and bases itself on the principle of refined presentation of the best ingredients on offer – and that is what this menu is all about,” Chef Michele said.

“This Celebration menu honors French culinary tradition as well as continuing The Manor’s mission of allowing the highest quality ingredients to shine through as the star of the dish.”

The wine dinner includes seared foie gras from Strasbourg served with fig and pear salad, Brittany lobster with fennel, Loire Valley asparagus, crab and bouillabaise, and tender French turbot with Jerusalem artichoke purée, mushrooms and white butter dressing.

At its best in spring, Aveyron Lamb – Agneau de l’Aveyron – are rare breed lambs born and reared in Aveyron in the plateaus of south western in France, resulting in delicate meat that is rose-pink and tender, served with potato mille-feuille and spring vegetables.

For a perfect finish, a selection of “Les Freres Merchand” cheeses and a Valrhona chocolate manjari complete the dining experience.

The wine pairing, carefully curated by in-house Sommelier David Duan, draws inspiration from the geographical source of much of the dining menu, and features wines from France’s most famous wine regions including Champagne, Alsace, Loire Valley, Burgundy and Bordeaux.



Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



THE KAWASAKI 1050M SAND 2021-05-07 | Fri | 20:50

KELVIN'S Choice caught the eye in his morning work, he enters into a small field race this Friday evening. **Kelvin's Choice** is a consistent sand sprinter and has gone close on a number of occasions this current season. The barrier four draw is ideal for him to get a charmed run under W.H. Lao. The engagement of W.H. Lao is a strong booking from S.H. Cheong’s yard in realising a strong run for his connection. He should get every opportunity in getting a nice strategic position in the straight and hopefully to get **Kelvin's Choice** to the winning stall at the end of the race. He is my NAP and banker for this Friday’s meeting.

Race 4 | Horse no. 6 **Kelvin's Choice** Banker as well as Win & Place bets for the race



OPINION

World Views

Shuli Ren, MDT/Bloomberg



THE WORLD'S LARGEST PENSION FUND HAS COOLED ON ESG. SHOULD YOU?

If a pioneer investor in ESG is getting cold feet, should you?

In July 2017, Japan's \$1.6 trillion Government Pension Investment Fund — the world's largest — blazed a trail by putting 1 trillion yen (\$9.1 billion) into three indices that track Japanese stocks that put emphasis on environmental, social and corporate governance issues. GPIF then plowed 1.2 trillion yen into two carbon-efficient indices in 2018, and another 1.3 trillion yen into two ESG foreign equity indices last December.

But top officials of the pension fund have been talking up fiduciary duty lately. GPIF "can't sacrifice returns for the sake of buying environmental names or ESG names," a senior director at the fund's investment strategy department told Bloomberg News in April.

At issue is poor performance. For instance, one of GPIF's earliest ESG picks was a thematic social index, which invests in domestic companies that hire and promote women. The MSCI Japan Empowering Women Index, the so-called Win index, has fared poorly against the benchmark Topix Index. Performance is all-important to GPIF: the fund is required to pursue a real investment return of 1.7% to support an aging Japan.

So what does this mean for the future of ESG investing? Since Joe Biden won the election in early November, passively-managed ESG funds saw a sharp uptick in investor demand. But will that strong inflow last? Could GPIF's shifting attitude foretell a cooling of this global trend?

First, flow does not guarantee returns. Just because a passive ETF [exchange-traded fund] has received billions of dollars of buying does not mean it will outperform, as GPIF has learned.

If anything, flow tends to follow performance, leaving funds susceptible to large withdrawals.

Second, ESG is too broad a category. Funds that focus on environmental issues can have very different return profiles from social or governance thematic funds. In Japan, despite former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Womenomics rhetoric, gender diversity simply was not a winning strategy. Of Topix 500 companies, those with no women on the company board generated, on a five-year basis, an 8% return on invested capital, a good 1.3 percentage points higher than corporations with women board members, data compiled by CLSA analyst Nicholas Smith show. This doesn't mean women aren't competent managers: Japan's male-dominant corporate culture may have placed women with no relevant experience into senior positions merely for show and PR. Nonetheless, the inferior return on capital of gender-diverse companies explains why the Win Index was a losing proposition.

On the other hand, passive funds that claim high carbon efficiency can fare very well. The S&P Global ex-Japan LargeMidCap Carbon Efficient Index, which the GPIF started tracking since 2018, is by far the best performer of the last year. A look at its holdings shows why: Big tech FAANG stocks and Tesla Inc. are among the top constituents, and the U.S. market — the world's most resilient — accounts for 63% of the fund.

That begs the question: If carbon efficiency is simply tech, do we really need to invest in an ESG fund? We could have bought into the cheaper and more liquid Invesco QQQ Trust, which tracks Nasdaq 100, and still feel pretty good about saving the planet. The two indices are highly correlated.

No doubt, with the European Union and Biden administration pushing fiscal stimulus money into clean energy and climate technology, ESG investing will remain a hot topic. But if the world's largest pension fund seems to have become more circumspect, shouldn't you? From the perspective of pure returns, passive ESG investing can still be fruitful, but one has to be nimble and practical, able to switch quickly from one thematic fund to another — or out of ESG funds altogether. Dogma won't work.

