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TELECOM DEVELOPMENT, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE 5G NETWORK, WILL BE A KEY TOPIC OF A LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE IN THE FUTURE

P3

CHINESE COAST GUARD USES WATER CANNON AGAINST PHILIPPINE BOATS

P7

THE TOURISM AUTHORITY FORECASTS OVER SIX MILLION VISITORS THIS YEAR AS WEEKEND ARRIVALS ARE SHOWING AN UPWARD TREND

P2



Hong Kong authorities have had enough of wild boars. An increasing number of attacks by the animals, including one that bit a police officer last week, triggered an operation Wednesday night in a district less than half an hour's drive from Hong Kong's financial center. Experts used dart guns to capture seven wild boars, which were later put down via medicine injections, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department said in a statement. Carrie Lam has warned of stiffer penalties for those caught feeding the boars.



India Authorities in Indian-controlled Kashmir yesterday ordered an investigation into a police raid that killed four people and led to protests from families of three of the victims who say their relatives were gunned down in cold blood. Police earlier said the two civilians among the victims died in the crossfire when government forces on Monday attacked suspected rebels in Srinagar, the divided region's main city.



Iraq More than 400 Iraqis sought to fly home from Belarus yesterday, abandoning their hopes of reaching the European Union following more than a week of tensions at the bloc's eastern border where hundreds of migrants remain stuck. A plane carrying an unknown number is expected to depart from Minsk in the early afternoon and make two stops — one in the city of Erbil and another in the capital, Baghdad.

More on backpage

TRACING CONCERNS

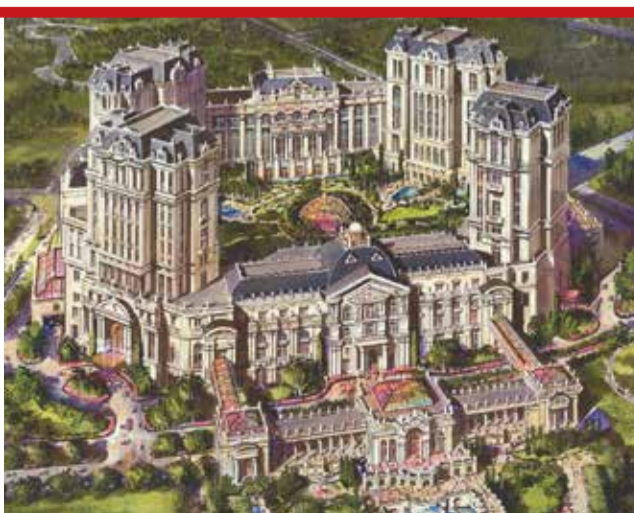
Gov't dismisses safety concerns on personal data gathered by new tracing function on health app, saying it will be used for statistical purposes only - and with users' consent

P4

MIGUEL BANDERA

KARL LAGERFELD HOTEL TO OPEN IN DECEMBER

P3



MACAU GT CUP HOME-GROWN TALENT

SUPPLEMENT

LIGHT FESTIVAL TO DAZZLE IN NEW LOCATIONS WITH MAPPING SHOWS

LYNZY VALLES

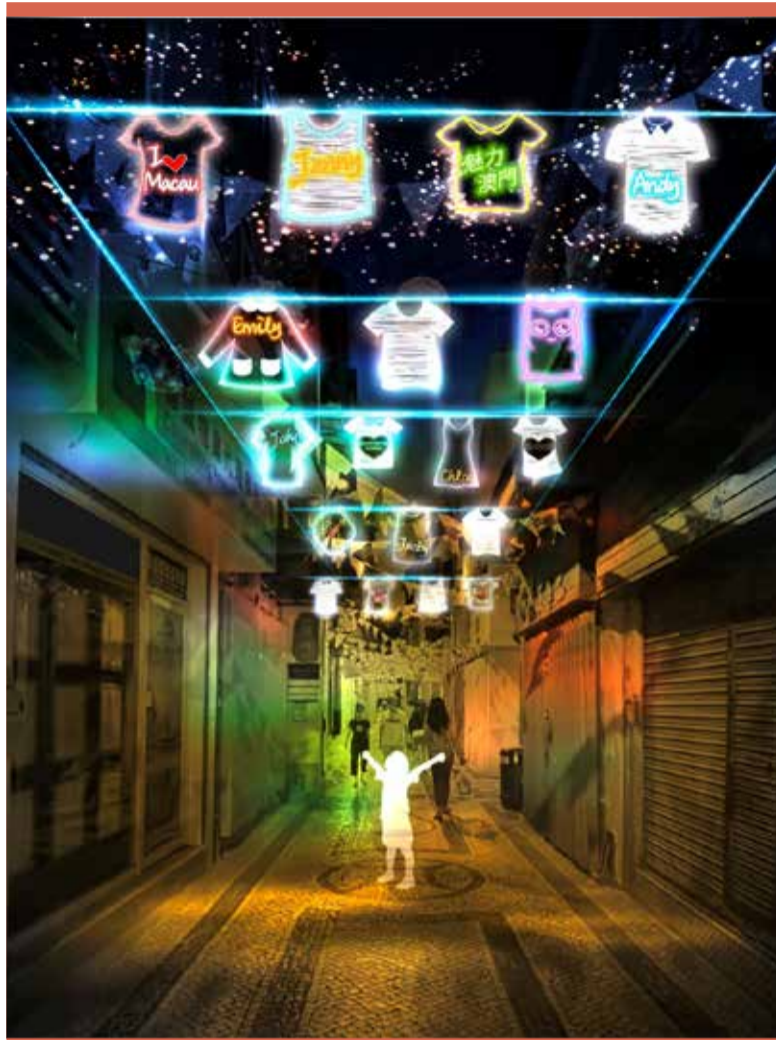
THE annual Macao Light Festival is set to showcase a series of projection mapping shows across the community from December 4 to January 2, 2022, weaving "tourism + culture and creativity."

Announced during a press conference yesterday, the festival themed "Travellers from Mars" will see four different projection mapping shows presented by performance teams from Macau, Hengqin, Changsha and Tokyo, dazzling upon different unique architectures and travel attractions.

Sprawling across different local streets and lanes, the festival will illuminate new locations such as the Macao Science Center and Barra Pier from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

The Macao Science Center will become a new place to experience projection mapping in the city, while project mapping will dazzle the Chapel of St. Francis Xavier in Coloane as a new show venue for the festival this year.

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) once staged mapping shows at the Chapel of St. Francis Xavier and other locations to celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Macao SAR in 2014. Largo do Pagode do Bazar at the Central District and Largo dos Bombei-



ros in Taipa, on the other hand, had both served as mapping show venues in the past editions of the Macao Light Festival.

MGTO's Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes estimates that the number of tourists

to be similar to last year, which is 250,000.

The total expenditure expected for the event is about MOP18.9 million, about 9.5% lower than last year, given that fact that the show is six days shorter.

ght Festival will feature a projection mapping team from Changsha as a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts.

The projection mapping shows revolve around the themes of Macau's history, culture and dynamic as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.

NO FIREWORKS ON NYE

The SAR government will not host any fireworks show this year, similar to its cancellation last year. However, the SAR government is considering to have one during the Chinese New Year.

"We understand that for fireworks, there are more restrictions set by the Mainland that's why we do not have the New Year's Eve fireworks," Fernandes explained.

Last year, the government had cancelled fireworks shows including the international fireworks competition to avoid crowding and reduce Covid-19 pandemic risks.

Last year, the "Macao Light Festival 2020 - Light Carnival" was held earlier than usual starting from September 26 to October 31, with a total budget of MOP21 million. The event was held a few days after China reinstated tourism visas to Macau from September 23, 2020.

