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THE AL SESSION SAW AN EXCHANGE OF ARGUMENTS BETWEEN PRO-DEMOCRACY AND PRO-ESTABLISHMENT LAWMAKERS ABOUT THE DISQUALIFICATION OF CANDIDATES P4,5

MGTO TO CONSOLIDATE MACAU'S STATUS AS CREATIVE CITY OF GASTRONOMY P2

BEIJING HAS MADE MOVES TO SHOW ITS PREPARATIONS FOR THE WINTER GAMES ARE WELL ON TRACK FOR FEBRUARY DESPITE PANDEMIC P7

China Rescuers were pumping out water yesterday to try to find 14 construction workers trapped by a flood in a highway tunnel being built in southern China. The rescuers have not been able to contact the workers missing since the 3:30 a.m. flood, the Zhuhai city emergency management department said in an online post.

China's government rejected U.S. accusations of forced labor in Xinjiang and accused Washington yesterday of hurting global trade after lawmakers endorsed import curbs and American companies were warned they face legal risks if they do business with the region. The measures add to rising pressure on companies that buy clothing, cotton, tomatoes and other goods from Xinjiang.

AP PHOTO



Indian and Chinese foreign ministers met in Tajikistan with New Delhi stressing that a military standoff along a mountainous border area was profoundly disturbing their ties, and warning that any unilateral change in the status quo by Beijing was unacceptable. "Full restoration and maintenance of peace and tranquility in border areas is essential for the development of bilateral ties," Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said in a tweet.

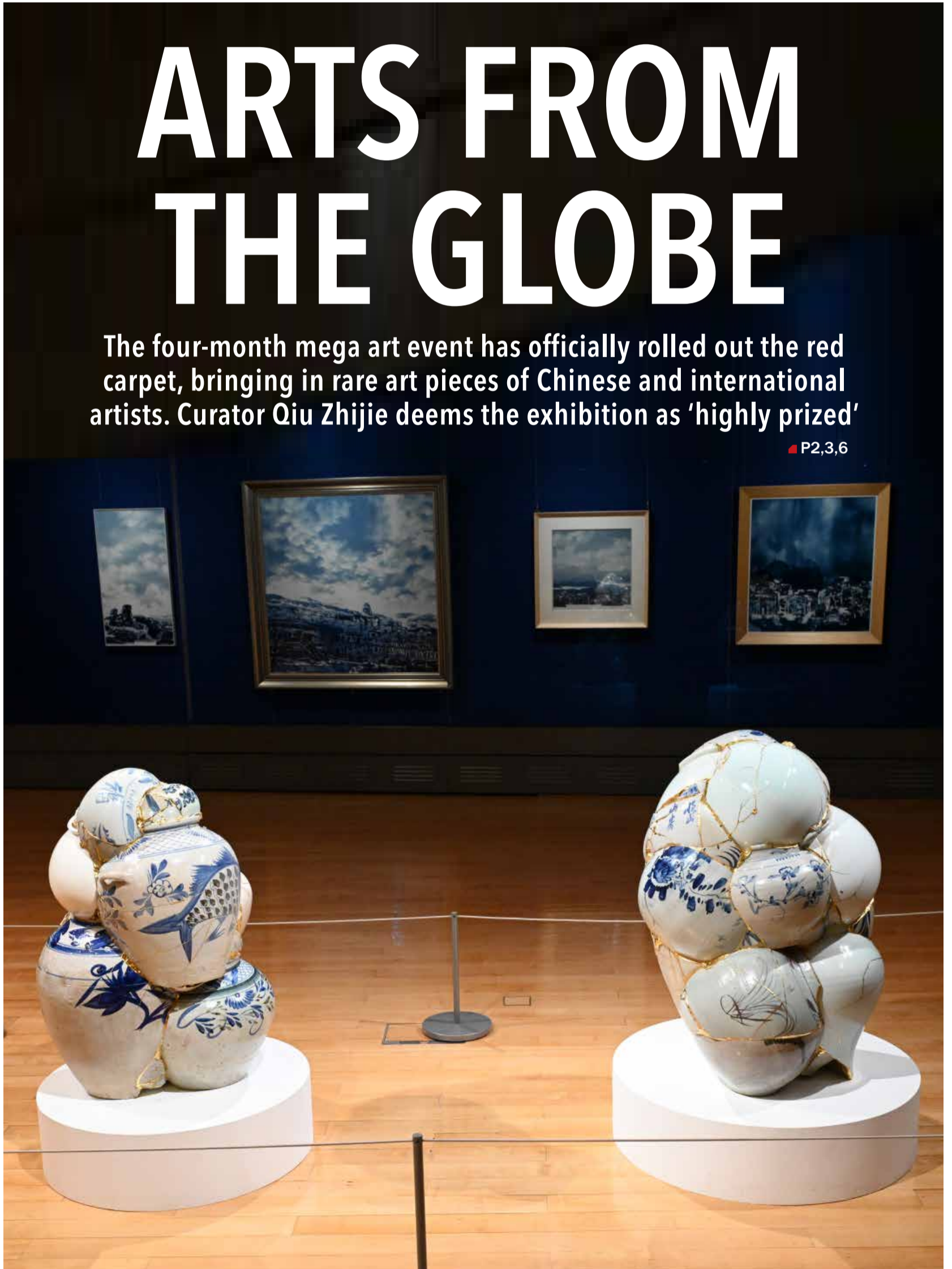
Pakistan A powerful roadside bomb targeting security forces killed two soldiers in southwest Pakistan, the military said yesterday, a sign of increasing violence in the region. The overnight attack happened in Pasni, a district in the impoverished Baluchistan province, according to a military statement. It said a search operation was still underway to arrest those who orchestrated the bombing.

More on backpage

ARTS FROM THE GLOBE

The four-month mega art event has officially rolled out the red carpet, bringing in rare art pieces of Chinese and international artists. Curator Qiu Zhijie deems the exhibition as 'highly prized'

P2,3,6



ONE-THIRD MORE SUSPICIOUS TRANSACTIONS RECORDED IN H1

The Financial Intelligence Office received 1,288 Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) during the first half of 2021, an increase of 36% compared with the same period in 2020. The change was mainly due to the increase in the number of STRs reported by the gaming and financial sectors. STRs received from the financial sector and gaming sector constituted 32.2% and 53.8% respectively of the total, whereas those from other institutions contributed only 14.0%.

ENGLAND LIFTS QUARANTINE FOR HONG KONG, TAIWAN ENTRANTS

Starting Monday, arrivals from Hong Kong and Taiwan will not need to quarantine when they arrive in England if they have a negative Covid-19 test result prior to their flight and a negative result from a test taken within two days of their arrival in the country. Authorities in England noted that the type of test needed by individual travelers will depend on their travel history over the previous 10 days. The UK government stressed that arrivals to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland may be subject to different rules. Quarantine measures on entrants from Macau will remain in place.

