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**LAWMAKERS EXPRESSED CONCERNS OVER PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TRADE UNION LAW IN MACAU – WHICH IS UNDER PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

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**LAGGING ECONOMIC SUPPORT: 2021 BUDGET AMENDED AMID HEAVY CRITICISM**

P5

**MGM CHINA RECORDED TOTAL REVENUE OF APPROXIMATELY HKD2.2 BILLION FOR THE THIRD QUARTER, DOWN BY 7% FROM THE PREVIOUS QUARTER**

P2



**Japan** The head of Japan's largest labor federation says she is determined to listen to the voices of all workers in fighting for better wages and conditions. Tomoko Yoshino is the first woman to head Rengo, the Japanese Trade Union Confederation. In an interview she said stable work has to be the top priority after the pandemic, which hit women and other vulnerable groups the hardest, in Japan and elsewhere.



**Indians** across the country began celebrating Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights yesterday amid concerns over the coronavirus pandemic and rising air pollution. Diwali is typically celebrated by socializing and exchanging gifts with family and friends. Many light oil lamps or candles to symbolize a victory of light over darkness, and fireworks are set off as part of the celebrations.



**Iran** Thousands of Iranians gathered on Tehran streets yesterday for the anniversary of the 1979 seizure of the U.S. Embassy, chanting "Death to America" and "Death to Israel," and burning American and Israeli flags. The government-organized commemoration, long a venue for voicing anti-Western sentiment, typically draws angry crowds each year. Last year, authorities canceled the event due to the still-raging coronavirus pandemic.

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## COVID-19

# VACCINE BOOSTER TO ROLLOUT NEXT WEEK

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## HIGH ANXIETY IN TAIWAN STRAIT



P6-7



GAMING

# MGM Q3 EARNINGS DOWN TO HKD2.2B

LYNZY VALLES

**M**GM China recorded total revenue of approximately HKD2.2 billion for the third quarter, down by 7% from the previous quarter.

Adjusted EBITDA was approximately HKD101 million, down by 13% in the same period. The overall occupancy rate was 50.9%, compared to 65.5% in the previous quarter.

During a call with analysts to announce the company's third quarter earnings, CEO and president of MGM Bill Hornbuckle said that ongoing challenges and testing requirements have continued to impact the Macau market. As a result, market-wide GGR was down 93% in the third quarter, year-over-year.

"Market-wide daily visitation has been very steadily improving into October's Golden Week. And since the second week of the month, we are seeing improved volumes across all segments sequentially week-on-week," said Hornbuckle.

"[This] month to date, we are encouraged that our properties have cross property EBITDAR breakeven levels, led by the recovery in the premium segments," he added.

Macau recorded only 8,159 tourist arrivals during the Golden Week

holiday, the lowest number of tourist arrivals ever recorded during what is traditionally the city's busiest time.

This dip reflected the stricter border measures brought on by the recent string of Covid-19 cases recorded in the city. Travelers entering Macau from the mainland city of Zhuhai via the land border were required to undergo 14 days of quarantine.

MGM expects the recovery continue gradually, driven by the premium mass market which two of its Macau properties "are ideally positioned to capture." Hornbuckle added that MGM "continues to believe in the long-term success of Macau, and we'll continue to invest in strengthening our market position there. Currently, construction of the additional suites in the south tower of MGM Cotai is under way and will be ready in mid-2021."

The company has also begun remodeling the MGM Macau villas and the gaming space on level 35, adding food and beverage options on the gaming focused floors.

In the longer term, Hornbuckle expressed a desire to build another hotel tower at MGM Cotai, along with "meaningful entertainment assets to diversify our offerings."

PHOTO ARCHIVE



## MGM CONFIDENT CONCESSIONAIRE RENEWAL PROCESS WILL BE 'JUDICIOUS, FAIR'

**PRESIDENT** and CEO of MGM, Bill Hornbuckle, is confident in the upcoming renewal of gaming concessionaires.

"Ongoing discussions with the government gives us greater confidence in our belief that the process will be both judicious and fair," said the executive. Last week, the 45-day public consultation on the amendments were concluded.

"Macau remains an important part of our business, and we have high conviction in the future success of this region," Hornbuckle added.

During the consultation, local officials advised that a plan to send government representatives to directly monitor casino operators will not affect business operations.

Gaming concessions are due for re-bidding next year. However, the government has not yet provided guarantees that any will be renewed. Many have also called on the government to extend the validity of the concessions, which end in June 2022, due to the adverse effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the industry.

# Worker dies from construction site fall

LYNZY VALLES

**A** worker from the mainland has fallen to his death after reportedly slipping and falling onto a third-floor platform while working on the 13th floor steel structure area of a construction site.

According to the Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL), the man was seriously injured and not wearing a safety harness.

The 37-year-old non-resident worker, surname Yang, was installing panels on the 13th floor of the construction site near Praça Ferreira Amaral from about 8 a.m.



Around 10 a.m., his colleagues heard a thud and witnessed his fall onto the building's third-floor podium.

He was rushed to the public hospital and pronounced dead.

Following the accident, the DSAL required the building contractor suspend all work carried out at height.

DSAL said it will continue to investigate the cause of the accident and will pursue the relevant respon-

sible entities in accordance with the law, based on the facts of the investigation.

The bureau also reminded contractors that they must provide workers engaged in high-altitude work with appropriate safety training. They must also provide work platforms with 90cm high fences and skirting boards at least 15cm high, as well as fall protection equipment.

In August, a 31-year-old male foreign construction worker died after falling from a height of five floors at the construction site of Galaxy Macau Phase 3. The man had previously been engaged to work on ground floor electrical wiring at the site. The fall resulted in heavy bleeding from the worker's back, and he was confirmed to be deceased after resuscitation attempts failed.

# 4,000 RESIDENTS PARTICIPATE IN CROSS-BORDER FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PROJECT

STAFF REPORTER

**T**he "Cross-Border Financial Management" pilot project in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) has attracted around 4,000 residents of mainland China and Macau.

The project saw approximately 900 registered transactions.

There are currently eight banks in Macau participating in the project.

Among the 4,000 participating residents, about 300 were investors from mainland China who carried out inbound transactions, while those making outbound

transactions totaled around 3,600 Macau residents. Of the 900 transactions, around 15% were transactions arising from the cooperation zone between Guangdong province and Macau in Hengqin, a sign that the project was well received by the market.

The initiative constitutes an innovative measure for the implementation of financial support in the construction of the GBA, promoting individual cross-border investment by residents in the area and boosting the interconnection of financial markets.

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COVID-19

# Gov't to administer booster shots from next week

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE Health Bureau will start administering third doses of the Covid-19 vaccine on Tuesday November 9, Dr Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of the health authorities' Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, announced yesterday at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center's press conference.

The vaccination plan will be delivered in two phases, with the first phase of the plan aimed at people with high-risk jobs, weak immune systems, and/or moderate to severely suppressed immune systems. The second phase of the vaccination plan "welcomes everyone who qualifies for the third dose of vaccine," said Tai.

