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**USJ AIMING TO GROW BY 50% OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS AFTER RECEIVING PERMISSION TO RECRUIT STUDENTS FROM THE MAINLAND** P5

**COVID-19: GOV'T WATCHING OMICRON, BUT NO CHANGES TO GUIDELINES – YET** P2

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AP PHOTO



**Cambodia's** long-serving Prime Minister Hun Sen explicitly declared his support to have his eldest son, army commander Hun Manet (pictured), succeed him as the nation's leader. The 44-year-old Hun Manet, a West Point graduate, has the rank of lieutenant general and holds several important military posts. Besides being army chief, he is deputy commander-in-chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, a deputy commander of his father's elite bodyguard unit and chief of the country's counterterrorism force.

**UNITED NATIONS** A key U.N. committee decided to delay action on requests by Myanmar's military junta and Afghanistan's Taliban rulers to take their countries' seats at the United Nations. The announcement by the chair of the General Assembly's Credentials Committee means that the ambassadors from the former governments in Myanmar and Afghanistan will remain in their jobs.

AP PHOTO

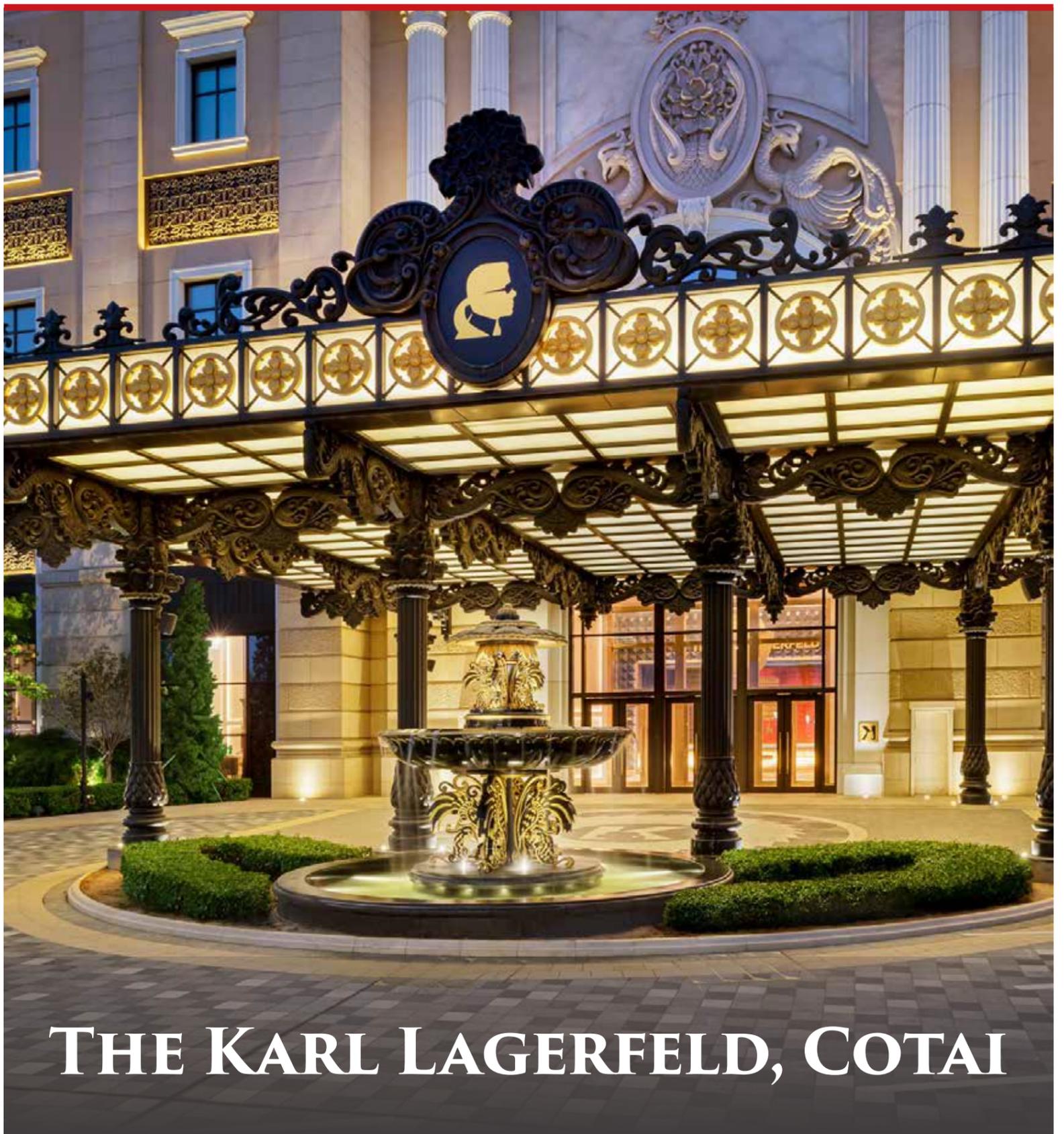


**New Zealand** Tom Udall, the new U.S. ambassador to New Zealand (pictured), says he wants to find areas of common ground with China in a region where tensions often run high. Udall, a former U.S. senator from New Mexico, held his first press conference in his new role Thursday after presenting his credentials a day earlier. He said the U.S. relationship with China was complex because the two countries disagree over human rights issues and compete economically.

More on backpage

# CARD TRAP

VPN firm says Macau at a high-risk level of credit card data leak: 0.8 on a 0-1 scale P3



## THE KARL LAGERFELD, COTAI

### 'MACAO WEEK IN CHONGQING' KICKS OFF

A trade delegation led by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) presented a tourism seminar in Chongqing yesterday, to highlight the strengths of Macau's tourism industry and facilitate networking between industry delegates on all sides. As part of the "Macao Week in Chongqing," MGTO sought to familiarize the trade representatives in Chongqing with the many dimensions of the SAR's "Tourism +" plan. As part of the Chongqing roadshow, the Macao Week will enliven Jiefangbei Square in Chongqing's Yuzhong District from December 2 to 6.

### AACM SIGNS JOINT AVIATION MAINTENANCE PROTOCOL

The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), the Civil Aviation Department of Hong Kong (HKCAD) and the Civil Aviation Authority (AACM) have recently signed a "Joint Maintenance Management Cooperation Arrangement." The aim of the agreement is to seize the opportunities of the National 14th Five-Year Plan to foster the development of the civil aviation maintenance industry for regional integration. The three civil aviation authorities are using the talks in Shenzhen to assist aircraft maintenance organizations by reducing the work load and financial burdens caused by redundant inspections and testing. The partnership also aims to assist airlines in choosing maintenance organizations.

### GOV'T CONDUCTS PANDEMIC-PREVENTION DRILL FOR WHOLESALE MARKET

An interdepartmental task force consisting of nine government departments has collaborated with live food wholesalers to conduct a pandemic prevention drill at Macau's wholesale market, according to a joint statement from several government departments. The aim was to test several response procedures, including shared systems for case-reporting; the coordination of the response; the allocation of duties; source- and contact-tracing; environmental-disinfection procedures; and epidemiological investigations. Macau's wholesale market currently hosts more than 200 businesses, which are together responsible for importing 230 tons of vegetables, 107 tons of fresh fruit, 600,000 eggs, and 16 tons of frozen and chilled poultry products every day.

### COVID-19

# GOV'T WATCHING OMICRON, BUT NO CHANGES TO GUIDELINES, YET

RENATO MARQUES

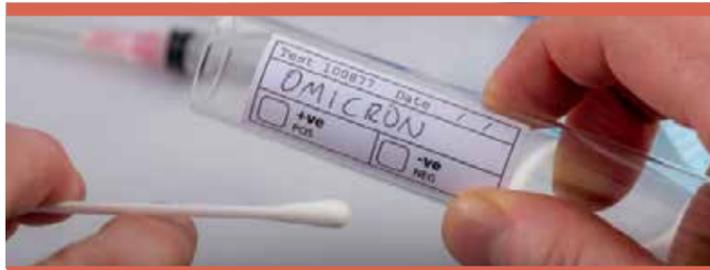
LOCAL health authorities are paying close attention to the Omicron variant of Covid-19 but, for the time being, no changes to the prevention and control guidelines have been proposed, representative of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, said yesterday.

According to Leong, there is not yet enough information on the new variant – which has been detected recently in several countries – to prompt a review of the current measures.

