



COVID-19: MACAU LOWERS AGE LIMIT FOR SINOPHARM VACCINES TO THREE YEARS OLD, DOWN FROM 12, STARTING TODAY

LAWMAKERS WORRY ON LACK OF DOMESTIC WORKERS

LOCAL GRAFT BUSTER PROBE UNDERWAY AS ICAC FINDS ALLEGED BRIBERY OVER MACAU-BASED CONSTRUCTION FIRM LISTING

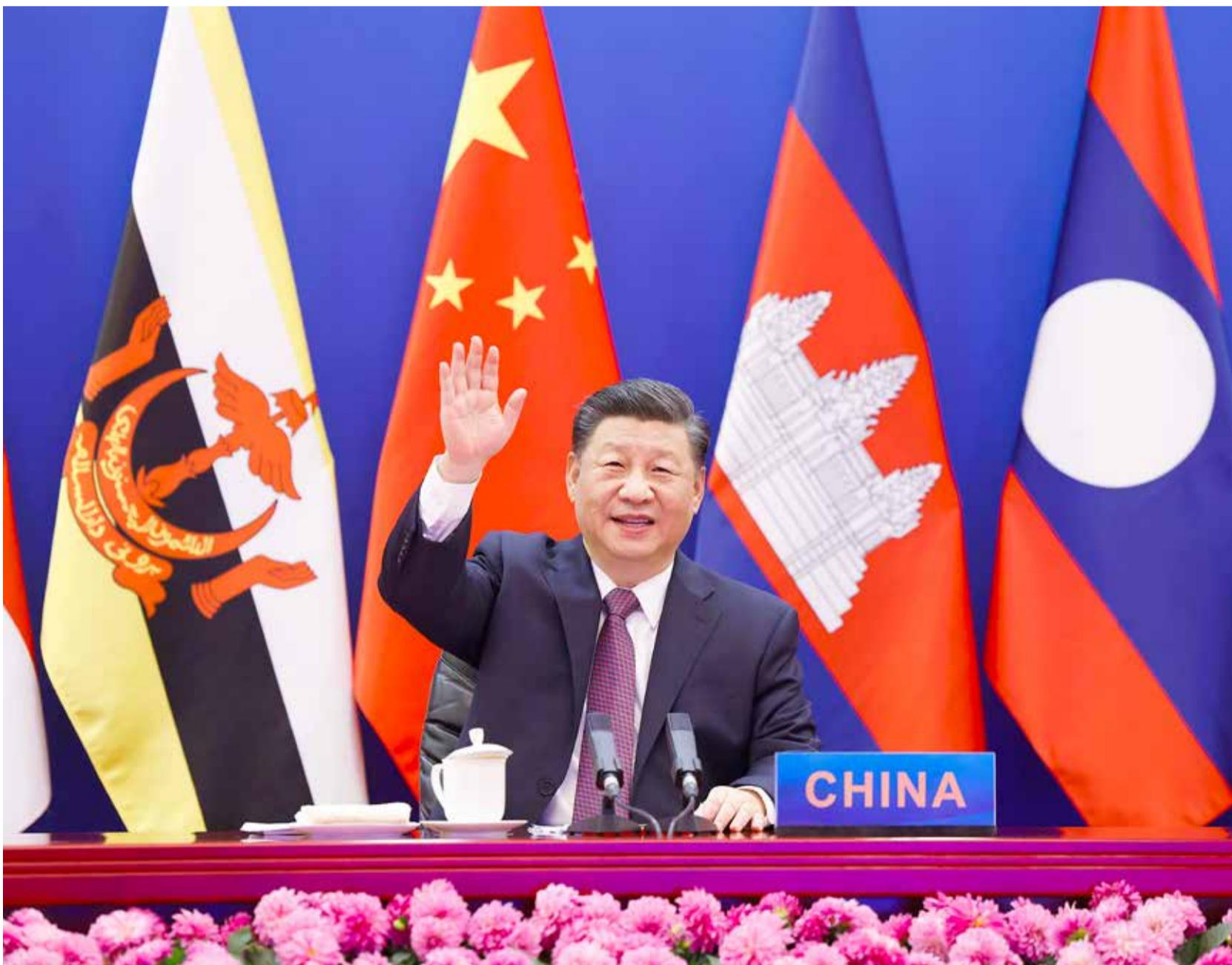
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NO BULLYING AROUND

Xi Jinping says his country will not seek dominance over Southeast Asia or bully its smaller neighbors amid ongoing friction over the South China Sea ▶ P7



Indonesia Denmark and Indonesia signed yesterday a pair of agreements that aim to boost the large Asian nation's green and sustainable development goals. Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod met with Indonesian officials in the capital of Jakarta to discuss fighting climate change as well as building economic and security cooperation. "We want the world to become more green and more sustainable," Kofod told reporters.



CREATIVE INDUSTRY CALLS FOR SUPPORT IN POLICY

NGAN AND ZHENG WORRIED ABOUT THE LACK OF SOLUTIONS FOR HIRING DOMESTIC WORKERS

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LAWMAKERS Ngan Iek Hang and Zheng Anting have presented two separate spoken inquiries to the government continuing to call on the executive to find an urgent solution for the hiring of domestic workers by local families.

The inquiries, presented yesterday at the Legislative Assembly during the period before the agenda, called on the government to find an urgent solution for the families that have been struggling over the past almost two years without being able to import non-resident workers for domestic service.

Ngan noted that in most families both parents work outside the house and, in many cases due to main industries in Macau, they do shift work without much time to dedicate to taking care of their young children.

Without the possibility of importing domestic workers from abroad due to the border restriction enforced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the young children of local families are increasingly unattended. Ngan voiced concerns that leaving children unattended can lead to "deviant behavior."

Ngan went on to note his concern that this could jeopar-

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dize social harmony, further noting that the extended prohibition of importing domestic workers might deter young couples from having children or even getting married, he said.

The lawmaker called the government to incentivize companies to increase the benefits to families and increase flexi-

bility on working schedules, especially for those who have young children.

In his turn, lawmaker Zhang also expressed concerns on the impossibility of hiring new domestic workers causing an "unbalanced" situation resulting in currently employed domestic workers constantly calling for the increase of their

salaries, which families who employ them feel forced to comply with for fear of losing those workers. Zhang claimed that domestic workers currently in Macau who are looking to change employers have a "blackmailing" attitude, threatening families with not renewing their work contracts unless their salary is raised to at

least 5,000 to 6,000 patacas or more. According to Zhang this represents, in most cases, a salary increase of 46%.

Zhang added that previously the "government has suggested hiring domestic workers from the mainland, but many families say that the starting salary for most of these workers ranges between 7,000 and 8,000 patacas, to which is added an annual fee of 3,600 patacas, [meaning] a total amount that exceeds the capacity of families in general."

The lawmaker called on the government to take action to not allow this situation to continue wherein extra pressure is being placed on local families who are already facing severe setbacks due to the pandemic, such as reduction of income, or layoff.

Zhang calls on the government to take this opportunity to define more rigorous criteria for the issuing of working visas as well as to proceed with a thorough investigation into the reasons that can lead to a change of employer for non-resident workers.

With these suggestions, Zhang intends to block blue cards holders from seeking new employers unless the termination of their contract is the decision of the employers.

Lawmakers urge govt to establish legal retirement age

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LAWMAKERS Chui Sai Peng, Ip Sio Kai, and Wang Sai Man want the government to significantly improve the laws regarding retirement by establishing a legal retirement age in Macau. The legislators expressed this desire in a spoken inquiry delivered yesterday at the Legislative Assembly.

During the period before the agenda, Wang, speaking on behalf of the three, called on the government to improve the regimes regarding retirement to improve the quality of life and bene-

fits of the population when they reach an older age.

