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CCAC: A FIRM HAS ALLEGEDLY FALSIFIED DATA ON LOCAL EMPLOYEES PROVIDED TO THE DSAL TO APPLY FOR QUOTAS TO IMPORT MIGRANTS

P4

PEREIRA COUTINHO CRITICIZES PROPOSED TRADE UNION LAW AS ‘LIMBLESS AND AUTHORITARIAN’

P4

A TRIAL BEGAN FOR HONG KONG MEDIA TYCOON JIMMY LAI AND OTHER PRO-DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS CHARGED OVER THEIR ROLES IN AN UNAUTHORIZED TIANANMEN VIGIL LAST YEAR

P5



Philippines forces have killed a key rebel commander in one of Asia's longest-running insurgencies, in what the military described as a daring raid in the country's remote southern region, but what guerrilla leaders claimed was an ambush. Jorge Madlos, who used the nom de guerre Ka Oris, was for many decades a leading figure and spokesman for the communist fighters in the southern Philippines's mountainous hinterlands.



Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida says Japan should revitalize its economy through “new capitalism.” Many in this avidly capitalist country are puzzled over exactly what he has in mind. Kishida has said he believes a more equal distribution of wealth is needed to prevent the world's third largest economy from sinking into stagnation. That sounds dramatic, but analysts say he doesn't stand for drastic change.



Israel yesterday began welcoming individual tourists for the first time since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Authorities hope that opening the country's gates to solo travelers will breathe new life into the struggling tourism industry. Before the pandemic, the Christmas season saw hundreds of thousands of people visit Bethlehem, believed to be birthplace of Jesus, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

More on backpage

MULTIPLE REALITIES

Konstantin Bessmertny's ongoing exhibition showcases a 'voyage' to an artist's different realities P2



ANOTHER SLUMP
CASINOS SAW ITS WORST MONTH OF THE YEAR AFTER REVENUES ONLY REACHED MOP4.37B

P3



KONSTANTIN BESSMERTNY

EXHIBITION SHOWCASES ART THAT TRANSPORTS VIEWERS TO ANOTHER REALITY

LYNZY VALLES

WITH the pandemic causing the closure of borders and mandatory quarantine once more returning to the city, the yearning to voyage has been intensified.

Macau-based Russian artist Konstantin Bessmertny, who has been fixture on the Macau art scene since 1992, had titled his ongoing art exhibition, "Voyage 2021," a conceit that plays on social conditions whereby staying put in a place has become the norm.

Voyage 2021 invites the public to see a different reality through the eyes of the artist. Although the exhibition does not travel to different places – it does allow the public to travel in the same space: exploring different scenarios at different timelines.

Speaking to the Times, Bessmertny expressed his passion for creating different narratives in a series of layers – creating another reality in the mindset of the viewers.

"It is the duty of the artist to create his own reality, and people believe or are comfortable - or uncomfortable - but at least it's another statement," said the artist.

The ongoing exhibition features pieces which date back in 1996, large-scale artworks which were part of the Art Biennale,

and few which were inspired by his recent stay at Koh Samui: a trip Bessmertny made before staying put in Macau, since undergoing quarantine is not something that can be repeated.

The arts industry is one of many industries that have been devastated amid the ongoing pandemic given that Covid-19 cases in the region have led to shutdowns of public cultural spaces in line with the govern-

ment's aim to deter the spread of the virus.

The last shut-down occurred in September, when the government closed its cultural venues and cancel various arts and cultural activities due to the string of cases that were discovered.

During the peak of the pandemic early last year, the government also shut down public venues, and only gradually reopened them. This meant that different kinds of artistic performances and exhibitions were either cancelled or postponed.

For Bessmertny, having had a significant number of solo exhibitions in Europe and Asia, this year's exhibition is to "keep myself in shape."

"The Art Biennale exhibition was half of the time closed [due to the pandemic]. People like to have real experience now. This is the second year [we're in the pandemic] and I'm here to keep myself in shape," said the artist.

CLOSE TO IMPOSSIBLE

Local artists – particularly emerging ones – may already have had difficult time holding their own exhibitions prior the pandemic. Now this is an even greater hurdle.

According to Bessmertny, Macau is one of the best places to create art, citing support and resources provided by the government.

However, to make a sustainable living out of merely producing artworks and showcasing them is another question that could frankly be answered as "close to impossible."

"It's close to impossible to build it up as sustainable profession. [It will be] close to impossible to survive," he said.

"In the pop culture and in the 'winner takes all' economy, only a few survive. It's sad to

LYNZY VALLES



"In the pop culture and in the 'winner takes all' economy, only a few survive."

KONSTANTIN BESSMERTNY
ARTIST

say but [with] the ratio [of artists and general public], it's quite difficult. How many artists does Macau need?" Bessmertny asked.

In his view, an artist should ideally hold a solo exhibition in Macau only once in three to five years.

"If you exhibit three times a year, it's a disaster. You overproduce, you overexpose and the effect is negative," the artist explained.

Bessmertny said that the

plans of emerging artists who are moving to Hong Kong in the hopes that there are more opportunities there, are unrealistic, since there already are lot of younger artists in Hong Kong who are also trying to survive.

NEXT PROJECT: MACAU HISTORY

Bessmertny is currently contemplating a new project that tells the history of Macau. Although two artworks related to

this theme are currently showcased at Voyage 2021, this time the artworks would be installations done created according to a Japanese technique.

"It's about what Praia Grande looked like in the 1600s, prior the arrival of the Portuguese. I'm bringing justice to historical events because there were no paintings made at the time," he explained.

The artworks are currently on display at Clube Militar de Macau until November 6.

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GAMING

Worst ever October GGR due to travel halt

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU has just seen its worst gross gaming revenue (GGR) for October – typically the highest month of gaming revenues – due to the string of Covid-19 cases in the city in late September which led to the tightening of entry and exit regulations.

Data from the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau shows that casino revenues fell to as much as 40% to MOP4.37 billion, the lowest figure this year.

The plunge came following the appearance of Delta cases in late September – just a few days before the city was expecting to have an influx of tourist arrivals.

With the new cases, Zhuhai

imposed quarantine measures for people entering the mainland from Macau – measures which were only lifted on October 19.

Last month's GGR fell 26% from September and was down 83% from the pre-pandemic level in 2019.

Given these figures and with just two months left before the year ends, it is now certainly impossible for the city to meet its goal of gambling revenues of MOP130 billion for 2021.

Meanwhile, due to the restrictions, the city recorded the lowest Golden Week arrivals at just 8,159 visitors during the seven-day National Holiday: a plunge of 95% year-on-year and a severe blow to the city.

Average daily tourist arrivals were 1,166, representing

a stunning decline of 94% compared to last year and a disappointment for local retailers and the tourism sector generally.

In sharp contrast to previous years, there was quiet during the Golden Week holiday.

Few people were seen at

famous tourist spots such as the Ruins of St. Paul and the Senado Square, which were once known to be crowded with tourists, or at the casinos.

Macau has only recently concluded its public consultation on the gaming law that is intended to achieve three central aims: perfect the inspection juridical regime, raise general competitiveness, and develop a healthy and stable gaming sector.

Secretary Lei Wai Nong has previously stated that concessionaires will be under tighter scrutiny from the government, which will have greater authority to verify the backgrounds of the staff hired by concessionaires as well as staff hired by entities who work with them. Casino concessions are due to expire next year. It is still unknown whether the current concessionaires will be extended.

Recently, brokerage firm JP Morgan stated that it will come as no surprise if the government chooses to extend casino licenses by between six to 12 months after their expiration in June next year.

2021 MONTHLY GGR

	2021	2020	Variance
Jan	8,024	22,126	-63.7%
Feb	7,312	3,104	+135.6%
Mar	8,306	5,257	+58.0%
Apr	8,401	754	+1014.4%
May	10,445	1,764	+492.2%
Jun	6,535	716	+812.5%
Jul	8,444	1,344	+528.1%
Aug	4,442	1,330	+234.0%
Sept	5,879	2,211	+165.9%
Oct	4,365	7,270	-40.0%

Unit: MOP million

TOURISM

Visitor arrivals hit nearly 60,500 in two days



LYNZY VALLES

MACAU has seen a steady recovery in visitor arrivals in recent days, particularly on Friday where tourists arrivals hit 30,501, the highest figure since the string of Covid-19 cases in late September.