"We are [treating this matter as one of] extreme importance [...] So far the WHO has not clarified whether or not this new variant has a higher level of transmissibility compared to other variants. So, [at this point] we cannot be sure of [the risk it may pose by potentially being] more transmissible, nor whether it is more likely to cause death or serious health complications," Leong said.

On a more positive note, Leong added that studies have shown that the new variant can be traced using the common methods for detecting Covid-19: namely the nucleic acid tests and the antibodies test.

"There is clear evidence that the tests currently in use can detect this variant. This is a positive side to look at in this case. We can effectively detect this variant and thus continue to pursue our greater task: namely to



prevent imported cases to avoid an internal resurgence of the disease," Leong explained.

As for the direct consequences of the outbreak of the variant Omicron, Leong noted that travellers from eight African countries are forbidden to enter Macau on commercial flights.

Leong also noted that the local health authorities are prepared, if necessary, to increase the

frequency of the tests performed on those coming from high-risk areas, that is, those with a travel history which includes countries or regions that have reported outbreaks of the new variant.

### NEW FORM OF CLASSIFYING COVID-19 CASES

From December 1, asymptomatic cases and confirmed cases of Covid-19 infection will be

classified separately.

Leong explained at the center's press briefing that the new measure brings Macau's statistical classifications in line with those used in the mainland, so that local data can be easily compared to data from different Chinese provinces and regions.

Questioned by the media, she explained that the change is effective on all data from December 1, though data collected previously remains unaffected.

As she explained, at issue is also the standardization of the criteria for classifying cases as asymptomatic or confirmed according to the different tests and symptoms different patients present.

## SSM TO ACQUIRE COVID-19 PILLS ONCE APPROVED

THE government will acquire antiviral oral medicines to treat Covid-19 as soon as are approved by national and international health authorities, the coordinator of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center, Dr. Leong Iek Hou said yesterday.

Questioned by the media, the Leong said, "the government is

closely following the development of these medicines. If these medicines prove to be effective and pass the national and international [agencies'] approval tests, the government will immediately reserve and acquire them too," Leong affirmed. "We procure and acquire medicines worldwide so this would not be a problem,"

she added when questioned on the need to wait for the medicines to be available in the region.

On another matter, Leong said that people in Macau aged between 18 and 60 years who have been vaccinated with two doses of the BioNTech mRNA vaccine, do not need to seek a booster shot urgently.

"Only those who

are part of the at-risk groups can and should take the third dose of the BioNTech vaccine. For the time being, the others will be able to do it at a later stage. Those who do not belong to at-risk groups and are aged between 18- and 60-year-old and [are in good] health should feel no urgency [to take a third dose]. We might consider allowing them to get the booster shot in special cases, such as if they need urgently to travel to an at-risk area," Leong explained. RM

## Fire breaks out due to joss sticks

A fire has broken out on the third floor of a building near Patane, allegedly caused by burning joss sticks.

Six people suffered smoke inhalation from the fire, one of whom was sent to hospital. Dozens of people were evacuated from the building.

The fire spread to the outer walls and air conditioners on the fourth to sixth floors, as well as the glass windows on the fourth and fifth floors. The fire department believes that the fire started due to burning joss sticks on the third floor of the building. LV



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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\_Albanio 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

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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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

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ANTHONY LAM

**M**ACAU is at a relatively high-risk level of payment card detail leaks, VPN provider NordVPN recently announced in a blog post.

By payment card, the company refers to both credit and debit cards.

The company commissioned a team of researchers to analyze payment card data from 4 million cards collected on the dark web.

On a scale of 0 to 1 (0 being least risky and 1 being most) Macau has scored 0.8 on the risk index. Meanwhile, the Chinese mainland has scored 0.1 and Portugal has scored 0.4.

The risk index was calculated based on three elements: 1) the number of cards per capita in the database for in the financial jurisdiction; 2) the official number of cards in circulation, as reported by card brands, for the jurisdiction; and 3) the proportion of non-refundable cards in the database for the jurisdiction. The third element has reduced influence on the overall index, however.

The level of the risk index, as NordVPN explains, is based on the assumption of one card per person. It emphasized that the more cards a person has, the more likely one of the cards will be hacked.

However, it also explained that

# Macau prone to high credit card data leak risks: VPN provider

as far as place of issuance is concerned, there is no direct correlation between the risk level and the number of card details obtainable on the dark web.

For example, NordVPN's independent research found 1,561,739 sets of card details for sale on the dark web from the US during their research, the largest number across all financial jurisdictions, but they did not see US card bearers more prone to risks of leakage. By contrast, the high proportion of non-refundable cards in Turkey gives the country a higher risk index.

Nonetheless, based on this reasoning, the company did not explain why the Chinese mainland is less at risk than Macau.

In terms of popularity, Visa cards were most common, followed by Mastercard and American Express. The data on mainland China did not coincide with this average trend. In the jurisdiction, Mastercard topped the list with China's own payment card brand, China UnionPay, being only in third place.

On average, a set of card details

costs less than USD10.

NordVPN also revealed the very troubling finding that the blind-sorting of payment card details, such as card verification value (CVV), can take as short a time as six seconds, provided that the numbers visible on a payment card were generated using a known set of rules.

Discussing how payments can be made more secure, the company recommended that passwords – strong ones – must be used during payment. Moreover, multi-factor authentication, such as verification by biometric elements, should be introduced.

It urges banks to adopt fraud detection tools, so that when a suspicious transaction takes place, the computer system can detect it and warn customers immediately.

Local law-enforcement authorities and banks have blamed vendors such as Apple for requiring too little information when a transaction is processed, leaving significant loopholes for payment card abuse.

EVA BUCHO



## The Karl Lagerfeld hotel opens with luxurious features

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE Karl Lagerfeld at Grand Lisboa Palace officially opens today, with 271 rooms showcasing the designer's style: from specially commissioned furniture to circular room dividers inspired by traditional Chinese moon gates.

The rooms and suites are divided into six categories, ranging in floor area from 60 square meters to 350.

The largest room is the Auto-graph suite, being the only one in the hotel with two bedrooms, a spacious living room, a dining room and a fully equipped kitchen among other unique features.

Entering the lobby, the visitor catches sight of a reception wall covered by over a thousand keys: a motif inspired by the movie *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, by Wes Anderson.

"The interior design of The Karl Lagerfeld [has a] unique and lavish blend of Chinese and Western aesthetics. [...] We believe that our guests will be impressed by his iconic style that runs throughout the hotel tower," Daisy Ho, chairman of the board of directors of SJM.

"SJM is proud to bring The Karl Lagerfeld to Macau, a testament to the luxury and uniqueness of the Grand Lisboa Palace, the first inte-



grated resort to introduce a fashion hotel concept to our city's hospitality scene." She added.

This is the first time the late German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld and his team designed an entire hotel, including its rooms, suites, and the Portuguese restaurant Mesa, which has been open since June.

"The Karl Lagerfeld is the first and only hotel tower in the world to be entirely designed by Karl [...] top to bottom, start to finish," said Pier Paolo Righi, CEO of Karl Lagerfeld. "[It was] a unique interior design project for Karl in China and a labor of love for over five years. He

was able to complete the design before his passing — designing and approving each element of the hotel tower."

Another dining option at the hotel is The Book Lounge at the lobby, inspired by Lagerfeld's passion for books, and specifically the famous library at his mansion.

The Karl Lagerfeld Hotel in the 20-storey tower, brings the total rooms housed in the Grand Lisboa Palace to 1,892 across its three hotels: the Grand Lisboa Palace Macau Hotel, Karl Lagerfeld Hotel, and the (yet to open) Palazzo Versace, designed by Donatella Versace.

## WORK ON FOOD SAFETY MUST BE DONE TO HELP HEALTH: ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

**T**HIS generation cannot forsake environmental protection, since the science tells us that this is the critical moment for action, Ruby O, chairperson of the Society of Food and Environmental Health, Macao (SFEH), said yesterday.

She added that food safety is one of the many ways in which we can help build a healthier world. "Because in order to achieve food safety, we must have a satisfactory ecology and environment, so that we can ensure both the environment and food are healthy. Otherwise, we won't be healthy," she said.

O hopes that the government and the food industries will show greater concern for society's relationship with the environment with respect to food, thereby improving both food safety and environmental safety in Macau.

She added that philo-

sophies that advocate a plant-based diet, responsible consumption, and the eating of local and seasonal produce have been observed in the region for generations.

