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THE GOVERNMENT ADDED 12 NEW ITEMS TO THE IMMOVABLE ASSETS HERITAGE LIST FOR CLASSIFICATION AND PROTECTION

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CIVIL SERVANTS GET NO SALARY INCREASE FOR SECOND YEAR IN A ROW

P3

AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK TOWN OVERWHELMED BY RESPONSE TO FREE LAND OFFER, FROM AS FAR AS HONG KONG AND BRITAIN

P7



China An apparent gas explosion gutted part of a high rise in northern China yesterday morning, killing at least three people and injuring 30. It occurred at a hotel in Shenyang, a city of more than 8 million people and a major industrial center that is in the process of renovating and replacing decaying gas lines, state media reported.



South Korea's first domestically produced space rocket reached its desired altitude but failed to deliver a dummy payload into orbit in its first test launch yesterday. South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who observed the launch on-site, still described the test as an “excellent accomplishment” that takes the country a step further in its pursuit of a satellite launch program.



India celebrated giving its billionth COVID-19 vaccine dose yesterday, a hopeful milestone for the South Asian country where the delta variant fueled a crushing surge earlier this year and missteps initially held back its inoculation campaign. About half of India's nearly 1.4 billion people have received at least one dose while around 20% are fully immunized, according to Our World in Data. [More on p8](#)

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SCHOOL'S BACK

IF NO COVID CASES IN THE COMING DAYS

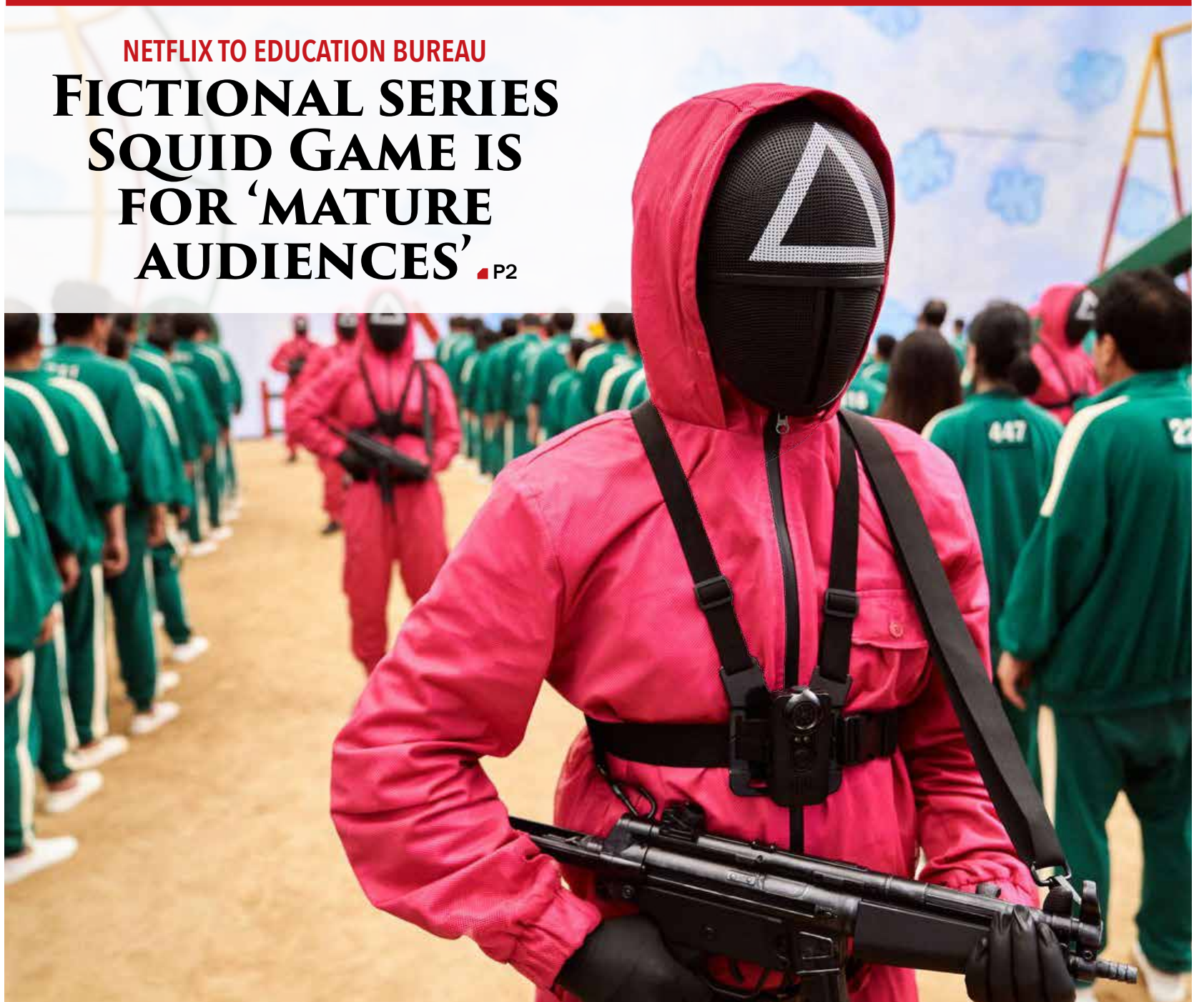
MONDAY

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NETFLIX TO EDUCATION BUREAU

FICTIONAL SERIES SQUID GAME IS FOR 'MATURE AUDIENCES'

P2



ANTHONY LAM

SQUID GAME

PARENTS, EDUCATORS SHOULD HAVE MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE WITH MINORS TO DEAL WITH VIOLENT FICTION: EXPERTS

ADULTS should take time to “discuss with children and teenagers after they view [violent content] to ease their own anxieties,” Nadia Chan Hei Ka, a UK-registered clinical psychologist and Macau-registered psychotherapist, told the Times.

Not all types of discussion will be helpful, though — only an open and critical conversation will do the job, she said while addressing the psychological impact of fictional series like Squid Game.

The conversations are not only to guide young viewers in their future actions, but also to offer parents and guardians the chance to understand their children's thoughts and feelings on what they have seen.

Sharing the same view is Paul Pun, executive director of Caritas Macau and retired school principal and social worker. He says “[educators] should prepare students with good perspectives on life, so when they come across negative elements, such as violent works of fiction, they [are] insusceptible to them. They will put more weight on the good side.”

Moreover, the charity manager stressed that human beings are always learning, meaning that our knowledge expands through experiences. “When we get burnt by a fire, we will adjust and be more careful in the future,” Pun explained.

Regular preparation is also important to building up protection against violent content, says Pun.

“For example, everybody fears tripping while walking, but they can regularly exercise to avoid that,” he suggests. “Furthermore, we can't be overly careful, so we also teach senior residents how to protect themselves when they trip.”

Chan suggests three other tactics to avoid becoming psychologically disturbed by any violent work of fiction: knowing our own limits and tolerance; setting boundaries; and being wary of binge watching.

Chan explains that the construction of ideas is complicated. It is not merely a single or double exposure to certain content — repetition is an important factor. Meanwhile, education and values are also important factors affecting the outcome.

“Behavior formation is complicated and multi-axial, which means very few, if any, factors are sufficient or necessary alone, but rather a combination of all these factors that will favor the occurrence of the targeted behavior,”

AP PHOTO



the clinical psychologist said.

The Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEDJ) recently issued a statement warning parents, guardians and educators about the potential impact on children and teenagers of Squid Game, a blockbuster Netflix series that has gained popularity around the globe.

In the statement, the DSEDJ describes the series as containing “violence, bloodshed, horror and distorted values.”

The bureau added that the violent and bloody scenes would have psychological impact on younger viewers. Worse, youngsters may seek to imitate the violence portrayed in the drama series.

“The distorted values will grow deep roots in their minds,” the authority warned.