Anyone who has received both doses of the Sinopharm or BioNTech vaccines is eligible for a third dose once six months have passed since their second dose. However, the target group for BioNTech, will

AP PHOTO



be those who work in high-risk locations, have low immunity, those who are living in homes or environments in which many people cohabit, those who intend to travel to high-risk places, and those aged over 60.

A fourth dose can be taken 28 days after the previous dose.

#### DATE FOR HK AND MACAU TRAVEL YET TO BE SET

Hong Kong and China will soon open their borders for travelers, Tai said in reply to a media inquiry about whether Macau and Hong Kong border restrictions would soon be eased. He said that negotiations

with Hong Kong have been taking place, but officials are still discussing the situation with China's officials. The authorities do not yet have a date when border restrictions will be eased, but will update the public when any progress has been made.

#### QUARANTINE PERIOD TO BE ADJUSTED ACCORDINGLY

In light of some epidemiological experts around the world stating that a 14-day incubation period is more than sufficient to detect the Delta variant, authorities were asked whether they have any scientific basis for subjecting visitors to a 21-day quarantine period. Tai said that due visitors from all around the world coming to Macau and a number of Covid-19 variants being spread worldwide, the extra seven days of quarantine are in place as a precaution. He added that these measures are not permanent, and will be adjusted according to the reality of the pandemic situation.

#### NAT VALIDITY MIGHT BE EXTENDED

Authorities had previously mentioned the possibility of extending the validity period for nucleic acid tests (NAT) for Macau and Zhuhai travel. Although the pandemic situation in Macau has calmed down recently, several regions in mainland China still have Covid-19 cases. As such, the Health Bureau is negotiating with Guangdong authorities amid the situation, and does not yet have a confirmed date when the validity of NATs will be extended.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

# LAWMAKERS EXPRESS CONCERNS OVER TRADE UNION LAW PROPOSAL

RENATO MARQUES

**SEVERAL** lawmakers have expressed concerns over a proposal, currently under public consultation, for the establishment of a Trade Union law in Macau.

In the period before the agenda of yesterday's Legislative Assembly plenary session, many inquiries were made on the topic.

Lawmakers Lei Chan U, Lam Lon Wai, and José Pereira Coutinho were among the most active on the matter, calling on the government to take into account aspects of the history of Macau, as well as international conventions on the matter, so that the law can best reflect both the local reality and worldwide trends.

Pereira Coutinho was the most critical, having previously proposed many bills of the same type. He criticized the proposal by claiming that it "brutally

atrophies the core values of workers' rights stated in Article 27 of the [Macau] Basic Law."

The lawmaker says that the proposal submitted for public consultation will result in an "amputated, lame and inoperative" union law.

He also urged the government to explain why civil servants, medical and nursing personnel, water, and workers from electricity, telecommunications, public transportation, and security are excluded from the general law, but not the gaming workers.

Pereira Coutinho noted that international conventions regulated by the International Labour Organization (ILO) state that "workers and employers, without distinction of any kind, have the right, without prior authorization, to form organizations of their choice, as well as to join these organizations, with the sole condition of

complying with the statutes of the latter." He said that restricting such a universal right is a clear abuse of the international conventions, which Macau claims to respect and ratify.

In Pereira Coutinho's view, the government should strictly respect Article 27 of the Basic Law and establish a union law under which union activities are "free, without subordination to employers or the limitations and interventions of public services," he said, adding that "only in this way [will] workers will be able to fight and defend their rights."

More moderate lawmakers linked with the Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) opted to express satisfaction with the establishment of the law, while also expressing the hope that the government will collect the opinions of society and take them into account.



Lam Lon Wai



Lei Chan U



Pereira Coutinho

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"Although the union law regulates the organization and functioning of union associations, its objective is to improve working conditions, reduce conflicts between employers and workers, increase company productivity and create a real 'win-win' situation," Lam Lon Wai said. He called on the government to continue to support the Standing Committee for the Coordination of Social Affairs as the best place to hear the opinions of all involved, and to mediate conflicts between workers and employers.

Lawmaker Lam also called on the government to respect local historical traditions and current realities in the drafting of the union law so that it can be "adapted to the development and situation of Macau." He also noted the need to include some temporary provisions

in the new law to ensure a smooth transition between the current system supported by workers' associations to a new system of unions.

The lawmaker said that these historical associations, which include the FAOM, have contributed over many years to "safeguarding workers' rights and interests, promoting labor and employer harmony and economic development, and improving labor security."

In Lam's view, the new trade union law "must stipulate that [the associations] continue to carry out their duties as well as ensuring that union representatives or members of the union leadership structure are not subject to unfair treatment at work, or affected in their livelihood due to representing the rights of other workers."

In turn, lawmaker Lei

also noted the ILO conventions, and the fact that Macau has ratified only some but not all of these.

Lei expressed a view that even if the establishment of the trade union law fulfills more conventions under the worldwide rules, this should not be an "end in itself" but a starting point for the fulfillment of all ILO conventions.

"Some international labor conventions related to labor standards do not apply in Macau, but this does not prevent the government from taking them as an important reference for the enhancement of workers' labor rights and interests," Lei said. The lawmaker added, "I hope that the government will materialize the concept of 'development for the people and sharing the fruits of development, strengthening workers' guarantees.'"





# 2021 budget amended amid heavy criticism

RENATO MARQUES

**A**T the Legislative Assembly to propose a second amendment to the government's annual budget for 2021, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong faced heavy criticism from lawmakers on the policies proposed for economic support of specific groups, which were included in the budget amendment.

The package comprises eight measures including financial support, tax exemptions, reduced interest on bank loans, and extension of loan repayment deadlines. The measures involve the allocation of 2.3 billion patacas from the government's financial reserves.

A large group of lawmakers called on the Secretary to justify the measures presented that are, in some cases, already being implemented, with different government departments accepting applications.

Some lawmakers, rather than disagreeing with the measures, consider them insufficient because they do not take into account a broader spectrum of the population. They say that the measures focus too much on companies and not on people, namely those cur-

rently unemployed or underemployed.

Lawmaker Ella Lei said the government lacked an explanation as to why it had established an income ceiling for independent workers of 144,000 patacas per year as a requirement to benefit from financial support.

Lei thinks that this ceiling lacks justification and that it will be very complex for the government to verify whether an individual's income exceeds the limit.

"This coverage for me is very insufficient. [It] does not account for those that have lost their jobs or been forced into lay off situations. It's just capped by income at 144,000 patacas and [does] not take into account their real and current situation," she said. Lei called on the government to implement "extra measures," including a new round of cash handouts in the amount of 8,000 patacas to be distributed via electronic means.

Leong Sun Iok also disagreed with the measures, highlighting that their lack of precision. The lawmaker noted that local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are supported, but the situation of the unemployed or underemployed, which he claims is of greater concern, is not considered.

