



SURVEY SHOWS THAT THE AVERAGE MONTHLY SALARY EMPLOYERS CAN OFFER A FRESH GRADUATE IS AROUND MOP10,000

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GGR ON A DOWNWARD TREND LAST WEEK: BERNSTEIN

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A MICE ASSOCIATION EXPECTS THE INDUSTRY TO BOUNCE BACK SOON DESPITE THE IMPACT OF THE SURGING COVID-19 CASES IN NANJING ON MACAU

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Koreas North and South Korea exchanged messages yesterday in communication channels that have been dormant for more than a year and agreed to improve ties — positive steps but ones that still leave any resumption of stalled negotiations to rid the North of its nuclear weapons a long way off. Liaison officials from the Koreas had several phone conversations including one on a military hotline and agreed to resume speaking regularly.



Indonesia Thousands of foreigners have left Indonesia in recent weeks, airport records released yesterday showed, apparently spurred by a brutal pandemic wave and a general shortage of vaccines, which have gone to high-priority groups first. Indonesia now has the most confirmed daily cases in Asia, as infections and deaths have surged over the past month and India's massive outbreak has waned.



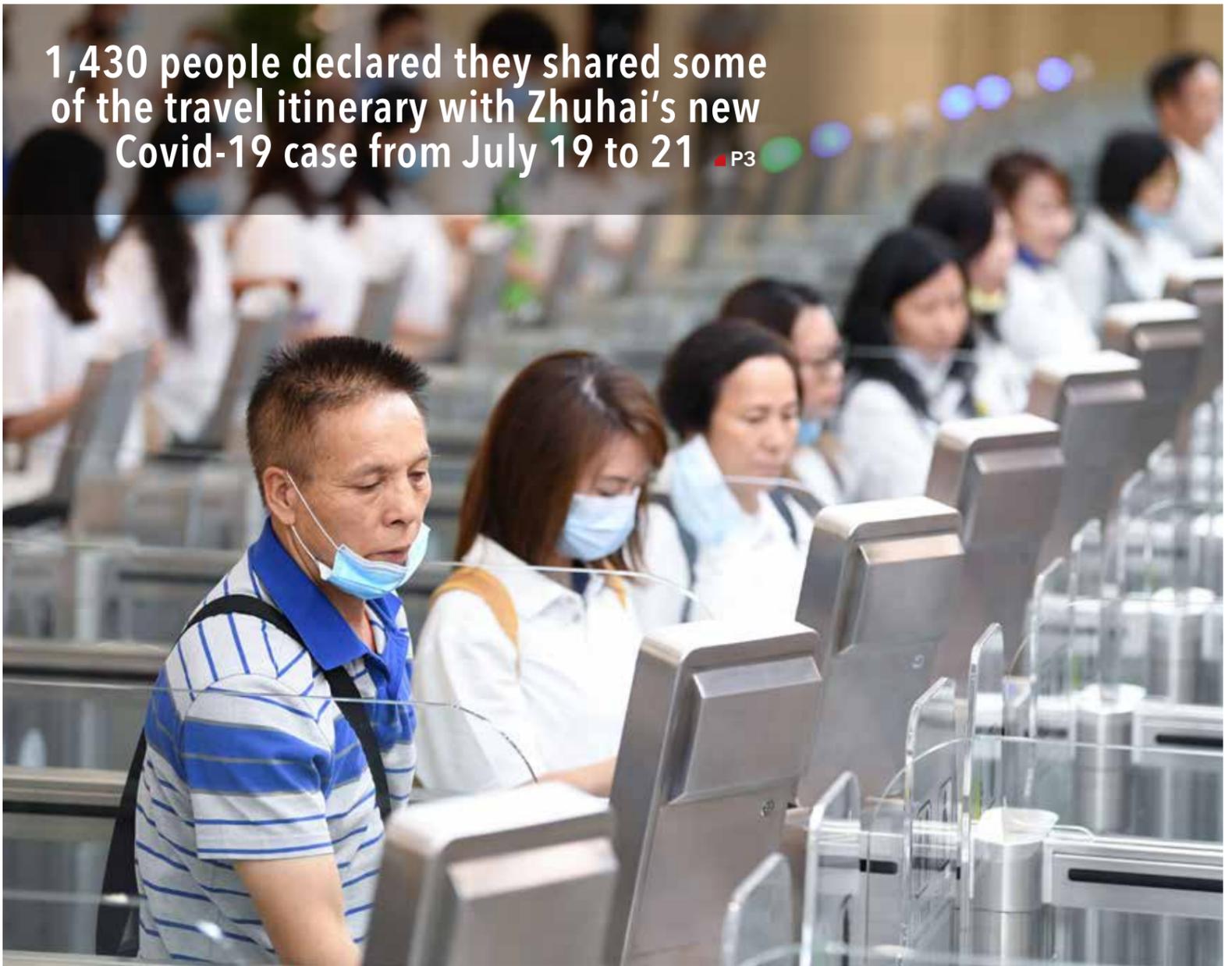
India The Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan has fully vaccinated 90% of its eligible adult population within just seven days, its health ministry said yesterday. The tiny country, wedged between India and China and home to nearly 800,000 people, began giving out second doses on July 20 in a mass drive that has been hailed by UNICEF as "arguably the fastest vaccination campaign to be executed during a pandemic."

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EXPOSURE SITES

1,430 people declared they shared some of the travel itinerary with Zhuhai's new Covid-19 case from July 19 to 21

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XINHUA

MANDY CHEUK

LOCAL MAKE UP ARTIST WINS INTERNATIONAL BODYPAINTING COMPETITION



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Mandy Cheuk



LOCAL ARTIST WINS INTERNATIONAL BODYPAINTING COMPETITION

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU makeup artist Mandy Cheuk has won this year's prestigious World Bodypainting Festival (WBF) in the category of Special Award – Rich Smokey Make-up.

Cheuk, who has been working in Macau in the field of makeup and bodypainting for over eight years, won the highest award of this new category in this year's WBF, which was temporarily halted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In an exclusive interview to the Times, Cheuk expressed her joy and surprise at the achievement, which she described as a "dream come true."

"I was so surprised and so happy because this year is [still] a pandemic year and the competition was [once again] held online. This brought a lot of more competitors from all over the world. I think there were around 400-something competitors this year. So, for me, it was quite a surprise to get this award since there were so many people participating. It was very challenging," Cheuk said to the Times.

This was the third time that

the artist participated in the international event, which is hosted annually in Austria. It was her second attempt running on her own.

"Four years ago, I went there for the second time but it was my first time running on my own. In theory, this is my second time participating in this competition," she said. She added that it was her first time participating in the event with her teacher and mentor Karen Yiu, that opened her eyes to the world of bodypainting.

"She [Yiu] was the one going to Austria to this competition, nine years ago. There, I finally saw how big the world is. I saw so many good artists and concepts – it was amazing for me. After that first event, I decided that I wanted to go back in the future and join the competition myself. I worked hard on my skills to do so," Cheuk explained. She added that the category of "rich smokey make-up" was new this year and had an open theme.

"Since this category is a new one, the organizers this year did not establish a mandatory theme to be followed. That gave me

more liberty to create something on my own. There are several things you need to think about besides the make-up itself – like the styling and how you will present it. It was quite challenging."

According to official information from the organizers, 455 artists from 48 nationalities in 17 different time zones took part in the competition this year.

MACAU WAS 'VERY IMPORTANT' TO MY PATH

Having worked in Macau for over eight years, primarily at creative company Franco Dragone Entertainment Group, Cheuk says that her career in Macau has contributed significantly to the development of her path in the industry.

