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THE 2021 GUANGDONG AND MACAU BRANDED PRODUCTS FAIR WILL BE HELD AT THE VENETIAN FROM TODAY UNTIL SUNDAY, FEATURING NEARLY 400 BOOTHS

JPMORGAN'S CEO REGRETS JOKE ABOUT COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA

RETAIL SALES ARE UP 78% YEAR-ON-YEAR IN THE THIRD QUARTER TO MOP16B, BUT COMING FROM A LOW BASE

The Philippines rejected yesterday China's renewed demand that it remove its outpost on a disputed South China Sea shoal and said Chinese coast guard ships should leave the area and stop blocking Manila's supply boats. Philippine forces use a grounded warship, the BRP Sierra Madre, as an outpost on the submerged but strategic shoal that is at the center of an ongoing dispute with China.

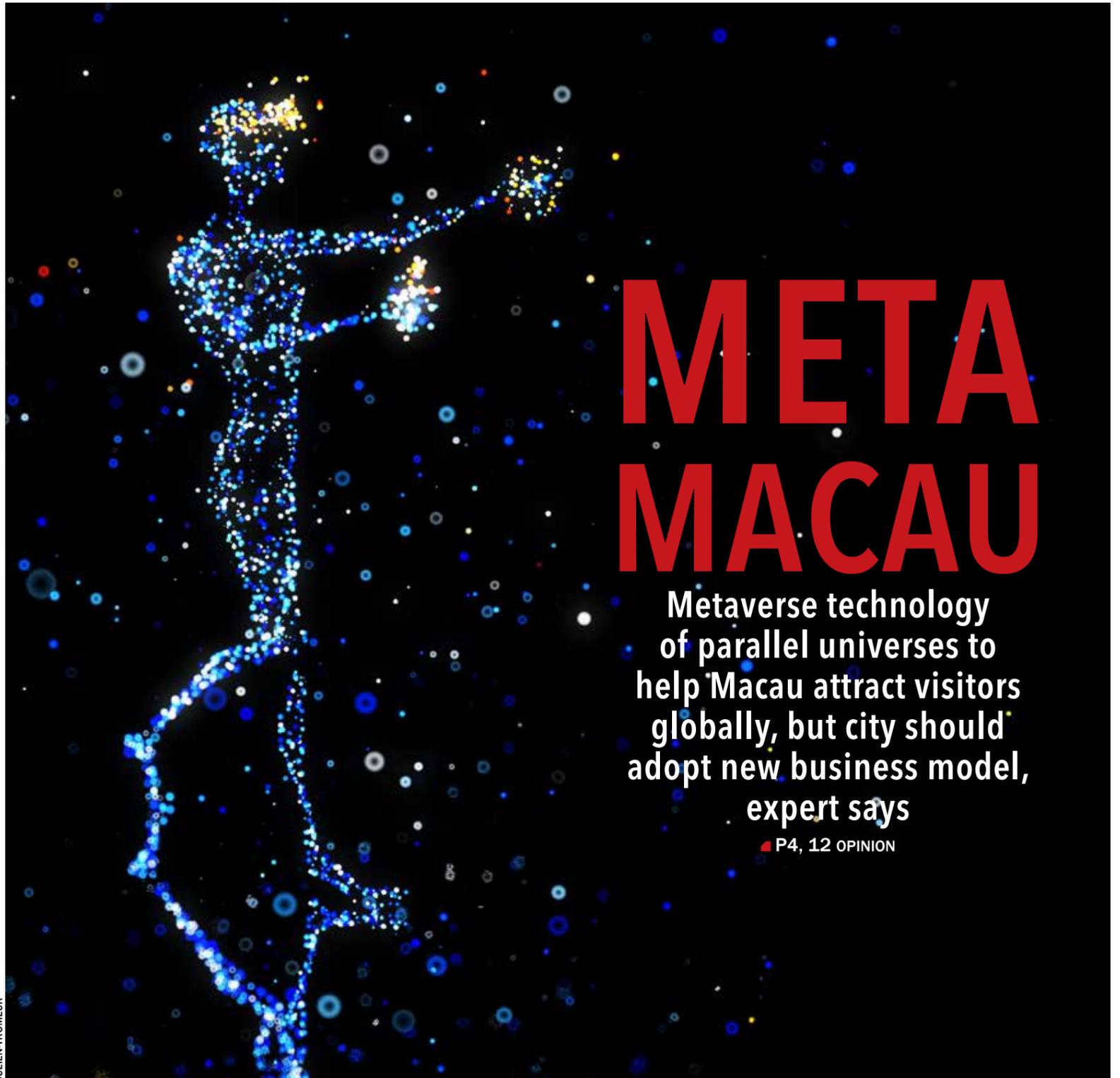


Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen (pictured) opened a virtual meeting of Asian and European leaders yesterday with a call for sustainable and shared global growth as the world seeks to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirty European countries and 21 Asian countries, along with multinational organizations representing the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, are represented at the two-day Asia-Europe Meeting.



English Channel Children and pregnant women were among at least 27 migrants who died when their small boat sank in an attempted crossing of the English Channel, the French government official said yesterday. The Interior Ministry also announced the arrest of a fifth suspected smuggler thought to have been involved in what was the deadliest migration tragedy to date on the dangerous sea lane.

More on backpage



META MACAU

Metaverse technology of parallel universes to help Macau attract visitors globally, but city should adopt new business model, expert says

▲ P4, 12 OPINION

JULIEN TROMEUR



MORE HEALTH CODE UPLOAD FAILURES FOR NAT RESULTS

ANTHONY LAM

AMID questioning by several lawmakers on the jurisprudence of the future Trustee Law and the Civil Code, the government assured them that the former will not override the latter.

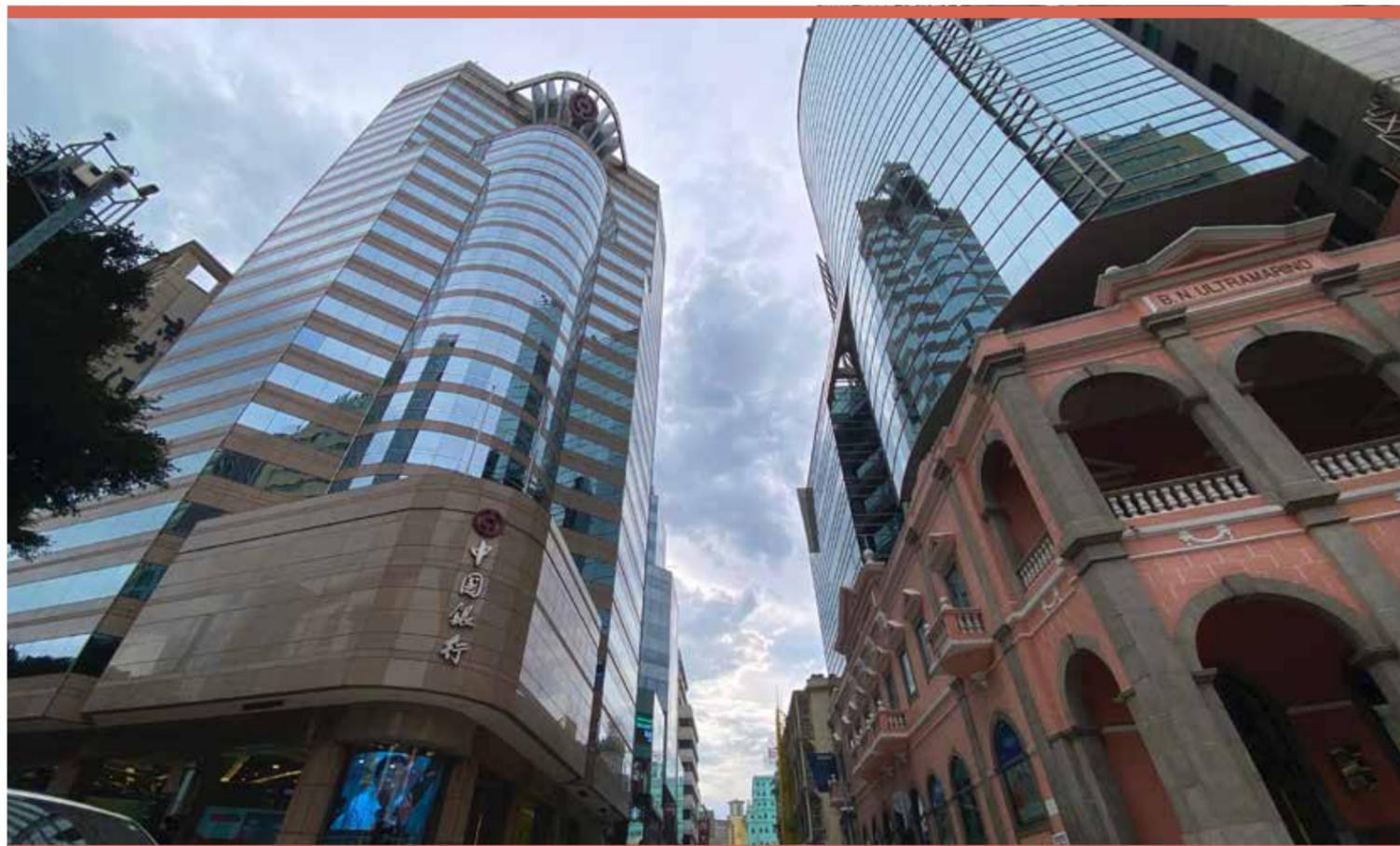
The concern was first raised by lawmaker Ip Sio Kai, president of the Macau Association of Banks and veteran banker. He feared the potential contradiction between the Civil Code's stipulation on specific distributions of legacy, and the future Trustee Law's stipulation that will allow the deceased to leave their legacy in certain form of trusts.