SOME FUNCTIONS OF GOV'T TRANSPORT APP TO BE SUSPENDED

For the next three weekends, the Transport Bureau app will have certain functions suspended in order to run system maintenance on the government's cloud computerization and data centers. The dates concerned are July 17, 23, 24, 30, 31 and August 1. On these days, some functions of the app will be down, including bus information, bus traffic, live traffic, e-payment, online booking and route enquiry.



ART MACAO PLAYS PART IN GOV'T'S ENDEAVOR TO FOSTER ART AND CULTURE

HONEY TSANG

THE Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale 2021 (Art Macao 2021), a four-month mega art event held every two years, officially rolled out the red carpet yesterday afternoon.

"Cultural development has long remained one of the top priorities of the SAR government," president of the Cultural

Affairs Bureau Mok Ian Ian said at the opening ceremony.

Art Macao 2021 is a part of the government's endeavor to "develop a base for exchange and cooperation with Chinese culture as the mainstream and [encourage] the coexistence of different cultures," she said.

She stated that the government is committed to mounting "Art Macao" on a biennial basis, in

a bid to consolidate Macau's position as a "World Centre of Tourism and Leisure" and a "Creative City of Gastronomy."

Other key objectives are to foster the exchange of Chinese and foreign cultures locally, promote interpersonal connections, and accelerate the development of Macau's cultural industries, Mok said.

Yesterday's opening ceremony

coincided with the kick-off ceremony of the Main Exhibition, themed "Advance and Retreat of Globalization," and curated by China's renowned award-winning artist Qiu Zhijie.

"Macau is distinctively charming," Qiu said, adding that because the event will be "held in such a city abounding in resources, the biennale is expected to become an important artistic event that impacts the world."

Aside from the Main Exhibition, the organizers will progressively unveil the other five exhibitions in the coming four months, namely "Special Exhibition of Resorts and Hotels," "Creative City Pavilion," "Public Art Exhibition," "Selected Works by Local Artists" and "Collateral Exhibition."

The ceremony was attended by key officials yesterday, including the director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of the Department of Publicity and Culture of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau SAR Wan Sucheng, and others.

Executives from six casino concessionaires and a number of artists also took part in the event.

This year marks the second Art Macao event since its debut in 2019. It features 30 art exhibitions in 25 locations. According to official data, the inaugural Art Macao in 2019 attracted upwards of 16 million participants.

MGTO vows to consolidate Macau's status as 'Creative City of Gastronomy'

HONEY TSANG

FOUR years on from Macau's classification as a "UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy," director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes pledged yesterday that authorities will continue to focus on the strategic development of "tourism and gastronomy."

"We will continue to rely on [the city's] gastronomy as a key element to accelerate cultural exchange, and to promote the virtues of multiculturalism, which is also a dis-

tinctive attribute of Macau," she added.

In order to showcase the city's "alluring food scene," the MGTO will offer assistance to promote novelty in the local food and beverage (F&B) sector, encouraging practitioners to create innovative dishes characteristic of Macau.

In order to further consolidate the title bestowed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the MGTO will help individuals in the industry to upskill themselves.

The MGTO will submit the first four-year work-

report to the UNESCO this year, she added.

Fernandes' statement on helping the local F&B sector thrive was delivered yesterday at the opening ceremony of the Masterclass Series of Culinary Expertise Demonstration, a food-centered event co-organized by MGTO, Wynn Macau and the Education and Youth Development Bureau.

The event will run from July to September this year. During this time, renowned mainland chefs will come to Macau and participate in 10 cooking tutorials and demonstration sessions.



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Art Macao 2021 to prompt innovation in locals: chief curator

HONEY TSANG

THE exotic nature of the foreign artworks presented in the Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale 2021 (Art Macao 2021) — or their “strangeness” in contrast to local culture — will stimulate Macau residents and the whole city, encouraging them to think differently and be more innovative, according to the art event’s chief curator Qiu Zhijie.

Prior to the official kick-off ceremony of the four-month mega art event, Qiu, one of the most influential and awarded contemporary artists in China, shared his insights yesterday with the media about the impact of Art Macao 2021 on Macau’s community.

Qiu is also the dean of the School of Experimental Art at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, with an extraordinary talent for contemporary visual arts.

“The development of a city cannot [flourish] without the nutrients of art. The strangeness within art pieces created by foreign



artists is the crucial element [in this event] to help the city innovate,” Qiu said.

The biennial art event has been deemed one of the most important in Macau’s calendar. The event, featuring Macanese, Chinese and international artworks galore, is a cultural melting pot that stimulates thoughts and emotions.

The biennale itself is also an epitome of globalization, said ar-

tist-cum-curator Qiu, who was born in Fujian in 1969.

“The event is also a highly prized one, as it is rare that art pieces of Chinese and international artists can be brought together and presented in the same event,” Qiu said. This is particularly true at a time when international travel has come to a virtual halt due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Art, with its intrinsic perspec-

tive, is a form of communication. “Though distancing from each other [during the pandemic], we can still communicate and understand one another through the bridge of art,” he told the guests.

To boost the engagement of locals in the art event, Qiu suggested the organizers conduct surveys and gather local opinions including ideas and thoughts on featured art pieces. He proposed that the government invite residents to jointly create some art pieces, usually described as “community art,” to encourage more interaction and dialogue during the event.

GLOBALIZED MAIN EXHIBITION

Under Qiu’s curation, the Main Exhibition at the Macao Museum of Art — under the theme of the “Advance and Retreat of Globalization” — has been divided into three sub-exhibition zones that beckon audiences to embark on a thought-provoking, artistic journey.

The three areas house over 100

pieces or sets of artwork, made by over 40 artists from nearly 20 countries and regions.

The first thematic zone, named “The Dream of Mazu,” will chiefly showcase ceramics created by global artists, supplemented by artworks of glass, leather carvings, recordings and ink paintings, the curator said.

The second zone, “Matteo Ricci’s Labyrinth of Memory,” shows “the encounter and convergence of Eastern and Western cultures,” he added.

The third and final area, the “Advance and Retreat of Globalization,” recapitulates the first two zones from the angles of space and time. “It reveals the thoughts of artists from all over the world in the era of globalization, especially during the pandemic.”

MACAU IN QIU’S EYES

When talking about the city’s qualities, the veteran of the art industry stacked Macau against its neighboring city Hong Kong.

“Macau is a laid-back place when compared to Hong Kong. It is this relaxed environment that renders the locals calmer and more tolerant,” he said.

The city has a vivid quality, accentuated by its mix of Chinese and Portuguese cultures, which make Macau an ideal city to host the biennial art event, he concluded.

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AL: Lawmakers exchange arguments over candidate disqualification from elections

RENATO MARQUES

YESTERDAY'S plenary session of the Legislative Assembly (AL) was marked by strong ideological clashes and an exchange of arguments between pro-democracy and pro-establishment lawmakers about the disqualification of a number of candidates from the September AL elections.

On the side of the democrats, lawmakers Ng Kuok Cheong and Au Kam San criticized the decision of the Legislative Assembly Electoral Affairs Commission (CAEAL).