"I had been working in Macau for over eight years already and after I started working here, I met a lot of people who were doing shows and events. Since they knew I was knowledgeable in bodypainting and makeup, they always boosted me up to bring Macau more into the spotlight of this industry and add some energy to it," she said. "I am very thankful for all my

friends here who contributed a lot to this achievement, from the model (Tina Kan) to the lighting person (Jin Lao), the photographer (Rose Cheong), and everyone else involved. They were relentless in helping me out with the setup and everything else that was needed so the presentation would go successfully. They are local people and they are all very talented. Most of them are working in the local film industry. Some are quite young and new to the industry but they are really good and supportive."

"Even during the competition, I thought only team and I were watching what was going on, but later when the judges were giving the final awards, I realized that there were a lot of friends here in Macau who were also watching the competition online. They all congratulated me as soon as the results came out."

AWARD WITH A LAST-MINUTE SCARE

Although a good team was put together to participate in the WBF, winning the final award did not come easily, Cheuk revealed.

A last-minute scare contributed even more pressure and adrenaline to the competitive process.

"I was planning everything in detail because my first competition was on July 19. Then one of my photographers got sick and he could not help me. This happened on the 18th, so I just started calling my friends to help me. Eventually, even though the original photographer could not join, he let me use his studio and equipment. One of the girls, who is the photographer's sister, also helped a lot. They were very quick and efficient."

She explained that although the competition is held online, there are rules in place to ensure that regulations are followed.

All the competitors must start at a given time. During the competition, several photos need to be sent to mark the time, beginning with an initial photograph of the models without make-up.

"From then, we have a time limit of two hours to complete the make-up. We also have to submit photos of several stages at given times so the jury can be up-to-date at all times with our progress until the end of the competition when the final work is presented," the artist explained.

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COVID-19

1,430 share itineraries with Zhuhai's case

HONEY TSANG

AS of 10 a.m. yesterday, 1,430 people had declared to the government that they shared some of the travel itinerary with Zhuhai's new Covid-19 case from July 19 to 21. The case in Zhuhai is a 29-year-old man who returned to Zhuhai International Airport from Nanjing Lukou International Airport on July 19.

The SSM once again urged locals yesterday to report themselves to the authorities immediately if they attended these locations in Zhuhai so that the Health Bureau (SSM) could promptly arrange for them to undergo Covid-19 tests.

As of noon yesterday, there were 144 people undergoing mandatory quarantine at the designated facility. All of them had been to the mainland's new Covid-19 epicenter at Nanjing Lukou International Airport, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center said yesterday.

On July 26, the government announced that arrivals who had been at Nanjing Lukou International Airport from July 14 onwards must undergo the 14-day mandatory quarantine period.

Of the total 144 people, 10 had already been undergoing medical observation before the enforcement of the new regulation.

The new travel restriction was implemented shortly after Zhuhai reported a new asymptomatic Covid-19 case on the same day, which



director of the SSM Alvis Lo regarded as an incident that put Macau at "higher contagion risk."

35,000 ZHUHAI RESIDENTS UNDER OBSERVATION

According to mainland media outlets, around 35,000 Zhuhai residents had their Yuekang Code, also known as Guangdong health code (GHC) status, changed from green to yellow since yesterday.

The Yuekang Code is a system similar to Macau's health code. It is issued and operated by Zhuhai Provincial Government to record health-related information for residents. The information recorded includes Covid-19 test results, records

of entry to Guangdong, and more.

Those affected by the health code change were at venues where the positive patient had also attended for over 30 minutes.

They are required to conduct two Covid-19 tests, each with a 24-hour interval, in the coming three days. If a negative result is returned, their health code status will be reverted to green.

Residents affected by the change are not required to observe quarantine but are advised to avoid large-group gatherings, crowds, and events. They are also prohibited from entering certain venues, including public transport stations, malls, and schools.

MICE hindered by Nanjing's pandemic but expected to rebound

THE surging number of Covid-19 cases in Nanjing is expected to have an impact on Macau's meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) sector, but the industry will bounce back soon, president of the Macao Association of Convention, Exhibition & Tourism Sectors, Alan Ho, said.

In light of the recent spike in Covid-19 cases in Nanjing, capital of east China's Jiangsu Province, Ho said the MICE industry will take precautionary measures to minimize transmission risks in Macau. Such measures inclu-

de requiring participants to record their travel itineraries and advising those from high-risk areas not to attend the events.

There are upwards of 100 events in Macau to be held in the second half of the year. Ho said these upcoming events, in general, received very positive feedback with high registration rates.

Some of these events have been postponed due to the situation in Nanjing but are not expected to be called off.

If the pandemic in Nanjing can be kept in check, Ho told the media on the sidelines of an event that

the city's total number of events for 2021 will be double that of 2020.

According to a report published yesterday by Xinhua, the Nanjing Municipal Government announced via a media briefing that the virus strain behind the new Covid-19 epicenter, Nanjing Lukou International Airport, is found to be the "highly infectious" Delta variant.

In 2020, there were 362 MICE events organized in Macau, with 914,000 participants and attendees, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

Since several airport

workers tested positive last week, Nanjing—a huge city with a population of over 9.3 million—saw a rapid rise of Covid-19 cases, now totaling over 100 locally transmitted cases.

On July 26, the Chinese mainland reported 31 new locally transmitted Covid-19 cases, all in Nanjing.

Ding Jie, vice director of the city's Center for Disease Control and Prevention, ascribed the rapid surge in case numbers within the region to "the special location of the outbreak" and "the highly contagious nature of the strain." HT

GAMING

GGR ON A DOWNWARD TREND LAST WEEK: BERNSTEIN

LYNZY VALLES

THE average daily gross gaming revenue from July 19 to July 25 was MOP257 million, 14% lower than the MOP300 million recorded the week prior, according to Sanford C. Bernstein Ltd.

As cited in a note seen by GGRAsia, Bernstein analysts Vitaly Umansky, Louis Li and Kelsey Zhu forecast July GGR to be down around "mid-60s of percent compared to July 2019; up approximately 30% month-on-month from June 2021."

The increase in the forecast GGR was driven by a recovery in visitor volume "following the June travel disruption in Guangdong," caused by a Covid-19 outbreak.

As new cases have arisen in the neighboring region, the institution noted that the new wave may limit

near-term tourist arrivals in the city.

Commenting on cases on the mainland in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, the brokerage stated that these have "raised concerns about a new potential outbreak in Guangdong. So far, it is under control with Covid testing of the entire city of Zhuhai slated to be completed on Tuesday [yesterday]."

Last month, the city saw a decline in GGR after witnessing a month-on-month increase in the preceding three quarters. Macau only recorded MOP6.54 billion, compared with MOP10.4 billion patacas one year ago.

The decline was due to the outbreak in Guangdong province that resulted in border restrictions and compulsory quarantine measures for those arriving from parts of Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Foshan.

STUDIO CITY LISTS SENIOR NOTES ON LOCAL BOND EXCHANGE

STUDIO City International Holdings Limited has announced the listing of 5% senior notes due in 2029 issued by its subsidiary, Studio City Finance Limited, on the Chongwa (Macao) Financial Asset Exchange Co. Limited (MOX).

Following the first listing of senior notes issued by a subsidiary of Melco on the MOX in June 2021 and the Studio City Finance senior notes, the aggregate amount of notes listed by the Melco Group will be the largest in Macau for any non-financial institution, the gaming operator announced in a statement.

"The listings showcase Melco's support for the local financial trading platform, and further demonstrate Melco's confidence in the city's further development as a world-recognized financial hub and tourism center," the statement read.

The listing of and permission to deal in the notes was granted by MOX, effective July 26, 2021.

In June, Melco Resorts & Entertainment announced the listing of 5.375% senior notes due in 2029 issued by its subsidiary, Melco Resorts Finance Limited, on MOX. LV



TOURISM INSTITUTE PASSES HACCP CERTIFICATION

The Macao Institute for Tourism Studies' (IFTM) Educational Restaurant has successfully passed the HACCP certification conducted by Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency (HKQAA) in Macau on July 15. Implementing strict food safety management systems and high hygiene standards such as HACCP ensures that all students and staff can experience working with internationally recognised food safety and hygiene standards, the institute said in a statement. The IFTM formed a cross-departmental food safety team and has successfully implemented and fulfilled all HACCP requirements. Each department involved was responsible for establishing the HACCP control system in their respective area.