Pursuant to the Civil Code, the legacy of a deceased individual must be distributed to various family members in specific proportions. For example, the spouse of the deceased must legally obtain 50% of the inheritance plus an equal share among heirs of the remainder 50%.

Given that there had been no mention of this in the Trustee Bill, Ip and several of his colleagues raised and followed up on the issue.

In response, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong assured them that the Trustee Law will not override the five Codes of Law. In a legal sense, the five Codes of Law have greater authority over other specific legislation. Stipulations that contradict the Codes of Law will automatically be void or become ineffective.

Chan Sau San, president of the Executive Committee of the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM), also explained that legacy distribution relies on



GOV'T: TRUSTEE LAW WILL NOT OVERRIDE LEGACY LAW

lex personalis, or personal law. Non-local owners of trustees thus will not need to abide with legacy legislation in Macau.

Ip and colleague Ngan Iek Hang also inquired about talent cultivation. Macau has a community of financial professionals — however, the act of trusts is a new practice in Macau. They questioned how the government was preparing the city for the future.

On this, Chan revealed that

the government has contracted several Hong Kong accreditation investigation into Macau.

Lawmakers also demanded further explanation into the type of trusts permitted. Along with wealth management trusts, lawmaker Ron Lam pointed out that there are other types, such as charity trusts. Lawmakers wanted to know the scope of permitted trust types.

Chan pointed out that the bill proposes that a trust can

be established with a specific goal. "It can be of charity nature, of environmental nature, etc.," he assured them, addressing lawmakers' concern that the scope would be too narrow, and rendering trust establishment in Macau unattractive.

Meanwhile, Ip stated that the law is exceptionally important for Macau on the road to developing wealth management. He explained that money invested by clients can easily

be integrated with the funds of financial institutions.

He further added that the law may solve problems that arise when individual apartment owners prepay their shares in the renovation of public parts of their building. "It is impractical to hold a bank account under several tens of people's names, but holding it under several representatives' name may carry risks," he explained.

PIDDA: key topic of question in third budget amendment

THE AL president expressed his understanding on the financial conditions carried-forward into this year's Government Investment and Development Expenditure Plan (PIDDA) made yesterday public budget debate an unusual one.

Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong sat-in at the parliamentary plenary yesterday to

present the government's third budget amendment in a year. In it were necessary extra investments in commercial and employee subsidies, among other areas.

Lawmaker Ron Lam identified a gap where the destination of the funds originally assigned to settling bills of public works this year was meant to be. These funds were later revealed

by the director of the Financial Services Bureau (DSF) Iong Kong Leong to amount to MOP4.8 billion.

Iong said that the funds will be carried forward to next year's budget so that they can be used to settle bills when each project concludes.

Iong explained that the carrying-forward was necessary due to the delayed, if not suspen-

ded, progress of public work projects caused by the several Covid-19 outbreaks this year. "I must stress that it's beyond the government's will to see them delayed," he said.

Lam tried to find identify concrete evidence about whether the PIDDA for next year is actually MOP14 billion, instead of the MOP18 billion figure announced previously.

In response, Ho In

Mui, vice director of the DSE, said that the works planned for next year will be settled by next year's funding; and the MOP4.8 billion of carried-forward funds will be used to settle works planned for this year, currently unconcluded and thus unpaid.

Lam considered his question unanswered, so he repeated it to the officials, who responded with the same answer.

At this, President Kou Hoi In of the AL expressed his understanding, saying that the MOP4.8 billion will be a considerable extra sum of money on top of the PIDDA for next year, although the government will start with MOP18 billion as the budgeted sum.

The bill was passed unanimously and the budget will be enacted today. AL

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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS_Albanjo Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Viviana Segui
DESIGNERS_Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua
SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR
Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
Advertisement_advertising@macaudailytimes.com
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IMPLEMENTATION PLAN TO GUIDE ARBITRATION AND SERVE COOPERATION ZONE

STAFF REPORTER

THE Zhuhai Court of International Arbitration recently issued its implementation plan during the 2021 Annual Work Meeting of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Arbitration Alliance. The plan will serve the Development of Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, providing several principles to guide arbitration in applying Chinese mainland and/or Macau laws to resolve civil and commercial disputes.

The Annual Work Meeting attracted over 200 representatives from legal institutions, universities and enterprises.

Arbitration — an internationally accepted method of dispute resolution — will play an important role in rule of law innovation in the cooperation zone. The newly-released plan is de-

signed to build a public legal service system in the zone, to build an international regional arbitration center, and provide high-quality, efficient arbitration and mediation services.

The Zhuhai Court of International Arbitration will take the development of the zone as an opportunity to converge with the internationally accepted commercial arbitration system, and promote the convergence of arbitration rules and procedures between Zhuhai and Macau.

Acting director of the Legal Affairs Bureau of the cooperation zone Zhong Yingyi says that the next step for the zone will be to further develop the Zhuhai-Macau cross-boundary arbitration platform. In doing so, they will establish new arbitration collaboration mechanisms and support personnel training to serve businesses in the zone.

2021 GMBPF

GD and Macau products fair themed 'smart living'

STAFF REPORTER

THE 2021 Guangdong and Macau Branded Products Fair (2021GMBPF) will be held at the Expo Hall D of the Venetian Macao from today until Sunday, featuring nearly 400 booths.

The 2021GMBPF's theme will be "smart living," and will combine shopping, leisure and entertainment across online and offline exhibitions to promote trade and cultural exchange. The three-day fair has free admission.

The event offers small and medium-sized enterprises an exhibition platform. This year there will be nearly 400 booths featuring 351 exhibitors, organizer Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) announced in a press conference yesterday.

There are four feature areas in the fair: the "Macau Featured Products Area" with 174 enterprises; "Guangdong Branded Products Area" which will host 180 booths with 150 Guangdong enterprises; "Belt and Road



Exhibition Zone" with 23 booths from 20 enterprises, and the "Smart Life Area."