Data from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) shows that the number of visitors has been showing an upward trend again, even reaching 29,990 on

Saturday.

MGTO said that it is forging ahead with different promotional initiatives while gearing up to stage the Macao Light Festival and the Light up Macao Drone Gala in December.

"The office is also broadening the publicity for different upcoming mega events such as the Macau Grand Prix and Macau Food Festival as well as other community activities in November to attract more visitors to Macao for travel and spending," the bureau said in a statement.

Macau registered 25,252 visitor arrivals last Friday, October 22: the highest number of arrivals since the city

entered the immediate prevention state and tightened its measures against Covid-19 on September 25; measures which were later relaxed on October 15.

Single-day visitor arrivals exceeded 20,000 on October 20 and have stayed above that number since then.

On September 25 Macau recorded a total of 13 new Covid-19 cases, causing Zhuhai to temporarily tighten its entry and exit requirements, following which outbreak the average daily volume of visitor arrivals only stood at about 1,000. The increasing figure is providing the tourism sector with much hope for recovery. **LV**

ATFPM: CASINOS SHOULD PAY FOR LRT, ISLANDS HOSPITAL, CASH HANDOUTS

RENATO MARQUES

THE six gaming concessionaires should take responsibility for the payment of the big expenses held by the Macau government, the president of the Macau Civil Servants Association (ATFPM), José Pereira Coutinho said yesterday on the sidelines of a meeting with the Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng to discuss opinions from different sectors on the government policy address for 2022.

According to Pereira Coutinho, the way for the government to save public resources is not to reduce the level of entitlements but, instead, to pass some of the "fat bills" to the gaming concessionaires.

"The government should pass on the 'fat bills,' namely for the Light Rapid Transit (LRT): we suggest that the six [gaming] concessionaires should account for its maintenance. We also suggested, on the proposal for the new gaming law, that the [same] six concessionaires should [also] be accountable for the maintenance of the new Islands Hospital which will operate under a public-private partnership," he said, adding also that the government should specify that the gaming companies must directly allocate 3% of gaming revenues to the residents of Macau.

"This [3%] should be attributed directly without passing through any public service or the Macao Foundation (FM) as we know that the money which enters in the FM then is shared as they please and they award it more or less arbitrarily," Pereira Coutinho remarked.

The also lawmaker believes that the government, instead of calling for gaming companies to participate more in other activity sectors, should restrain such expansion.

"We see that the gaming concessionaires are offering services that should be done by the local Small and Medium Enterprises. This is what causes them to fail and go bankrupt because they cannot compete with these huge corporations that are offering services that they should not be allowed to [offer]," Coutinho stated.



PEREIRA COUTINHO CRITICIZES PROPOSED TRADE UNION LAW AS 'LIMBLESS AND AUTHORITARIAN'

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKER and president of the Macau Civil Servants Association (ATFPM), José Pereira Coutinho has opposed the draft proposal of the Trade Union law presented by the government over the weekend.

The lawmaker, who in the past has unsuccessfully submitted several bills to the Legislative Assembly (AL) on the matter, says that the proposal now being presented by the government is not what's required.

"This Trade Union and collective negotiation law is a 'limbless' law. It's a law that does not meet its aims," said Coutinho. The lawmaker made the statement on the sidelines of a meeting with representatives of ATFPM with the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, to discuss matters related to the Policy Address for 2022.

"The way it is designed, it does not fulfill the requirements of independence that a trade union must enjoy and also does not fulfill the conditions of freedom and representativeness to be able to

support those who are members of the union," Coutinho said.

He added, "They [the government] are mostly copying the laws of Singapore, which is an authoritarian state, and also Taiwan. I do think that taking into account that the five [legal] codes of Macau are accurate representations of the five main Portuguese ones we should follow that. In Portugal, even the military staff and the police forces can be – and are – unionized, and the same goes for civil servants. Here we want to exclude them."

For the leader of the ATFPM, the priority has been to maintain the status quo with the associations helping people in specific situations, rather than to move to a unionized system that lacks capacity and competence.

"If it has to be like this, it is best to be an association (as we have been constituted till now) since we have much greater freedom to help everyone, rather than to be part of a union that is 'tied up' and that at the end of the day cannot operate and cannot represent anyone."

The lawmaker remarked that the ATFPM completely disagrees with the analysis that led to the drafting of the bill.

"It [the draft] lacks in independence, freedom, and the capacity to represent people, including in court cases. It is not useful! It's a way of saying that we have [a trade union law] although it is useless," he concluded.

REJECTED 12 TIMES ON LAWMAKERS' INITIATIVES

A year ago, a trade union bill proposed by lawmakers Pereira Coutinho and Sulu Sou was rejected by the AL.

This was the 12th time that a bill of this kind was rejected.

Pereira Coutinho, together with several lawmakers linked to the Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM), presented several bills aimed at the creation of a trade union law, over the last three legislative terms, all of which were rejected by the plenary.

In recent years, most lawmakers who voted against the proposals justified their vote by citing the alleged lack of compli-



ce with a legislative procedure. In their opinion, the initiative to draft new laws should come from the government and not from lawmakers. These opponents in the AL believe that lawmakers drafting new legislation should request permission from the CE

to advance the proposal before presenting it to the AL plenary.

The former pro-democracy wing, together with FAOM lawmakers, have consistently rejected this theory but have failed to convince a majority of the pro-establishment plenary.

Lawmaker calls CE for another financial support measure

RENATO MARQUES

JOSÉ Pereira Coutinho, lawmaker and president of the Macau Civil Servants Association (ATFPM), is calling for additional and augmented financial support measures for local residents, in the government Policy Address for 2022 (LAG22).

The matter was discussed at government headquarters yesterday morning in a meeting organized with the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, to discuss matters related to the (LAG22).

Leaving the meeting, Pereira Coutinho revealed that many topics were discussed, among the most significant of which related to government financial support for residents.

"Regarding the social matters, we have called for [a raise in] the Wealth Partaking Scheme [cash handouts] for 12,000 patacas next year, as well another 10,000 patacas for the elec-



tronic consumption scheme [increased from the 8,000 patacas distributed last June]," he said.

"7,000 patacas must be given back to the senior citizens, since the government has stopped paying this sum from the Social Security Fund since the year 2020, so we are calling for the payment of a total of 21,000 patacas [to each individual in] this group (referring to the year

2020, 2021 and 2022)," the lawmaker added.

Pereira Coutinho also argued that any kind of support from the government should take into account first the disadvantaged people, such as people suffering from chronic diseases, the elderly, the single-parent families, and informal caretakers, among others.

Besides the social matters, the ATFPM is also con-

cerned with the economy: especially with matters concerning trade with the mainland.

"It is not easy to conduct transactions between Macau and the mainland due to customs bureaucracies and taxes that are charged to all products that exit Macau and head the mainland. This has been creating difficulties on the generating of benefits for the Small and Medium Enterprises," he said, adding that the supports being currently given to the taxation group B companies are inadequate, since they exclude almost every company, including those which report very small profits.

As Coutinho explained, most of these companies are evaluated by the Financial Services Bureau (DSF) and since they do not have to pay taxes, they do not appeal from the estimated profits evaluation made by DSF, a condition which excludes them from government support measures.

CCAC

COMPANY FALSIFIES DATA TO IMPORT TNRS

LYNZY VALLES

THE city's corruption watchdog has detected a company which has allegedly falsified data on local employees provided to the Labour Affairs Bureau in order to apply for quotas to import or renew non-resident workers (TNRs).

According to the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC), the company in question provides maintenance services for the Macau Frontier Post on the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge.