PUBLIC LIBRARY LAUNCHES NEW ISSUE OF 'BOOKS AND THE CITY'

The 27th issue of Books and the City, published by the Macao Public Library under the Cultural Affairs Bureau, is now available to the public. With the theme of entrepreneurial wealth, this issue shares tips and suggestions based on the experiences of renowned writers in their respective areas and a local pioneering entrepreneurial team, as well as successful examples of old stores being transformed. It also introduces several practical books from the Macao Public Library's collections, allowing the public to gain knowledge about wealth creation from multiple perspectives.

4,300 LOCAL GRADUATES TO FACE GREATER DIFFICULTY IN JOB SEEKING

HONEY TSANG

THE city will see around 4,300 fresh graduates become new entrants to the job market, according to the survey conducted by the General Association of Chinese Students of Macau (AECM).

Compared to new graduates in previous years, this year's cohort will have to endure a difficult global employment environment, which has been significantly affected by economic fallout caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The AECM research suggests that the average monthly salary employers can offer a fresh graduate is around MOP 10,000.

During the pre-pandemic era, it took less than one month for recent graduates to land a job. However, the job-seeking period has increased to between three and six months for new job-seekers this year.

Not only are fresh graduates encountering additional hardship in finding a job, they are also finding it more difficult to find jobs that match their educational backgrounds, Leong Wai Hin, chairman of the AECM, told TDM in a private in-



XINHUA

terview.

Local businesses are themselves suffering due to the pandemic and are consequently offering fewer positions than before, he explained.

Previous graduates used to bide their time until a good job opportunity came up. However, the current situation will require graduates to be more open-minded and willing to explore positions across various industries.

According to the forecast by the Macau Human Resources Association, the local job market is unlikely to stabilize until 2023. The association advised fresh graduates to not be

too picky with their first job.

Across all industries, the job demand from Macau's meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) sector is expected to be the most pronounced, given a huge number of MICE events to be held in Macau. This is expected to generate many jobs for casual workers, the association stated.

Macau will see over 100 events to be held in the second half of this year, according to separate remarks made by president of the Macao Association of Convention, Exhibition & Tourism Sectors, Alan Ho.

Apart from MICE, the food and beverage and retail sectors

are also anticipated to recover relatively rapidly, a representative from the association told TDM.

The association suggests that local graduates proactively sign up for internship programs initiated by the government, as these schemes can provide a springboard for new graduates to secure a permanent job in the future.

According to official data, the unemployment rate among local residents was at 4.1% from March-May. The share of new job-seekers grew by 0.9 percentage points to 6.5% of the total unemployed population from previous surveyed period.

LEADERS FROM TOURISM INDUSTRIES POSITIVE ABOUT SUMMER HOLIDAY

HONEY TSANG

LOCAL tourism-related operators are remaining optimistic about the prospects for businesses during this summer holiday, despite two new Covid-19 cases reported in Zhuhai and Zhongshan last week and this week respectively.

Last Friday, president of Sands China Ltd Wilfred Wong told the media that his faith in the group's business during the summer holiday is steadfast, as he expects the average occupancy rate among the group's properties to reach 70%.

Following Wong's comments, several executives from other industries also expressed hope for the peak travel season, despite the mainland's recent Covid-19 infections.

Director of the United Association of Food and Beverage Merchants of Macau Fong Kin Fu told TDM that the in-



dustry's business has already returned to 50% of pre-pandemic levels, thanks to an increased number of tourist arrivals to Macau in July.

Despite the newly reported cases in neighboring cities, he said that the two municipal governments imposed anti-pandemic measures promptly. The timely measures are believed to provide reassurance to tourists and help sustain travel con-

fidence.

However, director of Macau Hoteliers and Innkeepers Association Lou Chi Leong stated that the city's average occupancy rate currently stands between 50% and 60%, with some travelers canceling their booking, which is believed to be due to new cases in Zhongshan and Zhuhai. He said the industry practitioners hope the outbreak will subside quickly.

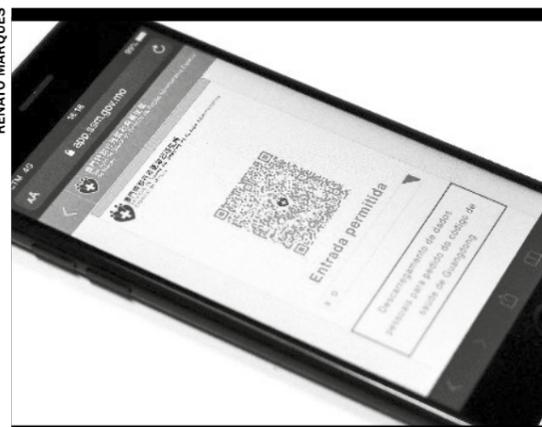
SSM VOWS HEALTH CODE DATA WILL COMPLY WITH DATA PROTECTION LAW

STAFF REPORTER

THE "visit record" function of the Macau health code is under development. All data on residents' visits will be encrypted and stored in their phones to comply with the Personal Data Protection Act, according to the Health Bureau (SSM).

The capability will record residents' visits to different venues.

This information comes in response to an interpellation made by lawmaker Agnes Lam, in which she urged the SSM to consider the possibility of allowing those without smartphones, such as children and the older residents, to present their ID cards or Macau Passes at venues instead of presenting the health code or the Macau "Leave Home



Safe" application. This would still protect the privacy of individuals.

"At present, the technology of smart cards (e.g. Macau Pass) cannot store all visit-related data, so such tools cannot record residents' visits," the bureau said in their reply. They additionally mentioned that "the visit record function has not yet been finalized and if specific measures become avail-

able, they will be announced in due course."

The bureau also mentioned that the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) will launch an easy-to-use application system for health codes, which will allow public sector staff to assist individuals to apply for health codes using their resident ID cards or non-resident worker cards.

GalaxyArt Gallery Unveiled to Support Local Arts and Cultural Development



GEG unveiled the GalaxyArt Gallery, a permanent and non-profit art space at Galaxy Macau.

Committed to fostering the development of arts and culture in Macau, Galaxy Entertainment Group (“GEG”) has supported various local arts and cultural activities aimed at enriching Macau’s appeal as a cultural tourism destination and a World Center of Tourism and Leisure. Recently, the Galaxy Entertainment Group Foundation (“GEG Foundation”) unveiled the GalaxyArt Gallery, a permanent and non-profit exhibition space, which GEG hopes can be used for the hosting of different arts and cultural exhibitions throughout the year, and become a key platform to support its arts and cultural initiatives.

Located on the Promenade Shops at Galaxy Macau, GalaxyArt has launched its first exhibition “Juxtapose”, which runs until October 31. As a special exhibition of the 2nd “Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale 2021”, “Juxtapose” features a series of giant metal sculptures that reflects on Macau’s long-standing customs, history and culture.



Mr. Philip Cheng

Earlier, an opening ceremony was held to mark the beginning of GalaxyArt. In his speech, Mr. Philip Cheng, Director of GEG, said that GEG is honored to present the “Juxtapose” exhibition, participate in the Macau SAR Government’s “Art Macao”, and to have opened the brand-new art gallery for local residents and tourists. He said, “GalaxyArt is another testament of GEG’s unwavering commitment to promote arts and cultural development in Macau. As a world-class integrated resort operator, GEG hopes that by

participating in ‘Art Macao’, we can help the Macau SAR Government promote the cross-sectoral integration of tourism and arts, attract more tourists to enjoy Macau’s diversified tourism experiences, and support the economy and tourism industry on its gradual recovery.” Following the “Juxtapose” exhibition, GalaxyArt will continue to hold thematic art and cultural exhibitions and present different cultural and artistic experiences to the public for free. Over the years, GEG has been actively promoting the community’s interests in local arts and cultural exchanges, and rolled out different initiatives through the GEG Foundation in hopes of facilitating the development of arts and culture, including the GEG Arts & Cultural Initiative, the GEG Intangible Cultural Heritage Scheme and the GEG Chinese Music Promotion Scheme.