The bureau reminds parents and guardians to provide assistance where necessary to younger generations when choosing which programs to watch. “Younger viewers should avoid watching shows that depict violence or pornography,” the DSEDJ added.

The Times contacted the online streaming platform for comment in response to the education regulator's warning, fears about the series' potential negative impacts, and its suggestions to viewers.

In reply, a Netflix spokesperson said by email: “Squid Game is rated 16+ and intended for mature audiences. We offer parents a wide variety of parental controls to make the appropriate choices for their families.”

From an artistic perspective, Agnes Lam finds the violence portrayed in Squid Game necessary to express the meaning of the fictional series

Agnes Lam, associate professor of communications at the University of Macau, said that making such content available to viewers, regardless of their ages, deserves greater attention and caution.

“For example, when news about suicide is reported, it requires

more careful attention. Communications studies don't say that each person reading news about suicide will follow suit, but normally those already mentally affected will feel greater impact,” she said.

Lam added that even adult viewers could be affected by the Netflix series, depending on their mental strength.

She also emphasized that discussion is crucial in the process of viewing the series. “[The show] is actually very dark, with implications that when a person needs to get out of the mire of life, they have to kill their friends, families or neighbors,” she said. “If a person is already unhappy, watching the show will bring more sadness.”

Whether or not the drama series is a good production as a whole remains a hot topic, at least among the members of a Macau social media group who hold regular discussions — and sometimes debates — on arts and literature.

Group members do not find the series very appealing, despite its global popularity. However, the selection, arrangement and pro-

duction of music in the series has received plaudits from the Australian violinists Brett Yang and Eddy Chen, who run the ‘TwoSetViolin’ YouTube channel with over 3.31 million subscribers. Their video discussing the musical score in the Netflix series has been viewed at least 345,000 times.

Both Yang and Chen agreed that the audio team picked a wonderful selection of music for the drama series.

The duo pointed out that the production team has used a work by Austrian composer Joseph Haydn in at least two scenes in the drama series, constructing a relaxing, if not vivid, atmosphere. Yet contrastingly, the show plays out as a relatively dark work.

From an artistic perspective, Lam finds the violence portrayed in the show meaningful and necessary to express the meaning of the fictional series.

Moreover, the use of children's games and snacks can easily accord with adult viewers, connecting them with their childhood memories. This can make the show more appealing. These are also symbols that repeatedly arouse different senses, contributing to the show's popularity.

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RENATO MARQUES



Schools to resume on Monday

ANTHONY LAM

AFTER almost a month of school suspensions caused by the Covid-19 outbreaks in late September and early October, students will return to school this coming Monday, Kong Chi Meng, vice-director of the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), announced yesterday.

However, the DSEDJ official stressed that a pre-condition for the resumption of school is the city not seeing any new Covid-19 cases in the coming days.

Due to the relatively long school suspension, Kong said that the education regulator has instructed schools to focus on students' adaptability and consolidation of previously taught content, meaning that teaching staff are not encouraged to teach new material during the early phase of the return to school.

Kong revealed that parents will have the discretion to decide whether their children return to

school during the first week back. Those who do not return next week may be considered not officially absent, at the discretion of individual schools.

Cross-border students may return to school from Monday. The usual dedicated border clearance channels for these students will resume operation as well.

Should no new cases be detected by Monday, higher education institutions will also resume face-to-face lectures on the same day.

Monday will also see the resumption of private extracurricular education facilities, such as tuition centers and life education providers.

Teaching staff at all educational facilities are required to take a nucleic acid test every seven days or have received at least one shot of a Covid-19 vaccine.

Without a representative at the regular health press conference yesterday, the Social Welfare Bureau announced separately that nurseries will also reopen on Monday.

Aged care homes and daycare facilities will also

resume normal operation. Visitors must hold a valid negative nucleic acid test result or have received at least one vaccine jab.

A recent equipment malfunction at Kuok Kim, a third-party nucleic acid test provider, has delayed results for about 2,200 test takers.

When questioned yesterday at the regular health press conference, public health doctor Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, reported that the Health Bureau (SSM), as the supervising entity, has ordered Kuok Kim to submit a report within three days to explain the incident.

The SSM has also required the service provider to put contingencies in place should similar situations arise in the future.

According to Leong, once the SSM became aware of the situation on the day of the incident, it ordered Kuok Kim to contact those affected and make a public announcement about the issue.

During the early stages of the incident, some social media users complained that they had received no notification whatsoever from Kuok Kim.

With regard to compensation, Leong recommended that those affected file a complaint and request with Kuok Kim.

Questioned on the price of the test in Macau, Leong said that the government has been in negotiations with third-party service providers about lowering the price.

It was revealed by the press that tests in Zhuhai

are charged differently according to the type of test – grouped or individual – with a grouped test being less expensive.

According to some members of the press, some pregnant employees have been forced by their employers to take the Covid-19 vaccine, which is not required by the SSM.

Leong explained that, although many pregnant individuals worldwide have been inoculated, considering the relatively low risk levels in Macau those who are pregnant can temporarily be exempted from receiving the jab.

She added that if employees find it necessary, they can file a complaint with the SSM.

Leong also reiterated that foreigners and non-Chinese-national Macau residents who want to enter mainland China from Macau should get the Sinopharm inactivated vaccine as part of their visa application requirements.

No salary rise for civil servants in 2022

RENATO MARQUES

THE civil service salary index will remain unchanged for the second consecutive year in 2022, Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong said on the sidelines of a press conference held by the Executive Council.

Cheong said that the decision to keep the salary index, which regulates the salaries of all civil servants, unchanged was made early on by the committee which considers the topic. The decision takes into account several factors, such as the inflation rate and cost of living.

This is the first leak of a series of announcements to be included in Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng's Policy Address for 2022, set to be delivered in mid-November this year.

The decision to freeze salaries in the public sector has been said to take into account the current uncertainty, as well as the injections of money into the economy in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic made through the use of monetary reserves. The index will remain, at least for another year, at 91 patacas per index point – a level established for 2020 when the government decided to raise salaries 3.4%, or the equivalent of 3 patacas per index point.

Last year, when a similar announcement was



made, several experts pointed out that the measure also had the purpose of easing pressure on the economically-embattled private sector by not further expanding the gap between public and private sector salaries.

In the same briefing, Cheong added that the government will also exercise strict control over the hiring of new staff, expecting that the number of civil servants will remain stable and imposing a theoretical ceiling of 38,000.

"We want to keep that figure on the ceiling of 38,000 and so we are asking all the services to make full use of the resources they currently have," Cheong said, adding, "Of course, if we need specific people we will hire then, but this will be a one-off situation and not a hiring of dozens of new people to the public sector."

NAT PROVIDER SAYS RESULTS DELAY DUE TO MALFUNCTION

THIRD-PARTY nucleic acid test provider Kuok Kim experienced a malfunction on Tuesday, resulting in a number of people not getting their test results shown on their health codes.

Some of those affected said that Kuok Kim did not offer an explanation. Queues of test takers were seen Wednesday at the office of the company, urging it to provide an explanation.

Kuok Kim apologized for the delay later that night, saying that it was caused by a malfunction in some of its laboratory equipment. An extra free-of-charge test was offered to those affected.



AD

OVER 80% OF GALAXY EMPLOYEES VACCINATED

Close to 82% of Galaxy Entertainment Group's employees have been vaccinated to date, the gaming operator announced yesterday. Since the launch of the Government's vaccination program, "GEG has held different promotional activities and initiatives to help its team members obtain information about the vaccination program and bookings, as well as to motivate them to get vaccinated, including the offering of Special Vaccine Leave for its team members. The company hopes "to encourage more team members to join the Macau SAR Government's call for vaccination" and to help the community achieve herd immunity.