HENGQIN PARTICIPATES

The Livelihood Affairs Bureau of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin will present a projection mapping show during the festival for the first time, to showcase a vision for the future development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. This year also marks the first time that the Macao Li-

MGTO: 2021 TOURIST ARRIVALS EXPECTED TO EXCEED SIX MILLION

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is confident that it will exceed six million tourist arrivals this year, noting that the city has seen some 30,000 arrivals last Friday. Last year, the city saw 5.9 million tourist arrivals, a plunge of 85% from the year prior due to the disruption to travel and tourism around the world, amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, the MGTO had forecast-

ed up to 10 million arrivals. "At least right now we should be able to pass six million. If it'll reach seven million, I'm not sure. But if we do have seven million, it will be slightly higher than last year," said MGTO's director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes. "I hope that this week, with the food festival and the Grand Prix, this will attract more visitors to Macau," Fernandes added.

Visitor spending rises to MOP4.8b in Q3

STAFF REPORTER

TOTAL spending by visitors, excluding gaming expenses, skyrocketed by 374.3% from the previous year to MOP4.8 billion in third quarter (Q3) of 2021, as per information from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The boost is attributable to a surge of 143.6% in number of visitor arrivals and a growth of per-capita spending of visitors.

Total spending of overnight visitors grew by 481.3%

to MOP4.22 billion, same-day visitors rose by 102.8% to MOP580 million. In the first three quarters of 2021, total spending of visitors grew by 199.3%, amounting to MOP18.14 billion.

Per-capita spending of visitors in Q3 increased by 94.7% to MOP2,626. Spending by visitors from mainland China grew by 93.4% to MOP2,597, of which those traveling under the Individual Visit Scheme rose by 52.3% to MOP5,917. Meanwhile, per-capita spending by overnight visi-

tors and same-day visitors increased by 74.8% and 2.4% respectively.

Regarding type of expense, visitors mostly spent on shopping (61% of per-capita spending), followed by accommodation (18.6%), and F&B (15.9%). Per-capita shopping spending expanded by 77.6% to MOP1,603. Analyzed by the main purpose of visit, per-capita spending of visitors coming to Macau for vacation and shopping rose by 36.1% to MOP5,574 and 186% to MOP3,019.

PHOTO ARCHIVE



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Karl Lagerfeld Hotel to open in December

THE Karl Lagerfeld Hotel at the Grand Lisboa Palace will officially open its doors on December 3, announced the SJM Resorts property. The new hotel will be the first hotel ever designed by the late German fashion designer, Karl Lagerfeld, one of the

most recognized designers worldwide who has worked for brands such as Fendi and Chanel. Lagerfeld, who was creative director of Chanel for 36 years, passed away in 2019.

This is the first time Lagerfeld and his team designed an entire hotel,

including its rooms, suites, the Portuguese restaurant Mesa, which has been open since June, and the Statement Bar.

The Karl Lagerfeld Hotel is expected to feature 270 guest rooms in a 20-storey tower, bringing the total to 1,892 rooms offered by the three hotels

in Grand Lisboa Palace, namely the Grand Lisboa Palace Macau Hotel, the soon to open Karl Lagerfeld Hotel, and the yet to open Palazzo Versace, designed by Donatella Versace.

The Grand Lisboa Palace suffered delays with its initial opening date, originally planned to be completed in 2017. The HKD39 billion hotel has since had a partial opening of its casino in July this year, 300 rooms in the Grand Lisboa Palace Macau Hotel, restaurants and event spaces.

Daisy Ho Chiu Fung, chairman and executive director of SJM Holdings, has stated previously that the number of rooms would slowly increase according to actual demand.

Some retail shops will open along with the Karl Lagerfeld Hotel, which would be "followed by three VIP rooms". The Palazzo Versace hotel is expected to open in the first quarter of 2022, along with the rest of retail and F&B throughout the year.

The Karl Lagerfeld Hotel is already open for bookings.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE TO FOLLOW UP ON 5G PROGRESS

TELECOM development, with an emphasis on the 5G network, will be a key topic of the parliamentary committee in the future.

After a plenary yesterday, president of the Follow-up Committee for Land and Public Affairs of the Legislative Assembly (AL), Chui Sai Peng, said that the Committee shall invite government officials to explain on telecom-related matters.

He disclosed that the next plenary will see telecom concession contracts as the topic for discussion.

"Although we all know that telecom service providers have had their concessions extended, there are still a series of conditions, particularly the 5G network, confluence and management of conces-

sion assets, among other topics, which should be clarified," Chui said at the post-plenary press briefing.

He stressed that members of the committee are concerned with these topics and are inclined to know more about them.

As a result, the head of the committee promised that government officials will be invited to future plenaries to clarify on the topics accordingly.

Meanwhile, the Committee also requests the government to provide the list of public concessions, so that it can conduct follow-ups prior to, during and after the implementation of such projects or plans.

The committee will also follow-up on land auction and the Gaming Law Review. **AL**

AD

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COVID-19

GOV'T STARTS ITINERARY REGISTER APP

ANTHONY LAM

THE trial version of the itinerary register app is now available on the two most popular app stores, the Health Bureau (SSM) announced yesterday at the regular health press briefing.

The app, name Macao Health Code, is used in the same manner as a similar app in Hong Kong, which requires users to scan QR codes at specific venues upon arrival to register their footprints.

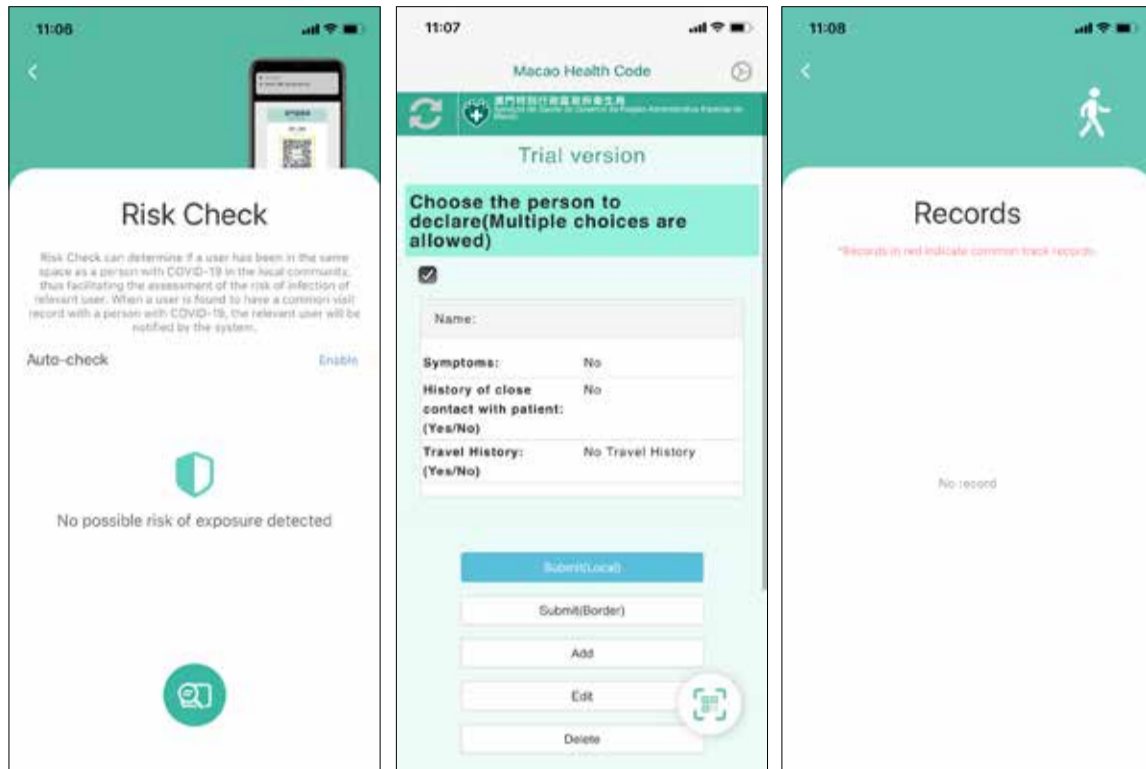
Concerns over data breach and privacy flaws have been raised several times. Members of the public fear that the data can be used to trace users' itineraries and thus build a database of preferences similar to social media platforms.

