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THIS YEAR'S LUSOFONIA FEST WILL BE HELD BETWEEN DECEMBER 1-12, INTEGRATED INTO THE CULTURAL WEEK CHINA-PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

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PORTUGAL PARLIAMENT REJECTED THE MINORITY SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT'S STATE BUDGET FOR 2022, A MOVE EXPECTED TO TRIGGER AN EARLY ELECTION

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China yesterday defended a new border law following criticism by India that it might disrupt the resolution of a 17-month-old standoff over disputed territory in the remote Ladakh region that has led to violent clashes. The law approved Sunday says Beijing will “combat any act that undermines territorial sovereignty and land boundaries.” That prompted an appeal by India’s foreign ministry Wednesday not to use it to change conditions in border areas.



Hong Kong’s president of legislature said yesterday it has become more efficient with no opposition members, after all pro-democracy lawmakers resigned late last year to protest the ouster of four colleagues for not demonstrating sufficient loyalty to Beijing. Hong Kong authorities have cracked down on political dissent in the past year, arresting over 120 people including several of the former opposition lawmakers under a sweeping National Security Law imposed by Beijing after months of anti-government protests.



India has test-fired a nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile with a range of 5,000 kilometers from an island off its east coast amid rising border tensions with China. The successful launch on Wednesday was in line with “India’s policy to have credible minimum deterrence that underpins the commitment to no first use,” said a government statement.

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SIMON ZHU

POLICE DENY RUMORS OF FORCED VACCINATION OF OFFICERS

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EMPEROR CINEMA TO MAKE MACAU DEBUT ON MONDAY

Emperor Cinemas is coming to Lisboeta Macau next Monday, the cinema firm has announced on its social media page. Further announcements are expected to be made on its website. Recently, Lisboeta Macau announced that it would gradually open its H853 Shopping Mall dining and retail outlets, as well as a new IMAX cinema. Earlier this year, Macau's only IMAX cinema, UA Cinema, was renamed to Galaxy Cinema after the Hong Kong chain closed its facilities in Hong Kong.

EXPORTS HIT MOP980M IN SEPTEMBER

Macau's total merchandise exports amounted to MOP981 million in September, up by 5.8% year-on-year. Re-exports (MOP783 million) grew by 3.7%, of which re-exports of Perfumes and Diamond & diamond jewelry surged by 247.8% and 125.5%, respectively, while those of Articles for casinos fell 75.3%. In the third quarter of this year, the total values of merchandise exported (MOP3.17 billion) and merchandise imported (MOP39.53 billion) grew by 10.0% and 49.5% respectively year-on-year, resulting in a trade deficit of MOP36.36 billion. External merchandise trade totaled MOP123.13 billion from January to September, up by 93.4% compared to MOP63.66 billion the previous year.

MGTO LAUNCHES SMART TRIP PLANNER

Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) launched the "Macao Full of Fun - Smart Trip Planner" yesterday, incorporating more elements of community tourism and reorganizing the walking tour routes of "Step Out, Experience Macau's Communities." The bureau has progressively unfolded an array of smart tourism-related projects, including the "Smart Trip Planner" website and the one-stop mobile application launched at the end of 2020. The app offers a comprehensive spectrum of tourism information for travellers, working in parallel with the government's strategies to build Macau into a smart city.

PORTUGAL EIGHT HOURS BEHIND MACAU AGAIN THIS SUNDAY

Portugal will be setting back its clocks by an hour midnight this Sunday, as Daylight saving time comes to a close. The winter time zone will resume, and most European countries will return to an eight-hour difference from Macau. The clocks will fall back an hour at 2 a.m. in mainland Portugal and Madeira, becoming 1 a.m. On the island of Açores, the hour change will occur an hour earlier, from 1 a.m. to midnight. Daylight saving time will restart March 22, 2022.



ANDRÉ CHEONG: CHINA'S UN SEAT CRUCIAL TO MACAU'S HANDOVER

ANTHONY LAM

The People's Republic of China (PRC) seat at the UN was crucial to the change of sovereignty in both Macau and Hong Kong, André Cheong, Secretary for Administration and Justice said yesterday.

Cheong recalled that, 50 years ago, both the now Special Administrative Regions were taken off the UN list of colonies as the result of a UN Resolution.

The government and the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Macao Special Administrative Region co-hosted a forum on the 50th Anniversary of the seat of the PRC at the UN, with attention paid to the impact of the event on the country.

Since 1999, Macau has participated in UN meetings and sessions representing either the SAR itself, China or as part of the Chinese delegation.

As one of the presiding guests of honor, Cheong gave a keynote speech at the event, in which he discussed Macau's position in the UN and the implementation of UN treaties among other topics.

The Secretary stressed that PRC's position and seat at the UN is of utmost significance to Macau's return to the motherland and the expansion of

international relations.

After the change of sovereignty, he said, the Macau SAR has become deeply integrated into the multilateral treaty system, participating extensively in international conferences, and has achieved fruitful results in its foreign work.

In the future, Macau will play a more active role in the interaction between the country and the world, actively researching and exploring avenues for diplomacy, making good use of external resources, and promoting the economic recovery and long-term development of the SAR.

Commissioner Liu Xianfa was also a presiding guest of honor who, like Cheong, gave a keynote speech. In his speech, Liu said that President Xi Jinping's important speech on the occasion carried great practical significance and far-reaching historical impact.

For 50 years, he said, China has consistently been a "builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a defender of international order, and has made historic contributions to the cause of the UN and the peaceful development of mankind."

The event 50 years ago is

an important moment in the centuries-old history of the Communist Party of China, and its centralized, unified leadership is the root of China's historic diplomatic achievements.

In a locally-focused section of his speech, Liu pointed out that Macau has played an important role in the cooperation between China and the UN, and has made positive contributions to the country's diplomacy overall.

After the change of sovereignty [...] the Macau SAR has become deeply integrated into the multilateral treaty system

As a centrally-appointed entity, the Foreign Affairs Office will continue to support Macau in combining its political positions of leaning on the motherland and facing out to the world. It will continue to consider the needs of the country with all the strengths of Macau, to support the state with efforts from the SAR, and to give full play to the potentiality of the SAR in terms of humanity, society, location and external connections. This approach will en-

sure that Macau can be more active and promising during the development of foreign exchange and cooperation.

Other speakers such as Liu Dexue, director of the Legal Affairs Bureau of Macau, Ho Teng Iat, president of the The Women's General Association of Macau, Choi Man Cheng, executive director of the Macao Youth Federation, addressed Chairman Xi Jinping's important speech at the commemorative meeting,

the significance of the event, and China's contribution to the United Nations. They spoke of the matter in glowing terms.

The speakers also shared Macau's role and practices in the cooperation between China and

the UN from their separate perspectives, and made suggestions about how Macau could participate further in the cooperation between China and the UN, and to promote the building of a community for a mankind with a shared future.

Counselor Wang Chen of the Commissioner's Office discussed China's work at the UN and the ways in which Beijing and the Commissioner's Office support Macau in its participation in UN affairs.