Leong noted that, according to the government rules, only those who lost jobs last year (in 2020) can apply for financial support, while those who became unemployed or were laid off this year are excluded from the support. He added that we are already 10 months into 2021.

The lawmaker is also not happy that the government has presented the amendment to be passed as a matter of urgency.

"Government solicited the urgency [in process] and I know that many people are waiting for this, so I voted in favor. But I hope that in the budget for 2022 the government thinks about more precise and adequate measures," he said. Leong also urged the government to define "plans and support measures for the upcoming times. We know that this [pandemic] is not over yet," he said.

Similar concerns were expressed by lawmaker Song Pek Kei, noting that a limit of 144,000 patacas per year accounts for a monthly income of 12,000 patacas. This ceiling, she claims, is even lower than the one specified in applications for government economic housing.

Lawmaker Ip Sio Kai also addressed the problem of people

being unemployed due to company closures.

"Many workers, due to closure of companies, could not [provide] the documents necessary to apply. There are many procedural flaws," he said, calling on the government to find a solution that does not exclude people in need because of bureaucratic procedures.

In response to the urgency claimed by the government, lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho said that the government is abusing the process "to avoid giving more explanation and details of the plan."

The lawmaker also asked the government to present proof of the real benefits of the measures implemented, noting that a consistent injection of money from financial reserves without any justification or consultation is not acceptable.

On the government side, director of the Financial Services Bureau Stephen Iong replied that the measures aim to benefit the groups most affected by the pandemic.

"We hope that we can relieve their difficulties, including the laid off people," he said, adding that the six types of profession included were chosen due to being "professions regulated through licensing, [which] had to do with a balance between rights and duties."

The government also justified the proposal's status as a matter of urgency by saying that it helped them "to simplify the procedures and be able to hand [out] the benefits as soon as possible. We hope to [distribute] the pecuniary support [...] this month," Iong said.

According to Secretary Lei, this second amendment proposed to the 2021 budget law, now approved unanimously, is not the last. A third amendment is being prepared.

"There will be a third amendment soon, because the gaming receipts are not enough and there is a difference [between our estimation and the reality] of between 3 to 4 billion patacas," Lei said.

The Secretary also justified the selection of particular groups by noting the need to conserve financial reserves to face future challenges, as the difficulties of the pandemic are not likely to reach an end soon.

## CE VISITING SHANGHAI, HANGZHOU

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng is on a four-day visit to Shanghai and Hangzhou, having accepted the invitation of the Minister of Commerce of the People's Republic of China to attend the opening ceremony of the 4th China International Import Expo, to be held in Shanghai. Following the stop in Shanghai, Ho will visit Hangzhou to meet officials of Zhejiang Province with the aim of strengthening bilateral ties. Ho will return to Macau on Sunday (7 November). The Secretary for Administration and Justice Andre Cheong Weng Chon and the Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong will take the role of Acting Chief Executive in turn.

## COIN EXCHANGE MACHINES LAUNCHED

The Monetary Authority of Macau (AMCM) has launched self-service coin exchange machines in collaboration with the Bank of China and BNU. During the trial phase, residents can go to selected bank branches and use the machines to exchange their pataca coins for notes. AMCM expressed its gratitude to the two issuing banks for a proactive collaboration, with the project being evaluated with consideration for further improvements in the future, depending on how effectively the machines function.

## IPIM BRINGS LOCAL FIRMS TO SHANGHAI IMPORT EXPO

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) has organised a delegation of nearly 70 representatives from Macau enterprises to visit Shanghai for the 4th China International Import Expo. The institute has also set up two pavilions, and will hold an investor presentation session at the event to "promote Macau's role as a platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, promote Macau's business advantages, and support local enterprises in exploring business opportunities." During the event, the delegates will participate in activities to learn about the latest market trends in different regions and seek out business partners.

## MACAU'S ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS RANKING UNCHANGED

**M**ACAU'S competitiveness still ranks 15th nationally according to the annual city rankings of comprehensive economic competitiveness established by the Financial Strategy Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS).

Although the ranking remains unchanged from last year, Macau still ranks lower than most other major cities in the Greater Bay Area. The CASS Annual Report On China's Urban Competitiveness ranked Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Guangzhou 2nd, 3rd and

5th respectively in terms of comprehensive economic competitiveness. The cities were ranked among a total of 291 cities across the mainland. In the Sustainable Competitiveness Index, Macau ranked 21st, two places lower than last year. **IV**





# PENTAGON: CHINESE NUKE FORCE GROWING FASTER

ROBERT BURNS, WASHINGTON

**C**HINA is expanding its nuclear force much faster than U.S. officials predicted just a year ago, highlighting a broad and accelerating buildup of military muscle designed to enable Beijing to match or surpass U.S. global power by mid-century, according to a Pentagon report released yesterday [Macau time].

The number of Chinese nuclear warheads could increase to 700 within six years, the report said, and may top 1,000 by 2030. The report did not say how many weapons China has today, but a year ago the Pentagon said the number was in the “low 200s” and was likely to double by the end of this decade.

The United States, by comparison, has 3,750 nuclear weapons and has no plans to increase. As recently as 2003 the U.S. total was about 10,000. The Biden administration is undertaking a comprehensive review of its nuclear policy and has not said how that might be influenced by its China concerns.

The report does not suggest open conflict with China but it fits an emerging U.S. narrative of a People's Liberation Army, as China calls its military, intent on challenging the United States in all domains of warfare — air, land, sea, space and cyberspace. Against that backdrop, U.S. defense officials have said they are increasingly wary of China's intentions with regard to the status of Taiwan.

“The PLA's evolving capabilities and concepts continue to strengthen (China's) ability to ‘fight and win wars’ against a ‘strong enemy’ — a likely euphemism for the United States,” the report said, adding that it makes China more capable of coercing Taiwan, the self-ruled island that China claims as its territory.

AP PHOTO



The report is the latest reminder to Congress, already leery of Beijing's military ambitions, that the Pentagon's frequent promises to focus more intently on countering China have moved only incrementally beyond the talking stage. The Biden administration

is expected to take a new step by following through on its announcement in September of plans to increase the U.S. military presence in Australia, in addition to a controversial decision to help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines.

China's military modernization is proceeding on a wide front, but its nuclear advances are especially notable.

The Chinese may already have established what is known as a nuclear triad — the combination of land-, sea-, and air-based

missiles that the United States and Russia have had for decades — the report said. To its existing land- and sea-based nuclear forces China is adding an air-launched ballistic missile.

The Pentagon report was based on information collected

## TAIWAN

# EU delegation meets island leader on first official trip



**T**HE head of a European Parliament delegation on its first official visit to Taiwan said yesterday that it's “high time” for the European Union to step up its cooperation with the self-ruled island, which is also claimed by China.

Thirteen lawmakers from the parliament's committee on foreign interference in democratic processes met with Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen on the second day of a three-day visit.