In response, including the occasion yesterday, the SSM has reiterated that the data will only be stored on the users' mobile devices. The data will only be uploaded to a central database for comparison purposes with the consent of the users.

This was assured by Leong Iek Hou, coordinator of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as public health doctor, during the event.

Echoing SSM director and pulmonologist Alvis Lo's previous comment, the use of the app is, at least for the time being, voluntary. When questioned about that, Leong said, "Users of the app have the discretion to decide whether they want to use the itinerary register function of the app." The health code function has also been copied to the app.

In the trial phase, SSM venues, the Macau Grand Prix and the Macau Food Festival will be the trial



locations of the app. Despite the introduction of the app, the health code website will continue to be operational for an unspecified period of time.

To use the app, users should download it from compatible app stores. After the registration process, when they enter venues that require the scanning of QR codes, they can do so with their phones. Their appearance at the venue will be immediately stored on their devices for 28 days.

If a new Covid-19 patient is diagnosed, with their consent, the SSM "will help upload the itinerary data to the database, which will then identify venues visited by the patient as prone to risks," Leong said.

Users can voluntarily download these data to their devices.

An automatic cross-reference will be conducted to evaluate the risks exposed to the users. The health codes of the users with overlapping or similar visitations will be turned to yellow, barring them from most locations and movements.

Venue owners or operators will have their QR codes generated by the "competent authorities," such as the Macao Government Tourism Office for bars and pubs, the Municipal Affairs Bureau for restaurants and the Health Bureau for clinics, but they will need to print the codes by themselves.

In addition to the itinerary register, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) also announced yesterday through a statement that all Macau Pass users must connect their card with their identity in order to enjoy discounted rides.

Card bearers must register their card on www.macaubusreg.com and tap their card against any of the above 130 Macau Pass console.

The director of the DSAT assured that no ID number will be required during the registration.

POST-JAB INFLAMMATORY CARDIOMYOPATHY RECORDED

THE private-owned Kiang Wu Hospital recorded a post Covid-19 vaccination Inflammatory Cardiomyopathy on November 15 before reporting the case to the Health Bureau, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center (the Center) announced on Wednesday night.

Diagnosed with cardiac problem due to rising Cardiac troponin T level from a blood test, the 24-year-old patient finished his mRNA vaccination on November 12.

He started experiencing fever on November 13 and left the public Conde de São Januário Hospital after clinical consultation. He continued to experience fever on the next day and also developed chest pain. However, he did not seek medical attention on the second day.

The Center cited data from the World Health Organization (WHO) that draws a connection between Inflammatory Cardiomyopathy and the mRNA vaccine of Covid-19. The condition usually exists in young males within days after the second dose of the jab.

The Center reminds the public to seek medical attention immediately should acute and constant chest pain or tightness, breathing difficulty or palpitation develop after vaccination.

In addition, the Center discourages high-intensity exercise or workout in the first week after the mRNA vaccination.

This latest case of Inflammatory Cardiomyopathy, is being studied by the Covid-19 Vaccination Adverse Event following Immunization (AEFI) Evaluation Taskforce. **AL**

Health Bureau denies allegations over unuploaded NAT result



RENATO MARQUES

THE coordinator of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr Leong Iek Hou, stressed yesterday that the first nucleic acid test (NAT) for residents is free and of which the result will be uploaded to the health code.

This comes after the Times reported that a resident has not received the result of his first free-of-charge NAT after nearly a day from his test.

He was reportedly told by Kuok Kim, the third-party NAT service provider, that results from free-of-charge tests are not uploaded, despite him being certain that it was his first test, which is free-of-

-charge for local residents.

The public health doctor suspected that the resident might have booked the test from the wrong link. The QR codes for regular NAT booking and NAT booking for key-group individuals are placed one above the other on the SSM website.

However, in response to the explanation, the resident stressed to the Times that his test was booked through local mobile payment app, MPay, which only brings intended NAT takers to the regular test booking page.

Leong also said that the authorities have checked with the third-party NAT provider, Kouk Kim, who denied the accusation of giving the explanation that all free-of-charge NATs would not have the results uploaded.

On this, the resident said that he was checking with

his friend about the matter because after more than six hours of sample collection, which is the expected time for results to be released, his result was still nowhere to be found.

He reiterated that his friend had called both the SSM and Kuok Kim for clarification. His friend confirmed to the Times that she was told on both calls that free-of-charge NATs, regardless of its key group or resident-oriented nature, would not have the results shown on the health code.

Upon being told the comment over the calls, she asked the service agent again to confirm that she did not get the information wrongly. She reiterated that she was told as aforementioned.

The free-of-charge NATs are paid by the government on the test takers' behalf.

MGS ENTERTAINMENT SHOW

Academic: Brand loyalty key to gambling industry recovery

ANTHONY LAM

Post-pandemic mode of consumption, in which consumers reach for familiar brands, will have an impact on Macau's gambling industry, said Dr. Edmund Loi, associate professor of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Macao Polytechnic Institute at an online summit.

He said that consumers will become further attached to large and familiar brands to which they are already attached or can otherwise relate.

The pandemic has also transformed people's interests or careers, Loi said, noting that many people had started practicing cookery or painting skills in lockdown, thus becoming better cooks and painters.

These conditions, according to the academic, have facilitated the transformation of consumption habits. Consumers now prioritize emotional factors when choosing a brand.

When this approach is



applied to the tourism and leisure industry, tourists will consider and make decisions about going to places they can relate to, which inspire them, or which may provoke other feelings.

In addition, safety is another factor in tourists' preferences, Loi said.

Loi said that the transformation of consumer habits is irreversible. Although physical interaction and in-person shopping may return in the short term, in his view people will persist with online shopping in the long term.

Despite this, he believes that physical interaction will ultimately return, because some industries will not continue working virtually for an extended period of time.

Discussing the projected recovery of Macau's economy, which has been said to be highly, if not overly, reliant on the tourism and gambling industries, the academic was confident, citing modeling from ITB China projecting that after the Covid-19 pandemic, the travel spending of Chinese families will fall between USD700

and USD2,800 per year.

Moreover, the ITB data also shows that travel agencies in mainland China expect infection control measures to be the most important factor when tourists make decisions prior to travel.

Macau's effort to diversify tourism products will also be attractive to tourists. The impact is not just regional but also international. The diversification will involve the development of non-gambling elements, so the gradual addition of other tourism choices will attract more visitors.

The academic added that, to further improve Macau's tourism industry, other factors should be taken into consideration as well. These include healthcare, gastronomy, sports and culture, among others.

Loi also believes there will be more Covid-19 vaccines available as many countries are researching their own jobs, while several pharmaceutical companies have already started testing new medicines to treat Covid-19.

RESIDENTIAL SALES PURCHASE VALUE DOWN BY 23.2%

STAFF REPORTER

PURCHASE and sale of residential units decreased by 396 to 1,537 units in the third quarter of 2021, information from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicated. The total value went down by 23.2% to MOP10.52 billion.

The number of existing residential units transacted reduced by 399 to 1,408, while transaction value decreased by 24% to MOP9.66 billion. Meanwhile, transaction volume of presale residential units increased by 3 to 129 units, while tran-



saction value dropped by 13.5% to MOP855 million.

A total of 2,122 building units and parking spaces were purchased and sold. The total value of tran-

sactions was MOP13.34 billion, a drop of 22.3% and 16.6% respectively.

Regarding average price per square meter of usable area, overall ave-

rage price of residential units decreased by 1.2% to MOP104,141; average prices in the Macau Peninsula dropped by 1.7% to MOP101,855, and decrease of 0.6% to MOP105,140 in Taipa. Meanwhile prices in Coloane rose by 0.7%.

Average price per square meter of usable area of industrial units decreased by 1.2% to MOP51,918, while that of office units rose by 12.1% to MOP118,567.

