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GRAB A WARM COAT BECAUSE TEMPERATURES MAY DROP ABRUPTLY TO 12 DEGREES CELSIUS THIS WEEK: WEATHER REPORT

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MESSI WON THE BALLON D'OR FOR A RECORD-EXTENDING SEVENTH TIME AFTER EARNING HIS FIRST MAJOR INTERNATIONAL TROPHY WITH ARGENTINA

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AP PHOTO



Myanmar A court postponed its verdict yesterday in the trial of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to allow testimony from an additional witness, a senior member of her political party. The court agreed with a defense motion that it allow Zaw Myint Maung, who had previously been unable to come to court for health reasons, to add his testimony, a legal official said. The court had been scheduled to deliver a verdict yesterday on charges of incitement and violating coronavirus restrictions.

Singapore's top court has postponed an appeal hearing challenging the death sentence of a Malaysian man who is believed to be mentally disabled, his lawyer said yesterday. Defense lawyer M. Ravi said he had requested the hearing scheduled for yesterday be delayed. The Court of Appeal has not informed him of a new date, the lawyer added. The hearing was originally scheduled for Nov. 10. The hearing was originally scheduled for Nov. 10, a day before Nagaenthran K. Dharmalingam was to be executed by hanging for trying to smuggle less than 43 grams of heroin into the country.

AP PHOTO



Japan confirmed yesterday its first case of the new omicron coronavirus variant, a visitor who recently arrived from Namibia, an official said. A man in his 30s tested positive upon arrival at Narita airport on Sunday and was isolated and is being treated at a hospital. Matsuno did not identify his nationality, citing privacy reasons. A genome analysis at the National Institute of Infectious Diseases confirmed that he was infected with the new variant, which was first identified in South Africa.

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OMICRON BRINGS VACCINE INEQUITY HOME TO ROOST

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AP PHOTO



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JUNKET SCANDAL
SUNCITY TO SUSPEND VIP OPERATIONS TODAY: REPORT

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COLD AGAIN

Low of 12 degrees forecast for Thursday

THE Meteorological and Geophysics Bureau announced in a special note that the weather will continue to be fine and dry during the week. Nonetheless, a replenishment of the northeast monsoon will arrive at the South China Coast area November 30, bringing the city stronger northerly winds that will bring the temperature down to a minimum temperature of around 12 degrees Celsius tomorrow. The bureau reminds the public to be aware of the temperature drop and prepare accordingly.

FIVE days after its chief executive officer was arrested, Suncity Group is closing all its VIP gaming rooms in Macau casinos and no longer paying some staff, said people familiar with the matter, Bloomberg reported last night.

The biggest junket operator in Macau will close its rooms from Dec. 1 and stop paying some employees from the same date, said the people, who asked not to be identified as they're not authorized to speak publicly. Some employees were also told that their salaries for November may not be paid on time, said the people, adding that it wasn't clear if the closures are temporary or permanent.

The salary suspensions affect at least one third of Suncity's workers in Macau, one of the people estimated.

According to Bloomberg, Suncity staff cannot currently access company systems such as email and chatrooms due to the police investigation, two of the people said. The group's website has also gone offline.

Since Chau was detained over the weekend, the company's Hong Kong-listed arm Suncity Group Holdings Ltd. which doesn't include its junket operation, has plunged over 50%, while a Bloomberg gauge of casino operators has dropped 10.4%.

News of Suncity's VIP

JUNKET SCANDAL

SUNCITY TO SUSPEND VIP OPERATIONS TODAY: REPORT



room closures and staff furlough was first reported by local media outlets Hong Kong Economic Times and HK01 yesterday

On Monday, Suncity said in a regulatory filing that Alvin Chau, who was detained on November 26 and is currently in pre-trial detention, intends to resign as chairman and executive director.

The Judiciary Police said on Sunday that Chau confessed to establishing overseas gambling platforms and carrying out illegal virtual betting activities. As part of their regular activities, junkets service high-rollers and extend credit to them.

"We are heading for a

junket-free scenario for Macau casinos," said Angela Hanlee, an analyst with Bloomberg Intelligence. Macau gaming companies may experience severe shrinkage in the VIP gaming business as authorities tighten supervision over junkets in mainland China, she wrote in a November 26 note.

Suncity confirmed that none of its subsidiaries or staff are under investigation in connection with Chau's arrest.

While the firm said it is dependent on financial support from Chau and his related companies, the board doesn't expect the incident to have a material adverse impact on Suncity's daily

operations, according to its HKSE filing. Suncity's listed arm does not include its junket operation.

The group's license as a gambling promoter (or "junket" in the industry lingo) is due to expire on December 31. The license is owned by Alvin Chau's sole-proprietorship company.

The swift downfall of an organization that once saw HKD180 billion (\$23 billion) bet by high rollers in its VIP rooms in a single month underscores China's intensifying crackdown in the world's biggest gaming hub.

Suncity accounted for more than 40% of Macau's junket market, or about 15% of the city's gaming revenue in 2019, according to JPMorgan Chase & Co. analysts including DS Kim, as quoted by Bloomberg. They predict that Macau's junket-driven VIP revenue pile could contract by half in the coming weeks. By 2023, the VIP sector may only drive about 4% of casino operators' earnings, they estimated, compared to 15% in 2019. **MDT/AGENCIES**

ANDRÉ CHEONG ASSURES PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE OF BO WEBSITE SECURITY



THE website of the Official Gazette (BO) complies with the highest security standards stipulated in the Cybersecurity Law, Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong told a parliamentary committee yesterday.

The Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly is in the process of reviewing the proposed amendments to Law No. 3/1999, which sets out the manner in which the BO should be published.

Chan Chak Mo, the pre-

sident of the Committee, revealed after a committee meeting that cybersecurity concerns were raised in the context of the government planning to shift from an offline-online hybrid publishing model to an exclusively online approach for the BO.

In response, Cheong assured the committee that the BO website is fully compliant with the guidelines of the Cybersecurity Center, so he believes security would not be a problem.

Citing Cheong, Chan

said that 11 of the 116 workers in the Printing Bureau (IO) work in the IT team. The committee president was assured that IT workers from other departments are available to support the IO team when necessary.

Cheong also provided an assurance that when technical problems occur and obstruct the online publication of the BO, printing will resume as a temporary means to get the BO published, as outlined in the proposal. **AL**

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Macau reservoirs set to hold 12 days of water reserves after major expansion

ANTHONY LAM

EXPANSION works will be carried out on two of the city's four reservoirs to expand local water supply capacity from seven to 12 days, announced Wong Soi Man, director of the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA), on the sidelines of a private event yesterday.

The reservoirs to be expanded are the Ka-Hó Reservoir and the Seac Pai Van Reservoir.

While the city has been heavily reliant on water supplied from the north side of the border, a local supply capacity that can last for seven days has been retained in case of emergencies.