Ng argued that calling for universal suffrage in the election of the Chief Executive (CE) is not an illegal act.

Noting the CAEAL decision that disqualified him from running in the elections, he said that he was accused of "having illegally promoted universal suffrage for the election of the CE, which is ridiculous."

"I have to reiterate here that universal suffrage — which I defend inside and outside this chamber — is fully in accordance with constitutional procedures. [I defend it] in the sense that [I am] requesting the CE to present, as soon as possible and with the agreement of the central government, the respective bill to the AL to be approved by a majority of two-thirds and create a regime in which the CE is chosen by the votes of the residents."

Continuing to express his ideas, Ng noted that in 2012 the deputy chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Qiao Xiaoyang, did not rule out the possibility of having universal suffrage for the election of the Macau SAR Chief Executive.

"Thus, there is in no illegality regarding the call for this universal suffrage," Ng remarked, urging the CE to press the government to "correct their political mistakes."

In his turn, Au openly criticized the CAEAL, accusing it of abusing its powers and destroying the electoral regime.

"In the current international situation, China is under pressure from the international community due to the situation in [...] Hong Kong. Suddenly, CAEAL disqualified the candidates who were not part of the pro-establishment wing, a more than notorious breach of the electoral regime. Therefore, it destroyed, on its own initiative, the principle of 'One country, two systems,'" Au said. He added: "From the perspective of the international community, this will be seen as the central government [intending to now come] to 'fix' the 'One country, two systems' principle in Macau, after having done the same in Hong Kong."

For Au, the unjustified attitude of CAEAL will end up raising small issues for Macau and at the international level.

Again accusing the CAEAL

RENATO MARQUES



members of abusing their power, Au urged them to reverse and "return to normalcy" so they do not "create [unnecessary] chaos for the country."

On the pro-establishment side many lawmakers also brought up the topic, expressing support for the decision of the CAEAL and accusing the disqualified candidates — namely those that are incumbent lawmakers — of attempting to clean up their record on activities that pro-establishment lawmakers consider disloyal towards Macau and the Basic Law.

Chan Hong, Ma Chi Seng, Chan Wa Keong, Iau Teng Pio, Fong Ka Chio, Pang Chun, Chan Chak Mo,

and Chui Sai Peng were all signatories of spoken inquiries that expressed support of the disqualification of candidates to the elections.

The pro-establishment legislators expressed the idea that it is indisputable that CAEAL fulfills its functions following the law, and that their decision "represents the fulfillment, by the Macau SAR, of its constitutional duties and the implementation of the fundamental principle 'Macau governed by patriots.'" They added that CAEAL acted "strictly following the law, with sufficient legal and factual grounds."

Ma elaborated, saying that "the

seven criteria on the defense, or not, of the Basic Law of Macau and loyalty to the Macau SAR, drawn up by CAEAL, are only for assessing the eligibility of all candidates. Since its establishment, the Macau SAR government has respected the various fundamental rights and freedoms of expression enjoyed by citizens under the law. The decision of the CAEAL is in no way a restriction on freedom of expression, nor does it affect Macau residents' right to information about and oversight of the Macau government's actions."

Lawmaker Iau, who was appointed by the CE, went even further, saying "we all know that



Sulu Sou farewells AL in speech

RENATO MARQUES

AWAY from the exchange of arguments between pro-democracy and pro-establishment lawmakers over disqualifications for the elections, lawmaker Sulu Sou choose to use the period before the agenda to present his farewell speech.

Sou recalled several moments from his term, from election day to the present moment, including his mandate suspension.

"It is said that one day in politics is already too much, especially in this complex and constantly changing time. I want to make good use of all valuable opportunities. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the members of the New Macau Association who, with selflessness, team spirit, assiduity, and maximum effort, created this [Sulu] Sou Ka Hou [and put it] in the spotlight, as well as to all those who have been following us with support,

trust, oversight, and criticism," he said. He added, "I've always felt as if I'm walking on thin ice in this place and sitting on a spiked rug."

Still, he said he had taken the best he could from his time at the Legislative Assembly (AL): "making good use of the right to information at source; spreading news [usually] kept behind closed doors; taking advantage of procedures; striving to prevent or at least lessen the harm of certain proposed laws or policies in the public interest; reinforcing the population's right to be heard; and bringing to the chamber the voices of disadvantaged groups and progressive issues, which had been overlooked."

Sou expressed hope that by being elected and fulfilling his term, he will help to encourage more young people to have confidence in themselves and Macau.

"I believe that, because of me, society will change and even if

these are slight changes, there will be nothing to regret," he said. He noted that people never regret giving opportunities to young people, because they tend to look not only at short term but at things in the perspective of one or more generations.

He added that those who participate in political life must understand the philosophy of thinking about what they will leave behind when they take office, and value what is entrusted to them by the population despite uncertainty and pressure.

"I had the opportunity to strive for the good of this home that I value very much; to serve this land that I love so much; to be elected by the population as a legislator; and to walk side by side with the people of Macau regardless of the wind and rain. I believe these were [...] the most beautiful moments of my life and a supreme honor for me," Sou concluded.

the qualification of some people for the elections was canceled because they practiced acts that are prohibited. Unfortunately, these people are trying very hard to avoid the issue. They started talking about what they did for the citizens, about their oversight of the government, freedom of expression, etc. This is simply diverting the public's attention and exhausting the good faith of Macau citizens," he said. He went to say, "These people have to provide clarity to society. They cannot continue to create confusion for our eyes and ears and divert the focus of attention."

Further insight was provided by lawmaker Chan Chak Mo, who described and enumerated several activities organized and participated in by the disqualified candidates that, in his opinion, justify the CAEAL actions.

"Some people always say they are the biggest supporters of the 'One country, two systems' policy, but they publicly organize June 4 meetings, broadcasting false and misleading messages, and deliberately distort the Central government's conclusive decision about the incident. Moreover, they undermine and attack, without the slightest concern, the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, and shout for the end of a one-party system, which seriously tramples the limits of the 'One country, two systems' policy," Chan concluded.

ELECTIONS 2021

Stress on remaining candidates reason for withdrawal, says Cloee Chao

ANTHONY LAM

EXTERNAL pressure on remaining candidates is the main reason for the Gaming New Macau list's withdrawal from the upcoming Legislative Assembly election, two of the list's representatives told a press conference yesterday.

The first two candidates from the list, Cloee Chao and Lei Man Chao, were disqualified by the Legislative Assembly Electoral Affairs Commission (CAEAL). With its original list comprising eight candidates, the group could still have run in the election.

However, not only did it decide to withdraw from the election, it has also decided to terminate its procedural dispute of the CAEAL's decision, meaning that the list will not file a judicial appeal.

Justifying the decision, both Chao and Lei said that the remaining candidates on the list have faced various external pressures. "After all, we're only working commoners," Chao said.

