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THE GOVERNMENT ASSURED THAT STAFF MEMBERS FROM CASINOS' VIP ROOMS THAT HAVE BEEN RECENTLY CLOSED WILL NOT BE AFFECTED

▲ P2

ONLY THOSE VACCINATED MAY BE ALLOWED UNDER QUARANTINE-FREE TRAVEL WITH HK

▲ P7

THE 21ST MACAO CITY FRINGE FESTIVAL WILL BE TAKING PLACE FROM JANUARY 12 TO 23 WITH THE THEME 'MARGIN BREAK'

▲ P3



China yesterday dismissed the decision by Canada and the United Kingdom to join Washington's diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games as a "farce." China is also unconcerned the officials' absence would spark a chain reaction, while numerous heads of state, government leaders and members of royal families have registered to attend, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters at a daily briefing. [More on p8](#)

Myanmar The government troops raided a small northwestern village, rounding up civilians, binding their hands and then burning them alive in apparent retaliation for an attack on a military convoy, according to witnesses and other reports. A video of the aftermath of Tuesday's attack showed the charred bodies of 11 victims, some believed to be teenagers, lying in a circle amid what appeared to be the remains of a hut in Done Taw village in Sagaing region.



Japan A Japanese billionaire and his producer rocketed to space on Wednesday and reached the International Space Station several hours later, the first visit by self-paying space tourists to the orbiting outpost in more than a decade. Fashion tycoon Yusaku Maezawa and producer Yozo Hirano, who plans to film his mission, blasted off for the International Space Station in a Russian Soyuz spacecraft along with Russian cosmonaut Alexander Misurkin. The trio lifted off as scheduled at 12:38 p.m. (0738 GMT) aboard Soyuz MS-20 from the Russia-leased Baikonur launch facility in Kazakhstan and successfully docked at the orbiting outpost almost six hours later.

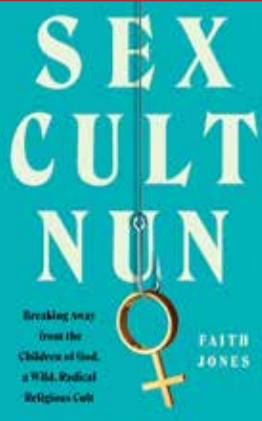
[More on backpage](#)

REBRANDING MACAU

Macau in a good position to market itself as a travel destination with high-quality offerings as purchasing power grows among millennials: Trip.com CEO, Jane Sun, told the Times in an exclusive interview [▲ P6](#)



XINHUA



AP PHOTO

MACAU'S CHILDREN OF GOD UNTOLD STORY: MEMOIR

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EVERGRANDE CHINESE CENTRAL BANKER SAYS MARKET CAN HANDLE DEVELOPER DEBT

▲ P8

RENATO MARQUES

STAFF members from casinos' VIP rooms that have been recently closed should not be affected, according to a joint press statement from the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) and the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) on Wednesday.

The government released the statement in response to numerous inquiries from the media on the topic. The DSAL and DICJ together assert that "under the provisions and regulations of the law into force, the rights of workers in the [gaming] concessionaires' VIP rooms cannot be affected by the suspension of these rooms, as they are hired by the concessionaires [and not by the VIP rooms]." The statement adds: "As for the workers hired by gaming promoters (junkets), it is their [junkets] responsibility to safeguard the workers' labor rights."

The DSAL also notes that no request for assistance from any staff members from casino VIP rooms have been received so far.

"So far, DSAL has not received any request for assistance from employees of those entities. DSAL will continue to pay attention to the employment situation of local residents," DSAL stated. "If a worker in the gaming sector understands that his interests have been harmed, he can present the matter to the DSAL, which will monitor the case following the law, safeguarding the workers' legitimate labor rights."

Both bureaus are said to be "very attentive to the situa-

RENATO MARQUES



GOV'T SAYS CLOSING VIP ROOMS WILL NOT AFFECT WORKERS

tion" involving "changes in the cooperation relations between the gaming concessionaires and the gaming promoters." They each took the opportunity to "warn these entities" that, under the current law, the rights of the workers must be respected.

TAK CHUN GROUP TO CLOSE 'SOME' VENUES

The statement's release coincided with more information about the closure of other junkets surfacing.

The Times has had access to an internal notice from the Tak Chun Group junket. In it, the group stated it would be closing "some of its venues" with the consequent dismissal of workers.

In the notice reviewed by the Times, it is said that the termination of these workers would be effective on the last

day of the operation of the venue, although what date this will be is not stated.

The company also states that these workers will be

compensated "in better terms than the ones stipulated by the labor law". This would include the payment of: one month of extra salary, service compen-

sation according to the number of years of work, providence fund money, and the monetary equivalent of any leave not taken.

SUNCITY EMPLOYEES COMPLAIN TO LABOR BUREAU

AT least 40 employees from the suspended Suncity junket filed a complaint with the Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL) regarding their unclear future, but have as yet received no reply, local media reports.

The report states that these employees worked at Suncity's VIP gambling rooms at the StarWorld, the Galaxy Macau, the MGM, the City of Dreams, and Studio City Macau.

Local Chinese media All About Macau has reportedly spoken with an employee of the junket operator, who is said to have worked at the company for more than a decade. The employee is among those who filed the complaint with the DSAL on December 7 morning.

The employee stressed that they have infor-

med the DSAL quite clearly that no salary for the month of November has been received, with no notice whatsoever from the employer.

Although the DSAL has pledged to give these complainants a reply within 10 working days, the employee said that if the authority does not reply soon, another complaint will be filed.

A statement jointly issued on December 8 evening by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) and the DSAL denied that any help-seeking action has been recorded by the latter bureau.

The statement left the employee dissatisfied. The employee questioned why the authorities said nobody has sought help when, in fact, they have. AL

Junket closures compliance with US regulations: HK media

JUNKET closures at US-originated casino brands in Macau may have occurred in compliance with US regulations, according to Hong Kong media Ming Pao.

US brands – including Sands China and Wynn Macau – allegedly ordered junkets operating in their casinos to close due to concerns that their operations may violate US laws.

The news outlet hinted that MGM China will follow their partners in or-

dering the closure of junket-operated VIP casinos.

This is also the reason why SJM Resorts S.A. (SJM) and Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) have maintained operations of these VIP casinos.