According to Wang in his inquiry, "Choosing the time to stop working is part of people's plans, but just as voter registration is done at 18 and the minimum age to enter casinos was set at 21, it is appropriate to set a retirement age." He additionally noted that this is the first major step before policies for the older population can then be properly drafted.

The lawmakers noted that there are significant differences between the private and the public sector. While for the public sector,

the government clearly defined the retirement age of civil servants, noting that the maximum age for the exercise of public functions is 65 years old. The government has also defined the compensation to be distributed upon retirement from the public sector. However, this provision is not made for the general population working in the private sector.

Wang noted that the government's establishment of benefits for senior citizens aged 65 years and older, has led the population to believe this is the statutory retirement age.

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However, there is in fact no legal regime establishing that age as the retirement age, which according to the lawmakers, causes cons-

tant "mistakes and injustices."

The lawmakers also noted that there is a rule in the mainland followed by

most state-owned companies that sets the retirement age at 60 years old for men and 55 for women. Upon reaching these ages, individuals receive a survival pension and provident fund support.

Wang said that the lack of a legal retirement age in the city leads to many situations in which older employees face dismissal by the companies without being legally protected by a retirement regime.

At the same opportunity, they called for the perfecting of legislation on the warranties and benefits for the older population.

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COVID-19

Gov't authorizes Sinopharm vaccine for children over three years old

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU has approved lowering the age limit for China's inactivated vaccine to three years old, down from 12 years of age, starting from today.

According to the Chief Executive Dispatch No. 179/2021, Sinopharm is now applicable to all persons aged between three years and 60 years, and to persons aged 60 years and over in good health or with an increased risk of exposure.

This comes several months after China has begun to allow those aged between three and 12 years old to get its homegrown Covid-19 vaccine shots.

Over the weekend, Hong Kong also extended the age eligibility of children taking the CoronaVac, also known as the Sinovac Covid-19 vaccine.

The government announcement noted that "adolescents aged 12 to 17 will be accorded priority to receive the

CoronaVac vaccine, with a view to extending to children of a younger age group at a later stage."

Official statistics in the MSAR shows that the city's population between zero and 14 years comprised 13.3% of the overall population in 2020, totaling 90,850 individuals.

The mRNA vaccine has been available to people aged 12 years and over since last month. The move was made to increase the rate of vaccinated individuals among secondary students.

Currently, Macau's vaccination rate has reached 70% of the total population.

Similar to Beijing and Hong Kong, Macau has retained strict travel restrictions and it is only open to entry for its residents and Chinese nationals in a bid to deter a new outbreak.

This move is largely in contrast to a global trend of opening up and living with the pandemic as these regions aim to realize its zero-covid policy.

BORDER-CROSSING NAT VALIDITY EXTENDED TO SEVEN DAYS

FROM 1 a.m. today, the validity period of Covid-19 nucleic acid test (NAT) for border-crossing purposes has been extended to seven days, the Macau government announced. Individuals using all land borders to Zhuhai from Macau should hold a NAT result issued within the seven preceding days, otherwise they will not

be allowed to enter Zhuhai. In addition to this requirement, other immigration necessities, such as ID or visas, must be presented. Individuals trying to enter Macau from Zhuhai have unchanged requirements. The government reminds travelers to be mindful of all disease control measures in Zhuhai.

Cultural and creative industry calls for support in policy

ANTHONY LAM

CERTAIN practitioners from the cultural and creative industry gathered at a forum to discuss their difficulties and called on the government to provide assistance in the form of policy.

At the forum, practitioners actively contributed to the discussion session and voiced a series of complaints and comments. At the same time, they articulated certain suggestions and opinions.

The 50 or so practitioners were dissatisfied, if not angry, with the city's review and assessment scheme in cultural funding. They work in several sub-industries, including fashion and styling, comprehensive design, audiovisual, cultural tourism and products and cultural performance.

One of the examples provided was the requirement of the Cultural Industry Fund that all project submissions be reviewed before and after the issuance of funds. The closure of review before funding issuance could be as early as a month before the actual work is set to commence. As a result, practitioners are unable to update their plans in response to the latest trends or social issues.

Moreover, the post-issuance review forbids any change or alteration to the actual work from the submitted proposals. This, in the practitioners' opinions, "murders the passion to create" and is also not

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helpful to the healthy development of the industry.

Based on this foundation of the status quo, the practitioners recommend the government consider the changing environment in the market its trend as well as review the funding criteria as far as the law permits, so as to allow reasonable mid-way alteration or change to funded designs.

They added that the requirements have had a particularly significant effect on projects submitted or approved during the past couple of years.

The practitioners suggested the government meet with them on a regular basis in order to push forward interactions, and noted that clearer guidelines should be compiled to help the industry's development.

The practitioners also voiced that they found engaging in written correspondents with the government demanding. Their justification is that they are mostly owners of small and medium sized enterprises and they consequently handle their projects in a hands-on manner.

The practitioners also requested a cross-departmental mechanism to assist them when applying for licenses, exploring the mainland market, conducting marketing and business development, as well as processing relevant procedures.

The practitioners also expressed the desire to see improvements in the constitution of the Creative Industry Fund so as to expand the horizons for the industry and ultimately "achieve economic diversification."

TOURISM

DOWNWARD TREND IN ARRIVALS ACROSS OCTOBER DUE TO COVID-19 OUTBREAK

LYNZY VALLES

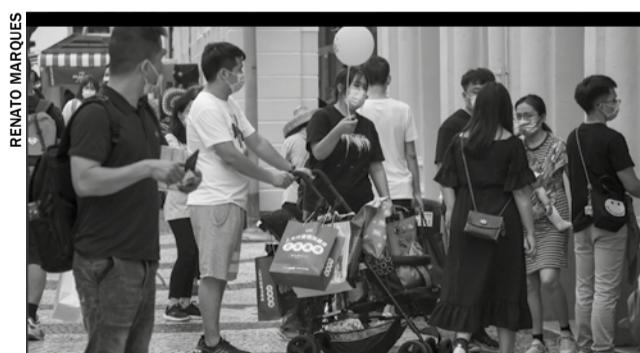
OCTOBER'S visitor arrivals decreased by 47.8% month-on-month to 328,245 due to the tightening of cross-boundary measures between Zhuhai and Macau in early to mid-October due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

The figure represented a drop of 43.6% year-on-year, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicated.

Numbers of same-day visitors (216,829) and overnight visitors (111,416) fell by 20.8% and 63.9% year-on-year respectively.

October is typically one of the months which records the most tourists. However, this year, it saw a devastating steep decli-

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ne as the city recorded 14 Covid-19 cases in a matter of two weeks, leading to the closures of government and entertainment venues and facilities, as well as the stricter requirements imposed for travelers entering Zhuhai from Macau.

Due to the quarantine measures imposed in mid-October, the average length of stay of visitors

went up by 0.9 days year-on-year to 2.3 days, with that of overnight visitors (7.2 days) increasing by 4.5 days.

In terms of visitor origins, the number of mainland visitors declined by 44.2% year-on-year to 300,996, with 64,097 of them travelling under the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS).

In the first 10 months of

2021, the number of visitor arrivals grew by 32.2% year-on-year to 6,083,773, coming from a low base last year as Macau's borders only reopened in August for mainland travelers who did not possess IVS visas.

Meanwhile, Macau's visitor arrivals were at a record high since the September outbreak when 35,525 visitors were registered on Friday, topping the record number of 30,000 from previous weeks. This is the highest recorded number of visitors since September 25, when Macau entered an immediate state of prevention due to a Covid-19 outbreak and implemented strict infection control measures.