The SFEH held its inauguration ceremony yesterday. It was announced at the ceremony

that the group had adopted a camphor tree in Shanghai last month. The tree is 300 years old, 20 meters tall, and has a canopy nearly 20 meters wide. As explained, the species of tree reduces harm on the environment caused by smoke and dust by absorbing toxic and hazardous gases.

After the inauguration ceremony, there was a seminar on sustainability and the transition to a low-carbon economy. The potential for Macau to diversify its economy with Big Health and eco-friendly industries was discussed. **AL**

POLICY ADDRESS

# LAWMAKERS CALL ON GOV'T FOR EVENT RESUMPTION TIMELINE

ANTHONY LAM

**D**URING Wednesday's parliamentary question session with regarding next year's Policy Address, lawmakers Ngan Iek Hang and Ron Lam inquired on the criteria by which the government will allow events to resume.

Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong sat in on the parliamentary session to reply to lawmakers' questions.

Regarding the resumption of larger-scale to mega-events in Macau, lawmaker Ngan asked the senior official what the criteria for holding events amid the current Covid-19 pandemic and the disease control restrictions would be.

Ngan stressed that, due to the halt in organizing and presenting events, many workers in or related to the industry have become unemployed.

Additionally, Ngan pointed out that the government had justified the decision to not host the New Year Countdown Show by asserting that foreign performers may not be able to enter Macau.

The lawmaker recommended the Secretary consider hosting the event by drawing upon local and Mainland performers.



Responding to the question, Ao Ieong clarified that the government did not ban concerts. As many professionals in the industry, such as lighting technicians and other mechanics, cannot enter Macau, the organization of concerts has been impossible.

Lawmaker Lam was not satisfied with the senior official's explanation. He said that in the past decade the city has nurtured its own team of professional show technicians skilled in organizing events in the city.

"We all know that in 2019 we had a show also every week,"

Lam recalled, hinting that the city should have a sufficient workforce to organize its own event.

Regarding the Countdown Show's cancellation this year, the Secretary explained that it will be difficult to control spectators' emotions, hinting that they may break disease control rules. Moreover, she admitted that it would be meaningless to have a "tranquil" countdown.

Lam was also not happy with this explanation, saying that the government, and specifically the Health Bureau, allowed the Grand Prix, the Food Festival,

and the Lights Festival.

"I see people at the Food Festival as excited as the countdown crowds," Lam said.

In response, the senior official stated that the government is "lacking the intelligence" to ensure that there are separate entrances and exits for spectators to the countdown show.

"In this case, we cannot take body temperature and check health codes," Ao Ieong said.

Recalling previous editions of the countdown show at the Sai Van Lake Plaza, barriers have been used to separate different

audience zones. The Secretary did not explain why this tactic, or the confinement strategies used at the Food Festival and the Tap Siac Art Fair, could not be used at the countdown show.

## NO MORE MELTDOWN IN THE FUTURE

Lawmaker Ella Lei expressed concerns about the clarity of the disease prevention standards. She asked officials if there is a new case in the future, under the proposed strategy of "disease control as a new normal" will go beyond cordoning off the affected area and trigger tight immigration restrictions, such as quarantine-upon-arrival.

She also argued for clearer disease control guidelines and criteria so that the public will understand whether their daily lives will be halted when a new case is detected.

In response, Ao Ieong said that the disease control measures were updated recently, although they are still being discussed with the authorities in the mainland. Ao Ieong hopes that, even if the city becomes a mid-risk area in the future, the meltdown mechanism will not be triggered.

The meltdown mechanism is the suspension of quarantine-upon-arrival-free border-crossings between Macau and mainland China.

Regarding the handling of Macau becoming a high-risk area, details are still in negotiations, Ao Ieong added.

## Int't Short Film Festival opens with 21 local productions

**T**HE 12th edition of the Macau International Short Film Festival opened yesterday with 21 local productions presented in the event which will run until December 9.

The venue for this year's event is the Capitol Theatre in the city center, which showed some of the most famous blockbuster films made in Hong Kong when it was in operation more than 20 years ago.

The organizing body announced that this year the festival will see 132 short films, with a combined run-time of 33 hours. The genres posed by the short films include fiction, documentary, animation and music videos.

A special element in this festival is that it will showcase several short films in patuá, celebrating a language unique in the world and native to Macau.

Despite the current pandemic and border restrictions, films were chosen from a pool of countries and regions thanks to technological advancements, with some from less-known film-producing countries, such as Kosovo.

At a press conference yesterday, it was highlighted that the core of the festival is the international competitions called Shorts and Volume, consisting of films officially selected as finalists. This year 113 films and six music videos were selected to take part. All the films in the Shorts session will compete for the awards at the festival.

To winner will be selected by the audience, who are invited to cast their votes to pick their favorite from each genre.

Seminars will also be held to provide a platform for competing film makers

from Macau to share their thoughts after their respective screening sessions. Film makers will have the chance to reflect on their production and also to offer a preview of their upcoming projects.

In the festival, there is a masterclasses section, in which professional or experienced film makers will be invited to discuss five topics with the audience, namely film directing, production, scriptwriting, soundtrack and entrepreneurship.

The festival opened with the 8-minute-long Greeting Again: a comedy from Spain by Jesús Lóniego.

Awards will be presented to the winning films and music videos at the closing ceremony. Before the presentation, the local band Evade will give a minimalist-electronic concert. **AL**

## ALVIN CHAU STEPS DOWN AS CEO, SUNCITY SHARES TUMBLE FURTHER

LYNZY VALLES

**A**LVIN Chau has officially resigned from his executive positions at Suncity Group and Summit Ascent, following his arrest, which led to a major plunge of the companies' market shares.

In a filing to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, the statement noted, "The Board announces that a letter was received from Mr. Chau, tendering his resignation from the posts of Chairman of the Board and Executive Director, effective from December 1, for the reason that his resignation would (in view of the pending legal proceedings against him) be in the best interests of the company, and also allow him to devote more time to personal matters."

Suncity closed all its

gaming-related operations on December 1.

It was then announced that the company would cease salary payments immediately for at least one-third of its staff, calculated to be about 3,000 people.

According to the filing, "further announcements will be made by the company in relation to the appointment of the chairman of the board, as and when appropriate."

The Hong Kong-listed company's shares fell as much as 20% following the resumption of trading.

On Wednesday, trading was suspended to avoid a further plunge in stocks, since the shares were last traded at HKD0.13 on Tuesday.

All six gaming operators have suspended their cooperation with Suncity and are tempo-

rarily suspending the operation of the promoter's VIP rooms in their casinos from December 1, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) noted.

Chau has been detained and put in preventive custody by the judge overseeing the case.

He was transferred to Coloane Prison after a long interrogation by the Public Prosecutions Office (MP). The judge in charge of the prosecution and investigation on the case decided that he will await trial while under arrest.

Chau is suspected of leading a criminal organization running illegal gambling and money laundering, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced on Sunday after the CEO of the VIP gaming promoter was detained for interrogation on Saturday.

# USJ aims to grow 50% over next decade

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE University of Saint Joseph (USJ) is aiming to expand by 50% over the next ten years after receiving permission to recruit students from the mainland.

According to the rector, Reverend Professor Stephen Morgan, the international university expects to see some mainland students joining them in the second semester, as USJ also focuses on recruitment for the following academic year.

"The permission came too late for us to recruit for this year. We may have some students joining us in the second semester, but we're focusing very hard upon recruiting for the programs that we have permission to recruit for," the rector told the Times on the sidelines of the university's 25th anniversary yesterday.

"We are finding ourselves almost bowled over by the number and quality of people asking to come to us," he added.

Rev. Morgan said that USJ expects to take on a considerable number of and high-caliber students. He believes that the univer-



sity will be able to demonstrate to the Central Government that for mainland students to be allowed to study at USJ is in their own in-

terest and in the interest of China. "It's a great responsibility to be the only Catholic university in China. It's a great responsibility to

be a genuinely international university. We've had students from over 60 different countries in this university over the past 25 years," the rector recalled.

Commenting on the university's contribution to the development of the Greater Bay Area, Rev. Morgan said that by concentrating on the university's position in Macau and the GBA, and by building close relationships in higher education institutions and com-

mercial organizations within the GBA, USJ can continue to "play a role that is much larger than our size. We are a small university but I think we truly punch above our weight where that's concerned."