Ambrose So, vice-chairman, executive director and CEO of SJM Holdings Ltd., told the Hong Kong news outlet that the corporation is contractually bound to continue its cooperation with these junkets.

So added that, as revenue from the main gambling floor surpassed that from VIP market recently, the bumps in the junket market have not affected earnings much.

The Hong Kong outlets also suggested that MGM sought to retain VIP casinos that it operates currently, and those operated by junkets would likely be shut down.

Wynn Macau is reportedly terminating its VIP room

by December 20 following the arrest of junket mogul Alvin Chau.

Melco Resorts & Entertainment Ltd. has also reportedly notified junket operators on Monday that from late December, they intend to shut down the rooms where companies bring high rollers to play, according to a Bloomberg report.

Melco, which has three casinos, will reportedly close such rooms on December 21. AL



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STAFF REPORTER

THE 21st Macao City Fringe Festival will be taking place from January 12 to 23, 2022, with the theme "Margin Break."

The festival will feature 20 programs and 15 outreach activities, directing the audience to break down the barriers of distance, crafting art out of regular venues, and integrating it into everyday lives. Like many other events this year, the Fringe Festival will combine online and offline amenities and present a range of creative programs, establishing itself as an exceptional event with innovative ideas.

A press conference was held yesterday at the Macao Cultural Center to introduce the City Fringe Festival, where Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) director Mok Ian Ian remarked, "Art is the reflection of the real world."

The Fringe Festival follows the dictum: "All around the city, our stages, our patrons, our artists." It seeks to encourage the participation of all residents. This year, they have launched the series "Crème de la Fringe" with two

City Fringe Festival to feature 20 programs

subthemes. "Iao Hon" by Ao Ieong Pui San features three programs and three outreach activities. "Todos Fest!" by Comuna de Pedra Arts and Cultural Association will feature three performances, two workshops, two screening sessions, and one sharing session.

"Crème de la Fringe: Iao Hon" is set against the backdrop of Iao Hon, with three outreach programs called "Surviving Route", "Not Junk Mail", and "Iao Hon Pop-up Store". They will use artistic creation to reframe the world through the eyes of its residents, primarily in the form of theater. It also features three programs: Tenant, Illegal Immigrant, and Passerby.

"Crème de la Fringe: Todos! Fest" features three performances named: The Never-ending Task of Lust for Failure for Secondary School Students; Dancing Veins; and Body-Specific!. The pro-

gram's screening and sharing sessions will be on "How to Curate Inclusive Art", as well as the "Symbiotic Dance Workshop" and the "Body Workshop for the Elderly". The third workshop is aimed to inspire the elderly and people with physical or mental disabilities to think creatively, to demonstrate their artistic potential, and to redefine the mainstream's aesthetics.

In addition to a series of performances, the festival features a total of 15 outreach programs, including: screening sessions, sharing sessions, workshops, exhibitions, seminars, and exchange sessions. It will also feature immersive interactive experiences in the community, further broadening the public's artistic horizons.

Registration for the festival's outreach programs starts this Sunday, December 12. Citizens can apply online via IC's website or by phone.



DSPA HOLDS WORKSHOP ON COMBUSTIBLE GASES INSTALLATION

The Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) recently held a workshop to present the main contents of the technical standards on the installation of combustible gases in buildings regulation, which was put into force in end-September. Representatives from various gas companies participated in the workshop, during which DSPA spoke about the main contents of the regulation, and held exchanges with the sector, in the hope that the new standards will be better implemented in practice and with a view to enhancing the dissemination of the safety requirements of gas installations.

CLOSE CONTACT OF CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASE IN MACAU

The Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre were informed by the Zhuhai health authorities of an individual who had been in Macau for a few days that came in close contact with a confirmed Covid-19 case from the Heilongjiang Province. The Health Bureau is currently performing nucleic acid tests on those who were in contact with the individual during their stay in Macau from December 3 to 5. They were subject to medical observation in Zhuhai upon returning on December 6; five NAT have been done over the past eight days, all of which returned negative. The ones who came in contact with the individual all returned negative NATs.

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CRIME

PJ UNVEILS MOP486,000 IPHONE BUNDLE BUY SCAM

RENATO MARQUES

A local 31-year-old man has been detained by the authorities, accused of conducting a scam worth 486,137 patacas, the Judiciary Police (PJ) unveiled yesterday morning in a specially organized press conference.

The case came to the attention of the PJ after a mainland woman filed a complaint on December 4, claiming that the man had stolen RMB384,000 from her while purporting to sell her a bundle of 50 mobile phones at a discount.

The woman said she had met the man through a friend early this year. After they were acquainted, the man allegedly told her via WeChat that he could help to get new iPhone mobile phone models at a special price via a friend that worked at a local Apple Store.

According to the complaint, he told the woman that she could get a 500 patacas discount per phone by acquiring 300 handsets.

He also told the woman that

he could arrange for the delivery of the phone equipment to Zhuhai for an extra fee.

The woman was interested in the deal, but could not afford to acquire that many phones at once, and so declined.

Later this year, the man contacted her again, this time saying that he could offer the same deal for a bundle of just 50 handsets.

The woman accepted the deal and transferred him the amount of RMB384,000 for the handsets. After a few days she was contacted by the man, who said that the person that was transporting the mobile phones into the mainland had been caught by customs and the merchandise had been seized.

He then sent the woman a photo of a customs apprehension notification document stating the seizure of the 50 handsets.

Following this, the woman lost contact with him, and decided to file a complaint to the PJ.

The man attempted to exit Macau via the Qingmao Border Post on December 8, and was de-

tained and questioned by the PJ.