The firm submitted false documents to the Financial Services Bureau (DSF) and the Social Security Fund. The employees whose records were falsified also allegedly received payments of MOP15,000 under the anti-pandemic support fund from the SAR government.

The company declared that it had employed 24 local employees.

Of these, six had abnormal entry and departure records, and seldom stayed in Macau during the period when payments are made by the social security system.

There was even one individual who had not entered Macau since leaving the region in 2015. Some employees admitted that they had never worked for the particular company and some admitted that they had never received any salaries and that the payment of contributions was only in order to maintain eligibility for the old-age pension.

According to the CCAC, there are strong indications that the employees were fake, hence the CCAC is further investigating the veracity of the remaining local employees. The involved company is alleged to have committed document forgery and the CCAC has reported the case to the Public Prosecutions Office.

FIREWORKS boomed as the visitors at Shanghai Disneyland waited for their COVID-19 test results, surrounded by healthcare workers dressed from head to toe in the white protective suits.

Shanghai Disneyland suddenly announced Sunday evening that they were no longer accepting any visitors and they were cooperating with an epidemiological investigation from another province. They then locked down the park, as Shanghai city healthcare workers and police rushed to the scene to conduct a mass testing.

The park is shut for Monday and Tuesday as they continue to cooperate with the pandemic prevention efforts, Shanghai Disneyland said in a notice yesterday.

The park's sudden lockdown and temporary closure underscored just how serious China is about enforcing its zero-tolerance pandemic prevention strategy.

Globally, many countries have turned to living with the virus, whether out of choice or necessity, although as virus surges come and go, many face overburdened healthcare systems, and excess deaths.

In China, which has kept its borders sealed since March 2020, the policy response has been to cut the chain of transmission of the virus as quickly as possible. With a strict quarantine on arrival policy, the authorities have aimed to stamp out each local outbreak to zero — helping China keep its reported totals to relatively lows of 4,636 deaths out of 97,243 cases since the pandemic began.

The case that prompted Disneyland's actions involved one individual whose illness was discovered in the nearby city of Hangzhou and had visited the theme park on Saturday, local media reported.

For hours on Sunday night,

AP PHOTO



COVID-19

Shanghai Disneyland tests 33K, closes two days over one contact

tens of thousands of families and visitors were stuck in the theme park, as they waited for a negative test result that would allow them to leave.

One Disney superfan, who gave her last name as Chen, said that she was inside the park when she heard the announcement to get tested at 5 p.m., but had taken it all in stride.

"No one complained, and

everyone behaved really well," she said. Chen said she holds an annual membership and visits the park at least once a month. She is waiting at a hotel for her second COVID test result before she is allowed to leave and go back to Beijing.

The city announced yesterday morning that all 33,863 people who had been at the park over the weekend had tested negative

for COVID-19. They will be asked to get tested again in the next two weeks and monitor their health.

Shanghai Disneyland is just the latest example of how far Chinese authorities will go to stop the spread of the virus.

Last Thursday, Beijing Railway authorities notified health authorities in Jinan to stop a train that was traveling from Shanghai to Beijing because one passenger

was a close contact of someone who had tested positive for COVID-19.

Jinan health authorities then sent health care workers, transportation workers and police rushing to the station to quarantine the passengers and disinfect the train. They sent 212 people into centralized quarantine, including the close contact. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

Eight activists on trial over banned Tiananmen vigil

ZEN SOO & MATTHEW CHENG, HONG KONG

A trial began yesterday for Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai and seven other pro-democracy activists charged over their roles in an unauthorized Tiananmen vigil last year, amid a crackdown on political dissent in Hong Kong.

Lai and the seven others, which includes Lee Cheuk-yan, the former chairman of the now-defunct Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, face charges that include organizing, participating and inciting others to take part in the

unauthorized candlelight vigil commemorating the bloody 1989 crackdown on protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

Lee and four other defendants pleaded guilty to the incitement charge as the trial began. Former Democratic Party chairman Wu Chi-wai pleaded guilty to taking part in the unauthorized vigil, while Lee also pleaded guilty to organizing it. They will enter mitigation pleas Nov. 12 before they are sentenced.

Lai, the founder of the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, pleaded not guilty to inciting others to take part

in the unauthorized assembly. Two other defendants, lawyer Chow Hang-tung and former reporter Gwyneth Ho, pleaded not guilty to the charges against them.

Police last year banned the annual vigil for the first time in three decades, citing public health risks from the coronavirus pandemic. Critics believe the ban is part of the crackdown on opposition in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory following months of anti-government protests in 2019.

More than a dozen activists turned up at the June 4 vigil last year

AP PHOTO



Pro-democracy activists, including Lee Cheuk-Yan (center) arrive at a court in Hong Kong on Oct. 15

despite the ban, and thousands followed suit, breaking through barriers in spite of police warnings. They set up around Victoria Park to light can-

dles and sing songs.

Police later arrested and charged 26 activists over the vigil, including members of the Hong Kong Alliance that organi-

zes the annual vigil.

The Hong Kong Alliance disbanded in September, amid accusations from the government that the organization was working for foreign interests. Leaders of the alliance categorically denied the accusations.

Of the 26 activists arrested, 16 of them including prominent Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong have pleaded guilty and were handed jail sentences ranging between four to 10 months. Three were given suspended sentences.

Two other activists in the case, Nathan Law and Sunny Cheung, have fled the city. **MDT/AP**

MENGQI JI

MISSOURI MAN ACCUSED IN CHINESE WIFE'S DEATH SET FOR TRIAL

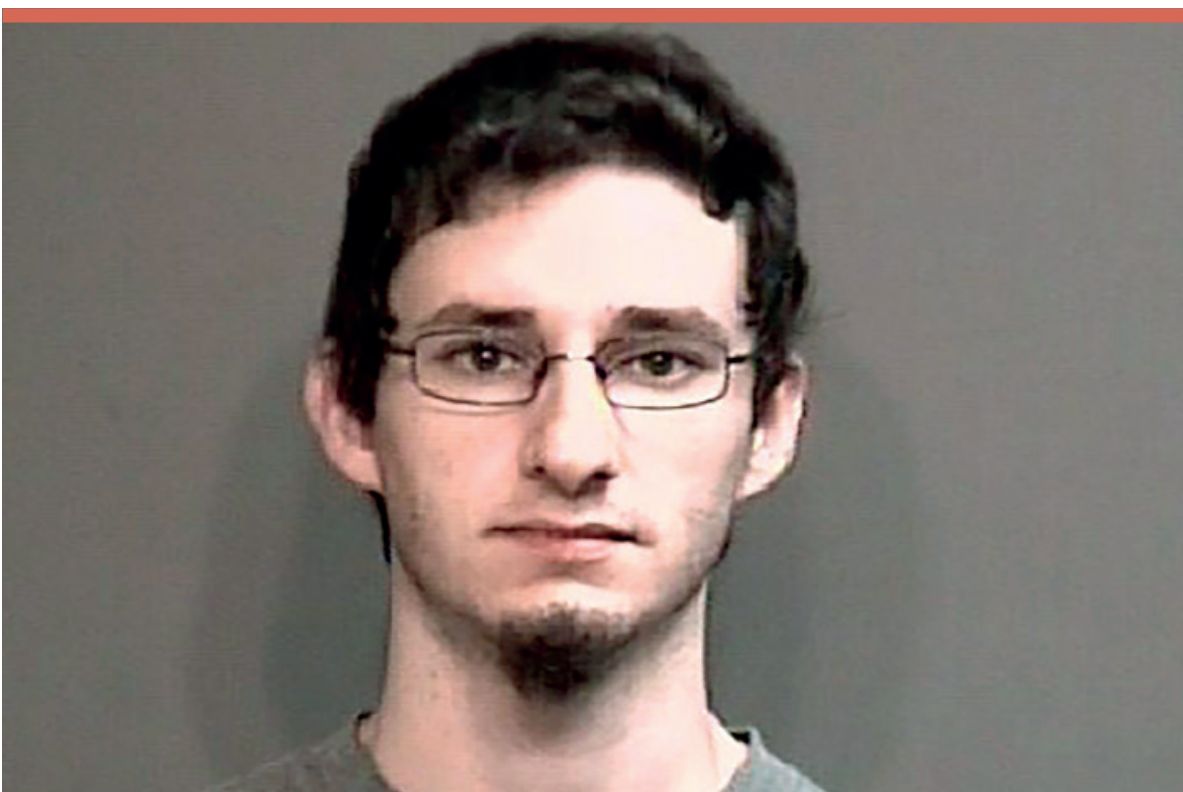
JURY selection was scheduled to begin today [Macau time] in the trial of a man charged with killing his Chinese wife two years ago and leaving her body at a Missouri park.