MACAO MUSEUM TO HOLD EXHIBITION ON GBA HISTORY

The Macao Museum will hold an exhibition to promote the development of the culture of the Greater Bay Area from November 27. Titled 'A Tale of Three Cities: Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and Export of Silk Products in the Ming and Qing Dynasties,' the exhibition features a total of 112 sets (201 pieces) of exhibits from the collections of the museums of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau. The exhibition is divided into four sections: "Greater Bay Area," "Export Silk," "The Changing World" and "The Greater Bay Area Today."

34 SUSPECTED ILLEGAL WORKERS IN OCTOBER

Authorities found a total of 34 suspected illegal workers in October after it investigated 180 locations. The joint and sole operations against illegal workers launched by the Public Security Police Force, the Labour Affairs Bureau and other authorities at construction sites, private flats, commercial and industrial establishments, and other locations. Its last data, released in June, showed that authorities found 66 suspected illegal workers after inspecting 324 locations.

ANTHONY LAM

A campaign was launched yesterday in the hopes of attracting returning tourists from the mainland through augmented reality (AR) technology which is integrated into visits to the city's central old district of Rua dos Ervanarios.

Explaining the concept on the sidelines of the launch ceremony yesterday, Manuel Lok Pui Ferreira, executive director of the Industry and Commerce Federation of Macau Central and Southern District, an organizing entity of the campaign, said that AR was incorporated into the event because a growing interest in the technology within younger tourists visiting Macau has been recently observed.

"As a result, the technology is utilized to attract young tourists to understand more about this district," Ferreira said. "After all, this is one of the most important Customs checkpoint back in the Ming Dynasty," Ferreira added.

The dynasty spanned the 14th to the 16th centuries.

Apart from learning about the history of the district, users will also be able to win coupons when they overcome the "challenges" set up at 15 participating shops. These coupons can be used at the respective shops, which are mostly cafeterias or snack shops.

After each "stop" of AR use, users will be able to take pictures with AR backgrounds or elements, before sharing them to social media platforms.

Tai Kin Ip, director of the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSEDT), another organizing entity, noted that the campaign is part of the government's efforts to revive the local economy, in addition to assisting small and medium sized enterprises and pushing forward development in more historical districts.

He stressed that this campaign is a new attempt conducted by the DSEDT by including new technology into the promotion of economic activities in older districts.

ANTHONY LAM



AUGMENTED-REALITY INTRODUCED TO ATTRACT TOURISTS TO OLD DISTRICT

MOP4.8B INJECTED INTO LOCAL MARKET BY SUBSIDY

As of November 18, about 4.8 billion patacas have flowed from government to business accounts through the consumption subsidy scheme, Tai disclosed on the sidelines of another event over the weekend.

Equating to 70 million transactions, the amount was injected to about 669,000 registered local residents, which is about 90% of the total eligible population. Tai stressed that 67% or 3.2 billion patacas have gone to small, medium and micro-sized enterprises.

In terms of industries, 22.6% of the funds went to the catering industry and 18.5% to supermarkets.

As the scheme will conclude at the end of the year, with its registration in mid-December, Tai has reminded unregistered local residents to conduct registration promptly and to finish using the subsidies prior to the deadline.

CCAC probe underway as HK finds alleged bribery over Macau firm listing

LYNZY VALLES

THE corruption watchdog is currently investigating possible offences committed by a group of accounting staff that allegedly accepted bribes totaling over HKD1 million from the chairman of the construction firm in exchange for compiling a false accountants' report.

The report was for the construction firm's submission to the Hong Kong Exchanges & Clearing Limited in relation to its listing on the Main Board.

According to Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), Macau's Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) also searched a number of premises, including the offi-



ce of the construction firm. The ICAC and the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) searched the office of a certified public accountant (CPA) firm and its sister company. The address is also the local registered business address of a Macau construction firm listed in Hong Kong. During the operation, the ICAC arrested nine persons, including three accountan-

ts and two audit staff of the firm and its sister company. Two of the accountants were holding the position of chief financial officer of the construction firm at different times.

"All arrestees have been released on ICAC bail. While enquiries are continuing, it is not appropriate for the ICAC to make further comments," the bureau in a statement.

POLICE ATTRIBUTE RISING CRIME TREND TO HIGHER TOURIST ARRIVALS

THE year-on-year rise in the number of formal investigations in the first three quarters of this year may be due to the increasing number of tourist arrivals, the police announced yesterday.

In addition to this reason, the police authorities noted their belief that "the condition of economic revivals, the more frequent use of internet for making friends and shopping, as well as the joint operations with police authorities from neighboring regions" have contributed to the rise in investigations.

Between January and September this year, the number of formal criminal investigations totaled 8,802, a 24.1% year-on-year increase. The number falls between the figure in the same period in 2019, the high point, and in 2020.

Across this period, the



police recorded more rape cases than ever before. The police stressed that more than half of these rape cases took place in hotel rooms and in 70% of the cases, alcohol was involved.

Increases in the number of cybercrimes and illegal currency exchange were also recorded. The number of cybercrimes has seen a nearly three-fold increase in the period. Across the cybercrimes, in the first nine months of this year, there were

50% more sham online romance and 19% more online investment traps than in 2020.

There were 20% more investigations opened into physical violence during the period. "Loan shark" cases have seen 5% more occurrence and abduction, a closely related crime, has seen nearly 7% more cases.

More than 2,600 investigations necessitated the use of the public surveillance camera system. AL



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IOC INTERVIEW WITH PENG SHUAI RAISES EVEN MORE QUESTIONS

STEPHEN WADE

OUT of public view for almost three weeks, Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai has appeared in a video call with International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach.

The IOC and the Chinese government would like this to be the end of the Peng saga, which has run since Nov. 2 when she accused former vice premier Zhang Gaoli of sexual assault.

That may be wishful thinking on their part.

The interview offered few details, no follow-ups on her allegations, and invited more questions for the IOC, Peng, and China.

It seems unlikely to satisfy Steve Simon, the chairman and CEO of the Women's Tennis Association, who has been blunt in criti-

cizing China and has threatened to pull all top-tier WTA events from the country.

Even after the IOC video was published Sunday, the WTA repeated what Simon has been saying for more than a week, calling for a full, fair, and transparent investigation "without censorship."

According to the IOC, Peng held a 30-minute call with Bach, and he recounted in a statement that she is "safe and well, living at her home in Beijing, but would like to have her privacy respected at this time."

The IOC said Bach invited Peng, a former No. 1-ranked doubles player and a three-time Olympian, to dinner when he is town to oversee the troubled Beijing Winter Olympics that open on Feb. 4.

Not only is the IOC now embroiled in this scandal, it has also been widely criticized for going ahead with the Olympics despite accusations of human rights abuses against minorities, namely, in Tibet and Xinjiang.

Yaqiu Wang, a China-born spokeswoman for Human Rights Watch, tweeted that the IOC is now "actively playing a role in the Chinese government's enforced disappearance, coercion and propaganda machinery."

The concerns for Peng from the WTA and so many of its top and retired players — Naomi Osaka, Serena Williams, and Martina Navratilova — and global attention on the WhereIsPengShuai social media movement have put pressure on China, even if the news of her allegations is blacked out at home.

CNN reported that its signal in China had been blocked around reporting on Peng.

A search for her name yesterday on Weibo, one of China's leading social media platforms, produced only a few posts about her, and they don't refer to the sexual assault allegation or the questions about her whereabouts.

China Open posted a photo with her at Sunday's youth tournament, but did not mention her in the caption.

Still missing is Zhang. He left public life about three years ago after being one of seven members of the Politburo Standing Committee — the apex of political power in China.

The effort to silence Peng reflects the ruling Communist Party's determination to squelch criticism of its leaders. Athletes

are especially sensitive politically because they are well-known, admired for their achievements, and used to promote the party's success.