ROAD TAX LABEL SCRAPPED IN THE NAME OF EFFICIENCY

The receipt label which provides proof of payment for the local annual road tax for motor vehicles has been dropped by the government. In a press conference held by the Executive Council to present the changes, spokesperson André Cheong said that the removal of the requirement to display this label on vehicles is a bid to simplify the process, reflecting the government's efforts in digitalization. Cheong explained that, while the actual payment of the tax had been simplified by allowing several methods of online payment, the need to collect a printed label was an inconvenient downside of the process. According to the official, the label was already unnecessary. Law enforcement agents have had, for some time, tools which allow them to check a vehicle's tax status in real time by scanning the vehicle's license plate.

BO TO STOP PHYSICAL PRINTING, DISTRIBUTION

The government has announced that printed publication of the government's official gazette (Boletim Oficial) will be discontinued. From January 1, 2022, the BO will only be available in electronic format. From next year, the BO will only be printed in cases where it is impossible to publish it online, such as a severe failure or system malfunction. According to official figures disclosed, subscriptions to the printed version of the BO had dropped from 600 copies in 2000 to just about 80 last year.

GOV'T TO CREATE NEW DRUG AFFAIRS BUREAU

RENATO MARQUES

YESTERDAY, the government announced its intention to create a new bureau to handle all matters related to drug registration and administration, including those used in Traditional Chinese Medicine. The announcement was made by the Executive Council (ExCo) yesterday in a press conference held at the government's headquarters.

The new Drug Monitoring and Management Bureau (ISAF) is expected to commence operation on January 1, 2022, the effective date of the administrative regulation leading to its creation, said ExCo spokesperson André Cheong.

The bureau will be headed by a president assisted by two vice-presidents, and will be comprised of five departments and six divisions.

From January next year, the new bureau will replace and expand the responsibilities currently attributed to the Department of Pharmaceutical Affairs, a sub-unit operating under the Health Bureau (SSM).

Within the new bureau's juris-



diction will be the study, coordination, and implementation of policies regarding the supervision and administration of drugs and medicines in Macau, including the registration of all new drugs and supervision of pharmaceutical companies and pharmacists.

Additionally, the ISAF will have authority to create a new legal re-

gime aiming to unify the management and use of small medical devices, specifically the medical equipment used by nurses and physicians for the administration of drugs.

Cheong explained that the majority of the ISAF's 105 staff will have been directly transferred from the former SSM department.

According to information provided, a total of 62 staff members from SSM are included in this planned transfer and integration into the new bureau.

Under the government's policy to constrain the number of civil servants, the bureau will recruit only essential staff members and will do so in a phased manner as required by the bureau's needs and workload.

Concurrently, and taking into account the creation of the new bureau, the ExCo also presented a second administrative regulation project that will transform the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) into a department with two sub-units.

The first sub-unit will be dedicated exclusively to the prevention and control of infectious diseases, while the second will be dedicated to health promotion.

The new regulation also attributed new responsibilities to the SSM, including the promotion and expansion of the medical record transfer system which allows patients' medical records and data to be shared between all public and private healthcare providers.

According to Cheong, the system is intended to ensure that a physician can immediately access their patient's medical records, avoiding mistakes and any unnecessary or overlapping diagnostic exams.

Gov't adds 12 new items to immovable assets heritage list

THE government has added 12 new items to the immovable assets heritage list for the purpose of classification and protection, the Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong announced yesterday in a press conference organized by the Executive Council.

The 12 new inclusions are

the third batch of immovable assets listed by the government, comprising a total of seven memorial items, four buildings of unique architecture, and one architecture cluster.

Among the newly listed are fragments and remnants related to the Ruins of Saint Paul's College surrounds as well as

several items related to the former Ká Hó Leprosarium in Coloane.

This third batch will be included in the list of assets to be classified and protected through an administrative regulation that enters into force the day after its publication in the government's official gazette. **RM**



NEW LISTINGS

MEMORIAL ITEM

- Historical remains found in an open ditch in the rock substratum, at Rua de D. Belchior Carneiro
- The Ruins of Saint Paul's College, which include the remains of the College, in Calçada de S. Paulo, sections of the Old Wall in Pátio do Espinho, and the section of the Old Wall in Beco do Craveiro
- Seak Kam Tong Hang Toi Pagoda, at Travessa da Ponte, No. 7, in Macau
- Sam Seng Pagoda, on the land plot next to Nossa Senhora de Ká Hó Road, in Coloane
- Pier No. 1, at Largo do Pagode da Barra, in Macau
- The former Taipa Pier, at Rotunda Tenente P.J. da Silva Loureiro, in Taipa
- The Coloane Pier, at Largo do Cais, in Coloane

BUILDING OF UNIQUE ARCHITECTURE

- Building at Calçada da Vitória, No. 55, in Macau
- Building on Estrada Nova, no. 2, in Macau
- Nossa Senhora da Misericórdia Home, at Largo da Companhia, 17-21, in Macau
- The Church of Our Lady of Sorrows at Nossa Senhora de Ká Hó Road, No. 239, in Coloane

ARCHITECTURAL CLUSTER

- Former Ká Hó Leprosarium of Vila de Nossa Senhora, on Estrada de Nossa Senhora de Ká Hó, No. 239, in Coloane



SINCE the spread of Covid-19, masks have become a daily necessity for all of us. For Macao's integrated resorts, a mask is more than just an anti-epidemic measure; it also serves to present a professional and socially responsible team image.

As the largest integrated resort operator in Macao, Sands China has been continuously striving to support "Made in Macao" enterprises and local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to thrive and grow. Following a comprehensive bidding process, local Macao company 853 Face Mask became one of Sands China's suppliers, designing and producing masks for the corporation.

Established in Macao, 853 Face Mask is a registered trademark of Marketing by Macau-

Sands China supports Made in Macao enterprise

factory Medical Supplies Limited (MMSL) and was one of the earliest companies created specifically for the purpose of manufacturing surgical masks in Macao. As implied by its name, the brand is strongly associated with Macao and strives to provide the city with quality masks. The SME was established after a month of almost complete confinement in Macao due to the Covid-19 pandemic that has disrupted the entire world.

According to Sands China, 853 Face Mask stood out be-

cause its masks are produced locally and have ASTM Level 3 and EN14683 Type 3 accreditations, which are recognized as high standards in the medical field. "Plus, 853 Face Mask has a very stable team, which makes communication between company and client efficient and reliable, and ensures quality for both design and end product," said Gary Choi, senior manager of Procurement and Supply Chain at Sands China Ltd. "It took only one month or so from layout and design to production. We believe this demonstrates the stability and dedication of their team," he added.

Amy Chan, general manager of 853 Face Mask, also gave great acknowledgement to her team. "They are young and energetic. Some of them studied overseas in the areas of design, marketing or public relations, and have brought new ideas to the team from time to time," she said.

The cooperation between Sands China and 853 Face Mask began early this year when the SME set up two mask vending machines at The Venetian Macao. Guests gave good feedback regarding the masks and more people came to know about

the "Made in Macao" brand. In the middle of the year, 853 Face Mask built a working relationship with Sands China. Chan said: "We formed a team specially for orders from Sands China, and through continuous communication and improvements to the design layouts, we were able to create masks that satisfied our customer's needs and requirements."

The factory now runs four production lines – three are designated for adult masks and one is for children's masks. More than 100,000 masks are manufactured daily. Retail store was also set up this year. The local SME is still working hard to develop a new series of masks to meet market demands.

As one of Sands China's suppliers, 853 Face Mask also participated in the Sands Shopping Carnival this year and received positive feedback from residents and visitors. "We are looking forward to join again, as it was a great platform for showcasing our products and raising consumer awareness of our brand" said the company's head.

As the largest sale event in Macao, Sands Shopping Carnival has supported the Macao SAR government's Consume for the Economy initiative and

consumption e-voucher scheme for two consecutive years now. It has provided a free business platform for local SMEs and Sands retailers amid the Covid-19 pandemic period and created a weekend destination for local residents and tourists.