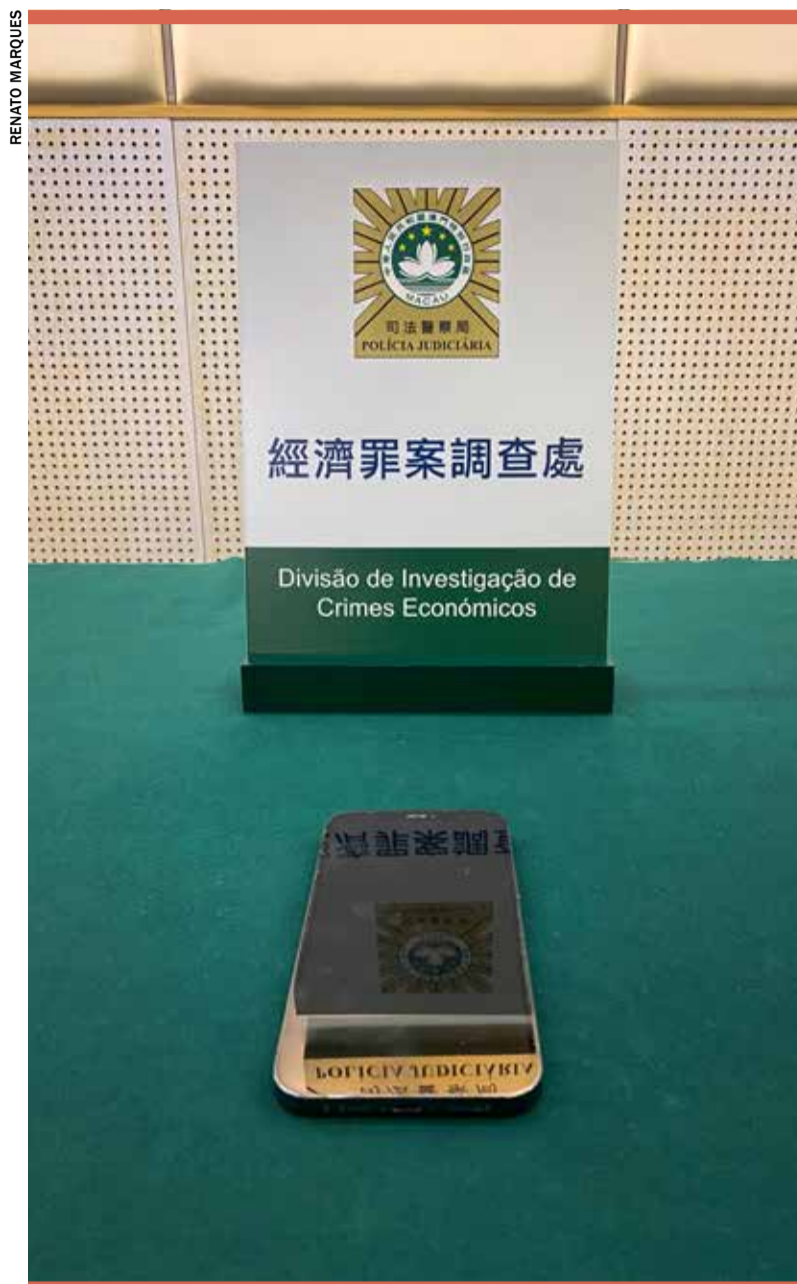
During questioning, the man admitted to the scam. He said that he never had any friend working in any mobile phone store, and was never capable of acquiring the discounted phones.

He also told the PJ that the money paid by the victim had already been spent in the casino, and used to pay a gambling debt.

Regarding the forged customs document, the suspect told the PJ that he was part of a WeChat group that included people involved in import and export business who, on occasion, shared these kinds of documents in the conversation.

Although he acknowledged that the document sent to the woman had been altered to include details relating to the mobile phones he "sold" to the woman, he refused to admit to the crime of document forgery.

At the time of this report, the case was to be forwarded to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigation and accusation of the suspect.



DSPA to promote EVs to cut emissions

RENATO MARQUES

THE government will increase the promotion of electric vehicles (EVs) to cut down on exhaust emissions, the director of the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) Raymond Tam said on a recent TDM Radio program "Macau Forum."

Responding to questions about enhancing the air quality in Macau, Tam said: "We will increase the number of charging stations in the public parking lots next year. Also [next year] we will enforce a new policy that states that all the public parking lots located in the new landfills areas will have these stations [build by default]". He added that the government will strive to ensure that all private residential buildings will also retain this kind of facility.

"The Land, Public Works, and Transport Bureau are already working on a new bill, so that all private residential buildings will have a sufficient number of charging stations for EVs within their



premises," Tam remarked.

Concurrently, and in cooperation with the Meteorological and Geophysics Bureau (SMG), the DSPA is strengthening the monitoring of roadside air quality, director of SMG Leong Weng Kun added.

The promotion of EVs in Macau, and the number of charging stations available, has been a topic of discussion for several months. It was recently on the debate of the Policy Address for 2022, with several lawmakers urging the government to improve and increase the num-

ber of charging stations.

According to lawmakers, the low number of charging stations available in Macau has been a deterrent for residents in acquiring EVs. They claimed that charging stations – specifically those located in residential areas – are often fully occupied, forcing residents to wait for hours to recharge their cars.

The fact there is no universal plug system, and different brands of vehicles require different types of chargers, has also been highlighted an obstacle for expanding the stations' network.

UM MONITORING ALLEGED SEXUAL HARASSMENT CASE FOLLOWING FORMER STUDENT'S CLAIM

STAFF REPORTER

A Facebook post from a former University of Macau (UM) student has been circulating online regarding a current PhD student's alleged behavior, including harassment, manipulation, and sexual abuse, among a number of other actions. The university stated that they are monitoring the incident, and have learned that a report has been made to the police, following an inquiry from the Times. "To protect personal privacy, we are not at liberty to comment on the incident at the moment," added UM.

The former student has written an open letter addressed to the university in hopes that they respond to the situation and create a better environment for UM students, ensuring student safety and gender equity. The letter is currently co-signed by over



30 people concerned by the situation, and over 280 responses have been received alongside the co-signer list.

The alleged victim is a recent UM graduate, and is currently studying at the University of Chicago.

"These actions include rape, sexual abuse, use of violence, gaslighting, cyber-stalking, emotional manipulation, and preventing me from seeking help from

multiple sources," said the former UM student in her open letter to UM, written and shared on Google Docs.

The letter is currently 11 pages long, excluding the co-signer list, and includes details of her experience with the alleged perpetrator, with whom she claimed she had a relationship at the time of the incidents.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



SANDS China Ltd. has continued to progress on its sustainability commitments leading to garnering renowned accolades.

In 2021, Sands China made significant strides in achieving measurable advances in categories like its employee development program, corporate citizenship and philanthropy, and supply chain management.

Through such dedicated efforts, the company was recently recognised by the S&P Dow Jones Indices by qualifying as a constituent of the Dow Jones Sustainability Asia Pacific Index, making it the only integrated resort company included in the DJSI Asia Pacific.

The prestigious index recognises the world's leading companies for their performance in environmental and social issues, as well as practices for responsible governance.