A three-time Olympian, Peng accused Zhang of sexual assault on social media in China, which was immediately taken down on its heavily censored internet. She also described having a consensual relationship with the Chinese official.

She wrote in part: "I know that to you, vice minister Zhang Gaoli, a person of high status and power, you've said you're not afraid. With your intelligence, you certainly will deny it or you can even use it against me, you can dismiss it without a care. Even if I'm destroying myself, like throwing an egg against a rock, or a moth flying into a flame, I will still speak out the truth about us."

The IOC can argue that it's "quiet diplomacy" worked, and gave China a way to save face. On the other hand, it makes the IOC an active partner in delivering Beijing's message, without subjecting Peng to an open interview about her allegations.

Although the IOC casts itself as a non-governmental organization, it's a sports business — like the WTA or NBA — that generates 91% of its income from sponsors and selling broadcast rights.

The WTA is the first sports body to defiantly stand up to China's financial clout, a sharp contrast to the IOC, which says it is powerless to intervene in China's internal policies.

"The statements make the IOC complicit in the Chinese authority's malicious propaganda and lack of care for basic human rights and justice," Global Athlete, a lobby group for athletes, said in a statement.

"The IOC showed a complete disregard for allegations of sexual violence and abuse against athletes," the statement said. "By taking a nonchalant approach to Peng Shuai's disappearance and by refusing to mention her serious allegations of sexual assault, IOC President Thomas Bach and the IOC Athletes' Commission demonstrate an abhorrent indifference to sexual violence and the well-being of female athletes." MDT/AP

China says five citizens kidnapped from Congo mining operation

CHINA says five of its citizens have been kidnapped from a mining operation in eastern Congo.

The Chinese Embassy in Kinshasa posted on the WeChat online message service that the five were abducted early Sunday from the site in South Kivu province that borders Rwanda,

Burundi and Tanzania.

It called on all Chinese citizens to leave South Kivu and the neighboring provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, saying the security situation in the area was "extremely complex and grim" and that there was little possibility of providing aid in the event

of an attack or kidnapping.

No details were given about those kidnapped, who they worked for or who was suspected of taking them.

All Chinese citizens and Chinese-invested businesses in Congo should pay close attention to local conditions, increase their

safety awareness and emergency preparedness, and avoid unnecessary outside travel," the embassy said.

Last weekend, a Congolese conservation park ranger was killed when 100 heavily armed men, presumed to be former members of the M23 rebel group, attacked a patrol post near

the village of Bukima in North Kivu. Other rangers fled unharmed.

Several armed groups including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, known by its French acronym FDLR, the Mai-Mai and the M23 regularly vie for control of eastern Congo's natural resources.

Despite the danger, Chinese businesses have moved into Congo and other unstable African states in a quest for rare minerals and other natural resources. Chinese workers have also been subject to kidnappings and attacks in Pakistan and other countries with active insurgencies. MDT/AP

CHINESE leader Xi Jinping yesterday said his country will not seek dominance over Southeast Asia or bully its smaller neighbors, amid ongoing friction over the South China Sea.

Xi made the remarks during a virtual conference with the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, held to mark the 30th anniversary of relations between China and the grouping.

Two diplomats said ASEAN member Myanmar was not represented at yesterday's meeting after its military-installed government refused to allow an ASEAN envoy to meet with ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other arrested politicians. Military ruler Gen. Min Aung Hlaing was also barred from representing his country at the last ASEAN summit.

China has repeatedly sought to overcome concerns about its rising power and influence in the region, particularly its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea that overlaps the claims of ASEAN members Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and the Philippines.

"China resolutely opposes hegemonism and power politics, wishes to maintain friendly relations with its neighbors and jointly nurture lasting peace in the region and absolutely will not seek hegemony or even less, bully the small," Xi said, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Xi's remarks came days after 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 and forced them to turn back.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte highlighted the incident in his remarks at the conference, referring to the shoal by its Philippine name.

"We abhor the recent event in the Ayungin Shoal and view with grave concern other similar developments. This does not speak well of the relations between our nations and our partnership," Duterte said, according to a statement from his office.

Duterte also called on China to respect the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea which establishes maritime entitlements and sovereign rights over maritime zones, along with a 2016 Hague arbitration ruling that mostly invalidated China's South China Sea claims. China has refused to recognize the ruling.

"We must fully utilize these legal tools to ensure that the South China Sea remains a sea of peace, stability and prosperity," Duterte said.

AP PHOTO



ASEAN leaders and Chinese President Xi Jinping on screen during an online meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Xi says Beijing will not seek dominance over Southeast Asia

Yesterday, the Philippines redeployed the two supply boats to provide food to the marines based at Second Thomas Shoal aboard a World War II-era warship which it deliberately ran aground in 1999 in a move to fortify the country's claim. Chinese vessels have surrounded the shoal and demanded the Philippines tow away the ship, the BRP Sierra Madre.

At a daily briefing yesterday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian reasserted China's position rejecting

the 2016 arbitration ruling and claiming that its "territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea are backed by sufficient historical and legal basis."

"Any attempt to challenge China's sovereignty and interests will not succeed," Zhao told reporters. "At present, the situation in relevant waters in the South China Sea are generally calm, and China and the Philippines are maintaining close communication."

Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob also raised the sea in his speech at the conference, saying, "As a claimant state, Malaysia firmly views that matters relating to

the South China Sea must be resolved peacefully and constructively in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law."

"Malaysia calls on all countries to remain committed towards maintaining the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability and trade," his office quoted him as saying. "To this end, all parties should exercise self-restraint and avoid actions that may be deemed provocative, which could further compli-

China resolutely opposes hegemonism and power politics [...] and jointly nurture lasting peace in the region.

XIJINPING

cate the situation and escalate tensions in the area."

China has sought to strengthen its presence in the waterway, home to crucial shipping routes, fish stocks and undersea oil and gas deposits, by building airstrips and other features on islands created by piling sand and concrete atop coral reefs.

China's powerful navy, coast guard and maritime militia

have also sought to block moves by regional countries to exploit resources within their exclusive economic zones, and it strongly objects to operations by the U.S. and other foreign militaries in the area. China and ASEAN have for years been negotiating a code of conduct for handling matters in the South China Sea but those talks have made little progress of late.

China remains a crucial market for Southeast Asian countries as well as a source of investment, and ASEAN has sought to avoid conflict with Beijing. China also has strong ties with ASEAN members Cambodia and Laos and has refrained from criticizing Myanmar, where security forces are estimated to have killed almost 1,200 civilians

since overthrowing Suu Kyi's elected government in February. The government has claimed a lower death toll.

China had wished that all 10 ASEAN members join yesterday's meeting, but Brunei, which currently holds the group's rotating chairmanship, objected to Myanmar's presence, according to two diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity.

A photo of the video meeting showed just an empty box with the Myanmar and ASEAN flags.

In other comments, Xi said peace was the "greatest common interest" of all sides and China would exert its utmost to avoid conflict.

"We must be the constructors and protectors of regional peace, insist on dialogue instead of confrontation, partnership and nonalignment, and join hands in dealing with various negative factors that threaten to undermine peace," Xi said.

"We must practice true multilateralism and insist on handling international and regional matters through negotiation," Xi said.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo emphasized the economic links that have made China ASEAN's biggest trading partner for the past 12 years.

Trade has grown from \$8.36 billion in 1991 to more than \$685.28 billion last year, Widodo said.

Over the same period, two-way cumulative investment has also exceeded \$310 billion, making China the fourth largest source of foreign direct investment among all ASEAN dialogue partners, the Indonesian leader added.