Regarding construction in the private sector, there were 8,850 residential units in the design stage, 1,750 under construction and 1,330 under inspection. Construction permits were issued to 910 residential units. Meanwhile, license of use were issued to 77 residential units.

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

Techno-cultural Dance Drama
Immersing the arts of
Lion Dance and Southern Fist

WHEREVER there is Chinese, there is Lion Dance". This December, MGM and Guangzhou Song and Dance Theater are ready to heat up your winter with the techno-cultural dance drama "MGM Awakening Lion". Starring the principal dancers of Guangzhou Song and Dance Theater: Iliwan Umar, Peng Guanyu and Zhu Jinhu, this re-arranged and tailor-made drama according to the best dance drama in the China Dance Lotus Awards is going to get your adrenalin going.



Featuring a cluster of multiple cultural elements, including lion dance, Southern Fist (Nanquan), and dance performances, this 70-minute dance drama intertwined traditional lion dance moves with exquisite dance arrangements, successfully redefined lion dance upon its traditional charm, passing on the spirit of Chinese from generation to generation. Leverages the cutting-edge technology and state-of-the-art equipment of the MGM Theater, it blends ancient intangible heritage with virtual reality, showcasing the new possibilities in the utilization and preservation of Lingnan cultural heritage. This unique exuberance experience of dance performance and mesmerizing stage effect is ready to leave you in awe and on the edge of your seat amid the powerful martial arts and breathtaking stunts.



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AP PHOTO

TAIWAN DEPLOYS ADVANCED F-16V FIGHTER JETS AMID CHINA THREAT



HUIZHONG WU
& JOHNSON LAI, CHIAYI

TAIWAN has deployed the most advanced version of the F-16 fighter jet in its air force, as the self-ruled island steps up its defense capabilities in the face of continuing threats from China, which claims it as part of its territory.

Taiwan's leader Tsai Ing-wen commissioned into service 64 upgraded F-16V fighter jets at an air force base in Chiayi yesterday. The aircraft represent part of Taiwan's total 141 F-16 A/B jets, an older model from the 1990s that will be completely retrofitted by the end of 2023.

Tsai said the upgrade project showed the strength of Taiwan's

cooperation with the U.S. defense industry. It comes at a time the island's status has become a major point of tension in the U.S.-China relationship.

Beijing has been stepping up its threat by sending fighter jets in combat formations into Taiwan's buffer zone southwest of the island on a regular basis, along with longer-range missions into the Western Pacific.

China has increased its rhetoric as well, with President Xi Jinping telling President Joe Biden during a virtual summit this week that challenges to China's claim over the island amounted to playing with fire.

The United States' "One China" policy recognizes Beijing as the government of China but allows

informal relations and defense ties with Taipei.

"This represents the steadfast promise of the Taiwan-U.S. partnership," Tsai said. "I trust that in holding fast to democratic values, there will definitely be more countries with similar values who will stand with us on this front."

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian reiterated China's opposition to official contacts between Taiwan and the U.S. and hopes that Washington will "be cautious with its words and actions on the Taiwan issue, and refrain from sending any wrong signals to the secessionist forces of Taiwan independence."

"The crux of the tension in the Taiwan Strait is that the secessionist forces of Taiwan independen-

ce are sparing no effort to split the country and collude with external forces," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing. "What they are doing is just like an ant trying to topple the giant tree, which will surely end up in failure."

The F-16V is the most technologically advanced version of the storied multi-role fighter jet, equipped with highly capable radar, allowing it to track more than 20 targets at a time. It also features cutting-edge electronic warfare systems, along with advanced weapons, precision GPS navigation and a system to automatically avoid collisions with the ground.

The planes represent the most advanced of the fourth generation of fighter aircraft, but still below the latest fifth generation such

as the U.S. F-22 and F-35, and Russia's Su-57 and China's J-20. Taiwan has mooted the idea of purchasing fifth generation aircraft from the U.S. but the F-16 upgrade was decided as the most effective measure under present circumstances.

Taiwan's air force also operates French Dassault Mirage 2000 and domestically designed and manufactured AIDC F-CK Chingkuo fighters for a total fleet of around 400.

China, by contrast, operates around 1,600 fighters, around half of them based in the eastern and southern theaters abutting Taiwan, along with around 450 bombers. China's superiority in both quality and quantity of fighter aircraft is seen as turning the military balance in the Taiwan Strait to its advantage, independent of involvement by U.S. forces.

With the upgrades and the planned delivery of 66 new F-16Vs in 2023, Taiwan will be the largest operator of F-16s in Asia, said Kitch Liao, a military and cyber affairs consultant for DoubleThink Lab, an organization targeting disinformation. This means the island should invest in repair centers for the jets to improve readiness, Liao said. Previously, Taiwan had to send the jets to other countries for repair.

In Chiayi, pilots in F-16s showed off complex maneuvers yesterday, flying low across the skies.

Sandra Oudkirk, the director of the American Institute in Taiwan, the U.S. de facto embassy in Taiwan, was in attendance as well. **MDT/AP**

#METOO

State media release attributed to Peng raises WTA concerns

THE head of the women's professional tennis tour questioned the legitimacy of what Chinese state media said was a retraction by a Grand Slam doubles champion who has accused a former top government official of sexual assault.

WTA Chairman and CEO Steve Simon said Wednesday that a statement attributed to Peng Shuai and tweeted out by CGTN, the international arm of Chinese state broadcaster CCTV — which said it contained the contents of an email she wrote to Simon — "only raises my concerns as to her safety and whereabouts."

Peng is a 35-year-old from China and a former No. 1-ranked player in women's doubles who won titles at Wimbledon in 2013 and the French Open in 2014.



She wrote in a lengthy social media post earlier this month that a former vice premier and member of the ruling Communist

Party's Politburo Standing Committee had forced her to have sex despite repeated refusals.

The post was removed

from her verified account on Weibo, a leading Chinese social media platform, and the country's state-controlled media has suppressed all reporting on the case.

Simon called Sunday for a full investigation and demanded that Peng not be censored. Those expressing concern about the case and Peng's safety also have included ATP Chairman Andrea Gaudenzi and four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka.

A statement attributed to Peng by CGTN on Wednesday included a reference to her allegation being "not true."

As the overseas arm of state broadcaster CCTV, CGTN is among the numerous propaganda tools wielded by the ruling Communist Party in an attempt

to sway foreign opinion. It has been sanctioned on numerous occasions by British TV regulator Ofcom for airing forced confessions by a British businessman, a Hong Kong bookseller and an employee of the UK consulate in Hong Kong.

"I have a hard time believing that Peng Shuai actually wrote the email we received or believes what is being attributed to her," Simon said. "Peng Shuai displayed incredible courage in describing an allegation of sexual assault against a former top official in the Chinese government. The WTA and the rest of the world need independent and verifiable proof that she is safe. I have repeatedly tried to reach her via numerous forms of communications, to no avail."

Peng wrote that Zhang Gaoli forced her to have sex despite repeated refusals following a round of tennis three years ago. She said Zhang's wife guarded the door during the incident.

Her post also said they had sex once seven years ago and she had feelings for him after that.

As is usual for retired Chinese officials, the 75-year-old Zhang dropped from public sight after his retirement in 2018 and is not known to have any intimate professional or political connections to current leaders.

In response to a question at Wednesday's daily briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said he had no knowledge of Peng's situation. **MDT/AP**

ADVERTORIAL

SANDS CHINA NEWS

Sands China Launches 2021 Expedited Payment Programme for Local SMEs

Programme provides relief to SMEs by reducing payment terms to seven days

Sands China Ltd. has launched a financial support programme for its local SME suppliers, in support of the Macao SAR government's relief package that includes eight measures to assist struggling SMEs amid the pandemic.

The 2021 SME Expedited Payment Programme aims to help all Sands China's local SME suppliers – whom the company views as its strategic partners – navigate the challenging business environment arising from the COVID-19 pandemic by easing their cash flow pressures amidst operational challenges. The programme is expected to involve up to MOP 350 million.