“We came here with a very simple, very clear message. You are not alone,” said Raphael Glucksmann, the French chair of the European Parliament committee. “Europe is standing with you, by you, in the defense of freedom and the defense of rule of law and human dignity.”

Tsai kept her welcome remarks short, calling the visit “highly significant” and saying Taiwan was willing to share its experience in comba-

ting disinformation and that it wants to build a “democratic alliance” against disinformation.

Last month, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling for the body to “intensify EU-Taiwan political relations.” The non-binding resolution also called for changing the name of the representative office in Taiwan to the European Union Office in Taiwan, and to establish a bilateral investment agreement with the island.

The visit comes amid growing support for the democratic island, which China claims as part of its territory to be annexed by force if necessary, and rising negative perceptions toward Beijing in Western countries.

China has sent an increasing amount of fighter jets toward the island in a prolonged campaign of military harassment since at least last year, when Taiwan began publicly releasing the data. **MDT/AP**



# ER THAN PREDICTED



na is pursuing a network of overseas bases and logistics hubs that “could interfere with” U.S. military operations and could support Chinese military operations against the United States. President Xi Jinping has said China plans to become a global military power by 2049.

The Pentagon’s wide-ranging assessment of China’s military strategy and force development is the latest in an annual series of reports to Congress and in some respects was more detailed than previous versions. For example, it questioned China’s compliance with international biological and chemical weapons agreements, citing studies conducted at military medical institutions that discussed identifying, testing and characterizing groups of “potent toxins” that have civilian as well as military uses.

The basis of the Pentagon’s prediction that China will vastly increase its nuclear arsenal is not spelled out in yesterday’s report. A senior defense official who briefed reporters in advance of the report’s public release, and thus spoke on condition of anonymity, said the forecast reflects several known developments, such as China’s addition of a nuclear bomber capability, as well as public statements in Chinese official media that have made reference to China needing 1,000 nuclear weapons.

The report also asserted that China has begun construction of at least three new missile fields that “cumulatively contain hundreds” of underground silos from which ICBMs could be launched.

The report provided no details on the new missile fields, but private nuclear analysts have reported that satellite imagery shows what appear to be vast new missile silo fields under construction in north-central China. In an update published Tuesday, analysts Matt Korda and Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists said they have seen continued construction progress and have discovered “unique facilities that appear intended to support missile operations once the silo fields become operational.”

One of those facilities, they said, is a complex in the mountains surrounded by what appear to be four tunnels into underground facilities. The tunnels are under construction and there are large amounts of excavated soil dumped nearby. This facility’s function is unknown but “could potentially involve missile and/or warhead storage and management,” the analysts said.

Other structures under construction may be technical service facilities and launch control centers, they said. **MDT/AP**

through December 2020 and so does not reflect or even mention Gen. Mark Milley’s expression of concern last month about Chinese hypersonic weapon tests last summer that he said came as a troublesome surprise. The report only referred to the widely known fact that China had fielded the DF-17 medium-range ballistic missile, equipped with a hypersonic glide vehicle designed to evade American missile defenses.

In remarks shortly before the report’s release, Milley told the Aspen Security Forum that the hypersonic missile test and other Chinese advances are evidence of what is at stake for the world.

“We are witnessing one of the largest shifts in global and geostategic power that the world has witnessed,” he said.

Milley also said his personal assessment is that China is unlikely in the next six to 24 months to use military force against Taiwan in order to fulfill the communist leadership’s public pledge to ultimately bring the island under Beijing’s control.

The Pentagon report said Chi-



## China’s advice to stockpile sparks speculation of Taiwan war

KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

A seemingly innocuous government recommendation for Chinese people to store necessities for an emergency quickly sparked scattered instances of panic-buying and online speculation: Is China going to war with Taiwan?

The answer is probably not — most analysts think military hostilities are not imminent — but the posts on social media show the possibility is on people’s minds and drew out a flurry of war-mongering comments.

Taiwan is a self-governing island of 24 million people China regards as a renegade province that should come under its rule. Tensions have risen sharply recently, with China sending a growing number of warplanes on sorties near the island and the U.S. selling arms to Taiwan and deepening its ties with the government.

Most residents interviewed in Beijing, the Chinese capital, thought war was unlikely but acknowledged the rising tensions. They generally favored bringing Taiwan under Chinese rule by peaceful means, the official position of China’s long-ruling Communist Party.

“I don’t feel panic but I think we should be more alert about this than in the past,” said Hu Chunmei, who was taking a neighborhood walk.

War fears or not, there were scattered reports of runs on rice, noodles and cooking oil in some

Chinese cities, according to local media. The more immediate worry for some was the possibility of neighborhood lockdowns as a COVID-19 outbreak spreads in several provinces.

The government moved quickly to try to tamp down fears with assurances of sufficient supplies. A bright yellow sign in an aisle of a Beijing supermarket asked customers to buy reasonably and not to listen to rumors or stockpile goods.

The online speculation started with a Commerce Ministry notice posted Monday evening about a plan to ensure the supply and stable price of vegetables and other necessities for the winter and spring. A line in it encouraged families to store some necessities for daily life and emergencies.

That was enough to set off some hoarding and a discussion on social media that the ministry could be signaling people should stock up for war.

China’s state media has covered the rising tensions with Taiwan heavily, including the often-tough words exchanged between China on one side and the U.S. and Taiwan on the other.

“It is natural to have aroused some imagination,” social commentator Shi Shusi said. “We should believe the government’s explanations, but the underlying anxiety deserves our thought.”

He said the populist views cheerleading for war don’t represent majority opinion but do send a signal or warning to Taiwan.

Other developments fueled the war speculation. One person

shared a screenshot of a list of recommended emergency equipment for families issued in August by the government in Xiamen, a coastal city near an outlying Taiwanese island. An unverified report — denied Wednesday by a military-affiliated social media account — said veterans were being called back to service to prepare for combat.

It’s difficult to gauge how many people interpreted the notice as a possible prelude to war, but the reaction was strong enough to prompt a state media response the next day.

The Economic Daily, a government-owned newspaper, said people’s imagination shouldn’t run so wild, explaining that the advice was meant for people who may find themselves suddenly locked down because of a COVID-19 outbreak.

Hu Xijin, the editor-in-chief of the Global Times newspaper, blamed the online speculation on the amplification of public opinion during a time of tension.

“I do not believe that the country wants to send a signal to the public at this time through a notice from the Commerce Ministry that people need to ‘hurry up and prepare for war,’” he wrote.

Zhang Xi, another Beijing resident, ruled out the possibility of war and counseled patience in a dispute extending to when Taiwan and China split during the civil war that brought Mao Zedong’s Communists to power in 1949.

“This is a leftover from history, and it’s impossible to solve this right away,” she said. **MDT/AP**





# UK authorizes Merck antiviral pill, first shown to treat Covid

**B** RITAIN has granted a conditional authorization to Merck's coronavirus antiviral, the first pill shown to successfully treat COVID-19. It is the first country to OK the treatment, although it was not immediately clear how quickly the pill would be available.