Sands China's inclusion in the index is a testament to its industry-leading performance in environmental, social and governance (ESG) efforts. In the world Consumer Services space, Sands China was one of only three companies named in the Asia Pacific index.

"Environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility are core values of our company," said Sands China Ltd. President Dr. Wilfred Wong.

"We are therefore very pleased to be recognised by Dow Jones in the DJSI Asia Pacific. Our gratitude and congratulations go to our hard-working and dedicated team members for their daily efforts to put our corporate values into practice, making our properties exemplary in our industry."

Sands China executes the People, Planet and Communities corporate social responsibility platform of parent company Las

Sands China continues to fulfil sustainability commitments

Vegas Sands through a variety of initiatives that include programmes such as the Sands ECO360 global sustainability programme; the Sands CARES corporate giving and community engagement programme; and the Sands China Academy, a team member professional development programme.

Manjit Jus, Global Head of ESG Research, S&P Global, said: "We congratulate Sands China Ltd. for being included in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) for Asia Pacific. A DJSI distinction is a reflection of being a sustainability leader in your industry. The record number of companies participating in the 2021 S&P Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment is testament to the growing movement for ESG disclosure and transparency."

Sands China's strong track record in sustainable business performance through the economic value and social impact it has delivered is part of its commitment to serve the Macau community and contribute to making it a better place to live and work.

LEADING THE WAY WITH SOLAR THERMAL-HEAT PUMP HYBRID ENERGY PLANT

Sands China has always sought to align its operational strategy with global frameworks and to focus on the topics where it can have the greatest positive impact.

Therefore, as it commits to providing the highest standards of professional conduct, Sands

China is now operating the first solar thermal-heat pump hybrid energy plant in Macau's hospitality and integrated resort industry at The Londoner Macao.

The energy-efficient plant generates both heating and cooling for 2,000 hotel rooms of the Sky Tower at Sheraton Grand Macao, eliminating the need for a natural gas boiler. It is also the industry's largest such energy plant in Southeast Asia.

Sands China's move to further adopt renewable energy into its resort operations aligns with the company's Sands ECO360 global sustainability strategy. This, along with other continuous eco-conscious efforts, helps the company take advantage of opportunities to reduce its environmental footprint, further improve energy efficiency and create a positive impact in the local community.

"We are very excited about embracing renewable energy in our business operations wherever possible to mitigate impact from fossil fuel energy sources, and this aligns with our commitment to environmental leadership in the market and to building a sustainable future," Dr. Wong said.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Sands China considers initiatives like its new Sands CARES Family Health and Wellness Series as central to its commitment toward social causes and community involvement.

This year, the leading integrated resort developer launched the Family Health and Wellness Series: The Londoner Discovery Journey, which aims to strengthen family bonding and parent-child communication, and to promote family health. Community outreach activities like this are part of Sands China's commitment to the local Macau community and to the promotion of social integration.

During The Londoner Discovery Journey, participants were invited to visit some of The Londoner Macao's Instagram-worthy locations, such as the Tea Cups, Londoner Guards and Londoner Taxi. They completed fun missions throughout the journey in order to win the prize of one night of accommodation at The Londoner Macao, and enjoyed afternoon refreshments and entertainment at Portuguese restaurant Chiado.

PROVIDING UNIQUE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

As Macau's leading integrated resort developer, Sands China supports Macau's transformation into a world centre of tourism and leisure, and considers the cultivation of local talent to be an important component of that process.

The company values local university students and graduates as representing the future of the city.

Through the Integrated Resort Career Exhibition Exclusively for University Students at The Venetian Macao's Adelson Advanced Education Centre, the company offers university students and graduates a platform to learn more about the abundance of career options available in the integrated resort industry and to provide them with opportunities to accrue valuable work experience, paving the way for their future careers.

ENHANCED DISASTER AND PANDEMIC PREVENTION EFFORTS

Sands China Ltd. is strengthening its disaster and pandemic prevention programme in collaboration with Macau Red Cross in light of the particularly severe typhoons that have hit Macau in recent years and the ongoing global Covid-19 pandemic.

The company initiative consists of packing and distributing sanitisation and emergency typhoon response kits and offering a free community seminar on typhoon preparedness and epidemic prevention.

Sands China sees it as its responsibility as a company and member of this community to help those who may need extra assistance and attention.

As Dr. Wong has said, Sands China is exerting tremendous effort supporting the community's needs in the fight against the pandemic.

TRIP.COM: REBRANDING MACAU AS A LEISURE DESTINATION WILL LEAD TO HUGE TRAVEL PICK-UP

LYNZY VALLES

THE Covid-19 pandemic has brought tourism to a pause, as borders around the globe were shut to deter the spread of the virus. But with the government's efforts to boost Covid-19 shots, the travel industry – particularly in the mainland – has already begun to see gradual recovery following Chinese New Year.

Yesterday, Trip.com Group held its 2021 Global Partner Summit in Macau with the theme of "Forward Together."

As the global vaccination rates continue to rise, the group is expecting international travel will return in the near future. China alone has 1.1 billion residents that have been vaccinated.

Despite the challenges faced by the travel industry, the group has said it continues to see growth across its major business units.

Jane Sun, CEO of China's giant global travel service provider Trip.com and subsidiary of the Trip.com group, said both domestic hotel bookings and air ticket bookings in mainland China saw double-digit growth in Q2 2021 compared to the same period in 2019. Trip.com's global domestic hotel bookings increased by over 160% in Q3 2021 compared to Q3 2019. Cross-border air ticket bookings in Europe also saw an increase of 200% in Q3 2021 compared to the previous quarter.

The Times sat down with Sun in an exclusive interview, where the executive was confident that, despite tourism's downturn, the health crisis has paved way for Macau to rebrand itself as a travel destination.

Macau Daily Times (MDT) – Macau has been conducting roadshows in the mainland to promote the city. Is it garnering attention among the residents?

Jane Sun (JS) - I think Macau has done an excellent job in becoming a very popular travel destination. The Macau government has been proactive. Trip.com works very closely with the Macau government, and also Macau airlines and hotels, so the portfolio is very well and matched. Trip.com is known to serve very high-end customers, business customers and now we are extending to young customers who have the buying power.