MACAU-THEMED “JUXTAPOSE”



Mr. Tang Mun Kian

“Juxtapose” presents 11 life-size steel rod sculptures by Malaysian artist, Mr. Tang Mun Kian. The artistic and witty drawings depict Macau’s tangible and intangible cultural heritages, celebrating its unique history, people and places. His approach is merging visual journal with comic narrative and transforming those ideas into steel drawings, hence the name “Stories in Steel”. Mr. Tang has worked closely with GEG Foundation to showcase Macau’s historic and cultural charms through these metal sculptures after learning of GEG Foundation’s values and missions. He said, “It was a great pleasure to work with GEG

Foundation, who was very supportive and involved in every stage from the initial concept to the final installation,” adding that he appreciates the efforts made by GEG Foundation by setting up a permanent arts and cultural space in commercial premises to engage the public on the importance of arts and culture. Mr. Tang explained, “The topics for ‘Juxtapose’ cover the diverse cultural and artistic characteristics of Macau - from iconic monuments like the Ruins of St. Paul Church to the forgotten trades like ‘Naamyam singers’, ‘boatmaker’ and ‘firecrackers’. The exhibition showcases Macau’s rich heritage to the public, helps recall their fond memories, and raises awareness to the importance of cultural heritage conservation and preservation. As people say, our future depends on how we understand the past.” According to Mr. Tang, the 3D wall-hanging installations of “Juxtapose” provide caricatures of memories and the soul of the old city. He believes that the fun, amusing, and



GEG invited families from BYS for a guided tour of the exhibition and to take part in a workshop.

easy-to-understand sculptures will interact with viewers of all ages.

PASSING ON

To encourage children on exploring Macau’s history, culture and artistic interests in an entertaining and innovative way, GalaxyArt will arrange a series of workshops for children ages 5 to 12 this summer, including storytelling by its collaborator, the Oral History Association of Macao, and handicraft sessions where children can make and bring home their own artwork as a souvenir. The workshops are part of the exhibition’s extension program and are based on topics related to Macau’s heritage and historic landmarks. Ms. Evi Ian from the Oral History Association said the association is honored to have the opportunity to cooperate with GalaxyArt on introducing Macau’s history and culture to the public in this innovative way. “During storytelling, we will share the oral history and stories that are related to the ‘Juxtapose’ exhibits, including the personal experiences, feelings and anecdotes of those engaged in these historical activities. Doing so will enable our participants, especially children, to have a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning behind these cultural activities,” she said, believing that this will also help promote the importance of conservation of our city’s cultural heritage.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Upholding its philosophy of “what is taken from the community to be used for the good of the community”, GEG also organized family visits and workshops for local social service associations. On the day after the exhibitions’ opening, GEG invited families from the Bosco Youth Service Network (“BYS”) for a guided tour of the exhibition and to take part in a workshop. During the handicraft session, the participants shared the joy of arts while being taught how to make a drunk dragon using pipe cleaners. Ms. Gigi Wong from the BYS said, “The exhibition has allowed the participating families to view artworks up close and to learn about Macau’s history and unique cultural activities. It has broadened their horizons, enhanced their understanding of Macau’s cultural diversity and cultivated their sense of art appreciation. We thank GEG for providing such a great opportunity for local service associations.” Moreover, the participating parents also shared that the visit to GalaxyArt was very fruitful. It has helped both parents and children to learn more about the city and understand the importance of preserving culture and heritage.

HONG KONG

GUILTY VERDICT IN FIRST TRIAL UNDER SECURITY LAW

THE first person to be tried under Hong Kong's sweeping national security law was found guilty of secessionism and terrorism yesterday in a ruling condemned by human rights activists.

The Hong Kong High Court handed down the verdict in the case of Tong Ying-kit, 24. He is accused of driving his motorcycle into a group of police officers while carrying a flag bearing the protest slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times" on July 1 last year, a day after Beijing imposed sweeping national security legislation on Hong Kong following months of anti-government protests in 2019.

The verdict was closely watched for indications of how similar cases will be dealt with in the future. More than 100 people have been arrested under the security legislation.

Tong pleaded not guilty to charges of inciting secession and terrorism, and an alternative charge of dangerous driving.

He faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, and his



lawyers are expected to argue for a lighter punishment at his sentencing hearing Thursday.

Reading the verdict, Justice Esther Toh said Tong "committed terrorist activities causing or intended to cause grave harm to the society" in pursuit of a political agenda.

His behavior was an act of violence aimed at coercing the central and Hong Kong governments and intimidating the public, Toh said.

Carrying the slogan-bearing flag constituted an act of incite-

ment to secession, she said.

Because the prosecution was certain that it had proven "each and every element" of the terrorism and secession charges, it decided not to proceed with the dangerous driving charge.

Tong did not speak during the reading of the verdict. He waved to his parents and others in the gallery as he was escorted from the chamber.

The trial, which ended July 20, was held in the High Court with no jury, under rules allowing the exception from

Hong Kong's common law system if state secrets need to be protected, foreign forces are involved or if the personal safety of jurors needs to be protected. Trials are presided over by judges handpicked by Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam.

Tong's defense lawyer has said it's impossible to prove that Tong was inciting secession merely by having used the slogan.

The defense also said there is no evidence that Tong committed the act deliberately, that he avoided crashing into officers and that his actions couldn't be considered terrorism since there was no serious violence or harm to society.

The verdict was immediately condemned by Amnesty International, which called it "the beginning of the end for freedom of expression in Hong Kong."

"People should be free to use political slogans during protests, and Tong Ying-kit should not be punished for exercising his right to free speech," Asia-Pacific Regional Director Yamini

Mishra said in an emailed statement. "It is particularly clear that he should never have been charged with a 'national security' offense carrying a possible life sentence."

While Hong Kong has its own Legislative Council, Beijing's ceremonial legislature imposed the national security law on the semi-autonomous city after it determined the council was unable to pass the legislation itself because of political opposition.

China's legislature has mandated changes to the makeup of the city's Legislative Council to ensure a pro-Beijing majority, and required that only those it determines "patriots" can hold office.

Authorities have banned the protest slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times," stating that it has secessionist connotations.

Hong Kong's last remaining pro-democracy newspaper, Apple Daily, was forced out of business last month and a court denied bail for four editors and journalists held on charges of endangering national security.

Beijing has dismissed criticisms, saying it is merely restoring order to the city and instituting the same type of national security protections found in other countries. **MDT/AP**

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British official's remarks on South China Sea 'disregard facts': embassy

THE Chinese Embassy in Britain yesterday voiced deep concern about and firm opposition to the recent remarks by a senior British official on the South China Sea as they disregard facts and undermine regional peace and stability.

Referring to British Secretary of Defense Ben Wallace's "extremely irresponsible" remarks made during a visit to Vietnam, a spokesperson for the Chinese embassy said the remarks "disregard the historical merits and objective facts of the South China Sea issue, deliberately sow discord among regional countries and thus, undermine regional peace and stability."

China's sovereignty, rights and interests in the South China Sea have been formed in the course of a long history and have abundant historical and legal basis, the spokesperson said, adding that they have been upheld by successive Chinese governments all along.



The so-called "arbitral tribunal ruling" on the South China Sea is illegal, null and void, the spokesperson stated, noting that the arbitration violated the "principle of state consent" and the arbitral

tribunal exercised its jurisdiction ultra vires and rendered an award in disregard of law.

China always advocates friendly negotiations and consultations on issues in relation to the

South China Sea, treats its littoral neighbors as equals and exercises maximum restraint when safeguarding its sovereignty, rights and interests in the South China Sea, the spokesperson stressed.