"At this time of Covid, when people are often drawing their boundaries in, rather than looking at the world, I think we have a very important role to play, here in Macau, in GBA and in China," he added.

USJ celebrated its 25th anniversary yesterday with a ceremony at their Ilha Verde campus. The USJ Donors Wall and Confucius Garden were inaugurated in commemoration of the anniversary.

USJ was first founded as the Inter University Institute of Macau, changing its name to the University of Saint Joseph in 2009.

As to drawing future plans for the university, the rector said he feels humbled to have been given the opportunity to "take command of a ship that has been sailing for 25 years."

The rector also briefly announced that it is working on new course offerings, particularly in the masters and doctorate levels.

**"We're focusing very hard upon recruiting for the programs that we have permission to recruit for."**

REV. PROF. STEPHEN MORGAN  
USJ RECTOR

AD

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BRI  
**LAOS-CHINA RAILWAY TO LAUNCH AS DEBT TO BEIJING MOUNTS**

JOE MCDONALD, SAM MCNEIL & ELAINE KURTENBACH, BEIJING

**L**AOS, a nation of 7 million people wedged between China, Vietnam and Thailand, is opening a \$5.9 billion Chinese-built railway that links China's poor southwest to foreign markets but piles on potentially risky debt.

The line through lush tropical mountains from the Laotian capital, Vientiane, to Kunming is one of hundreds of projects under Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative to expand trade by building ports, railways and other facilities across Asia, Africa and the Pacific.

The 1,035-kilometer line opens this week to cargo but no regular passengers due to anti-pandemic travel curbs.

Poor countries welcome China's initiative. But the projects are financed by loans from Chinese state-owned banks that must be repaid. Some borrowers complain Chinese-built projects are too expensive and leave too much debt.

The Kunming-Vientiane railway is a link in a possible future network to connect China with Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore. That would give southern China more access to ports and export markets.

Laotian leaders hope the railway will energize their isolated economy by linking it to China and markets as far away as Europe. But foreign experts say the potential benefits to Laos beyond serving as a channel for Chinese trade are unclear and the cost appears dangerously high.

The railway will "generate very positive economic returns" for



An aerial view of Ganlanba railway station, one of the stations along the China-Laos railway is under construction in September

China and possibly other countries, but it is harder to see "exactly what the economic benefits are going to be" for Laos, said Scott Morris of the Center for Global Development in Washington.

With only 21 stations in Laos, the line is designed to serve Chinese needs to reach foreign ports quickly, Morris said. He said a railway to serve mostly rural Laos would have more stations to connect farmers to markets.

"This is essentially a Chinese public infrastructure project that happens to exist in another country," he said.

Chinese contractors are building a high-speed rail line from the Thai capital, Bangkok, to northeastern town of Nong Khai on the Lao border. That won't be completed until 2028 and leaves a gap to be filled between the border and the

line to China.

The Kunming-Vientiane railway's 418-kilometer segment in Laos will be operated by the Laos-China Railway Co., a joint venture between China Railway group and two other Chinese government-owned companies with a 70% stake and a Laotian state company with 30%.

Borrowed money makes up 60% of the railway's investment, according to the two governments.

Such a debt load is unusually heavy and "repayment risk should be quite high," said Laura Li of S&P Global Ratings, a specialist in infrastructure financing.

Laos might be forced to take over repaying the joint venture's full \$3.5 billion debt to keep the line running if the company defaults and the Chinese partners choose not to put in more money,

said Ammar A. Malik and Bradley Parks in a report for AidData, a research project at Virginia's College of William & Mary.

That is the equivalent of nearly a fifth of Laos's economic output last year.

The country's outstanding debt, much of it owed to Beijing, is equal to about two-thirds of annual economic output. Laos ranks among poor countries deemed to be at "high debt risk."

Railways can raise incomes by linking rural areas with cities and export markets. But that payoff can take decades, while railways require big spending on equipment, land and construction. Operators that start with high debt need revenue fast to pay lenders.

"Laos has put itself in a position where if the railway doesn't make a profit, then it's got real debt issues," said Greg Raymond, a Southeast Asian expert at Australian National University.

Laos has been one of the world's fastest-growing economies over the past decade but still is one of its poorest. Its average economic output per person more than doubled since 2010 but stands at \$2,600.

The railway has the potential to raise incomes by 21% in the long run if other reforms also are carried out to make trade and doing business easier, the World Bank said in a report last year.

The railway "will convert Laos from being geographically disadvantaged, by taking advantage of its location, to a regional land-linked hub," said the vice president of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Valy Vetsaphong, according to the Lao news agency.

People who were displaced

from their homes to make way for the railway complain they were paid too little.

Environmentalists say construction damaged natural habitats and threatens endangered species in Laos, which already is a center for wildlife trafficking.

"Any new transport facilitator between the country and major markets for wildlife, such as China, is going to threaten wildlife," said Steven Galster, executive director of the Freeland Foundation, which investigates and combats wildlife trafficking.

Laos represents a new market for China's railway technology. China's state press describes the Kunming-Vientiane line as high-speed, but its 160 kph (100 mph) speed is about half that of China's bullet trains.

China's bullet train network is the world's biggest. The system is based on technology licensed from French, German and Japanese manufacturers, but China is developing its own trains and marketing them globally.

Railways built with BRI financing, including in Kenya and Ethiopia, have struggled to repay Chinese loans. Beijing has started offering lower-cost loans and forgiving some following complaints about debt loads for poor countries.

In 2019, Beijing forgave debts owed by Ethiopia and Cameroon. The same year, Malaysia canceled a \$20 billion rail line due to be built by Chinese contractors after failing to renegotiate the price.

Laos also is turning to its giant neighbor to help develop other industries, including delivering power from hydroelectric dams to neighboring countries, one of the country's biggest exports.

Under an agreement signed in March, the national power distribution grid and export system will be run by a joint venture between the Laos utility and state-owned China Southern Power Grid Ltd. **MDT/AP**

**C**HINA'S aviation regulator cleared the Boeing 737 Max yesterday to return to flying with technical upgrades more than two years after the plane was grounded worldwide following two fatal crashes, a news outlet reported.

Chinese pilots will need to complete new training before commercial flights can begin, China Aviation Daily said, citing the Civil Aviation Administration of China. Phone calls to the regulator weren't answered.

The report displayed a copy of the CAAC's airworthiness directive.

China is the last major market where the Boeing 737 Max was awaiting approval after the United States allowed flights to re-

**AVIATION**

**Regulator clears Boeing 737 Max to fly again**

sume in December 2020 and European Union regulators gave permission in January. Brazil and Canada also have given approval.

Boeing welcomed the decision.

"The CAAC's decision is an important milestone toward safely returning the 737 MAX to service in China. Boeing continues to work with regulators and our customers to return the airplane to service worldwide," it said in a statement.

Boeing's shares jumped 4.25% in pre-market trading yesterday.

Governments grounded the Boeing 737 Max after a total of 246 people were killed in the crashes of a Lion Air flight in Indonesia on Oct. 29, 2018, and an Ethiopian Airlines flight on March 10, 2019.

Investigators blamed a computer system that pushed the plane's nose downward in flight and couldn't be overridden by pilots.

Boeing Co. was required to redesign the system and pilots will need to be trained on the new technology.

Earlier this year Boeing

reported its first quarterly profit since 2019 and its revenue topped expectations as the giant aircraft maker dug out from the most difficult stretch in its history.

The aircraft-maker has recently reported modest gains in new airliner orders, including dozens for the 737 Max.

As recently as 2018, it booked more than 1,000 orders. That was followed, however, by the Max crashes. Boeing has also struggled with production flaws on another plane, the larger 787. **MDT/AP**



HYUNG-JIN KIM & KIM  
TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

**A**MERICA'S defense chief rebuked China yesterday, vowing to confront its potential military threats in Asia and warning that its pursuit of hypersonic weapons intended to evade U.S. missile defenses "increases tensions in the region."

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's stern comments after annual security talks with South Korea, a top U.S. ally, are a window into one of the Biden administration's top foreign policy worries: How should Washington and its partners contain a Chinese military that is strengthening — both in sheer firepower and in confidence — as it pursues an end of American dominance in Asia?