The Macau exhibition area has attracted 5% more local enterprises than last year, 40% of which are newcomers to this event — indicating local SME's are more open to the business opportunities of this event.

This year's fair will focus on technologies that can be used in everyday life, providing a platform for displaying these smart technologies. The newly added Smart Life Area will host 32 booths, showcasing technological innovations, cultural and creative products, home appliances, and other smart life products.

An array of activities will be avail-

able during the fair, including: free cooking workshops, lucky draws, tourism products and food mystery boxes, and guided tours. The fair has further enhanced online elements, having introduced online exhibitions with real-time display functions for its exhibits. Online business matching services will be available for exhibitors to establish business contacts with potential partners.

IPIM executive director Sam Lei expressed his belief that "this event brings new opportunities to the GBA" for businesses.

The event is a three-day fair, jointly organized by IPIM and the Department of Commerce of Guangdong Province.

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SCHOLAR: MACAU SHOULD PREPARE FOR NEW BUSINESS MODEL AMID META

ANTHONY LAM

IN spite of the global inclination to “normalizing” the use or execution of the metaverse concept, in which the five senses can receive virtual stimuli that compare to real stimuli, Macau’s tourism industry should not panic, but rather should prepare for a new business model.

The comment was given on the sidelines of a business breakfast event Wednesday by Peter Chang, co-founder of Golding Technology and lecturer of business of City University of Macau.

Chang had worked for the then internet giant Yahoo! in the early stage of his career. He revealed that most advertising agents working in the Silicon Valley had experiences working at Yahoo!.

During his presentation, Chang said that the information technology industry is developing the metaverse concept to the point where users may be able to sense feelings within the metaverse as if they are physically perceiving certain elements.

With continual hardware improvements expected, users in the future should expect to see, hear, smell, feel and taste the elements presented to them in the metaverse.

If so, the tourism industry of Macau might worry that nobody will physically visit any tourist sites when the metaverse truly becomes the new normal. This was actually a question raised by a participant at the event.

Chang takes an optimistic view of the question. He said that al-



Peter Chang

though more activities will be able to be conducted online, the yearning for physical tourism will still be there. He believes that people will still enjoy real-life experiences, even when metaversal experiences become widely attainable.

“Although people may be able to see the Ruins of St Paul’s so realistically as if they’re really standing in front of it, I believe they will still have the desire to visit the attraction in person,” Chang said. “Imagine: we’ve run online meetings for a couple of years now, do we

still want to meet our friends and family who are outside of Macau?” “Tourism is a special case,” he concluded.

Chang said that since metaversal experiences rely heavily on hardware, such as virtual-reality goggles and perception suits, prolonged periods of engagement will leave users with pairs of exhausted eyes. “It may make them desire real-life experiences more,” he explained.

He uses the Ruins of St Paul’s as an example. “People will only

be able to touch and scrutinize the rocks and stones used to build the Ruins with themselves standing right in the middle of it,” he said. “Only then can they see what marks and scratches have been left on these centuries-old materials.”

The key factor, in his opinion, is that in physical world, traces of events cannot be easily eradicated, but in the metaverse they can.

Speaking on how Macau should prepare for the era of the metaverse, Chang thinks that the city can at most be an intermediary, playing a role similar to today’s social media platforms, which help people promote our businesses or, in the case of many influencers, themselves.

In other words, Chang believes that Macau should use the technology to promote itself to the world’s population, “and trigger their desire to visit Macau using virtual or augmented realities.”

WHAT IS THE METAVERSE?

A Google search for “metaverse” returns results like this one from Wikipedia: “The metaverse is a hypothesized iteration of the internet, supporting persistent online 3-D virtual environments through conventional personal computing, as well as virtual and augmented reality headsets.”

It seems both utterly fantastic and difficult to comprehend. However, at the breakfast event, Chang stressed that the execution or the realization of the concept is not as new or distant as many have understood.

He said that the use of virtual

reality or augmented reality in video games, such as the famous FIFA, Gran Turismo and Grand Theft Auto series, are vivid and live examples of the execution, if not the experimentation, of the concept in real-life scenarios.

Although not fully a metaverse, these video gaming platforms can in fact be considered as approximating metaverses, Chang explained.

In a metaverse, users will be able to make their own avatars and interact with others, similar to what they do in real life. For the time being, senses may not be as vivid as in physical life but such obstacles may be crossed someday in the future.

Where there is life, there is consumption. It can be imagined that materials used by the avatar will not be free-of-charge. Similarly to the many cellphone and video games currently available, these avatar materials, such as clothing, will be charged for.

During his presentation, he revealed that sport equipment and lifestyle brand Nike have recently secured the world’s first virtual trademark registration. With this, online surrogates of the brand can be legally banned. More importantly, the brand can start selling metaversal products to metaversal identities.

He added that three major technology firms, namely Facebook – now Meta – Microsoft and Nvidia are developing their own metaverses. Meta shall focus on life and lifestyle experiences, Microsoft on virtual meetings and Nvidia on 3D contents.

Italian Wine & Dine to feature masterclasses

THE Macau Italian Wine & Dine will take place at Grand Lisboa Palace tomorrow, featuring two masterclasses, and a food and wine pairing event.

Aiming to promote Italian culinary culture within the local community, the event will feature 18 high-quality wines from well-known wine producers. Among the most notable names are Gajax, Frescobaldi, Banfi, De Stefani and Pio Cesare; all are available to be tasted by the glass exclusively across the event.

The highlight of the night will be the “Italian

Cooking Demonstration – White Truffle Risotto,” where participants will have the unique opportunity to watch and learn how to prepare two of the most popular Italian dishes.

The “Italian Wine Masterclass – Banfi, the Builders of Brunello” will be held from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. and will include the tasting of four outstanding Banfi wines. It will be conducted by Paolo Fassina, the Area Manager for Banfi in North-East Asia, who will speak about the crucial role that Banfi played in the growth and recognition of Brunello di

Montalcino as one of the most emblematic wines of Italy.

Co-organized by Grand Lisboa Palace, the Wine Society of Macau, and DOC DMC Macau, the Macau Italian Wine & Dine is part of the World Week of Italian Cuisine – an initiative of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. It is interrelated with Italia MIA Festival, a project launched in 2019 by the Consulate General of Italy in Hong Kong that intends to celebrate the richness of Italian culture and its varied culinary heritage. LV

Q3 RETAIL REVENUES UP MOP16B

THE value of retail sales in the third quarter of 2021 totaled MOP15.98 billion, up 78.1% year-on-year, but coming from a low base.

Discounting the effect of price changes, the sales volume index surged 86.5% year-on-year, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

For the first three quarters of 2021, the value of retail sales totaled MOP55.45 billion, double the amount in the corresponding period of last year. The figure represented a drop of only 1.8% from the same period in 2019 (MOP56.44 billion), implying that retail sales have gradually returned to pre-pandemic levels.

The increase in retail



sales value was mainly driven by a surge in sales of Leather Goods, Communication Equipment and Watches, Clocks & Jewelry. In addition, the sales volume index for the first three quarters of 2021 soared 115.7% year-on-year and grew by 3.9% from 2019.

Meanwhile, the value of retail sales in Q3 dropped 22.9% from the revised figure (MOP20.71 billion) in

the previous quarter. The sales values of Adults’ Clothing and Watches, Clocks & Jewelry fell 36.9% and 30.8% quarter-to-quarter respectively, which can be put down to the fall in the number of visitor arrivals resulting from the temporarily tightened entry and exit measures in August. The sales value of Supermarkets, however, grew 17.0%. LV

EARLIER this month, Melco Resorts & Entertainment celebrated a construction milestone for its Studio City Phase 2 development with a topping out ceremony, at which the company unveiled details of the USD 1.3 billion extension designed by Zaha Hadid Architects.