"Mutual trust can be realized if we all respect international law," Widodo said. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Interpol election raises rights concerns about fair policing

BARBARA SURK, PARIS

HUMAN rights groups and Western lawmakers are warning that Interpol's powerful network of global police officers could end up under the sway of authoritarian governments, as the world police agency meets in Istanbul this week to elect new leadership.

Representatives of countries like China and the United Arab Emirates are bidding for top posts in the France-based policing body when its general assembly convenes in Turkey today.

Interpol says it refuses to be used for political ends. Critics contend that if these candidates win, instead of hunting down drug smugglers, human traffickers, war crimes suspects and alleged extremists, their countries would use Interpol's global reach to apprehend exiled dissidents and even political opponents at home.

Two candidates have drawn special criticism: Maj. Gen. Ahmed Naser al-Raisi, inspector general at the UAE's interior ministry, who is seeking to be elected Interpol's president for a four-year term; and Hu Binchen, an official at China's ministry of public security, expected to be up for a vacant spot on Interpol's executive committee.

A vote is expected Thursday. Interpol's president and executive committee set policy and direction. They also supervise the body's secretary-general who handles the day-to-day operations and

is its public face. That post is filled by German official Juergen Stock.

Al-Raisi is accused of torture and has criminal complaints against him in five countries, including in France, where Interpol has its headquarters, and in Turkey, where the election is taking place.

And Hu is backed by China's government, which is suspected to have used the global police agency to hunt down exiled dissidents and of disappearing its citizens.

Appointing Hu could be fraught with peril — including, possibly, for himself. Meng Hongwei of China was elected Interpol president in 2016, only to vanish on a return trip to China two years later. He is now serving a 13½-year jail sentence for corruption, charges that his wife Grace Meng, now living in France with her children under police protection, insisted in an interview with The Associated Press were trumped up and politically motivated.

Al-Raisi, already a member of Interpol's executive committee, contended in a LinkedIn post Saturday that the UAE prioritizes "the protection of human rights at home and abroad."

But a recent report by the MENA Rights Group describes routine rights violations by the UAE security system, in which lawyers, journalists and activists have been forcibly disappeared, tortured, arbitrarily detained, and intimidated for peacefully asking for basic rights and freedoms.

Matthew Hedges, a British doctoral student who was imprisoned in the UAE for nearly seven months in 2018 on spying charges, visibly struggled at a news conference in Paris as he described torture and months of being held in solitary confinement with no access to a lawyer.

"I was given a cocktail of medication ... to alter my mental state," Hedges said. "I am still dependent on most of this medication now. I would hear screams coming from other rooms, and there was evidence on the floor of torture, physical torture, beatings."

Hedges was pardoned by UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, but Emirati officials still insist Hedges was spying for Britain's MI6 intelligence agency, without offering definitive proof to support their claims. He, his family and British diplomats have repeatedly denied the charges.

"There is no way that a country's police force that is willing to do this to foreign citizens, let alone their own, should be given the honor of holding one of the highest positions at Interpol," Hedges said.

"Electing al-Raisi, the man responsible for what was happening to me, would be a slap in the face of justice and an embarrassment to other police forces who believe in upholding the rule of law."

He and fellow Briton Ali Issa Ahmad, a soccer fan who says he was tortured by UAE security agents during the 2019 Asia Cup soccer tour-

nament, have filed a lawsuit against al-Raisi and other Emirati security officials in the U.K. They also filed criminal complaints in Norway, Sweden and in France.

If French prosecutors decide to pursue the case, al-Raisi could be detained and questioned about alleged crimes committed in another country if he enters France or French territory.

Ahmad said he was attacked by plainclothes UAE security agents at a match between Iraq and Qatar in Abu Dhabi. He was wearing a fan T-Shirt with a Qatari flag at a time of bitter diplomatic dispute between Qatar and other Gulf countries.

He said the agents attacked him on the beach, threw him in a car, handcuffed him and put a plastic bag over his head. Using pocketknives, they carved the outlines of the Qatari flag on his chest as they cut out the emblem from his T-shirt, he said. Ahmad was jailed for two weeks and was released only after pleading guilty to the charge of "wasting police time." Police say he already was hurt when he presented himself to a police station in Sharjah.

Another torture complaint under the principle of universal jurisdiction is pending in France against al-Raisi, filed in June over the alleged torture of prominent Emirati human rights defender and blogger Ahmed Mansoor, currently serving a 10-year sentence for charges of insulting the "status and prestige of the UAE" and its leaders in social media posts.

A major concern for dissidents is potential abuse of the Interpol red notice — the equivalent of putting someone on a global "most-wanted" list, meaning a suspect could be arrested anywhere they travel.

Interpol insists that any country's request for a red notice is verified for compliance with its constitution, "under which it is strictly forbidden for the organization to undertake any intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character." But critics say Interpol has been used in the past by its member governments for political ends, and that this could get worse under new leadership.

Al-Raisi has run a slick campaign for the presidential post, traveling the world to meet lawmakers and government officials and boasting academic degrees from the U.K. and the U.S. and years of experience of policing. MDT/AP

this day in history

1963 JOHNSON TAKES OVER AS US PRESIDENT



Fifty-five year old Lyndon Baines Johnson begins his new job today as US president.

He was sworn in yesterday just two hours after an assassin shot President John F Kennedy in the head.

The former vice-president took his oath on the presidential plane at Andrew's Air Force Base.

The new first lady, Claudia Alta Taylor Johnson, witnessed the swearing-in together with the dead president's widow Jacqui Kennedy - her stocking still stained with her husband's blood.

The party flew to Washington with the assassinated president's coffin after the ceremony.

On arriving in Washington the president said, "I will do my best. That is all I can do."

President Johnson will address a joint session of Congress in three day's time where it is likely he will outline his future programme.

Commentators say there probably will be little immediate change in policy with a presidential election on the horizon.

The new president has come from humble beginnings to become one of the world's most powerful men.

The eldest of five children, he was born on a Texan farm in 1908 into a poor background.

Mr Johnson worked as a teacher before entering politics as a Texan congressman's secretary in 1931.

President Roosevelt soon spotted his talents and made him the director of the National Youth Administration in Texas in 1935.

After serving six successive terms in the House of Representatives, he entered the senate in 1948 and rapidly rose through the ranks gaining powerful posts.

He made his mark by single-handedly steering the Civil Rights Act through the senate in 1957 despite opposition from within his own party.

In 1960 Mr Johnson ran in the Democratic presidential elections which he lost to Kennedy who then invited him to be his running mate.

He is regarded by some commentators as a master of compromise with an able political brain.

Mr Johnson is married with two daughters, 19 year old Lynda and Lucy aged 16.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

President Lyndon Johnson was re-elected by a massive majority in 1964.

He gained widespread popularity for his programme of social reform introducing improvements in civil rights legislation, housing and medical care for the elderly.

The president began to lose support as a result of the continued involvement of US troops in Vietnam.

In 1968 he gave in to demands to stop the bombing of North Vietnam.

He then announced he would not stand for re-election and retired to his Texan ranch in 1969.

He published his memoirs, "The Vantage Point" in 1971.

He died in 1973.

YOUR STARS**ARIES**

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Today's skies touch on this story as the illuminating sun merges with the south node. This energy lowering aspect asks you to see what mental blockages are still standing in your way.

**TAURUS**

Apr. 20-May. 20

The south node's presence in Sagittarius has made it all important for you to determine what patterns have been blocking your way towards true intimacy in the past year and a half.

**GEMINI**

May. 21-Jun. 21

The illuminating sun merges with the south node today, guiding you directly towards what remains that requires transformation in your approach to forming intimate partnerships.

**CANCER**

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Be sure to think twice before you say something that might hurt your partner's feelings. However, you should be concerned about what they want in return.