The ongoing pandemic has caused economic shock waves across the globe, and SMEs are particularly vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19. Upholding the business philosophy of supporting the growth of local SMEs, Sands China proactively contacted all its SME partners by phone at the onset of the pandemic, to better understand their financial and operational challenges and needs.

After already offering advance payments and swifter invoice processing to SME suppliers in need in the aftermath of Typhoon Hato back in 2017, Sands China is once again extending additional support to local SME suppliers – with its SME support programme.

Between Nov. 1, 2021 and Jan. 31, 2022, Sands China's SME partners can apply for the 2021 SME Expedited Payment Programme in order to have their payment terms shortened from the current 30 days to seven days. Eligible SME partners can apply by email to SME_Info@sands.com.mo or eva.wong@sands.com.mo. Once the application is approved and becomes effective, payment terms for new orders and contracts will be reduced to seven days throughout the duration of the programme. For more details, please visit: <https://www.sandschina.com/the-company/SME-Support.html>.

Sands China's success and the success of Macao go hand-in-hand. The company has been investing back into the community that it serves to help it thrive and grow, contributing to the development of local enterprises along the way. In 2020, 89 per cent of Sands China's total procurement amount went to Macao enterprises, demonstrating the company's commitment to supporting local enterprises as part of the company's corporate social responsibility efforts.



AP PHOTO



In this photo provided by the Philippine Coast Guard, a Chinese Coast Guard vessel is seen patrolling in the South China Sea, taken sometime mid-April

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Chinese coast guard uses water cannon against Philippine boats

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

CHINESE coast guard ships blocked and sprayed a powerful stream of water at two Philippine boats carrying supplies to troops at a disputed South China Sea shoal, prompting Manila to order Beijing's ships to back off and warn that its supply vessels are covered by a mutual defense treaty with the United States, Manila's top diplomat said yesterday.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said no one was hurt in the incident on Tuesday, but the two supply ships had to abort their mission to provide food to Filipino forces occupying Second Thomas Shoal, which lies off western Palawan province in the Philippines' internationally recognized exclusive economic zone.

Locsin said in a tweet that the three Chinese coast guard ships' actions were illegal and urged them "to take heed and back off."

It was the latest flare-up in the long-simmering territorial disputes in the strategic waterway, where China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have overlapping claims. China claims virtually the entire South China Sea and has transformed seven shoals into missile-protected island bases to cement its assertions, ratcheting up tensions and alarming rival claimants and Western governments led by the U.S.

The Philippine government conveyed to China "our outrage, condemnation and protest of the incident," Locsin said, adding that "this failure to exercise self-restraint threatens the special relationship between the Philippines and China" that President Rodrigo Duterte and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, worked to nurture.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said China's coast guard had upheld China's sovereignty after the Philippine ships entered Chinese waters at night without permission.

National Security Adviser Hermonogenes Esperon told reporters in Manila that two Chinese coast guard ships blocked the two wooden-hulled supply vessels. A third coast guard ship "water cannoned the two for one hour," he said, adding that the outrigger of one of the Philippine ships was displaced by the impact.

A water cannon is a device on firetrucks that shoots high-velocity water for firefighting and crowd control but has also been installed on Chinese coast guard ships to drive away what China considers intruders in the waters it claims.

The Philippines plans to deploy coast guard and Bureau of Fisheries vessels instead of navy ships to back up its forces and enforce its fishing laws at Second Thomas Shoal, which Filipinos call Ayungin and China refers to as the Ren'ai reef, Esperon said.

The number of Chinese surveillance ships has increased in recent weeks in the far-flung shoal and also around Thitu, a larger Philippine-occupied island in the Spratly archipelago in the South China Sea's most hotly contested area, he said.

Philippine forces won't be deterred from traveling again to the shoal following the incident, he said.

"We will continue the resupply and we do not have to ask the permission of anybody because that is within our territory," Esperon said.

The Philippine military deliberately ran aground a World War II-era warship, the BRP Sierra Madre, at the submerged shoal in 1999 to fortify its claim and provide a shelter to a small contingent of Filipino marines.

The Sierra Madre is now effectively a rusty shipwreck but the Philippine military has not decommissioned it. That makes the ship an extension of the government and means any attack on the ship is tantamount to an assault against the Philippines. MDT/AP



Grace Meng, the wife of former Interpol president Meng Hongwei

INTERVIEW | GRACE MENG

Ex-Interpol chief's wife takes on China government

JOHN LEICESTER, LYON

IN China, she enjoyed the privileges that flowed from being married to a senior member of the governing elite. Her husband was a top police official in the security apparatus that keeps the Communist Party in power, so trusted that China sent him to France to take up a prestigious role at Interpol.

But Meng Hongwei, the former Interpol president, has now vanished into China's sprawling penal system, purged in a stunning fall from grace. And his wife is alone with their twin boys in France, a political refugee under round-the-clock French police protection following what she suspects was an attempt by Chinese agents to kidnap and deliver them to an uncertain fate.

From being an insider, Grace Meng has become an outsider looking in — and says she is horrified by what she sees.

So much so that she is now shedding her anonymity, potentially putting herself and her family at additional risk, to speak out against China's authoritarian government that her husband — a vice minister of public security — served before disappearing in 2018. He was later tried and imprisoned.

In an exclusive interview with The Associated Press, Meng chose for the first time to show her face, agreeing to be filmed and photographed without the dark lighting and from-the-back camera angles that she previously insisted on, so she could speak openly and in unprecedented detail about her husband, herself and the cataclysm that tore them apart.

"I have the responsibility to show my face, to tell the world what happened," she told The AP.

Among the global critics of China — many of them now mobilizing against the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing — Meng brings the unique perspective of a former insider who has walked through the looking glass and emerged with her views transformed. So profound is the change that she has largely stopped using her Chinese name, Gao Ge. She says she now feels more herself as Grace, her chosen name, with her husband's surname, Meng.

"I have died and been reborn," she says.

About Meng, his whereabouts and health as an imprisoned soon-to-be 68-year-old, she is entirely in the dark. Their last communication was two text messages he sent on Sept. 25, 2018, on a work trip to Beijing. The

first said, "wait for my call." That was followed four minutes later by an emoji of a kitchen knife, apparently signaling danger. She thinks he likely sent them from his office at the Ministry of Public Security.

Since then, she says she has had no contact with him and that multiple letters sent by her lawyers to Chinese authorities have gone unanswered. She is not even sure he is alive.

"This has already saddened me beyond the point where I can be saddened further," she said. "Of course, it's equally cruel to my children."

"I don't want the children to have no father," she added, starting to cry. "Whenever the children hear someone knocking on the door, they always go to look. I know that they're hoping that the person coming inside will be their father. But each time, when they realize that it isn't, they silently lower their heads. They are extremely brave."

Official word about Meng's fate came out in dribs and drabs. A statement in October 2018, just moments after Grace Meng had first met reporters in Lyon, France, to sound the alarm about his disappearance, announced that he was being investigated for unspecified legal violations. That signaled

that he was the latest high-ranking Chinese official to fall victim to a party purge.

Interpol announced that Meng had resigned as president, effective immediately. That still infuriates his wife, who says the Lyon-based police body "was of no help at all." She argues that by not taking a firmer stand, the global organization that works on shared law enforcement issues has only encouraged authoritarian behavior from Beijing.

"Can someone who has been forcibly disappeared write a resignation letter of their own free will?" she asked. "Can a police organization turn a blind eye to a typical criminal offense like this?"

In 2019, China announced that Meng had been stripped of his Communist Party membership. It said he abused his power to satisfy his family's "extravagant lifestyle" and allowed his wife to use his authority for personal benefit. In January 2020, a court announced he'd been sentenced to 13 years and six months in prison on charges of accepting more than \$2 million in bribes. The court said he confessed guilt and expressed regret.

His wife has long maintained that the accusations were trumped up and that her husband was purged because he'd been using his high-profile position to push for change.