Melco Chairman & CEO Mr. Lawrence Ho said at the event, "Although the world remains greatly affected by the pandemic, Melco's commitment and belief in Macau's long-term future remains unwavering. This initiative highlights Melco's dedication to Macau's economic diversification and the strengthening of its position as a world-class tourism destination."

The highly anticipated Studio City Phase 2 is scheduled to complete before end of December 2022 and "showcases Melco's refusal to compromise on its core beliefs of quality hospitality, great design and world leading entertainment," said Mr. Ho.

"Melco has a strong track record of contributing to Macau's ongoing development as a world center of leisure tourism. With 99% of the USD 1.3b investment dedicated to non-gaming, Studio City Phase 2 reaffirms our ongoing commitment to the city and contributes to reinforcing Macau's non-gaming proposition in Asia and internationally. We are grateful for the support of the Central and Macau governments during the project construction."

Adjacent to the Lotus Bridge which connects Macau to Hengqin Island, the project will focus on developing world-class non-gaming elements and give full play to the unique advantages of Macau. The project will support the development opportunities of the Greater Bay Area, further promoting the sustainable development of Macau as a world leisure tourism center.

NEXT GENERATION ENTERTAINMENT

The Studio City Phase 2 complex further complements the integrated resort's existing Phase 1, which features a modern interpretation of the rich detailing, bold geometries and craftsmanship of the Art Deco period.



ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Studio City extension: Melco's ongoing commitment to Macau



It was announced that the new entertainment and leisure destination will offer one of Asia's largest indoor & outdoor water parks, a six-screen Cineplex comprising two regular houses and four VIP suites, as well as a state-of-the-art MICE space.

With a total gross floor area of approximately 250,000 square meters, Studio City Phase 2 is located in the Cotai area of Macau, comprising two luxury hotel towers with 900 rooms and suites and a retail com-

plex of over 21,000 square meters. The development has also been named winner of the 'Regional Award, Asia' at BREEAM Awards 2021 in recognition of its incorporation of sustainable building design, development and management.

ASIA'S FIRST-EVER RESIDENCY SHOW PROJECT

Earlier in the year, Melco announced Asia's first series of residency shows featuring an incredible line up of superstar

artists including, Mr. Aaron Kwok, Ms. Joey Yung and Mr. Leon Lai (names in no particular order). Set to take place at Studio City, the three-year residency show project and investment is a major undertaking that further highlights Melco's commitment to diversification in Macau through world-class entertainment.

The residency shows focus on A list musicians and artists. Mr. Aaron Kwok, Ms. Joey Yung and Mr. Leon Lai (names in no particular order) will be performing a collective of 90 shows at Studio City created especially for the occasion over the course of the next three years. Each artist performance series will be available exclusively at Melco.

Mr. Aaron Kwok said, "It's my pleasure to cooperate with Studio City Macau once more. My performance for the grand opening of Studio City Event Centre in 2015 and large-scale show with electrifying stage effects was hosted here in 2019. Asia's first-ever residency show project in Macau to be hosted will be innovative and striking.

My team and I have already designed a brand new multi-intelligent stage with a rundown of classic songs. I look forward to presenting an exhilarating and beautiful dance performance to the audience with the very top on-stage visual effects."

Ms. Joey Yung further added, "It's a great honor to be a part of this wonderful line-up. I look forward to creating my most innovative show to date for the audiences."

Mr. Leon Lai said, "This collaboration will be the first residency in Asia – and I'm looking forward to being joined by audiences from throughout the region for it."

Further first-class artists will join this unique line up with their own bespoke shows and details of these collaborations will be announced in due course. Mr. Evan Winkler, President of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said, "We are thrilled to bring to Macau such an amazing line-up of stars. The region's biggest names are finally coming to the city to deliver a show experience that will be totally unique."



COVID-19

GOV'T PLEASSED WITH HEALTH CODE APP USAGE

RENATO MARQUES

HEALTH authorities are reportedly pleased with the rates of usage of the new mobile application (app) that generates local health codes and traces users' itineraries.

In the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center press briefing yesterday afternoon, Dr Leong Iek Hou said authorities are happy with the results recorded one week after the new system began operation.

"Since Thursday last week, [as of] until 9 a.m. [yesterday], we have recorded 53,079 people that have successfully registered in the new app," Leong said, adding that over 159,000 health codes have been generated through the app so far.

"This means that about 8% of the population is already using it. We think [these figures] demonstrate that people are happy with it and we hope more people will download it because it is much more convenient," Leong remarked.

The official announced

that in the next few days several services operating under the Health Bureau will post QR codes in several locations that will let people directly download the app. She urged the population to begin using it, as it is "more stable than the previous version and it has added functions."

OLYMPIC MEDALISTS TO FOLLOW SAME GUIDELINES

When asked by the media about the possibility raised by the Sports Bureau (ID) that a group of Olympic medal winners from China could tour Macau in December after passing through the neighboring region of Hong Kong, Leong explained that the prevention and control guidelines in force apply to everyone, and there would be no exception for Olympic medalists.

"What we look at is the travel history of these people. If they have been in areas of medium or high risk for the Covid-19, they must comply with the measures into force," she said. "This applies to any residents or non-residents

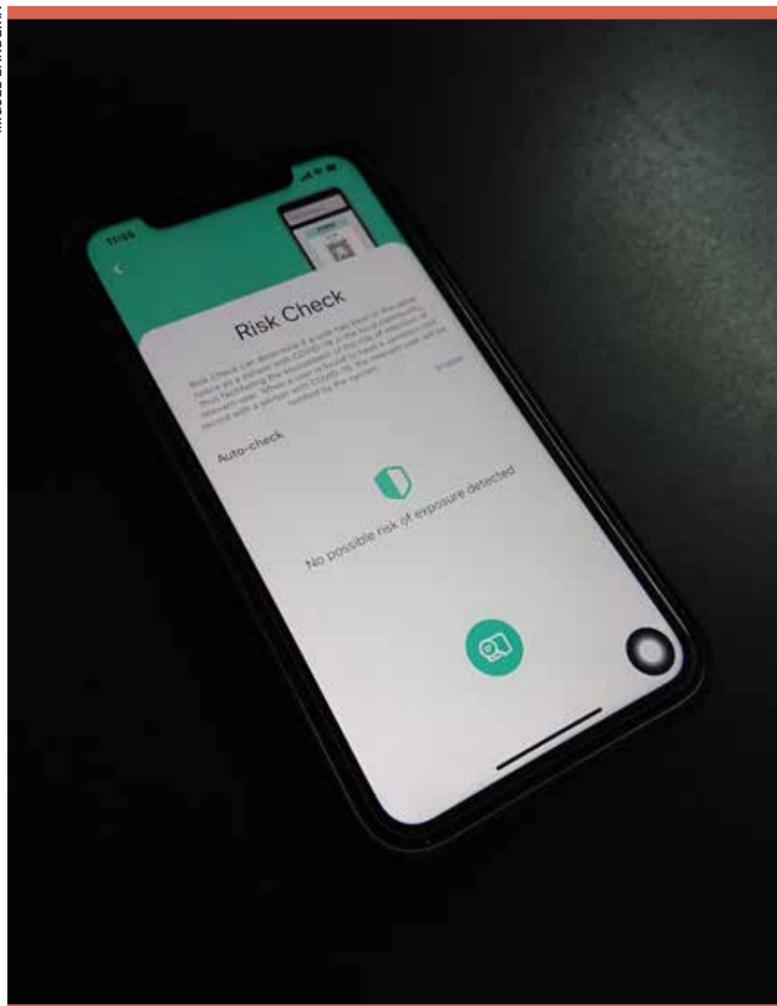
entering Macau. They need to undergo quarantine [or not] according to their travel history. This is the main aspect we look at when they arrive at Macau — their travel history and not who they are."

BORDER REOPENING WITH HK NOT YET AUTHORIZED

In response to questions regarding the potential reopening of the borders between Macau and Hong Kong, Leong said the matter is down to a three-party negotiation in which the central government takes the leading and decisive role.