Chan believes that 853 Face Mask benefits from working with a large-scale enterprise like Sands China. "We improve our brand image and become more knowledgeable about the demands of large enterprises, which in turn pushes our team to improve."

Although the SME has only been operating for over one year, Chan already has a clear map for its future. "Given that the pandemic is not concluded, we will put mask production as a priority," she said. She assures that the company will develop more alternatives which are both protective and fashionable.

Sands China encourages local SMEs, such as those in the face mask market, to be proactive in promoting their products. Besides producing a greater variety of masks, SME suppliers are encouraged to take actions such as participating in exhibitions to explore new business opportunities.



EVERGRANDE

STRUGGLING CHINESE DEVELOPER CALLS OFF \$2.6B ASSET SALE

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

A major Chinese real estate developer whose struggle to avoid defaulting on billions of dollars of debt rattled financial markets says it has called off the sale of a \$2.6 billion stake in a subsidiary and has made no progress in selling other assets.

China Evergrande Group's planned sale of 50.1% of its property management unit to a rival, Hopson Development Holdings, was canceled because the buyer "had not met the prerequisite to make a general offer for shares," Evergrande said late Wednesday in a statement through the Hong Kong stock exchange. It gave no other details.

Evergrande's struggle to reduce its 2 trillion yuan (\$310 billion) of debt to comply with curbs on borrowing by Chi-



na's real estate industry has prompted fears a default might trigger a financial crisis.

The Chinese central bank has tried to allay those fears and said Friday the "risk of spillo-

ver" to the financial industry is controllable.

The ruling Communist Party is pressing companies to reduce debt levels it considers dangerously high.

In a separate announcement, Evergrande said except for the sale of shares in a Chinese bank, "there has been no material progress" in plans to shed other assets to "ease the liquidity issues" of the company.

Evergrande missed payments in late September and early October to investors in U.S. dollar-denominated bonds issued abroad. The company said a 30-day grace period to make those payments before it would be declared in default had yet to expire.

Economists say Beijing can prevent a credit crunch if Evergrande defaults on debts to Chinese banks and bon-

dholders but wants to avoid appearing to arrange a bailout while it tries to force other companies to reduce reliance on debt.

If regulators get involved, they are likely to focus on protecting families that paid for apartments that are yet to be built, not banks and bondholders, economists say. That would cause bigger losses for banks, construction companies and small investors who own Evergrande debt.

Another real estate company, Fantasia Holdings Group, announced Oct. 5 it failed to make a \$205.7 million payment due to bondholders.

Hundreds of smaller Chinese developers have gone bankrupt since regulators began tightening control over the industry's finances in 2017.

The slowdown in construction helped to depress China's economic growth an unexpectedly low 4.9% over a year earlier in the three months ending in September. Forecasters expect growth to decelerate further if the financing curbs stay in place. **MDT/AP**

PRESS

Beijing boots Caixin financial news from approved media list

CHINA'S leading financial magazine has been dropped from an official list of outlets websites can republish, reducing the exposure of a rare independent voice as the authorities tightens control over the media.

Caixin Media is privately funded, unlike most state-run news organizations. The Cyberspace Administration of China dropped it from a list of more than 1,300 news outlets and government agencies whose content can be republished.

Internet platforms are barred from publishing content from non-approved sources. Caixin was on the previous list, published in 2016.

Another independent Chinese newspaper, The Economic Observer, was also dropped from this year's list.

The Cyberspace Administration said in a notice that outlets omitted from the list published this week "no longer meet requirements, have poor daily performance and



lack influence." The aim was to maintain the "seriousness and credibility" of the list, it said.

Caixin's exclusion means readers in China will have to visit its website or app directly to read its news stories, instead of reading them on popular news aggregator websites.

The company did not comment when contacted by phone and email.

Earlier this month, draft regulations issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, China's top planning body, said that private investments into

news gathering and distributing operations would be banned.

The draft rules come as China's Communist Party tightens its grip around private businesses and deals a further blow to freedom of expression.

Caixin is known for being bolder than most media, pushing limits imposed to ensure that news agencies and social media platforms censor politically sensitive or inappropriate topics. The outlet is known for its investigative reporting on corruption and other issues.

Founded by prominent

editor Hu Shuli, the company has a think tank, a data company, investable indices, and research firms.

The Economic Observer also has been critical of the government at times. In 2011, it ignored a government censorship directive and published an in-depth feature about a high-speed train collision that killed dozens.

The Chinese news landscape is tightly controlled by the government, which blocks online access to many Western news organizations such as the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and the BBC. State media, such as the China Daily, People's Daily and Global Times, tend to publish stories in line with government messaging.

It's not the first time Caixin has run afoul of authorities.

In 2016, China's cyber watchdog suspended Caixin's credentials for two months, prohibiting online sites from syndicating its content and accusing Caixin of putting out "problematic" news reports.

That followed Caixin's coverage of opposition by a group of lawyers to new regulations set out by China's Ministry of Justice. **MDT/AP**

GUO SHUQING

CHINA AIMS FOR BETTER FINANCE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH REGULATION, INNOVATION

CHINA strives to create a better finance environment through strengthened laws, regulations, and innovation, Guo Shuqing, chairman of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, told Xinhua in an interview.

As the world's second-largest modern financial system, China's financial system has strong vitality with its openness, competitiveness, fairness, and inclusiveness at a high level, said Guo, also Party secretary of the People's Bank of China, the central bank.

In terms of competitiveness, he said, there are more than 4,000 institutions in China's banking system. The market share of the four major state banks is only about 34 percent, with the industry concentration far lower than that of developed countries.

In addition, China's mobile payment, online credit, and internet insurance businesses are booming,

and these fields are dominated by private capital, he said.

"Without the support of financial institutions and policies, it is difficult to have such a situation," Guo added.

On the other hand, Guo admitted that "monopolies and unfair competition are prominent problems in certain areas of China's financial sector."

He cited the disorderly expansion of industrial capital in the finance field, illegal financial activities disguised as "financial innovation," and unfair competition of some large internet platforms in various financial services as major problems in the sector.

Therefore, anti-monopoly and preventive measures against disorderly capital expansion are urgently needed and conducive to fostering a new development paradigm, advancing high-quality development, and promoting common prosperity, Guo said. **XINHUA**

AUSTRALIA

Outback town overwhelmed by response to free land offer

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

THE Australian Outback town of Quilpie hoped its offer of free residential land to anyone who would make it their home might attract five new families to the remote community of 800. But authorities have been overwhelmed by more than 250 inquiries in less than two weeks from around Australia and internationally.

The Quilpie [Quill-Pea] Shire Council came up with the novel idea to overcome a housing shortage, an obstacle to filling jobs in the cattle and sheep ranching region of western Queensland state.

People who buy a block of land, build a house on it for less than 750,000 Australian dollars (\$560,000), and live in it for six months are eligible for a AUD12,500 (\$9,400) grant.

With fully serviced, 1,000-square meter (about a quarter acre) blocks selling for the same amount as the grant, the council is effectively giving the land away.



Seen from the above: the town of Quilpie

The grant was the idea of the council's chief executive, Justin Hancock. The 30-year-old spent six months in a retirement village cottage when he first arrived in Quilpie this year because of the shire's housing shortage.

Quilpie has recently needed nurses, teachers, mechanics, butchers, trade apprentices, bar tenders and more.

Enquiries came from as far

Enquiries came from as far away as Britain, India, Hong Kong and New Zealand

away as Britain, India, Hong Kong and New Zealand, the council said. But home buyers need to be Australian citizens or permanent residents to qualify for the grant.

"If we could get five new fami-

lies to the shire, for us that would be a massive success," Hancock said yesterday. "To see the interest, it was a little overwhelming."

Real estate prices have soared across much of Australia throu-

ghout the pandemic due to record low interest rates and extended lockdowns in the largest cities, Sydney and Melbourne, which have sent residents searching for more spacious homes in smaller towns.