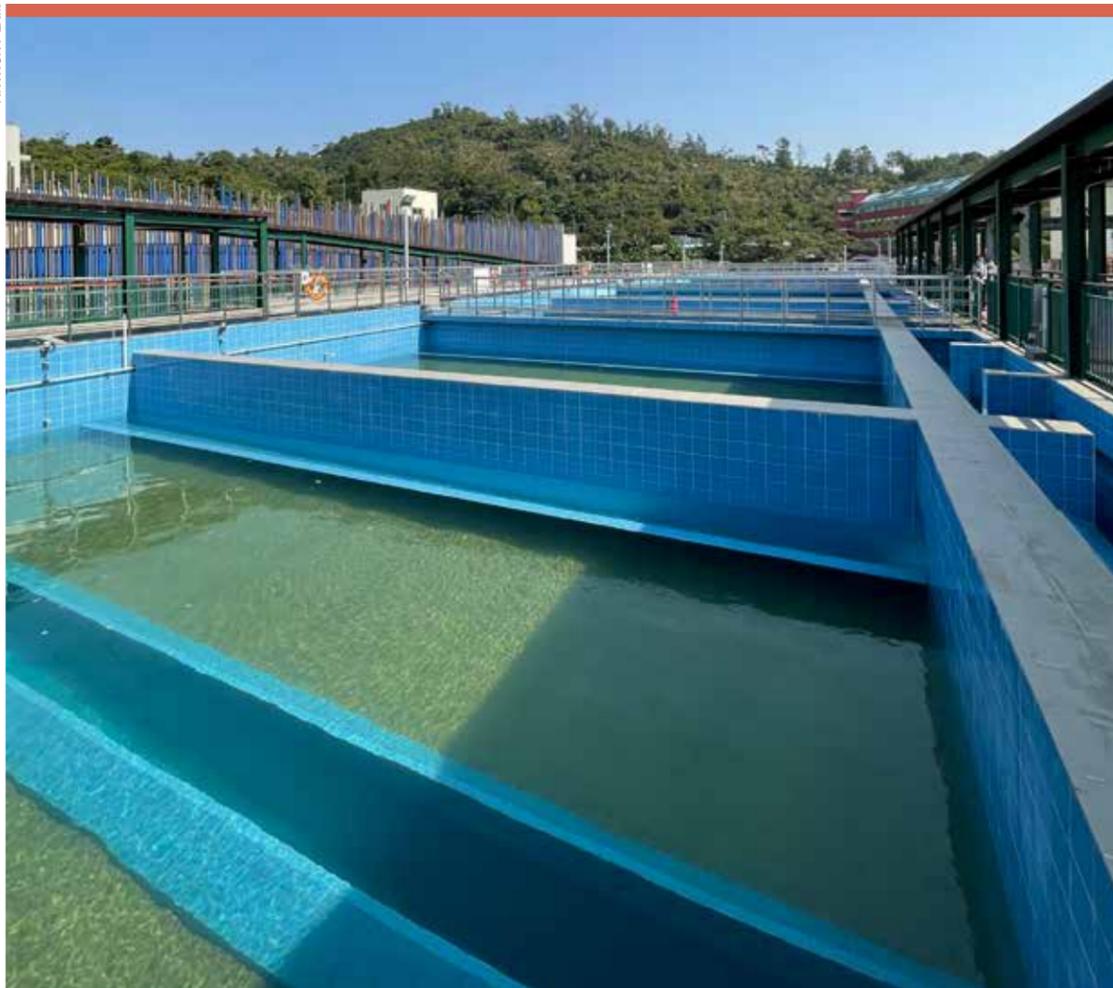
With this capacity, the city can survive for a week thanks to the four reservoirs even if no water is supplied to Macau for some reason.

In light of continued economic development and population growth, the need to expand some of the city's reservoirs has been on the table. The focus for expansion has been set on the two aforementioned reservoirs.

Once the proposed expansions are complete, the city's water storage capacity will be increased from 1.9 million cubic meters to 3.12 million cubic meters, providing five extra days of local water supply.

However, water consumption continues to rise. Nacky Kuan, the executive director of Macao Water, said at the same event that the company has recorded a slight rise in water consumption amid the gra-

ANTHONY LAM



dual economic uptrend.

Compared year on year, the city's water consumption levels in the first 10 months have risen 1%. Commercial water consumption has gone up 8% due to the rise in tourist arrivals and resumption of commercial activities.

At the same time, residential water consumption has dropped a single percentage point. Kuan

attributed this decrease to the extension of the validity period for SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid tests for border-crossing purposes, which has seen residents more likely to travel across the border.

Despite the overall rise in water consumption in the first 10 months, the figure is still down 7% from consumption levels in 2019, which were the highest the city has ever seen.

Kuan also said that the company had learned lessons from the severe Typhoon Hato, which brought devastating floods to the city, cut off power supplies and eventually brought the city to a halt for days. Without electricity, water pumps could not operate and no water was supplied.

As a result, Kuan confirmed that the company has chosen a

higher location for building the Seac Pai Van plant so as to avoid, as much as possible, the same situation happening again.

MACAO WATER OPENS NEW PLANT AT SEAC PAI VAN

The Macao Water Supply Company Limited (Macao Water) yesterday opened a new raw water treatment plant in Seac Pai Van.

Construction of the plant commenced in mid-2018 and took 32 months.

According to Macao Water, the Seac Pai Van Water Treatment Plant is connected with the Fourth Raw Water Pipeline to Macau and the distribution network, forming a complete public water supply system for raw water, water production and water transmission.

The completion of the new plant in Coloane has also ended Macau's reliance on unidirectional water supply from north to south, forming a dual core water supply layout for the peninsula and the islands area, effectively enhancing the capacity of the water supply system in case of emergencies.

Steve Clark, CEO of SUEZ Asia and chairman of the Macao Water board of directors, used a video speech to express his gratitude to the Macau SAR government, the general public and the community for their support and trust, which he said was integral to the success of SUEZ's integration with Macau's social development over the past 30 years.

MOP60K fines slated for failure to auto-exchange tax data

IN the future, financial entities that fail to conduct automatic tax information exchange may face fines ranging from MOP6,000 to MOP60,000, a parliamentary committee announced yesterday.

The Third Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly discussed an Amendment Bill regarding the law on tax information exchange.

It is proposed in the bill that failure to comply with the requirement to automatically exchange information could result in the violator being fined.

With regard to the act, the bill proposes that information and documentation be submitted to financial institutions when a client – whether new or existing – tries to open a new financial account.

It is also proposed that the five-year limit on exchange of specific information be scrapped, although members of the committee cited stipulations in the Commercial Code and other specialized legislation which states that companies and entities are legally bound to retain business or commercial documents for five years.

The bill also proposes that the scope be expanded so that future laws will have authority over retirement funds and Non-mandatory Central Provident Fund. As such, when the law is enacted, the managing entities of such funds will be governed by the law too.

Citing data from the Financial Services Bureau, Vong Hin Fai revealed that, as of the end of September, about 137,000 workers participated in any form of a retirement fund operated by nine private entities, seven of which are insurance agencies and

two of which are retirement management companies.

In the meantime, five insurance agencies and two retirement management companies are operating Non-mandatory Provident Fund services, covering a total of 100,054 workers.

