

THE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS WAREHOUSE TO KEEP ALL INFLAMMABLE TOXIC, AND DANGEROUS PRODUCTS WILL BE READY BY SEPTEMBER NEXT YEAR: WONG P4

SME CRISIS: 13% FEWER PRACTITIONERS ENGAGED IN CULTURAL SECTOR P2

JAPAN AND VIETNAM WILL COLLABORATE IN SPACE DEFENSE AND CYBERSECURITY TO COUNTER CHINA'S GROWING ASSERTIVENESS P6

China At least four people have died in the partial collapse of a workers' dormitory in the province of Jiangxi, state media report. Part of the six-story building in the province's Ganjiang New District tumbled down Monday evening, they said. The building housed workers who had originally worked at a pharmaceutical plant and most of the residents were elderly, according to state broadcaster CCTV and other outlets. The building was constructed in 1995 mainly out of prefabricated slabs and was considered to be poor quality.



Bulgaria A bus carrying people home to North Macedonia from a tourist trip to Istanbul crashed and caught fire in western Bulgaria yesterday, killing at least 45 people, authorities and local media said. The accident happened around 2 a.m. and there were children among the victims, authorities said. Seven people were taken to hospitals for treatment. The cause of the crash was not immediately confirmed, but it appeared that the bus hit a highway guard rail, crashed and caught fire.



South Korea Former military strongman Chun Doo-hwan, who seized power in a 1979 coup and brutally crushed pro-democracy protests before going to prison for misdeeds while in office, died yesterday. He was 90. Chun, who suffered in recent years from Alzheimer's disease and a blood cancer, was declared dead after a heart attack at his Seoul home. Chun's rule lasted until 1988 and remains for many South Koreans a time marked both by severe political repression, as well as rapid social and economic changes.

More on backpage

RULING ON THIN ICE

Court of Final Appeal rules against gaming concessionaire Wynn on Dore junket case, creating a precedent that could affect an industry's sector already walking on thin ice P2



RENATO MARQUES

RUMOR HAS IT

CASINO STOCKS SURGE AMID CHINA-HK BORDER REOPENING OPTIMISM

P3

TUI RULES AGAINST GAMING OPERATOR ON DORE CASE

RENATO MARQUES

RENATO MARQUES

THE Court of Final Appeal (TUI) has ruled in favor of the former gaming promoter Dore Entertainment Company Limited (Dore), finally deciding that the gaming concessionaire Wynn Macau Limited (Wynn Macau), from which Dore was operating, shares responsibility for the repayment of a debt resulting from the theft of a casino cage manager, who disappeared after stealing HKD700 million from Dore's accounts in September 2015.

The ruling from TUI, which is final, ascertains that the license owner (Wynn Macau) has responsibility for the operations of other companies or entities located within, and operating from, their premises.

The decision of TUI confirms the decision already reached by the Court of Second Instance (TSI), which in 2018 ruled that Wynn Macau was jointly liable for the repayment of some HKD6 million to former investors who had deposited money with Dore with the promise of profiting from high interest paid.

The case establishes an important legal precedent, as it determines the legal responsibility of the gaming concessionaires over the activities developed by gaming promoters (junkets).

In a 2020 interview, the former head of the Gaming Inspection and



Coordination Bureau (DIC), Paulo Martins Chan, had already noted as such after the decision of TSI.

"If the license is yours, the problem is yours. You have to find a way to control, according to the contract between the junket and the concessionaire. So, if one day, the court decides that the concessionaire is also responsible, the gaming operator will have to be more careful when selecting the junket, or they'll have to manage VIP gaming by themselves," Chan said to Macau Business.

This decision, considered to be of critical importance to the sector, seems to have been taken to a new level by the government, which, when presented the document for the Public Consultation on the new gaming law, made sure to include such a matter as one of the new provisions. The new law thus establishes the responsibility of license holders for all activities developed by junkets operating VIP rooms and other facilities related to high rollers.

Since this is not the only case of

this kind running in the courts of Macau, it is likely that the decision from TUI, taken on last November 19, which the Times had access to yesterday, would implicate the decisions of over a dozen of other cases, creating a legal precedent (case law) on the matter.

Earlier this year, the gaming law expert and former government advisor on the topic, António Lobo Vilela, described the decision from TUI on the matter as having "crucial implications for the industry" and for the junket sector, in an arti-

cle published in the March edition of the specialized magazine Gaming Law Review.

"If the Final Instance Court [TUI] affirms the Second Instance Court [TSI] decision, it might cause an unprecedented and materially adverse impact on the robustness that casino operators enjoy in Macau," Vilela wrote. "More, depending on the dimension, it may even imperil their existence. The worst-case scenario would be for gaming promoters, most of them incorporated as companies with the minimum registered share capital allowed by law and with no significant assets or no assets at all in Macau or elsewhere, to file for bankruptcy (if they do not have the means to, or do not want to, repay the amounts in custody), leaving to [...] casino operators the honoring of their obligations," he added.

Remarking on the significant impact of the decision now reached by TUI, Vilela recalled that Suncity Group alone, "is said to account for 50% of Macau's VIP market of USD16.904 billion [135.7b patacas] in 2019 i.e., roughly 25% of Macau's entire gaming market."

If the warnings of the two gaming experts seem to have been accounted for by the new law, which is now undergoing drafting procedures, a larger problem arises now with the current situation, that may severely hit a market that is already walking on thin ice due to the economic crisis resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and the prevention and control measures enforced at the borders, which have been preventing large-scale visitation to Macau for almost two years.

13% fewer practitioners engaged in cultural sector

ANTHONY LAM

ACCORDING to the latest statistical data released by the government's Statistics and Census Service, the city had 2,483 organizations in its cultural industry, equating to about 282 residents per each organization.

By cultural industry, the government is referring to four sub-industries, namely creative design, cultural exhibitions & performances, art collection and digital media.

Compared with the previous year, the city saw 28

more such organizations in 2020. Despite the rise, there were in fact 13.4% fewer practitioners engaging in related works, translating to a 4.8% drop in expenditure on remunerations. The industry spent about 2 billion patacas on salary and related costs.

During the early phase of the current pandemic, the industry generated one-third less revenue and more than a quarter less in contributions to the overall economy. However, it obtained a 0.4% greater share in the overall economy.



A 35.7% year-on-year drop in fixed asset values has been recorded as some organizations decided to reduce the scale of their

premises and equipment. All but one sub-industry, the creative design subindustry, recorded an increase in the number of

organizations. Increases ranged between one and 139, with art collection seeing the largest expansion.

Meanwhile, all subindustries recorded decreases in employment scale, and the drops were somewhat evenly distributed between 11% and 16%. Creative design saw 21 fewer organizations in the year, with 16% fewer employees and 20% less expenditure on remuneration.

Despite the reduction in employment scale, cultural exhibitions & per-

formances saw a 21.5% rise in expenditure on remuneration on top of a reduced yearly revenue amounting to 510 million patacas.

The 2020 data showed that the subindustry still could not stand on its own feet with ticketing income alone, which only accounted for 12% of their overall income.

In addition, the need for photography services seems to be on the rise as in 2020 the city saw three more photography entities with a 8.9% smaller employment scale.

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GAMING

Casino stocks surge amid China-HK border reopening optimism

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU casino stocks in New York surged by up to 6.19% yesterday as a result of speculation that Hong Kong's border will soon reopen.

This comes after a delegation of medical experts from mainland China visited the neighboring region for a four-day visit to the city's anti-pandemic facilities as both Hong Kong and Beijing are in discussions regarding the launch of quarantine-free travel between the two regions, which they reportedly seek to begin from "early December."