Joseph Elledge, of Columbia, is charged with first-degree murder in the death of 28-year-old Mengqi Ji. Elledge reported her missing on Oct. 10, 2019, prompting numerous searches before her remains were found March 25 in a remote area of Rock Bridge State Park about 5 miles south of Columbia.

Authorities have not said how she died, but prosecutors have suggested Elledge strangled or suffocated Ji before taking her body to the area where her remains were found.

Boone County Chief Prosecutor Dan Knight charged Elledge even before his wife's body was found. In court hearings, Knight has called Elledge a "jealous, controlling, manipulative psychopath." He argued Elledge killed Ji to avoid a divorce and prevent her from fleeing China with the couple's daughter.

AP PHOTO



This undated file photo provided by the Boone County Sheriff's Department in Columbia, Mo., shows Joseph Elledge, the man charged with first-degree murder in death of Mengqi Ji

During the trial, the jury will hear audio recordings of arguments between the couple. Ji secretly recorded two of the

tapes and Elledge recorded 10 others, for a total of 13 hours of recordings.

Elledge also faces related charges

of child endangerment and domestic assault. A trial to determine custody of the child will be held after the murder trial.

According to a probable cause statement, Elledge played video games and contacted his mother and a friend during what he later said were the first hours that Ji was missing on Oct. 9, 2019, but did not tell them she was missing. A friend came to check on Ji the next day at the request of Ji's mother, which prompted Elledge to report her disappearance.

In the hours after he said his wife disappeared, Elledge took two drives with the couple's then-1-year-old daughter to rural areas and to a popular biking and hiking trail with access to the Lamine River, according to the statement.

Elledge told investigators that the couple's relationship had been strained for several months and she had rebuffed his efforts to get closer. He said he believed she was exchanging flirtatious messages with another man but wasn't aware of that until after she disappeared.

Ji came to the U.S. from China and earned a master's degree in mechanical and aerospace engineering from the University of Missouri in December 2014. She previously attended the East China University of Science and Technology in Shanghai.

She stayed in Columbia and married Elledge, who was a student at the University of Missouri, in 2017. **MDT/AP**

AD

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ROD MCGUIRK & DAVID
RISING, CANBERRA

TRAVEL

Australia, Thailand reopen borders after lengthy lockdowns

SYDNEY'S international airport came alive with tears, embraces and laughter yesterday as Australia opened its border for the first time in 20 months, with some arriving travelers removing mandatory masks to see the faces of loved ones they've been separated from for so long.

"Just being able to come home without having to go to quarantine is huge," Carly Boyd, a passenger who traveled from New York, told reporters at Sydney's Kingsford-Smith Airport, where Peter Allen's unofficial national anthem "I Still Call Australia Home" was playing.

"There's a lot of people on that flight who have loved ones who are about to die or have people who died this week. So for them to be able to get off the plane and go see them straight away is pretty amazing," Boyd added.

Countries in the Asia-Pacific have had some of the world's strictest COVID-19 pandemic lockdown measures and travel restrictions, but with vaccination rates rising and cases falling, many are now starting to cautiously reopen.

Some, like China and Japan, remain essentially sealed-off to foreign visitors but Thailand also started to substantially reopen yesterday and many others have also already started, or plan to follow suit.

Tourism accounted for some 20% of Thailand's economy before the pandemic, and the lockdown has caused massive job losses and hardship.

Still, only a few months removed from a surge fueled by the delta variant of the virus that saw deaths rise dramatically, many Thais remain worried that an influx of outsiders could trigger new outbreaks.

Bangkok taxi driver Issarapong Paingam lost his mother to COVID-19 during the recent surge, and said it would make more sense to him for the government to focus its attention fully on reopening domestically before introducing foreign travelers into the mix.

"The government has not yet told the public what they would do if an outbreak takes place again," the 34-year-old said. "I don't understand why they don't let people in the country live normally as a trial to see the trend (of COVID-19 cases) before welcoming tourists."

Thailand has allowed residents to travel during the pandemic, but mandated a strict two-week quarantine in specially designated hotels for people entering the country.

Foreign arrivals plummeted from 40 million in 2019 to 6.69 million in 2020 — almost all in

AP PHOTO



Long time no see: A woman is embraced by a loved-one after arriving on a flight from Los Angeles at Sydney Airport

the first three months before the pandemic restrictions were introduced — to fewer than 100,000 so far in 2021.

Yesterday's reopening builds on a pilot scheme launched in July on the resort island of Phuket, which allowed fully vaccinated travelers from selected countries to spend their quarantine moving around the island instead of in a hotel room.

Starting this week, if travelers are fully vaccinated and from one of 63 countries and territories deemed "low risk" — which some cynical Thais have noted seem to be based more on spending power than coronavirus infections — they are exempt from quarantine. They need to spend one night at a designated hotel and can't check out until they have a negative COVID-19 test, but then are free to travel.

Travelers from countries not on the preferred list or those who are unvaccinated are still subject to various quarantine rules.

Restrictions are also being relaxed in the destination areas, including widespread reopening of businesses and other facilities such as department stores, spas, tattoo shops, schools and sporting events.

With the combination of strict screening of visitors and higher

vaccination rates in Thailand, Supat Hasuwannakit, president of Thailand's Rural Doctor Society, said he is not concerned about foreign tourists sparking a new surge in cases.

But he said he does worry about the planned reopening of bars and clubs in December, noting that recent domestic outbreaks came after the government allowed people to gather for activities such as religious services and weddings.

"Once people start to gather, eat and drink, it has a high possibility to create a new outbreak," he said. "Most bars and nightclubs are indoors with bad airflow, so it is easy for COVID-19 to spread once they reopen."

Rules requiring masks and distancing remain in place, much like other countries in the region that have begun reopening.

In India, which saw a peak of 400,000 daily cases in April and May, officials have been warning that people need to continue following such restrictions to avoid causing "super spreader" events during the holiday season as the country gradually reopens.

India began granting tourist visas on Oct. 15 for fully vaccinated people arriving on charter

flights, and will extend them to tourists on commercial flights starting Nov. 15.

Neighboring Sri Lanka has already started to allow fully vaccinated travelers without quarantines, and partially or non-vaccinated people with some restrictions. South Korea, which yesterday began to allow larger social gatherings and lifted operating-hour restrictions on restaurants, has a similar scheme.

Vietnam is still closed but plans to open the popular resort island of Phu Quoc to fully vaccinated vacationers by the end of the month, and neighboring Cambodia, which yesterday lifted restrictions on domestic travel, has a similar plan to open two seaside provinces to international travelers. Malaysia intends to open its northern resort island of Langkawi on Nov. 15 to fully vaccinated tourists.

Australia is betting that vaccination rates are now high enough to mitigate the danger of allowing international travel.

Initially only Australian permanent residents and citizens will be free to enter the country. Fully vaccinated foreigners traveling on skilled worker and student visas will be given priority over international tourists.

But the government expects

Australia will welcome international tourists back to some degree before the year ends.

Already, Australia announced yesterday that vaccinated tourists from Singapore — which has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world — will be welcome from Nov. 21 under a bilateral agreement.

Boyd hopped on the first flight home from New York to surprise her parents in Australia.