When questioned about the type of evidence that was cited to prove their "lack of allegiance to



Pictures Chao uses to prove her patriotic sentiments

Macau and its Basic Law," both expelled candidates revealed that they were given a book full of social media screen captures.

"My social media account is public, and I still can't tell which of my posts have violated the Election Law," Lei said.

Chao said that the Judiciary Police even screen-captured posts of her family trips to Hong

Kong.

Both said that they still felt confused as to what from these posts contributed to their disqualification from the election.

Chao stressed that she has remained a patriot. For example, in the name of the trade union, she organized events to celebrate the Chinese National Day, annual visits to the National Security Edu-

cational Exhibition, as well as volunteer campaigns to poorer areas in Mainland China, supporting the national policy of poverty alleviation.

WONG SIO CHAK SAYS POLICE FOLLOWED 'SEVEN CRITERIA'

After yesterday's Legislative Assembly Plenary, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak was questioned about the principles used by the Judiciary Police in captioning the "evidence" that it passed to the CAEAL for consideration.

Wong stressed that the police followed the "seven criteria" – announced by the CAEAL on Monday – to shortlist evidence. Writing captions to describe evidence is the duty of police. He stressed that the CAEAL was the entity which made the final decision.

On the same topic, Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong reiterated that the CAEAL "was carrying out its legal responsibility in the disqualification process."

Meanwhile, some internet users have started an online petition calling for the reversal of the disqualification by the CAEAL.

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ART MACAO

SCL'S EXHIBITION AIMS TO BRING HOPE, POSITIVITY AMID PANDEMIC

SANDS China kicked off its ceramics exhibition for Art Macao at The Venetian Macao yesterday, presenting "Project Sands X: Beyond the Blue – An Exhibition of Ceramic Extraordinaire."

One of the special exhibitions of Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale 2021, the exhibition is open to the public 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily July 15-Oct. 31.

To curate the exhibition, the gaming operator once again invited artist Caroline Cheng, who called on the talents of more than 20 ceramic artists and institutions to create works on the theme of "Beyond the Blue."

The "Beyond the Blue" theme is faceted in meaning. The works utilise a diversity of designs and palettes, showcasing how the beauty of ceramics can go "beyond the traditional colours of blue and white."

By applying innovative



techniques, technologies and designs, the artists have created pieces in hopes of bringing positivity to the world through art.

Curator Cheng explained that the exhibition shows how an ancient art like making ceramics can take advantage of techniques unavailable to artisans of the past to now make ingenious creations previously thought impossible.

"Viewers can interact with and enjoy art in an entirely new way and connect with each other in real time regardless of geographical distance. We hope that, with 'Beyond the Blue,' this interconnectedness and creativity inspires us all with hope and determination for a safe and unified post-pandemic world," she said.

The exhibition features a combination of technology

and ceramics with innovative presentation, and visitors are able to interact with selected pieces via a free augmented reality (AR) smartphone app.

Also, a parallel exhibition of "Beyond the Blue" with the Everson Museum of Art is being presented, which contains one of the United States' foremost collections of ceramic art is also featured at the property.

Exhibits made from recycled ceramics promoting sustainability in art are also on display.

Further, Sands China yesterday launched "Time Is On My Side – 2021 Greater Bay Area Young Artists Scheme – A Competition of Painting & Photography."

The July-October contest is open to young artists from Macau and the Greater Bay Area.

In 2019, Sands China presented a gold-themed ceramics exhibition for the inaugural of Art Macao. LV

IPIM HOLDS BUSINESS-MATCHING EVENT FOR LOCAL ENTERPRISES

THE Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) recently organised the "Macao Ideas, Join & Match" business-matching showcase in a bid to promote "Made in Macau," "Macao Brand" and "Macao Design" products and services.

In co-operation with the Zhuhai Municipal Bureau of Commerce and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade Representative Office in Macau, the event attracted the participation of 120 representatives from mainland and Macau enterprises and a total of 81 business matching sessions were held on site.

The event also aims to promote the advantages and characteristics of local enterprises, and facilitate business co-operation and exchange between mainland and local enterprises.

Through displaying products featured in "Macao Ideas" and organising business matching sessions, the event seeks to provide a platform for business matching for mainland delegates and members of "Macao Ideas," strengthening business exchange and fostering business co-operation between enterprises from the two regions.

In addition, IPIM has organised a delegation of event participants from mainland Macau enterprises to visit the Zhuhai-Macao Cross Border Industrial Zone (Macao Park). LV

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WITH the postponed Summer Olympics set to open in Tokyo next week, Beijing has made moves to show its preparations for the Winter Games are well on track for February despite the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Journalists taken on a tour of snow event venues in the outlying city of Zhangjiakou this week were shown the locations for ski jumping, snowboarding and Nordic events.

While China has largely eliminated local transmission of the coronavirus, it has maintained strict quarantine regulations. Organizers have not announced what rules will be in place for athletes, officials and coaches at the 2022 Winter Olympics, or if fans will be allowed.

Jia Maoting, general manager of the company overseeing construction of the venues, told reporters that the "pandemic situation is uncertain, we cannot guess how it will develop."

"We have solid determination to face the changing world," Jia added. "We built good venues in any case and then we wait and expect a good result."

China has also faced calls for a boycott of the games from foreign politicians and human rights groups.

Beijing says it provided voluntary job training and anti-radicalization classes and has denounced boycott calls as a politicization of sports based on false evidence.

The Chinese capital hosted the 2008 Summer Olympics and is the first city to be given rights to host the Winter Games as well.

Chen Rongqin, an official with the planning committee's construction department, said work was largely completed apart from construction on tem-

AP PHOTO



Beijing: 2022 Winter Olympics on track despite pandemic

porary facilities that can't be built too early.

"We still need to build some more facilities and houses in the next few months, and those are our major work now," Chen said.

The National Ski Jumping Center was one of the major venues for the tour, highlighted with an

evening light show. It is has been nicknamed Snow Ruyi, after an ancient ski slope-shaped jade ornament symbolizing good fortune. As well as its two ski jumping tracks, it has a football pitch at its base.

Zhangjiakou is about 200 kilometers to the west of Beijing in

Hebei province, connected by highway and a high-speed rail line.

It is due to host ski jumping, snowboarding, freestyle skiing, cross-country skiing, and Nordic combined and biathlon competitions during the Games.

The 2020 Summer Games were last year postponed for 12 months

because of the pandemic.

There'll be heavy restrictions on all participants at the Games, which open July 23. And with Tokyo in a state of emergency and rising numbers of COVID-19 cases in the city, there'll be no fans allowed at most of the Olympic venues. **MDT/AP**

Economic growth slows to still-robust 7.9%

JOE MCDONALD,
BEIJING

CHINA'S economic growth slowed to a still-strong 7.9% over a year earlier in the three months ending in June as a rebound from the coronavirus leveled off.

As expected, the growth reported yesterday fell from the previous quarter's explosive 18.3%, which was magnified by comparison with early 2020, when the world's second-largest economy closed factories, stores and offices to fight the coronavirus. China led a global recovery after the ruling Communist Party declared the disease under control last March and reopened most industries.