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PSP denies rumors of forced vaccination of officers

RENATO MARQUES

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) has denied rumors claiming that police officers were being forcibly vaccinated against Covid-19. Ma Chio Hong, representative of PSP issued the denial yesterday at the press conference of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

Ma was questioned by the media about an alleged threat made to PSP officers, in which they would be penalized in their performance evaluation if they did not get the vaccine immediately.

In the response, he said that never heard of anything like it among the force and that such a rumor is a direct contradiction of the force's position, which allows officers to choose if they wish to be vaccinated or not.

"There has never been a relationship between getting or not getting the vaccine, and work performance evaluations that all staff are subject to," he remarked. He noted that, like any other civil servants, officers that are not vaccinated against Covid-19 need only present proof of a negative nucleic acid test (NAT) every seven days to work normally.

Asked later if the police would consider prosecuting those who began the rumor, Ma said that it would be necessary to investigate the source of the misinformation as well as its context to determine if there was a clear intention to cause harm or defame the institution.

VACCINATION RATE AT 70%

The coordinator of the Center Leong Iek Hou announced that as of 4 p.m. yesterday, almost 800,000 doses of the vaccines had been distributed, and almost 350,000 people had been fully vaccinated in Macau, or about 70% of the population.

Leong added that the rates of vaccination among youngsters (aged 12 to 19 years old) have been growing slightly. She



continues to place the focus of the vaccination on the members of the society that aged 60 and above, which she claims is the age group with the lowest vaccination rate.

"We have been passing on the information and encouraging the youngsters — specifically students — to get vaccinated. This has been working positively, but we are now more concerned about the senior population," Leong said.

"[People aged 60 and above] are more likely to suffer from severe effects

of infection with Covid-19: effects that are 100 times more serious than among youngsters. We are calling on the younger population to try to encourage [seniors] to get vaccinated as soon as possible."

While she maintains that an 80% vaccination rate in the general population is still the goal being pursued, Leong explained that, in light of the evidence collected about the Delta variant of Covid-19, reaching this rate is unlikely to have any immediate effect on the prevention and control

measures adopted. Specifically, the mandatory use of facemasks, temperature measuring, social distancing and other measures currently in force are likely to continue.

She anticipated that the most immediate effect likely to be seen is a potential extension of the validity period for cross-border NAT to seven days for those fully vaccinated.

Figures from the PSP yesterday show that, in the past few days, border-crossing has stabilized to around 360,000 entries and exits per day.

COVID-19

VACCINATION OUTREACH PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS TO RESUME NEXT WEEK

RENATO MARQUES

THE vaccination outreach program in non-tertiary education institutions is expected to resume next week, Wong Ka Ki, head of the Department of Non-tertiary Education from the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), said yesterday during the Covid-19 press briefing.

The program was suspended before it even started, with the cancellation of classes following the discovery of community cases. According to Wong, the program is now set to resume next week, as the DSEDJ finishes gathering information on all the students, teachers, and other staff members that

wish to take part.

The official also took the opportunity to remind the population that because the Sinopharm vaccine has now been approved for people under 12 years old, students and their parents now have a second vaccine option.

Wong also noted that while the vaccination rate for the teaching staff and students of tertiary education is quite high (85%), the same cannot be said for non-tertiary institutions, where the rate is only about 46%. Wong noted that DSEDJ has been encouraging non-tertiary students and staff members to boost the immunization rate and, consequently, the immunity barrier in schools.

Q3 HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATE AT 51%

STAFF REPORTER

IN the first three quarters of 2021, the average occupancy rate of guest rooms was 50.6%, up by 27.8 percentage points year-on-year, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

A total of 5,040,000 guests were recorded at hotels & guesthouses during the first nine months of the year, a surge of 111.7% year-on-year from a low base.

The figure represents a month-on-month growth of 12.2 percentage points: a rise attributable to the relaxation of entry and exit requirements for most of September, in contrast to August.

In September, the number of guests checked into hotels & guesthouses leapt by 147.6% year-on-year to 531,000,

with mainland guests (418,000) soaring by 213.4% and local guests (82,000) rose by 31.7%.

September arrivals soared by 53.7% month-on-month to 629,085: likewise attributable to the easing of entry and exit requirements in Macau. This also represented a growth of 40.1% year-on-year.

The tourism and hospitality industries are eyeing the upcoming Grand Prix as a draw for tourists, after the city failed to attract tourists during the Golden Week.

Meanwhile, DSEC data shows that there were no inbound package tour visitors in September. The number of visitors joining local tours was about 1,000 people. Nearly 8,000 outbound residents used travel agency services, and 96.2% visited mainland China.

SECOND SECTOR-SPECIFIC FIVE-YEAR PLAN CONSULTATION SESSION FOCUSED ON TOURISM

ANTHONY LAM

CULTURAL tourism was the focus of a recent sector-specific consultation session on the government's 2nd Five-year Plan on the city, the Policy Study and Regional Development Bureau (DSEDPR) has revealed.

The session was held to accommodate practitioners from the sectors of social services, conventions and exhibitions (C&E), hotels, tourism, and transport.

Participants recommended that the 2nd Five-year Plan should have clearer mapping of the future of Tourism+C&E, Tourism+Culture and creativity, as well as Tourism+Gastronomy. These elements, which are longstanding features of the city, have been the strategies promoted by the government for the past few years.

The DSEDPR also

suggested engaging in more in-depth cooperation with other cities in the Greater Bay Area to attract more multi-faceted tourists, along with tourists from outside of China.

Participants from the C&E sector put forward that the advantages of Macau should be appropriately utilized to help attract investment and innovation in C&E events.

Cutting-edge technologies should also be introduced to the industry.

Meanwhile, Macau's aviation industry might be further developed with the introduction of multi-base airlines, taking advantage of external aviation protocols. The cargo transport functions of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge might also be expanded.

Urban renewal was also discussed at the session.

LUSOFONIA FESTIVAL TO BE INTEGRATED INTO 'ENCOUNTER IN MACAU'

STAFF REPORTER

THE 24th Lusofonia Festival will be held between December 10 and 12 this year, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) confirmed yesterday.

The festival will be integrated into the 3rd "Encounter in Macau - Arts and Cultural Festival between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries", operating from November 11 to December 12, due to the current pandemic situation.

With a budget of 8.9 million patacas, the Arts and Cultural Festival is organized by the IC, and co-organized by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

The festival showcases China and Portuguese-speaking countries' diverse cultures, as well as cementing Macau's position as a "Cultural Exchange Centre between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries" — offering residents and tourists a Sino-Portuguese cultural experience.

President of the IC Mok Ian Ian assured listeners at the press conference yesterday that "communication with the associations in the organization of Lusofonia has never failed". Mok said they are



counting on all Lusophone representations in Macau.

"The collaboration between the two festivals was possible due to the stabilized public health situation, and we hope that by organizing the two festivals together will create synergy. That way, we can better streamline the festivals and bring a better artistic

environment to the city," said the president.