Most of the interest in coronavirus-free Quilpie has come from the state capital, Brisbane, a city of 2.4 million on the Pacific Ocean 1,000 kilometers to the east.

But there is also interest from Melbourne -- which local media report has been locked down longer than any other city in the world -- the city of Newcastle, and Western Australia state.

Both young families and retirees are considering the Quilpie move. Their reasons vary.

"People who are coming out of lockdown are saying 'I want wide open spaces,' and we have plenty of that," Hancock said. The shire covers 68,000 square kilometres.

Two grants will also be cashed by Quilpie locals, one by council employee Tom Hennessy, 23, and his 24-year-old school teacher fiancée, Tessa McDougall. The couple bought a block in August.

"I love Quilpie. It's a great place. Everyone's friendly," Hennessy said.

Hennessy was born in Quilpie and his fiancée came a year ago from Brisbane where relatives struggle to buy houses and make mortgage repayments.

"They're a little bit jealous of us," Hennessy said. **MDT/AP**

AD

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COVID-19

India celebrates 1B vaccine doses, hopes to speed second shots

KRUTIKA PATHI,
NEW DELHI

INDIA celebrated giving its billionth COVID-19 vaccine dose yesterday, a hopeful milestone for the South Asian country where the delta variant fueled a crushing surge earlier this year and missteps initially held back its inoculation campaign.

About half of India's nearly 1.4 billion people have received at least one dose while around 20% are fully immunized, according to Our World in Data. Many of those shots have come in just the past couple of months, after the rollout languished in the first half of the year amid vaccine shortages and problems with the system for rolling them out.

The success of the campaign has been credited with driving down coronavirus cases since the devastating months at the start of the year when India was recording hundreds of thousands infections a day, hospitals buckled under the pressure, and crema-

toriums and graveyards became overwhelmed. But experts warn that India must speed up the delivery of second shots in order to ensure the outbreak doesn't flare again.

The country widened the gap between shots from 12 to 16 weeks in order to administer more first doses at a time when supply was limited and infections were surging — a tactic countries like the United Kingdom have used in times of crisis. But it created a lag in getting people fully immunized.

India is using vaccines that require two doses. Ramping up the second dose is "an important priority," V.K. Paul, the head of the country's COVID-19 taskforce, said last week.

"We would like to see this number go up. Complete coverage is absolutely critical," Paul said.

For now, the country appears to have enough vaccines to do that — but its supplies will be watched closely since it is a major supplier of the shots globally. When it halted exports in April as cases sur-

ged at home, it had a devastating impact on poorer countries that particularly rely on doses from India. Exports resumed earlier this month.

The government is now optimistic that the country's rising vaccine supply will be enough to cover its international and domestic commitments. Both of the two main suppliers have ramped up production, with the Serum Institute of India now producing around 220 million doses a month and Bharat Biotech about 30 million, Paul said.

Still, experts say the vaccine situation will need constant review. "There can be no written-in-stone rule — if infections rise drastically, they can again stop exports until there's enough doses," said K. Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India.

Yesterday, India confirmed more than 18,400 new cases and 160 deaths — dramatically below the worst days in May when daily fatalities exceeded 4,000. Overall, the country

has recorded around 34 million infections and over 450,000 deaths, according to the Health Ministry, though those figures, as elsewhere, are likely undercounts.

Even states where infections were swelling a few weeks ago, such as Kerala along the tropical Malabar coast, have seen a sustained decline.

"There is a sense of comfort that India has suffered the worst of the delta variant, but this must be accompanied with a feeling of caution," said Reddy. "Even if cases go up, we are unlikely to see the scale of the surge earlier — if that does happen, it would be fairly unexpected."

India earlier said it aimed to vaccinate all eligible adults by the end of the year, but experts say the current pace of immunizations will need to increase to meet this goal, even though it has already ramped up significantly. Though the campaign began in January, by mid-June, only about 3.5% of the population had been fully vaccinated.

India celebrated the achievement of 1 billion shots with fanfare — though it's not that surprising since it's the world's second-most populous country. The first country to reach that milestone, China, is the most populous.

Billboards announcing the feat with a photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi were posted across New Delhi. Outside a local politician's house in the capital city, residents gathered as sweets were distributed. A song and film to commemorate the moment have been released, and the Indian flag was unfurled at the historic Red Fort in New Delhi.

In recent months, life in India has swung back to normal. Markets buzz with activity, foreign tourists are allowed again after a 19-month hiatus and the country is gearing up to celebrate Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

But there are fears this could be a lull before a storm. Even though India may have borne the brunt of the delta variant already, things could escalate quickly if a new variant emerges — either from within the country or outside.

"If the virus becomes different or mutates, it changes the dynamics. This could change everything," Paul said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1966 DOUBLE-AGENT BREAKS OUT OF JAIL



One of Britain's most notorious double-agents, George Blake, has escaped from prison in London after a daring break-out believed to have been masterminded by the Soviet Union.

Wardens at Wormwood Scrubs prison last saw him at the evening roll call, at 1730 GMT.

An hour-and-a-half later, his cell was discovered to be empty.

After a short search, the escape route was found. Bars in a window at the end of a landing had been sawn away and a rope ladder hung down inside the prison wall.

Blake is believed to have taken advantage of the free association allowed between prisoners on Saturday afternoons in the long-term wing, where he had his cell.

He had served a little over five years of his 42-year sentence.

He was not under high security at the prison, and the privileges he enjoyed have been heavily criticised in the wake of his escape.

He was removed from the list of likely escapers after only a year, and wardens were said to have been lulled into a false sense of security by his seeming acceptance of his exceptionally long sentence.

Blake was charged under the Official Secrets Act in May 1961. During his trial, part of which was held in camera, he pleaded guilty to five counts of passing on secrets to the Soviet authorities.

He was sentenced to the maximum of 14 years on each of three counts, to run consecutively — a total of 42 years. It was the longest jail term any British court had handed down to an individual to date.

He spent nine years as a double-agent after being converted to Communism while a prisoner of war in Seoul, during the Korean War.

During this time, he is believed to have betrayed the names of more than 40 British agents to the Soviets. Many disappeared, and were thought to have been executed.

His actions devastated British secret service operations in the Middle East. He is believed to have passed on the names of almost every British agent working in Cairo, Damascus and Beirut.

Lord Parker, Lord Chief Justice, the judge sentencing him, likened his actions to treason, and said, "It is one of the worst that can be envisaged other than in a time of war."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

After escaping from Wormwood Scrubs, George Blake made his way to Moscow, where he has lived ever since in a state-owned flat.

He left his three children behind, divorcing his wife and starting a new family in Russia. Once in the USSR, he was treated as a national hero.

He published his autobiography, *No Other Choice*, in 1990. He received about £60,000 from the book's British publisher before the government stepped in to freeze the remaining £90,000 he had been promised.

In May 2003, he accused the British government of breaching his human rights by confiscating the money. He was awarded £5,000 compensation in September 2006.

In a television interview broadcast by the state television channel in 2002 to celebrate his 80th birthday, he described the years he has spent in Russia as "the happiest of my life".