Previously, Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam said that it was the government's priority to relax border restrictions with mainland China in preference to opening up to international travel.

With the speculation, casino stocks of American-listed companies have risen, with Las Vegas Sands recording the largest surge at 6.19%.

This was followed by Melco Resorts and Entertainment, which had an increase of 5.3%.

Wynn Resorts, which recorded a surge of 4%, and MGM Resorts, which mostly relies on its American operations, at 0.59%.

Hong Kong is a crucial feeder



market for Macau visitors, as one out of five visitors in Macau normally hails from the neighboring region.

However, its tourists are currently required to complete a 14-day quarantine period upon arrival in Macau – despite the long-planned travel bubble the two regions aimed to create during the first half of this year.

On Monday, the government lengthened the required validity of negative nucleic acid for arrivals from Hong Kong to 72 hours.

Earlier this month, analysts from Sanford C. Bernstein noted

that a potential Hong Kong-China reopening would "allow Macau to drop its quarantine requirements for Hong Kong residents, which historically comprised [circa] 15%+ of Macau's gaming business."

"A reopening with Hong Kong would be a positive impact on Macau and successful reopening for HK/China travel could lead to continued easing of travel restrictions between China and Macau," analysts at the brokerage added.

China, Hong Kong and Macau's zero tolerance policy has meant strict border measures

imposed by the regions, which may also lead to a potential hurdle to recovery – particularly for the city's gaming sector.

This is largely in contrast with other countries, which have lifted their restrictions on movement and normalized Covid-19.

Meanwhile, as cited in a CNBC report, David Katz from Jefferies Analysts stated, "The Macau market could be close to bottoming with [the] current local Covid-19 outbreak in China failing to single-digit daily cases and a partial China-Hong Kong border opening possible before year-end."

FIBA BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT TO TAKE PLACE FROM TODAY

The FIBA 3x3 Macao Masters – Wynn Cup Greater Bay Area Qualifying Tournament will take place from today until Sunday, November 28, across three locations, the Ruins of Saint Paul, Barra Square, and Wynn Palace. The opening ceremony will be held today at 4 p.m. at the Ruins of Saint Paul, with a closing ceremony to be held on Sunday at the Wynn Palace at 6:30 p.m. The event is organized by the Sports Bureau and sponsored by Wynn Macau.

COVID-19 ITINERARY TRACKING APP REGISTERS OVER 30,000 DOWNLOADS

The newly released Macau health code application by the Health Bureau (SSM), which records movements, has already registered over 30,000 downloads. Officials stressed that the data would only be stored in the users' mobile device for 28 days, after which period it will be deleted. Dr Leong Oi Sam of SSM's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention said the bureau is looking into dividing a venue into different areas each with their own QR code. The suspension or cancellation of the website version of the health code is being considered.

OCTOBER CPI RISES SLIGHTLY

The Composite CPI for October rose by 0.91% to 102.84, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) showed. The increment was attributed to higher gasoline prices, higher charges for eating out, and increasing airfares and wages for domestic helpers. The price was partially offset by lower residency rentals and lower pork prices. Among the various sections of goods and services, the price indices of Transport and Household Furnishings & Services went up, whereas that of Communication and Clothing & Footwear fell.

Young entrepreneurs explore development in Shunde

A delegation of young entrepreneurs from the Youth Committee of the Industrial Association of Macau have paid a visit to nearby Shunde City to gain exposure to the development of diversified industries.

During the visit, Fong Son Kin, director-general of the association, commented that the current pandemic has put the weakness of Macau as a focused economy in the spotlight.

He said that multifaceted development is especially needed and

urgent now, so he hopes that the young entrepreneurs can cultivate a broad and brave mindset in developing Macau, while absorbing the experience of Shunde in manufacturing and scientific innovation.

Both Macau and Shunde are UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy.

Meanwhile, Lao Hong Fai, deputy director-general of the association, complimented Shunde's achievements in manufacturing small home electric appliances. Lao ex-

pressed hope that the youth entrepreneurs could utilize these experiences back home.

Wong Tim Fok, director of the committee, stressed that the two cities have ample opportunity for collaboration, such as using Macau as the conduit for selling electric appliances to African and Lusophone countries. Large enterprises may also consider establishing headquarters in Macau or Hengqin so as to explore the Lusophone market, the director suggested. **AL**

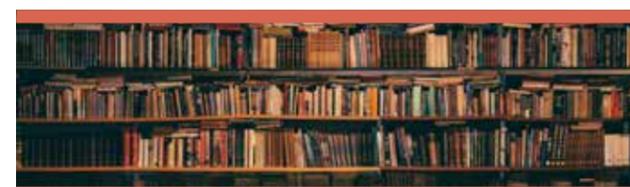
LITERARY FESTIVAL TO TAKE PLACE IN DECEMBER

STAFF REPORTER

THE 10th edition of the Macau Literary Festival will be held from December 3 to 5 at Casa Garden, with its opening theme of Deolinda da Conceição and the role of women in Macau's literature and society.

On the centenary of the Macanese writer's birth, The Script Road is bringing writers, academics, and translators to the event's main stage to celebrate her life and work, presenting a performance built around her book Cheong-sam: a production of the experimental theater group "Artistry of the Wind Box" will be performed on December 4 and 5 at the Portuguese Bookshop Gallery.

Among the writers participating in the 10th edition of The Script Road, a few will



be presenting books from abroad, including the Angolan writer José Eduardo Agualusa, who will talk about *Paraíso e Outros Infernos* (Paradise and Other Hells), a book of chronicles that will be published in Chinese and English by the Macau Literary Festival.

Meanwhile, the Cai Fora theater group will perform a play inspired by the book *The Lost Soul*, written by Polish author Olga Tokarczuk. There will be six performances, all held at the Portuguese Consul's Official Residence, Bela Vista Building.

Apart from art perfor-

mances, there will also be concerts taking place, as well as visual arts. In the building where Art For All Association is based, a concert will take place with the participation of the band Work Tone and vocalists Gabriel and Maria Monte.

Two exhibitions will be inaugurated at Casa Garden on the festival's opening day, one being organized by Macau Closer Magazine which brings together the winning works of the "Photography Competition: A Strange Familiarity." The other exhibition will show a photography and writing project.

ID: CHINESE OLYMPIC MEDALISTS MAY VISIT CITY MID-DECEMBER

Following communications with the General Administration of Sport, while details are unconfirmed, Macau residents may expect to see Chinese Olympics athletes in the city in December. Pun Weng Kun, president of the Sports Bureau (ID), disclosed yesterday on the sidelines of an event. Pun added that he believes the national athletic delegation's visit would promote patriotism across the city, while advancing a local focus on sports and exercise. The delegatory tour has taken place multiple times after past Olympic Games. Apart from city tours, mainland athletes will also conduct exchange sessions with local athletes and students.

UM TEAM WINS AWARD IN BIG DATA COMPETITION

The Smart Energy Research Group of the State Key Laboratory of Internet of Things for Smart City, University of Macau (UM), won an Award of Excellence and a Best Mentor award at the 2021 X-Game Shanghai New Energy Vehicle Big Data Competition. The UM team was comprised of PhD student Kong Lingming and master's student Zhang Jinxin, as well as assistant professor Zhang Hongcai and associate professor Dai Ningyi, who acted as their mentors. According to a statement, total of 550 teams formed by 754 students from 179 universities around the world, including Tsinghua University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and Tongji University, participated in the online preliminaries.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS WAREHOUSE TO BE READY BY SEPTEMBER 2022

RENATO MARQUES

The hazardous materials warehouse in which the government plans to keep all inflammable, toxic, and dangerous materials will be ready by September next year, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, reaffirmed at the Legislative Assembly (AL) on Monday.