"We follow a uniform principle. If Hong Kong and the mainland agree to reopen the borders, we can also move forward after that. But, so far, there is no concrete [new] information on this matter," she said. She hinted that China's National Health Committee (NHC), which is currently touring Hong Kong, is evaluating conditions in order to decide on the future enforcement of border controls.

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COVID-19

More health code upload failures for NAT results

RENATO MARQUES

ADDITIONAL failures in uploading users' nucleic acid tests (NAT) results to their health codes have been detected, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center admitted yesterday in response to a media question.

In the recent case discussed, NAT results were unsuccessfully uploaded by users at sampling stations operated by the Namyue company.

"According to our information, they [Namyue] failed to follow the regular procedure for uploading the results of the tests. [That's] why there was a problem and they couldn't upload results to the Health Code system for a certain period," Doctor Leong Iek Hou admitted. She added that, "after checking, this problem has already been [confirmed as] solved."

The official noted that the health authorities have "reminded the third-party

MUFID MAJUNIN



organization to do well their work."

When asked if the government is imposing any sanctions on the company for breaching protocol and creating the problem, Leong dodged the question. "This was a systematic error, and not something done on purpose. We are only issuing warnings and keeping them under close watch to ensure that the problem does not reoccur, and that everything goes according to the normal procedure," she said.

Namyue is responsible for three out of the seven regular NAT sampling stations

in Macau — specifically those operating near the border posts of Border Gate, Hengqin Port, and Qingmao Port. Results from them are essential for border-crossing.

As the Times reported late last week, other residents have reported similar situations occurring at other sampling stations, namely at the Macao Forum sampling post, operated by Kuok Kim. Health authorities have refuted the allegations brought to them by the Times at the time, claiming that the fault belonged to users who had made wrong NAT bookings.

CHEN MAN

Fashion photographer in Dior controversy apologizes

A renowned Chinese fashion photographer has apologized for her past work after online critics called it insulting to the Chinese people and fashion house Dior removed one of her photos from a show in Shanghai.

Chen Man acknowledged the criticism of her earlier work, including "Young Pioneers," a series of images of a young model with backdrops of major landmarks such as China's massive Three Gorges Dam or with an image of the country's first lunar orbiter flying out from under her dress.

The criticism was reported by the state-owned Global Times newspaper, which said that comments on social media had called her work "implicit child pornography and insulting the young pioneers," the name of a Communist Party-affiliated youth organization.

"I have reflected deeply and blamed myself for my naivety and ignorance at the time. I think that I must still formally apologize to everyone," Chen wrote this week on her social media account.

"I'm a Chinese person, born and raised, I deeply love my motherland," she wrote. "And I know, deeply, that as an artist, I have a responsibility to the mission to record and spread the Chinese people's culture."

She joins numerous Chinese and foreign celebrities, brands and artists who have made public apologies following criticism of their work in state media. Some have been boycotted for refusing to apologize or if the apology is deemed insufficient.

Chen's apology came more than a week after Dior was attacked over the photo at its exhibition in Shanghai, which pictured a model of



Asian descent with tan, freckled skin and darkened eyelids holding a Dior purse.

Critics deemed the photograph contrary to East Asian beauty standards of fair skin and said it perpetuated Western stereotypes of Asian faces, such as slanted eyes.

At least one photo editor has praised her work in the past for creating an aesthetic that was neither aping Western magazines or Japanese and South Korean ones. And in 2019, the Global Times described Chen as China's answer to U.S. photographer Annie Leibovitz, calling her a "shining star" with a unique perspective.

Dior removed the photograph, adding that it was part of an art project and not an advertisement. In a statement on its Chinese social media account, Dior said it "respects the feelings of Chinese people" and "strictly abides by Chinese laws and regulations."

Chen's social media post said she accepted criticism of her work inclu-

ding that for a certain brand, but didn't specify Dior.

The photograph taken down from the Shanghai exhibit was shot in a similar style to a series of covers Chen did for British fashion magazine i-D that featured 12 young Chinese women from different ethnic minorities. Many of the women did not fit what has become a common definition of beauty in China — some had small eyes and others had freckles.

Ding Yining, a photo editor at Sixth Tone, praised Chen's work in a 2018 article for the state-backed English-language features website.

"From her works, it would seem that Chen prefers female models with narrow, single-lidded eyes and a sense of traditional East Asian elegance," Ding wrote.

Chen told Sixth Tone that "as a professional visual artist, I believe that I should help more people recognize the face of modern Chinese beauty with greater confidence." MDT/AP

JPMorgan's Dimon regrets joke about Chinese Communist Party

KEN SWEET, NEW YORK

JPMORGAN Chase CEO Jamie Dimon said last week that "he truly regrets" a quip he made this week about JPMorgan outlasting the Chinese Communist Party.

Dimon was speaking at an event in Boston where he said, "I was just in Hong Kong and I made a joke that the Communist Party is celebrating its 100th year. So is JPMorgan."

"I'd make you a bet we last longer," he said,

adding that he couldn't likely make those comments in China itself.

Many large U.S. banks have operations in China, and their ability to do business there and how successful they are is often at the whim of the Chinese government.

Dimon traveled to Hong Kong just last week as part of a tour of JPMorgan's operation in Asia, his first trip there since the pandemic. Dimon got a special Hong Kong government waiver to COVID-19 quarantine



Jamie Dimon

protocols as part of his trip.

A JPMorgan spokeswoman said that the bank remains committed to

doing business in China.

Dimon is known for speaking his mind, with few filters in between. But he said he regretted the comments he made about China.

"It's never right to joke about or denigrate any group of people, whether it's a country, its leadership, or any part of a society and culture," he said in a statement.

"I was trying to emphasize the strength and longevity of our company," he added in a separate statement. MDT/AP

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

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AP PHOTO



In this image made from aerial video, smoke rises from burning buildings during a protest in the capital of Honiara, Solomon Islands, yesterday

Australia sending troops to Solomon Islands as unrest grows

DAVID RISING & ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

AUSTRALIA announced yesterday it is sending police, troops and diplomats to the Solomon Islands to help after anti-government demonstrators defied lockdown orders and took to the streets for a second day in violent protests.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the deployment includes a detachment of 23 federal police officers and up to 50 more to provide security at critical infrastructure sites, as well as 43 defense force personnel, a patrol boat and at least five diplomats.

The first personnel left Australia on yesterday with more going today, and the deployment was expected to last for a few weeks, Morrison said.

"Our purpose here is to provide stability and security," he said.

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare declared a lockdown Wednesday after about 1,000 people gathered in protest in the capital, Honiara, demanding his resignation over a host of domestic issues.

The protesters breached the National Parliament building and burned the thatched roof of a nearby building, the government said.

They also set fire to a police station and other buildings.

"They were intent on destroying our nation and ... the trust that was slowly building among our people," the government said in a statement.

Morrison said Sogavare requested assistance from Australia amid the violence under a bilateral security treaty.

"It is not the Australian government's intention in any way to intervene in the

pital locked down from 7 p.m. Wednesday through 7 p.m. Friday after saying he had "witnessed another sad and unfortunate event aimed at bringing a democratically elected government down."

"I had honestly thought that we had gone past the darkest days in the history of our country," he said. "However, today's events are a painful reminder that we have a long way to go."

Despite an announce-

ment in 2019, particularly leaders of the Solomon Islands' most populous province, Malaita, when he cut the country's diplomatic ties with Taiwan, switching its diplomatic allegiance to China instead.

Local media reported that many of the protesters were from Malaita, whose premier, Daniel Suidani, has been at odds with Sogavare, whom he accuses of being too close to Beijing.

Suidani said he was not responsible for the violence in Honiara, but told the Solomon Star News that he agreed with the calls for Sogavare to resign.