He has always insisted that none of the spies he betrayed was executed.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Send your focus towards the talents you've kept waiting in the wings, Aries. Friday's skies work to remind you that you have something special to offer the world as the moon marches through practical Taurus.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Luna's presence here increases emotional responses and creates a strong need to put yourself first, while her variety of soothing aspects throughout the day provides a gentle optimistic atmosphere to enjoy.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

The moon meanders through peace-seeking Taurus, encouraging you to reconnect your sense of spirituality, rest, and surrender. Luna's multitude of supportive contacts makes it easy to renew yourself.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Friday's cosmic landscape works to soften the blow of whatever came up yesterday, and the grounded Taurus moon offers you some relief via the support of your social network.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Devote some time to untangling your current career crisis, Leo. The moon's presence in easygoing Taurus encourages you to get practical about the affairs of your real-world and reputation.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

It's easy for you to become buried under mounds of mental pressure. Aim to dismantle any overwhelming feelings yourself break free from boring routines that keep your mind stuck in its usual grooves.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Be extra gentle with yourself today, Libra. You're in need of some delicate healing time spent away from the world after yesterday's emotional explosions were unearthed.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Honesty is the best policy. You may find that you need to apply some softening touches on the tail end of any tough conversations that came up yesterday, and today's skies help you do just that.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You're liable to overextend yourself when it comes to your workflow, and while you're craving some productive action today, it's important not to take it to the point of burnout.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Mercury's recent retrograde phase has had you questioning where your energy belongs along these lines, as you've deeply reviewed concepts around your career.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

The last few days have tested your patience and amplified your mental and emotional stress, making it critical that you find your footing and embrace a healing-first attitude towards yourself.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Things are beginning to brighten up for you. It's been a challenging couple of weeks, as you've needed to move through some emotionally charged material concerning your experience of intimacy.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	5	16	fine
Harbin	-3	13	fine
Tianjin	11	15	rain
Urumqi	12	15	overcast
Xi'an	14	17	rain
Lhasa	9	13	fine
Chengdu	16	18	overcast
Chongqing	13	17	overcast
Kunming	7	10	rain
Nanjing	22	24	rain
Shanghai	9	17	overcast
Wuhan	-3	12	fine
Hangzhou	9	18	overcast
Taipei	-4	11	fine
Guangzhou	15	19	rain
Hong Kong	19	29	cloudy

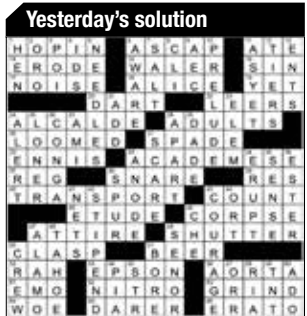
WORLD

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
Moscow	5	12	rain
Frankfurt	6	12	overcast
Paris	8	15	overcast
London	4	14	overcast
New York	13	21	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Out of patience; 6- Hit with an open hand; 10- Sibilate; 14- Bouquet; 15- One with will power?; 16- A dish with many ingredients; 17- Grinder; 18- Prefix with -drome; 19- Swedish soprano Jenny; 20- PC key; 21- Like corn tassels; 23- Actor Kinski; 24- Opt; 26- Tree covered land; 27- Beginner; 29- Nonsense; 31- Converse competitor; 32- Spur part; 33- Blackguard; 36- Make urban; 40- Noteworthy period; 41- ____, I'm Adam; 42- Elevator man; 43- Conger catcher; 44- Drop a security from an exchange; 46- Elbow; 48- ____, con pollo; 49- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 50- Piece of poetry; 52- Nav. officer; 55- Univ. recruiting group; 56- Wife of a rajah; 57- Boat often made of birchbark, canvas, or fiberglass; 59- ____, soup yet?; 60- On a single occasion; 61- Wearies; 62- Goes out with; 63- Red or white, in the blood; 64- Elegance;

DOWN: 1- Renown; 2- Psyche's love; 3- The good life; 4- Actress Thurman; 5- 3.26 light-years; 6- Biblical verb; 7- Vichysoise ingredient; 8- Breezy; 9- Maven; 10- Empty; 11- Greek epic poem; 12- Nasal cavity; 13- Lays down the lawn; 22- Clinch; 23- Eucalyptus eater; 25- One telling tales; 26- Stimulate; 27- Appoint; 28- Superior to; 29- Like some bears and icecaps; 30- Do the crawl; 32- Sat on the back of a horse; 33- Urban dwellers collectively; 34- Israeli weapons; 35- Take a breather; 37- Last letter of the Greek alphabet; 38- "____ Rider" starred Clint Eastwood; 39- ____ contendere; 43- Decrees; 44- AMA members; 45- Builds; 46- Snare; 47- Set free; 48- Prospero's servant; 49- Pupil's place; 50- Turbine blade; 51- Business letter abbr.; 53- Christmas; 54- Zaire's Mobutu ____ Seko; 56- Incredibly powerful mythical bird; 58- Small island;



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In the Depths of the Sea, Ng Ka Ian

THE AUTUMN SALON 2021

LEAVES OF ART

STAFF REPORTER

THE Autumn Salon 2021, organized by the Art For All Society (AFA) and Fundação Oriente, will open at 5:30 p.m. tomorrow at Casa Garden.

The exhibition will feature 84 art pieces by around 80 Macau artists, selected from an open competition by the organization, featuring applications from artists with differing art styles and age groups.

The selected works come in a variety of media, including oil and acrylic painting, sketches, video,

photography, sculpture, engraving and installation.

This year's participants include young and aspiring artists, as well as those who have already established themselves in Macau's contemporary art scene, including Alexandre Marreiros, Fan Sai Cheong, Francisco Ricarte, Kit Lee, Luna Cheong, Sit Ka Kit, Un Sio San, Yung Lai Jing and the exhibition curator, Alice Kok.

Works have been selected for the "Prémio Fundação Oriente para as Artes Plásticas" (Visual Arts Prize), an award where the winner will have the chance to visit Portugal on

a one-month artistic exchange program.

The prize winner will be announced at the opening ceremony of the Autumn Salon.

The AFA and Fundação Oriente have historically worked on creating platforms for artists, opening windows of opportunity for them to interact and learn from one another. By inviting collectors and visitors to the exhibition, young artists are given the chance to show their work to the public and develop their own art.

The Autumn Salon 2021 will be at Casa Garden, Macau Delegation of Fundação Oriente. The exhibition will be open to the public from October 24 to November 28.

The gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day except Monday.



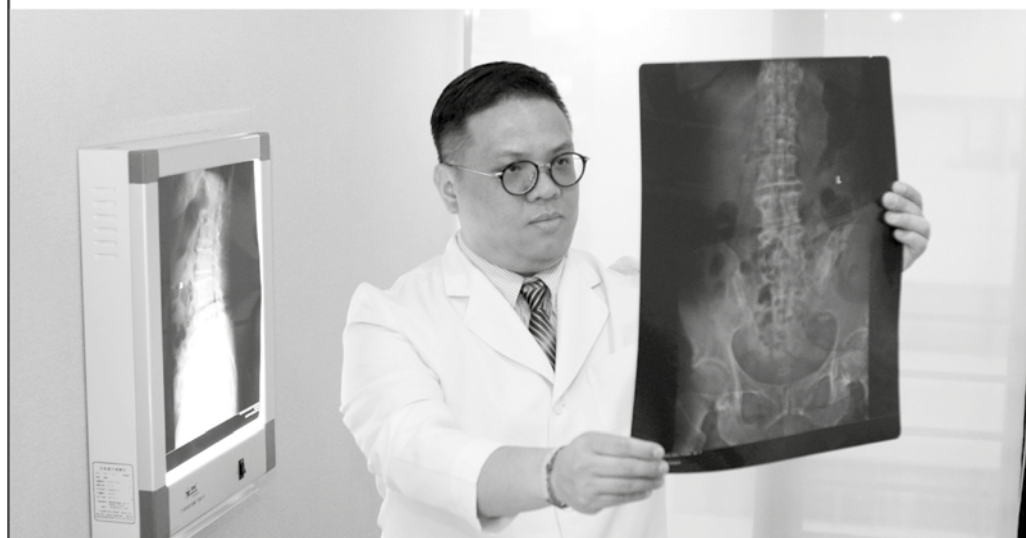
Wasteland, Ricardo Filipe dos Santos Meireles