**LEO**

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Today's skies see your ruling planet, the illuminating sun, merging with the south node, lowering energy levels and helping you acknowledge any other hurdles still looming in these arenas.

**VIRGO**

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

The south node's time in Sagittarius has helped you realize what needs releasing in this area, especially around your home life and emotional issues that stem from your early upbringing.

**LIBRA**

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

The illuminating sun spends the day merged with the south node, shining a light onto any remaining hurdles that need better dismantling in those departments.

**SAGITTARIUS**

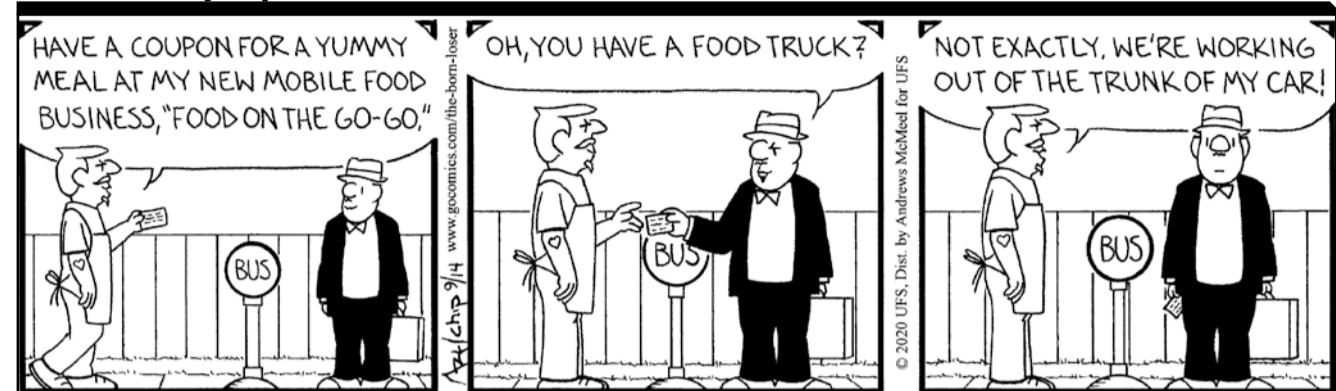
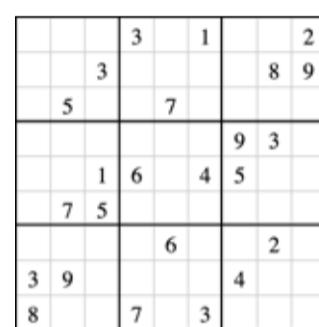
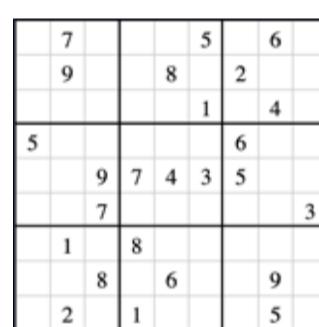
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Today's skies find the illuminating sun forming a conjunction with the south node, shining a fresh sense of awareness onto any remaining hurdles around your sense of self.

**AQUARIUS**

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

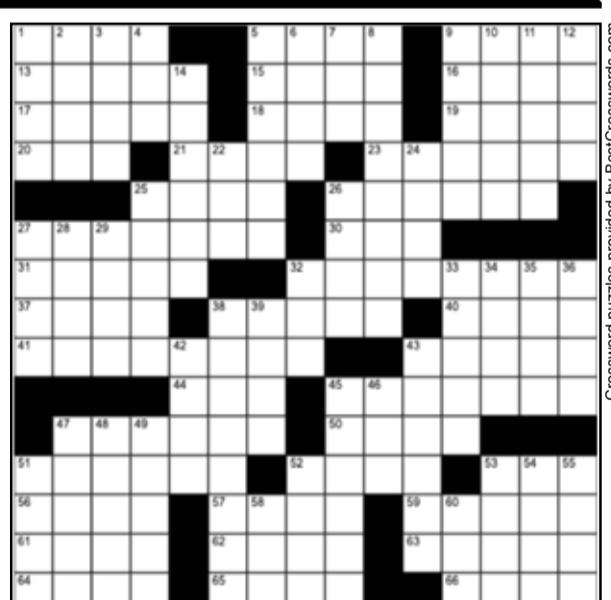
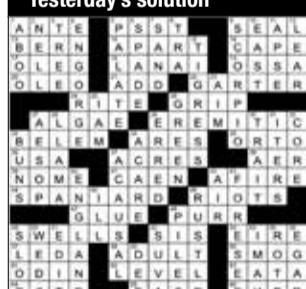
The south node's presence in Sagittarius has helped you release community ties that no longer serve you and let go of outgrown aspirations over the past year and a half.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**SUDOKU****EASY****EASY+****MEDIUM****HARD****CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Desperate; 5- "Goldberg Variations" composer; 13- Chew the scenery; 15- That's ____ haven't heard; 16- He sang about Alice; 17- Defense covering; 18- Lyric poems; 19- Psychic; 20- Meadow; 21- Disenactors; 23- Island off the SE coast of China; 25- Neighbor of Cambodia; 26- BB, e.g.; 27- Slowdown by workers; 30- "Wheel of Fortune" buy; 31- ____ of thousands; 32- Frozen dessert; 37- Gym counts; 38- Late bloomer; 40- Ticklish doll; 41- Brief summary; 43- For want of ____; 44- To the point; 45- Walked like a duck; 47- River of song; 50- Increases; 51- Arachnid; 52- "quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 53- Simile center; 56- Shoppe sign word; 57- Need a scratch; 59- Strictness; 61- Monetary unit of Cambodia; 62- Drop ____ (moon); 63- Capture; 64- Gas burner or Sicilian volcano; 65- Quick sharp bark; 66- Mex. miss;

DOWN: 1- What's the big ____?; 2- Hungary's Nagy; 3- Actress Downey; 4- DDE's command; 5- Abounding in trees; 6- Extremities; 7- Levi's rival; 8- Auditor; 9- Pesto herb; 10- ____ having fun yet; 11- Wedge; 12- Word with French or English; 14- Wide of the mark; 22- It's not free of charge; 24- A Baldwin brother; 25- Dogie catcher; 26- Step; 27- Mercury and Saturn, e.g.; 28- ____ -deucey; 29- ____ Crunch; 32- T.G.I.F. part; 33- Tears; 34- Airlines to Tel Aviv; 35- Gallic girlfriend; 36- Shape; 38- Acrimony; 39- Web locale; 42- Window piece; 43- Dangerous snakes; 45- Drift onto the beach; 46- Spots; 47- Cleft; 48- Broader; 49- Journalist ____ Rogers St. Johns; 51- Achy; 52- Earth Day subj.; 53- Petri dish gelatin; 54- Kind; 55- Domain; 58- It's past due; 60- Social connections;

Yesterday's solution

**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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FOR SALE

Taipa Village HKD 9,988,000
 Ref: 2111 6002 2,073 ft² 4 bed 3 bath 1 car

Rain Dance Property
 "We dance until it's SOLD!"

Hellene Gardens HKD 7,980,000
 Ref: 2109 6001 1,663 ft² 3 bed 2 bath 1 car

AD

AP PHOTO



ENERGY

PORTUGAL BECOMES FOURTH EU COUNTRY TO STOP USING COAL PLANTS

ENVIRONMENTAL activists are welcoming the end of electricity generation from coal in Portugal, though they said yesterday the possible conversion of the country's last coal-fired power plant into one that burns wood pellets would be a step in the wrong direction.

The Pego plant located 150 kilometers northeast of the Portuguese capital Lisbon stopped generating over the weekend, as Portugal became the fourth European Union country to stop burning coal to produce electricity. Belgium quit coal in 2016, and Austria and Sweden followed suit last year.