China sees much of Asia as its natural sphere of influence. But many in the region warn of a pattern of Chinese interference, accompanied by moves to acquire the weapons needed to dominate its rivals. Austin's comments were directed at China's July test of a hypersonic weapon capable of partially orbiting Earth before reentering the atmosphere and gliding on a maneuverable path to its target.

Experts say the weapons system is clearly designed to evade U.S. missile defenses, although China insisted it was testing a reusable space vehicle, not a missile.

"We have concerns about the military capabilities that the PRC con-

# US defense chief slams Beijing's drive for hypersonic weapons

tinues to pursue, and the pursuit of those capabilities increases tensions in the region," Austin said about the hypersonic weapons test, using the abbreviation for the People's Republic of China, the country's official name.

"We'll continue to maintain the capabilities to defend and deter against a range of potential threats from the PRC to ourselves and to our allies," he said.

The Pentagon released on Monday the results of a global posture review that calls for additional cooperation with allies to deter "potential Chinese military aggression and threats from North Korea."

Last month, Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the United States is also working on hypersonic weapons. But there is worry in Washington that it is lagging behind China and Russia in pursuing these types of weapons. Russia said Monday its navy successfully tested a prospective hypersonic cruise missile.

Hypersonic weapons, which fly at speeds in excess of Mach 5, or five times the speed of sound, could pose crucial challenges to missile defense systems because of their speed and maneuverability. But some experts argue that hypersonic



South Korean President Moon Jae-in (right) bumps elbows with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin at the Blue House in Seoul, yesterday

weapons would add little to America's ability to deter war and worry that they could trigger a new, destabilizing arms race.

Austin also addressed another major U.S. worry: North Korea.

He said that he agreed with South Korean Defense Minister Suh Wook that the North's growing weapons program "is increasingly destabilizing for regional security." Austin said the allies remain committed to a diplomatic approach to North Korea.

Suh said the two agreed on a document updating joint contingency plans in the event of a war on the peninsula to reflect changes in North Korean threats and other conditions, but didn't elaborate on the document's details.

North Korea's nuclear arsenal is believed to have

grown significantly in recent years.

After a series of high-profile missile and nuclear tests in 2016-17, North Korea claimed to have the ability to launch nuclear strikes on the American homeland. According to a 2018 South Korean estimate, North Korea has built up to 60 nuclear weapons.

Despite severe economic hardships related to the pandemic, North Korea has continuously rebuffed U.S. offers to resume disarmament talks, saying Washington must first abandon its hostility. The Biden administration maintains that international sanctions on North Korea will stay in place until the country takes concrete steps toward denuclearization.

The United States stations about 28,500 soldiers in South Korea to deter potential aggression from North Korea. During Thursday's meeting, Austin highlighted a U.S. commitment to maintain the current level of U.S. forces, according to a joint statement.

The alliance, forged during the 1950-53 Korean War, was tested in recent years as then-President Donald Trump threatened

to pull U.S. troops out of South Korea if Seoul did not drastically increase its financial support for them. Trump also repeatedly complained of the cost of regular military drills between Washington and Seoul.

Such concerns have eased since President Joe Biden took office in January. But the alliance still faces challenges such as Seoul's historical disputes with Japan, another key U.S. regional ally, and its hesitation to join U.S.-led initiatives targeting China, its biggest trading partner.

Austin and Suh pledged to continue trilateral cooperation involving Japan. But they didn't elaborate on how South Korea and Japan could overcome tensions stemming largely from Tokyo's 1910-45 colonization of the Korean Peninsula. **MDT/AP**

## WTA: Loss of China events over Peng could go past '22

**T**HE suspension of all WTA tournaments in China because of concerns about the safety of Peng Shuai, a Grand Slam doubles champion who accused a former government official there of sexual assault, could result in cancellations of those events beyond 2022, the head of the women's professional tennis tour told AP yesterday. "We're hopeful we get to the right place, but we are prepared, if it continues as it is that we will not be operating in the region," WTA President and CEO Ste-

ve Simon said in a video call from California. "This is an organizational effort that is really addressing something that's about what's right and wrong."

He said the move to put a halt to the tour's play in China, including Hong Kong, came with the backing of the WTA Board of Directors, players, tournaments and sponsors. It is the strongest public stand against China taken by a sports body — and one that could cost the WTA millions of dollars.

Peng dropped out of public view after raising the allegations about former vice premier Zhang Gaoli in a Nov. 2 social media posting that was quickly taken down by Chinese authorities.

In the month since, Simon has made repeated calls for China to carry out an inquiry into the 35-year-old Peng's accusations and to allow the WTA to communicate directly with the former No. 1-ranked doubles player and owner of titles at Wimbledon and the French Open. **MDT/AP**

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AP PHOTO

COVID-19

# Omicron unravels travel industry's plans for a comeback

DAVID KOENIG & YURI KAGEYAMA

**T**OURISM businesses that were just finding their footing after nearly two years of devastation wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic are being rattled again as countries throw up new barriers to travel in an effort to contain the omicron variant.

From shopping districts in Japan and tour guides in the Holy Land to ski resorts in the Alps and airlines the world over, a familiar dread is rising about the renewed restrictions.

Meanwhile, travelers eager to get out there have been thrown back into the old routine of reading up on new requirements and postponing trips.

Abby Moore, a librarian and associate professor at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, was scheduled to leave for Prague on Wednesday. But the day before her flight, she started having doubts when she saw that Prague had closed its Christmas markets and imposed a citywide curfew.

"I wasn't really concerned about my trip until the Czech Republic started what looked like a mini-lockdown process," said Moore, who decided to reschedule her travel to March.

Less than a month after

significantly easing restrictions for inbound international travel, the U.S. government has banned most foreign nationals who have recently been in any of eight southern African countries. A similar boomerang was seen in Japan and Israel, both of which tightened restrictions shortly after relaxing them.

While it is not clear where the variant emerged, South African scientists identified it last week, and many places, including the European Union and Canada, have restricted travel from the wider region.

For all the alarm, little is known about omicron, including whether it is more contagious, causes more serious illness or can evade vaccines.

Still, governments that were slow to react to the first wave of COVID-19 are eager to avoid past mistakes. The World Health Organization says, however, that travel bans are of limited value and will "place a heavy burden on lives and livelihoods." Other experts say travel restrictions won't keep variants out but might give countries more time to get people vaccinated.

London-based airline easyJet said Tuesday that renewed travel restrictions already appear to be hurting winter bookings, although CEO Johan Lundgren said the damage is not yet as severe as

during previous waves. The CEO of SAS Scandinavian Airlines said winter demand was looking up, but now we "need to figure out what the new variants may mean."

"In the past year, each new variant has brought a decline in bookings, but then an increase once the surge dissipates," said Helene Becker, an analyst with financial services firm Cowen.

Hotels, which were recovering more quickly than expected, have experienced a similar phenomenon.

"Every time there has been a variant, as soon as it clears up a little bit (leisure travel) snaps back very quickly. Business travel is a little more uncertain," said Ari Klein, a hotels analyst for BMO Capital Markets.

Israel's decision to close the country to foreign visitors is hitting the nation's tourism industry as it geared up for the Hanukkah and Christmas holidays. The country only opened to tourists in November, after barring most foreign visitors since early last year.

Just over 30,000 tourists entered Israel in the first half of November, compared to 421,000 in November 2019, according to government figures.

Joel Haber, a Jerusalem-based guide, said during a typical Hanukkah holiday his calendar would be chock full

of food tours through Jerusalem's colorful Mahane Yehuda market. Instead, he has just one tour a day.

"Tour guides like me are the first to get hit and the last to emerge and are directly prevented from working by a government decision," Haber said.

In the West Bank city of Bethlehem, revered by Christians as Jesus' birthplace, local businesses expected a boost from Christmas tourism. The Bethlehem Hotel, one of the largest in the city, has operated at a fraction of capacity for the past 18 months.

"Everyone who had bookings over the next two weeks has canceled, while others are waiting to see what happens next," said the hotel's manager, Michael Mufdi. "I don't know how much longer we can last, but we are doing our best."

The pandemic already caused foreign tourism in Japan to shrink from 32 million visitors in 2019 to 4 million last year, a trend that has continued through this year.

As worries surfaced about omicron, Japan on Wednesday tightened its ban on foreign travelers, asking airlines to stop taking new reservations for all flights arriving in the country until the end of December. The country earlier reversed a relaxation of travel restrictions that had been in effect just three weeks.