AP PHOTO



The United States and other major economies are bouncing back, but some are hampered by the spread of new virus variants. The rapid U.S. recovery has led the Federal Reserve to suggest it might start unwinding its stimulus earlier than planned, late next

year instead of in 2023.

China's growth in the April-June quarter over the previous three months, the way other major economies report results, was 1.3%, reflecting a return to normal for factory activity and consumer spending as government stimulus

and easy credit wind down. That was up from the January-March period's 0.6% expansion over the final three months of 2020 but still was among the past decade's weakest quarters.

"Overall, China's economy looks to be on track for recovery," said Chaoping Zhu of JP Morgan Asset Management in a report. The latest data, Zhu said, suggest the economy "has already peaked and is easing back to its long-term average growth rate."

China's outlook is clouded by a lingering trade war with Washington over Beijing's industrial development tactics. President Joe Biden has said he wants better ties with Beijing but has yet to say whether he

will roll back tariff hikes imposed by his predecessor, Donald Trump.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen called this week for a "unified front" with Europe against China's "unfair economic practices." Biden has expanded the list of Chinese companies Americans are barred from investing in due to possible military connections.

Still, Chinese manufacturing, auto sales and consumer spending have recovered to above pre-pandemic levels.

Exporters benefited from their relatively early return to work while foreign competitors were hampered by anti-disease controls. Exports surged 32.2% in June over a year

earlier, though a government spokesman warned growth might weaken due to uncertain global conditions.

The International Monetary Fund and private sector forecasters expect economic growth this year of about 8% but say that should decline in 2022. The government is in the midst of a marathon effort to steer China to slower, more sustainable growth based on domestic consumption instead of exports and investment.

"With output already above its pre-virus trend, the economy is struggling to gain ground at its usual pace," Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a report. "Headwinds to growth are likely to intensify during the second half of the year." **MDT/AP**

US to begin evacuating Afghans who aided American military

THE Biden administration said yesterday that it is prepared to begin evacuation flights for Afghan interpreters and translators who aided the U.S. military effort in the nearly 20-year war — but their destinations are still unknown and there are lingering questions about how to ensure their safety until they can get on planes.

The Operation Allies Refuge flights out of Afghanistan during the last week of July will be available first for special immigrant visa applicants already in the process of applying for U.S. residency, according to the White House.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki declined to detail how many Afghans are expected to be among those evacuated in the first flights or where those evacuated will be taken, citing security concerns.

"The reason that we are taking these steps is because these are courageous individuals," Psaki said. "We want to make sure we recognize and value the role they've played over the last several years."

Confirmation on the timeline of the evacuation flights came as President Joe Biden met Wednesday with Gen. Austin "Scott" Miller, who earlier this week stepped down as the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan. Psaki said Biden wanted to personally thank Miller for conducting an "orderly and safe" drawdown of U.S. troops.

Miller, who oversaw the war effort for nearly three years, expressed dire concern in his final days as commander about the rapid loss of districts around the country to the Taliban, telling reporters that "a civil war is certainly a path that can be visualized if this continues on the trajectory it's on right now." Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who met separately with Miller at the Pentagon, praised the general for planning a "complex withdrawal of millions of tons of equipment and thousands of personnel" that "thus far been conducted without a



single casualty."

Biden has faced pressure from lawmakers on both parties to come up with a plan to help evacuate Afghan military helpers before next month's U.S. troop withdrawal. The White House began briefing lawmakers on the outlines of their plans last month.

The evacuation planning could potentially affect tens of thousands of Afghans. Several thousand Afghans who worked for the United States — plus their family members — are already in the application pipeline for special immigrant visas.

The Biden administration has also been working on identifying a third country or U.S. territory that could host Afghans while their visa applications are processed.

Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, president and CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, said that much about the Biden evacuation plan remains unknown, including how the administration will help those in areas outside the capital of Kabul evacuate. The Taliban have made rapid gains in taking over huge swaths of the country, particularly in more rural areas.

"Unfortunately, there are still far too many questions left unanswered, including who exactly and how many people are eligible for evacuation. [...] How will those outside the capital access safety?" said Vignarajah, who-

se group has helped resettle thousands of Afghans in the U.S. "And to what countries will they be evacuated? We have serious concerns about the protection of our allies' human rights in countries that have been rumored as potential partners in this effort."

The administration is weighing using State Department-chartered commercial aircraft, not military aircraft, according to an administration official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss internal deliberations and spoke on condition of anonymity.

But if the State Department requests military aircraft, the U.S. military would be ready to assist, the official said. The Pentagon said as of Wednesday no requests for such assistance have been made by State.

Tracey Jacobson, a three-time chief of mission in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kosovo, is leading the State Department coordination unit charged with overseeing Operation Allies Refuge. That unit also includes representatives from the departments of Defense and Homeland Security.

Russ Travers, deputy homeland security adviser and former head of the National Counterterrorism Center, is coordinating the interagency policy process for the evacuation, officials said.

Separately, the White House announced that Eli-

zabeth Sherwood-Randall, the White House homeland security adviser, would lead a U.S. delegation to a security conference in Uzbekistan this week to discuss Afghanistan's security issues with leaders from Central Asia.

The Biden administration is considering a number of locations, including military installations both abroad and in the continental United States, to temporarily house Afghans while their visa applications are considered.

Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said Wednesday the Pentagon has identified an unspecified number of overseas locations as "potential candidates," but no final decisions have been made.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul issued 299 special immigrant visas in March, 356 in April and 619 in May, according to the State Department. Biden said last week that the federal government has approved 2,500 special immigrant visas to come to the U.S. since his January inauguration.

An estimated 18,000 Afghans have worked for the U.S. as interpreters, drivers and other positions have applied for visas and await their applications being processed. Psaki reiterated that the White House is working with Congress on legislation to streamline the application process.

Biden announced last week that the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan will end on Aug. 31.

The firming of the date to end the war comes after President Donald Trump's administration negotiated a deal with the Taliban to end the U.S. military mission by May 1, 2021. Biden, after taking office, announced that U.S. troops would be out by the 20th anniversary of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The attacks were plotted by al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan, where he had been given refuge by the Taliban.

George W. Bush, who as president launched the war, criticized the Western withdrawal in an interview with a German broadcaster released Wednesday, saying he fears for Afghan women and girls as the Taliban regains control of much of the country.

"It's unbelievable how that society changed from the brutality of the Taliban, and all of a sudden — sadly — I'm afraid Afghan women and girls are going to suffer unspeakable harm," Bush said. **AP**

this day in history

1969 APOLLO 11 TAKES OFF FOR THE MOON



The Apollo 11 space rocket has taken off successfully from Cape Kennedy, Florida, at the start of the first attempt to land a man on the Moon.

An estimated one million people gathered from all over the state to see the giant Saturn 5 booster rocket blast off.