"It's pretty amazing," she told Nine Network television after touching down. "It's been like three years since I've been home so it's pretty exciting."

The new freedoms also mean that fully vaccinated Australian permanent residents and citizens can leave the country for any reason without asking the government for an exemption from a travel ban that has trapped most at home since March 25, 2020.

Sydney was the first Australian airport to announce it would reopen yesterday because New South Wales was the first state where 80% of the population aged 16 and older has been fully vaccinated. Melbourne and the national capital, Canberra, also opened after Victoria state and the Australian Capital Territory achieved the vaccination benchmark.

Even though Australians are now free to travel overseas, four Australian states and a territory are still maintaining pandemic restrictions on crossing state lines.

Australian Ethen Carter, who landed at Sydney's airport from Los Angeles yesterday, expressed his frustration at having to apply for permission to visit his dying mother in Western Australia state.

He pleaded through the media to Western Australia Premier Mark McGowan, who has said the state border will not open this year, to let him in.

"Mark, think of the people that are suffering, like, mentally to see their family. That's also a health issue," Carter said. "And we know we've got to protect people's lives, but you've got to bring families together again, you have to."

McGowan said his government would consider allowing Carter to enter the state if he applies for an exemption.

"These situations are very sad and very difficult and we've seen much of this over the course of the last two years," McGowan said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



HEATING UP

World leaders take center stage at climate talks

SETH BORENSTEIN,
GLASGOW

IT'S time for more than 130 world leaders to feel the heat.

They will traipse to the podium this week at crucial international climate talks in Scotland and talk about what their country is going to do about the threat of global warming. From U.S. President Joe Biden to Seychelles President Wavel John Charles Ramkalawan, they are expected to say how their nation will do its utmost, challenge colleagues to do more and generally turn up the rhetoric.

"Humanity has long since run down the clock on climate change," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was expected to say during the opening session, according to partial remarks released by his office yesterday [Macau time]. "It's one minute to midnight and we need to act now."

The biggest names, including Biden, Johnson, India's Narendra Modi, France's Emmanuel Macron and Ibrahim Solih, president of hard hit Maldives, will take the stage today [Macau time].

And then the leaders will leave.

The idea is that they will do the big political give-and-take, setting out broad outlines of agreement, and then have other government officials hammer out

the nagging but crucial details. That's what worked to make the historic 2015 Paris climate deal a success, former U.N. Climate Secretary Christiana Figueres told The Associated Press.

"For heads of state, it is actually a much better use of their strategic thinking," Figueres said.

In Paris, the two signature goals — trying to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times and net zero carbon emissions by 2050 — were created by this leaders-first process, Figueres said. In the unsuccessful 2009 Copenhagen meeting the leaders swooped in at the end.

Thousands lined up in a chilly wind in the Scottish city of Glasgow yesterday to get through a bottleneck at the entrance to the venue. But what will be noticeable are a handful of major absences at the summit known as COP26.

Xi Jinping, president of top carbon polluting nation China, and Russian President Vladimir Putin won't be in Glasgow. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also decided not to travel to Glasgow, the state-run Anadolu Agency said, without citing a reason for the change of plans.

Figueres said the absence of the Chinese leader isn't that big a deal — though Biden chided China over the weekend — because he isn't

leaving the country during the pandemic and his climate envoy is a veteran negotiator.

More troublesome are several small nations from the Pacific islands that couldn't make it because of COVID-19 restrictions and logistics. That's a big problem because their voices relay urgency, Figueres said.

Kevin Conrad, a negotiator from Papua New Guinea who also chairs the Coalition for Rainforest Nations, said he's watching the big carbon polluting nations. "I think it's really important for the United States and China to show leadership as the two largest emitters. If both of them can show it can be done, I think they give hope to the rest of the world," he said.

Scientists say the chances of meeting the goal to keep global temperatures from rising by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius this century are slowly slipping away. The world has already warmed by more than 1.1C and current projections based on planned emissions cuts over the next decade are for it to hit 2.7C by the year 2100.

The amount of energy unleashed by such warming would melt much of the planet's ice, raise global sea levels and greatly increase the likelihood and intensity of extreme weather, experts say.

But before the U.N. cli-

mate summit, the heads of the world's largest economies, at the close of their Group of 20 summit in Rome, offered vague climate pledges instead of commitments of firm action, saying they would seek carbon neutrality "by or around mid-century." The G-20 countries also agreed to end public financing for coal-fired power generation abroad, but set no target for phasing out coal domestically — a clear nod to China and India.

The G-20 countries represent more than three-quarters of the world's climate-damaging emissions and summit host Italy, and Britain, which is hosting the Glasgow conference, had been hoping for more ambitious targets coming out of Rome.

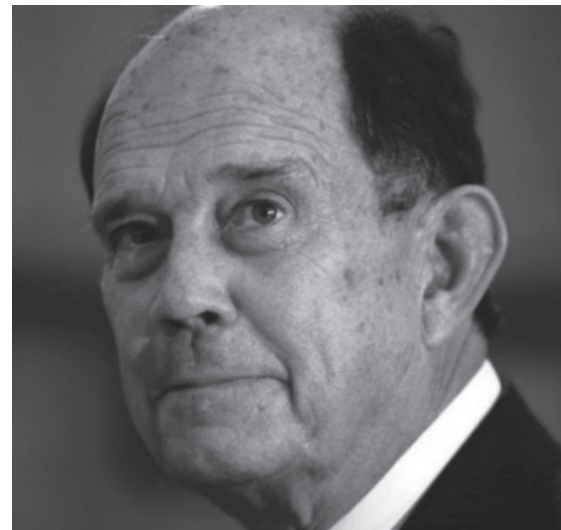
India, the world's third-biggest emitter, has yet to follow China, the U.S. and the European Union in setting a target for reaching "net zero" emissions. Negotiators are hoping Modi will announce such a goal in Glasgow.

The Biden administration has tried hard to temper expectations that two weeks of climate talks will produce major breakthroughs on cutting climate-damaging emissions.

Rather than a quick fix, "Glasgow is the beginning of this decade race, if you will," Biden's climate envoy, John Kerry, told reporters. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1995 EX-MINISTER CHARGED WITH APARTHEID MURDERS



Former South African defence minister General Magnus Malan has been charged with murder.

General Malan was arrested today with 10 other former senior military officers.

They were charged with murdering 13 black people in 1987 as part of a conspiracy to create war between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Zulu Inkhata Freedom Party.

The conspiracy was said to have been aimed at damaging the ANC and maintaining white rule.

The charges relate to an attack in January 1987 on the home of Victor Ntuli, an ANC activist.

Mr Ntuli was not at home but 13 people, including seven children, were killed in the house in KwaMakhuta township, near Durban.

It is alleged that General Malan and his co-defendants supported a covert unit which trained the Inkhata members who carried out the attack.

General Malan, who served as defence minister from 1980-1991, is the highest-ranking

The 11 accused were granted bail and ordered to appear in court again on 1 December.

After being released on bail, General Malan said: "What happened here today is causing the biggest crisis that's ever been in the democracy of South Africa.

"I would like to say I am a moderate, I am a democrat, I am a Christian and I'm very proud of it," the general added.

The former ruling National Party and other right-wing white groups have demanded the defendants be granted immunity from prosecution under an amnesty clause in the country's interim constitution.

However, President Nelson Mandela has said he will not halt the prosecutions.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Eventually the number charged rose to 20 - all were acquitted after a trial in 1996.

South African President Nelson Mandela supported the judge's decision and called on South Africans to respect it.

The mammoth seven-month trial cost around £1.2m and brought hostility between black and white South Africans once more out into the open. Very few people have been tried for crimes carried out in the apartheid era because the South African Government granted wide-ranging amnesty to both apartheid officials and black anti-apartheid fighters.

In 1996 a Truth and Reconciliation Commission began its hearings.

The commission had been set up by the government to establish a record of human rights violations and to give recommendations on reparation for victims and amnesty.