For Mok, this set of initiatives demonstrates the characteristics of Macau "as a city that embraces all cultures".

Mok guaranteed that, if conditions allow, the Lusofonia Festival will once again be autonomous next year.

The Lusofonia Festival is a three-day festival with a diverse activity program, including cultural booths from the local Lusophone communities, music and dance performances, gastronomy and games. It allows the public to gain a Portuguese cultural experience like no other.

The first edition of the Lusofonia

Festival was held in 1998 and over the years has become an important event aimed at sharing the culture of the Portuguese-speaking communities with the Chinese community.

FESTIVAL'S HIGHLIGHTS

The "China and Portuguese-speaking Countries Film Festival", themed "The Gourmets of Cinema", will feature 30 films from China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The "Annual Arts Exhibition between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries" features two exhibitions — "Symbiosis" and "Embrace of Diversity," which will bring together contemporary artworks from Macau, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and eight Portuguese-speaking countries. The festival aims to open a window for the public to experience the diversity of Chinese and Portuguese arts. Moreover, the "Arts and Cultural Festival between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries" will bring a series of passionate and enthusiastic performances to the community. The Dance and Singing Group of Fujian Province and six local Portuguese-speaking artistic groups will feature traditional music and dance performances. The Belt and Road Cultural Talk Series - Samba and Dance; and the Taipa Houses 100th Anniversary Activities will also be celebrated.

CRIME

TUI REJECTS APPEAL FROM TWO DEFENDANTS IN 'HOTEL LISBOA' PROSTITUTION CASE

RENATO MARQUES

THE Court of Final Appeal (TUI) has rejected the appeals made by two out of the three defendants in the exploitation of prostitution case also known as the "Hotel Lisboa case", the office of the president of the TUI announced in a statement.

The three defendants appealed to TUI after the Court of Second Instance (TSI) ruled in 2019 to increase the prison sentences originally handed down by the Court of First Instance to the three defendants in the 2015 case.

The collective ruling from the judges of TUI confirmed the sentence of five and eight years of imprisonment given to two of the defendants in the case, one of whom, Alan Ho, is the alleged ring leader and nephew of late casino tycoon Stanley Ho.



The same court decision overturned the charge of participating in a crime syndicate for the third defendant, sending the process back to the TSI where the defendant's case will be re-evaluated, taking into account a combined three counts of operating prostitution.

Alan Ho, former executive director of the Hotel Lisboa,

had seen a significant extension added to his sentence by the TSI from the original 13 months' imprisonment, which Ho had already served. His sentence remains at a total of eight years, given it had been proven that he founded and led a criminal cartel, and organized the prostitution. The TJB has found him guilty only of the second crime.

NEARLY ALL SCHOOLS EQUIPPED WITH LOCKERS, DRINKING FOUNTAINS

THE Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) has announced that almost 96% of local schools have installed lockers, and 97% have installed drinking fountains, in the hopes of making school bags lighter.

Since September this year, the bureau has conducted 150 surveys weighing school bags at different schools across the city, testing about 50,000 bags. The data collected will be sent to schools to help lighten students' school bags even further. Schools may, for example, consider choosing lighter textbooks.

According to the DSEDJ, the weight of a school bag should not surpass 15% the weight of its carrier. In order to achieve the goal, a subsidy scheme is available for schools to install faci-



ilities that help lower the weight of school bags. Authorities expect that 30 more schools will achieve significant improvements in lowering weight of school bags. With lockers and drinking fountain installed, the need for students to bring a lot of textbooks, stationery

and other materials, like water bottles, to school is reduced, the DSEDJ asserts.

Nonetheless, the authority has also encouraged publishers to be mindful of the weight of textbooks. Students have also been encouraged to use school bags with wheels. **AL**

MELCO Resorts & Entertainment sees supporting local Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as an integral part of its business strategy. Their approach aims to identify and implement opportunities to enhance the sustainable economic prosperity of local suppliers and SMEs – including through establishing long-term partnerships to help enhance SME competitiveness. The company also aims to contribute to the sustainable prosperity and development of the business community in the Greater Bay Area. At present, of the 90% of Melco's procurement with local companies and distributors in Macau, nearly 50% comes from micro and small enterprises.

SME ROADSHOWS GENERATE OPPORTUNITIES

Since January 2021, Melco's innovative Heart of House (employee area) roadshow series has generated a total of nearly MOP 6.5 million revenue for local SMEs and NGOs. By offering additional revenue generating opportunities to sell and market directly to colleagues of City of Dreams, Studio City and Altira Macau, the roadshow series has benefited nearly 100 local SMEs and NGOs at almost 75 sessions to date this year. Its most recent Mid-Autumn Heart of House roadshow series offering electronics, foods and beverages, clothing and accessories, household items and groceries has successfully generated nearly MOP 2.8 million for 26 local SMEs and NGOs.

SME participant of this latest roadshow, Ms. Do Chong of Sania Iran Products Shop, said, "This is the second time we've taken part in Melco's Heart of House roadshows. As a member of the local micro SME community, we are thankful for this opportunity made available by Melco to outreach directly to colleagues – enabling us to market, showcase and sell our products. We thank Melco for supporting us retailers and local creators through these extremely trying times as we look forward to joining more roadshows soon." Fellow SME participant, Ms. Vivian Ng of AVI Trading Limited, added, "The roadshow has been hugely valuable for us SMEs, greatly increasing our own business revenue by 25% for the month of September."



ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Melco contributes to the sustainable development of local enterprises



MENTORING YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS

Focused on its ongoing social responsibility to support local micro-enterprises, Melco's management team has offered mentorship and skills to local youth entrepreneurs through its Adopt a Micro-Enterprise program. Organized in collaboration with Junior Chamber International (JCI) Macao, China, Macao Young Entrepreneur Incubation Centre (MYEIC) and Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Center (CPTTM), the program's objective is to cultivate local youth entrepreneurs through leveraging expertise from Melco as well as

the multi-disciplinary skills of its colleagues.

Representatives from six nominated micro-enterprises and members of MYEIC were recently invited to a City of Dreams experience tour of Melco's Heart of House employee area. Participants were met by Melco colleagues possessing diverse skills from its various business units including Warehouse, Wardrobe, Guest Experience and Events & Promotion to gain in-depth understanding of the integrated resort's core operations. In addition, a procurement technique sharing workshop was hosted by the company's Supply Chain

team, highlighting tips for successful business pitching.

Ms. San Choi, Deputy Director of MYEIC, said, "Exchanges with Melco's various departments and their colleagues made available through the Adopt a Micro-Enterprise program has helped strengthen MYEIC members' marketing and administrative management skills. The experience tour and procurement workshop also contributed towards members' improved understanding of procurement procedures and quality control protocols, adding value to their business acumen and competitiveness."