"It's a fake case. It's an example of a political disagreement being turned into a criminal affair," she said. "The extent of corruption in China today is extremely serious. It's everywhere. But there are two different opinions about how to solve corruption. One is the method used now. The other is to move toward constitutional democracy, to solve the problem at its roots."

Grace Meng also has political connections through her own family. Her mother served on an advisory body to the Chinese legislature. And the family has previous experience of political trauma. After the Communist takeover in 1949, Grace Meng's grandfather was stripped of his business assets and later imprisoned in a labor camp, she said.

History, she says, is repeating itself.

"Of course, this is a great tragedy in our family, a source of great suffering," she told the AP. "But I also know that very many families in China today are facing a similar fate to mine." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1985 SUPERPOWER SUMMIT 'OFF TO GOOD START'



The first meeting in six years between the world's superpowers — the United States and the Soviet Union — has begun in Switzerland.

Early reports indicate the meeting between President Ronald Reagan and the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva has got off to a good start.

Their first get together this morning — at the Villa Watter Lily owned by the Aga Khan — lasted four times the scheduled 15 minutes.

The two men were alone apart from their interpreters.

And in the afternoon they unexpectedly went off entirely by themselves for an hour.

However, a key stumbling block to any agreement is expected to be America's Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) — popularly known as "Star Wars".

Mr Reagan believes a defensive shield of laser gun ships in space would guarantee peace.

But Mr Gorbachev believes SDI could upset the nuclear balance and allow a state with the technology to launch an attack untroubled by the threat of retaliation.

Upbeat

There is a complete news blackout on details until the end of the summit on Thursday.

But the general atmosphere was upbeat at the end of the first day with Mr Gorbachev announcing the two men had got down to "serious business".

"We must achieve decisions together," the Soviet leader said.

The presidents and their wives later dined together.

The summit continues tomorrow when the leaders are expected to discuss arms control, regional conflicts and human rights.

In the absence of hard news regarding the summit, much interest has been focused on the activities of the leaders' wives.

On Tuesday Raisa Gorbachev and Nancy Reagan carried out separate public programmes but met for tea in the afternoon.

Reporters have dubbed the women's alleged desire to be the best-dressed — "Style Wars".

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Both sides painted a positive picture of the summit but the lack of specific details in the subsequent agreement reflected areas of major differences.

The document signed by the two presidents committed them to work towards a 50% cut in their nuclear arsenals and explore the possibility of an agreement on medium range missiles.

It also said they should try and resolve "humanitarian cases" — believed to refer to the USSR granting exit visas to Soviet Jews.

In October 1986 the two men held another summit in Reykjavik in Iceland.

However, after a positive start the meeting ending without agreement when the US insisted it would not give up the "Star Wars" programme.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
The veil is thin this time of the year, Aries. That's been especially true for you lately, as you've been confronting the nagging ghosts of relationships past and present in the light of day.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Friday's skies mark one of the most pivotal moments of the year for you, Taurus. The full moon blooms in your sign this afternoon, putting your identity, health, and individuality in its illuminating spotlight.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Let your introverted twin take center stage today, Gemini. You've been keeping yourself incredibly busy as you work to hone desired skills and make your workflow run more efficiently.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You're just beginning to gain the confidence to find your own stage and shine, Cancer. The month ahead sees you preoccupied with developing your creative potential and presenting that talent to the world at large.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Today's skies are sure to provide a stark moment of clarity, Leo. You've only just begun to return to your private nest and focus your energy on shoring things up around your emotional foundation.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
This time of the year has you busy and on the go, Virgo. You're likely been knee-deep in educational endeavors, writing projects, answering calls and emails, or running circles around your block trying to keep up with errands.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
This time of the year is about pure self-discovery, Libra. You're busy getting back in touch with the special qualities and talents that make you who you are.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Your attention is momentarily redirected towards your close personal relationships today, as the full moon points to changes and revelations around romantic involvements.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You're being flooded with subconscious messages today, Sagittarius. Pay close attention to your dreams and visions as quick-footed Mercury squares off with your ruling planet, aspirational Jupiter.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Today's full moon in Taurus shines its illuminating spotlight onto your creative contribution to the world, making it easy to obtain revelations around your creative process and the stage you wish to see yourself on.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Today's cosmic landscape is chock full of revelations, Aquarius. You've been keeping yourself busily preoccupied with making career moves and figuring out which role in society you wish to inhabit.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Pisces people are all about the dream. You're built that way! This time of the year has you all the way zoomed out on your life, taking a broad look at the philosophies and priorities that have built your life.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

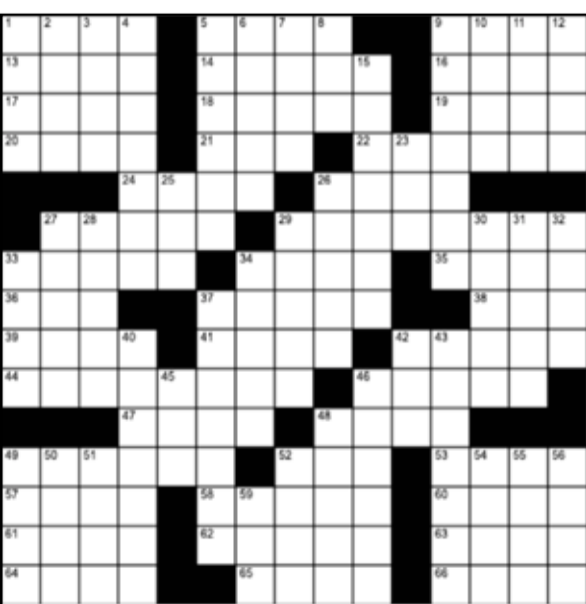
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-4	4	FINE
Harbin	-4	4	SNOW
Tianjin	6	13	FINE
Urumqi	4	14	FINE
Xi'an	8	13	FINE
Lhasa	0	5	SNOW
Chengdu	14	22	CLOUDY
Chongqing	10	19	FINE
Kunming	2	10	CLOUDY
Nanjing	18	24	CLOUDY
Shanghai	4	10	FINE
Wuhan	-5	0	RAIN
Hangzhou	1	9	FINE
Taipei	-10	-1	FINE
Guangzhou	12	19	RAIN
Hong Kong			
WORLD			
Moscow	0	7	rain
Frankfurt	4	10	overcast
Paris	3	12	overcast
London	9	12	overcast
New York	9	19	clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1-Initial stake in a hand of poker; 5- Hey, over here!; 9- Authenticating mark; 13- Capital of Switzerland; 14- Separated; 16- Headland; 17- Designer Cassini; 18- Polynesian porch; 19- Greek peak; 20- Ersatz butter; 21- Make another point; 22- Device for holding up a stocking; 24- Ceremonial act; 26- Clench; 27- Aquarium buildup; 29- Like a recluse; 33- Brazilian port; 34- Bellicose deity; 35- ___ take arms against...; 36- Country bordered by Canada and Mexico; 37- Lots of lots; 38- ___ Lingus; 39- City on Norton Sound; 41- Normandy city; 42- Burning; 44- Iberian peninsula inhabitant; 46- Mob scenes; 47- Adhesive; 48- Run smoothly; 49- Bulgies; 52- Bro's sibling; 53- Cork's place; 57- Moon of Jupiter; 58- Mature; 60- Kind of alert; 61- Thor's father; 62- Horizontal; 63- I could ___ horse!; 64- Cornerstone abbr.; 65- Smooth sailing; 66- Looked at;

DOWN: 1- Peek follower; 2- Dudley Do-Right's love; 3- Corner; 4- Swallow greedily; 5- Roof of the mouth; 6- One in a black suit; 7- Quartz grains; 8- Musical syllable; 9- Eighth sign of the zodiac; 10- Bridge seat; 11- Church section; 12- Cordelia's father; 15- Large, striped female feline; 23- Goal, intention; 25- Cartesian conclusion; 26- Fresh; 27- Author of fables; 28- South American ruminant; 29- Made a mistake; 30- Quality; 31- Anatomical passages; 32- Reactor part; 33- Bread rolls; 34- Without ___ in the world; 37- Random; 40- Division of the United Kingdom; 42- Broadcast; 43- Prophecy; 45- Unwell; 46- Steal livestock; 48- Heaps; 49- Blackthorn fruit; 50- Unites; 51- Prepare a book or film for release; 52- Capital of Fiji; 54- If ___ be so bold...; 55- Routine; 56- Mild oath; 59- Gidget portrayer Sandra;