I'm very excited to see [Macau] going forward - not only

LYNZY VALLES



with an impression as a gambling city, but also a place where big conventions and MICE activities can be hosted. If in the future [the city] recovers, [it can provide] entertainment such as acrobats and concerts.

MDT - Are we seeing a continuous rise in buying power in the younger generations?

JS - My generation, we [have seen] our country grow from a very poor country to one with the second largest industry. It was promising, it was positive. The younger generation, they [grew up] under the one-child policy, so they had everything they wanted. Their buying power is much stronger. When they were young, their parents probably already took them to many countries, so they're very brave and eager to explore. I'm just very excited for that generation. I think the buying power for that generation, and ability and the bravery they have demonstrated, is very exciting for us.

MDT - With the closure of several international borders and the recent upwards trend, what's the expectation in domestic travel?

JS - After the Chinese New Year this year, from March to July, these five months, travel

was doing very well – the recovery trend was very strong.

But in August there was an outbreak in Nanjing, and then in Fujian. Then it became a little bit difficult to do cross-state transactions. But I'm confident that the pandemic will end, and travel will [gain] some great momentum.

MDT - Going back to pre-pandemic levels, is there a long way to go?

JS - It really depends on the

"If Macau brands itself well, [...] we'll be able to drive a lot of business customers and leisure customers to this beautiful city."

JANE SUN
CEO OF TRIP.COM

outbreak and our scientists in the medical field. If pandemic is well controlled, you will see this huge pick up [driven by] pent up demand. I'm heartened to see that 1.1 billion have already taken two shots. The third shot [distribution] is underway as well.

MDT - In terms of cross-border travel, how is Macau on par with some other cities in China in terms of the customers' travel choices?

JS - In terms of the quality Macau is offering, it's very good. I think the quality of the product is very strong – but we need to make sure it's very easy to get, as well as the brand. Macau has changed its image from a pure gambling city to a place where families will have great opportunities to watch shows, do sports and businesses have good meeting venues. All these are [ideas] that need to be enhanced in the business world as well as in the leisure travel customers portfolio.

MDT - Macau's non-diversified offerings – does this attract a certain group of people?

JS - Absolutely. When I came [into the market] 10 years ago, Macau's image was an old gaming city. Gradually, it has evolved into a global city [with the new themed-integrated resorts]. So, I think going forward, we should brand Macau not only with its casinos but also as a wonderful MICE venue just like Las Vegas.

MDT - With China's zero Covid policy, domestic travel is on the rise. Will we see a stronger market in terms of Hong Kong-Macau?

JS - Of course. If there is no impact from Covid, many people will come to Macau from different [mainland] ci-

ties. From our data, the pent-up demand is very strong.

MDT - Are there specific offerings that Macau has in terms of the choices for users on the Trip.com platform?

JS - A couple of things: if you look at the overseas market, Macau is the only city mainland visitors can go to without having to be quarantined when they return to their hometown. That's a huge plus. Secondly, the hotels in Macau are world-class resorts and that's very [inviting] for a lot of visitors. Certainly for business travelers, which is again the reason why we selected Macau as our global partner meeting venue. It can host huge company events without having to break into different meeting rooms. If Macau brands itself well – keeps up its efforts in working with partners such as Trip.com – I think we'll be able to drive a lot of business customers and leisure customers to this beautiful city.

MDT - What's the current travel trend in the new normal?

JS - The older generation are more price sensitive. So when they go to overseas cities they prefer to travel with a group [to] feel more comfortable. The young generation, meanwhile, are very good with English. They have strong buying power, and are very good with exploring new places, so I think they will do great in a city like Macau.

CDC: Quarantine-free scheme with Hong Kong may only welcome vaccinated travelers

ANTHONY LAM

ALTHOUGH there no update from the local government on border normalization with Hong Kong at the regular health press conference yesterday, Dr Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), hinted that full vaccination may be needed for physical interactions.

Many are anticipating, and speculating, that the border will return to normal operations between Macau and Hong Kong on December 20. The public health doctor at the CDC has been asked about this repeatedly.

Yesterday, when asked the question again, she said there was no update on the matter, recapping that the disease control measures between the mainland and the Special Administrative Regions (SARs) must be in alignment.

"Considering many governments have adopted the 'vaccine bubble' initiative, Macau-Hong



XINHUA

Kong border normalization may be so," she said.

When asked if this implies the need of vaccination for border crossings between mainland China and Macau, given that measures across three jurisdictions must be congruent, she replied that it is only a possibility

She added that, during the early phase, not all people will be

allowed to go to Hong Kong and back without quarantine. She expects that those who have urgent needs, such as visiting a terminally ill relative, will be among the first eligible.

Given individuals moving between Macau and mainland China need to convert their health codes between the mainland edition and the Macau edition, Ma-

cau-Hong Kong border normalization may function similarly. Hong Kong will kick in its health code system in upcoming days.

Leong, for the first time, admitted that the city's government and its Hong Kong counterpart are working on the technical level for health code conversions.

When asked why the SARs' border normalization criteria

seems to constantly changing, she denied this, and reiterated that the requirements have never changed. Should vaccination be required, she said, all types of vaccine available in both mainland China and the SARs will be considered valid.

As to why some individuals are not included in the booster shot program, and when they will be, Leong said the decision was made based on global guidelines, such as those issued by the WHO and the National Health Commission (NHC), "because we have administered quite a large number of the Sinopharm vaccine."

Not providing booster shots to the vaccinated with two doses of the mRNA vaccine generally is a decision made in line with the WHO guidelines, she added.

When asked whether individuals vaccinated outside of Macau can have their records transferred to the Macau health code, Leong said these individuals can do so, with valid testimony or certification, at any vaccination point in Macau.

AD

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JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

FINANCIAL markets can cope with the impact of a Chinese real estate developer that is struggling to avoid defaulting on \$310 billion in debt, the central bank governor said yesterday, in a new effort to assure the public the economy can be shielded from fallout.

Yi Gang's comments by video to a seminar in Hong Kong added to indications Beijing has no plans to bail out Evergrande Group. Fears of a default have rattled financial markets, but economists say the ruling Communist Party wants to avoid sending the wrong signal at a time when it is trying to force companies to cut high debt burdens.

"The short-term risks of individual real estate companies will not affect the normal financing function of the medium- and long-term market," Yi said, according to Chinese news outlets.

"Evergrande's hazard is a market event that will be properly handled in accordance with market principles and law," Yi said. Investors' interests "will be protected in accordance with the law."