In introducing the amendment to the committee, the government stated that the changes are required to further align Macau with the international standards set at the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes. **AL**



SCOTT GRAHAM

SHANGHAI WILLING TO TAKE PART IN BID TO DIVERSIFY MACAU

RENATO MARQUES

THE city of Shanghai is willing to play its part in responding to the central government's call to diversify Macau's economy through the development of projects in Hengqin intensive cooperation zone. The Chairman of the Council for the Promotion of International Trade of Shanghai, Zhou Minhao, made the pledge in a recorded speech presented at the press conference of the 26th Macao International Trade and Investment Fair (MIF).

"Over the recent years, Macau has made great achievements in the application of the 'one country, two systems' policy, and this September the State Council has rolled out the plan for the Macau and Guangdong intensive cooperation [zone] in Hengqin island. Shanghai is very much willing to take part in this opportunity," Zhou said. He added that the participation of Shanghai as "Partner City" of this year's event represents the first real project under the cooperation agreement between the two cities.

Zhou recalled that, in June this year, when Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng toured Shanghai, he met with the city's Mayor, Gong Zheng. The two agreed at the time on establishing cooperation in se-

RENATO MARQUES



veral fields, especially in the sector of meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE), a traditional strength of Macau.

"In June this year the CE, Ho Iat Seng, and our Mayor took part in the first meeting of the Shanghai-Macau coo-

operation, where they ... talked about the possible cooperation in the MICE industry and the upcoming MIF. This will be the first important moment of our cooperation," Zhou remarked. He explained that the Chinese megapolis has experience in organizing

exhibitions and conventions reaching back to 1918, when the first such company was created, and now has a sector comprising over 100 companies.

Speaking about the Shanghai exhibition pavilion at MIF, the chairman said it will focus

mainly on science and innovation projects, as well as those in investment, MICE, creative industries, and the travel industry.

"We will focus on these matters both online and offline, as we will have 16 exhibitors [from Shanghai] coming to Macau [to present their products and services]," he said.

As Zhou mentioned, this will be the first endeavor under the new cooperation agreement between Shanghai and Macau that the city hopes will expand and identify new opportunities within the new Hengqin intensive cooperation zone.

The president of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), Benson Lau, said in his speech that the city of Shanghai had been invited as the partner city for this year's MIF "to deepen the cooperation between Shanghai and Macau on multiple fronts: as an established economic, financial, trade, freight, and scientific innovation hub at home and abroad."

Besides the "Shanghai Pavilion," where the city will showcase its industries, products, and services, the two cities will also co-host the International Trade and Investment Forum, themed "Modern Service Industry Empowers the Transformation of Scientific and Technological Innovation Achievements."

The Trade and Investment Forum this year invites experts in finance, science, and technology, as well as other fields, to share insights and updates with local companies.

Trade and investment a priority over being an international fair: IPIM

RENATO MARQUES

CONTINUING to promote trade and investment in Macau is more important and a higher priority than keeping the standard as an international fair, the president of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), Benson Lau, said yesterday.

Questioned by the media on the topic during a press conference on the 26th Macao International Trade and Investment Fair (MIF), Lau said that the role of the MIF in promoting trade and investment among different countries and regions, especially with China and the Lusophone countries, was a clear priority over having

international participation on-site.

Lau noted that the Covid-19 pandemic is turning many international-level events "less international" due to travel restrictions, but "this is happening everywhere and not just in Macau." He noted that other locations around the globe are also facing similar difficulties and a "lack of internationalization" when compared with previous years.

The IPIM president remarked that organizers are striving as best they can to ensure the event remains productive, including resorting to online and virtual tools.

"We are doing our best online and offline to make

this event the best we possibly can. We are also communicating with exhibitors about what we are doing, and we have put our best efforts [into this hybrid] online and offline model, which is quite acceptable at the moment," Lau remarked. He added that additional effort is being expended to "step-up on content and improve the platforms for the users."

This year's MIF also sees a joint effort with other exhibitions and forums such as the Macao Franchise Expo 2021 and the 2021 Portuguese-speaking Countries Products and Services Exhibition (Macau) to leverage synergies when organizing an event

of this size in Macau while border restrictions still do not allow the entry of any foreigners.

This year's edition takes place between December 10 and 12 and, as per last year, will also include a series of smaller-scale events, including the "2021 Science and Technology Week and Innovation and Technology Achievement Exhibition" and "China Traditional Chinese Medicine Health (Macao) Brand Exhibition 2021."

This year, due to the lower number of participants in other events, these events are covering an area of 3,500 and 3,000 square meters respectively, a 10 and 12-fold increase of floorspace respectively.

RENATO MARQUES



In his speech, Lau said that the increased footprint of these two events is also related to the direction of the industrial development in Macau and the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Coopera-

tion Zone in Hengqin.

As in previous editions, the first day (December 10) is reserved for the attendance of professionals, while the fair is open to the general public on the following days.



Aux Beaux Arts - Christmas Eve & Christmas 5-course Dinner Set



Anytime - Christmas Afternoon Tea Set



Anytime & Pastry Bar - Cocoa Bomb



Anytime - Cheese & Chocolate Fondue



Anytime - Christmas Sugar Crush

Merry Gatherings at MGM

It is the time of gifting, receiving, and most important of all, feasting. As always, MGM celebrates the joyous season with all by crafting an array of gourmet delights, including exquisite French dining, Teppanyaki, decadent buffet, festive pastries, and everything sweet. Ring in the holidays at the restaurants from different regions all under one roof, each one guarantees sumptuous menus to light up the year-end gatherings for everyone.

Begin with a palatial feast full of exciting delicacies. **Aux Beaux Arts** offers exquisite French Christmas set menu such as *Pan Seared Chilean Seabass*, *Chestnut Velouté* and *Quail Roti*, allowing you to dine with an elegant atmosphere and casual sophistication of a 1930s brasserie, and complete with a signature cocktails, specialty Gin & Tonics or exquisite spirits as a nightcap at **ABA Bar**.

Grill 58 will be adding sparkles to the festive dining with its exclusive, two-nights only "Teppanyaki Escapade – Black and White Truffle" on December 24 & 25; meanwhile, for those opting for a more conventional setting, be enchanted by its Christmas dinner set that features premium ingredients cooked over firewood grill.

MGM is bringing the snowy winter charms to the Spectacle at MGM COTAI, welcoming all guests to immerse into the true sparks of winter wonderland in Macau, with a tempting selection of sweets at **Anytime**. Perfect under the chilly air is a cup of warm *Cocoa Bomb* that melts into a blossom of marshmallow and choco bits. The popular all-you-can-savor *Sugar Crush* will have a festive theme of time-limited treats. Don't miss out on the *Christmas Afternoon Tea Set*, and a winter special *Chocolate Fondue* a rich cocoa blend of 58% dark chocolate and a dash of

white and milk chocolate to create an extra silky mouthfeel and *Cheese Fondue* made with classic Swiss recipe of Gruyère, Tête de Moines and Emmental, melted in low heat along with white wines and Kirsch.