Wong was at the AL presenting and discussing the new law that will regulate such materials as part of the relevant bill's first reading when he was questioned on the matter by lawmakers.

In response to an inquiry from lawmaker Ella Lei as to when the new warehouse would be ready, Wong said, "We expect [the storage] to be completed by September 2022 and, once the necessary conditions are guaranteed, we will proceed with the transfer [of the substances currently dispersed over seven different locations] all to this facility, first to a temporary store, and then in a second phase to an area of permanent storage."

The Secretary also admitted that there is an ongoing judicial case regarding the matter, but explained, "It [does not have to] do with the land retrieval by the government, so it won't affect



the progress of the construction of the infrastructure."

The government also announced that the new, and soon-to-be only, facility in Macau suitable for receiving such materials would be located in the Ka Ho area in the building that was previously occupied by the community center for drug rehabilitation, "Teen Challenge".

The new hazardous materials warehouse will be located adjacent to the new Coloane Prison, the construction of which is also ongoing.

In a session in which the warehouse and its operation was the subject of most questions, instead of the law itself, Wong also explained that the management of the new facility would

most likely be assigned to a private company.

"For the time being, we are more inclined towards the idea of attributing the management to a private entity. This is because, on the one hand, the government cannot handle everything, and on the other, attributing the management to a private [entity] will benefit from this entity's expertise in dealing with these types of materials," the Secretary explained.

He also clarified that the storage of materials would be subjected to a fee to be paid by the owners of the materials, although the amount, that should be related to the space occupied, has not yet been fixed.

The new law, which was

approved unanimously upon its first reading, aims to regulate the production, transport, storage, and use of hazardous substances. The legal regime also creates a new crime of the "possession, producing or [use of] prohibited dangerous substances" with a penal framework providing for up to three years of imprisonment.

Fines are also set for the misuse, mishandling or illegal storage of the materials and they can range from 2,000 patacas up to 500,000 patacas if the illegality is committed by a person, or up to 1 million patacas if the offence is attributed to the responsibility of a company.

The government initiated the legal development of the regime as well as the idea of building specific facilities for the storage of hazardous materials after the central government issued guidelines to every province on the topic in the aftermath of the explosions that occurred in a chemical factory located in an area of the Port of Tianjin, on September 12, 2015. According to official reports, the explosion caused the death of 173 people as well as the equivalent of more than 8 billion patacas of estimated economic loss.

Merging of Education Funds does not aim at cuts: Ao leong

RENATO MARQUES

The merging of the different education funds into one single and autonomous fund would not aim to promote cuts to government funding of educational institutions, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao leong assured the Legislative Assembly (AL) on Monday.

Ao leong was at the plenary session to present and discuss the provision of the new bill to amend Law No. 9/2006, the non-tertiary education framework law, and Law No. 10/2017, regarding the tertiary education system, and was questioned by lawmakers on the matter.

According to Ao leong's presentation, the amendments to the laws would include the merging of three existing funds within the education field into a single autonomous fund, which she emphasized would not imply any reduction in the investment of the government in the education sector, but, instead, a rationalization of resources.

Another of the changes would include the merging of the Higher Education Council and the Non-ter-



tiary Education Council into just one entity to be in charge of all education levels.

This comes after last year's merger of the two previously extant Bureaus, which are now under the Education and Youth Development Bureau.

Ao leong also confirmed that the specific competencies and works of the Non-tertiary and Higher education levels would be catered for, as they would still be separated at the Department level.

Still, the explanation of the Secretary did not convince the lawmakers

elected by the leader of party New Hope, José Pereira Coutinho, and Che Sai Wang, who expressed concerns regarding the mechanisms of control over public money under the new regime.

The bill was approved upon its first reading for the majority of the lawmakers, with only the two previously mentioned abstaining, calling for a better definition and explanation of the topic during the discussion that will follow at the AL Standing Committee, where the law will be analyzed in more detail.

CRIME

MAN ARRESTED FOR LUXURY PRODUCTS SCAM

STAFF REPORTER

A man has been arrested by the Judiciary Police (PJ) for allegedly scamming others out of millions, claiming he and his wife were selling luxury products at a discounted price. Police are still attempting to locate his wife.

The suspects contacted multiple victims using various forms of communication, such as mobile instant communication applications, as well as by impersonating staff of duty-free shops, casino VIP rooms, and luxury stores.

The couple made victims believe they had the ability to sell countless luxury products at promotional prices, namely watches, skincare products, and new smartphones, as well as offering more favorable rates for currency exchange.

cy exchange.

According to the PJ's spokesperson, Chong Kam Leong, the suspects would only deliver half of the victims' order after they transferred the money, and would defer the shipment of the other half with excuses.

"The suspect had transferred the money he scammed to the mainland to other victims, creating the impression that he was capable of ordering the products or conducting currency exchange," said Chong, as cited in a TDM report.

"It's also [been] discovered that the suspect, surnamed Yang, had transferred the money to different mainland bank accounts after receiving it via AliPay, to cover up the source and the illegal intent, and evade our bureau's investigation," he added.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

GEG Proactively Supports Local SMEs' Growth and Development

As one of Macau's leading corporations, GEG is committed to contributing to the city's economic diversification by providing unwavering support to nurture and develop local SMEs, Made-in-Macau brands and young entrepreneurs. Considering local SMEs as its key partners, GEG prioritizes them in business cooperation and was the first gaming operator to launch a SME partnering program in 2015 to assist local traditional F&B brands in their modernization and corporatization. Currently, over 90% of GEG's total expenditure on goods and services come from Macau enterprises and SMEs. This year, GEG continued to help local SMEs flourish by launching various initiatives and other inspirational activities aimed at propelling the development of Macau's different industries.

PLATFORM FOR UNIQUE EVENTS

Recently, Broadway Food Street at Broadway Macau successfully concluded the Chestnut Festival, a long-standing and traditional Macanese festival which was inscribed on the Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage by the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macau SAR Government in 2020. The event's organizer, Best Concepts Planning Limited – a relatively small event production enterprise with only five staff members, attributed the festival's success to the tremendous support it had received from GEG. "We approached GEG in hopes of collaboration and were so delighted to have received their swift and active response. GEG not only sponsored a fabulous venue at Broadway Food Street, but also provided us with equipment and technical support. Broadway Food Street is the perfect venue with its reputation as one of Macau's most popular gourmet destinations equipped with top-notch facilities. In addition, GEG also helped us

with the event's promotion which further increased the public's awareness of the event, it also offered many professional and practical suggestions to ensure the event run smoothly," said Mr. James Sun, a representative from Best Concepts.



The two-day Chestnut Festival was the biggest of its kind ever held in Macau, featuring traditional folk dances, Macanese music performances, food and beverages, culinary and handicraft workshops, etc. It was also a platform which GEG curated for the 25 local SMEs from the F&B, retail and cultural creative sectors to exhibit their unique cultural products and cultures. Along with the existing SMEs at Broadway Food Street, they created synergies in further promoting Macau's charm as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.

Since 2015, GEG has been inviting local retail and F&B SMEs to operate in the Broadway Food Street, and to help them build their brands whilst offering essential professional advisory services and technical support. At present, close to 60% of GEG's SME partners are renowned and traditional brands in Macau. Through its active support and contribution, GEG has created win-win outcomes for both itself and their SME partners, and received positive feedbacks from the society.