Portugal has no coal, oil or gas, which are all imported,

and has been investing heavily in green energy in recent decades.

"Coal's dire economics and public desire for climate action are driving faster and faster phase outs across Europe," said Kathrin Gutmann, campaign director for Europe Beyond Coal, which aims to ensure coal is phased out in Europe by 2030.

Coal power is the single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

"The challenge now is to ensure utilities do not make the mistake of replacing coal with fossil gas, or unsustainable biomass," Gutmann said in a statement.

But proposals for the continued use of Pego, which is out to tender, include biomass.

Portuguese Environment Minister João Pedro Matos Fernandes says other proposals include solar energy and electric vehicle production. Proposals must be presented by Jan. 17.

"Freeing ourselves from our biggest source of greenhouse gases is a momentous day for Portugal. But it is soured by the prospect of the plant being converted to burn forests," said Francisco Ferreira, head of the Portuguese environmental association ZERO.

"Ditching coal only to switch to the next worst fuel is clearly not an answer," he said. MDT/AP

TELECOM

Thailand's DTAC and True to merge, pursue tech businesses

MAJOR Thai telecoms companies DTAC and True Corp. plan to merge to pursue opportunities in the tech sector, their parent companies said yesterday.

Norway's Telenor Group, parent company of DTAC, and Charoen Pokphand (CP) Holding, the parent firm of True, notified the Stock Exchange of Thailand that their joint venture, Citrine Global Company, will make an offer for all shares of the two telecom companies.

The new company will be a leading telecommunications service provider able to speed up Thailand's adoption of digital technology, Telenor said in a statement.

"The telecom and technology sectors are key to enabling Thailand to move up the development curve and to create broad-based prosperity," it quoted C.P. Group CEO Suphachai Clearavanont as saying.

DTAC's share price jumped

9.1% yesterday, while True's soared 10.2%.

The newly merged company will apply to be listed on Thailand's stock exchange, the companies said.

Jørgen A. Rostrup, Telenor executive vice president and head of Telenor Asia said the plan reflected the company's commitment to the region.

"Our access to new technologies as well as the best human capital will be a vital contribution to the new company," Rostrup said.

He said the new company plans to raise venture capital funding to invest in promising digital startups focusing on new products and services for Thais.

The plan was approved by the companies' boards on Friday after a preliminary memorandum of understanding.

During the merger process DTAC, or Total Access Communication Plc., and True will operate as usual, the companies said. MDT/AP



CORPORATE BITS

Sands China honors over 3,700 employees for reaching 15, 10-year anniversaries



More than 1,500 Sands China team members are celebrating their 15-year company anniversaries in 2021, and over 2,200 are marking their 10-year

anniversaries.

Sands China Ltd. recently honoured the more than 3,700 team members at ceremonies at The Londoner Macao.

Those celebrating 15 years received an Honourable Service Award – a 15th anniversary souvenir box containing an anniversary certificate, special edition pin designed by a team member, and a commemorative tie or scarf. They also received a gift certificate for a special 15-year anniversary meal to enjoy with a loved one at their choice of selected Sands China restaurants.

The 10-year anniversary team members were recognised with a commemorative plaque and a gift certificate for a special 10-year anniversary meal.

SJM to roll out outreach vaccination center



SJM Resorts is set to organize "Take the shot, protect Macau" event in collaboration with the Health Bureau from November 25 to 27.

According to a statement, SJM will roll out a three-day public outreach vaccination center – the first of its kind in Macau –

providing vaccination services for eligible persons at the Grand Ballroom of Grand Lisboa Hotel.

SJM hopes that the convenient location of Grand Lisboa will make it easier for residents in a bid to increase vaccination rates and establish herd immunity.

In an effort to attract more local residents to get vaccinated, SJM is also launching a lucky draw.

More than 100 prizes are on offer, including an opportunity to win the latest digital devices. Fully vaccinated participants will also receive an exclusive SJM souvenir on first-come, first-served basis.

ROB HARRIS

THE eight stadiums — all within a 30-mile radius of Doha — are now largely complete. The 2022 World Cup has been preserved after fending off hostility from neighbors, corruption investigations and concerns about worker abuses. And a clock on the Corniche waterfront in the Qatari capital was unveiled on Sunday to count down one year until kickoff.

Expect another 12 months of pressure from rights groups — fueled by player protests — and indignation from some World Cup organizers.

"Qatar has been unfairly treated and scrutinized for a number of years," organizing committee CEO Nasser Al Khater said Saturday.

That scrutiny, though, has produced improvements to labor laws under the weight of criticism of working conditions since a reported \$200 billion of upgrades to the country's infrastructure began after the FIFA vote in December 2010.

"You take it into context of the region," Al Khater told reporters, "I think Qatar is a trailblazer right now with all the reform that it's done, whether it's on worker standards, accommodation standards, the introduction of minimum wage."

In some cases it was the World

FOOTBALL

A year to go, Qatar World Cup still feels heat of scrutiny

AP PHOTO



Cup organizing committee introducing changes before the country as a whole, but the enforcement of laws and conditions facing workers — particularly in the fierce summer heat — remains a source of concern for groups.

Qatar has not provided full details and data on the deaths of the migrant workers, particularly from South Asia, who are relied on to build the infrastructure across the country. Amnesty International has highlighted the need for deeper investigations into the cause of

deaths, the lack of a right to form unions and the need for all companies to comply with newer laws saying workers should be allowed to leave jobs without permission of the employer.

"There's criticism," Al Khater said. "There's work that needs to be done. There is, however, a lot of progress but unfortunately that has not been captured in reports such as Amnesty, Human Rights Watch."

Twelve countries, as well as Qatar as host, have so far secured qua-

lification for the 32-team event. Denmark has said its training kit in Qatar will feature critical human rights messages, ensuring the tournament will feature player activism.

The building work is starting to wind down.

"All eight stadiums for the World Cup are complete," Al Khater said.

Seven venues are now ready to stage matches, with Stadium 974 built using that number of shipping containers to be inaugurated later this month at the FIFA Arab Cup that is serving as a test event for the World Cup.

A 40-minute drive north takes fans to the 80,000-capacity Losail Stadium that will stage the final on Dec. 18, 2022 but is not ready for games. Nearby is also the Losail International Circuit where Formula One defending world champion Lewis Hamilton said ahead of Sunday's inaugural Qatar Grand Prix that the country still has a "long way to go" on ensuring equality.

Hamilton is wearing a rainbow-

-colored helmet in Qatar to draw attention to the anti-LGBTQ+ laws that World Cup organizers effectively suggest won't be enforced during the tournament.

"Everybody is welcome to come to Qatar and have an enjoyable time at the World Cup," Al Khater said. "They can come and enjoy their time here without fear of any sort of repercussions, it makes no difference to people's (sexual) orientation, religion, creed, race whatsoever."

Al Khater said any couple could share a hotel room.

"I don't know if this is a misconception," he said. "I don't know where you know, where you get this from. I mean, anybody is free to stay in a hotel, whether with their friend, with their partner."

The challenge for supporters could still be affording the trip. Even though it's a World Cup requiring no flights between games, demand for accommodation could be stretched in the tiny Gulf nation. MDT/AP

合夥人 PARTNERS:
 官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha °
 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °
 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °
 趙魯 Zhao Lu °
 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

大律師 ASSOCIATES:
 高文軒 Adelino Correia °
 羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues °
 白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
 馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
 陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo
 白穎怡 Icilia Berenguel
 冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
 馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins
 飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira °
 杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo
 宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção
 莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura
 安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos
 巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
 歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
 陳芷喬 Joana Chan
 顏曉蓉 Teresa Xiaorong Yan
 諸瑪莉 Maria Noras
 康靜雅 Viviana Hong
 梁淑嵐 Ana Leon
 黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong

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 張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong
 陳健雄 Eurico Chan
 吳霆鋒 Ng Teng Fong
 戴博晴 Tai Pok Cheng
 吳佩榆 Ng Pui U
法律專家 JURISTS:
 羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues
 茲彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo
 潘卡莉 Candice Pun
 陳子健 Kimi Chan
 伍福賢 Domingos Ng



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OPINION

China Daily

Editorial, China Daily

NEXT STAGE OF THEIR EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY BEGINS WITH CHINA, ASEAN UPGRADING TIES

Over the past 30 years, China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have jointly seized the opportunities of economic globalization to achieve leapfrog development together.