YOUTH BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENT

To enhance understanding and awareness of business knowledge among students, as well as to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the University of Macau, the Faculty of Business Administration of the University of Macau and Melco are jointly organizing the first ever 2021 Guangdong Hong Kong Macau Greater Bay Area Integrated Resort Sustainable Business Case Study Competition – "Start Young" Hospitality Management Professional Challenge. Explored through field visits focused on sustainable development at integrated resorts, the competition aims to help students better understand on-the-ground business operations and sustainable optimization solutions.

Ms. Akiko Takahashi, Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff to Chairman & CEO of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said, "In our commitment to providing opportunities for the community's youth, and to empower young people through education, we are thrilled to be collaborating with the Faculty of Business Administration of the University of Macau on this project as one of the biggest business case competitions in Macau. We are confident that the collaboration will help students from Macau and the rest of the Greater Bay Area understand the value of sustainability and obtain real life business examples on how sustainable development is being achieved, whilst inculcating creativity and innovation by encouraging students to push boundaries and think outside of the box."



STRAIT TENSION

TAIWAN MINISTER SAYS ISLAND MUST DEFEND ITSELF

HUIZHONG WU, TAIPEI

TAIWAN'S defense minister said yesterday that the island must defend itself and not depend entirely on others for help if China were to launch an attack, even as Taiwan's president said she had faith the U.S. would defend it.

Taiwan "must rely on itself, and if any friends or other groups can help us, then it's like I said before, we're happy to have it, but we cannot completely depend on it," the minister, Chiu Kuo-cheng, told reporters after being questioned in the legislature as part of a session on national defense.

Tensions between Taiwan and China have risen to their highest level in decades, with China sending record-breaking numbers of fighter jets toward international airspace close to the island, and stepping up a campaign of military harassment. Taiwan's Defense Ministry has said that China would have "comprehensive" capabilities to invade the island by 2025.



Taiwan's minister Chiu Kuo-cheng

China claims Taiwan as part of its national territory although the island has been self-ruled since it split from the communist-ruled mainland in 1949 after a long civil war.

Chiu has called the rising tensions between China and Taiwan

"If the US continues to stubbornly cling to the illusion of using Taiwan to contain China, [...] China will resolutely counter and fight back."

CHINESE DEFENSE MINISTRY

the most "severe" he has seen in 40 years.

Taiwan's leader Tsai Ing-wen said in an interview with CNN that aired yesterday that she was confident the U.S. would defend Taiwan if China made a move against the island.

"I do have faith given the long term relationship we have with the U.S. and also the support of the people of the U.S. as well as Congress," Tsai said.

Tsai also confirmed the presence of a small number of U.S. troops on the island to help train their Taiwanese counterparts.

Although the U.S. has no formal diplomatic relationship with the Taiwanese government, it has strong unofficial ties. Under the Trump administration, the U.S. stepped up weapon sales to Taiwan.

Further, the U.S. has a policy of "strategic ambiguity" toward Taiwan, where it has been deliberately vague about whether it would defend the island in the face of an assault. However, the

U.S. also has a policy to support the island's self defense, including by providing it arms, as declared in the Taiwan Relations Act.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spoke out against the confirmation of troops, saying it is "firmly opposed to any form of official contacts and military ties" between the U.S. and Taiwan, and that no one should "underestimate the strong determination, firm will and strong capacity" of China to defend its sovereignty.

Separately, the Chinese Defense Ministry said in a statement that China strongly opposes military exchanges between the U.S. and Taiwan and called on the U.S. to clarify the situation.

"If the U.S. continues to stubbornly cling to the illusion of using Taiwan to contain China, [...] China will resolutely counter and fight back," Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Tan Kefei said at a press conference.

Last week, U.S. President Joe Biden seemingly contradicted the decades-long U.S. policy toward Taiwan when he said the U.S. was committed to protecting the island if China attacked it.

The White House later said Biden's comments did not represent a change in policy toward the island. **MDT/AP**

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

ASEAN

Biden calls out China's Taiwan actions as 'coercive'

PRESIDENT Joe Biden told leaders at the East Asia Summit yesterday [Macau time] that China's recent actions in the Taiwan Straits are "coercive" and undermined peace and stability in the region.

The comments by Biden, who participated by video in the annual meeting of 18 Asia-Pacific nations, come during a surge in Chinese military activity near the island that China regards as a renegade province and has vowed to reclaim by force if necessary.

"The president also reiterated the U.S. commitment to the international rules-based order and expressed concern over threats to that order," the White House said in a statement. "He made clear that the United States will continue to stand with allies and partners in support of democracy, human rights, rule of law, and freedom of the seas."

Last week, Biden set off alarm bells in Beijing by saying the U.S. has a firm commitment to help Taiwan defend itself in the event of a Chinese attack.

The White House later downplayed the president's comments, which came during a CNN town hall, and said he did not mean to imply any changes in the U.S. "one-China policy,"



AP PHOTO

which recognizes Beijing but allows informal relations and defense ties with Taipei.

Relations between Washington and Beijing have plunged to new lows since nosediving under former President Donald Trump's administration, which adopted a confrontational approach on trade, visas, diplomatic representation and educational exchanges.

A U.S. nuclear submarine

deal with Australia and the U.K. has also angered China, which claims most of the disputed South China Sea and warned the pact would threaten regional stability.

Some nations such as Indonesia and Malaysia also fear the pact could escalate tensions and spark an arms race.

"Indonesia does not want this region to become an arms race and a power projection

that can threaten stability," Indonesian President Joko Widodo told his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison, according to Indonesia's foreign minister.

Australia announced a \$93 million package to support security, climate and health efforts in Southeast Asia, while Morrison defended the new pact with the U.S. and UK, saying it does not change Australia's commitment to the Association of Southeast Asia Nations or the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific — "indeed it reinforces it."

He said Australia had no intention of acquiring nuclear weapons and remained deeply committed to nuclear non-proliferation.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said his country shared serious concern with ASEAN about challenges to the free and open maritime order in the East and South China seas, according

to Japan's Foreign ministry.

He did not mention China by name, but Tokyo has more become vocal in defending the freedom of navigation and resolution of disputes based on international law, at a time China expands its military power beyond its shores, rattling neighbors with the construction of man-made islands and sending ships near their coasts.

The meetings have been clouded by a diplomatic standoff after military-ruled Myanmar skipped the summit in protest of ASEAN's move to bar Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, whose forces seized power in February, from attending.

In Biden's private conversations with ASEAN leaders, he denounced the "horrific violence" by the military junta in Myanmar as he looks to press U.S. leadership in the Pacific.

"In Myanmar, we must address the tragedy caused by the military coup which is increasingly undermining regional stability," Biden told the leaders, according to the White House. The president added, "The United States stands for the people of Myanmar and calls for military regime to end the violence, release all political prisoners and return to the path of democracy." MDT/AP

AD

ENCOUNTER

2021
NOV
/
DEC

3rd ENCOUNTER IN MACAO
Arts and Cultural Festival between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries

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Annual Arts Exhibition between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries

11.06, 11.07
Traditional Music and Dance Performance in the Community

11.06-11.28
Taipa Houses 100th Anniversary Activities

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Prime Minister Antonio Costa: Allies from far-left left him and PS alone in the budget vote

PORTUGAL

Election likely after Socialist govt defeat in budget vote

BARRY HATTON, LISBON

PORTUGAL'S parliament early yesterday [Macau time] rejected the minority Socialist government's proposed state budget for 2022, a move expected to trigger an early election and put a brake on the country's post-pandemic recovery plans.