The launch was on schedule, at 1432 BST (1332 GMT).

Nine seconds before lift-off, the rocket's five engines ignited, sending a sheet of flame over the launch pad and about 20 acres of the surrounding marshland.

Then with an immense roar, the booster rocket took off into the sky, taking Apollo 11 and the hopes of the world with it.

It is the first time human beings have attempted to land on another heavenly body.

Almost 12 minutes later, Apollo 11 went into orbit around the Earth.

On board are three astronauts, Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin. All have already flown in space during the Gemini manned space missions, and have been intensively training as a team for many months.

They carry with them goodwill messages from the heads of the member states of the United Nations and their flags.

Two hours and 44 minutes after take-off, the engine of the third-stage booster was fired for five minutes and 47 seconds, and the speed increased to 24,545mph (39,500 km/h) to take the astronauts out of orbit and shoot them off to the Moon.

Neil Armstrong, the flight's commander, reported: "We have no complaint with any of the three stages on that ride. It was beautiful."

The launch was watched by US Vice-President Spiro Agnew, who said it marked a "new era of civilisation".

"With the lift-off of Apollo 11, America enters a new age of discovery," he said.

Apollo 11 is scheduled to touch down on the Moon on Sunday 20 July if all goes well.

Speaking at a news conference before the launch, Neil Armstrong said the landing on the Moon and the take-off from it were "the big unknowns".

The lunar module, known as Eagle, is scheduled to land on the Moon at 2100 BST (2000 GMT).

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

On 21 July 1969, right on schedule, Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the Moon, stepping onto the Moon's surface in the Sea of Tranquility at 0256 GMT. He was joined by Buzz Aldrin 20 minutes later. The entire event was watched avidly by millions live on television across the world.

The Apollo 11 crew returned safely on 24 July and spent the next 21 days in quarantine at an American military base - a procedure dropped in subsequent missions since no alien organisms were found.

The Moon landing marked the pinnacle of the space race and American investment in the space programme declined accordingly.

The last three of the original 20 Apollo missions were cancelled, and the last lunar module, Apollo 17, landed in December 1972.

In January 2004 however, interest in missions to the Moon was rekindled when US President George Bush announced American astronauts would return to the Moon by 2020 as the launching point for journeys further into space.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

As the day progresses, the pace slows down and allows you more freedom to drift. Luna remains in relationship-focused Libra, helping you dig deeper into relationship matters.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Productivity is easy to achieve under today's skies, Taurus. The moon coasts through level-headed Libra, spending the morning hours in a supportive connection with stabilizing Saturn.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

The moon meanders through artistically inclined Libra, reaching out to capable Saturn on her path. This cosmic connection offers a grounded, realistic view of your circumstances.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Reconnect with your roots today, Cancer. The moon cruises through balance-seeking Libra, sending your focus towards the state of your living space and your emotional foundation.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Cosmic connection creates a grounded, practical point of view to apply towards your current partnership story. It's an ideal day to engage in important conversations that require a serious tone.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

It's an ideal day to tap back into your forgotten skills and talents. Luna's steady trine to grounded Saturn makes it easy to apply stamina and follow through on work projects.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

How often do you put your own needs first, Libra? The moon's presence in your sign works to remind you to listen to what your body and heart need most.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

As a Scorpio, you're no stranger to alone time. Take today to reconnect with yourself in a quiet, uncomplicated way, as the moon floats through balance-bringing Libra.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

This connection offers up an ideal opportunity to lay down the groundwork of future ambitions. It's also great in terms of facing serious, future-oriented conversations among friends.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Make your dream vision a reality, Capricorn. You've got everything you need to push ahead with your ambitions, as the harmony-bringing Libra moon aligns with your ruler, grounded Saturn.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Today's skies touch on this story, as the peace-seeking Libra moon aligns with steady Saturn. Where can you continue to self-expand, and where should you maintain certain limits?



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You've been working on releasing your own mental and emotional garbage, Pisces. While it's not exactly a pleasant or simple process, you've been making considerable strides in freeing yourself up.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	30	thunderstorms
Harbin	25	31	cloudy
Tianjin	28	37	fine
Urumqi	23	27	showers
Xi'an	27	34	cloudy
Lhasa	23	27	thunderstorms
Chengdu	27	35	cloudy
Chongqing	26	35	thunderstorms
Kunming	28	36	cloudy
Nanjing	22	30	cloudy
Shanghai	26	33	cloudy
Wuhan	28	36	fine
Hangzhou	25	31	thunderstorms
Taipei	28	33	rain
Guangzhou	21	33	thunderstorms
Hong Kong	24	28	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	19	31	rain
Frankfurt	14	23	cloudy
Paris	16	24	cloudy
London	12	23	overcast
New York	24	32	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Important times; 5- Turkish bigwig; 10- In excess of; 14- Beancurd; 15- Improvise; 16- Corn syrup brand; 17- Mountain lake; 18- Metal spikes; 19- Memo opener; 20- Hydroxyl compound; 21- Staff; 23- Ailing; 25- Hit sign; 26- Large punch bowl; 31- Penniless; 35- Copy; 36- Bendable twig, usually of a willow tree; 38- Director Lubitsch; 40- Penury; 42- Tending to a definite end; 44- I could ___ horse!; 45- Actress MacDowell; 47- Pomme or manzana; 49- ___ out (relax); 50- Capital of Yemen; 52- Having no junction; 54- Fast flier; 56- Litigate against; 57- Book of the New Testament; 62- Jai ___; 66- Waiter's offering; 67- China's Zhou ___; 68- Scottish loch, home to a monster; 69- Seed cover; 70- Sash; 71- Polynesian carving; 72- The last Mrs. Chaplin; 73- Wander; 74- Kiln for drying hops;

DOWN: 1- Kitchen addition; 2- Horse of mixed color; 3- Bushy hairstyle; 4- Lighted by the sun; 5- Participant in a forum; 6- Economist Smith; 7- Faux pas; 8- Small mountains; 9- Soak up; 10- Depression-era migrant; 11- Turbine blade; 12- Goes wrong; 13- School of the future?; 22- Long ago; 24- Summer sign; 26- "Give that ___ cigar!"; 27- Unfolds; 28- I ___ vacation!; 29- ___ yellow ribbon...; 30- Aids; 32- Mined mineral; 33- Jack; 34- Politico Kefauver; 37- Ready for plucking; 39- License plates; 41- Loud noise; 43- Categorize; 46- Facilitate; 48- Flightless bird; 51- Evaluate; 53- Makeshift shelter; 55- Tinged; 57- Architect Saarinen; 58- Nabokov novel; 59- Hawaiian native dance; 60- Chemical used on trees; 61- Japan's first capital; 63- Sci-fi princess; 64- Inquires; 65- ___ soup yet?; 66- Long March leader;

Yesterday's solution

Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Rain Dance Property
"We dance until it's SOLD!"