SUPPORTING INITIATIVE IN FACILITATING START-UPS

GEG supports the Macau SAR Government's directions to develop Macau as the service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. Recently, GEG supported the inaugural "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition (Macau) for Technology Enterprises from Brazil and Portugal" organized by the Economic and Technological Development Bureau of the Macau SAR Government for the purpose of assisting young entrepreneurial winners on their endeavors as well as curating opportunities for them to integrate into the national development. The competition introduced 20 outstanding projects from the two Portuguese-speaking countries, which competed in various aspects such as big health, green environmental protection, and artificial intelligence. The competition also highlighted Macau's position as an important pillar in facilitating the development of the Greater Bay Area into an international innovation and technology hub and the construction of a scientific and technological innovation corridor.

RIDING THROUGH CHALLENGES OF PANDEMIC

Amid the new normal of the pandemic, GEG has been supporting local SMEs



to overcome difficulties through different initiatives, including a HK\$100 million subscription of the SMEs themed COVID-19 Impact Alleviation Social Bonds issued by Bank of China Limited, Macau Branch. Recently, GEG cooperated with the Macao Chamber of Commerce (MCC) and the General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macau (UGAMM) on donating over 400 boxes of sanitizers to SMEs in the downtown districts. The supplies were hand-delivered by GEG Volunteer Team members in hopes of spreading love and care to the community through concrete action. Mr. Chan Ka Leong, President of the Board of Directors of UGAMM, said, "GEG's donation of anti-pandemic supplies has helped strengthen the community's preventive work. It has also enhanced the overall prevention awareness among SMEs, and supported Macau's economic recovery." Last year, GEG and MCC also co-organized the "Healthy and Fun Carnival", which provided a total of 70 booths for more than 100 different local SMEs to participate in the Carnival free of charge, with aims to boost domestic consumption and assist Macau with its steady economic recovery.



MATCH FOR THE FUTURE

Meanwhile, GEG continued to work closely with local SMEs in elevating their competitiveness through mutual development. Recently, GEG collaborated with MCC, the Macau Youth Entrepreneur Association, and the Macau Young Entrepreneur Incubation Centre on hosting the "GEG SME Series: Local SME Online Business Matching Session". Such online session allowed local SMEs to explore business opportunities conveniently, and attracted the participation of over 60 SME representatives. During the online business matching sessions, local SMEs met with representatives from GEG's Procurement Department to gain a more in-depth understanding of each other's business and to explore potential partnership opportunities.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY MAKING A COMMITMENT



Beijing protests passage of US destroyer through Taiwan Strait

CHINA yesterday protested the passage of a U.S. Navy destroyer through the Taiwan Strait, calling it a deliberate move to undermine stability in the region.

The U.S. Navy said in a statement the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Milius "conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit" on Tuesday "in accordance with international law."

It said the ship's transit through the strait "demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."

"The United States military flies, sails, and operates anywhere international law allows," said the statement posted on the website of the 7th Fleet.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said U.S. warships have been "flexing muscle and stirring up trouble in the Taiwan Strait repeatedly in the name of freedom of navigation."

"This is not a commitment to freedom and openness, but a deliberate attempt to disrupt and undermine regional peace and stability," Zhao told reporters at a daily news briefing.

U.S. Navy ships routinely transit the Taiwan Strait, which lies in international waters and is a main conduit between the South China Sea and northern waters used by China, Japan, South Korea and others.

Beijing's protest follows Taiwan's introduction of upgraded F-16V fighter jets into its air force to help counter the threat from the increasing number of incursions by Chinese warplanes into the airspace around the island.

China claims the self-ruling island of Taiwan as its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary. The U.S. has only unofficial relations with Taiwan, but provides the island with defensive weapons and is legally bound to regard threats to the island as matters of "grave concern." MDT/AP



Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian

JAPAN, VIETNAM LOOK TO SPACE AND CYBER DEFENSE AGAINST CHINA

JAPAN and Vietnam yesterday signed an agreement to cooperate in space defense and cybersecurity, as the two Asian nations rapidly step up their military ties amid concerns over China's growing assertiveness.

Japan's Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi told reporters that the space and cyberspace agreement aimed to address a "strong sense of urgency" over activities in the Indo-Pacific region that challenge the existing international order, indicating China without identifying any country by name.

Kishi said talks with his Vietnamese counterpart, Phan Van Giang, had taken "defense cooperation between the two countries to a new level."

Tokyo regularly protests the Chinese coast guard's presence near the Japanese-controlled Senkaku islands, which China also claims and calls Diaoyu. Japanese officials say Chinese vessels routinely violate Japanese territorial waters around the islands, sometimes threatening fishing boats.

Kishi also said he raised concerns over the recent escalation of joint military activities by China and Russia near



Vietnam's Defense Minister General Phan Van Giang (left) attend a signing ceremony with Japan's Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi (right) in Tokyo

Japanese waters and airspace.

Kishi said a fleet of two Chinese H-6 fighters and two Russian Tu-95 flew from the Sea of Japan to the East China Sea and to the Pacific Ocean, triggering Japanese Self-Defense Force jets to scramble.

Chinese and Russian warplanes previously flew together around Japan twice in 2019, he added.

During the talks, Kishi expressed Japan's strong opposition to "any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by

coercion or any activities that escalate tensions," referring to China's increasingly assertive activity in the East and South China Sea.

Japan is committed to protecting a "free and democratic" Indo-Pacific region and cooperating with the United States and other "like-minded countries that share universal values," Kishi said.

Tuesday's deal comes only two months after the two countries struck a deal allowing Japan to provide defense equipment

and technology to Vietnam. Details of the transfer of specific equipment, possibly naval vessels, are still being discussed.

Vietnam is the 11th nation with which Japan has signed a defense equipment and technology transfer deal as Tokyo seeks to support its own struggling defense industry. Japan is also looking to expand military cooperation beyond its longtime ally the U.S., and has signed similar agreements with Britain, Australia, the Philippines and Indonesia. MDT/AP

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

HONG Kong authorities will set up polling stations at the border with mainland China to allow Hong Kongers living there to vote during upcoming legislative elections, the city's leader said yesterday.

During the Dec. 19 legislative elections, registered Hong Kong permanent residents living in the mainland will be able to cross the border into the city to vote at the special polling stations, Carrie Lam said.

After voting, they must return immediately and will not need to undergo coronavirus quarantines in mainland China, Lam said at a regular news conference.

"Currently, there are still people stranded on the mainland, they can't come back to work or study, and they won't be able to come back to Hong Kong to vote (without these measures)," she said.

HONG KONG

AUTHORITIES TO ALLOW RESIDENTS OF MAINLAND TO VOTE IN ELECTION



Currently, those who travel from Hong Kong to mainland China must undergo at least 14 days of quarantine. Travelers from mainland China to Hong Kong can enter the city without any quarantine if they have not traveled to any high-risk areas on the mainland.

The legislative elections are the first under revamped election laws in Hong Kong aimed at ensuring that only "patriots" loyal to Beijing

run the city. The number of directly elected seats has been reduced and many lawmakers will be selected by a largely pro-Beijing committee.

Hong Kongers living in the mainland are considered more likely to support pro-Beijing candidates. The measure could also boost voter turnout, which is widely expected to be lower this year following the electoral reforms.

People who wish

to vote at the special polling stations must register ahead of time, Lam said.

"The whole voting process will be put in a closed loop. Voters who visit these special polling stations cannot leave the area of the polling station, they cannot go into the community," she said.

Separately, Lam said a mainland delegation consisting of experts on COVID-19 had visited Hong Kong for four days to prepare for the possible opening of the border.