However, the commission's final report in 1998 met with criticism from all sides.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Tuesday's skies aim to slow your pace and help you hone your focus as the balance-seeking Libra moon forms a supportive alignment with capable Saturn.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You have all the willpower and energy you need to apply yourself towards something you actually care about in your craft as the logical Libra moon enjoys a supportive alliance with level-headed Saturn.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Luna's supportive connection with grounded Saturn makes it easy to apply yourself with follow-through and steadiness towards any project that speaks to you, so long as it piques your interest.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You have no option but to heal yourself from the past to the present, Cancer. You've been steadily addressing any lingering emotional issues, especially those concerning your ability to form meaningful commitments.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Luna's smooth alignment with capable Saturn makes it easy to apply yourself with focus and follow-through, especially when it comes to one-on-one interactions and building future plans.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

This supportive and steady alignment makes it simple to accomplish whatever you set your sights on, especially when your goals include activating your personal talents.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

The moon, currently in your sign, forms a supportive link with grounding Saturn, making it easy to hone your focus and apply yourself with steady follow through.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You're in no mood to be taxed socially, as the moon's presence in reflective Libra encourages you to honor rest, relaxation, and renewal above all else.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Get your list of goals out, Sagittarius. Tuesday's cosmic landscape finds you needing to fine-tune the things you actually want to accomplish vs. those grandiose plans that may be too far out of reach.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Make sure you're applying that immense work ethic towards something you actually care about as the balanced Libra moon forms a smooth alignment with your ruling planet, steady Saturn.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Escape any of your exhausted, mundane routines today, Aquarius. Tuesday's skies find you hungry for fantasy, adventure, and a widened perspective of your life as the moon floats through idealistic Libra.

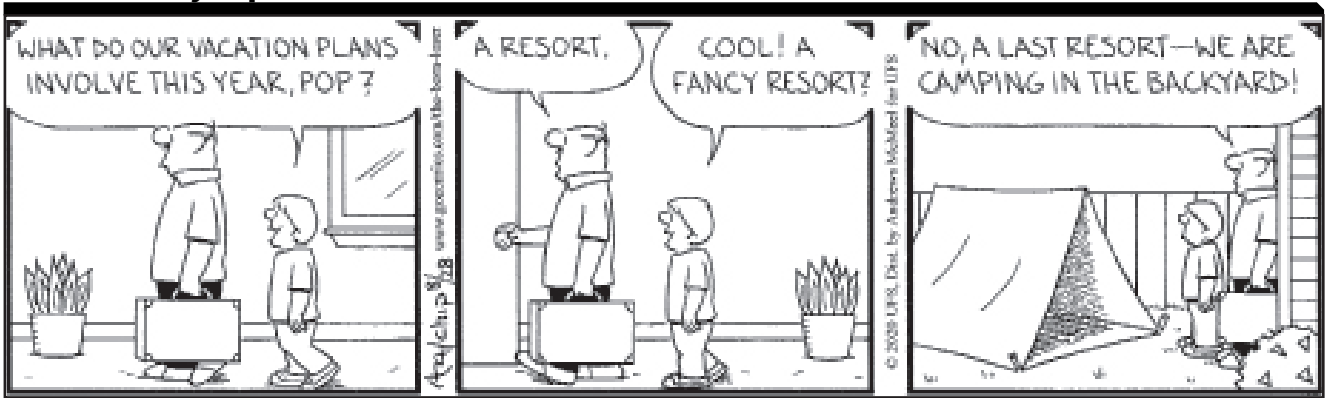


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

The other-oriented Libra moon fine-tunes your focus on any relationship issues that need softening, and her sweet link with grounded Saturn makes it easy to look at things from a realistic perspective.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

			9	4			3
2				7			
3		7				9	
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MEDIUM

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HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	7	20	fine
Harbin	5	14	cloudy
Tianjin	11	22	cloudy
Urumqi	13	18	rain
Xi'an	16	18	rain
Lhasa	13	18	overcast
Chengdu	19	23	overcast
Chongqing	15	25	cloudy
Kunming	10	14	overcast
Nanjing	21	25	cloudy
Shanghai	12	21	cloudy
Wuhan	5	12	cloudy
Hangzhou	9	21	cloudy
Taipei	1	14	fine
Guangzhou	18	28	cloudy
Hong Kong	22	26	overcast

WORLD

Moscow	2	7	overcast
Frankfurt	5	15	overcast
Paris	8	17	overcast
London	14	17	overcast
New York	13	17	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Home of Odysseus; 7- Youth org.; 10- Weed whackers; 14- Thin soups; 15- Big bird; 16- Feminizing suffix; 17- Rum cocktail; 18- Help, resource; 19- Went through, as the paper; 20- Loving; 23- Blast from the past; 26- Future fish; 27- Race official; 28- Masked critter; 29- Samovar; 30- RR stop; 31- Republic in central Europe; 33- Hot time in Paris; 34- Powdery residue; 37- Canard; 38- Traveler's stop; 39- Neither's partner; 40- Cedar Rapids college; 41- DDE's rival; 42- ABA member; 43- Place in position; 45- ___ carte; 46- Word that can succeed old, ice and bronze; 47- Invitation request; 48- ___-garde; 51- "The Wizard of Oz" studio; 52- Seizes with teeth; 53- Activated by small change; 56- Gillette brand; 57- Shoe width; 58- Tater Tots maker; 62- Film spool; 63- Broke bread; 64- Pay as due; 65- Goes wrong; 66- Acid; 67- Set upon;

DOWN: 1- Big Blue; 2- La-la lead-in; 3- ___ polloi; 4- To disgrace; 5- Abrade; 6- In your dreams!; 7- Lighthouse; 8- Strike hard; 9- Autobahn auto; 10- Rupture; 11- Late bedtime; 12- Related on the mother's side; 13- Passover meal; 21- Wide of the mark; 22- Furry swimmers; 23- Florida citrus center; 24- Nephew of Donald Duck; 25- Prescribed amounts; 29- Utah's ___ Mountains; 30- Rock; 32- Theater district; 33- Riddle; 34- ___ of thousands; 35- Find the answer; 36- Aids; 44- Poseidon's spear; 45- Historical records; 46- Consented; 48- Without ___ in the world; 49- Elector; 50- Broadcaster; 51- Confronts; 52- Henri's hat; 54- Ring out; 55- When said three times, a 1970 war movie; 59- Gilbert and Sullivan princess; 60- Yr's end; 61- Biblical beast boat;

Yesterday's solution

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

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PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone – Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity – Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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AD

AP PHOTO



CHINA'S ECONOMY SLOWS AS BEIJING WRESTLES WITH DEBT

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINA'S economic rebound from the coronavirus pandemic is stalling as President Xi Jinping's government cracks down on surging corporate debt.

For a decade, the ruling Communist Party has talked about shifting to economy based on spending by 1.4 billion consumers instead of on building factories and apartments. But with each slowdown, Beijing fell back on pepping up growth with more construction and borrowing.

Finally, Xi's government is confronting the problem by clamping down on borrowing by a real estate industry that supports millions of jobs.

That is sending shockwaves through the economy. Businesses and households are jittery as housing sales and construction slump. That is chilling auto and retail sales. It has possible global repercussions as China buys less steel and other building materials.

"Many customers would like to wait and see," said Liang Qiming, a salesman for online real estate broker 5i5j.com in Nanchang, a southern provincial capital that was turned into a boomtown by a flurry of construction over the past two decades.

China became the world's factory, but the bigger power

driving its economic boom was a construction frenzy that took off in the late 1990s. Developers and local governments poured borrowed money into blanketing the country with new apartments, office towers, shopping malls, bridges and railways.

Xi's government appears to be willing to accept a politically painful slowdown to get that debt under control and achieve the longer-term goal of self-sustaining, safer growth.

Beijing "doesn't want growth at all costs, followed by the likely or inevitable financial market crash, which is very much the sort of European-U.S. model," said Robert Carnell, head of Asia research for ING.

Financial markets are on edge about whether one of the biggest developers, Evergrande Group, might be allowed to collapse under 2 trillion yuan (\$310 billion) in debt as a warning to others.