After weeks of negotiations, the moderate Socialists were deserted by their hard-left allies from the Communist Party and the Left Bloc. Those two parties have helped shore up the government's power over the past six years by voting for its policies or abstaining.

The budget proposal was defeated by 117 votes to 108, with five abstentions.

"My conscience is clear,"

Prime Minister António Costa told lawmakers. "Because I did all I could to make this budget work without adding anything to it that would be to the country's detriment."

Referring to economic recovery efforts, he said "the last thing Portugal needs, and the Portuguese deserve, is a political crisis at this moment."

Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, who has no executive powers but oversees the running of the country, had warned that he would call an early election if parliament did not approve next year's government spending plan. He could make an official announcement next week, after consultations with political parties and others.

The government's current four-year term is due to end in 2023.

Due to constitutional requirements that must be met before an election can be held, and taking into account the Christmas vacation period, the early election would probably take place in January.

That means a new 2022 spending program probably wouldn't go before parliament before April.

The timetable consigns Portugal to months of political limbo just when the government was poised to fire up the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic by deploying 45 billion euros (\$52 billion) in aid from the European Union.

On top of that, the emergence of smaller parties that

have won seats in parliament in recent years, including a surging right-wing populist party, have muddied the political outlook, according to Francisco Pereira Coutinho, a politics professor at Lisbon's Universidade Nova.

"This crisis is less worrying than what might be coming afterward ... with a more unstable and volatile political situation than we have now," he said.

A popular mass vaccination campaign has helped Portugal, for the moment, largely contain COVID-19. The way things stand, with fewer than 1,000 new cases a day since mid-September and daily deaths in single figures, the pandemic shouldn't hold up an election in the country of 10.3 million.

Recent opinion polls suggest the Socialist Party would easily win an election but would again fall short of a parliamentary majority.

Costa, the prime minister for the past six years whose political profile in the EU rose considerably during Portugal's presidency of the bloc last year, is widely considered a candidate for an international job. A poor election result could be his cue to depart national office.

Both the Communist Party and Left Bloc lost votes in Portugal's 2019 election, with their decline in popularity blamed in part on their support for the more moderate Socialists.

The center-right Social Democratic Party, the main opposition, is caught up in a leadership battle and has largely failed to capitalize on the government's predicament.

The Socialists' differences with their hard-left allies piled up this year. Key disagreements included the size of a minimum salary increase, new rules on workers' rights in the gig economy and working from home, income tax increases, public health spending and pension entitlements. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1975 FRANCO'S 36-YEAR REIGN ENDS



General Franco's dictatorship has effectively ended with the announcement heir designate Prince Juan Carlos will take over as provisional head of state for Spain.

The move comes as a result of the general's continuing illness. He has suffered a massive series of heart attacks and internal bleeding in the last three weeks.

The 37-year-old prince has been groomed for the role since he was named heir designate in 1969, continuing an agreement between General Franco and the Prince's father.

The urgent need of a leader for the country persuaded the prince to take over on a provisional basis, something which he had been reluctant to repeat.

He had previously been placed in charge last June when Franco was last ill but lasted a mere six weeks.

The prince will have to wait until the general dies, thought to be a matter of days, before he is officially sworn in as King.

The latest report on the health of General Franco said his condition remained grave. The onset of a mouth infection and an increase of liquid in the peritoneal cavity are said to be adding to the problems being faced by the semi-comatose dictator.

The placement of the Prince as King and commander-in-chief was deemed more favourable than other options, including a possible vote of incapacity by the Council of the Realm or getting the general to sign a transfer of power.

The first role for the new provisional leader will be to preside over a Cabinet meeting at Zarzuela Palace.

When sworn in he will become the first King of Spain for 44 years. After municipal elections in 1931 showed an overwhelming republican majority, the Prince's grandfather, King Alfonso XIII suspended the exercise of royal power and went into exile.

Courtesy BBC News

EUROPEAN Union regulators opened an investigation this week into graphics chipmaker Nvidia's \$40 billion purchase of chip designer Arm over concerns it would limit competition, adding to global scrutiny of the deal.

The European Commission said it's concerned the combined company would have the ability and incentive to restrict access to technology from United Kingdom-based Arm Ltd., whose chip designs power the vast

EU REGULATORS INVESTIGATE NVIDIA'S PURCHASE OF CHIP DESIGNER ARM

majority of the world's smartphones.

The commission, which is the EU's top antitrust authority, said it worried the deal would result in higher prices, less choice and reduced innovation in the semiconductor industry.

Nvidia Corp., based in Santa Clara, California, said

last year that it was buying Arm from Japanese technology giant Softbank. The deal raised concerns that Arm would abandon its neutral business model of licensing its chip designs to hundreds of tech companies, including many of Nvidia's rivals.

"Our investigation aims

to ensure that companies active in Europe continue having effective access to the technology that is necessary to produce state-of-the-art semiconductor products at competitive prices," said EU Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, who's in charge of competition and digital issues for the bloc. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

General Franco died on 20 November 1975. The decision was made by doctors who had been keeping him alive through 34 days of critical illness. In his last message to the nation the dictator said: "I ask pardon of all my enemies, as I pardon with all my heart all those who declared themselves my enemy, although I did not consider them to be so." Prince Juan Carlos was sworn in as King of Spain on 22 November 1975. His first major role was to attend the funeral of the former dictator where he joined thousands of other mourners.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Your ambitions have been undergoing a major period of reconstruction. Several of your long-held goals no longer feel worthwhile, while new ideas for your future seem to be brewing right beneath the surface.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You seem to be taking on more responsibility than ever. Your career has been demanding a deep re-evaluation, and you can no longer bury your head in the sand and pretend everything is okay with it.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
The path-lighting sun locks into a tense configuration with disciplinarian Saturn, highlighting flaws in your future plans, long-held beliefs, and larger visions for your life.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
The illuminating sun forms a tough square with lesson-teaching Saturn, making partnership matters feel heavier than they really are while also showing you where you need better boundaries and grounding.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
The universe has been persistent with its teachings on the art of relationship. Friday's skies find you yet again absorbing another lesson as the self-focused sun squares off with structure-seeking Saturn.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
The universe has been testing you in this regard, as it's asked you to form a healthier relationship with your body and acknowledge which craft it is you really wish to be pursuing.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You've been learning some major lessons around who to trust with your heart. Skies bring new dimensions to this story as the path-guiding sun locks into a hard configuration with reality-checking Saturn.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Your home and family have demanded more of your attention than you're used to giving, Scorpio. The cosmos has been pressing you to define your role in your family unit, which is never an easy task.