A second meeting discussing joint anti-epidemic efforts will take place Thursday in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen, which borders Hong Kong.

"I do look forward to a possible announcement of opening of borders in an orderly manner as soon as possible,"

she said.

Hong Kong authorities have been pushing for mainland China to allow quarantine-free travel from Hong Kong to the mainland. Hong Kong has implemented strict quarantine rules for overseas travelers arriving in the territory as it seeks to prevent new outbreaks.

The city has one of the strictest quarantine policies in the world, with travelers returning from abroad having to serve up to 21 days of quarantine in government-designated hotels.

Lam urged Hong Kong residents to get vaccinated because the city has yet to reach a vaccination rate of 70% for first doses.

"I appeal to members of the public to perform their civic duties for the sake of an early resumption of normal activities," Lam said. MDT/AP

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Philippine supply boats reach marines at China-guarded shoal

THE Philippine navy successfully transported food supplies to marines guarding a disputed shoal in the South China Sea yesterday, a week after China's coast guard used water cannons to force the supply boats to turn back, sparking outrage and warnings from Manila, officials said.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the two wooden boats carrying navy personnel reached the marines stationed on a military ship at Second Thomas Shoal without any major incident. President Rodrigo Duterte expressed disgust on Monday in a regional summit led by Chinese President Xi Jinping over last week's Chinese blockade of the supply boats.

However, Lorenzana said that while the Philippine navy personnel were unloading supplies from the boats, a Chinese coast guard ship deployed a rubber boat with three personnel who took pictures and video of the Filipino forces. "I have communicated to the Chinese ambassador that we consider these acts as a form of intimidation and harassment," Lorenzana said.

He said the resupply boats reached the shoal without a Philippine military escort in accordance with a request by China's ambassador to Manila, who assured him over the weekend that the boats

AP PHOTO



would not be blocked again. But a Philippine military plane flew over as the supply boats arrived around noon at the remote shoal, which has been surrounded by Chinese surveillance ships in a years-long territorial standoff.

The Philippines says the shoal is in its internationally recognized exclusive economic zone, but China insists it has sovereignty over the waters and has the right to defend it.

Officials said the Philippine government conveyed its "outrage, condemnation and protest of the incident" to China after two Chinese coast guard ships blocked the two Filipino boats on Nov. 16 and a third coast guard ship sprayed high-pressure streams of water on the boats, which were forced to abort their resupply mission.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. warned China

that the supply boats are covered by a mutual defense treaty with the United States. Washington later said it was standing by the Philippines "in the face of this escalation that directly threatens regional peace and stability," and reiterated "that an armed attack on Philippine public vessels in the South China Sea would invoke U.S. mutual defense commitments" under the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian responded to the Philippine protests by saying that China's coast guard had upheld Chinese sovereignty after the Philippine ships entered Chinese waters at night without permission.

Duterte, who has nurtured closer ties with China, did not comment on China's action until Monday, when he raised the issue at a meeting of leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China, using the Philippine name for the shoal.

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

Xi did not respond directly to Duterte's remarks but gave an assurance that China will not bully its smaller neighbors or seek dominance over Southeast Asia, diplomats said. **MDT/AP**

AD

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AP PHOTO



Ibrahim Rasool, Afghan refugee, formerly a FIFA-licensed futsal referee

MIGRATION

Afghan referee sees no fair play in EU border policies

EDVIN ZULIC, VELIKA Kladusa

Ibrahim Rasool loved his job as a referee because of sportsmanship and fair play. But the 33-year-old from Afghanistan says there's nothing fair about the way the European Union treats people flocking to its borders in search of a better life.

Rasool told The Associated Press that police in Croatia ignored pleas from a pregnant woman and families with small children and instead deported him and 16 others back to Bosnia when they crossed into the EU country this month.

Rasool provided video that he said he had filmed inside a Croatian police van and in a forest at Croatia's border with Bosnia. Croatian police insulted the people who tried to make it in and told them to go back to Afghanistan, Rasool said.

Croatian police have not responded to an AP request seeking information about the alleged Nov. 10 border incident.

"Police didn't (pay) attention to kids, to woman pregnant, (to) women, nobody," Rasool said. "They show (us) gun, (say) 'Don't

move. Stop. We are police.'"

The video provided by Rasool showed people crouched inside a fenced, moving van that included women and small children. In the forest video, men are carrying an apparently pregnant woman in a blanket. Neither video could be independently verified.

Rasool said Croatian police told the group there is no space in the EU for people from Afghanistan, referring to the migrants as "animals" and "dirty people."

Croatian police have faced multiple accusations of pushing back migrants and refugees and using violence to do so. The European Court of Human Rights last week ruled against Croatia in a 2017 pushback case after which a 6-year-old Afghan girl was killed by a train.

Although Croatian authorities last month were forced to suspend three special police officers who were filmed hitting migrants with batons while forcing them out of Croatia, they have rejected accusations of a systematic, widespread abuse of migrants in the border zone.

Rasool and his group have been stuck in a makeshift camp near the Bosnian border town of Velika Kladusa.

The camp has no facilities other than improvised tents but Rasool said it was still better than official migrant camps "because we are free."

Upon leaving Afghanistan four years ago, Rasool first went to Iran, then to Turkey and Greece. He came to Bosnia two months ago through Albania and Montenegro after staying in Greece for more than three years. Despite being turned back repeatedly at the Croatian border, Rasool and his fellow migrants will try again to cross as soon as they can.

Once they reach Croatia, migrants seek to go to Italy or Slovenia before moving on toward Western Europe's wealthiest countries. Several thousand people remain stuck throughout the Balkans looking for a chance to reach the EU.

"We cannot stay in Bosnia because the weather is going (to be) very cold" soon, said Rasool.

Rasool provided the AP with copies of his FIFA-approved referee certificates and photos from some of the hundreds of futsal matches he handled in Afghanistan. He said he fled his home country over disagreements with the management of the

Afghan football association.

"I want to continue my job, I want to be back to my normal life," he said. "It doesn't matter which country."

Futsal is a form of soccer played on a much smaller, hard court and mainly indoors.

While in Greece, Rasool coached refugee teams, he said. In Bosnia, he could be seen playing soccer with children and other men in the camp. Returning home to Afghanistan is not an option, especially after NATO troops pulled out and the Taliban took over again.

But Rasool said his hopes of a brighter future in the West have been shaken badly by the treatment at the Croatian border. The fourth time he tried to cross into Croatia, police took all his money and laughed at him and others.

"They stole from refugees," he said. "They think we are animals, not human."

He said the Taliban, Croatia and other EU governments are all playing with people's lives.

"If European Union accept this" stance by Croatian border police, then it is no better than the Taliban, he said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

2005 PUBS OPEN 24 HOURS



Round-the-clock drinking in England and Wales is now a reality after new licensing laws came in force.

More than 1,000 pubs, clubs and supermarkets have been granted 24-hour licences to sell alcohol, according to government figures.

Around 40% of premises applied to vary their licences by either extending their opening by an hour or two or by offering late food and entertainment.

It has led to fears disorder will put more pressure on police and hospitals.

But Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell told BBC Newsnight the new law was necessary "to make it possible for the vast majority of people who drink but who never get into trouble to have more freedom as to when they drink".

"But also, to give the police the powers that they need to tackle the problem we have as a country of alcohol-related crime and violence," she said.

Meanwhile, Home Secretary Charles Clarke said recorded crime was set to rise as police resources targeted alcohol-fuelled offences.

"We are determined to tackle alcohol-related violence and anti-social behaviour in all its forms and crack down on those who encourage it by irresponsible re-tailing," he said.