A staple in any festivity, scrumptious buffets with a myriad of international culinary delights is available at both MGM MACAU and MGM COTAI. Relish *Roasted Turkey*, *Seafood on Ice*, *Tuna Poke Bowl* and an assortment of *Christmas sweets* at **Coast**. Over at **Rossio**, guests are welcomed to feast on *Roasted Turkey Leg*, *Chocolate Log Cake*, *Christmas Stollen*, and more to fit your palates.

Savor the tantalizing moments with your friends and family, rejoice your holidays with our finest festive dining offers now! For more information, please visit **mgm.mo**.



Grill 58 - Christmas Eve & Christmas 5-course Dinner Set



Grill 58 - Christmas Eve & Christmas 8-course Teppanyaki Omakase



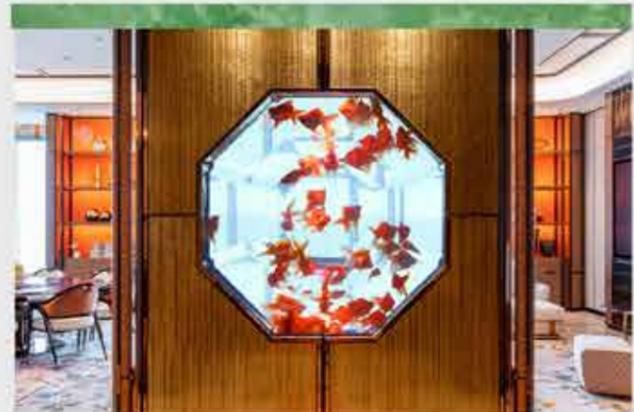
Coast & Rossio - Christmas Eve & Christmas Dinner Buffet

MGM'S EMERALD VILLA

Accentuating Macau's skyline with the Midas touch

Sitting gracefully above MGM COTAI is Macau's new luxury accommodation, Emerald Villa; an innovative vision brought to stunning reality, heralding a new era in Asia's luxury tourism.

Emerald Villa may have just celebrated its grand opening, but it has already garnered numerous awards for its exceptional interior design. It is the Winner of the SBID International Design Awards 2021 in the Hotel Bedroom & Suites Design category, as well as the Platinum Winner of the 2021 MUSE Design Awards in the Interior Design (Hotels & Resorts) category.



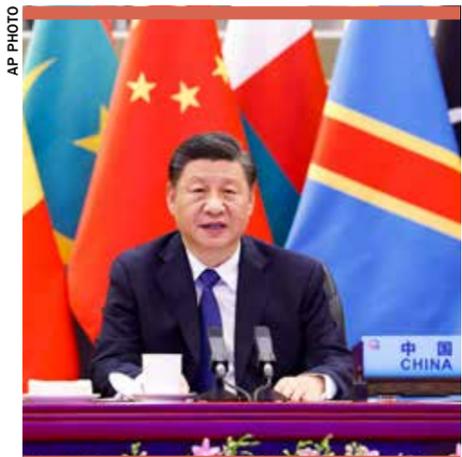
The exclusive accommodation is an experience in itself. Designed for ultimate space and privacy, each of the 28 villas boasts exquisite art pieces and cultural treats – all housed within breath-taking interiors. Whether it be the show-stopping diamond-shaped aquarium in the three-bedroom villas, or the moving sand art piece in the one-and-two-bedroom villas, every element reflects the charm of Chinese heritage and modern elegance, capturing MGM's enduring spirit of "Originality + Innovation".

Complementing the opulent interior design and décor are state-of-the-art equipment and high-end amenities. Distinguished guests are invited to sit back and relax on the Rio Chaise Lounge by famed Brazilian architect, Oscar Neimeyer, as they effortlessly control all devices with the in-room tablet, or enjoy the ambience from the rhythm interactive lighting wall feature. For those looking to elevate the luxurious experience, look no further than a little pampering in a private massage room, or a lively time in a karaoke suite. Whatever the request, a personal butler stands at the ready, 24 hours a day.

This is no ordinary hotel or suite – indeed, Emerald Villa is where extraordinary meets exquisiteness for an experience like no other.

With its innovative designs and exquisite details, Macau's newest landmark underlines the city's position as one of the world's top luxury destinations.





China to donate 600 million Covid-19 vaccine doses to Africa

CHINA has pledged to donate 600 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccines to Africa as the world grapples with the unequal distribution of the shots between rich and poor countries.

Chinese President Xi Jinping made the promise yesterday [Macau time] in a video speech to the opening ceremony of a China-Africa forum on economic cooperation.

He said China will supply 1 billion doses in all. The other 400 million are to come through other routes such as production by Chinese companies in Africa.

"We need to put people and their lives first, be guided by science, support waiving intellectual property rights on COVID-19 vaccines, and truly ensure the accessibility and affordability of vaccines in Africa to bridge the immunization gap," he said.

The two-day Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, which is held every three years, is being hosted by Senegal. **MDT/AP**

Chinese team reports racial abuse at table tennis worlds

CHINESE officials' formal complaint of racist abuse toward one of their players at the table tennis world championships in Texas was taken "very, very seriously," the sport's governing body said.

A racial slur seemed to be directed by an unidentified spectator at Liang Jingkun during his match on Friday at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston. The sixth-seeded Liang went on to beat Liam Pitchford of England.

"We got a complaint from the Chinese Table Tennis Association and we noticed something on one night ourselves," said Steve Dainton, chief executive of the International Table Tennis Federation.

"And as soon as we got that complaint, together with the local organizers, we took



China's Liang Jingkun (left) and Lin Gaoyuan

it very, very serious, and we started to take action," Dainton told Chinese broadcaster CGTN America.

Liang advanced to the men's singles semifinals and lost on Sunday to top-se-

ded teammate Fan Zhendong, the Tokyo Olympics silver medalist.

The ITTF's newly elected president, Petra Sörling, said the issue was taken "very, very, seriously" by the orga-

nization she was elected last week to lead.

"We are standing against racism, and for us, 'Table Tennis. For All. For Life' is reality. It's not only our motto," Sörling told CGTN. **MDT/AP**

PMI

MANUFACTURING IMPROVES AS POWER SHORTAGES EASE

CHINA'S manufacturing activity rebounded in November as orders improved and power shortages eased, a survey showed yesterday.

An industry group and the national statistics agency said a monthly purchasing managers' index rose to 50.1 from October's 49.2 on a 100-point scale. The index spent the previous two months below 50, which shows activity decreasing.

A measure of production rose 3.6 points to 52, indicating activity was recove-



ring from power rationing imposed in major manufacturing areas in September to meet official energy efficiency targets.

"Industrial activity rebounded this month thanks to easing disruptions from power shortages," said Sheana Yue of

Capital Economics in a report.

Yue noted the recovery faces uncertainty due to the spread of the coronavirus's omicron variant. She said manufacturers also face supply shortages but that was offset at least partly by falling prices for materials.