In contrast, Britain claims to uphold "rules-based international order" but its cherry-picking of rules of international law reveals a typical practice of hypocrisy and double standard, the spokesperson noted.

With the joint efforts of countries in the region including China, passage through the South China Sea has been smooth and safe all along, the spokesperson said, calling the allegation that "freedom of navigation is under threat" in the South China Sea "untenable."

"If indeed this allegation is true, the threat could only come from the one who deploys carrier strike group to the South China Sea half a world away and flexes its naval muscles to heighten the military tension in that region," the spokesperson said.

According to Wallace, Britain, a former influential colonial power who used its military superiority to subdue Asian countries, is increasing maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific region to uphold the so-called "rules-based international order."

"Gunboat diplomacy no longer works in the 21st century. As a country outside the region, Britain should refrain from stretching its arms too far," the spokesperson said. **MDT/XINHUA**

HENAN FLOODS

Residents mourn drowned subway riders in central China

DAKE KANG,
ZHENGZHOU

RESIDENTS laid a bouquet after bouquet, the neatly tied yellow and white flowers standing on end, yesterday outside an entrance to a subway station in central China where 14 people died last week after a record-breaking downpour flooded large swaths of Henan province.

Torrents of water rushed into a subway line in the provincial capital, Zhengzhou, trapping a train with hundreds of passengers between two stations. The deluge drowned some and left others gasping for breath in chest-high water until emergency crews could reach them.

"I'm filled with grief," said Zhengzhou resident Zhang Shuai, 35, who bowed three times in front of the



entrance after laying a bouquet of chrysanthemums. "I hope that their relatives can recover from this tragedy as soon as possible."

At least 71 people perished in the floods, according to an updated death toll yesterday. Zhengzhou authorities said 14 had died in the subway station, up from 12 reported earlier.

A crowd of about 50 people stood outside

under partly cloudy blue skies as streams of mourners and delivery drivers left bouquets wrapped in black paper in a rectangular area extending from the shuttered station entrance.

Some relatives of the deceased have criticized the Zhengzhou subway authority, accusing them of continuing to operate the trains even when it became clear it would

be dangerous to do so. They said subway officials had obstructed the search for missing relatives.

"I no longer have a husband, my daughter no longer has a father," the wife of Sha Tao, a Zhengzhou resident who drowned in the subway, wrote on Weibo, a Chinese social media platform. "If they had prepared contingency plans ahead of time, the number

of deaths could have been minimized. The Zhengzhou subway must take the blame and responsibility!"

A video conference held by the central government Monday said subway systems nationwide should enhance their emergency response capabilities, implement flood-control measures and respond quickly to early warnings, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

On Monday, pictures circulated on social media showed yellow plastic barricades set up around the bouquets, blocking them from view and attracting online criticism. A video published by a local newspaper, Dahe Daily, showed the barricades being taken down later.

The barricades were gone yesterday afternoon, and journalists were free to take photos and conduct interviews. Uniformed and plainclothes police monitored the scene. AP journalists were asked to show identification but allowed to continue reporting. **MDT/AP**

GOV'T PROSECUTES 2,825 INDIVIDUALS FOR ORGANIZED CRIME IN H1

CHINESE prosecutors filed lawsuits against 2,825 individuals involved in organized crime in the first half of this year, the country's top procuratorate said yesterday.

The Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) said in a statement that procuratorial agencies nationwide have pressed ahead with the routine fight against organized and gang-related crimes in the first half of the year.

A total of 5,433 individuals were indicted on charges of gang-related crimes, according to the SPP.

China launched a special three-year campaign targeting organized crime and local offenses in 2018.

Another 281 individuals were prosecuted for their involvement in money laundering in the first half of 2021, more than double from the same period last year, SPP figures showed.

In addition, a total of 8,144 people were prosecuted for duty-related crimes in the first half of 2021, an increase of 22.3 percent from the same period last year, the SPP said.

During the period, China's supervisory commissions at all levels had transferred 10,828 people suspected of committing duty-related crimes to the procuratorial organs, according to the SPP. **MDT/XINHUA**



Philippine leader unabashedly threatens to kill drug dealers

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

PHILIPPINE President Rodrigo Duterte unabashedly renewed his threat to kill drug dealers in his final state of the nation speech on Monday, while defending his nonconfrontational approach in the country's territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea.

Duterte, 76, who won a six-year presidential term in 2016, is winding down his often-tumultuous presidency amid a raging pandemic, a battered economy and a legacy overshadowed by his deadly campaign against illegal drugs that has set off complaints of mass murder before the International Criminal Court.

While many expected him to focus on ways to combat the coronavirus, which has devastated the economy and worsened hunger and poverty, Duterte instead devoted most of a rambling, nearly three-hour televised speech to non-pandemic topics he has addressed repeatedly in the past.

Duterte reiterated his threat to kill drug dealers, explaining it is tougher to

fight criminals "the legal way," while daring the International Criminal Court to record his remarks.

"I would never deny and the ICC can record it: Those who destroy my country, I will kill you. And those who destroy the young people of our country, I will kill you," Duterte said. "I will really bring you down because I love my country."

"You can do it the legal way, but it would take you months and years," Duterte told an audience of legislators, Cabinet members and foreign diplomats.

More than 6,000 mostly petty suspects have been killed during police drug raids

Duterte and police officials have denied condoning extrajudicial killings, but he has repeatedly threatened to kill suspects in his public speeches. More than 6,000 mostly petty suspects have been killed during police drug raids. In addition, a large number have also been gunned down by motorcycle-riding assassins who human rights groups suspect are linked to law enforcement.

The killings have alarmed Western governments, U.N. rights experts and human rights groups. Duterte has acknowledged that he failed to fulfill a campaign promise to eradicate the drug menace and deeply entrenched corruption within six months of becoming president. But he said he had found at least nine police generals and Bureau of Customs officials were involved in the drug trade.

"I did not know that I was fighting my own government," he said, although the involvement of law enforcers and public officials has long been reported.

Randy Delos Santos, whose 17-year-old nephew, Kian, was shot to death in 2017 by three officers who were later convicted of murder, said the poor have been traumatized by the drug crackdown.

"He has not won this war on drugs, because the problem is still there, but a lot of families have lost their breadwinners," Delos Santos told The Associated Press. "We're the biggest loser and we still live in fear."

An ICC prosecutor said last month a preliminary examination found reason

to believe crimes against humanity had been committed under Duterte's crackdown on drugs and sought permission to open a formal investigation. Duterte said he will never cooperate with a possible investigation.

Allies have defended Duterte's record, with documentaries on state-run TV and speeches highlighting his administration's efforts to fight criminality, poverty, corruption and decades-long communist and Muslim insurgencies, as well as build infrastructure.

But increasingly vocal opponents have criticized Duterte's handling of key issues, including his refusal to confront China's pressing of territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Duterte said he had not aggressively confronted China because a military solution is not an option for the weaker Philippines.

"It will be a massacre if I go and fight a war now," Duterte said. "We are not yet a competent and able enemy of the other side."

Duterte thanked medical workers who are fighting the coronavirus along with private companies and foreign banks which provided help and funds that allowed the country to deal with the pandemic.

He said the economy can hardly endure more lockdowns, but that if the highly contagious delta variant spreads widely he would have little option but to resort to more restrictions.

"I really do not know what to do. I have to listen to the task force," he said, referring to a government body of Cabinet officials and medical experts which has been dealing with the pandemic.

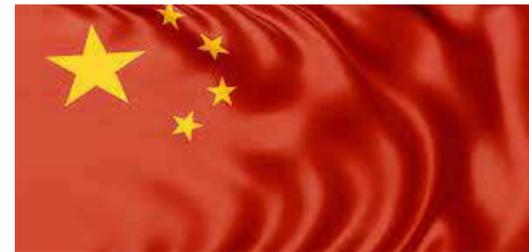
The Philippines has reported more than 1.5 million COVID-19 infections, including 27,224 deaths. Months of lockdowns and natural disasters caused the economy to plummet by 9.5% last year.