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Ref: 2103 6001 788 ft² 2 1

AD

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

JOCELYN NOVECK,
AP NATIONAL WRITER

REVIEW

DOC EXPLORES ANTHONY BOURDAIN'S OWN 'PARTS UNKNOWN'

THERE are many startling moments in "Roadrunner," Morgan Neville's rich and moving documentary about the singular culinary storyteller Anthony Bourdain, who tragically took his life at the age of 61.

Here's just one that sticks out: a quick scene with a therapist, in Argentina. As Bourdain lies on her couch, cameras rolling for an episode of his show, he describes some frightening psychological urges he has. She asks him if he wants to change, and to feel differently. He replies: "I suspect it's too late."

We never learn here why Bourdain wanted to film what seems a genuine therapy session. But it fits in perfectly with the portrait Neville paints of a man who couldn't resist being anything but painfully honest, and painfully public, even when it took him down some dark paths.

It's also an example of just how much material Neville had to work with. Between Bourdain's own recordings and voiceovers, copious footage — much never seen — from production of his TV travelogues, and countless home movies and photos, it comes to feel like Bourdain himself is narrating his life story. And it's hard to shake the feeling he already knows what ha-



pens, especially when he quips early on: "Here's a little pre-emptive truth-telling: there's no happy ending."

Neville dispenses quickly with the early stuff — Bourdain dropping out of college, washing dishes in Cape Cod — even his

years as chef at Manhattan's Brasserie Les Halles. It really starts at age 44, when "Kitchen Confidential," his wickedly funny memoir about the underbelly of the restaurant world, catapults him into stardom and a life as a globetrotting raconteur

bold enough to swallow a still-beating cobra heart or a sheep's testicle.

The transformation is dizzying: People are shouting to Bourdain in the streets. He's sitting down with Letterman, and with Oprah. They're saying Brad Pitt wants to

play him. "It was like he died and was reborn," says his brother, Chris Bourdain.

The final act of "Roadrunner" is infused with a feeling of dread. Bourdain had become involved with Italian actor Asia Argento, a key accuser of Harvey Weinstein. She directed an episode of his "Parts Unknown" in Hong Kong, and we literally watch Bourdain falling in love. We also hear how devastated he was when a tabloid published pictures of her with another man, shortly before his death during filming in eastern France.

It's clear that some of Bourdain's co-workers felt the relationship with Argento sent Bourdain into a tailspin that led to his death — even though one of them points out, rightly of course, that "Tony did this." It's unfortunate that the film does not include Argento's own voice here.

But one cannot fault "Roadrunner" for not coming up with clear answers. There rarely are clear answers, anyway, and this film seems to want to be about a life, not a death. A fascinating life, parts of which will forever remain unknown.

"Roadrunner," a Focus Features release, has been rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America "for language throughout." Running time: 118 minutes. ★★★★★

AD

合夥人 PARTNERS:
官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha
山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues
馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata
趙魯 Zhao Lu
馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

大律師 ASSOCIATES:
高文軒 Adelino Correia
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues
白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
陶義德 António Isó de Azeredo
白穎怡 Iúlia Berenguel
冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
薛明恩 Maria Antónia Giestas
飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira
杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo
宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção
吳永誠 Rui Velez de Moura
安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos
巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
陳芷喬 Joana Chan
顏曉蓉 Teresa Xiaorong Yan
諾瑪莉 Maria Noras
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法律專家 JURISTS:
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潘卡莉 Candice Pun
陳子健 Kimi Chan
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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

FASHION MASTERSTROKE OF HOROLOGICAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

MORITZ Grossmann unveils two new models, the HAMATIC VINTAGE and the TOURBILLON, both featuring handcrafted 750/000 rose gold hands. The exquisite dials of the two models come in a deep black and beautifully accentuate the fine gold hands. Framed by a rose gold case, the result is a supremely elegant ensemble and the perfect embodiment of Grossmann's watchmaking artistry.

THE HAMATIC VINTAGE WITH ROSE GOLD LANCE HANDS

The special edition HAMATIC Vintage features a 'black-or' dial with long, slender index hands in solid gold. The delicate tip of these hands lends a charming touch to the time display. An elaborate manual process is used to create the exceptionally exqui-

site "black-or" dial of the HAMATIC Vintage. Several layers of anthracite lacquer are applied to a base of precious German silver and polished until a subtle, gleaming, mirror-like surface emerges. The final touch involves a transparent layer to fix the expressive "black or" dial in place.

THE TOURBILLON WITH ROSE-GOLD RHOMBUS HANDS

This limited edition of the Grossmann TOURBILLON also boasts hands made of 750/000 rose gold. Shaped like an elongated rhombus and ending in a wafer-thin tip, the hands have the instrumental character that is the hallmark of the manufactory. Combined with the dark tone of the jet-black solid silver dial on which the hands rotate, the result is one of profound elegance.



TASTE OF EDESIA

Intimate dining

IRENE SAM, MDT

CHEF de Cuisine Jesse Zhao and his team take guests on an unsurpassed 5-course culinary journey as a part of the newly unveiled **Chef's Table Dining Series**, available every second and fourth Wednesday of each month

starting from this month.

The Chef's Table's menu spotlights one specific theme at a time. Guests embark on a mystery dining experience with no prior knowledge of the menu and progression. This month's theme is "Seafood Inspiration", inspired by the diverse range of seafood and fruits found

in local markets. The menu incorporates both locally sourced and imported ingredients while preserving the authenticity of the French flavour. The dinner is guided by Chef Jesse. An exclusive interactive Apron Session allows guests to participate and have fun. In August, the second round of Chef's Table will transport guests to a vegetarian celebration by the name of "Summer Green and Fruits", allowing guests to enjoy quality vegan dishes, while September's theme pivots to "French Cheeses."

Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



THE KYOTO (TURF) 1200 METRES 2021-07-17 | Sat | 16:00

I am keen to follow a horse who has no win in MJC this Saturday. There is a good chance that he may be obliged in this Class 6 race; watching his last race video replay closely, **Royal Applause** got to the front and lead strongly on the deep end of the track; stayed on strongly till another mighty challenger Power Right took the better of him and that was a 1050 metres rain affected sand race in Class 5. This Saturday his trainer will enter him in a Class 6 turf race in 1200 metres, which **Royal Applause** got 2 placings in this turf distance. He got a good draw this time, reckoned he should run a very solid big race for his connection this Saturday. He is my NAP of the week, I am keen to put my money to see him cross the line.

Race 1 Horse no. 4 RIVER APPLAUSE Win & Place bets



OPINION

World Views

Elliot Berkman, University of Oregon
 MDT/The Conversation

PSYCHOLOGICAL TIPS FOR RESISTING THE INTERNET'S GRIP

"22 of the Cutest Baby Animals," the headline said. "You won't believe number 11!"

Despite an impending deadline – not to mention my skepticism (how cute could they possibly be?) – I clicked on the story. I'm only human, after all. Yet this failure in self-regulation cost me at least half an hour of good work time – as have other clickbait headlines, bizarre images on my Twitter feed or arguments on Facebook.