The pill was licensed for adults 18 and older who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have at least one risk factor for developing severe disease, such as obesity or heart disease. The drug, known as molnupiravir, is intended to be taken twice a day for five days by people at home with mild to moderate COVID-19.

An antiviral pill that reduces symptoms and speeds recovery could prove groundbreaking, easing caseloads on hospitals and helping to curb outbreaks in poorer countries with fragile health systems. It would also bolster the two-pronged approach to the pandemic: treatment, by way of medication, and prevention, primarily through vaccinations.

Molnupiravir is also pending review at regulators in the U.S., the European Union and elsewhere. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced last month it would convene a panel of independent experts to scrutinize the pill's safety and effectiveness in late November.

Initial supplies will be limited. Merck has said it can produce 10 million treatment courses through the end of the year, but much of that supply has already been purchased by governments worldwide.

In October, U.K. officials announced they secured 480,000 courses of molnupiravir and expected thousands of vulnerable Britons to have access to the treatment this winter via a national study.

"Today is a historic day for our country, as the UK is now the first country in the world to approve an antiviral that can be taken at home for COVID-19," said Britain's health secretary, Sajid Javid.

"We are working at pace across the government and with the NHS to set out plans to deploy molnupiravir to patients through a national study as soon as possible," he said in a statement, referring to the U.K.'s National Health Service. Doctors said the treatment would be particularly significant for people who do not respond well to vaccination.

Merck and its partner Ridgeback Biotherapeutic have requested clearance for the drug with regulators around the world to treat adults with mild-to-moderate COVID-19 who are at risk for severe disease or hospitalization. That's roughly the same group targeted for treatment with in-

fused COVID-19 antibody drugs, the standard of care in many countries for patients who don't yet require hospitalization.

Merck announced preliminary results last month showing its drug cut hospitalizations and deaths by half among patients with early COVID-19 symptoms. The results have not yet been peer reviewed or published in a scientific journal.

The company also did not disclose details on molnupiravir's side effects, except to say that rates of those problems were similar between people who got the drug and those who received dummy pills.

The drug targets an enzyme the coronavirus uses to reproduce itself, inserting errors into its genetic code that slow its ability to spread and take over human cells. That genetic activity has led some independent experts to question whether the drug could potentially cause mutations leading to birth defects or tumors.

Britain's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency said molnupiravir's ability to interact with DNA and cause mutations had been studied "extensively" and that it was not found to pose a risk to humans.

"Studies in rats showed that (molnupiravir) may cause harmful effects to the unborn offspring, although this was at doses which were higher than those that will be given to humans, and

these effects were not observed in other animals," the agency said in an email.

In company trials, both men and women were instructed to either use contraception or abstain from sex. Pregnant women were excluded from the study. Merck has stated that the drug is safe when used as directed.

Molnupiravir was initially studied as a potential flu therapy with funding from the U.S. government. Last year, researchers at Emory University decided to repurpose the drug as a potential COVID-19 treatment. They then licensed the drug to Ridgeback and its partner Merck.

Last week, Merck agreed to allow other drugmakers to make its COVID-19 pill, in a move aimed at helping millions of people in poorer countries get access. The Medicines Patent Pool, a United Nations-backed group, said Merck will not receive royalties under the agreement for as long as the World Health Organization deems COVID-19 to be a global emergency.

But the deal was criticized by some activists for excluding many middle-income countries capable of making millions of treatments, including Brazil and China.

Still, experts commended Merck for agreeing to widely share its formula and promising to help any companies who need technological help in making their drug — something no coronavirus vaccine producers have agreed to.

"Unlike the grotesquely unequal distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, the poorest countries will not have to wait at the back of the queue for molnupiravir," said Dr. Mohga Kamal-Yanni, a senior health adviser to the People's Vaccine Alliance. Fewer than 1% of the world's COVID-19 vaccines have gone to poor countries and experts hope easier-to-dispense treatments will help them curb the pandemic.

Previously Merck announced licensing deals with several Indian makers of generic drugs to manufacture lower-cost versions of molnupiravir for developing countries.

The U.S. reportedly paid roughly \$700 per course of the drug for about 1.7 million treatments. Merck says it plans to use a tiered pricing strategy for developing countries. A review by Harvard University and King's College London estimated the drug costs about \$18 to make. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1984 SANDINISTAS CLAIM ELECTION VICTORY



Nicaragua's ruling Sandinista Front (FSLN) has claimed a decisive victory in the country's first elections since the revolution five years ago.

Within hours of the count beginning, the leader of the country's left-wing junta, Daniel Ortega, said he had gained nearly 70% of the vote in the presidential election.

Mr Ortega said his party won a similar share of the vote in the parliamentary election.

Mr Ortega said: "We can already say that the FSLN is the clear winner of these elections by an ample majority."

The Sandinistas' nearest rivals have so far polled just 11% of the vote but Nicaragua's leading right-wing parties boycotted the ballots.

Turnout was high with an estimated 83% of the country's 1.5 million-strong electorate casting a vote.

The Sandinistas have been at pains to convince the outside world, especially the US, that the elections were free and fair.

Approximately 400 independent foreign observers, including a number of Americans, were in Nicaragua to monitor proceedings.

The unofficial British election observer, Lord Chitnis, said proceedings were not perfect but he had no doubt the elections were fair.

In 1979 the Sandinistas - named after an assassinated former leader of Nicaragua - ousted long-time dictator Anastasio Somoza.

The Sandinistas have been at odds with the US ever since, especially since the superpower began assisting the party's main opponents, the Contras.

The Contras, based in neighbouring Honduras, are engaged in a guerrilla war aimed at ousting the Sandinista Front.

The vicar said he would remain in Britain until he had discovered the whereabouts of his friend.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

In spite of the Sandinista victory being declared fair the United States continued to oppose the left-wing Nicaraguan government.

It increased its military activity in the region prompting fears in Nicaragua of an invasion.

Eventually the US backed off but, unhappy at Nicaragua's ties with the Soviet Union, continued to fund the anti-Sandinista rebels, the Contras.

However, during 1987-1988 the Nicaraguan leadership held talks and signed a peace agreement with the Contras.

During elections in 1990 a US-backed centre-right National Opposition Union defeated the Sandinistas, ending their decade-long spell in power.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

The new moon in sensual Scorpio emerges today, directing your focus towards your sex life, sense of commitment, and shared responsibility in working partnerships in the weeks ahead.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

As a Taurus, you receive cosmic direction from the enchanting planet of love, Venus. Friday's skies find Venus on the move as she marches forward into ambitious Capricorn.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Your ruling planet is on the move today. Messenger Mercury marches forward into sharp-minded Scorpio today, where it works to intensify your approach towards perfecting your craft...