Opposition Sen. Risa Hontiveros said she failed to hear clear plans in Duterte's speech for dealing with inadequate virus testing and contact tracing and the massive number of Filipinos who lost their livelihood because of the pandemic.

"Our people wanted to hear about jobs and health from the president. He should have focused on these most of all," Hontiveros said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1976 CHINESE EARTHQUAKE KILLS HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS



Hundreds of thousands of people are feared dead following an 8.3 magnitude earthquake in China.

The quake has virtually destroyed the city of Tangshan, north-east of Beijing, and Western sources believe the death toll may be much higher than the official figure of 240,000. Some believe the figure is more like 750,000.

The Hong Kong Royal Observatory reports the earthquake was intense although speculation of the magnitude of the quake ranges from 6.3 to 8.3.

Around 2,000 people are believed to have died when the quake devastated the city's biggest hospital, according to sources quoting Chinese officials. It is feared that many miners are buried alive in coal works in the industrial city, which has a total population of 1.6m.

Diplomatic observers say that up to 80,000 people died in the first shock of the natural disaster.

Up to 164,000 people have been severely injured, according to initial reports from the city.

Tangshan was at the epicentre of the earthquake, although it badly damaged Tientsin. Tremors were also felt in Beijing, where residents were urged to live in the streets and keep to open spaces as it is not thought to be safe to return to their homes in the city.

The force of the quake has been so strong that people are reported to have been thrown into the air after roads, bridges, railway stations, homes and factories were completely destroyed.

The quake has also knocked out power throughout the city, making rescue efforts difficult.

When the earthquake struck Tangshan at 0342 local time, more than a million people lay sleeping. The entire earthquake reportedly lasted approximately 14 to 16 seconds. It was followed by a 7.1 magnitude aftershock.

Survivors have been digging through debris to answer the calls for help as well as find missing relatives.

There is a deep-seated peasant belief that the "Year of the Dragon" - which happens every 12 years - augurs ill.

The survivors of the Tangshan quake are living in tents and are expected to be moved to winter shelters, the New China news agency has reported. Aircraft and lorries have been taking large quantities of relief supplies to help the relief effort.

The authorities later hope to move people to simple houses, which can withstand tremors and are warm and rainproof before winter sets in.

Chinese officials have rejected any offers of help from the outside world, saying that survivors have enough to eat and wear and there are sufficient medical supplies and doctors in the city.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Officially, the Chinese government estimated between 240,000 and 250,000 people died in the Tangshan earthquake.

The rebuilding of Tangshan began almost immediately after the earthquake and eventually the entire city was rebuilt. It is now home to more than a million people - earning it the name "Brave City of China."

In the decades since the quake, the death toll is estimated closer to half a million although some believe it is higher still. This would make this the most deadly quake in the twentieth century, and the strongest since the Alaska quake in 1964 which was of magnitude 9.2.

More people died in earthquakes in the first 10 months of 1976 than in any year since 1970.

During 1976, there were a string of tremors, stretching from China to Greece, which Swedish expert Dr Marcus Baath believes may be a signal of new movement in the Earth's crust. In August 1976, a new earthquake measuring 6.9 was reported 250 miles north of Chungking, which is around 1,000 miles from Tangshan.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Major cosmic shifts take place under Wednesday's skies. After several months of leaning into a refreshed understanding of solitude and spirituality, you're ready to re-enter society.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You've only just begun to explore and expand upon your newly emerging goals. The universe suggests that there's more work to be done before you can continue to proceed.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Things are changing in an undeniable way in your world, Gemini. You've been fearlessly embarking on new career terrain and working to enhance your reputation.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Your horizons have only just begun to expand in ways you never thought possible. Yet, the universe thinks you have more inner work to do before you can go into full bloom.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Mercury's presence here returns your dazzling charisma and ability to hold people's attention with any written or communication-based efforts, now through August 11.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Today's skies find Jupiter retrograding back into progressive Aquarius, where it works on bringing growth and expansion to your workflow for the remainder of the year.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Your approach towards your work/life balance has been encountering some major shifts, Libra. You've been investing so much energy into embracing new growth on the job front.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

The deeply-creative Pisces moon merges with ethereal Neptune. This pairing increases your need for pleasure, escapism, and romance through an otherworldly-lens.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You're running extra sensitive under today's skies, Sagittarius. Treat yourself gently, as the heartfelt Pisces moon merges with reality-dissolving Neptune.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

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



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Jupiter's enlarging presence in your sign works to help you shore up your confidence and embrace new forms of identity, independence, and self-expression through the end of the year.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Today's skies shift that narrative, as Jupiter retrogrades back into solution-seeking Aquarius. This shift points your focus on shedding outgrown behaviors for the remainder of the year.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

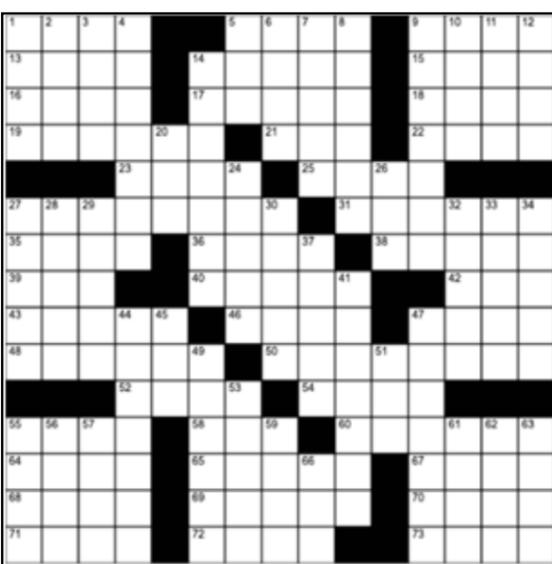
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	29	thunderstorms
Harbin	24	33	cloudy
Tianjin	26	35	cloudy
Urumqi	21	33	fine
Xi'an	26	35	cloudy
Lhasa	24	32	fine
Chengdu	29	36	thunderstorms
Chongqing	27	36	cloudy
Kunming	28	38	cloudy
Nanjing	21	29	showers
Shanghai	26	33	cloudy
Wuhan	25	32	rain
Hangzhou	24	31	thunderstorms
Taipei	24	28	rain
Guangzhou	19	31	cloudy
Hong Kong	24	27	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	17	29	overcast
Frankfurt	16	26	rain
Paris	16	24	rain
London	15	22	rain
New York	22	33	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Lab gel; 5- Between ports; 9- Will-___-wisp; 13- Goad; 14- Paradises; 15- Cool; 16- Bound; 17- Adlai's running mate; 18- Dash; 19- Kind of garage; 21- Hit sign; 22- Rick's love in "Casablanca"; 23- Passing notice; 25- About; 27- Cure-alls; 31- Shred; 35- Ill-mannered one; 36- Split; 38- Analyze a sentence; 39- Go off course; 40- Clan symbol; 42- Mule's sire; 43- Lost; 46- Defense grp. since 1949; 47- Nice notion; 48- Labyrinthine; 50- Deeply respectful; 52- Egyptian goddess of fertility; 54- Cutty ___; 55- Jazz phrase; 58- Stand in; 60- Hunting dog; 64- Yours, in Tours; 65- Experiment; 67- "A Jug of Wine..." poet; 68- Apply powder to oneself; 69- Delight; 70- Slight; 71- Actress Sommer; 72- Wall St. letters; 73- Electric fish;

DOWN: 1- Mercury or Saturn; 2- Sheepish look; 3- Author James; 4- British soldier; 5- Commercials; 6- Goes down; 7- Diciembre follower; 8- Classify; 9- The tiniest bit; 10- Blab; 11- Lukas of "Witness"; 12- Gas burner or Sicilian volcano; 14- Most strange; 20- 1970 Jackson 5 hit; 24- Claw; 26- Plant juice; 27- Make one's case; 28- Trunk line; 29- Suckle; 30- Lute of India; 32- Commerce; 33- Ruhr city; 34- Adjust to zero; 37- French beans?; 41- Ambulatory; 44- Building; 45- Small batteries; 47- Annoying; 49- Pay attention; 51- Important time; 53- Bad-tempered; 55- Appraise, charge per unit; 56- Romance lang.; 57- People in general; 59- Prejudice; 61- "Peter Pan" pirate; 62- British nobleman; 63- Very, in Versailles; 66- Packed away;



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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Ref: 2005 1002 1,269 ft² 2 2

Rain Dance Property
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Traditional apartment **HKD 2,680,000**
Ref: 2103 6001 788 ft² 2 1

AD

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

BITCOIN JUMPS ON SPECULATION THAT AMAZON CONSIDERING CRYPTO

BITCOIN'S price surged again yesterday [Macau time] after speculation that Amazon may be entering the cryptocurrency sector after it posted a job seeking a "digital currency and blockchain product lead."