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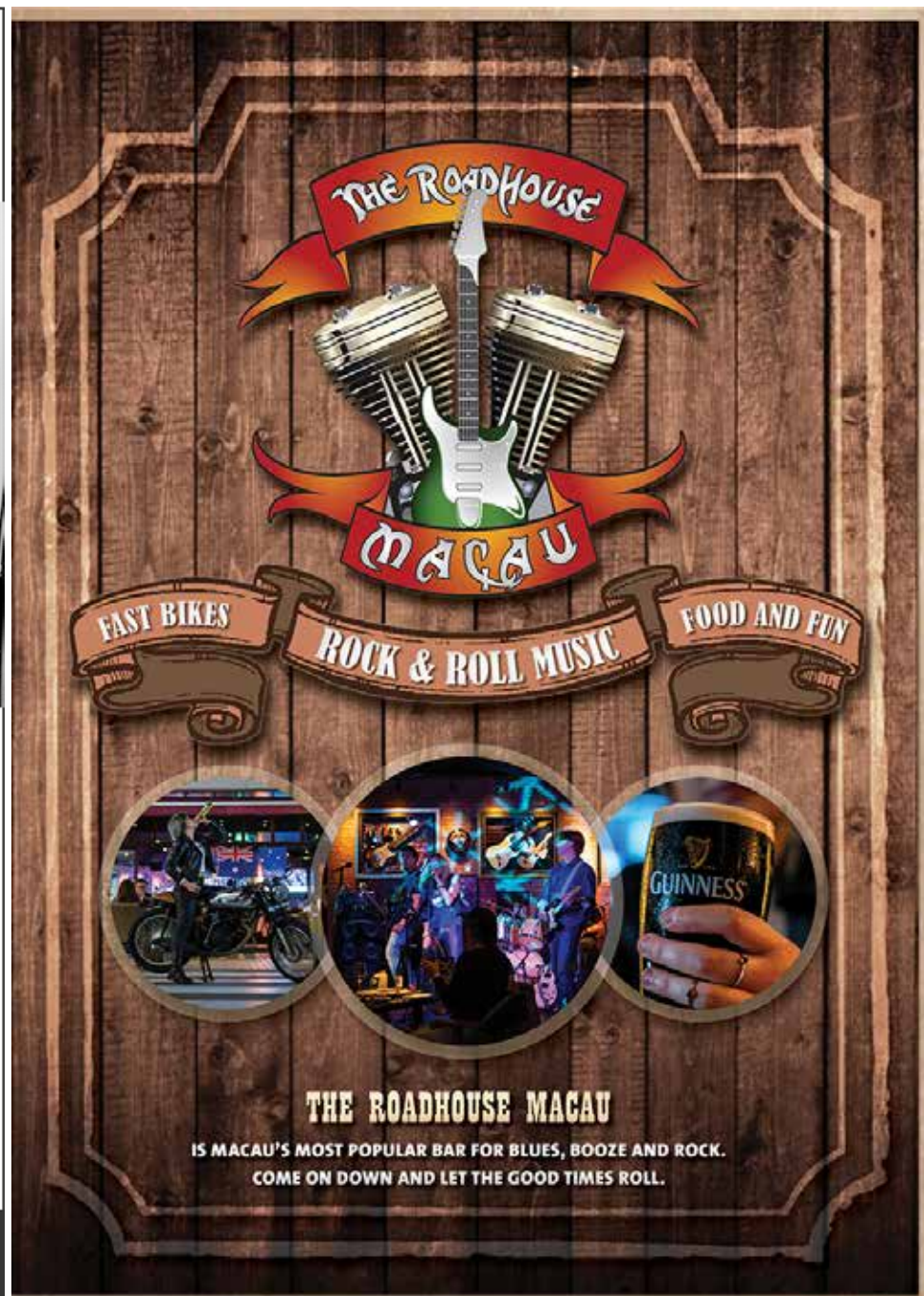
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FASHION

TRANSITIONAL JOURNEY

CANADA Goose has launched its newest capsule collection, designed in partnership with guest designer, Angel Chen. The Chinese designer, known for her colourful approach and fusion of Eastern and Western aesthetics, remains one of fashion's brightest up and coming young talents. Following the success of their first collaboration earlier this year, Angel Chen for Canada Goose Fall 2021 ushers in the season with pieces that blend Canada Goose's functional expertise with Angel Chen's signature style.

This season's collection is inspired by the transitional journey from the urban fall environment in the East to nature in the West, immersed in the Canadian winter mountains.

Inspired by Canada Goose's most iconic parka, the Snow Mantra, Angel Chen as Guest Designer pushes boundaries and delivers a lifestyle collection that combines Canada Goose fabrics, technology and design features with her aesthetic. The collection features bold silhouettes with new belted pieces and A-line shapes, as well as provides stylish versatility with bright colours and reversible jackets for a more unique and customised look.

This capsule presents pieces that are designed to fit any climate, condition and season with items that can be layered, worn together or on their own to work within various lifestyles, providing custom warmth and protection no matter the elements.



TASTE OF EDESIA

Chic afternoon delight

IRENE SAM, MDT

MAX Mara boasts a history of impeccable style. To commemorate its 70th Anniversary, The Ritz-Carlton, Macau has partnered with the fashion brand to launch the Max Mara Anniversary Afternoon Tea Set and the Max Mara Anniversary Signature Coffee Collection. Located on the 51st floor of The

Ritz-Carlton, Macau, The Ritz-Carlton Bar and Lounge, with its plush interior design, beautiful Italian marble bar and backdrop of Cotai, is the perfect place to enjoy a curated afternoon tea experience.

The uniquely designed Max Mara Tea Set features sweet and savoury delicacies. The savoury selections include enticing treats such as the Truffle Custard Vol au Vent, the mouthwatering

Lobster Rillettes, Caviar, Brioche Toast, and the lovely Prosciutto Rose, Sun-dried Tomato Cream, Spinach Profiterole. On the sweet side, the nectarous Toasted Coconut, Jaconde, Butter Cream Cake and the divine Maciera Florte Walnut, Flute Tart, and more, are all delicately dreamed up and layered with refined ingredients, synonymous with the fashion brand's fine Italian craftsmanship at the highest level.

CORPORATE BITS

Eight more accolades for Grand Lisboa in China's Wine List of the Year Awards



The Grand Lisboa Hotel and Grand Lisboa Palace Resort have garnered eight more accolades from China's Wine List of the Year Awards 2021, the properties' owner SJM has announced.

The Grand Lisboa Hotel once again received the title of "Best Hotel Group Wine List - Outstanding" and "Best Luxury Fine Wine Cellar List," further strengthening its elite status.

All four signature restaurants at the Grand Lisboa received the highest rating "3 Glass Award" for the third consecutive year, while Michelin three-starred restaurant Robuchon au Dôme claimed its title in the "Hall of Fame" for the ninth year in a row.

Mesa, located at the newly opened Grand Lisboa Palace, won the "3 Glass Award" for the first time.

Paul Lo, Director of Food and Beverage for the Grand Lisboa Hotel, has been included in the "Hall of Fame" for the third time.

China's Wine List Awards are one of the most prestigious in the hospitality industry. According to SJM's statement, the awards are known as the "Oscars" for hotel sommeliers.

The Manor at St. Regis presents Alba white truffle creations



The Manor at The St. Regis Macao presents 'Diamonds of the Kitchen' six-course Alba white truffle menu, the hotel announced in a press release. The Manor is also launching its latest evolution of the Stories of the Sea - The Ninth Chapter "highlighting exotic seafood from oceans worldwide at the same time."

Known as the 'diamond of the kitchen', "white truffle is a precious ingredient with limited production around the world. The intensely-flavored white truffle needs to be espoused with delicate ingredients to bring out the

best of its flavors," reads the note.

Executive Sous Chef Michele Dell' Aquila takes guests on an aromatic six-course truffle journey curated with seasonal ingredients from Italy. According to Dell' Aquila, the entire menu has been created to showcase the "highly sought-after white truffles from Alba," the picturesque town in northwestern Italy.

The 'Diamonds of the Kitchen' six-course dinner menu is available until December and is priced at MOP1,888+ per person or MOP2,688+ per person with wine pairing.