Default is all but certain after Evergrande, the global real estate industry's most-indebted company, warned Friday it might run out of cash. The company says it has 2.3 trillion yuan (\$350 billion) of assets but it is struggling to sell them fast enough to pay its debts.

Beijing can keep lending



Chinese central banker says market can handle developer debt

markets functioning if Evergrande defaults, and local officials can mobilize to contain turmoil in real estate markets, economists say. The central bank released 1.2 trillion yuan (\$190 billion) from bank reserves for additional lending on Monday.

Evergrande and its creditors have yet to confirm news reports the company failed to make a payment due this week on a U.S.-dollar-denominated bond sold abroad.

Evergrande, headquartered in the southern city of Shenzhen, is the biggest company caught in a cam-

paign launched by Beijing last year to force developers to reduce soaring debt that is seen as a threat to economic stability. Smaller developers have gone bankrupt, missed debt payments or warned they might default.

Total Chinese corporate, government and household debt has risen to about 300% of annual economic output from 270% in 2018, unusually high for a middle-income country.

Another developer, Kaisa Group Holdings Ltd., warned it might fail to pay off a \$400 million bond due Tues-

day. The company has yet to confirm news reports that it missed the payment, but Fitch Ratings on Thursday cut Kaisa's credit rating to "restricted default" while it waited for confirmation.

The slowdown in real estate sales and construction caused by the debt campaign helped to depress China's economic growth an unexpectedly low 4.9% over a year earlier in the three months ending in September. Forecasters expect growth to decelerate further if the financing curbs stay in place. **MDT/AP**

Gov't dismisses UK, Canada Olympic boycott as 'farce'

CHINA yesterday dismissed the decision by Canada and the United Kingdom to join Washington's diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games as a "farce."

China is also unconcerned the officials' absence would spark a chain reaction, while numerous heads of state, government leaders and members of royal families have registered to attend, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters at a daily briefing.

The three countries have said they won't send government dignitaries to the Games that run Feb. 4-20 to protest on



the alleged human rights abuses in China, while New Zealand said it informed Beijing earlier that it wouldn't be sending any officials due to pandemic travel restrictions.

Under the diplomatic boycott, the countries will

still send their athletes to compete.

Wang said China had not extended invitations to the U.S., Canada or the U.K. and that it "doesn't matter if their officials come or not, they will see the success of the Beijing

Winter Olympics."

"Sports has nothing to do with politics," Wang said. "It is they who have written, directed and performed this farce."

China is not only confident there will be no chain reaction, but perceives overwhelming global support for the Games, he said.

"As of now, numerous heads of state, leaders of government and royal family members have registered to attend the Beijing Winter Olympics, and we welcome them," Wang said. "China is committed to making greater contributions to the international Olympic cause and will offer up a streamlined, safe and exciting Olympics to the world."

China has vowed to respond to the U.S. with "firm countermeasures" over the boycott, but has given no details on how it plans to retaliate. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1988 DEATH TOLL RISES IN ARMENIAN EARTHQUAKE



Up to 45,000 people have died and a further 500,000 are homeless after the devastating earthquake which ripped through Armenia, official figures revealed today.

Rescue work is currently still concentrating on finding any survivors, but hope is waning in Armenia which borders Turkey and Azerbaijan.

The Soviet Union declared today a national day of mourning as the death toll rose and President Gorbachev toured the cities devastated by the earthquake.

It measured 6.9 on the Richter scale and affected an area 80 kilometres in diameter.

Spitak, a town of 25,000 inhabitants, has been completely destroyed and cannot be rebuilt - a new city will have to be built over the wreckage.

The city of Leninakan, with 290,000 inhabitants, and the towns of Stepanavan and Kirovakan in the northern area of Armenia, were also hit by the earthquake.

It struck three days ago at 1141 local time when children were at school and most people at work.

With most of Armenia covered in high-rise buildings the consequences have been devastating.

The scale of the destruction has brought criticism the infrastructure was substandard, prompting Soviet authorities to pledge Spitak will be rebuilt with blocks no more than five storeys high.

The disaster has led to an unprecedented level of openness by the Soviet authorities as they struggle to cope with the devastation.

The Soviet Union has made an appeal for medical aid requesting, in particular, blood transfusion equipment and dialysis machines.

America is sending medical aid and sniffer dogs capable of detecting survivors.

Dogs sent by France alerted aid workers to 60 people buried alive under the rubble yesterday.

India has sent clothes and blankets while Britain is transporting excavating equipment

Five tonnes of clothes have already been collected by Aid Armenia based in Britain.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The final number of people who died reached 25,000.

The former Soviet Union came under heavy criticism for failing to co-ordinate rescue work and acting promptly - revealing it had no contingency plans for any disasters.

Twelve thousand families remain displaced as a result of the earthquake after new cities, started by Moscow in 1989, have remained half-built.

A project by the Urban Institute, policy researchers, along with its partners, the Institute for Urban Economics in Moscow and the American University of Armenia, is underway to resolve this.

The goal is to provide permanent housing to those still displaced by the earthquake while restoring the original city centres.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

The first quarter moon arrives in ethereal Pisces at the same time, highlighting the current divide between your long-term trajectory and any self-sabotaging behaviors that currently stand in the way.

TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You glean cosmic insight from the enchanting planet of love, Venus. Friday's skies find Venus caught between a rock and a hard place as she merges with underworld-taker Pluto.

GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

It's important to sweep the truth out from under the rug in matters concerning close partnerships. Meanwhile, the first quarter Pisces moon illuminates the divide between your public life and relationship needs.

CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Relationship building Venus unites with transformation-seeking Pluto, helping you face the music when it comes to dealing head on with what partnership patterns need to change.

LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Elsewhere, the first quarter moon in Pisces touches on the divide between your need for romantic fun and your desire for commitment and emotional security.

VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Meanwhile, lover Venus unites with renewal-seeking Pluto, intensifying your need for profound honesty and change when it comes to your romantic life and creative aspirations.

LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Friday's skies witness Venus encountering some turbulence, as she locks into a heavy conjunction with transformation-demanding Pluto.

SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

There's no escaping the intense relationship conversations awaiting you under Friday's skies, Scorpio. You might as well lean in and face the music in order to clear the air.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Let yourself feel whatever comes up, and embrace changes to your workflow and finances. The first quarter moon in Pisces illuminates the divide between your independent needs and family demands.

CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You're signing up for some major changes, Capricorn. Lean into the potent emotional storm you feel brewing within as it guides you directly towards what needs changing and release.

AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You're likely to be facing some emotionally challenging material behind closed doors today, Aquarius. Give yourself space to process whatever needs to come up...

PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

The first quarter moon also arrives in your sign, illuminating changes to be made between the demands of your public life and your personal needs.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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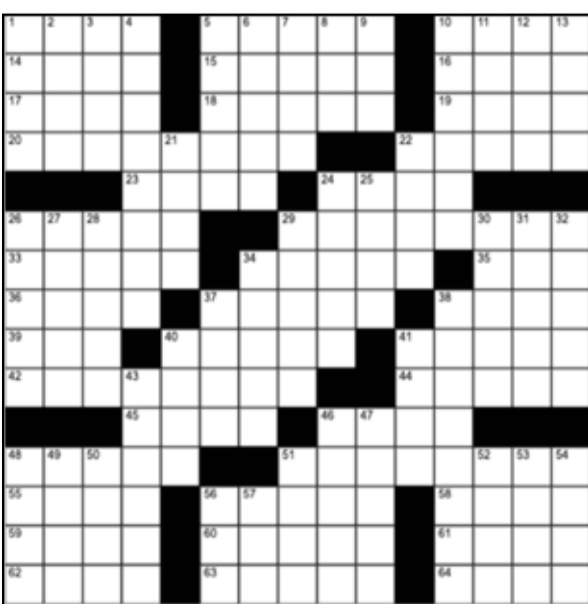
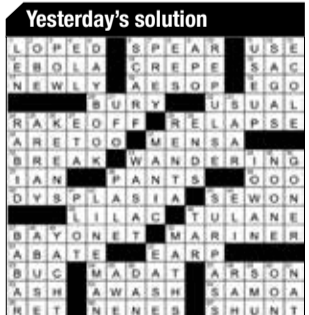
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	6	clear
Harbin	-15	-9	cloudy
Tianjin	-3	5	clear
Urumqi	-12	-7	clear
Xi'an	-1	8	cloudy
Lhasa	-4	14	cloudy
Chengdu	7	11	overcast
Chongqing	10	13	overcast
Kunming	5	19	clear
Nanjing	8	10	overcast
Shanghai	10	14	overcast
Wuhan	5	13	cloudy
Hangzhou	8	13	overcast
Taipei	20	21	moderate rain
Guangzhou	15	23	cloudy
Hong Kong	16	22	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-9	-6	clear
Frankfurt	0	2	sleet
Paris	3	5	overcast
London	5	7	drizzle
New York	3	6	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Ailing; 5- Frighten; 10- Dweeb; 14- This ___ outrage!; 15- ___ once; 16- Peace Nobelists Wiesel; 17- "___ grip!"; 18- Coarse; 19- Soak leather in base solution; 20- Tumor; 22- Governed; 23- Having a sound mind; 24- Cad; 26- Lend ___; 29- Lat. "Strange bird"; 33- Puccini classic; 34- Dense element; 35- Words of commitment; 36- Hazard; 37- Great reviews; 38- In the Black?; 39- Exist; 40- Seizes with teeth; 41- Available; 42- Watchdog; 44- San Marino surround; 45- Jittery; 46- Skin eruption; 48- Creates; 51- Insolvent debtor; 55- Thor's father; 56- Africa's most populous city; 58- Doozy; 59- Dreg; 60- Apportion; 61- Other, in Oaxaca; 62- Covetousness; 63- Pooh's creator; 64- Feminist Lucretia;

DOWN: 1- Indication; 2- Ahal; 3- Roman censor; 4- Backpack; 5- It's a wrap; 6- Shut; 7- Homecoming guest; 8- Old cloth; 9- Biblical verb ending; 10- Interstellar cloud; 11- Airline to Tel Aviv; 12- Confirmation, e.g.; 13- Exploit; 21- Pasternak heroine; 22- Sincere; 24- Can't stand; 25- Periods of history; 26- Gillette razors; 27- Boite ___; 28- Ruhr city; 29- Party; 30- Prospect; 31- Role model; 32- Lathered up; 34- British buddy; 37- Circular band; 38- Foyer or vestibule; 40- Offers a price; 41- Pen sound; 43- Itty-bitty; 46- Biblical brother; 47- Benjamin; 48- Yard tunnel; 49- Mideast gulf; 50- Capital of the Ukraine; 51- List of charges; 52- Golden rule preposition; 53- Like a minx; 54- Horse's gait; 56- Irregularly shaped disk; 57- The Greatest;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
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BOOK IT

MEMOIR: LEAVING THE CHILDREN OF GOD 'SEX CULT' AND HER MACAU CHILDHOOD

MAE ANDERSON, NEW YORK

FAITH Jones' vivid memoir "Sex Cult Nun" chronicles her 23 years in the infamous Children of God cult and her slow journey to leave. Born into the cult in 1977 in Hong Kong, Jones was cult royalty, the granddaughter of leader David Berg.

One of the first religious sects to be dubbed a "sex cult," The Children of God has received media attention over the years, including a "Children of God" documentary (1994) and the "Children of the Cult" Discovery+ series (2021). Actors River Phoenix and Rose McGowan were famously members. And writer Lauren Hough addresses her experience in her book of essays "Leaving Isn't the Hardest Thing."

But the length of Jones' tenure in the cult and her position as the granddaughter of Berg gives her a unique perspective on why its nefarious teachings compelled tens of

thousands of people to join over its decades of existence. She recalls some happy moments, like playing with friends and animals at the farmstead in Macau where she lived as a child, and triumphing over difficult chores and punishments, even as she recounts being abused and manipulated in the name of "The Family" time and time again.

Berg was an elusive leader, hiding his whereabouts and communicating his beliefs with followers mostly through illustrated newsletters – Jones never met her own grandfather. The gospel he preached was focused on utter devotion to his teaching about the word of God. But Berg's addition was the "Law of Love." In his doctrine,

sex was godly and should be encouraged between everyone, including children and adults. For women and girls to say no to a Family member meant

being labeled "unyielding" and going against God.

Jones was a true believer, and tried to pray her way out of her revulsion at the sexual abuse she endured and the punishments she had to go through to be "rehabilitated" for minor infractions like not smiling enough. She even reports on herself when she is racked with guilt for kissing a "Systemite" – a non "Family" member.