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Lover Venus marches forward into serious Capricorn today, where she works to both sweeten and re-examine your approach to maintaining long-term relationships.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Value-defining Venus moves forward out of flamboyant Sagittarius and marches into practical Capricorn today, where she attracts positive opportunities to your current work circumstances.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Wherever your ruling planet Mercury goes, you follow faithfully. Today's skies find Mercury slipping forward into sharp-tongued Scorpio, intensifying your mental atmosphere and emotional responses.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

As a Libra, you glean cosmic guidance from the dazzling planet of love, Venus. Friday's skies find Venus on the move as she moves forward into realistic Capricorn.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Friday's skies prompt major changes in the cosmic atmosphere, Scorpio. Messenger Mercury moves forward into your sign today, where it remains until November 24.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You're moving through the trickiest time of your year, Sagittarius. Friday's skies see you sinking deeper into the process of shedding and renewal as brainy Mercury moves forward into transformative Scorpio.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Friday's cosmic landscape holds some interesting shifts in store. Lover Venus moves forward into your sign today- where she intends to remain until March of next year due to an upcoming retrograde!



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Important shifts are getting underway today, Aquarius. Friday's skies find messenger Mercury on the move, as it dips into sharp-minded Scorpio until November 24.



### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Lover Venus moves forward into practical Capricorn, where she remains until March of next year. Venus' time here sweetens social networks while also helping you re-examine your values among peers.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



## SUDOKU

### EASY

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

### EASY+

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### MEDIUM

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	6 2							

### HARD

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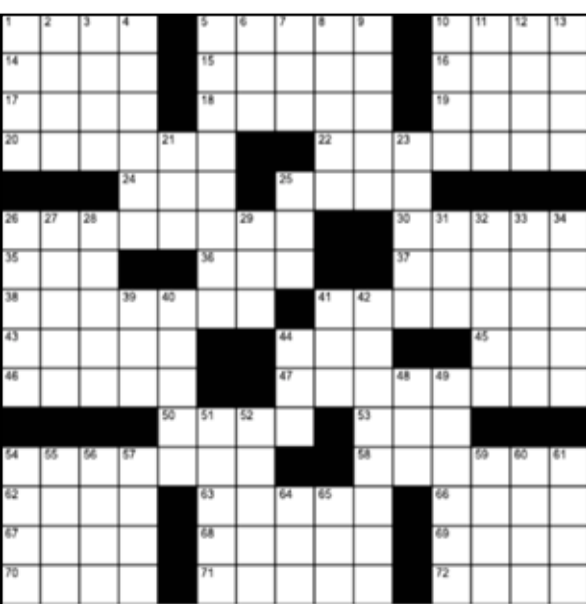
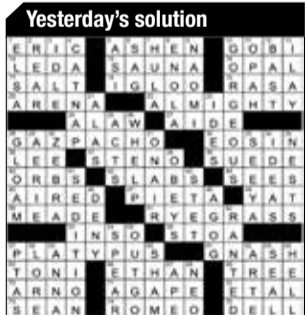
## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	12	14	rain
Harbin	5	14	cloudy
Tianjin	19	31	cloudy
Urumqi	17	20	rain
Xi'an	22	29	overcast
Lhasa	11	15	rain
Chengdu	24	32	cloudy
Chongqing	24	35	fine
Kunming	27	36	cloudy
Nanjing	19	29	fine
Shanghai	25	30	thunderstorms
Wuhan	22	31	rain
Hangzhou	4	14	cloudy
Taipei	20	27	cloudy
Guangzhou	8	13	rain
Hong Kong	12	15	rain
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	6	11	rain
Frankfurt	4	9	rain
Paris	2	12	overcast
London	6	10	overcast
New York	4	12	fine

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Flat sound; 5- Threepio's buddy; 10- Covers; 14- Ovid, e.g.; 15- Monument; 16- Apartment; 17- Specialty; 18- Host; 19- Walkman maker; 20- Tooth deposit; 22- Infectious disease of cattle; 24- Decline; 25- Whirlpool; 26- Dejected; 30- Small hill; 35- Siouan speaker; 36- Defunct airline; 37- Creepy; 38- Candidate; 41- A bit reddish; 43- I \_\_\_ vacation!; 44- Boy; 45- Thrice, in prescriptions; 46- "Lou Grant" star; 47- Pomposity; 50- Geraint's lady; 53- Broadway's "Five Guys Named \_\_\_"; 54- 4th president of the U.S.; 58- Thorough view; 62- River of Spain; 63- Storage center; 66- Trim; 67- Bump into; 68- Eat away at; 69- Verge; 70- Gymnast Korbut; 71- Guide; 72- Stink;

DOWN: 1- Petty quarrel, ejected saliva; 2- Marsh bird; 3- Clairvoyant; 4- \_\_\_ Island; 5- Make sour; 6- St. Louis griddle; 7- Twitch; 8- Echo, for one; 9- Continuously; 10- Succulent; 11- Are you \_\_\_ out?; 12- Actress Merrill; 13- Underworld river; 21- 1970 Jackson 5 hit; 23- Wee ones; 25- Sorority letter; 26- Italian lady; 27- Siouan speakers; 28- What girls will be; 29- Nor. neighbor; 31- Miss-named?; 32- Emulate Cicero; 33- Unit of volume; 34- Suspicious; 39- Ox tail?; 40- Nostrils; 41- Operated; 42- Dashboard gauge; 44- Acid; 48- Son; 49- Pager; 51- Swellings; 52- Like helium; 54- Exec's note; 55- Genesis victim; 56- Remnant; 57- Mite; 59- Become dim; 60- Yen; 61- Vichyssoise ingredient; 64- "The Bells" poet; 65- Lyric tribute;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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DRIVE IN

# TOM HANKS, A ROBOT AND A DOG IN 'FINCH'

LINDSEY BAHR,  
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

**T**OM Hanks doesn't need a human or even a sentient acting partner to make a film or a scene sing. Think Wilson the volleyball, Hooch and even that laptop from "You've Got Mail." So it's not at all surprising if he's the first guy on the list for your post-apocalyptic film about a man, a robot and a dog.

Even less surprising is that Hanks delivers in "Finch," playing a robotics engineer who is dying from radiation exposure and desperately trying to make sure his dog will be taken care of when he's gone. It's the kind of premise that's been designed to pull at your heartstrings. Dying Tom Hanks and a cute pup? It's impossible to resist. And yet somehow it doesn't work as the epic it would like to be.

The story started out as a 20-page short about a man who builds a robot to replace him as a dog's caretaker from a film student named Craig Luck.

Earth has been rendered a dusty wasteland after a solar event destroyed the ozone layer now direct sunlight is the most dangerous thing in the world. It cooks



Tom Hanks in a scene from "Finch"

any living thing within moments of being exposed.

Unlike the stranded, solitary men of "Cast Away" and "The Martian," Finch has no family or home to get back to. He's dying and the world is dying around him and he just wants to do everything he can to make sure the dog can live without him. The solution is rushed and imperfect — a robot who he's going to have to train on

the go and is only at 72% completion—but they're running out of time and have to make a treacherous journey to San Francisco in an RV from the '80s.