The crowds of Chinese shoppers who used to arrive in Tokyo's glitzy Ginza district in a stream of buses to snap up luxury items have long disappeared. Restaurants and bars have been forced to restrict hours.

In Asakusa, a quaint part of town filled with souvenir shops, rickshaw drivers, and stalls selling traditional sweets, news of the omicron variant made little difference this week. Vendors say there hasn't been any business for months except for a few local customers.

In South Africa, Frederic Plachesi, owner of Tambo-ti lodge in Dinokeng Game Reserve, is facing a similar fall-off in the international guests his business relies on.

"The odds are for the next few months, only locals will visit the lodge," said Plachesi. "We estimate a 60% loss of business because of the omicron restrictions."

In Europe, Alpine ski resorts worry about how to keep up with requirements such as ensuring all skiers are vaccinated or recovered from infection and have tested negative for the virus. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1989 MALTA SUMMIT ENDS COLD WAR



The leaders of the two world superpowers, the USA and the USSR, have declared an end to the Cold War after two days of storm-lashed talks at the Malta summit.

At a joint news conference held on board the Soviet cruise ship, Maxim Gorky, the two men announced they had set the stage for big reductions in troops and weapons in Europe.

The Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, also said: "I assured the President of the United States that I will never start a hot war against the USA."

For his part, US President George Bush said: "We can realise a lasting peace and transform the East-West relationship to one of enduring co-operation. That is the future that Chairman Gorbachev and I began right here in Malta."

The Malta summit is being hailed as the most important since 1945 when Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt agreed a post-war plan for Europe at Yalta.

The two men have met face-to-face for the first time against a backdrop of fast-moving change in Eastern Europe.

In the past few weeks Hungary has opened its borders with the West, the Berlin Wall has fallen, followed by the government of Czechoslovakia. Only yesterday the fledgling East German government of only seven weeks was also forced to resign.

Both leaders spoke hopefully of the changes sweeping Eastern Europe - but they also spoke of the need for caution, particularly with regard to the future of Germany and the prospect of reunification.

Mr Bush said: "It is not for the United States to dictate the pace of change in Germany or anywhere else."

Mr Gorbachev said: "The world is leaving one epoch and entering another. We are at the beginning of a long road to a lasting, peaceful era."

"The threat of force, mistrust, psychological and ideological struggle should all be things of the past."

The summit was not all plain sailing. High winds and heavy seas yesterday left the American president stranded aboard his cruiser in Marsaxlokk Bay.

An afternoon session of talks had to be abandoned while the Russians waited in vain for Mr Bush to arrive on their ship, the Maxim Gorky, which was moored in a calmer position.

A joint dinner was also cancelled as the president remained marooned. [...]

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The Malta summit is regarded by many as the official end of the Cold War, although little of substance was actually agreed.

The summit followed a series of arms-reduction treaties between the two superpowers, including Salt II in 1979 and the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty in 1987.

Presidents Bush and Gorbachev went on to sign a treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe in November 1990, establishing parity between East and West, and the first of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (Start) in December 1991.

The collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe continued with the fall of the Romanian government and the reunification of Germany in 1990.

Although Mikhail Gorbachev was seen as a hero by the outside world, within the Soviet Union the slow progress of reform and declining economic conditions eventually led to the break-up of the union and his resignation in December 1991.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
The moon slips forward into far-reaching Sagittarius and trudges tiredly through her waning phase, making it an ideal day to cultivate closure around relationship stories from the past month.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Don't swim upstream by pushing yourself to stay productive. It's best to tie up any loose ends looming around relationship narratives from the past month.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Take it easy under Friday's low-key landscape, Gemini. The moon marches into adventure-seeking Sagittarius, drifting exhaustedly through her waning phase.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
While you're feeling fired up to get the ball rolling on work projects, it's important that you first bring closure to the creative endeavors you've been embarking on.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
The hard times are nearly over, Leo. You're in the home stretch of dealing with some turbulent emotional material, and greener pastures are beginning to reveal themselves.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
The month ahead is likely to see you leaning into a brand-new story emerging around your understanding of your roots, as revelations around your home life come forth.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
It's an ideal time to seek closure and tie up any loose ends looming around the changes in your current work story. Take it slow and engage in the important conversations that await you.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
The past few weeks have either frustrated or invigorated you, Scorpio. Perhaps you've even experienced a little bit of both! Fortunately, Friday's easygoing skies work to bring you out of this heavy headspace.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
There's so much on your plate right now, Sagittarius. Keep maintaining your balance and pushing ahead, as you're on the brink of a brand-new chapter of self-discovery.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
As a Capricorn, it's rare for you to know when you need a break. Let Friday's skies gently remind you to slow your pace as the moon wades forward into pensive Sagittarius.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Friday's skies to do just that, as the far-seeing Sagittarius moon encourages you to cultivate closure. Luna's lack of cosmic contacts makes for a low-key, low energy day- so don't overdo it!

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
You're entering into one of the most important points of your year, Pisces. In order for you to fully prepare for the changes brewing on the career front, you need to tie up a few loose ends.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	0	12	fine
Harbin	-6	-16	cloudy
Tianjin	1	11	fine
Urumqi	-1	-8	fine
Xi'an	-1	13	fine
Lhasa	1	13	cloudy
Chengdu	7	17	cloudy
Chongqing	8	16	overcast
Kunming	8	13	cloudy
Nanjing	11	22	fine
Shanghai	5	13	fine
Wuhan	1	17	cloudy
Hangzhou	2	16	fine
Taipei	13	18	fine
Guangzhou	7	21	fine
Hong Kong	15	21	fine
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-12	-3	snow
Frankfurt	-1	3	cloudy
Paris	2	6	cloudy
London	1	6	fine
New York	5	14	rain

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Equilibrium; 7- Uncooked; 10- Assistant, particularly to heads of state; 14- Add fizz; 15- Miscalculate; 16- Well-behaved; 17- Ultimatum words; 18- Architect I.M.; 19- The King \_\_\_; 20- Put in place; 23- Come to a consensus; 26- This \_\_\_ stickup!; 27- Potala Palace site; 28- Undoing; 29- N.Y. neighbor; 30- "\_\_\_ Believer" (Monkees hit); 31- Kind of tuition; 33- \_\_\_-Cat; 34- Catchall abbr.; 37- Hydrocarbon suffix; 38- JFK posting; 39- Capp and Capone; 40- Howe'er; 41- Neighbor of Leb.; 42- Lux. neighbor; 43- Tomahawk; 45- RPM part; 46- Hee \_\_\_; 47- Kiln for drying hops; 48- "Our Gang" girl; 51- \_\_\_ Lingus; 52- Sleep disorder; 53- Geography dealing with the sea; 56- Had the mic, say; 57- Covered vehicle; 58- Place; 62- Famous last words; 63- Second sequel tag; 64- The Muse of astronomy; 65- Zaire's Mobutu \_\_\_ Seko; 66- It's in the genes; 67- Something that occupies space;

DOWN: 1- \_\_\_ Paulo; 2- Thrice, in prescriptions; 3- Just the Way You \_\_\_; 4- Conspicuous; 5- "Who's there?" reply; 6- Leak slowly; 7- Meal; 8- Sports area; 9- Habeas corpus, for one; 10- Hercule's creator; 11- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 12- Bygone birds; 13- Minneapolis suburb; 21- Straight; 22- Nearly; 23- Met highlights; 24- Burlap; 25- Stair part; 29- Sleek swimmer; 30- Marriage acquisition; 32- Mediterranean arm; 33- African sands; 34- One of the Allens; 35- The ones here; 36- Terra \_\_\_; 44- Mimic; 45- Pestilence; 46- Rupture; 48- Prescribed amounts; 49- Perceptive; 50- Leases; 51- Once more; 52- Now, in Nogales; 54- 'Ars Amatoria' poet; 55- Purple fruit; 59- Tiny toiler; 60- Fail to tell the truth; 61- Sympathetic attention;



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- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
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- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
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1,663 ft<sup>2</sup> 3 2 1

AD

BOOK IT

# IN MEMOIR, IT'S GOOD TO BE COMEDY KING MEL BROOKS

DOUGLASS K. DANIEL, MDT/AP

**B**AGELS and Nova Scotia lox for the writing team's breakfast while punching up the script for "Blazing Saddles." Earl Grey tea and English digestive biscuits while developing Gene Wilder's idea for "Young Frankenstein." Cottage cheese topped with fruit while hashing out yet another writer's pitch for "Silent Movie."