The insidious, distracting suck of the Internet has become seemingly inescapable. Calling us from our pockets, lurking behind work documents, it's merely a click away. Studies have shown that each day we spend, on average, five and a half hours on digital media, and glance at our phones 221 times.

Meanwhile, the developers of websites and phone apps all exploit human behavioral tendencies, designing their products and sites in ways that attract our gaze – and retain it. Writing for Aeon, Michael Schulson points out:

Developers have staked their futures on methods to cultivate habits in users, in order to win as much of that attention as possible.

Given the Internet's omnipresence and its various trappings, is it even possible to rein in our growing Internet consumption, which often comes at the expense of work, family or relationships?

Psychological research on persuasion and self-control suggests some possible strategies.

Tricks for clicks

It's important to realize some of the tricks that Internet writers and web developers use to grab our attention.

The strange number 22 in the headline is an example of the "pique" technique. Lists are usually round numbers (think of Letterman's Top 10 lists or the Fortune 500). Unusual numbers draw our attention because they break this pattern. In a classic study, the social psychologist Anthony Pratkanis and colleagues found that passersby were almost 60 percent more likely to give money to panhandlers asking for US\$0.37 compared to those who were asking for a quarter.

People in the study also asked more questions of the panhandlers who requested strange amounts, compared to those who begged for a quarter. The same thing happened when I saw the headline. In this case, the skepticism that caused me to ask the question "How cute could they possibly be?" backfired: it made me more likely to click the link.

An attention pique (such as asking for \$0.37 or calling out photo #11) triggers us to halt whatever we're doing and reorient to the puzzle. Questions demand answers. This tendency has been dubbed by psychologists as the rhetorical question effect, or the tendency for rhetorical questions to prompt us to dig deeper into an issue.

These tricks exploit built-in features of our minds that otherwise serve us well. It's clearly advantageous that unexpected stimuli capture our attention and engage us in a search for explanation: it might stop us from getting hit by a car, or alert us to sudden and suspicious changes to the balance in our bank account.

So it wouldn't make sense to turn off that kind of vigilance system or teach ourselves to ignore it when it sounds an alarm.

Binding ourselves to the mast

Content on the net isn't only designed to grab our attention; some of it is specifically built to keep us coming back for more: notifications when someone replies to a posts, or power rankings based on up-votes. These cues trigger the reward system in our brains because they've become associated with the potent reinforcer of social approval.

Not surprisingly, Internet use is often framed in the language of addiction. Psychologists have even identified Problematic Internet Use as a growing concern.

[Abridged]

More than 20 people have died and dozens of people were missing yesterday in Germany and neighboring Belgium after heavy flooding turned streams and streets into raging torrents, sweeping away cars and causing buildings to collapse. Storms across parts of western Europe in recent days caused rivers and reservoirs to burst their banks, resulting in several flash floods overnight as rain-soaked soil failed to absorb any more water. Authorities in the western German region of Euskirchen

said eight deaths had been reported there in connection with the floods. Rescue operations were hampered by the fact that phone and internet connections were down in parts of the county, which is southwest of Cologne. Officials said five people had died in Ahrweiler county. Up to 70 people were reported missing after several houses collapsed overnight in the village of Schul in the Eifel, a volcanic region of rolling hills and small valleys southwest of Cologne.

AP PHOTO



ON FAREWELL VISIT TO US, MERKEL BRINGS MESSAGE OF STABILITY

FRANK JORDANS & ALEXANDRA JAFFE, WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Joe Biden welcomes German Chancellor Angela Merkel to the White House for what is likely to be her last official visit and one to which she's bringing a bag full of issues and an overarching message for Berlin's close ally: You've got a friend.

The veteran German leader is expected today [Macau time] to discuss the coronavirus pandemic, the rise of China and a Russian

gas pipeline that Washington opposes. She will meet with Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and other senior U.S. officials.

"In part, this is a farewell visit. In part, she is signaling continuity and stability in the German-U.S. relationship," said Johannes Thimm, a senior fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, a think tank in Berlin.

After 16 years of dealing with Merkel, many officials in Washington and elsewhere are wondering what course Germany might

take after the next election. The longtime chancellor — who has dealt with four U.S. presidents in her time — will seek to reassure them that there won't be a huge shift, Thimm said.

Merkel's party is leading in polls ahead of Germany's Sept. 26 election, but the environmentalist Greens and the center-left Social Democrats are also vying to lead a future government. While the three parties differ in many policy areas, all are committed to a strong trans-Atlantic relationship.

The veteran German leader is expected today [Macau time] to discuss the coronavirus pandemic, the rise of China and a Russian gas pipeline that Washington opposes

One sour note that preceded and outlasted the Trump era of diplomatic discord with Washington has been the thorny issue of a new pipeline taking natural gas from Russia to Germany.

Merkel sought this week to dampen expectations for an imminent breakthrough,

but she is likely to want to resolve the issue before leaving office. "It weighs on German-U.S. relations and German-EU relations," Thimm said.

While German officials have been unusually coy about which topics will be discussed during the trip, Merkel's spokesperson confirmed that China will come up.

"That can be said with relative certainty," Steffen Seibert told reporters. "This also played an important role at the G-7 summit, where the chancellor and the American president last met."

Germany has strong trade ties with China but has also been critical of Beijing's human rights record. Merkel is keen to avoid a situation in which Germany, or the European Union, might be forced to choose sides between China and the United States.

Merkel has insisted on the need to cooperate with China on global issues such as combating climate change and tackling the coronavirus pandemic, even while Biden's predecessor Donald Trump was accusing Beijing of having started it. MDT/AP

Syria At least nine civilians were killed, including three children, when Syrian government rockets hit two villages in the last rebel stronghold in northwestern Syria, rescue workers and a war monitor said yesterday. The U.N. Children's agency confirmed three children were killed, calling it a "terrifying sign" that violence is returning to the area that has been under a cease-fire for over a year.

European Union's top court ruled yesterday that employers may forbid the wearing of visible symbols of religious or political belief, such as headscarves. But the Luxembourg-based tribunal said in its ruling that courts in the bloc's 27 member states should weigh up whether the ban corresponded to a "genuine need" on the part of the employer. They must also consider the rights and interests of the employee, including by taking into account national legislation on freedom of religion, it said.

AP PHOTO



Mexico A judge sentenced a Mexican building expert to 208 years in prison yesterday for signing off on defective remodeling work blamed in the collapse of school that killed 26 people during a 2017 earthquake. It was the longest sentence yet handed down in relation to the magnitude 7.1 quake of Sept. 19, 2017, though it is largely symbolic, because Mexico does not permit life imprisonment and limits sentences to 60 years.

AP PHOTO



South Africa's army has begun deploying 25,000 troops to assist police in quelling the weeklong riots and violence sparked by the imprisonment of former President Jacob Zuma. In the largest deployment of soldiers since the end of white minority rule in 1994, the South African National Defence Force has also called up all of its reserve force of 12,000 troops.