"Over the last 20 years Mannaseh Sogavare has been in power, the plight of Solomon Islanders has worsened whilst at the same time foreigners have reaped the best of the country's resources," Suidani was quoted as saying. "People are not blind to this and do not want to be cheated anymore."

Honiara journalist Elizabeth Osifelo said the cause of chaos was a "mixture of a lot of frustration."

"The switch to China from Taiwan, that was also, I could, say part of it," Osifelo told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "It's not probably what has triggered the situation, but that has also pretty much contributed to some of the tension we've been experiencing." MDT/AP

Sogavare angered many when he cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan, switching its diplomatic allegiance to China instead

internal affairs of the Solomon Islands. That is for them to resolve," he said.

"Our presence there does not indicate any position on the internal issues of the Solomon Islands," Morrison added.

Australia led an international police and military force called the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands that restored peace in the country after bloody ethnic violence from 2003 until 2017.

Sogavare ordered the ca-

ment from the Solomon Islands police force that they would be conducting increased patrols through Honiara amid the lockdown, protesters again took to the streets yesterday.

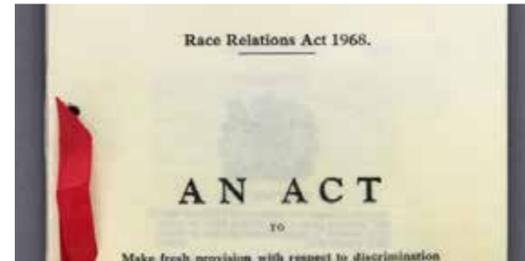
Local journalist Gina Kekea posted photos on Twitter of a bank, shops and a school in flames.

Morrison said he decided to send help after it became clear that police in the Solomon Islands were "stretched."

Sogavare angered many

this day in history

1968 RACE DISCRIMINATION LAW TIGHTENED



The new Race Relations Act has come into force, making it illegal to refuse housing, employment or public services to people because of their ethnic background.

The Act has extended the powers of the Race Relations Board to deal with complaints of discrimination; and set up a new body, the Community Relations Commission, to promote "harmonious community relations".

Presenting the Bill to Parliament, the Home Secretary, Jim Callaghan, said, "The House has rarely faced an issue of greater social significance for our country and our children."

One of the most controversial areas of the Act has been the exclusion of government services, such as the police, from legal proceedings.

Opposition MP Quintin Hogg said it was unfair to treat private employers more strictly than public employers.

"Why should the ordinary subject be liable to an action for damages, as the Home Secretary has decided that he should be, but the Home Secretary get off scot free?" he asked the Commons.

Race has become a major issue following the speech in April of the right-wing Conservative MP, Enoch Powell, against immigration into Britain from Commonwealth countries.

He spoke of a "river of blood" should immigration continue, and his remarks caused outrage among MPs.

Mr Powell was sacked from the shadow cabinet soon afterwards for his racist views, but the government was taken aback to find some sections of the media applauding the speech.

Thousands of workers staged strikes in protest and marched to Downing Street in support.

'Fair but tough' promise

Mr Powell's speech came after the sudden influx of Kenyan Asians into the country, driven out of Kenya by draconian laws denying them employment.

At the beginning of the year, up to 1,000 Kenyan Asians, who hold British passports, were arriving in Britain each month.

Amid growing unrest, the government rushed through the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in March, restricting the number of Kenyan Asians who could enter the country to those who had a relative who was already a British resident.

The new Race Relations Act is intended to counter-balance the Immigration Act, and so fulfil the government's promise to be "fair but tough" on immigrants.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Race Relations Act 1968 was the second in a family of three laws on race relations in Britain.

It was intended to strengthen Britain's first-ever race relations legislation, passed in 1965, which made it illegal to discriminate in any place of public resort, such as hotels or cinemas.

The 1965 Act was brought in against strong resistance to combat the "colour bar" - the common practice of banning non-white people from using public services or entering public places.

However, discrimination in other areas was still widespread, and the Act was superseded and strengthened by the 1968 legislation.

Both Acts were replaced by a third Race Relations Act in 1976, which significantly strengthened the law.

For the first time, it defined direct and indirect discrimination, and also founded the Commission for Racial Equality.

Following the Macpherson report into the death of Stephen Lawrence, the 1976 Act was amended in 2000 to include the police for the first time.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
The giddy Leo moon spends the day in opposition with dream-big Jupiter, helping you tap into your creative energy whilst examining which of your pipedream plans are worth pursuing.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
The moon leaps forward into fellow-earth sign Virgo. Luna's presence here amps up your need for pleasure, romance, and creative self-expression.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
You're likely to feel caught between past and present as you wrestle with old feelings that skew your vision of reality. Aim to acknowledge what elements of your past are worth letting go of.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
The ambitious Leo moon urges you to get your ducks in a row and organize your workflow, while her opposition with big-hearted Jupiter has you re-assessing the future of joint collaborations and financial concerns.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
What's taking place in your one on ones, Leo? The universe is asking you to explore the give-and-take happening in the relationship department as the moon finishes her journey through your sign today.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You're wrapping up your stay in solitude today, Virgo. The moon spends the day meandering through big-hearted Leo, helping you work through emotional knots that need untangling in peace.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Give yourself permission to be a social butterfly today, Libra. You're in need of connection to the people you cherish and to take a closer look at the goals you have in mind.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
One final push on the career front is all you need today, Scorpio. The moon's presence in show-stopping Leo encourages you to contemplate your current trajectory and make any necessary adjustments.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You can't help but think about your larger place in the world today. What comes next for you? The moon prowls through self-focused Leo and spends the day in opposition with your ruling planet.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
The moon wraps up her stay in heart-centered Leo with an opposition with feel-good Jupiter, helping you tune into the current stories swirling around your latent talents and resources waiting to be activated.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You can't turn away from the stories brewing in your close relationships. The moon trots through the tail end of love-seeking Leo, pointing your focus towards the stories brewing in your close relationships.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Put the finishing touches on any looming work projects and prepare to move on. Later, Luna leaps into rational Virgo, turning your focus towards your close relationships.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

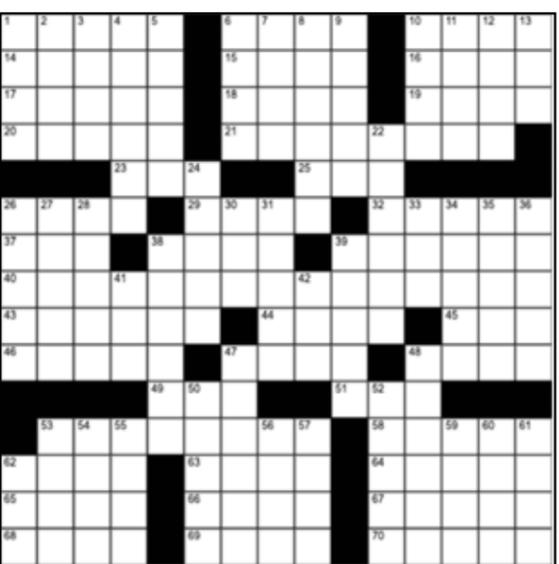
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-4	4	cloudy
Harbin	-14	-6	clear
Tianjin	2	6	overcast
Urumqi	-10	-6	cloudy
Xi'an	-1	9	cloudy
Lhasa	-4	14	cloudy
Chengdu	7	13	cloudy
Chongqing	11	14	overcast
Kunming	9	21	clear
Nanjing	9	11	drizzle
Shanghai	13	15	drizzle
Wuhan	4	9	overcast
Hangzhou	10	16	overcast
Taipei	21	25	cloudy
Guangzhou	19	26	clear
Hong Kong	18	25	clear
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	2	moderate snow
Frankfurt	0	8	clear
Paris	5	11	cloudy
London	8	13	cloudy
New York	6	14	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Scorch; 6- Croat, e.g.; 10- Capital of Fiji; 14- Academy award; 15- Expensive seating area; 16- Quod ___ demonstrandum; 17- Roman goddess of the moon; 18- Cabinet dept.; 19- Follow; 20- Catches; 21- Unexpected gain; 23- Long fish; 25- Vegas roller; 26- Latin lesson word; 29- Gumbo vegetable; 32- Truman's birthplace; 37- Semi; 38- Burn soother; 39- Niche; 40- Typical instance; 43- First day of the week; 44- Periods of history; 45- Canine command; 46- Sight-related; 47- Goes wrong; 48- Old Fords; 49- If I ___ a Hammer; 51- Driving peg; 53- Early fruit; 58- Tenuous substances; 62- Bandleader Puente; 63- Collar type; 64- ___ Gay; 65- Pass over; 66- Prying; 67- Lost a lap; 68- O.T. book; 69- Kind of code; 70- 1,000 kilograms;