A measure of new export orders rose 1.9 points to 48.5 while new orders overall improved by 0.6 points to 49.4, according to the federation and the National Bureau of Statistics. **MDT/AP**

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COVID-19

Omicron variant brings vaccine inequity 'home to roost'

MARIA CHENG, LORI HINNANT, LONDON

THE emergence of the new omicron variant and the world's desperate and likely futile attempts to keep it at bay are reminders of what scientists have warned for months: The coronavirus will thrive as long as vast parts of the world lack vaccines.

The hoarding of limited COVID-19 shots by rich countries — creating virtual vaccine deserts in many poorer ones — doesn't just mean risk for the parts of the world seeing shortages; it threatens the entire globe.

That's because the more the disease spreads among unvaccinated populations, the more possibilities it has to mutate and potentially become more dangerous, prolonging the pandemic for everyone.

"The virus is a ruthless opportunist, and the inequity that has characterized the global response has now come home to roost," said Dr. Richard Hatchett, CEO of CEPI, one of the groups behind the U.N.-backed COVAX shot-sharing initiative.

Perhaps nowhere is the inequality more evident than in Africa, where under 7% of the population is vaccinated. South African scientists alerted the World Health Organization to the new omicron variant last week, though it may never be clear where it first originated. Researchers are now rushing to determine whether it is more infectious or able to evade current vaccines.

COVAX was supposed to avoid such inequality — but instead the initiative is woefully short of shots and has already abandoned its initial goal of 2 billion doses.

Even to reach its scaled-back target of distributing 1.4 billion doses by the end of 2021, it must ship more than 25 million doses every day. Instead, it has averaged just over 4 million a day since the beginning of October, with some days dipping below 1 million, according to an Associated Press analysis of the shipments.

Shipments in recent days have ramped up, but nowhere near the amount needed.



AP PHOTO

Meanwhile, richer nations often have a glut of shots, and many are now offering boosters — something the WHO has discouraged because every booster is essentially a dose that is not going to someone who's never even gotten their first shot. Despite the U.N. health agency's appeal to countries to declare a moratorium on booster shots until the end of the year, more than 60 countries are now administering them.

"What it highlights are the continuing and fundamental risks to everyone associated with not seriously addressing the inequalities still at play globally in the fight against disease and poor health," said Dr. Osman Dar, director of the One Health Project at the Chatham House think tank.

Anna Marriott, health policy manager for Oxfam, said COVAX was limited from the outset after being pushed to the back of the vaccine queue by rich countries.

"The COVAX team may be delivering as fast as they can, but they can't deliver vaccines they haven't got," Marriott said.

Just 13% of vaccines COVAX contracted for and 12% of promised donations have actually been delivered, according to calculations by the International Monetary Fund from mid-November. About a third of the vaccines dispensed by COVAX have been donations, according to the vaccine alliance known as Gavi, and the initiative is now partly a clearinghouse for those donated doses, the very situation it was set up to avoid.

Last week, COVAX sent out

a news release praising a European Union pledge to ship 100 million vaccines to Africa by the end of the year — but only 1/20 of that amount was actually on planes.

Asked about the logistical challenges of distributing the other 94 million doses in only six weeks, Aurelia Nguyen, managing director of COVAX maintained that arrangements "are in place to move a vast number of doses between now and the end of the year."

In a statement, she said the issue was ensuring that "conditions are right on the ground for doses to be administered."

In minutes released ahead of an executive meeting this week, Gavi fretted that the perception that rich countries are dumping older or lesser vaccines on poor countries could undermine the whole project. Yesterday, in a joint statement with WHO and the African Union among others, it admonished that "the majority of the donations to date have been ad hoc, provided with little notice and short shelf lives."

Fury over dose dumping is already very real. In Malawi and South Sudan, tens of thousands of out-of-date doses were destroyed.

But it's not just getting the vaccines into poorer countries that's a problem, according to some experts. COVAX is "falling short on getting vaccines from the (airport) tarmac into people's arms," said Dr. Angela Wakhweya, senior director for health equity and rights at CARE.

Authorities in Congo, for instance, returned their entire

COVAX shipment this summer when they realized they would not be able to administer doses before they expired.

In a "risk management" report on COVAX, Gavi warned that "poor absorption" of vaccines by developing countries could lead to "wastage" of some doses. One problem is logistics — just getting the doses in the right country at the right time. But just as important is the ability of often underfunded national health systems to distribute the shots where they're most needed, along with syringes and other necessary gear. A third issue is persuading sometimes hesitant people to get the vaccines.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, however, has disputed distribution is a problem, saying the only obstacle to immunization in poor countries is supply.

Most COVAX doses distributed so far have been AstraZeneca's vaccine, a shot that has yet to be authorized in the U.S. and whose botched rollout in Europe helped fuel anti-vaccine sentiment when the vaccine was linked to rare blood clots. The vaccines mostly used in the U.S. and much of Europe — made by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna — have only been available in tiny amounts via COVAX.

The U.S., which blocked vaccine sales overseas and exports of key ingredients for months, has donated 275 million doses in all, more than any other country but still less than a third of what the Biden administration pledged. The European Union, which has in general allowed vaccines manufactured in the bloc to be sold anywhere in the world, has actually delivered about a third of its 400 million promised doses.

Efforts to ramp up global production beyond a select group of manufacturers have stalled, which many activists and scientists blame on pharmaceutical companies' opposition to waive intellectual property rights for the highly lucrative vaccines.

COVAX's failure to deliver anywhere close to enough vaccines has led some to wonder if it's worth the effort to fight for the shots, given that the pandemic has so far not devastated Africa as many had initially feared — and has often been the worst in richer nations. That's a strategy few public health officials would endorse.

"I think what Africa could do to really shame the world is to stop asking for vaccines," said Christian Happi, a Nigerian virologist who sat on the scientific advisory board of CEPI. "The vaccines have not arrived, and anyways it may turn out that we don't need them as much as the West." **MDT/AP**

this day in history



1990 TUNNEL LINKS UK AND EUROPE



Construction workers have drilled through the final wall of rock to join the two halves of the Channel Tunnel and link Britain to France.

The momentous breakthrough links the UK to Europe for the first time since the Ice Age, about 8,000 years ago.

To a throng of cheers, construction workers celebrated with champagne — the only time alcohol has been allowed underground on the work site.

French worker, Philippe Cozette, and his British counterpart, Graham Fagg, waved flags and shook hands as the first men able to walk between the two countries.

Only moments earlier at 1100 GMT, a half-metre wall of rock separated Britain from mainland Europe.

The men continued drilling until a hole was created big enough to allow vehicles through.

The first Britons walked through the tunnel to have their passports stamped in France.

There were similar scenes on the other side as a French party which drove into Folkestone, Kent, headed straight over to customs and immigration officers.

Tributes
Transport secretary Malcolm Rifkind was among the first through.

Speaking to the BBC, he said: "The physical contact that has been achieved between Britain and France today is symptomatic of many changes that we have been experiencing in the last 20 years."

"It is all happening and it is continuing to happen at an accelerating pace."
Downing Street called the event a "tribute to private enterprise".

The Channel Tunnel venture is expected to lead to the construction of a high speed train link across Kent, to match one France has already built.