Britain's most senior police officer said he was worried his force's resources would be "stretched", particularly in the early hours of the morning.

Met Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair said: "I have made clear that I see anybody who wants a drink at four in the morning as a special interest group and those who are making profits out of it are going to have to pay."

BBC research suggests that around one-third of all licensed clubs, pubs and shops in England and Wales will be able to open for longer under the new laws.

Of the 375 licensing authorities surveyed, 301 responded in full. BBC News 24 researchers found 60,326 outlets can sell alcohol for longer.

But only 1,121, including 359 pubs and clubs, are getting 24-hour licences.

The survey results came after ministers warned the introduction of more relaxed licensing laws on Thursday was likely to lead to an increase in alcohol related arrests.

Meanwhile, the chairman of J D Wetherspoon, Tim Martin, has said up to 90% of his pubs - of which there are over 650 - will stay open for one or two hours later as a result of the new licensing laws in England.

Mr Martin told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "Whether we make a buck nobody knows for sure."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The first weekend after the change in licensing laws did not bring the predicted wave of alcohol-fuelled violence and debauchery.

A police leader warned that 24-hour drinking would lead to a reduction in the number of police recruits, because they would not want to spend all their time dealing with binge drinkers.

There were also warnings that the lack of late-night public transport and other facilities would lead to an increase in disorder.

But police said the full implications would not be clear for at least six months.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You're beginning to see the light again, Aries. After a tough couple of weeks of re-examining the wounds around your approach to intimate relationships, you're ready to witness your life from a new perspective.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 The moon prowls through lazy Leo and reaches out to the self-concerned sun and expressive Mercury, making it an ideal day to lay low and involve yourself in important, healing conversations.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Mercury's time here works to send all of your focus on the current relationship stories stirring in your world, so prepare yourself to speak your truth with those you're closest to in weeks to come.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 It's an ideal time to focus on mind-clearing meditations or stream of consciousness writing - anything to remove stuck feelings from standing in your way.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Meanwhile, the nurturing moon treks through your sign and aligns with the sun and Mercury, offering an easy flow of energy towards romantic pursuits.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Mercury transitions from sharp-tongued Scorpio and moves forward into reflective Sagittarius, where it works to direct your focus on home and family issues in the weeks to come.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 The playful Leo moon aligns with the energy-giving sun and chatty Mercury, making it an ideal for tackling important conversations that need to run smoothly.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 You may feel parts of your personality starting to shift under Wednesday's cosmic landscape, Scorpio. Expressive Mercury departs from your sign and moves forward into fiery Sagittarius today.

SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 The show-stopping Leo moon links up with the life-giving sun and chatty Mercury, making it an ideal day to make your skills visible and known to others.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 The big-hearted Leo moon reaches out to the life-giving sun and expressive Mercury, making it an ideal day for therapeutic endeavors and healing conversations.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 The romantic Leo moon convenes with the energetic sun and talkative Mercury, making it an ideal day for important conversations that need added support, especially on the relationship front.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 The self-concerned Leo moon aligns with the energetic sun and brainy Mercury, making it an ideal day to tackle work projects that need to run smoothly.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles: EASY and EASY+. Each puzzle is a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled. The EASY puzzle has numbers like 5, 7, 3, 9, 2, 7, 3, 4, 6, 8, 1, 7, 3, 4, 8, 9, 7, 3, 6, 9, 6, 1, 3, 8. The EASY+ puzzle has numbers like 9, 6, 3, 4, 5, 7, 2, 9, 1, 8, 5, 2, 3, 8, 9, 2, 6, 5, 1, 2, 3, 4, 7.

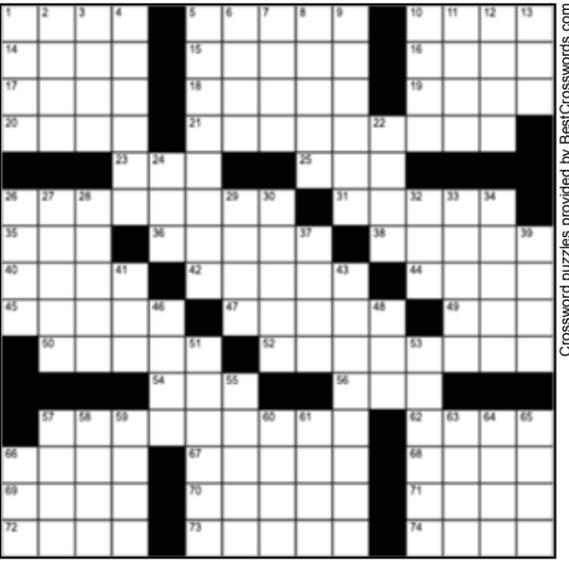
Sudoku puzzles: MEDIUM and HARD. Each puzzle is a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled. The MEDIUM puzzle has numbers like 1, 6, 5, 3, 9, 7, 8, 1, 9, 5, 7, 2, 3, 7, 8, 1, 3, 4, 6, 1, 2, 4, 8, 5, 4, 8. The HARD puzzle has numbers like 8, 5, 7, 4, 3, 6, 7, 1, 2, 3, 6, 4, 2, 7.

WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows include CHINA (Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, Urumqi, Xi'an, Lhasa, Chengdu, Chongqing, Kunming, Nanjing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Hangzhou, Taipei, Guangzhou, Hong Kong) and WORLD (Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, London, New York).

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1-Helper; Abbr.; 5- Inner self (Jung); 10- Factory; 14- Lip-curling facial expression; 15- Short letters; 16- Succulent plant; 17- Waiter's offering; 18- ___ once; 19- Dweeb; 20- Opposed to; 21- Place side by side; 23- Sellout sign; 25- "___ don't say!"; 26- First principles; 31- Validation; 35- French pronoun; 36- Make fit; 38- Continental cash; 40- It may turn; 42- Marshal; 44- Tiered shelves; 45- Sports stadium; 47- Lute of India; 49- Skater Babilonia; 50- Construct; 52- 20th president of the U.S.; 54- Prefix with athlete; 56- Banned spray; 57- Tigerstripe precursor; 62- One of two equal parts; 66- Crikey!; 67- Garlic sauce; 68- Yours, in Tours; 69- Different; 70- Hard drinker; 71- Masked critter; 72- Bristle; 73- War horse; 74- Computer programs, for short.



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AD

RETAIL

ORGANIZED THIEVES HIT HIGH-END BAY AREA STORES AMID TREND

OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ,
SAN FRANCISCO

GROUPS of thieves, some carrying crowbars and hammers, smashed glass cases and window displays and ransacked high-end stores throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, stealing jewelry, sunglasses, suitcases and other merchandise before fleeing in waiting cars during a weekend of brazen organized theft that shocked holiday shoppers and prompted concerns about the busy retail season.

The thefts are believed to be part of sophisticated criminal networks that recruit mainly young people to steal merchandise in stores throughout the country then sell it in online marketplaces. The thefts are ratcheting up as the holiday shopping season gets underway, experts and officials said.

"We're not talking about someone who needs money or needs food. These are people who go out and do this for high profit, and for the thrill," said Ben Dugan, president of the Coalition of Law Enforcement and Retail.

The weekend robberies started in San Francisco Friday around 8 p.m., when packs of people broke into stores including Louis Vuitton, Burberry and Bloomingdale's in the downtown area and in Union Square, a posh shopping district popular with tourists that was teeming with holiday shoppers.

Videos of the chaotic scene posted on social media by witnesses showed police officers dragging one suspect from a waiting car and people running with merchandise in their arms or dragging suitcases.