OPINION

Animal Farm

Albano Martins



THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY IMPERATIVE

The Government has decided to launch towards the end of this economic year “8 measures to support SMEs,” to which I add, and workers.

For the time being, nothing has been quantified, although it is assumed to be a prudent and adequate use of public resources.

It will not lead to major impact on the 2020 budget due to the late announcement of this measure. Such support will most likely come only in 2022. The biggest impact on the economy this year will be due to the savage drop in gaming revenues and dependent activities, of which there are many. The Intermediate Consumption by the gaming sector (the value consumed in order to produce) was 42.3 billion over the whole of 2019, which are the last values known.

Good budget principles are that revenues should be always underestimated, and expenditures overestimated to avoid further overruns.

Revenues were overestimated because the Government forecast 130 million as revenue from gaming, and expenditures were underestimated because the Government did not take into consideration an emergency plan to deal with the implications of having an economy closed to the world.

As is well known, gaming revenue to September was only 67.79 billion, but the Government had estimated 130 billion for the whole year, which suggests an average of 10.833 billion per month. This figure was never achieved in any month in 2021 although it came close in May. Now it will be necessary from October to December for gaming to produce something like 20.734 billion per month, which does not seem possible.

When you make economic policy, you must make realistic predictions of the variables that influence an economy.

Now, more than halfway through, the Government launches a document, which is still to be discussed in the Legislative Assembly, where another budget amendment will be presented, and then the 2022 budget will be presented.

We underestimated the implications for economic activity in Macau of closing the economy to the outside world, driven by the zero-case policy.

If these policies are maintained, even intermittently, until the end of the year, Macau's GDP will be deeply affected, after a year in which it fell by 56.3 percent. Gaming revenue until September alone was something like 30.8 percent of that achieved in the same period of 2019.

The fall in gaming revenue compared to the Administration's expectations, adversely impacted revenues to September by 11.6 billion patacas and most likely by 17.2 billion to the end of the year. In other words, there will be a fiscal loss of this nature solely attributed to gambling, to which the fiscal loss resulting from the fall in economic activity and the policy to support the economy must be added, even if the latter is not very ambitious.

This will be not good optics.

In this economic support document, there are four measures that implicate a loss of revenue, and another four that will not have budget effects. Two may lead to deferred collection and two others, suggested by AMCM, are just a request to banks and private operators to help those required to pay loans or those who use the “simple pay” service. Even if the latter is not labeled by AMCM as bad debt, they will weaken liquidity and assets of the financial system.

Finally, regarding measure eight (the MOP10,000 handout for lowest earners) it would have been more appropriate to align this measure with the median salary for 2020, which, as is known, was 15,000 patacas.

Those who had been earning lower wages would thus have a higher percentage increase.

Doing as the Government proposes probably supports less than 180 thousand workers of a universe of 388.8 thousand.

FACEBOOK SAYS IT WILL PAY FRENCH PUBLISHERS FOR NEWS CONTENT

Facebook said yesterday that it has struck a deal with a group of French publishers to pay for links to their news stories that are shared by people on the social network.

The company says it inked the licensing agreement with the Alliance de la Presse d'Information Generale, which represents 300 French publishers, to “improve the quality of online information for Internet users and publishers on Facebook.”

The financial terms weren't disclosed.

Facebook also said it would launch in January a French version of its Facebook News product, where the group's publishers could allow their stories to appear.

The licensing deal is the result of a wider push by authorities in Europe and elsewhere to force Facebook and other social media companies to compensate publishers for content. Governments have been responding to news outlets' complaints that internet companies are getting rich at their expense, selling advertising linked to their reports without sharing revenue.

France was the first of the European Union's 27 nations to adopt the bloc's 2019 copyright directive, which outlines a way for publishers and news companies to strike licensing deals with online platforms.

AP PHOTO



Pianist Bruce Liu Xiaoyu of Canada reacts after being named as the winner

CANADIAN WINS 18TH CHOPIN INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

MONIKA SCISLOWSKA, WARSAW

BRUCE Liu Xiaoyu of Canada was named yesterday as the winner of the 40,000-euro (\$45,000) first prize in the 18th Frederic Chopin international piano competition, a prestigious event that launches pianists' world careers.

The announcement from the jury came just hours after Liu played as the last entrant among the 12 finalists, performing Chopin's concerto in E minor, opus 11 with the orchestra at the packed National Philharmonic in Warsaw. His inspired performance was met with huge applause.

“Oh my god. I don't know what to say, honestly,” Liu said after being named winner.

“We have been dreaming with all these people here for this prestigious stage,” the 24-year-old born in Paris said in English.

“Being able to play Chopin in Warsaw is one of the best things you can imagine, of course, so I'm truly honored for this award, of course, and for this jury's trust and for all the warmth I have received in recent days,” Liu said.

The second prize and 30,000 euros went jointly

to Alexander Gadjiev, representing Italy and Slovenia, and Kyohei Sorita of Japan. Gadjiev also won Krystian Zimerman's prize of 10,000 euros for the best sonata performance.

The third prize of 20,000 euros was awarded to Martin Garcia Garcia of Spain, who also won the 5,000 euros prize for best concerto performance.

The fourth prize and 15,000 euros was shared by Aimi Kobayashi of Japan and Poland's Jakub Kuszlik, who also won best mazurka performance prize and 5,000 euros. Italy's Leonora Armellini was awarded the fifth prize of 10,000 euros, while the sixth prize and 7,000 euros went to Canada's J.J. Jun Li Bui.

The first prize was funded by the office of Poland's president, and other prizes were funded by the government, state culture institutions and by private individuals.

High ranking in the renowned competition opens the world's top concert halls to the pianists and paves the way to recordings with best known record companies.

Jury head Katarzyna Popowa-Zydron said after the announcement that the level of the pianists was very high and

made the award decisions very hard for the 17 jurors. She called the participants “wonderful young people.”

During the competition, she had said that apart from being excellent pianists, the participants should also show sensitivity and bring freshness to the music.

“I try to look for a rapport between the performer and Chopin,” Popowa-Zydron said in an interview. Music is a “message from a person, and (the musicians) should know what kind of person Chopin was.”

Bowing to their artistry, the jury allowed two more finalists this year than usual. The competition, held every five years, was postponed from 2020 due to the pandemic.

Chopin, Poland's best known and beloved classical music composer and pianist, was born in 1810 in Zelazowa Wola near Warsaw to a Polish mother and a French father. He left Poland at 19 to broaden his musical education in Vienna and then in Paris, where he settled, composing, giving concerts and teaching the piano. He died on Oct. 17, 1849, in Paris and is buried at the Pere Lachaise cemetery. His heart is at the Holy Cross Church in Warsaw. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Iran yesterday kicked off an annual air force drill across the country, a week after holding another massive exercise in air defense, state TV reported. The report said bombers, jet fighters, and attack and surveillance drones will participate in the drill, using heavy weapons including laser-guided missiles.

AP PHOTO



UN The head of environmental group Greenpeace, Jennifer Morgan (pictured), yesterday warned against efforts by countries and corporations at the upcoming U.N. climate talks in Glasgow to “greenwash” their ongoing pollution of the planet. The summit has been described as “the world's last best chance” to prevent global warming from reaching dangerous levels, and it is expected to see a flurry of new commitments from governments and businesses to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases.

AP PHOTO



Britain and New Zealand have agreed on a trade deal that eliminates tariffs on a wide range of goods as the U.K. expands economic links around the world following its exit from the European Union. The deal was cemented in a conference call between U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his New Zealand counterpart, Jacinda Ardern, after 16 months of talks by negotiators.

Greece Hundreds state hospital workers marched yesterday through central Athens as part of a 24-hour strike to protest staff shortages and compulsory coronavirus vaccinations. About 500 protesters demonstrated in the center of the capital, heading past parliament toward the health ministry chanting slogans and holding up banners.