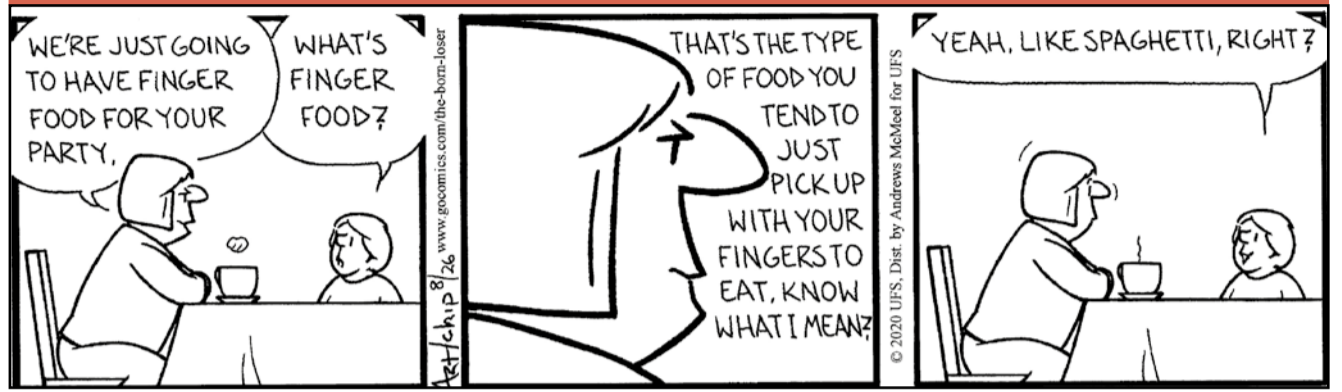
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
The cosmos has been insistent on having you form a healthier relationship with your mental world. Have you been giving yourself new outlets for communication and allowing yourself mental downtime?

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
As a Capricorn, it can be difficult for you to come to terms with your sense of self-confidence. The universe has dealt you some serious lessons when it comes to learning to believe in your talents and embrace your self-worth.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Friday's cosmic landscape shines its revealing spotlight on to you, Aquarius. You've been under a variety of tests, particularly those concerning your sense of independence and personal self-expression.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You've been something like a snake shedding its skin in recent times, Pisces. The universe has had you scrubbing ancient emotional grime out of your subconscious, which is rarely an easy task.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	7	17	cloudy
Harbin	1	15	cloudy
Tianjin	15	18	rain
Urumqi	13	19	cloudy
Xi'an	16	19	rain
Lhasa	13	18	cloudy
Chengdu	18	23	overcast
Chongqing	18	21	rain
Kunming	10	13	rain
Nanjing	23	27	rain
Shanghai	12	21	cloudy
Wuhan	1	15	fine
Hangzhou	10	20	cloudy
Taipei	1	15	cloudy
Guangzhou	19	29	cloudy
Hong Kong	22	26	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	7	9	rain
Frankfurt	6	14	overcast
Paris	11	16	rain
London	11	16	rain
New York	13	15	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Small jazz band; 6- Whispered sweet nothings; 11- Dernier ___; 14- Make sense; 15- Speed; 16- Done, to Donne; 17- Thaw before takeoff; 18- It's a plus; 19- Hot tub; 20- Underlying cause; 22- Adlai's running mate; 24- Laughs loudly; 28- Mischievous person; 30- Narcotic; 31- Main artery; 32- Code name; 33- Truce; 37- Hydrocarbon ending; 38- Was Hamlet; 39- Expected; 40- Variety of chicory; 43- Sniff; 45- Blender setting; 46- Shawl worn in Mexico; 47- Hoarded; 49- Analogous; 50- Rupture; 51- French actor Jacques; 52- "SNL" alum Gasteyer; 53- Sallow; 56- Head lock; 61- Besides; 62- Steamed; 63- Bay; 64- Drain-cleaning chemical; 65- Chad neighbor; 66- Queeg's command;

DOWN: 1- No gentleman; 2- Form of poem, often used to praise something; 3- Start of the 16th century; 4- Tampa Bay player, for short; 5- Function; 6- Total disorder; 7- Oven used to dry hops; 8- CIA forerunner; 9- Hot time in Paris; 10- Hates intensely; 11- ___ Rica; 12- Drive back; 13- Some nest eggs; 21- Be short; 23- Ella specialty; 24- Private Pyle; 25- Once ___ time...; 26- Discharged; 27- Scale notes; 28- Lover of Juliet; 29- Like the Sahara; 31- Bandleader Shaw; 33- Needed liniment; 34- Role model; 35- Mea ___; 36- Conger catcher; 38- 43,560 square feet; 41- Wall St. debuts; 42- Drape; 43- Hebrew or Phoenician, e.g.; 44- Hosp. procedure; 46- Make a lap; 47- Nice days, usually; 48- Commerce; 49- Less loony; 50- False god; 51- Mal de ___; 54- Hindu honorific; 55- Crone; 57- Retrovirus component; 58- Quarterback Manning; 59- DC bigwig; 60- Canonized Mlle.;

Yesterday's solution

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N	I	C	E			P	A	N	E		A	R	M
H	U	M	I			T	O	T	A		A	R	E
B	A	R	E			T	O	T	A		S	O	I
O	R	A	T			S	K	I	N		F	I	N
O	T	T	E			R	U	R	L		R	O	L
R	E	E	D	S		P	A	T		O	O	L	A

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DRIVE IN

ODDBALL SAFECRACKER CHARMS IN 'ARMY OF THIEVES'

MARK KENNEDY, MDT/AP

ONE of the unlikeliest heroes to emerge from Zack Snyder's horror-action flick "Army of the Dead" earlier this year was an oddball safecracker named Dieter.

Part nerdy Eurotrash, part pretentious busybody, Dieter was never going to make it out alive. He was like one of those guys wearing a red shirt in "Star Trek." Sooner or later, Dieter was gonna be gone.

Well, that turns out to be dead wrong: Dieter has escaped — by way of the prequel, "Army of Thieves," an improbable film starring this strange, fussy German creature who eats cheese and cucumber sandwiches and wears turtlenecks with suspenders. It's a film no one really demanded and yet is loads of fun.

"Army of Thieves" takes place in the months before "Army of the Dead," which was set in a Las Vegas overrun by a zombie apocalypse. But zombies aren't really on the menu here. Don't tune in for undead thrills.

Instead, this is Dieter's show — acted and directed with glee by Matthias Schweighöfer — with a



Matthias Schweighöfer, left, and Nathalie Emmanuel in "Army of Thieves" (Netflix)

plot that leads us right up to the time when he joins the gang of safe robbers in a very gnarly Las Vegas. Shay Hatten, who helped write "Army of the Dead," gives us a story of a small-town bank clerk who lives his best life as a master safecracker in a previous robbery crew.