DOWN: 1- Lays down the lawn; 2- The doctor ___; 3- Final Four org.; 4- Sacred river of India; 5- Rub out or remove from memory; 6- Move sideways, killed; 7- Burt's ex; 8- To-do list; 9- "Otello" composer; 10- Stiff bristle; 11- Caspian Sea feeder; 12- Colorado resort; 13- City in GA; 22- Guys; 24- Hard candy; 26- You ___ right; 27- State of confusion; 28- Representative; 30- Pond fish; 31- Allude; 33- Take steps; 34- Damp; 35- Evade; 36- Leases; 38- Geronimo, e.g.; 39- ___ of thousands; 41- Start of the 16th century; 42- Like some vbs.; 47- Newspaper executive; 48- Rough shelter; 50- Sports area; 52- Discharge; 53- Wheel parts; 54- Busy; 55- Portnoy's creator; 56- Attitude; 57- "Only Time" singer; 59- In a jiffy; 60- North Carolina university; 61- "No Ordinary Love" singer; 62- Foot digit;

Yesterday's solution



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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	



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

LINDSEY BAHR,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

EVERYTHING in "House of Gucci" is over the top. The accents. The performances. The fashion. The settings. The runtime. The music. The greed. This movie knows exactly what it is and, sweetie, it is gloriously decadent, ridiculous fun.

There is an alternate universe in which "House of Gucci" is a subtle Italian-language film. Perhaps it's a more straightforward tragedy. Maybe it's even a limited series taking the viewer back to the origins of the Italian luxury label, in 1921. But director Ridley Scott, and screenwriters Becky Johnston and Roberto Bentivegna, have chosen the route of operatic artificiality. You don't cast Jared Leto as clownish Fredo-type and have him act against a father played by Al Pacino by accident. Big is the point.

Based on a book by Sara Gay Forden, "House of Gucci" is about the dissolution of the Gucci dynasty. Their reign over the eponymous leather goods and fashion house lasted only three generations. But as any new money family knows, by the time the third generation takes over, usually no one is left to remember a time when there wasn't extraordinary wealth and privilege.

And this is where we pick up with the Gucci family, with the business being run by founder Guccio Gucci's sons Rodolfo (Jeremy Irons) and Aldo (Pacino). Scott's film glosses over the other second-generation siblings in part to streamline an already sprawling story but mostly to hammer in the father-son themes. Aldo's son is Paolo (Leto), a fool with delusions of grandeur and little talent to back



Lady Gaga as Patrizia Reggiani in "House of Gucci."

DRIVE IN

'HOUSE OF GUCCI' IS PURE, UNAPOLOGETIC DECADENCE

it up. Rodolfo's son is Maurizio (Adam Driver) who is smart but would rather study law than join in the family business. Our entry to this world, however, is an outsider: Patrizia Reggiani (Lady Gaga), a local bombshell and party girl who meets Maurizio by chance. Her eyes light up with

manic purpose when she hears his last name is Gucci and she makes it her mission to become part of his life. This might sound sinister, especially if you know where it all ends up, but it's actually quite charming at first. The beginning of their odyssey plays like a breezy romantic comedy, with Patrizia as

the gentle hunter of Driver's soft-spoken and bashful prey. Both are happy and in love and they stay together even after Rodolfo cuts his son off for choosing to marry someone beneath his station. And it's true, Patrizia might not have much in the way of education or culture and mistake Klimt for Picasso, but she's a way with people too and, we'll come to find out, is a natural Machiavelli.

"House of Gucci" presents a fascinating and insane story that just keeps getting more unbelievable. It was a big, glamorous mess and deserves a big, glamorously messy movie, right down to the performances and all-over-the-place accents. But if the idea of watching Leto and Pacino chew the scenery together sounds unappealing, this movie might not be for you. Everyone is going for broke here.

And in spite of the absurdity, it is stupidly watchable. If you don't know or remember the details of what went down, save the search for after. Just wear your gaudiest designer logo, order a martini at the bar and give in to the easy pleasures of "House of Gucci."

"House of Gucci," a United Artists Releasing release in theaters last Wednesday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "some sexual content, language, brief nudity and violence." Running time: 157 minutes. ★★☆☆

★☆☆☆

AD

- 合夥人 PARTNERS:**
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 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °
 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °
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FASHION

METAVEVERSE CAPSULE

FOLLOWING their widely praised Expedition and The Backstreet collections, The North Face teams up with Taiwanese streetwear staple Invincible once again this season to introduce the exclusive and limited edition Metaverse Explorer collection. Marking the trilogy instalment in their three year long collaboration, Metaverse Explorer delves into the creative synergy of the 1990s through the lens of futuristic exploration. Imbuing futuristic styles into classic outdoor apparel, Invincible brings Metaverse to the forefront of The North Face this year. Colourful neon inks are infused into The North Face's signature Mountain Light Jacket and Nuptse Down Jacket to create a brilliant galaxy hurtling us into the future. A mottled and nostalgic vintage effect is achieved with a special printing process to present The North Face's rich and diverse brand history in a 90s context - paying tribute to retro fashion while stepping into the future. Mr. Akio Hasegawa, a long-term INVINCIBLE collaborator, is invited again to demonstrate his individual aestheticism with a contemporary street culture enriched in every piece of this collection.



TASTE OF EDESIA

Christmas at Sheraton

IRENE SAM, MDT

CHRISTMAS is almost here and Sheraton Grand Macao is offering an array of festive menus at The Conservatory and Feast to raise the spirits and celebrate this magical festive season.

The Conservatory prides itself on the robust British inspired fare. Between December 23 - 26, one can enjoy festive roasts including roast turkey breast and leg ballotine with cranberry and caraway stuffing with hearty sides followed with festive desserts.

Special roast pork shoulder ham created by Sous Chef Ben Hu is marinated for more than 12 hours with various spices and herbs before being slow-cooked for at least 18 hours. The final roasting method imparts the

smokiness to this tender fall-off-the-bone pork unlike any other. Those who prefer to celebrate at home can select their favourites from the extensive festive takeaway menu, which includes herb roasted turkey, baked honey gammon ham, Christmas stollen, mince pies and selective wines.

The festive dinner buffet at Feast is especially popular due to its lavish variety of signature dishes from around the globe. On December 24 and 25, guests can indulge in traditional roast turkey with stuffing, gammon ham, seafood, Japanese konro grill, Christmas desserts to Sichuan Mala hotpot. On New Year's Eve, one can enjoy fresh seafood, slow-roast herb-crusted prime beef ribs, heartwarming stews and many more evergreen favourites.

OPINION

World Views

Joseph Bak-Coleman, University of Washington
 MDT/The Conversation



THOUSANDS HARMED BY FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM LOST IN META'S 'AVERAGE USER' DATA

Fall 2021 has been filled with a steady stream of media coverage arguing that Meta's Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram social media platforms pose a threat to users' mental health and well-being, radicalize, polarize users and spread misinformation.

Are these technologies – embraced by billions – killing people and eroding democracy? Or is this just another moral panic?