This robot is impressively strong and book smart but is more teenager than obedient servant. And his accent is a cross between Russian and the "Twin Peaks" Black Lodge backwards speak. This is the choice made by actor Caleb

Landry Jones (a nod to his appearance in the "Twin Peaks" revival?), who also did motion capture work to play the robot. And, well, I'm not sure if it's the voice or how the character was written, but this robot is hard to root for. Sometimes you find yourself wishing that he'd never been introduced at all, which is not exactly the best thing when he's one of only three characters.

"Finch's" scope and scale also

were clearly designed for the big screen and an attentive audience, which might prove difficult on a living room television (the same felt true of Apple TV+'s other Tom Hanks epic, "Greyhound," which was still a superior movie.) Although many of the visuals are quite familiar for anyone who has seen a post-apocalyptic movie in the past 20 years, they are striking and detailed nonetheless, and no doubt underserved by even the best small screen. The music cues, meanwhile, could not be more obvious (ahem, "Road to Nowhere").

And it's no one's fault that a film with cautionary messages about delaying travel and living life while you can may be a little hard to swallow for an audience approaching year two of life in a pandemic.

But you're probably not coming to "Finch" for lessons, you're coming to "Finch" for Hanks. The good news is that he's not just the reason to show up, he's the reason to stay around as well.

**"Finch," an Apple TV+ release available Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "brief violent images." Running time: 115 minutes. ★★☆☆**

AD

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

JONATHAN LANDRUM,  
LOS ANGELES

FASHION

# Gucci's star-studded show shines bright in Hollywood

WITH stars like Gwyneth Paltrow and Serena Williams sitting in the front row, Alessandro Michele's nostalgic clothing designs inspired by old Hollywood glam shined just as bright during a Gucci fashion show in Los Angeles.

Jared Leto and Macaulay Culkin were among the many models who calmly pranced down the Walk of Fame runway at the Gucci Love Parade on Tuesday night. It was such a splashy spectacle that the event shut down a few blocks of busy Hollywood Boulevard.

That gave the models enough room to strut out of the iconic TCL Chinese Theatre before walking down both sidewalks alongside a star-studded audience that included such popular figures as Salma Hayek, Lizzo, Miley Cyrus, Lindsey Vonn, Dwyane Wade, Gabrielle Union, James Corden, Dapper Dan, Tracee Ellis Ross and Tyler, the Creator.

With his new collection, Michele brought his love for old cinematic wardrobes to life with cowboy hats, feathered gowns, faux fur coats, diamond tiaras, crop tops, wide leg pants and voluminous dresses. He offered a mixture of colors through his models who wore lavender, teal and hot pink suits along with metallic and gold gowns. Black was another color of preference.

Some models wore chunky silver platform shoes, patent leather

AP PHOTO



flats and white pointy boots. Another popular accessory was face jewelry around the nose and cheekbones.

The Italian designer also featured small to plus-sized models.

"I think with fashion, you have a duty to give a voice," Michele,

the creative director of Gucci, said after the show. "I see beauty everywhere. It's something which is organic and natural."

Leto, who will star in the upcoming film "House of Gucci," drew applause while he walked the runway sporting an oversized double-breasted blazer with no shirt, laced leather white pants and white boots. Culkin wore a colorful jacket with a blue Hawaiian-styled shirt, brown slacks and a white Gucci belt.

For Michele, it was a dream come true to unveil his work on the boulevard of stars, where he said holding the show reflected his "uncurbed love for the classic world."

"It's a bit like home," said the Italian designer, who recalled hearing about the glitzy Hollywood scene from his mother, who worked in the film industry as an assistant at a production company.

Michele said his mother would talk about Marilyn Monroe's diaphanous voice, Rita Hayworth's special black satin gloves and Veronica Lake's velvet hair. They were living on the outskirts of Rome at the time, and her stories felt like a fairy tale.

"It's a place I love," he said. "There are elements that are close to me and my heart. This city is an inspiration." MDT/AP

TASTE OF EDESIA

## A NEW AGE OF LUXURY

IRENE SAM, MDT

GLENFIDDICH, the world's most awarded single malt Scotch whisky, is teaming up with MR PORTER, the award-winning online destination for men's style, on a collaborative first for both brands. Creating a unique new expression of whisky through a highly creative lens, Glenfiddich presented by MR PORTER is limited to only 1,500 bottles worldwide.

MR PORTER has spent the last decade curating the world's most desirable menswear brands, creating engaging original content, and providing first-class service across over 180 countries. This November, for the first time, MR PORTER is entering the world of fine spirits.

Inspired by both brands' restless explorations of taste, elegance and innovation, the limited edition whisky offers a fresh take on luxury style; a

beautifully complex 20 Year Old producing layers of fudge, spiced oak and caramelised Demerara sugar. A true collector's item in the making, the limited edition Glenfiddich Presented by MR PORTER is a treasure to be enjoyed with close friends, an elegant addition to home bars and the perfect accessory for raising a dram.

"Glenfiddich and MR PORTER have consistently challenged convention throughout their history, always pushing industry boundaries and innovation. This collaboration marks a first for both brands, joining a heritage and style as one, culminating in a limited and collectable whisky to enjoy for many years to come" comments Ben Palmer, MR PORTER Creative Director.

The rich and indulgent single malt has been curated by MR PORTER Creative Director, Ben Palmer, under the expert guidance of Glenfiddich

Malt Master, Brian Kinsman. Both taste leaders have worked in tandem to develop the perfect final liquid, hand selecting casks of New American oak, ex bourbon and European oak sherry casks, married together to create a deep, silky smooth single malt. This use of Glenfiddich's innovative Solera technique combines the three casks to create a bigger, richer and more complex flavour; a rare marriage of casks.

Brian Kinsman, Glenfiddich's Malt Master, said: "Innovation, craft, style and curation remains at the heart of both brands. Where Glenfiddich's highly creative nature and diligent techniques have seen the brand create the best quality and innovative whiskies for 134 years, MR PORTER's meticulous sourcing of the world's leading lifestyle labels and brands has made it the world destination for style."





**OPINION**

**Animal Farm**

Albano Martins



**DREAMING IS A RIGHT!**

The first time I visited China, I had been invited by Ma Man Kei, thirty-three years after the founding of the People's Republic of China. I visited Zhuhai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and places nearby.

The population, who lived very humbly at the time, still dressed in Mao suits and were very curious to see Western children up close!

For many years I continued to visit China, but further to the North, and I saw the desire that the people had to develop.

The Cultural Revolution had already passed, with all the evils and misery it had sown, even affecting generations of future new leaders.

The formula created by Deng Xiaoping of having Special Economic Zones around Macau and Hong Kong and which later would be extended to various parts of the country which were to benefit from the dynamism of these capitalist economies, made the difference.

The history of China was to take another 20 years to give forth its first great blossoms, together with the transfers of sovereignty.