Work on the Channel Tunnel began in 1986 and it is due to be completed by 1993.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Channel Tunnel was first formally proposed in 1963 although the concept had long been under discussion. Its cost ballooned to £12bn — more than double original estimates and construction finished a year late in 1994. Original expectations of public enthusiasm for the project proved over-optimistic and Eurotunnel, the tunnel operator, unveiled a loss of £925m in 1995 — one of the biggest in UK corporate history. A fire in the tunnel which led to freight traffic being suspended for more than six months in 1996 added to its woes. It eventually caught on as a mode of transport and Eurotunnel announced its first net profits in 1999.

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
As an Aries, you rarely recognize when you need to pump the brakes. Let Wednesday's skies help you slow down and move into a more reflective headspace, as the moon floats through solitary Scorpio.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Turn your focus towards the state of affairs in your closest relationships, Taurus. Wednesday's skies urge you to spend some time fixing up that arena as the moon floats through your opposite sign of psychological Scorpio.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Let yourself get down to business, Gemini. You're rearing to get productive and cross things off your to-do list that you've left looming for too long as the moon prowls through sharp-minded Scorpio.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You've been all work and no play lately, Cancer. Let yourself enjoy a mid-week break from the hustle and grind as the moon dances through sensual Scorpio.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Tune into the story stirring at your roots, Leo. Something is calling out for attention deep below, particularly in regard to ancient family wounds or issues concerning your home environment.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You're naturally drawn towards storytelling and communication-based endeavors. Let yourself reconnect with this natural mode of operation today as the moon treks through sharp-minded Scorpio.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Luna's challenging square with limitation-setting Saturn is likely to highlight frustrations on the path towards creative self-expression. Acknowledge your fears and keep pushing through!

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You deserve to be doted on, Scorpio. The nurturing moon spends the day camping out in your sign beneath Tuesday's skies, encouraging you to mindfully reconnect with your mind, body, and health.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
It's an ideal day to catch up on rest, take a long bath, or journal. Luna's square with heavy Saturn is likely to make storm clouds crop up around communication-based efforts or mental health issues.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You don't have to be an island. Aim to reach out and reconnect with your community today, as the moon slides through highly-sensitive Scorpio. One of your trust friends may just hold the key to your forward movement.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
The sharp-minded Scorpio moon increases your visibility and has you pushing forward with your ambitions, yet Luna's hard square later on can prompt unexpected emotional releases around your sense of identity.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Today's skies find the moon prowling through psychologically-rich Scorpio, pushing you to break from the norm and seek out some stimulation through education, travel, or philosophical conversations.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

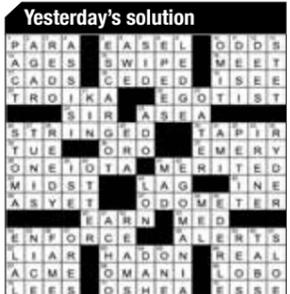
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	7	fine
Harbin	-14	-7	fine
Tianjin	-2	8	fine
Urumqi	-10	-2	fine
Xi'an	-2	9	fine
Lhasa	-4	16	fine
Chengdu	7	14	fine
Chongqing	7	15	overcast
Kunming	5	15	cloudy
Nanjing	-1	9	fine
Shanghai	4	9	cloudy
Wuhan	0	12	fine
Hangzhou	3	8	fine
Taipei	13	16	rain
Guangzhou	8	19	fine
Hong Kong	14	20	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	-5	-7	snow
Frankfurt	6	10	drizzle
Paris	2	8	drizzle
London	8	11	cloudy
New York	2	6	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1-Pack animal; 4- Ezio Pinza, for one; 9- HOMES, e.g.; 14- Fur scarf; 15- The Hunter; 16- Great Lakes tribesmen; 17- Permissible; 19- Dressed to the ___; 20- Prophets; 21- They get high twice a day; 23- Being, to Brutus; 24- Headgear of a monarch; 27- Did the butterfly; 30- Negative electrode; 32- Carry a balance; 33- Produces milk; 37- Draw a bead on; 39- Austrian composer; 40- Armed conflict; 42- ___ Irish Rose; 43- Inventor of the gramophone; 44- Rat-a-___; 45- Values highly; 48- Be up and about; 50- Warming drink; 51- Cure, in a way; 55- Managed; 57- Boring tool; 58- Put together; 60- Airport; 64- Sharp-edged instrument; 65- Commerce; 66- Frat letters; 67- Like helium; 68- Lets up; 69- Decade divs.;

DOWN: 1- Put down; 2- Mends a shoe; 3- Type of pitch; 4- Bends downward; 5- First name in Notre Dame football; 6- Bro or sis; 7- Impresario Hurok; 8- Ring combo; 9- Give for a while; 10- Spring sign; 11- Female relative; 12- Extra-wide shoe size; 13- Draft org.; 18- Mined mineral; 22- Neither Rep. nor Dem.; 24- Members of the Felidae family; 25- Hwys.; 26- Cries of surprise; 28- Alert; 29- Unit just above a yard; 30- Bring about; 31- Viscounts' superiors; 33- Atty.-to-be exams; 34- No longer on deck; 35- Find fault with; 36- ___ Bo; 38- ___ were you...; 40- Garden intruder; 41- Military force; 43- Night spot; 46- ___-Foy, Quebec; 47- So far; 49- Helicopter part; 51- Big ___ Calif.; 52- Prolonged pain; 53- Ring-tailed primate; 54- Head lock; 56- Chipper; 57- Citrus quenchers; 58- Mentalist Geller; 59- Photographer Goldin; 61- Chapter in history; 62- ___ Tafari (Haile Selassie); 63- Lyric tribute;



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
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REDUCED
Nam Long
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HKD 7,980,000
1,404 ft² 4 1/2 2 1/2

Rain Dance Property
"We dance until it's SOLD!"
Hellene Gardens
Ref: 2109 6001
HKD 7,980,000
1,663 ft² 3 1/2 2 1/2 1 1/2

SOCIAL MEDIA

NEW TWITTER CEO STEPS FROM BEHIND THE SCENES TO HIGH PROFILE

BARBARA ORTUTAY

NEWLY named Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal has emerged from behind the scenes to take over one of Silicon Valley's highest-profile and politically volatile jobs.

But his prior lack of name recognition coupled with a solid technical background appears to be what some big company backers were looking for to lead Twitter out of its current morass.

A 37-year-old immigrant from India, Agrawal comes from outside the ranks of celebrity CEOs, which include the man he's replacing, Jack Dorsey, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, and Elon Musk of SpaceX and Tesla. Those brand-name company founders and leaders have often been in the news — and on Twitter — for exploits beyond the day-to-day running of their companies.

Having served as Twitter's chief technology officer for the last four years, Agrawal's appointment was seen by Wall Street as a choice of



Newly named Twitter CEO Agrawal has emerged from behind the scenes to take over one of Silicon Valley's highest-profile and politically volatile jobs

someone who will focus on ushering Twitter into what's widely seen as the internet's next era — the metaverse.