Beijing wants to make sure families receive apartments sold to them by Evergrande before they were built, as is common in China, economists say. But they say it is trying to avoid sending the wrong message by bailing out the company.

Evergrande is a "pre-emptive cleanup," Carnell said.

China revived from the coro-

navirus pandemic earlier than the United States, Europe or Japan, but but that rebound quickly flattened out.

Depressed by the building slump, the economy expanded just 4.9% over a year earlier in the three months ending in September much weaker than the previous quarter's 7.9% growth. Compared with the previous quarter — the way other major economies are measured — growth in the three months ending in September fell to 0.2%, among the weakest of the past decade.

With no sign Beijing will ease up, forecasters expect the economy to weaken further

Housing sales fell 32% in September from a year earlier. Buyers were put off by curbs on mortgage lending and anxiety about whether developers might fail to deliver apartments paid for in advance. That means less spending on furniture and appliances.

With no sign Beijing will ease up, forecasters expect the economy to weaken further, since consumers who are reluctant to spend won't fill the gap left by lower investment.

This quarter's growth might fall as low as 3% over a year ago,

according to Nomura. Bank of America cut its full-year forecast from 8% to 7.7%, which still would be among the world's strongest. It slashed next year's outlook from 5.3% to just 4%.

The total owed by companies, households and the government rose to almost the equivalent of three times annual economic output last year from 270% in 2018 — high for a middle-income country.

Xi affirmed his priorities at an August planning meeting, calling for "high-quality development" and "forestalling major financial risks," according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

"China is in the middle of a transformation from growth driven by blind investments to high-quality growth," said Zuo Xiaolei, an economist in Beijing.

Regulators tightened control over use of debt by real estate developers last year. Hundreds already had gone bankrupt following other restrictions imposed since 2017.

Tightening control, Beijing on Oct. 15 declared 19 of China's biggest banks that account for three-quarters of their industry's assets to be "domestic systemically important banks" that will face closer government scrutiny and

lending controls.

A midsize developer, Modern Land (China) Co., announced it failed to pay off on a \$250 million bond due Oct. 25. Earlier, another developer, Fantasia Holdings Group, missed a \$205.7 million payment to bondholders due Oct 5.

Evergrande has caused more anxiety due to its vast debt, which includes \$18 billion owed to foreign bondholders.

It failed to make a bond payment due Sept. 23. An official newspaper said the company avoided being declared in default by wiring \$83.5 million for the payment on Oct. 22, one day before the end of a 30-day grace period.

"The risk of a sharper slowdown in real estate activity can't be ruled out," Tommy Wu of Oxford Economics said in a report.

Meanwhile, the economy also faces headwinds from power rationing imposed in major manufacturing areas to meet official efficiency goals. Automakers and other factories have been disrupted by shortages of processor chips.

Auto sales plunged 16.5% in September from a year earlier, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

Buyers are uneasy about the pandemic and economic outlook, said Chu Xianwu, who sells Jeeps at Shandong Xindu Auto trading Co. in the eastern city of Jinan. He said sales there were down 20% from six months ago.

"I really hope the situation will improve in the near future," Chu said. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

Tottenham fires coach Nuno after losing half of EPL matches

TOTTENHAM fired manager Nuno Espirito Santo yesterday after losing half of his 10 Premier League matches in charge of the club.

The dismissal, after only four months in the job, followed a 3-0 home loss to Manchester United on Saturday when Nuno was booed and fans chanted "You don't know what you're doing" at the Portuguese coach.

In an increasingly volatile atmosphere, supporters also shouted "We want Levy out" at chairman Daniel Levy, who has now decided change is required again after firing Jose Mourinho in April.

Tottenham is in eighth place in the Premier League, 10 points behind leader Chelsea and five points behind fourth-placed West Ham.

The club said Nuno and his coaching staff had been "relieved of their duties" and that an update on the coaching "will follow in due course," with no successor announced.

"I know how much Nuno and his coaching staff wanted to succeed and I regret that we have had to take this decision," Tottenham managing director Fabio Paratici said. "Nuno is a true gentleman and will always be welcome here. We should like to thank him and his coaching staff and wish them well for the future."

A chaotic recruitment process

AP PHOTO



Tottenham's head coach Nuno Espirito Santo

in the offseason saw Levy try to re-hire Mauricio Pochettino and pursue Paulo Fonseca, Gennaro Gattuso and Antonio Conte before handing a two-year contract to Nuno.

The former Wolverhampton manager immediately had to grapple with the uncertainty over the

future of Harry Kane, who was denied a move to Manchester City and has looked a shadow of the striker who was top scorer in the Premier League last season. Kane's one goal in nine Premier League games and the failure to get a shot on target against United is reflective of Tottenham's malaise.

Nuno only managed the club for 17 games in all competitions.

While he was voted Premier League manager of the month after winning the first three games of the season in August, Tottenham has won only two of the seven games since then.

There has been progress in the

League Cup to the quarterfinals but in the Europa Conference League Tottenham has won only one of three games.

The north London club qualified for Europe's new third-tier competition after finishing seventh in the Premier League, a far cry from the four consecutive top-four Champions League finishes from 2016-2019 under Pochettino.

The Argentine even reached the Champions League final in 2019 despite being unable to make any signings that season, missing out on the title to Liverpool. A poor start to the following season led to him being fired in November 2019 and he is now top of the French league with Paris Saint-Germain.

Tottenham is still struggling to reach the standards set by Pochettino, and reproduce the high-tempo attacking football to attract fans into its two-year-old stadium which increased the club's debt to 604.6 million pounds (\$828 million) in its most recent financial report. **MDT/AP**

AD



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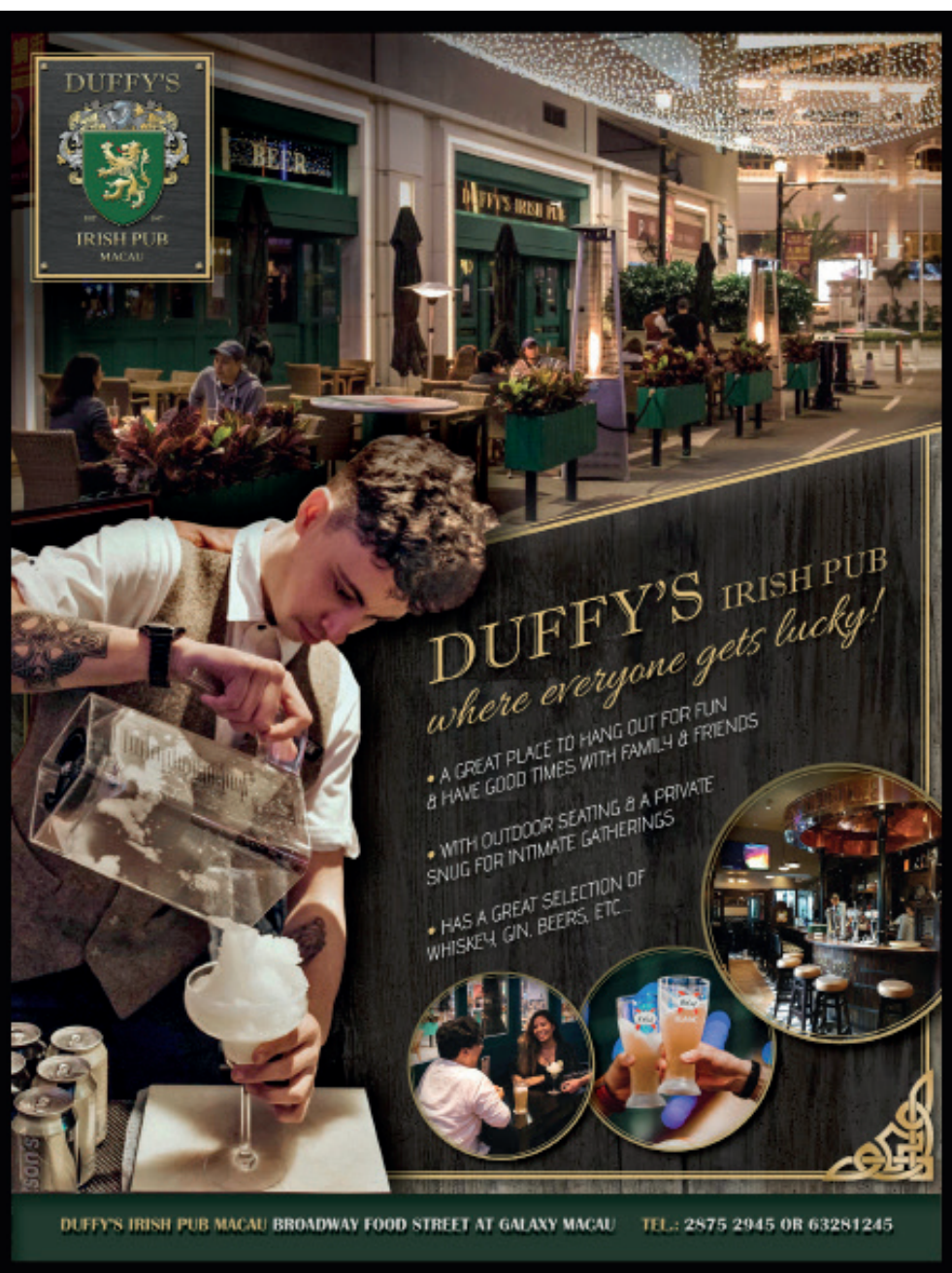
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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