[Abridged]

ANTI-OLYMPIC PETITION GAINS TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SIGNATURES

An online petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be canceled has gained tens of thousands of signatures since being launched in Japan only days ago.

The rollout of the petition comes with Tokyo, Osaka and several other areas under a state of emergency with coronavirus infections rising — particularly new variants. The state of emergency is to expire on May 11, but some reports in Japan say it is likely to be extended.

The postponed Olympics are to open in just under three months on July 23.

The petition is addressed to International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, who has tentative plans to visit Japan later this month. He is expected to meet the Olympic torch relay on May 17 in Hiroshima, and perhaps also travel to Tokyo where small anti-Olympic protests are being planned.

Although 70-80% of Japanese citizens in polls say they want the Olympics canceled or postponed, there is no indication this will happen. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, Tokyo organizing committee president Seiko Hashimoto, and Bach have repeatedly said the games will go on as scheduled.

THE BUZZ

AP PHOTO



THAILAND ASSURES FOREIGN RESIDENTS THEY CAN BE VACCINATED

THAILAND sought yesterday to assure its foreign residents that they can get COVID-19 vaccinations, countering comments by some officials suggesting they would be at the end of the line for inoculations.

Opas Karnkawinpong, director-general of Thailand's Department of Disease Control, made the pledge as Thailand fought to control an outbreak in the heart of its capital that has sickened thousands of people in the past month, Thais and foreigners alike.

He said all at least 70% of Thailand's population had to be inoculated to create herd immunity and that Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha "mentioned clearly that everyone on Thai soil, both Thais and foreigners, can access the vaccines."

"Foreigners and diplomats will have the same criteria as Thais," Opas said, adding that the country had a population of 67 million Thai nationals and 3 million foreigners.

More than 2.5 million foreigners in Thailand are from neighboring countries, including Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. Many work on construction sites and in factories. The rest, about 200,000, are mostly professionals legally living in Thailand and retirees — from Australia, China, Britain, Europe and the United States.

Opas' comments came after some health authorities had said foreigners legally living in the country would

have to wait until the entire Thai population was inoculated to get the shots.

With strict travel restrictions in place, many foreign residents would need to make time consuming and expensive trips abroad to get the shots.

"We have followed international practice," he said. "Thais and foreigners including diplomats will be treated equally."

Thailand has been very slow and haphazard in its vaccination rollout and showed no sense of urgency until early April, when new infections began sweeping through slums and low-income areas located in and around Bangkok's central business district.

"Foreigners and diplomats will have the same criteria as Thais."

OPAS KARNKAWINPONG
DEPARTMENT OF DISEASE CONTROL

Less than 2% of all Thais have been inoculated for COVID-19, mostly health workers, but the government says it intends to vaccinate 70% by the end of the year.

Until recently, Thailand had relatively few cases and less than 100 deaths. It only signed deals for the local manufacturing of AstraZeneca vaccines in late 2020, choosing at first only to import China's Sinovac vaccines.

The effort gained urgency as new cases surged to about 2,000 a day, as deaths began escalating.

Yesterday, Thailand reported 1,911 new cases and 18 new deaths, bringing the total number of confirmed infections to 76,811, with 336 deaths. Of the total cases, 47,948 cases were since April 1, along with most deaths.

Thailand closed its borders to almost all travelers for months last year and it has been requiring visitors to the country to present tests showing they are not positive for COVID-19 and spend up to 14 days in mandatory quarantines.

The latest outbreaks are a big setback for plans to allow fully vaccinated foreign visitors to enter the country with no quarantine to help revive the devastated tourism industry. Nearly 40 million tourists visited Thailand in 2019, compared to almost none after the government ordered the airports closed to most international travel in April 2020.

Critics of Thailand's handling of the crisis assert that local business interests played a role in delaying and limiting vaccination efforts.

Only three vaccines have been authorized for use in Thailand and only two have been administered so far: the AstraZeneca and Sinovac vaccines. The government now says it is trying to import U.S. and Russian-made vaccines, but they likely face a lengthy authorization process. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has downplayed any prospect of an imminent trade deal with a post-Brexit Britain. In an interview with BBC radio broadcast yesterday, Blinken said any deal would take "some time" and that U.S. President Joe Biden wants to ensure any trade agreement would benefit American workers and their families.

AP PHOTO



EU leaders said yesterday that in the wake of the U.S. backing for waiving patents on Covid-19 vaccine technology the 27-nation bloc will start discussing such plans immediately. Their first get-together to mold a common view will come as soon as during their two-day summit in Porto, Portugal, starting today.

AP PHOTO



French fishermen angry over loss of access to waters off their coast gathered their boats in protest yesterday off the English Channel island of Jersey, the flashpoint for the first major dispute between France and Britain over fishing rights in the wake of Brexit. Dimitri Rogoff, who heads a grouping of Normandy fishermen, said about 50 boats from French ports along the western Normandy coast joined the protest, gathering their fleet off the Jersey port of St. Helier.

Canadian health officials said they have become the first to approve Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for ages as young as 12. Dr. Supriya Sharma, chief medical adviser at Health Canada, confirmed the decision for ages 12 to 15 and said it will help children return to a normal life. Canada is the first country to authorize Pfizer for that age group. The U.S. and the European Union are also reviewing it. The vaccine was previously authorized for anyone 16 or older.