Tiananmen was another bump in this path, a natural result of the desire for greater democracy in a country that was already growing. In similar ways to Hong Kong of recent times, although there many interests, some even calling for independence, this incident tarnished the struggle for greater democracy within the same country.

I'm not here to tell you the wonders of the capitalist economy, known today as the western world, where the values of democracy are almost always confused with direct universal suffrage. And where important things as the general right to housing and work with a minimum level of dignity are forgotten.

As if the human rights that the West shouts towards heaven blind us to imperialist invasions and wars fought wherever economic interests lay, or to the plight of its own minorities or other forms of blatant racism.

The world is in constant evolution, unfortunately not always peaceful and unfortunately not always democratic and, being so, not always favorable for the most vulnerable, be they humans, nature, or animals.

China grew, with natural upheavals, but it is still a developing country today. Didn't the West have many more complicated setbacks?

Look at the creation of the USA itself, at the massacre of the "red skins," and the colonialism that spread throughout the world, the first and second world wars (the massacres by the Nazis and the Japanese), or even the atomic bomb dropped on civilian populations of defenseless women, the elderly, and children, in spite of the war crimes perpetrated by the Japanese that the West has feigned forgetfulness.

The economic growth of China, and of other underdeveloped countries, did not happen by chance or for reasons of Western benevolence, but because the logic of the market system invited its operators to look to countries that produced more cheaply, to overthrow their own rivals, internally or externally.

But grain by grain is the hen's crop filled. And grain by grain the nation of China grew. And, as would be easy to predict, it became the factory and later the biggest restaurant and supermarket in the world. And that is an invitation for the rooster to crow.

The Western world was weakened by Trump. Democracies have lost their sense of humanity with ongoing political corruption and with a system of justice that does not work fairly or quickly, itself designed to let the country's richest thieves and bandits pass through the mesh.

Economic power tends to control political power. China has studied the lesson well.

Human rights? Well, in the West the call for this is only valid if it is the right to protest and to speak. The greed of the system does not take into consideration higher order values. Neocolonialism has taken over the world.

A third system is needed, democratic, more humane, and friendlier to the environment and animals.

Several major coal-using nations have pledged for the first time to phase out their use of the heavily-polluting fossil fuel or to speed up existing plans to do so, while others announced commitments to end investment in new coal-fired power plants.

U.K. business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said yesterday [Macau time] that the commitments made on the sidelines of the U.N. climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, meant the "end of coal is in sight." But critics noted the several major economies still have not set a date for ending their dependence on the fuel that is a major source of planet-warming emissions.

The British government said pledges of new or earlier deadlines for ending coal use came from countries including Poland, Ukraine, Vietnam and Chile. Further details about which countries were doing what were to be announced Thursday at the conference, known as COP26.

While Kwarteng called the agreements a "milestone moment in our global efforts to tackle climate change," his counterpart in the opposition Labour Party's said there were "glaring gaps" such as the lack of commitment from large emitters to stop increasing coal domestically.



AP PHOTO

**US MANDATES VACCINES OR TESTS FOR BIG COMPANIES BY JAN. 4**

**T**ENS of millions of Americans who work at companies with 100 or more employees will need to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by Jan. 4 or get tested for the virus weekly under government rules issued yesterday.

The new requirements, which were first previewed by President Joe Biden in September, will apply to about 84 million workers at medium and large businesses, although it is not clear how many of those employees are unvaccinated.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations will force the companies to require that unvaccinated workers test negative for COVID-19 at least once a week and wear a mask while in the workplace.

Tougher rules will apply to another 17 million people who work in nursing homes, hospitals and other facilities that receive money from Medicare and Medicaid. Those workers will not have an option for testing — they will need to be vaccinated.

Workers will be able to ask for exemptions on medical or religious grounds.

OSHA said companies that fail to comply with the regulations could face penalties of nearly \$14,000 per violation.

It was unclear how OSHA planned to enforce the rules. A senior administration official said the agency would target com-

panies if it gets complaints.

The release of the rules followed weeks of regulatory review and meetings with business groups, labor unions and others. The regulations form the cornerstone of Biden's most aggressive effort yet to combat the spread of COVID-19, which has killed more than 740,000 people in the U.S.

OSHA drafted the rules under emergency authority meant to protect workers from an imminent health hazard. The agency estimated that the vaccine mandate will save more than 6,500 worker lives and prevent more than 250,000 hospitalizations over the next six months.

Senior administration officials said the rules preempt conflicting state laws or orders, including those that ban employers from requiring vaccinations, testing or the wearing of face masks.

The administration will face an immediate challenge from Republican state officials who are eager to fight Biden in court and in Congress. Senate Republicans immediately launched a petition to force a vote to overturn the vaccine mandate, but with Democrats controlling the chamber, the effort is nearly certain to fail.

More than two dozen Republicans serving as state attorneys general have indicated they plan to sue, arguing that only Congress

can enact such sweeping requirements under emergency authority.

Last week, 19 states sued to stop Biden's narrower mandate that employees of federal contractors be vaccinated. That requirement was scheduled to take effect Dec. 8, but the administration said it will be delayed until Jan. 4 to match the requirements on other large employers and health care providers.

The rules will require workers to receive either two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine by Jan. 4 or be tested weekly. Employees who test positive must be removed from the workplace.

Companies won't be required to provide or pay for the tests, but they must give paid time off for employees to get vaccines and sick leave to recover from side effects that prevent them from working. The requirements for masks and paid time off for shots will take effect Dec. 5.

For weeks, Biden has encouraged businesses not to wait for the OSHA rule to take effect. He has touted businesses that have already announced their own vaccine mandates and urged other companies to follow their lead.

Administration officials say those efforts are paying off, with about 70% of the nation's adults now fully vaccinated. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

**Lebanon's** prime minister yesterday again urged the information minister to step down over an unprecedented diplomatic rift with Saudi Arabia, saying his resignation would be "a priority." The rift has threatened to destabilize the new government of Prime Minister Najib Mikati (pictured, right), sworn in less than two months ago, and escalate Lebanon's economic tailspin.



AP PHOTO

**Israel** said it has begun testing a massive inflatable missile detection system designed to hover at high altitudes and detect long-range threats. The High Availability Aerostat System resembles a giant blimp or zeppelin. The Defense Ministry says it's one of the world's largest systems of its kind. It was developed in cooperation with a subsidiary of state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries and TCOM, a U.S. aerostat manufacturer.

**Belarus** A cargo plane crashed yesterday while trying to land in eastern Russia, killing all seven people on board, officials said. The Soviet-built An-12 operated by Belarusian carrier Grodno crashed and caught fire near Irkutsk, eastern Siberia. Belarus' Investigative Committee, the top state investigative agency, said there were seven people on board and all of them died in the crash.

**Norway's** largest pension fund said yesterday that it has divested from 14 companies involved in producing nuclear missiles and other weapons. Oslo-based KLP, which manages more than \$35.4 billion, said it made the decision after reviewing companies that may violate its guidelines on weapons.