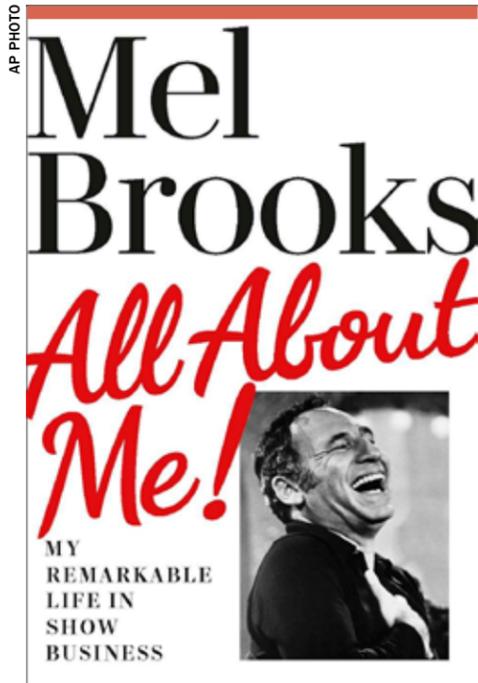
Besides an uncanny memory for food, Mel Brooks has the skill of an alchemist turning the base metal of others' ideas into comedy treasure. But the lead comes before the gold. With the notable exception of "The Producers," Brooks' greatest hits have been a team effort that usually began as a nugget in someone else's mind.

In his new memoir "All About Me!" the unmatched self-promoter, now 95, generously shares the credit... most of the time. Look elsewhere to hear a different side of the Mel Brooks story — some of his collaborators have grumbled about being elbowed aside as he grabbed all the glory he could. The same goes for his personal life

— his first marriage is barely noted in spite of three children and years of litigation — and anything else that might cast a shadow on the beloved funny man.

As advertised, "All About Me!" is a narrowly focused celebration of a poor Jewish kid who grew up from Brooklyn street corner joker to become synonymous with hearty laughter and naughty chuckles. It's a surprisingly gentle remembrance from a comedian known for mocking anything considered sacred in America.

The entertainment world was an escape for Melvin Kaminsky, the youngest of four brothers whose father died when Melvin was 2 and whose mother worked hard to get enough pennies for a movie ticket. His stint at a Catskills resort as a clownish teen (contrasted with harrowing months defusing bombs in the wake of the the Battle of the Bulge) followed by a postwar Army assignment to an occupation en-



"All About Me! My Remarkable Life in Show Business" by Mel Brooks (Ballantine)

tertainment unit helped make his heavenly dream more earthbound.

Brooks refined his talent for comedy during his first big break, writing for Sid Caesar's "Your

Show of Shows" and "Caesar's Hour" series during TV's Golden Age. Lean years followed, but Brooks kept at it, thanks to his "2,000-Year-Old Man" routine with Carl Reiner, co-creating TV's "Get Smart" and writing and directing his first film, "The Producers" (1968), which he adapted decades later into a Broadway juggernaut.

Along the way Brooks met the likes of Cary Grant (debonair but dull), John Wayne (he thought the script for "Blazing Saddles" was hilarious but too dirty for an appearance by America's Favorite Cowboy) and Alfred Hitchcock (the Master of Suspense kept Brooks hanging on whether he thought "High Anxiety" was insult or homage — he finally sent a note with a case of fine wine). And there was actress Anne Bancroft. Her unlikely attraction to Brooks' off-kilter personality resulted in that rare Hollywood production, a durable marriage.

To avoid confusing ticket-buyers, Brooks kept his name off

his production company's non-comedies "The Elephant Man," "Frances," "The Fly" and other top-notch films. His all-too-brief discussions about the business side of the movie business — he demanded foreign rights to his later pictures and was rewarded with more money than he earned domestically — are welcome asides.

Anyone looking for introspection will be disappointed. While Brooks celebrates his reputation for "dangerous" comedy, he's taking no chances with today's hot topics. Look elsewhere for Brooks to muse over whether "Blazing Saddles" with its liberal use of the N-word would survive in our politically correct culture (no, he has said). Reconsidering the misogyny and homophobia that were part of his generation's comedy canon just isn't on the menu.

Yes, too much of "All About Me!" is self-congratulatory — if Brooks isn't praising himself, he quotes others praising him — and, yes, recounting plots and casts for his films comes off as superficial. His memoir works best, which is more often than not, as a look back in laughter from a man who isn't through trying to make us gasp for breath.

Douglass K. Daniel is the author of "Anne Bancroft: A Life" (University Press of Kentucky).

AD

- 合夥人 PARTNERS:**  
 官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha °  
 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °  
 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °  
 趙魯 Zhao Lu °\*  
 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques
- 大律師 ASSOCIATES:**  
 高文軒 Adelino Correia °  
 羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues \*  
 白秀蘭 Susana Batalha  
 馬潔冰 Maria João Marques  
 陶義德 António Isó de Azevedo  
 白穎怡 Icília Berenguel  
 冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves  
 馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins  
 飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira °  
 杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo  
 宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção  
 莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura  
 安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos  
 巴慧雅 Vera Bastos  
 歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo  
 陳正喬 Joana Chan  
 顏曉蓉 Teresa Xiaorong Yan  
 諾瑪莉 Maria Noras  
 康靜雅 Viviana Hong  
 梁淑嵐 Ana Leon  
 黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong
- 實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:**  
 張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong  
 陳健雄 Eurico Chan  
 吳靈鋒 Ng Teng Fong  
 戴博晴 Tai Pok Cheng  
 吳佩倫 Ng Pui U
- 法律專家 JURISTS:**  
 羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues  
 斐彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo  
 潘卡莉 Candice Pun  
 陳子健 Kimi Chan  
 伍福賢 Domingos Ng  
 劉慧敏 Amanda Liu  
 楊詩婷 Si Teng leong



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 地址:澳門南灣大馬路759號3-5樓  
 Tel: (853) 2837 2642 / 2837 2623  
 Office hours: Mon-Thu: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:30  
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F&B

## TOAST TO A FUTURE OF GOOD FORTUNE

As thousands of families hope to gather near and far for Chinese Lunar New Year, they look for the perfect gift to inspire new beginnings full of exciting possibilities. Glenfiddich, of family-owned distiller and distributor William Grant & Sons, unveils the final edition in the Rlon Wang-designed series trilogy of Chinese New Year gift packs that embraces the occasion in celestial style. Partnering again with the rising star Chinese illustrator, Glenfiddich CNY limited edition gift pack invites a look to the future and imagine a world where good fortune and auspicious wonders await. Artist Rlon Wang says of the partnership: “I greatly enjoyed working with Glenfiddich for this final design; I was able to use a technique of multi-layered illustrations to put people’s brightest hopes and dreams on a canvas. I gave the design an otherworldly feel with the use of traditional symbols in futuristic forms. We see old friends - Glenfiddich’s Royal Stag and the traditional dancing Chinese lion - ascending to the stars with a bright galaxy in front of them; auspicious lanterns, lotus flowers and a soaring phoenix guide them into a vibrant world full of galactic proportions. Zero-gravity allows them to reach new heights, representing a boundless future that awaits.”



The Manor Team - Janet Yuen, David Duan & Chef Michele



Japanese Sea Bass



Domori Piedmont



New Zealand Ora King Salmon



Rhug Estate Pigeon Breast



TASTE OF EDESIA

# Midday decadence

IRENE SAM, MDT

**T**HE latest edition of “Let’s do a Luxe Lunch” set menu at **St. Regis Macao’s The Manor** features the finest imported seafood and premium cuts with the option of free-flow Champagne.

Executive Sous Chef at The Manor, Michele Dell’Aquila, said the Let’s Do a Luxe Lunch represents an enhanced interpretation of the popular seasonal menu, and offers diners an alternative to the traditional hotel brunch. “We have meticulously sourced the most premium ingredients from all over the world to create a celebratory lunch as we enter the festive season,” he said.

The lunch allows guests the choice of three, four or five-course menus depending on their appetite. Seafood connoisseurs will appreciate the Hokkaido scallops with langoustine and Japanese sea bass and New Zealand Ora King Salmon while the George Bruck foie gras, Rhug Estate pigeon breast and Aveyron lamb dressed with celeriac, truffle and mustard seeds are chef’s specialties. Chocolate lovers can indulge in the rich hot chocolate cake with hazelnut cream and Illy coffee ice cream. Alternatively, opt for the Chestnut confit with cream and snow-white meringue. Both desserts are the perfect finale to this decadent brunch.