In this process, the two sides have jointly upheld the principles of extensive consultations, joint contributions and shared benefits. And in doing so, they have ensured regional stability, spearheaded economic integration in East Asia, and explored a bright path of good-neighborness and win-win cooperation.

Always looking out for each other, their relations have withstood and been strengthened by the tests of the times. They have stood with each other in amity and with sincerity through the Asian financial crisis, the international financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges, and with each new challenge forged a stronger sense that they form a community with a shared future.

This shared experience has been invaluable, as President Xi Jinping observed on Monday.

Speaking via video link at the Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of China-ASEAN Dialogue Relations, he called it a "shared asset" that the two sides "need to doubly cherish" and uphold over the long run.

The comprehensive strategic partnership that the two sides have established will help them do that. Announcing the upgrading of their relations as chairman of the summit, President Xi said that it will inject new impetus into their joint efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region and promote prosperity. The summit was thus not only a review of the past trials, tribulations and triumphs of their relations, but also a preview of the next stage of their extraordinary journey.

The concrete proposals Xi put forward at the meeting, which all tap into the development complementarity of the two sides. Ranging from more vaccines, funds and research to tame the novel coronavirus to more funding, freer trade and closer exchanges for future cooperation to pursue high-quality, sustainable and green development, they not only indicate the significance that China attaches to substantiating its comprehensive strategic partnership with the ASEAN member states, but also their shared responsibilities as the builders and guardians of the region's future.

The measures highlight that by making their cooperation more extensive and intensive they can build on what has been achieved and deliver real benefits and a greater sense of gain to peoples in the region and beyond.

As Xi noted, China was, is, and will always be ASEAN's good neighbor, good friend and good partner. Since the United States is trying to sow discord in the region, China and ASEAN should make joint efforts to safeguard stability in the South China Sea and make it a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation with no loopholes left for external troublemakers to take advantage of.

Working together to promote the peaceful development of the region will ensure that the region remains a friendly, beautiful and prosperous shared home for all peoples in the region.

US: MORE THAN 90% OF FED WORKERS GOT SHOTS BY DEADLINE

More than 90% of federal workers received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by today's deadline set by President Joe Biden.

Biden announced in September that more than 3.5 million federal workers were required to undergo vaccination, with no option to get regularly tested instead, unless they secured an approved medical or religious exemption.

A U.S. official said the vast majority of federal workers are fully vaccinated, and that a smaller number have pending or approved exceptions to the mandate.

In all, more than 95% of federal workers are in compliance with the Biden mandate, the official said, either by being vaccinated or having requested an exemption. Workers who are not in compliance are set to begin a "counseling" process that could ultimately result in their termination if they don't get a shot or secure an approved exception to vaccination.

The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the statistics because the official wasn't authorized to speak on the record before their official release today.



Young people line up for receiving shot of the Sinovac's vaccine at a Phnom Penh health center

AFTER SLOW STARTS, SOME ASIAN VACCINATION RATES NOW SOARING

WHEN Cambodia rolled out COVID-19 vaccines, lines stretched down entire streets and people left their shoes out to save their places as they sheltered from the sun. But three months into its campaign, just 11% of the population had received at least one dose. In far wealthier Japan, it took two weeks longer to reach that level.

Now both countries boast vaccination rates that rank among the world's best. They are two of several nations in the Asia-Pacific region that got slow starts to their immunization campaigns but have since zoomed past the United States and many nations in Europe.

The countries with high rates include both richer and poorer ones, some with larger populations and some with smaller. But all have experience with infectious diseases, like SARS, and strong vaccine-procurement programs, many of which knew to spread their risk by ordering from multiple manufacturers.

Most started vaccinating relatively late due to complacency amid low infection rates, initial supply issues and other factors. But by the time they did, soaring death tolls in the United States, Britain and India helped persuade even the skeptical to embrace the efforts.

"I did worry, but at the moment we are living un-

der the threat of COVID-19. There is no option but to be vaccinated," said Rath Srey mom, who rushed to get her daughter, 5-year-old Nuth Nyra, a shot once Cambodia opened its program to her age group this month.

Cambodia was one of the earlier countries in the region to start its vaccination program with a Feb. 10 launch — still two months after the United States and Britain began theirs. As elsewhere in the region, the rollout was slow, and by early May, as the delta variant started to spread rapidly, only 11% of its 16 million people had gotten at least their first shot, according to Our World in Data. That's about half the rate reached in the United States during the same timeframe and a third of the U.K.'s.

Today Cambodia is 78% fully vaccinated — compared to 58% in the U.S. It is now offering booster shots and looking at extending its program to 3- and 4-year-olds.

From the beginning, it has seen strong demand for the vaccine, with the rollout to the general public in April coinciding with a massive surge of cases in India, from which grim images emerged of pyres of bodies outside overwhelmed crematoria.

Prime Minister Hun Sen leveraged his close ties with Beijing to procure nearly 37 million doses from China,

some of which were donated. He declared last week that Cambodia's "victory of vaccination" could not have happened without them. The country also received large donations from the U.S., Japan, Britain and from the international COVAX program.

Still, it took time to get sufficient supplies, and many countries in the region that started their programs later struggled even more, especially when the region's major producer, India, suspended vaccine exports during its spring surge.

"Certainly getting the supply in place was really important for the countries that have done particularly well," said John Fleming, the Asia-Pacific head of health for the Red Cross. "Then there's the demand creation side — clearly this is about getting a buy-in from the population and also reaching out to marginalized groups."

Early in the pandemic, many Asian countries imposed strict lockdown and travel rules that kept the virus largely at bay. As vaccines rolled out in force elsewhere, those low rates sometimes worked against them, giving some people the impression that getting the shot wasn't urgent.

But when the virulent delta variant began ripping through the region, cases rose, encouraging people to sign up. MDT/AP



USA A joyous scene of marching bands and children dancing in Santa hats and waving pom-poms turned deadly in an instant, as an SUV sped through barricades and into a Christmas parade in suburban Milwaukee, killing at least five people and injuring more than 40 others. One video showed a woman screaming, "Oh my God!" repeatedly as a group of young dancers was struck yesterday [Macau time]. A father talked of going "from one crumpled body to the other" in search of his daughter. Members of a "Dancing Grannies" club were among those hit.



Belgium Tens of thousands of people demonstrated through central Brussels to protest reinforced COVID-19 restrictions imposed by the Belgian government to counter the latest spike in coronavirus cases. Many among the police estimate of 35,000 at the rally had already left for home when the demonstration descended into violence as several hundred people started pelting police, smashing cars and setting garbage bins ablaze. Police responded with tear gas and water cannons and sought to restore order as dusk settled on the Belgian capital.



Netherlands Dutch caretaker Prime Minister Mark Rutte condemned rioters in Rotterdam and other towns and cities across the Netherlands over the weekend as "idiots" and said police and prosecutors would bring them to justice. Rutte's comments came after coronavirus protests in the Netherlands and Brussels descended into violence amid simmering anger at lockdown measures being put in place in an attempt to rein in soaring rates of infection.