The flash mobs are usually organized by local people who recruit their crews and send them to steal specific merchandise requested by criminal organizations throughout the country, Dugan said.

Those who do the stealing get paid between \$500 and \$1,000 to take as much as they can and bring it back to organizers who ship it to other parts of the country.

"Crew bosses organize them, they'll give him the crowbars, and in some cases even rent them cars, or provide them with escape routes or a list of products to actually go out and steal. It looks very chaotic but it's actually very well organized," Dugan said.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said his office met with retailers over the weekend who asked for more police patrols.

"You will see substantially more starting today, in and around areas that are highly trafficked

and coming into the holiday season Black Friday in shopping malls," he told reporters yesterday [Macau time] at an event in San Francisco.

He said the California Highway Patrol immediately stepped up patrols along nearby highway corridors following the thefts this weekend and asked local officials how they could help.

In July, Newsom signed a law that allows prosecutors to charge those who work with others to steal merchandise. He said this year's state budget included millions of dollars for local officials to address retail theft and his January budget proposal will include an "exponential increase of support to help cities and counties."

"My business has been broken into three times this year," he said. "I have no empathy, no sympathy for these folks, and they must be held to account." Newsom owns

two wine shops in San Francisco.

Most of the flash mob robberies had been happening in stores near highways in suburbs where police response can be slower. But last year, the packs of robbers took advantage of protests following the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis and ransacked stores in several cities, including San Francisco, Dugan said.

"It was meant to look like looting, but it really wasn't. It's a criminal entity employing other people to steal for them so they can profit by selling it online," he said.

Retailers lose about \$65 billion each year to organized theft, the bulk stolen by professional thieves. Criminal flash mobs are part of a growing national trend, he said.

Last week, fourteen suspects went into a Louis Vuitton store in Oak Brook, a Chicago suburb, pulled large plastic bags from

their coats and filled them with clothing and other items, stealing more than \$120,000 in merchandise, police said.

The National Retail Federation said a recent survey found stores are seeing an increase in organized thefts and perpetrators being more aggressive.

Experts said state laws raising the threshold for what constitutes a felony and the ease of reselling stolen goods online are contributing to the increase in brazen robberies.

Following Friday's thefts, San Francisco Police Chief Bill Scott said officers arrested six men and two women, all young adults, and seized two guns and two vehicles. They are mostly residents of the Bay Area and some are known to San Francisco police, Scott said, adding that he expects more suspects will be arrested in the coming days.

Car access to the streets in Union Square will soon be limited and the area will be flooded with police officers, Scott said.

"We will do what we need to do to put an end to this madness," Scott said at a news conference Saturday.

Hours later, about 80 people, some wearing ski masks and wielding crowbars, ransacked a Nordstrom at an outdoor mall in Walnut Creek 20 miles northeast of San Francisco, assaulting employees and stealing merchandise before fleeing in waiting cars, police and witnesses said.

Similar scenes of young people wearing hoodies and masks were repeated Sunday in jewelry, sunglasses and clothing stores in the cities of Hayward and San Jose, police said. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Sands China donates MOP300,000 to Caritas Macau



Sands China Ltd. recently donated MOP 300,000 to Caritas Macau, in support of two annual Caritas Macau events, the 52nd Charity Bazaar and the 2021 Charity Run, marking Sands China's

18th consecutive year donating to the local NGO.

Since 2004, the gaming operator has contributed nearly MOP 5million to Caritas Macau. The funds help support Caritas Ma-

cau's operational expenses and its efforts to develop and implement social services in the community.

In light of Macau's Covid-19 control and prevention measures, this year's Charity Run was held as a virtual run and the bazaar was held in the form of several mini-bazaars at various locations, in order to prevent large gatherings of people in a centralised location.

For the virtual run, participants complete their runs at their own chosen locations within a specified period of time and then submit photos from their runs, such as from running apps or treadmill screens.

MGM and MUST organize culinary demonstration workshop



MGM once again joined hands with the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management of Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) to organize a culinary demonstration workshop ear-

lier this month. Neo Ng, pastry chef of MGM Cotai, was invited to showcase his expertise in chocolate-making to the bachelor students of MUST majoring in Food & Beverage Management (BFBM).

Marking the fourth edition of the series, both parties hope to enable students to better understand the professional culinary techniques.

Sponsored by Macao Foundation, this year's workshop invited Neo Ng who has 20 years of industry experience in his tally, to demonstrate different techniques in chocolate making and share his insightful experience with nearly 30 students.

With the aim of developing local culinary talents for the gastronomy industry, MGM started partnering with MUST every year since 2018 to host culinary workshops, site-visits and other activities for their BFBM students.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

ALAN SUDERMAN,
WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL

World Cup host Qatar used ex-CIA officer to spy on FIFA

THE tiny Arab nation of Qatar has for years employed a former CIA officer to help spy on soccer officials as part of a no-expense-spared effort to win and hold on to the 2022 World Cup tournament, an investigation by The Associated Press has found.

It's part of a trend of former U.S. intelligence officers going to work for foreign governments with questionable human rights records that is worrying officials in Washington and prompting calls from some members of Congress for greater scrutiny of an opaque and lucrative market.

The World Cup is the planet's most popular sports tournament. It's also a chance for Qatar, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, to have a coming-out party on the world stage.

The AP's investigation found Qatar sought an edge in securing hosting rights by hiring former CIA officer turned private contractor Kevin Chalker to spy on rival bid teams and key soccer officials who picked the winner in 2010. Chalker also worked for Qatar in the years that followed to keep tabs on the country's critics in the soccer world, the AP found.



Mohamed bin Hamad Al-Thani (left) Chairman of the 2022 bid committee, and Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of Qatar, hold the World Cup trophy in front of FIFA Secretary General Jerome Valcke (2010)

The AP's investigation is based on interviews with Chalker's former associates as well as contracts, invoices, emails, and a review of business documents.

The surveillance work inclu-

ded having someone pose as a photojournalist to keep tabs on a rival nation's bid and deploying a Facebook honeypot, in which someone posed online as an attractive woman, to get close to a target, a review

of the records show. Operatives working for Chalker and the Persian Gulf sheikhdom also sought cell phone call logs of at least one top FIFA official ahead of the 2010 vote, a review of the records show.

Chalker also promised he could help the country "maintain dominance" over its large population of foreign workers, an internal document from one of Chalker's companies reviewed by the AP shows. Qatar — a country with a population of 2.8 million, of whom only 300,000 are citizens — is heavily reliant on foreign-born labor to build the stadiums and other infrastructure needed for the tournament.

Qatari government officials did not respond to requests for comment. FIFA also declined to comment.

Chalker, who opened an office in Doha and had a Qatari government email account,

said in a statement provided by a representative that he and his companies would not "ever engage in illegal surveillance."

Chalker declined requests for an interview or to answer detailed questions about his work for the Qatari government. He also claimed that some of the documents reviewed by the AP were forgeries.

The AP reviewed hundreds of pages of documents from Chalker's companies, including a 2013 project update report that had several photos of Chalker's staff meeting with various soccer officials. Multiple sources with authorized access provided documents to the AP. The sources said they were troubled by Chalker's work for Qatar and requested anonymity because they feared retaliation.

The AP took several steps to verify the documents' authenticity. **MDT/AP**

AD



HOLIDAY RENTAL HOUSES

Lugar das Letras  Casa de Gouvães 

The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the worlds Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views. But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.