**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**ABE'S WILD TALK  
 LAYS BARE MILITARIST  
 DREAM**

By claiming that "A Taiwan emergency is a Japanese emergency, and therefore an emergency for the Japan-US alliance," former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe has openly revealed his out-dated mindset and the militarism that is deeply ingrained in his psyche.

If Japan was to heed such wild talk it would sacrifice its future for the futile cause of separatists on the island. Citing Japan's alliance with the United States shows Abe knows Japan is powerless to act on its own.

His remarks immediately drew a strong reaction from the Chinese side: Not only did the Chinese Foreign Ministry lodge a stern representation to the Japanese side, it also summoned Japan's ambassador to China on Wednesday evening.

In her meeting with Japanese Ambassador Shui Hideo, Assistant Foreign Minister Hua Chunying called Abe's remarks "erroneous" and a violation of basic norms of relations between China and Japan as they have "openly challenged China's sovereignty and given brazen support to Taiwan independence forces".

In fact, Abe's remarks continue the incessant attempts by anti-China forces to interfere in China's internal affairs.

He was right in predicting that it would be a crisis for Japan if it tried to thwart China's reunification bid and for its alliance with the United States, which will not welcome being dragged into a conflict by armchair warriors in Japan.

Pretending to be unaware that the climate between the US and China has changed for the better after a video summit between President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden last month, Abe is still indulging in the dream that Japan can profit from geopolitical competition between the two big countries and that he is still relevant on the world stage.

But Biden made it clear in his talk with Xi that the US has no intention of getting into a conflict with China nor does it support "Taiwan independence".

As a diehard right-winger, Abe vigorously pushed for constitutional changes which would have given Japan's Self-Defense Forces a greater role both in the country's periphery and overseas when he served as Japan's prime minister. But his attempts to revive the ghost of Japan's military past encountered strong condemnation both at home and abroad. Long gone are the days when Japanese militarists could colonize and bully China.

Considering that Japan is already at odds with China over the East China Sea issue, a war with China over Taiwan, as presented by Abe, would only lead the country down a self-destructive path. And he was wrong in suggesting that it would be an emergency, as that is something which happens unexpectedly. Beijing has repeatedly made clear the consequences of emboldening the island's secessionists to cross the redline.

It is high time Abe and other right-wingers in Japan laid their militarist dreams to rest.

**VISA CEO: COVID CAUSED PERMANENT  
 SHIFT TO DIGITAL PAYMENTS**

**THE  
 BUZZ**

Al Kelly believes there has been a permanent shift in how consumers worldwide pay for goods and services. His 91-year-old parents are a prime example.

The CEO of payments processing giant Visa recently visited his mother just after she'd finished buying her groceries online — something she'd never done prior to COVID-19.

"She said to me 'I cannot believe I wasn't doing this before the pandemic,'" Kelly said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Kelly is more than five years into his tenure as the head of one of the world's largest payments companies and arguably, one of the

world's best-known brands. Since he took over, the company's stock has tripled in value as more of us pay with Visa's credit and debit cards — a trend bolstered by the pandemic, as once cash-only establishments started accepting plastic and shoppers did more transactions online.

But while the shift to online shopping is helping Visa's bottom line, the company is facing new forms of competition, particularly from Silicon Valley, who have debuted alternative forms of payment that go around the traditional Visa and Mastercard networks.

Full interview on [macaudailytimes.com](http://macaudailytimes.com)

**UK COURT BACKS  
 MEGHAN IN DISPUTE OVER  
 PRIVACY WITH PUBLISHER**

SYLVIA HUI & JILL  
 LAWLESS, LONDON

**T**HE Duchess of Sussex yesterday won the latest stage in her long-running privacy lawsuit against a newspaper publisher over its publication of parts of a letter she wrote to her estranged father.

The Court of Appeal in London upheld a High Court ruling in February that publication of the letter that the former Meghan Markle wrote to her father Thomas Markle after she married Prince Harry in 2018 was unlawful and breached her privacy.

The publisher of the Mail on Sunday and the MailOnline website challenged that decision at the Court of Appeal, which held a hearing last month. Dismissing that appeal, senior judge Geoffrey Vos told the court in a brief hearing yesterday that "the Duchess had a reasonable expectation of privacy in the contents of the letter. Those contents were personal, private and not matters of legitimate public interest."

In a statement, Meghan, 40, said the ruling was "a victory not just for me, but for anyone who has ever felt scared to stand up for what's right."

"While this win is precedent-setting, what matters most is that we are now collectively brave enough to reshape a tabloid industry that conditions people to be cruel, and profits from the lies and pain that they create," she said.

Associated Newspapers disputed Meghan's claim that she didn't intend the letter to be seen by anyone but her father. They said correspondence between Meghan and her then-communications secretary, Jason Knauf, showed the duchess suspected her father might leak the letter to journalists and wrote it with that in mind.

The publisher also argued that the publication of the letter was part of



Meghan and her prince

Thomas Markle's right to reply following a People magazine interview with five of Meghan's friends alleging he was "cruelly cold-shouldering" his daughter in the run-up to her royal wedding.

But Vos said that the article, which the Mail on Sunday described as "sensational," was "splashed as a new public revelation" rather than focusing on Thomas Markle's response to negative media reports about him.

In their appeal, Associated Newspapers had also argued that Meghan made private information public by cooperating with Omid Scobie and Carolyn Durand, authors of "Finding Freedom," a sympathetic book about her and Harry.

The duchess' lawyers had previously denied that she or Harry collaborated with the authors. But Knauf said in evidence to the court that he gave the writers information, and discussed it with Harry and Meghan.

Knauf's evidence, which hadn't previously been disclosed, was a dramatic twist in the long-running case.

In response, Meghan apologized for misleading the court about the extent of her cooperation with the book's authors.

The duchess said she didn't remember the discussions with Knauf when she gave evidence earlier

in the case, "and I apologize to the court for the fact that I had not remembered these exchanges at the time."

"I had absolutely no wish or intention to mislead the defendant or the court," she said.

Meghan, a former star of the American TV legal drama "Suits," married Harry, a grandson of Queen Elizabeth II, at Windsor Castle in May 2018.

Meghan and Harry announced in early 2020 that they were quitting royal duties and moving to North America, citing what they said were the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media. They have settled in Santa Barbara, California, with their two young children.

In her statement, Meghan strongly condemned Associated Newspapers for treating the lawsuit as "a game with no rules." She said she had been subject to "deception, intimidation and calculated attacks" in the three years since the lawsuit began.

"The longer they dragged it out, the more they could twist facts and manipulate the public (even during the appeal itself), making a straightforward case extraordinarily convoluted in order to generate more headlines and sell more newspapers — a model that rewards chaos above truth," she said. **MDT/AP**



**Japan** says it has retracted a ban on new incoming international flight bookings to defend against the new variant of the coronavirus only a day after the policy was announced, following criticisms that it was an overreaction. The transport ministry on Wednesday issued a request to international airlines to stop taking new reservations for flights coming into Japan until the end of December as an emergency precaution to defend against the new omicron variant.

**South Korea** broke its daily record for coronavirus infections for a second straight day yesterday with more than 5,200 new cases, as pressure mounted on a health care system grappling with rising hospitalizations and deaths. The rapid delta-driven spread comes amid the emergence of the new omicron variant, which is seen as potentially more contagious than previous strains of the virus, and has fueled concerns about prolonged pandemic suffering.

**European Union** drug regulator said it has started a rolling review of a new coronavirus vaccine made by French startup Valneva, the first step toward giving the vaccine the green light to be used in the 27-nation EU. Approval by the European Medicines Agency would add another vaccine to the EU's armory against COVID-19 as the bloc ramps up administering booster shots and some countries are preparing to deliver shots of Pfizer's vaccine to children ages 5 to 11.



**USA** President Joe Biden is set to kick off a more urgent campaign for Americans to get COVID-19 booster shots Thursday as he unveils his winter plans for combating the coronavirus and its omicron variant with enhanced availability of shots and vaccines but without major new restrictions. The plan includes a requirement for private insurers to cover the cost of at-home COVID-19 tests and a tightening of testing requirements for people entering the U.S. regardless of their vaccination status.