According to Meta's PR team and a handful of contrarian academics and journalists, there is evidence that social media does not cause harm and the overall picture is unclear. They cite apparently conflicting studies, imperfect access to data and the difficulty of establishing causality to support this position.

Some of these researchers have surveyed social media users and found that social media use appears to have at most minor negative consequences on individuals. These results seem inconsistent with years of journalistic reporting, Meta's leaked internal data, common sense intuition and people's lived experience.

Teens struggle with self-esteem, and it doesn't seem far-fetched to suggest that browsing Instagram could make that worse. Similarly, it's hard to imagine so many people refusing to get vaccinated, becoming hyperpartisan or succumbing to conspiracy theories in the days before social media.

So who is right? As a researcher who studies collective behavior, I see no conflict between the research (methodological quibbles aside), leaks and people's intuition. Social media can have catastrophic effects, even if the average user only experiences minimal consequences.

To see how this works, consider a world in which Instagram has a rich-get-richer and poor-get-poorer effect on the well-being of users. A majority, those already doing well to begin with, find Instagram provides social affirmation and helps them stay connected to friends. A minority, those who are struggling with depression and loneliness, see these posts and wind up feeling worse.

If you average them together in a study, you might not see much of a change over time. This could explain why findings from surveys and panels are able to claim minimal impact on average. More generally, small groups in a larger sample have a hard time changing the average.

Yet if we zoom in on the most at-risk people, many of them may have moved from occasionally sad to mildly depressed or from mildly depressed to dangerously so. This is precisely what Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen reported in her congressional testimony: Instagram creates a downward spiraling feedback loop among the most vulnerable teens.

The tendency to ignore harm on the margins isn't unique to mental health or even the consequences of social media. Allowing the bulk of experience to obscure the fate of smaller groups is a common mistake, and I'd argue that these are often the people society should be most concerned about.

Establishing causality from observational data is challenging, so challenging that progress on this front garnered the 2021 Nobel in economics. And social scientists are not well positioned to run randomized controlled trials to definitively establish causality, particularly for social media platform design choices such as altering how content is filtered and displayed.

But Meta is. The company has petabytes of data on human behavior, many social scientists on its payroll and the ability to run randomized control trials in parallel with millions of users. They run such experiments all the time to understand how best to capture users' attention, down to every button's color, shape and size.

Meta could come forward with irrefutable and transparent evidence that their products are harmless, even to the vulnerable, if it exists. Has the company chosen not to run such experiments or has it run them and decided not to share the results?

Either way, Meta's decision to instead release and emphasize data about average effects is telling.

[Abridged]

Interpol yesterday elected a contentious official from the United Arab Emirates as its new president during the international law enforcement body's annual General Assembly held in Istanbul.

Maj. Gen. Ahmed Naser al-Raisi, inspector general at the United Arab Emirates' interior ministry and a member of Interpol's executive committee, was elected for one four-year term, the global policing body announced. He has been accused by human rights groups of involvement in torture and arbitrary detentions in the UAE.

Interpol said al-Raisi was elected following three rounds of voting and received 68.9% of the votes cast in the final round.

"It's an honor to have been elected to serve as the next president of Interpol," the global police agency quoted al-Raisi as saying.

The vote for president was being closely watched since the first-ever Chinese president of the body, Meng Hongwei, vanished midway through his four-year term on a return trip to China in 2018. It subsequently emerged that he had been detained, accused of bribery and other alleged crimes.

AP PHOTO



Dogs are seen in a cage at a dog meat farm in Siheung, South Korea

ANIMAL RIGHTS

SOUTH KOREA TO LAUNCH TASK FORCE ON BANNING DOG MEAT

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

SOUTH Korea yesterday said it will launch a task force to consider outlawing dog meat consumption after the country's president offered to look into ending the centuries-old practice.

Restaurants that serve dog meat are dwindling in South Korea as younger people find dog meat a less appetizing dining option and pets are growing in popularity. Recent surveys indicate more people oppose banning dog meat even if many don't eat it.

In a statement, seven government offices including the Agriculture Ministry said they decided to launch the group comprising officials, civilian experts and people from related organizations to deliver recommendations on possibly outlawing dog meat consumption. It said authorities will gather information on dog farms, restaurants and other facilities while examining public opinion.

The statement noted that "public awareness of their basic rights and animal rights issues are tangled in a complicated manner" when it comes to dog meat consumption.

Public opinion suggests "people have negative views both about eating dogs and legally banning it," it added.

The government says the initiative, the first of its kind,

doesn't necessarily guarantee the banning of dog meat. The seemingly vague stance drew quick protests from both dog farmers and animal rights activists.

Farmers say the task force's launch is nothing but a formality to shut down their farms and dog meat restaurants, while activists argue the government's announcement lacks resolve to outlaw dog meat consumption.

Ju Yeongbong, general secretary of an association of dog farmers, accused the government of "trampling upon" the people's right to eat what they want and farmers' right to live.

Lee Won Bok, head of the Korea Association for Animal Protection, called the government's announcement "very disappointing" because it didn't include any concrete plans on how to ban dog meat consumption.

"We have deep doubt about whether the government has a resolve to put an end to dog meat consumption," Lee said.

About 1 million to 1.5 million dogs are killed each year for food in South Korea, a decrease from several millions about 10-20 years ago. Thousands of farmers currently raise a total of about 1 million to 2 million dogs for meat in South Korea, according to Ju's organization.

Ju said the farmers,

mostly poor, elderly people, want the government to temporarily legalize dog meat consumption for about 20 years, with the expectation that demand will gradually taper off. Lee said animal rights organizations want a quicker end of the business.

"South Korea is the only developed country where people eat dogs, an act that is undermining our international image," Lee said. "Even if the K-pop band BTS and the (Korean drama) Squid Game are ranked No. 1 in the world, foreigners are still associating South Korea with dog meat and the Korean War."

Lee accused many farmers of animal cruelty and other illegal activities when they raise and slaughter their dogs. Ju said that activists "exaggerated" such information, and that it only applies to a small number of farms.

According to Lee, dogs are consumed as food in North Korea, China and Vietnam as well as in South Korea.

In September, President Moon Jae-in, a dog lover, asked during a meeting with his prime minister "if it's time to carefully consider" a ban of dog meat consumption, sparking a new debate over the issue.

Dog meat is neither legal nor explicitly banned in South Korea. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



European Union's drug regulator yesterday authorized Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine for use on children from 5 to 11 years old, clearing the way for shots to be administered to millions of elementary school pupils amid a new wave of infections sweeping across the continent. It is the first time the European Medicines Agency has cleared a COVID-19 vaccine for use in young children.

Germany Official figures released yesterday show Germany has become the latest country to surpass 100,000 deaths from COVID-19 since the pandemic began. Germany's disease control agency said it recorded 351 additional deaths in connection with the coronavirus over the past 24 hours, taking the total toll to 100,119. In Europe, Germany is the fifth country to pass that mark, after Russia, the United Kingdom, Italy and France.

Serbia Thousands rallied in central Belgrade on Wednesday against the populist government's policies that protesters say favor interests of foreign investors over those of the Balkan nation's citizens and are bad for the environment. More than 2,000 people gathered outside the Serbian presidency building, blowing whistles and blocking traffic before marching through the central city zone toward the parliament and government buildings.

AP PHOTO



Russia A fire at a coal mine in Siberia killed 11 people and injured more than 40 others yesterday, with dozens of others still trapped, authorities said. Efforts to rescue those trapped in the mine were halted in the afternoon because of an explosion threat, and rescuers were rushed out of the mine, administrators of the mine told the Interfax news agency. The blaze took place in the Kemerovo region in southwestern Siberia. Russia's state Tass news agency reported, citing an unnamed emergency official, that coal dust caught fire, and that smoke quickly filled the Litsvyazhnaya mine through the ventilation system.