Agrawal is a "safe" pick who should be looked upon as favorably by investors," wrote CFRA Research analyst Angelo Zino, who noted that Twitter shareholder Elliott Management Corp. had

pressured Dorsey to step down.

Elliott released a statement yesterday [Macau time] saying Agrawal and new board chairman Bret Taylor were the "right leaders for the company." Taylor is president and chief operating officer of the business software company Salesforce.

Agrawal, whose name is pronounced (PUH-rag AH-gur-wahl), joins a growing cadre of Indian-American CEOs of large tech companies, including Sundar Pichai of Google parent Alphabet, Microsoft's Satya Nadella and IBM's Arvind Krishna.

He joined San Francisco-based Twitter in 2011, when it had just 1,000 employees, and has been its chief technical officer since 2017. At the end of last year, the company had a workforce of 5,500.

Agrawal previously worked at Microsoft, Yahoo and AT&T in research roles. At Twitter, he's worked on machine learning, revenue and consumer engineering and helping with audience growth. He studied at Stanford and the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.

While Twitter has high-profile users like politicians and celebrities and is a favorite of journalists, its user base lags far behind old rivals like Facebook and YouTube and newer ones like TikTok. It has just over 200 million daily

active users, a common industry metric.

As CEO, Agrawal have to step beyond the technical details and deal with the social and political issues Twitter and social media are struggling with. Those include misinformation, abuse and effects on mental health.

Agrawal got a fast introduction to life as CEO of a high-profile company that's one of the central platforms for political speech online. Conservatives quickly unearthed a tweet he sent in 2010 that read "If they are not gonna make a distinction between muslims and extremists, then why should I distinguish between white people and racists."

As some Twitter users pointed out, the 11-year-old tweet was quoting a segment on "The Daily Show," which was referencing the firing of Juan Williams, who made a comment about being nervous about Muslims on an airplane.

Twitter did not immediately respond to a message for comment on the tweet. **MDT/AP**

AD

MGM MACANESE CULINARY CONTEST

ENROLLMENT DATE
12 / 1 - 31

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PARENT & CHILD CATEGORY
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This contest is only open to non-professional chefs & non-culinary art teachers only

Candidates is required to submit a 5-min video of cooking designated Macanese dish

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Participating Unit: 澳門中華總商會

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

JEROME PUGMIRE, PARIS

BALLON D'OR

Putellas and Messi win awards

LIONEL Messi won the men's Ballon d'Or for a record-extending seventh time yesterday [Macau time], ending the year in style after a brilliant final season with Barcelona and earning his first major international trophy with Argentina.

Alexia Putellas became the third winner of the women's award for an outstanding season with Barcelona and Spain.

The 34-year-old Messi led Argentina to the Copa America title in July after losing in four major international finals.

"I'm very happy to be here, happy to keep fighting for new trophies," he said through a translator. "I don't know how many years I have left, but I hope many more. I'd like to thank all my (former) teammates at Barcelona and Argentina."

Messi finished with 613 points to top prolific Bayern Munich and Poland striker Robert Lewandowski on 580.

"I would like to say to Robert that it's an honor to be your rival, and everyone would say you deserved to win it last year," Messi said.

Awarded by France Football magazine, the Ballon d'Or has been given out to men every year



Barcelona player Alexia Putellas and PSG's Lionel Messi

since 1956 when Stanley Matthews won.

Both 2020 awards were canceled because the coronavirus pandemic disrupted the season.

The 33-year-old Lewandowski set a new single-season scoring record for the Bundesliga with 41 goals — one more than late Germany great Gerd Müller — when he scored in the last minute of the last game.

Lewandowski netted in 19 consecutive games in all competitions for Bayern from February to

September and he just missed out on equaling the record of scoring in 16 Bundesliga games in a row. Overall, he already has 25 goals in 20 games for Bayern this season.

His 11 goals in 12 games for Poland this year took his international tally to 74 in 128 games, just six less than Messi.

Chelsea and Italy midfielder Jorginho was third with 460 points after helping the London club win the Champions League and his nation win the European Championship. Real Madrid and Fran-

ce forward Karim Benzema was fourth on 239.

Putellas helped Barca win the treble and scored 26 goals in 42 games overall. The midfielder netted in the Champions League final against Chelsea, and in August she was named UEFA women's player of the year.

"I'm very emotional, it's a very special moment," she said at the Paris ceremony through a translator. "I would like to start by thanking all my teammates, especially my current (Barce-

lona) teammates. For me it's a collective success."

The only previous women's award winners are Norway striker Ada Hegerberg in 2018, and U.S. forward Megan Rapinoe in 2019.

Putellas tallied 186 points to finish far ahead of club and country teammate Jenni Hermoso on 84.

Hermoso netted 31 goals to top the Spanish first division scoring charts for a third straight season. Hermoso was joint-top scorer in the Champions League with Chelsea's Fran Kirby on six goals.

Chelsea and Australia striker Sam Kerr placed third in the voting after 21 goals in the English Women's Super League and six for Australia at the Tokyo Games. Kerr has maintained her excellent form with 13 goals in 12 games this season.

Messi, meanwhile, counts two more Ballon d'Or awards than longtime rival Cristiano Ronaldo, who was sixth in the voting.

Messi's staggering tally of 672 goals for Barcelona included an extraordinary 50-goal league season in 2012; 96 league goals across 2012 and 2013; eight Spanish league and six Champions League scoring titles. **MDT/AP**



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

World Views

Derek Gatopoulos, MDT/AP

MIGRANT CRISIS FRONT AND CENTER IN POPE'S GREECE-CYPRUS TRIP

When Pope Francis visited the Greek island of Lesbos in 2016, he was so moved by the stories he heard from families fleeing war in Iraq and Syria that he wept and brought a dozen refugees home with him.

Speaking to reporters on the way home that day, he held up a drawing handed to him by a child from the island's sprawling refugee camp.

"Look at this one," he said, revealing a bird neatly decorated in colored pencil, the word "peace" scrolled in English underneath it. "That's what children want: Peace."

Francis is returning to Lesbos this week for the first time since that defining day of his papacy, making a repeat visit to the island where hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants have passed through on their journey to Europe.

But he will find attitudes toward migrants here have only hardened in the intervening five years, as they have elsewhere in Europe, with tensions flaring on the border between European Union country Poland and Belarus and more deadly crossings — most recently in the English Channel.

Francis will first stop in Cyprus, another predominantly Orthodox Christian country in the Mediterranean that is also coping with a rise in refugees so significant that the government is seeking to stop processing asylum claims. As he did in Lesbos five years ago, Francis has arranged for several would-be refugees in Cyprus to travel to Italy after his visit, Cypriot officials say.

"They are our brothers and sisters," Francis said in a video message to Greek and Cypriot faithful before the trip. "How many have lost their lives at sea! Today our sea, the Mediterranean, is a great cemetery."

The pontiff starts his five-day trip on Thursday in Cyprus before heading to Greece on Saturday. He returns home on Monday.

While Francis' renewed messages of compassion and welcome for migrants isn't quite resonating in European capitals, they are a welcome salvo for the migrants themselves.