Dieter's sad little life in Germany is cracked open when a mysterious woman (Nathalie Emmanuel, beguiling) recruits him — back then he's Sebastian

and hasn't yet taken the name Dieter — to join their jet-setting ring. "I'm the woman who's going to change your life forever," she says. She proposes the heist of vaults built by the world's greatest safe-maker, the last having 72 trillion possible combinations. She offers him "a life less ordinary."

Dieter politely declines and goes back to his sad sandwiches. No, of course he doesn't. He joins the crew, which consists of a ha-

cker, a getaway driver, the muscle and his recruiter as they go about robbing three banks across Europe, each more complex and dangerous than the last.

"Is it like in a movie film where each one of us has a different skill-set and it's only working together that we can pull off that which needs the pulling off?" Dieter asks. (There's more than a little Borat in our Dieter).

Dieter is naïve, excitable and

adorable and relatable. He actually exclaims "gulp!" when he's stunned — "Did you just say 'gulp?'" asks his recruiter — and recognizes film clichés, including when the crew inevitably grow close: "May I ask, are we doing the bonding right now?" he says. His skills, to be honest, seem just to be really good at listening to safe tumblers clicking.

The film is a hoot as it celebrates previous thrillers — the use of a Nixon mask during a robbery ("Point Break"), a bicycle chase ("Premium Rush"), an underground safe-cracking competition ("Fight Club") and the obsessive tracking by an unhinged detective ("The Pink Panther"). One cop says it feels like he's in a spy movie. We are. There are name-checks of Nicholas Cage and Zach Efron.

You find yourself rooting for this unlikely safecracker, a savant when it comes to vaults and opera but a bumbling, awkward guy otherwise who stuns even himself with his bravery. He's after the glory of opening the vaults, not the money. Those of us who have watched the "Army of the Dead" know what's in store for him in Las Vegas so giving him a moment in the sun is only fair, the disposable sidekick come good.

"Army of Thieves," a Netflix release, is rated TV-MA for violence, language and adult situations. Running time: 129 minutes. ★★★★★

AD

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tTUNES

Elton John taps some talented friends for new album

MARK KENNEDY, MDT/AP

IT'S been more than 35 years since Elton John recorded with Stevie Wonder and that's clearly way, way too long. But the wait is over: The legends join on the new gospel-flavored song "Finish Line," enlivened by Wonder's trademark harmonica and John's piano work. It's a victory lap of a song.

It's also a highlight of John's 16-track album "The Lockdown Sessions," which sees the Rocket Man outsmart the pandemic by working with an eclectic mix of artists, from Stevie Nicks to Lil Nas X. Not all of it works, but most of it does, and credit John for the supreme musicianship to bend to his guests' strengths in music's every genre.

The album kicks off with the slinky "Cold Heart (PNAU Remix)" — melding John's songs "Kiss the Bride," "Rocket Man," "Where's the



"The Lockdown Sessions," Elton John (Interscope Records)

Shoorah?" and "Sacrifice" — into a dance bop featuring vocals by Dua Lipa. It's addictive stuff, and the bad part is the song has to end at some point.

John then has a twang with Brandi Carlile on "Simple Things" — repeating a line about the finish line — and a foot-stomping, '70s rock groove with Eddie Vedder on "E-Ticket." But John is a subdued presence on both Lil Nas X's cut "One of Me" and a cover of Metallica's "Nothing Else Matters" with Miley Cyrus, who, turns out,

slays at metal singing.

John gets glam rocky and spacy on the Gorillaz's "The Pink Phantom" with 6lack, and soars perfectly with Charlie Puth in "After All," but he stumbles in a pairing with Young Thug and Nicki Minaj on "Always Love You," his piano and vocals ill-fitting this particular vehicle. And "Beauty In the Bones," a duet with country singer Jimmie Allen, is flat since the song is weak tea.

John rights himself on the driving tune "Stolen Car" with Stevie Nicks, duets beautifully with rising star Rina Sawayama on track "Chosen Family" and the album ends on a poignant note with "I'm Not Gonna Miss You," his Pro Tools collaboration with the late Glen Campbell, who died in 2017. "I'm still here/And yet I'm gone," Campbell sings while John somehow transcends the ultimate finish line. Long may he run.

FASHION IN THE MOOD FOR WHITE AND PINK GOLD

SWISS Haute Horlogerie manufacturer Audemars Piguet expands its 15452 series with two new Royal Oak Selfwinding models in 37 mm. Crafted in white or pink gold, the two iterations are meticulously set with diamonds and colourful gemstones, while their guilloché dial incorporates new grey or beige hues. A new satin-finished calfskin leather strap completes the watch's elegant and original aesthetic.

Each of the 40 brilliant-cut gemstones adorning the gold bezel has been meticulously chosen to offer a smooth and harmonious gradation. The stones have been individually cut and polished to present clear and sharp angles before being set by hand on the bezel. Perfectly aligned, they reflect the ever-changing light to create unique optical effects, ranging from red and orange tints to pink hues, depending on the model.



TASTE OF EDESIA

A first-class cocktail journey

IRENE SAM, MDT

THIS November, award-winning mixologist Tural Hasanov will be at **The St. Regis Bar** from November 8 to 12 for an exclusive cocktail journey. The Director of Beverage at The Portman Ritz-Carlton Shanghai has been a guest mixologist for various properties within Marriott International and won the "People Choi-

ce Mixologist of the Year" by That's Shanghai Magazine in 2020. He is also credited for pioneering creative cocktails for different venues and occasions inspired by a sense of place. His professional demeanor and in-depth knowledge has led him to mentor many aspiring bartenders. My mission is to introduce the fun part of concocting cocktails and to leave a little memento behind for

guests and the bartenders at The St. Regis Bar" said Tural. "I have been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to work with some of the most talented bartenders in Shanghai and Dubai and I look forward to adding Macau to the list."

Guests can discover a selection of New York inspired cocktails handcrafted by Tural and wind their way through curated cocktail list inspired by the home of the Astor, New York. Each infusion evokes a unique story from the city's five boroughs, steeped in heritage and vibrant mythology of Upper Manhattan, Lower Manhattan, East Side, West Side and Midtown. To elevate the experience, Tural will lead a master class revealing his secrets to making personalised cocktails that are always classy, balanced and above all, original.

AD

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OPINION

Animal Farm

Albano Martins



A BALANCE OF PAYMENTS THAT DOESN'T PAY MY DOUBTS

I cautiously read the data released by AMCM regarding the 2020 and 2019 Balance of Payments.

At the beginning of September, I contested the quality of these values in an email sent to AMCM and also directly to AMCM's President.

The text I sent is pretty much the same as the one I use now in this piece.

Unlike DSEC who were kind enough to explain, attempt to refute or even accept my positions - and this has happened several times in my life - AMCM has been quite silent.

What then is my question on the Balance of Payments disclosed by AMCM?

Well, one is best not to remind the devil of an item in this Balance called "Errors and Omissions". Whether referring to 2019 or even to 2020 it was huge, although in this last year it is much smaller.