Bitcoin jumped more than 14% in the past 24 hours, nearly reaching \$40,000 per unit before settling closer to \$37,000. The five-week intra-day high comes after a long slide where it dipped under \$30,000 from an April high of nearly \$65,000.

There is also speculation that the price surge may have also been a result of traders buying up bitcoin to fill positions they were short on, having bet its value would fall further. But it's difficult if not impossible to track short positions on the cryptocurrency.

Amazon's job listing says the company is looking for "an experienced product leader to develop Amazon's Digital Currency and Blockchain strategy and product roadmap."

The Seattle-based online retail giant currently has 74 listings for jobs whose descriptions inclu-

AP PHOTO



de the words "blockchain," the backbone of cryptocurrencies, many dating back to earlier this year. However, the jobs are not necessarily related to blockchain development, but list blockchain background as relevant experience for those applying for the job.

In a statement, Amazon rejected as "fabricated" a report that said it would be accepting payments in cryptocurrency by the end of the year, and that it could

launch its own digital coin in 2022.

But it did acknowledged that it is exploring what the use of cryptocurrencies would look like on Amazon.

"We believe the future will be built on new technologies that enable modern, fast, and inexpensive payments, and hope to bring that future to Amazon cus-

tomers as soon as possible," the company said.

Tom Forte, a senior research analyst who covers Amazon for the investment bank D.A. Davidson, said he doubts Amazon will accept bitcoin across its platform any time soon. Forte noted bitcoin accounts for less than 1% of transaction payments on Overstock.com, one of the few online retailers to accept the cryptocurrency.

"It's been an effective mechanism for trading and speculation, but it hasn't shown to date to be a form of currency for payments," Forte said.

Proponents of bitcoin seem to have shifted their pitch from its value as a digital currency, focusing more on applying it as "store of value," like gold or other commodities.

Bitcoin is not tied to a bank or government and allows users to spend money anonymously. The coins are created by users who "mine" them by lending computing power to verify other users' transactions. They receive bitcoins in exchange. MDT/AP

It acknowledged that it is exploring what the use of cryptocurrencies would look like on Amazon

AD

HOLIDAY RENTAL HOUSES

Lugar das Letras Casa de Gouvães

The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the worlds Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views. But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.

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AP PHOTO



Olympic outsider teams celebrate rare gold medals in Tokyo

JAMES ELLINGWORTH, TOKYO

The Tokyo Olympics have brought some unexpected gold medals for countries and teams which rarely, if ever, see their athletes on the podium. Here's a look at some of the teams which have won events despite having little history of Olympic success.

BERMUDA

The Atlantic island of only 65,000 people — they could all fit into the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo — has its first gold medalist after Flora Duffy won the women's triathlon yesterday. She is one of only two athletes representing the self-governing British territory at the Tokyo Games. Duffy had to put up with wind and driving rain to win her gold as a storm moved

up the Japanese coast. "I was Bermuda's first medal hope in many years. I wanted to achieve this for myself and my country. I was overwhelmed," she said.

PHILIPPINES

After 97 years of competing at the Olympics, the Philippines finally has a gold medal to celebrate. Hidilyn Diaz was up against the world record holder in the women's 55-kilo-

gram weightlifting category but still won. Diaz is now looking forward to a long-awaited return home after the coronavirus pandemic left her stranded in Malaysia without seeing family and friends. "To all the young generation in the Philippines, please dream high," Diaz said.

HONG KONG

Hong Kong last won a gold medal 25 years ago, a year before the

port city was returned to China from Britain. Windsurfer Lee Lai Shan had a sculpture installed in her honor on the beachfront. Fencer Cheung Ka Long could be in line for a similar honor after he became Hong Kong's second Olympic champion with victory in the men's saber on Monday. "It means a lot to show to the world we can do it," Cheung said.

KOSOVO

Sometimes it pays to specialize. Kosovo has made its name in judo since making its debut at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics. The Balkan nation has three medals in its history — all of them gold, all won by women and all in judo. Majlinda Kelmendi blazed the trail when she won the 52-kilogram category five years ago. When Distria Krasniqi and Nora Gjakova both won gold in Tokyo, Gjakova paid tribute to Kelmendi's pioneering example, saying "she opened the door for us to dream big."

TUNISIA

The North African country had won four gold medals since its Olympic debut at the 1960 Rome Games. Make that five after a surprising win from the outside lane by 18-year-old swimmer Ahmed Hafnaoui in the men's 400-meter freestyle. "I was in tears in my eyes because when I see the flag of my country and I hear the anthem in the background, it was great," Hafnaoui said. He could reach the podium for the second time in the upcoming 800, which has a final tomorrow.

Tokyo reports record virus cases days after Olympics begin

JAPAN'S capital, Tokyo, reported its highest number of new coronavirus infections yesterday, days after the Olympics began. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga urged people to avoid non-essential outings, but said there was no need to consider a suspension of the Games.

Tokyo reported 2,848 new COVID-19 cases, exceeding its earlier record of 2,520 daily cases on Jan. 7. That brings its total to more than 200,000 since the pandemic began last year.

Tokyo is under its fourth coronavirus state of emergency, which is to continue through the Olympics until just before the Paralympics start in late August.

Experts have warned that the more contagious delta variant could cause a surge during the Olympics, which started Friday.

Still, Japan has kept its cases and deaths lower than many other countries.



Nationwide, it reported 5,020 daily cases Monday for a total of 870,445 and 15,129 deaths. Its 7-day rolling average of cases is about 3.57 per 100,000 people, compared to 2.76 in India, 17.3 in the United States

and 53.1 in Britain, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Asked if he is considering an option of suspending the Games, Suga replied, "There is no worry about that," adding that

people have been moving about less since the Games started because of traffic controls and the government's request that they work remotely.

Suga again urged that people avoid non-essential

outings. "Please watch the Olympic Games on TV at home," he said.

Suga's government has been criticized for what some say is prioritizing the Olympics over the nation's health. His public support ratings have fallen to around 30% in recent media surveys, and there is little festivity surrounding the Games.

Health Minister Norihisa Tamura, asked about the jump in cases, said it was not a surprise. "Taking into consideration the global acceleration of infections because of the delta strain, which is taking over earlier variants, it was quite possible," he said.

Tamura blamed bars and restaurants that are still serving alcohol despite a ban under the state of emergency as a possible cause, instead of the Olympics.

Experts noted that cases among younger, unvac-

inated people are rising sharply as Japan's inoculation drive loses steam due to supply uncertainty. Many serious cases involve those in their 50s. They now dominate Tokyo's nearly 3,000 hospitalized patients and are gradually filling up available beds. Authorities reportedly plan to ask medical institutions to increase their capacity to about 6,000 beds for COVID-19 patients.