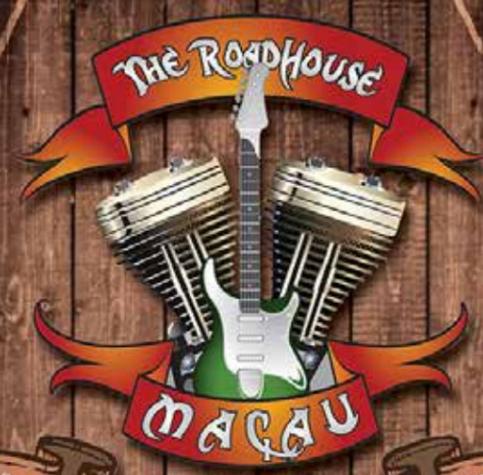





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OPINION

Millennial Money

Laura McMullen, MDT/NerdWallet



IT'S OK TO NOT BUY STUFF ON BLACK FRIDAY

It's that time of year when retailers seem to join forces to plant a message in shoppers' minds: "Buy Stuff on Black Friday, or You Are a Fool."

They transmit this message in loud TV commercials, targeted social media ads and promotional emails you don't remember subscribing to.

But you are no fool. And you — not retailers — get to decide what to buy and when.

Feeling compelled to spend money right now is normal. Who doesn't want to be like the advertisements' grinning models, with an armful of gifts?

"This time of year, there is a lot of pressure to consume happiness — to show your love through products," says Christine Whelan, a clinical professor in the department of consumer science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Retailers want you to fold under that pressure. They make most of their money around this time, Whelan says, during their "end-of-year push to sell products."

So, for various reasons, you may be primed to overshop on Black Friday. With that in mind, try to remember that "bargain hunting" can often lead to buying more stuff than you need, says Ryan Sterling, founder of Future You Wealth, a New York-based investment firm. He's also the author of "You're Making Other People Rich: Save, Invest, and Spend with Intention."

Plus, the fact that your favorite store is promoting 40% off doesn't change the amount in your bank account. So aim to shop with intention, rather than in response to promotions.

Whelan recommends reviewing your finances to determine how much you can spend on holiday shopping. Create a list of gift recipients, too. With this information, you'll get an idea of how much to spend on each person. (And if you plan to buy yourself something, add your name to the list.)

As you're planning, set a few rules. Otherwise, it's too easy to spot something you want and impulsively buy it. You already have one rule to guide you: Stick to the list. Yes, you may see the perfect item on sale for your aunt. But if she isn't on your list, or if she is and you already bought her something, move along.

Rules that add "speed bumps" between shopping impulses and reactions are also helpful, Sterling says. For example, maybe you step away from potential purchases for at least an hour, if not a day, before deciding whether or not to buy.

Without giving yourself boundaries, you may do exactly what retailers want — see their product and impulsively buy it. They certainly don't want you to pause first.

As you take control of your spending, rethink gift-giving.

Melkumian recommends asking yourself: "What can I bring to the table? Is it only money, and is it only materialistic? Or can I be creative?"

"Creative" can mean a few things, but before changing your approach, loop in your family or whoever you typically buy gifts for. Decide, together, how to handle gifts.

Perhaps you agree to a spending cap, or to a gift exchange, rather than having everyone buy something for everybody else. Your loved ones may be grateful for a new approach so they, too, can spend less. (They may also be happy to receive fewer things.)

Another way to buck the buy-everything-for-everyone tradition could be to give only homemade or experiential gifts. Whelan likes to combine the two with homemade gift certificates that could include, for example, a night of babysitting or dog-sitting.

Giving services rather than material gifts doesn't just save us money, she says. "They are a way of encouraging social connection and building relationships."

[Abridged]

Trapped in conflicts, the children of West and Central Africa are the most recruited by armed groups in the world and also have the highest number of victims of sexual violence, says a report released yesterday by the United Nations Children's Fund.

For five years the region has seen increased conflicts in which more than 21,000 children have been recruited by government forces and armed groups, says the report. In addition, more than 2,200 children in the region have been victims of sexual violence since 2016, says the report.

More than 3,500 children have been abducted, making it the region with the second-highest abductions in the world, said the report.

"The numbers and trends are extremely worrying for current and future generations of children," Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF's regional director for West and Central Africa told The Associated Press.

"Not only have grave violations against children perpetrated by parties to the conflicts not stopped across West and Central Africa, but we have even seen a spike over the past five years," she said.



Comedian Dave Chappelle

TRANS NETFLIX WORKERS DROP LABOR COMPLAINT BUT ONE RESIGNS

Two former Netflix employees who criticized anti-transgender comments on Dave Chappelle's TV special are dropping labor complaints and one has resigned from the company, it was announced yesterday [Macau time].

Terra Field, a senior software engineer who is trans, announced that Field had voluntarily resigned as of Sunday.

"This isn't how I thought things would end, but I'm relieved to have closure," Field said in a resignation letter posted online.

Chappelle's "The Closer" first aired on Oct. 1 and gained millions of views. However, Chappelle's disparaging remarks about the transgender community raised protests within Netflix and from activists. About 30 Netflix workers staged a an Oct. 20

walkout and joined a rally at Netflix offices in Los Angeles.

Field was suspended by the company after attending a business meeting for senior executives but was quickly reinstated.

Field and B. Pagels-Minor, a game launch operations program manager who also is trans, filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board. They alleged that Netflix retaliated against the workers to keep them from speaking up about working conditions, including "Netflix's products and the impact of its product choices on the LGBTQ+ community."

"We have resolved our differences in a way that acknowledges the erosion of trust on both sides and, we hope, enables everyone to move on," Netflix said in a statement Monday.

Pagels-Minor has acknowledged that they were the employee that Netflix fired last month for allegedly disclosing confidential financial information about what it paid for "The Closer." The information was referenced in a Bloomberg news article.

Pagels-Minor has denied the allegations.

Netflix ran into a buzz-saw of criticism not only with the special but in how internal memos responded to employees' concerns, including co-CEO Ted Sarandos' assertion that "content on screen doesn't directly translate to real-world harm."

Sarandos also wrote that Netflix doesn't allow titles that are "designed to incite hate or violence, and we don't believe 'The Closer' crosses that line."

Netflix continues to make the special available for streaming. MDT/AP



The German military is making coronavirus shots compulsory for troops amid a growing debate in the country about whether to introduce a general vaccine mandate to counter rising infection and hospitalization rates. The Defense Ministry yesterday confirmed a report in the German military blog Augen Geradeaus that officials and soldiers' representatives agreed to add the coronavirus shot to the list of vaccines soldiers must get. The measure still needs to be formally added to military regulations, the ministry said in a statement.



USA Jill Biden opened the holiday season at the White House by breaking off a sprig from the official Blue Room tree and giving it — and a big smooch — to her toddler grandson. "Look how beautiful this is," the first lady said of the 18 1/2-foot Fraser fir that was delivered by wagon to her Pennsylvania Avenue doorstep by Clydesdale horses named Ben and Winston. The first lady later joined President Joe Biden for a visit to the Army's Fort Bragg in North Carolina to celebrate "friendsgiving" with service members and military families.



Grammys The Recording Academy will announce nominees for its 64th Grammy Awards early today, but it'll be the first year selections have been made after some sweeping changes. The academy earlier this year ditched anonymous selection committees and now allows its more than 11,000 voters to choose nominees in certain categories, with the full membership eligible to weigh in on top honors like album and song of the year. The shift comes after The Weeknd called the Grammys "corrupt" after he was shut out of 2021's ceremony.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Petr David Josek



A zoo curator using a kayak tries to catch a pelican in order to move him into its winter enclosure at the zoo in Liberec, Czech Republic.