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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tTUNES

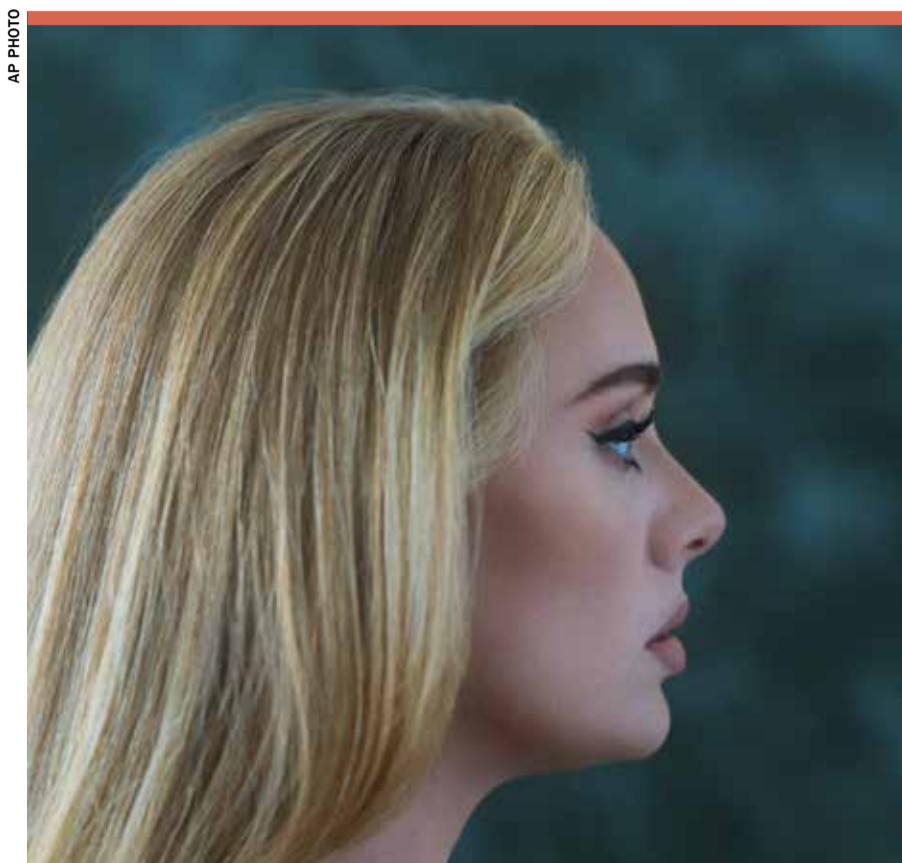
ADELE GOES BEYOND HEARTBREAK IN POWERFUL '30' ALBUM

RAGAN CLARK, MDT/AP

COMING out of a divorce, one might expect Adele to write an album of heartbreak ballads. But, to expect anything short of the full spectrum of emotions from "30" would do the Grammy winner a disservice.

As one of the greatest voices of our time, it is no surprise that some of Adele's shining moments on the album are on tracks bare enough that the strength of her vocals stand on their own. What is maybe more surprising is the delightfulness of the songs that are a departure from her normal style.

Adele's opener is unlike any she's written before. "Strangers By Nature" whisks the listener into a black-and-white Audrey Hepburn-era film — whimsical and at times ominous. The album is given theatrical bookends with closer "Love Is a Game" mimicking some of these dramatic tones. It is a triumphant con-



"30," Adele (Columbia Records)

clusion with harmonies in the chorus which give a nod to '60s groups like the Supremes.

In between, there are songs about heartbreak and also love songs — to her son, to

new loves (or, at least, those she'd like trying to love) and to herself. Adele stretches herself on "30," dipping into genres and tones that show her ability to deviate from more somber chart toppers like "Hello" and "Someone Like You." There's the bubble gum pop "Cry Your Heart Out," dance anthem "Oh My God" and the Western-tinged "Can I Get It" — a song that is so divergent from typical Adele that it calls to mind Beyoncé's "Daddy Lessons." In "My Little Love" and "All Night Parking," Adele brings R&B to the record.

While there are jubilant moments on the album, Adele's diary style songwriting ensures that pain is also present on the 12-track "30." "My Little Love" is a movingly perso-

nal track which includes voice recordings of Adele comforting her young son and even crying as she describes her loneliness. The pain is also tangible on "To Be Loved." Its sparse production serves Adele beautifully. There is nothing to smooth out the emotion as her voice teeters on cracking.

The second half of the LP is much quieter than the first, filled with ballads more typical of the British singer. "Woman Like Me" shows her quiet confidence — she alludes to feelings of guilt and uncertainty in "My Little Love" and "I Drink Wine," but in this song, she reasserts her own self-worth.

"Complacency is the worst trait to have, are you crazy?" she croons, "You ain't ever had, ain't ever had a woman like me."

If "30" is in fact a snapshot of the person Adele is at this moment in time, it is clear that the six years since "25" have led to growth and a more realized version of herself. There are traces of her younger self, but a renewed self-awareness.

"All I do is bleed into someone else," she sings on "To Be Loved." "I'll be the one to catch myself this time."

AD

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INTERNATIONAL PHILANTHROPY ASSOCIATION MACAU

THIS IS MY STREET

A story of people's lives in exceptional times

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

F&B

ALCHEMIST FLAIR

TODAY and tomorrow, **Kazuhisa Arai**, general manager of the award-winning bar Sober Company, Shanghai, is presenting a menu of six signature cocktails at The Ritz-Carlton Bar & Lounge. Kazuhisa began his bartending journey at just 20 years old, coming first at Jameson Bartender's Ball-World Mix Master competition in 2016. In 2017, he relocated to Shanghai to set up Sober Company with Shingo Gokan, the mastermind behind The Odd Couple in Shanghai and The SG Club in Tokyo. Under Kazuhisa's guidance, Sober Company is awarded by Asia's 50 Best Bars for five consecutive years, rising through the ranks each year to 5th place in 2021. Kazuhisa will bring popular cocktails from Sober Company and its sister bars to his guest shift, including the Sixty Forty, a Martini and Manhattan combination; XO, a woody, leathery tequila-based negroni; and the Heminguava Daiquiri, a tropical delight crafted with Appleton White Rum, Guava, Grapefruits and Maraschino.



TASTE OF EDESIA

Celebration of the grill

IRENE SAM, MDT

RECENTLY, Chef Conor Beach has joined MGM Cotai as Chef de Cuisine at **Grill 58**. Having lived in various places around the world such as United States, Europe and Asia, he incorporates his own insights into dishes of both Asian and Western origins.

Driven by his enthusiasm for homemade fermented ingredients and exotic flavors, he creates a burst of uniqueness featuring Nordic cold-water shrimps brined and grilled over lychee wood and Japanese charcoal. The Shrimp Cocktail Tarts is then dressed in a sauce infused with Thai basil and curry leaves. His interpretation of Tuna Tarta-

re highlights an unconventional marinade of Saikyo miso, giving the pink yellowfin tuna a delicate and sweet taste. Layered with crème fraiche on grilled brioche toasts, it is completed with a dusting of charcoal powder. Lastly, 28-Day Aged Snake River Farm M7 Wagyu Bone-In Ribeye is fire grilled to seal its juices, finished in a charcoal grill oven.

AD

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山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues*
馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata*
趙魯 Zhao Lu**
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大律師 ASSOCIATES:
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羅普齡 Zelina Rodrigues*
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陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo
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OPINION

Animal Farm

Albano Martins



ALLEGIANCE TO NAM VAN!