Japan's vaccination drive began late and slowly, but picked up dramatically in May for several weeks as the supply of imported vaccines stabilized and the government pushed to inoculate more people before the Olympics.

The government says 25.5% of Japanese have been fully vaccinated, still way short of the level believed to have any meaningful impact on reducing the risk for the general population.

MDT/AP

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

IMPORTANCE OF VACCINATION CANNOT BE OVERSTRESSED

In a grim reminder that the epidemic prevention and control work brooks no complacency, hardly had a new cluster of infections of the novel coronavirus in the border areas of the southwestern Yunnan province been brought under control than a fresh cluster emerged in Jiangsu province, which has since spilled over to other provinces.

Zhuhai in Guangdong province and Wuhu in Anhui province have begun mass testing for the virus after asymptomatic infections were found linked to the cases in Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu province, which is now conducting a second round of citywide nucleic acid testing.

That the latest clusters of local infections in Yunnan and Jiangsu both originated from imported cases also reinforces the importance of containing imported infections and preventing them from causing local community transmission.

The most valuable lesson to be learned from the recent cases is that things may need to be done a little differently than before. While strict restrictions like regional lockdowns worked wonders in the initial fight against the virus, making the country the first in the world to bring the virus under control by and large, from the perspective of the recovery of both the economy and people's livelihoods, the mobility controls cannot be rigidly maintained.

The constantly mutating virus may be increasingly infectious, and new upticks are continuously reported, even in some of the most vaccinated countries and communities. But those new developments are not devoid of good news, since it has been found that in one country and community after another, vaccinated individuals have stronger resistance against the virus. It is true that many who have taken the jab may still be infected with the virus. But apparently most of those vaccinated only experience minor symptoms, and the likelihood of them suffering an acute condition is much lower than it is for those who have not been vaccinated.

The Nanjing cluster has borne this out. On the one hand, many of those who got infected had been inoculated. On the other hand, none of them had serious symptoms.

And the spillover cases, mostly travelers who had been to Nanjing airport, where the first victims work, have largely been asymptomatic. This, according to medical experts, conveys two messages: that people should remain vigilant and adopt the recommended personal protection measures even after they have been vaccinated; and that domestic vaccines significantly reduce the seriousness of infection.

The country has administered more than 1.5 billion vaccine doses, which is a great achievement. But it is far from enough for a country with a population of 1.4 billion. Substantially ramping up the vaccination program is imperative.

But given the harsh reality of the global situation, considerable efforts are needed to improve public awareness of the importance of vaccination.

THAILAND SENDS COVID-19 PATIENTS TO HOMETOWNS BY TRAIN

Authorities in Thailand began transporting some people who tested positive for the coronavirus from Bangkok to their hometowns yesterday for isolation and treatment to alleviate the burden on the capital's overwhelmed medical system.

A train carrying more than 100 patients and medical workers in full protective gear left the city for the northeast.

It will drop patients off in seven provinces, where they will be met by health officers and taken to hospitals.

Medical authorities in Bangkok said Monday that all ICU beds for COVID-19 patients at public hospitals were full and that some of

the sick were being treated in emergency rooms. Officials said they have asked army medics to help out at civilian hospitals.

"We will continue this service until no COVID-19 patients who cannot get beds in Bangkok are left," said Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul.

He said buses, vans and even aircraft might be deployed to send people back to less badly affected provinces.

Of Thailand's total of nearly 500,000 confirmed cases and more than 4,000 fatalities, 137,263 cases and 2,176 deaths have been recorded in Bangkok.

THE BUZZ

AP PHOTO



Cardinal Angelo Becciu

CARDINAL, NINE OTHERS ON TRIAL AT VATICAN IN MONEY SCANDALS

FRANCES D'EMILIO, VATICAN CITY

A trial opened yesterday within the Vatican City's imposing walls of 10 defendants, including a once-powerful cardinal, in a case based on a sprawling probe into the allegedly criminal management of the Holy See's portfolio of assets, including donations by countless Catholics from the pews.

Among the defendants is an Italian prelate, Angelo Becciu, a longtime Vatican diplomat whom Pope Francis raised to cardinal's rank in 2018. After a web of scandals started unraveling during a two-year investigation, Francis gave Becciu the boot last year as chief of the Catholic church's saint-making office. Not waiting for find out the eventual verdict of a Vatican court, Francis also has removed Becciu's rights as a cardinal.

Less than three months ago, it would have been impossible for a cardinal to be in the dock in Vatican City State, which has its own justice system and even a jail. But Francis had a Vatican law changed so that Vatican-based cardinals and bishops can be prosecuted and judged by the Holy See's lay criminal tribunal as long as the

pontiff signs off on that. Previously, Vatican cardinals could only be judged by their peers, a court of three fellow cardinals.

Becciu, 73, is charged with embezzlement and with pressing a monsignor to recant information he supplied to prosecutors about the handling of the disastrous Vatican real estate investment in London. Becciu has denied any wrongdoing.

Since a nearly 500-page indictment was issued in early July, prosecutors have filed some 30,000 pages of supplemental documentation.

Defense lawyers say they haven't sufficient time to study the material.

The presiding judge, Giuseppe Pignatone, is a retired chief prosecutor of Rome who earlier in his career took on the Mafia and economic wrongdoing in Sicily.

To accommodate the largest criminal trial in the Vatican's modern history, the hearings are being held in a large hall converted into a courtroom in the Vatican Museums.

A pool of reporters accredited with the Vatican is being allowed to follow the proceedings in court, but their accounts aren't allowed to be filed until after the day's hearing ends.

Defendants are alleged to have had various roles in actions that effectively cost the Holy See tens of millions of dollars in donated funds through poor investments, dealings with shady money managers and purported favors to friends and family.

Looming large in the indictment is the London deal approved by the Vatican secretariat of state. An initial 200 million euros (now nearly \$240 million) was sunk into a fund operated by an Italian businessman. Half that money went into the real estate venture in the swank Chelsea neighborhood, an investment which eventually cost 350 million euros. By 2018, the original investment was losing money, and the Vatican scrambled to find an exit strategy.

Defendants include Cecilia Marogna, who was hired by Becciu as an external security consultant. Prosecutors allege she embezzled 575,000 euros in Vatican funds that Becciu had authorized for use as a ransom to free Catholic hostages abroad. Marogna has contended that charges she ran up were reimbursement of her intelligence-related expenses and other money was her compensation. **MDT/AP**

Iran recorded over 34,900 new coronavirus infections yesterday, setting the nation's single-day record for cases as vaccinations lag, public complacency deepens and the country's outbreak spirals further out of control. The previous record of 31,814 infections had been set only a day earlier, providing a sense of how quickly Iran's latest surge, fueled by the contagious delta variant, is mounting. Health authorities recorded 357 COVID-19 fatalities on Tuesday, bringing the total death toll to 89,479 — the highest in the Middle East.

Egypt An apartment building in the Egyptian capital of Cairo collapsed yesterday, killing a man while rescue workers hours later pulled his wife alive from under the rubble, officials said. The woman spent more than five hours buried under the rubble of the four-story building in the city's Waraq neighborhood, officials said. She was taken to hospital. No other residents were believed to be inside the building at the time of the collapse.

AP PHOTO



Germany An explosion at an industrial park for chemical companies killed at least one person yesterday, with 16 injured and four still missing. Fire officials who tested the air said there did not appear to be a danger to nearby residents after authorities initially urged people to shelter inside. The explosion at the waste management facility of the Chempark site in the city of Leverkusen, near Cologne, sent a large black cloud into the air. It took firefighters almost four hours to extinguish the fire that took hold after the explosion.

AP PHOTO



Austria Authorities said yesterday that two young boys have died from carbon monoxide poisoning and their mother is fighting for her life after the family used an emergency generator during a power outage. Upper Austria police said they were called Monday to a house in the town of Lasberg where three seriously ill people were reported to be in the basement.