In 2019 the estimates for the Balance of Payments made by AMCM had errors and omissions amounting to -60.3 billion patacas! In 2020, this figure was 29.5 billion!

Common sense teaches that these values should always be residual, and it is not acceptable for them to be that high.

When errors and omissions are high, it means that the flows that should be included in the balance are not controlled in even a minimally acceptable way, or quite questionable, or even wrong, methodologies are in use.

Giving just one example that can be taken from the net itself, in Portugal the weight of errors and omissions regarding its goods and services balances was only 4.3 and 6.1 percent in 2020!

In Macau, this weight in 2020 was 45.6 and 48.8 percent.

For an economist who must interpret these data, which are fundamental for any economy, one is immediately left with the feeling that such numbers do not lend any credibility to the values of the flows that have been identified.

As I mentioned, at the beginning of September, I called AMCM's attention, without any response, to the use of the values of exports and imports published by DSEC in the GDP figure in 2020 and used by AMCM in this estimate.

These values are substantially higher than those referred to in the ECEM (Statistics of External Merchandise Trade) of DSEC, whose credibility I questioned of DSEC and continue to question.

As I referred in a previous article, regarding exports, its GDP figures in 2020 were about 2.36 times higher than that of ECEM, which is not minimally acceptable when explanations were simply based on assumptions that some imports were so high that they would have necessarily been sold (exported).

How is it possible that in a period of general pandemic, with restrictions on the entry and exit of visitors, a substantial reduction in visitors (-85%), in hotel occupancy for visitors (-72.5%), a sharp drop in visitor expenses (-81.4%), with such a sharp drop in gaming (-79.33%) and a huge recession (-56.3%), the likes of which have never been seen in the history of Macau, there is room for an assumption that several imported goods have been exported, meaning sold to non-residents?

Never in Macau's history have the exports of goods, in terms of GDP, been of this magnitude, which, moreover, occurs in a year in which the pandemic has profoundly affected the growth of economies in general. If this value were aligned with those of the ECEM, or even a little bit higher as has occurred in the past with adjustments, but not so absurdly high, the fall in Macau's GDP in 2020 would have been much greater!

And who knows if this correction would not have made the "Errors and Omissions" of the Balance of Payments disclosed by AMCM come to tolerable values?

Since its takeover of the government in February, the Myanmar military has been torturing detainees across the country in a methodical and systemic way, The Associated Press has found in interviews with 28 people imprisoned and released in recent months.

Based also on photographic evidence, sketches and letters, along with testimony from three recently defected military officials, AP's investigation provides the most comprehensive look since the takeover into a highly secretive detention system that has held more than 9,000 people.

The military, known as the Tatmadaw, and police have killed more

than 1,200 people since February.

While most of the torture has occurred inside military compounds, the Tatmadaw also has transformed public facilities such as community halls and a royal palace into interrogation centers, prisoners said.

The AP identified a dozen interrogation centers in use across Myanmar, in addition to prisons and police lockups, based on interviews and satellite imagery.

Read full report on macaudailytimes.com

AP PHOTO



Protest in Khartoum

AP PHOTO



Thailand A resident of a high-rise condominium cut the support rope for two painters, apparently angry she wasn't told they would be doing work, and left them hanging above the 26th floor until a couple rescued them, police said Wednesday. The woman is facing attempted murder and property destruction charges, Pol. Col. Pongjak Preechakrunpong, chief of the Pak Kret police station north of the Thai capital, told The Associated Press.

New Zealand officials said yesterday they will gradually loosen their border quarantine requirements, which have been among the toughest in the world throughout the pandemic. But while the changes will make it easier for New Zealanders stranded abroad to return home, officials gave no date for when tourists might be welcomed back. That change is likely still months away.

AP PHOTO



Russia European gas prices dropped yesterday after President Vladimir Putin instructed the country's major natural gas company to pump more gas into EU storages. Europe's gas prices have soared in recent weeks amid strong demand in Asia driven by the economic recovery from the pandemic and due to depleted European Union stocks from a cold winter.

AP PHOTO



Morocco Demonstrators took to the streets in cities around Morocco yesterday, some clashing with police as they denounced the country's decision to require coronavirus vaccination passes to be allowed to work and enter public venues. The decision came into effect Oct. 21 and stipulates that Moroccans must provide proof of vaccination in order to enter their workplaces. In a statement, the government has said employers have "direct legal responsibility" to enforce the decision.

SUDAN MILITARY LEADER FIRES SIX DIPLOMATS WHO CRITICIZED COUP

SUDAN'S strongman fired at least six ambassadors, including the envoys to the U.S., the European Union and France, after they condemned the military's takeover of the country, a military official said yesterday.

The diplomats pledged their support for the now-deposed government of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok.

Also fired by Gen Abdel-Fattah Buran were the Sudanese ambassadors to Qatar, China and the U.N. mission in Geneva, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief media.

The state-run Sudan TV also reported the dismissals.

The ambassadors were fired two days after Burhan dissolved the transitional government and detained the prime minister, many government officials and political leaders in a coup condemned by the U.S. and the West. The military allowed Hamdok to return home Tuesday after international pressure for his release.

Burhan said the military forces were compelled to take over because of quarrels between political parties that he claimed could

lead to civil war. However, the coup also comes just weeks before Burhan would have had to hand over the leadership of the Sovereign Council, the ultimate decision-maker in Sudan, to a civilian, in a step that would reduce the military's hold on the country. The council has military and civilian members. Hamdok's government ran Sudan's daily affairs.

The coup threatens to halt Sudan's fitful transition to democracy, which began after the 2019 ouster of long-time ruler Omar al-Bashir and his Islamist government in a popular uprising.

The takeover came after weeks of mounting tensions between military and civilian leaders over the course and pace of that process.

Ali bin Yahia, Sudan's envoy in Geneva, was defiant after his dismissal.

"I will spare no efforts to reverse the situation, explain facts and resist the blackout imposed by coup officials on what is happened my beloved country," he said in video comments posted online.

Nureldin Satti, the Sudanese envoy to the U.S., said Tuesday he was working with Sudanese diplomats in Brussels, Paris, Geneva and New York to

"resist the military coup in support of the heroic struggle of the Sudanese people" to achieve the aims of the uprising against al-Bashir.

Activists have been circulating videos on social media showing mostly empty streets in the capital, with most stores except for groceries and bakeries closed yesterday. Earlier, protesters called for a national strike to pressure the military to relinquish power.

Earlier this week, a group of over 30 Sudanese diplomats in and outside Sudan condemned the military's takeover in a joint statement, saying that the ambassadors in Belgium, Switzerland and France had pledged their continued allegiance to the Hamdok government.

The Ministry of Culture and Information, still loyal to Hamdok, said in a Facebook post that the ambassador to South Africa is also part of this group.

In another development, Burhan fired Adlan Ibrahim, head of the country's Civil Aviation Authority, according to the official. Adlan's dismissal came after the resumption of flights in and out of Khartoum's international airport resumed Wednesday. **MDT/AP**