Even though I am no longer working there, I raise the following as a matter of justice – that precious and forsaken jewel!

For those with no knowledge of the times, in the early 1990s, the company Nam Van was entrusted with an area of 130 hectares along the bay of Praia Grande, which had reclaimed 50 ha of land for construction and 80 ha for two large lakes, Nam Van and Sai Van, with ecological platforms and aerators for water oxygenation. Ten hectares of this area was later handed over to the government, as was a public area.

4.1 km of four-lane roads were built in Praia Grande as well as two roads along the banks linking the Inner Harbor. The entire area had a traffic light system and a dyke was built next to the old bridge to allow the connection of NAPE to the Macau Tower and the Inner Harbor. All this was transferred to the government, including floodgates, dykes, other equipment and pumping stations.

The sewage that had been discharged to the bay was channeled through a new 2.4 km sewer network to sewage treatment plants.

The stench was over and the city had gained a new face.

7,000 private and 4,150 public car parking spaces and two public parking silos were also designed and transferred to the government.

The company fulfilled its responsibilities to the government within the deadlines set.

What did Nam Van get in exchange for this enormous work and a 2.4 billion cash premium and 1.4 billion in infrastructure? 31 plots of land of a total of 46 that were reclaimed from the sea, leaving the government with the remaining 15.

With the real estate crisis of the 1990s, which continued until gaming liberalization, Nam Van was forced to hand over two more plots of land in Zone B to pay the final premium.

In 2002, the government solicited from the company the remaining four lots it had in Zone B to facilitate the plans for the liberalization of gambling, with a promise to deliver the same gross construction area, in Zones C and D, next to the Macau Tower and to immediately reorganize these lands, which were worth much less than the four original lots where Wynn Macau and MGM are currently located.

However, and for this new land allocation to take place, the government suspended the detailed plan for these zones, making it impossible for the company to develop within the stipulated period of development the 13 lots there plus the four that it had been promised and never received.

Time passed and the public service did nothing.

Investors got stressed and tried to present alternative plans to deal with this agreement of transferring the land allocation to a less valuable area, but the government would consider nothing at the time, nor was anything else forthcoming.

As a result, with 14 years more than enough to develop this entire area, the company had its hands tied, the government would not move forward with any redevelopment project, would not add the four plots that the company had originally been given to allow for the liberalization of gambling and, ultimately, it lost all 13 land plots in Zone C/D.

According to official conversation and the courts, the company lost all the allocated plots of land for not developing them.

And we work under the rule of law!

The truth is that the company didn't develop them because it was not allowed to do so.

What was lost, because the project was not developed, by the expected dates or even with delays resulting from the government's dithering? Billions.

Imagine justice functioning independently of political power....

NOVAVAX ASKS EU DRUG REGULATOR TO OK ITS COVID VACCINE

THE BUZZ

The European Union's drug regulator said it received an application from Novavax to authorize the American biotechnology company's coronavirus vaccine, a request that could significantly boost the continent's vaccine supplies if it's granted.

In a statement yesterday [Macau time], the European Medicines Agency said it had begun evaluating data submitted by Novavax for its two-dose vaccine. An expedited review process could produce a decision within weeks "if the data submitted are sufficiently robust and complete to show the efficacy, safety and quality of the vaccine," the agency said.

Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine is made using a different techno-

logy than others currently on the market, including those made by AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson, and the messenger RNA vaccines produced by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech.

Novavax's shot is made with lab-grown copies of the spike protein that coats the coronavirus, which then trigger an immune response.

In June, Maryland-based Novavax announced the vaccine had proven about 90% effective against symptomatic COVID-19 in a study of nearly 30,000 people in the United States and Mexico. It also worked against variants circulating in those countries at the time, the company said.

AP PHOTO



CALLERS TO GLOBAL HELPLINES VOICED SIMILAR PANDEMIC WORRIES

LINDSEY TANNER

FEARs of infection. Loneliness. Worries about physical health.

As the coronavirus spread across borders early in the pandemic, calls to global helplines showed a striking similarity in the toll on mental health — from China to Lebanon, Finland to Slovenia.

An analysis of 8 million calls to helplines in 19 countries, published Wednesday in *Nature*, reveals a collective response to unprecedented, uncertain times.

Callers' worries centered on fears of infection, loneliness and physical health. Calls about relationship issues, economic problems and suicide-related issues

were generally less prevalent than before the pandemic.

The Swiss and German researchers looked at helplines in 14 European countries, the United States, China, Hong Kong, Israel and Lebanon. They included suicide-prevention hot lines and ones providing crisis counseling.

"We were struck by how similar the broad evolution of helpline call patterns looked across nations," said Marius Brulhart, a University of Lausanne economics professor and the study's lead author.

Pooling country-specific data during the pandemic's first 12 weeks in 2020,

the researchers found that call volumes peaked at six weeks, rising 35% above calls during the same period in 2019.

The researchers also analyzed data through spring 2021 from two of the largest helplines, in France and Germany. Call patterns in those two countries followed upswings and downswings in infections and government restrictions, and the concerns raised were similar to those early in the pandemic.

The researchers looked at helplines in 14 European countries, the United States, China, Hong Kong, Israel and Lebanon

Strict lockdown and social distancing measures were linked with more calls due to fear, loneliness and suicidal thinking or behavior. Governmental financial support for workers who lost jobs and businesses that lost patrons had the opposite effect, "alleviating distress and mental health concerns," the researchers said.

Karestan Koenen, a Harvard mental health researcher, said patterns linking a decline in calls with government assistance is an important takeaway for policymakers.

Analyzing helpline data is "an incredibly creative way to assess mental heal-

th in the pandemic" in an array of countries, she said. In the U.S., crisis helplines have been heavily promoted throughout the pandemic and that may have broadened their use, Koenen noted.

Concerns raised in the calls echo results from surveys showing the pandemic's toll on mental health, said Judith Bass, of Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health.

"The idea that fear was part of the early manifestations both makes research sense but also logical sense," Bass said. The virus "was an unknown that nobody had experienced before."

Bass noted that the study didn't include developing countries, such as those in Africa that have experienced Ebola and other disease outbreaks. People in those countries might have reacted differently to the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic than the countries included in the analysis, she said.

Still, the study showed how prevalent helplines are around the world, Bass said, and they are available in many more countries than were included in the study.

Brulhart said those used in the study manage data in a way that made them accessible for academic research. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Iran The United Nations' atomic watchdog says it believes that Iran has further increased its stockpile of highly enriched uranium in breach of a 2015 accord with world powers. The International Atomic Energy Agency told member nations in its confidential quarterly report Wednesday that Iran has an estimated stock of 17.7 kilograms of uranium enriched to up to 60% fissile purity, an increase of almost 8 kilograms since August.

AP PHOTO



Libya's influential speaker of parliament announced yesterday that he will be running for president, making him the latest candidate to join the race for the country's highest office after years of civil war. Aguila Saleh (pictured), 77, who has led the country's House of Representatives since 2014, announced his candidacy in a video statement. The elections are supposed to be held Dec. 24, but face growing uncertainty after two controversial candidates declared they are running.

Turkey's Central Bank cut interest rates again yesterday, a day after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke out against high borrowing rates and raising increasing concerns about the impact of soaring consumer prices on families and businesses. The bank's monetary committee announced it was reducing the policy rate to 15% from 16%, even as inflation runs at close to 20%. It was the bank's third interest rate cut in as many months.

US The United States is warning pilots that planes operating at one of Africa's busiest airports could be "directly or indirectly exposed to ground weapons fire and/or surface-to-air fire" as Ethiopia's war nears the capital, Addis Ababa. The Federal Aviation Administration advisory cites the "ongoing clashes" between Ethiopian forces and fighters from the northern Tigray region, which have killed thousands of people in a year of war. The U.S. this week urged its citizens in Ethiopia to "leave now," saying there should be no expectation of an Afghanistan-style evacuation.