"His presence here will strengthen us, spiritually, and give us hope, some comfort," said Christian Tango Muyaka, a 30-year-old asylum-seeker from Congo who is due to participate in a Sunday service with the pope at a new migrant camp on Lesbos.

The north coast of Lesbos, just 10 kilometers from Turkey, served as the main landing point for boats crossing into Europe during the 2015-16 migration crisis.

Fast forward five years, and the welcome mat is gone. Migrants reaching the eastern Greek islands are now being held in detention camps, newly built and funded by the EU. Coast guard patrols are instructed to intercept dinghies and boats heading west and send them back to Turkey.

The overcrowded camp on Lesbos that Francis was taken to in 2016 burnt to the ground last year during protests against pandemic restrictions.

And along Greece's land border with Turkey, a new steel wall and hi-tech sensor network have been installed to stop illegal crossings.

Eva Cosse at Human Rights Watch said, "Since the pope's last visit, Greece continues to host large numbers of asylum-seekers while failing to protect their rights."

"Thousands seeking refuge in Greece are violently pushed back to Turkey. Migrant children face homelessness and a lack of access to health care, education and food. And nongovernmental groups face legislative restrictions and criminal harassment by officials."

Greek authorities deny allegations of summary deportations. They argue that tougher border policing is necessary to counter hostility by several EU neighbors accused of exploiting the crisis and to limit arrival numbers to manageable levels.

"(Francis') message is that we are one world, that we don't have borders, that everybody is a child of God. Look, this is the religious point of view," said Dimitris Vafeas, the deputy director of Mavrovouni migrant camp on Lesbos where the pope will visit.

Former President Donald Trump's lawyers will try to persuade a federal appeals court to stop Congress from receiving call logs, drafts of speeches and other documents related to the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol led by his supporters.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit will hear arguments today [Macau time] from lawyers for Trump and the House committee seeking the records as part of its investigation into the riot.

Trump's attorneys want the court to reverse a federal judge's ruling

allowing the National Archives and Records Administration to turn over the records after President Joe Biden waived executive privilege.

Judge Tanya Chutkan rejected Trump's claims that he could exert executive privilege overriding Biden, noting in part, "Presidents are not kings, and Plaintiff is not president." The appeals court issued an administrative stay after Chutkan's ruling to review the case.

Democratic presidents nominated all three judges. Patricia Millett and Robert Wilkins were nominated by President Barack Obama, and Ketanji Brown Jackson is a Biden appointee.

PORTUGAL PROBES LOCAL TRANSMISSION OF OMICRON AT SOCCER TEAM

ARITZ PARRA & HELENA ALVES, LISBON

Portuguese health authorities yesterday [Macau time] identified 13 cases of the omicron coronavirus variant among members of a professional soccer club and were investigating whether it was one of the first reported cases of local transmission of the virus outside of southern Africa.

The Ricardo Jorge National Health Institute said that one of those who tested positive was a player from the Lisbon-based Belenenses SAD soccer club who had recently traveled to South Africa, where the omicron variant was first identified.

The others, including players and other members of the club's staff, hadn't reportedly traveled to southern Africa, where most of the cases have been recorded so far.

The institute said that those who had been in contact with the positive cases were in isolation regardless of their vaccination status.

Players of Lisbon's biggest team, Benfica, which played Belenenses SAD on Saturday, were also being tested for the virus.

"Since this is a new variant, we have to tighten the controls," Portugal's health general director, Graça Freitas told the local TSF radio.

Freitas said that some of the infected had no symptoms and that all were improving.

"Despite being vaccinated, we know that the vaccine is not 100% effective," she told SIC Noticias news channel.

Health authorities, the clubs and Portugal's Primeira Liga were all facing questions for allowing the game to go ahead even when the Belenenses SAD had already reduced its squad to nine players — two fewer than the game calls for — because of the coronavirus outbreak.

The Portuguese league called for an "urgent" meeting with health authorities to understand what happened



and discuss changes in the current COVID-19 protocols for matches. It questioned why health officials failed to consider all Belenenses players to be at a high risk of contagion considering the possible presence of the omicron variant.

The referee suspended the game just after halftime, with Benfica leading 7-0, when only seven Belenenses SAD players took the field and the squad then lost another player.

Benfica said that its players were tested on Monday as they normally are every week and the results came back negative. It said the club hadn't received any requests to cancel Saturday's game and league protocols were followed.

Benfica's next scheduled match is the Primeira Liga derby against Sporting Lisbon on Friday.

Belenenses yesterday asked the league for a rematch, saying that by its interpretation of the rules the result shouldn't count because the game wasn't fully completed.

"The league must not ratify the result of the game and should schedule a new one," it said in a letter sent to the league and that the club shared with The Associated Press.

Club president Rui Pedro Soares had said the club didn't formally ask for the game to be postponed, but he had told the league it didn't want to play it. The club said it was the responsibility of the league and of health authorities to make the decision to postpone it.

The club told Portuguese media on Sunday that 16 of its players had tested positive and that 44 people in total were put into isolation by health authorities.

Portugal also found two positive coronavirus cases when it screened 218 passengers who arrived in Lisbon on a flight from Mozambique's capital on Saturday. One of the cases was the delta variant and the other one couldn't be established, authorities said.

Despite having one of the highest vaccination rates in Europe, with 86.6% of its 10.3 million residents having received two coronavirus jabs, authorities in Portugal have tightened pandemic restrictions amid a recent rise in infections.

Starting today, wearing a face mask will once again be mandatory in enclosed spaces and digital certificates proving vaccination or recovery from the coronavirus must be shown to enter restaurants, cinemas and hotels. MDT/AP

Maldives The highest court in the Maldives yesterday overturned the prison sentence of the country's former president Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, who had been convicted of money laundering. A three-member Supreme Court bench unanimously annulled the five-year jail term and \$5 million fine slapped on Yameen two years ago by a lower court. The former leader had recently been moved to house arrest.



Iran struck a maximalist tone yesterday after just one day of restarted talks in Vienna over its tattered nuclear deal, suggesting everything discussed in previous rounds of diplomacy could be renegotiated. Iranian state media reported the comments by Ali Bagheri, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, and Mohammed Eslami, the country's civilian nuclear chief. It remained unclear, however, whether this represented an opening gambit by Iran's new hard-line president or signaled serious trouble for those hoping to restore the 2015.



Barbados stopped pledging allegiance to Queen Elizabeth II yesterday as it shed another vestige of its colonial past and became a republic for the first time in history. Several leaders and dignitaries, including Prince Charles, attended the ceremony that began late Monday in a popular square where the statue of a well-known British lord was removed last year amid a worldwide push to erase symbols of oppression.



USA Authorities searched the home of rocker Marilyn Manson after allegations of physical and sexual abuse by several women. Los Angeles County sheriff's Deputy Eva Jimenez said a search warrant was served on the home of Manson, whose legal name is Brian Hugh Warner. She would give no further details. The Sheriff's Department said in February that its detectives had begun investigating Manson over reports of domestic violence between 2009 and 2011 in West Hollywood, where he lived at the time.