**A MISSION FOR
SCIENTISTS,
NOT SPOOKS**

Investigations into the origins of viruses are a complicated scientific issue, and often take years or even decades to complete.

Thus US President Joe Biden's intention was questioned when he gave his intelligence officers, rather than scientists or virologists, the task of determining where the COVID-19 virus had come from, and ordered them to report back in just 90 days.

The loaded way in which Biden has approached this serious scientific issue shows that he doesn't care much about the facts or the truth. He is more interested in giving some substance to the US narrative that blames China for the COVID-19 pandemic.

A two-page summary report of the investigation's "findings" was published in August, which China brushed aside as "not scientifically credible".

Clearly feeling that the intended message had not got across, the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence offered an updated intelligence briefing on Saturday, in which it asserted that a natural origin and a lab leak were both considered plausible hypotheses for the origin of the novel coronavirus, although it admitted the truth may never be known.

Since the US has been pushing the claim that the virus leaked from a virology laboratory in Wuhan, it was justifiable that China's Foreign Ministry should reject the "findings" announced by the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence, with spokesman Wang Wenbin saying that "a lie repeated a thousand times is still a lie".

Apart from the lab-leak theory, the intelligence report also accuses China of withholding major data and trying to hinder the global investigation into the origin of the virus.

Which is not true. China has always called for an objective, scientific, and responsible attitude in the tracing of the origins of COVID-19, and cooperated closely with the World Health Organization in this regard. A joint study by China and the WHO published early this year already concluded that it was "extremely unlikely" that the novel coronavirus had spread to humans through a laboratory leak. And scientists have not been able to identify any new evidence that might give any credit to the lab-leak hypothesis.

The US blame game against China will only become a joke for the world.

The WHO has launched a new task force, the Scientific Advisory Group on the Origins of Novel Pathogens, comprising 26 global experts, calling it "the last chance" to identify the origin of the virus. China has made it clear it will support and participate in this new endeavor.

Promoting the concept of a community of common health for mankind, China is playing its due part in the global fight against the pandemic.

**HAPPY HALLOWEEN: GAMING
PLATFORM ROBLOX IS BACK ONLINE**

The popular gaming site Roblox went back online yesterday [Macau time] after being down for most of the weekend.

The online platform crashed Friday. In a statement, the company tweeted Sunday evening that "Roblox is back online everywhere! Thank you for your continued patience as we get back to normal."

The company tweeted several updates on its progress to restore service. Roblox said the outage was "not related to any specific experiences or partnerships on the platform." This was apparently meant to quash rumors that the trouble was caused

by a free burrito giveaway at a digital Chipotle on the Roblox platform.

On the platform, players can create their own games and play with other users. It became wildly popular after the coronavirus pandemic closed schools and kept children indoors looking for something to do.

According to numbers compiled by the social media consulting firm Backlinko, Roblox has more than 43 million active users a day (up from 14 million in 2016), 40 million games and 9.5 million developers.

THE
BUZZ

AP PHOTO



The ElectricAir plane is on approach before landing at Wellington Airport yesterday

**NEW ZEALAND STRAIT
CROSSED FOR FIRST TIME
BY ELECTRIC PLANE**

**NICK PERRY,
WELLINGTON**

As he made history by becoming the first person to fly across New Zealand's Cook Strait in an electric plane, Gary Freedman thought it only fitting that the first thing he saw when approaching the Wellington coastline was the rotating blade of a wind turbine producing renewable energy.

Freedman's 40-minute solo flight in the small two-seater came 101 years after the first person flew a conventional aircraft over the body of water that separates the South Pacific nation's two main islands.

Yesterday's flight was aimed at drawing attention to the possibilities of greener flying and timed to coincide with the opening of a pivotal U.N. climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland.

Wellington International Airport officials believe it may be the longest distance flown in an electric plane across any body of water.

"It's a very exciting day for the airport. A world-record-setting day," said spokesperson Jenna Raeburn.

Freedman said the day began badly with pouring rain at his departure point near the town of Blenheim. After delaying the flight for 15 minutes, the weather cleared just enough for takeoff and soon improved to sunny conditions over the ocean.

Freedman said he was ecstatic when he landed, and the technology worked better than he'd hoped.

"We still had 40% left in the battery," he said. "We could have almost flown back again."

Freedman, 49, who founded the company ElectricAir, said he's long been passionate about the environment and the idea came as he thought about the incongruity of driving an electric car and flying a gas-powered plane.

He took a trip to Slovenia to buy a Pipistrel Alpha Electro plane, and then jumped through

various hoops with New Zealand aviation regulators to get the plane cleared.

It weighs less than 400 kilograms and is much quieter than a traditional aircraft. For the 78 kilometer trip, Freedman flew it at just 305 meters above sea level and at the relatively slow speed of 130 kilometers per hour in order to preserve its charge.

Freedman said it takes about one hour to fully charge the plane. The maximum flight time is also about an hour, and he mainly uses it for pilot training.

Wellington International Airport is preparing for regular short-hop flights of new 12-seater electric planes that will begin in about five years' time, said Raeburn, the airport spokeswoman.

She said electric technology is not yet advanced enough to power large passenger planes, but biofuels and hydrogen will likely provide greener alternatives in the future. **MDT/AP**

Germany's outgoing health minister is calling on state governments to reactivate some specialized COVID-19 vaccination centers that were closed in the late summer to help administer booster shots as new coronavirus infections increase rapidly. Germany's standing committee on vaccination currently recommends booster shots for over-70s and a few other groups, but the health ministry has said that everyone is in principle entitled to one — drawing criticism from a group representing doctors.

AP PHOTO



UK The chief executive of British bank Barclays stepped down yesterday following a report by regulators into his past links with the late financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Jes Staley (pictured) has previously said he "deeply regrets" his relationship with Epstein, who killed himself at a federal jail in New York in August 2019 while awaiting a sex trafficking trial. There is no suggestion that the 64-year-old Staley knew anything about Epstein's alleged crimes.

AP PHOTO



Ethiopia's prime minister has called on citizens to redouble their efforts to combat the rival Tigray forces who claim to have seized key cities on a major highway leading to the capital, while a new wave of detentions of ethnic Tigrayans has begun. A move on Addis Ababa is a new phase in the war that has killed thousands of people since fighting broke out a year ago between Ethiopian and allied forces and Tigray ones who long dominated the national government before Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office in 2018.

HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Thursday November 4. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.