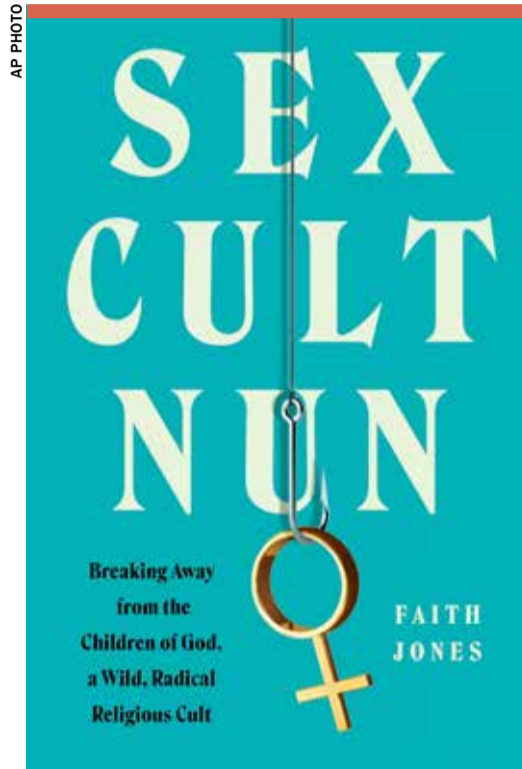
But slowly she began to see a world outside of the cult, through clandestine novels like "The Secret Garden," and a glimpse at American education when her parents visit the U.S. She begins to question why being in The Family makes her so unhappy even though she is so devout.

There's no dramatic exit for Jones. At 23, she decides to go to college, and informs The Family she is leaving. Even thou-

gh she has little formal education, her experience growing up in six countries and learning three languages wows her entrance interviewer at Georgetown, where she gets a scholarship. She goes on to U.C. Berkeley law school.

But while she wins educational success, it takes longer for her to fully grasp how indoctrinated she was by the Children of God. When she does, she questions how her parents could have put her through such abuse. They experienced life outside the cult, she was born into it. Ultimately, she realizes they were as indoctrinated as she was.

"Lies aren't always intentional... you don't have to be conscious that you're doing something wrong to be wrong. Abusers can believe they are acting out of 'love'" she writes. "The guise of love and freedom and nature is a beautiful smoke screen that often masks violations and manipulation." MDT/AP



"Sex Cult Nun" by Faith Jones (William Morrow)

AD

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TASTE OF EDESIA

A chocolate affair

IRENE SAM, MDT

THIS Winter, **Four Seasons Hotel Macao's Valrhona Afternoon Tea Set** at Xiao Ting features artful western savouries and sweets at the elegant space.

Founded in 1922, Valrhona is a small chocolate manufacturer in the French village of Tain l'Hermitage, overseeing every aspect of its chocolate's sustainable production, from bean to bar, in more than 30 terroirs and 20 origins. It is chosen by the world's greatest chefs and artisans for its wide aromatic range constantly being updated with innovations. Its ambition is to expand each and every individual's gastronomic horizons using a variety of unique, instantly recognizable chocolate flavors which never fail to amaze.

Showcasing the ingenuity of Four Seasons' culinary team, Valrhona Afternoon Tea Set's array of exquisite delicacies includes Caviar

with Inspiration Yuzu and scallop cauliflower composite. Inspiration Yuzu combines the subtle, citrus flavor of Yuzu confit with the unique texture of chocolate, enchanting the umami characteristics of scallop and velvety texture of cauliflower.

Perfectly balancing the smoothness of the milk before revealing a fruity tanginess and slight bitterness, Bahibe 46% and its high cocoa content blends itself into a chocolate miso complementing soy marinated tiger prawn. The perfect execution in balancing the tastes of ingredients from both the land and sea reveals an extraordinary level of sophistication.

Manjari 64% is selected to make chocolate spice gingerbread cookie. Liberating fresh and acidic notes of red fruit with a delicate finish of roasted nuts, the chocolate pairs beautifully with the warmth of ginger and spice, manifesting all its splendor in the form of a cookie.



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OPINION

World Views

Staci Zavattaro, University of Central Florida
 MDT/The Conversation

MEDICAL EXAMINERS AND CORONERS HAVE BORNE A HEAVY BURDEN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

“We stopped doing heads.”

It was the second time I'd heard a medical examiner say this while I was studying how the roles of medical examiners and coroners have changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A medical examiner from Ohio explained to me that opening a skull is one of the most dangerous parts of an autopsy in the COVID-19 era. This is because the kind of saw often used during autopsies has a beating motion that produces aerosols – among the primary modes of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The medical examiner explained that his office would not open a skull unless absolutely necessary for the exam and then would use a high-powered vacuum to reduce particle spread from the process.

This was one of several policies and practices medical examiners and coroners in the U.S. had to change when adapting to the ongoing pandemic.

In the early months of the pandemic, doctors and nurses – or “front-line” health care workers – received much-deserved praise and recognition for their heroic actions. This included New Yorkers banging on pots and pans every night at 7 p.m. and Denver residents howling like wolves at 8 p.m. in support of front-line workers for months in 2020 – a tradition that returned in 2021 a year after the pandemic began.

But “death care” workers such as coroners and medical examiners, who also are providing critical services during the ongoing pandemic, have been far less celebrated and recognized. Yet they have been struggling under the unceasing pressure of excess deaths, backed-up funeral systems and increased data-gathering responsibilities. They have also had to take on additional tasks of reporting COVID-19 data for public health purposes. And these workers have suffered a lot of burnout.

I am a public administration professor who is studying public servants in death care services. My work has highlighted the need to better understand the complex roles that these medical professionals play, especially when much of their work is unseen and not well understood by the general public.

THE ROLES OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS AND CORONERS

Since the beginning of the pandemic, medical examiners and coroners have dealt with repeated COVID-19 surges that as of November 2021 have left more than 768,000 Americans dead. Public health and reporting requirements following COVID-19 deaths added to these professionals' already heavy workloads.

Medical examiners and coroners are public servants charged with carrying out medical, scientific and legal death investigations. Medical examiners have board-certified medical training in pathology, forensic pathology or another associated medical field and are appointed by county commissioners or other leaders. Coroners, who receive training in medical and legal investigation, are elected to their roles by voters.

Outside of the context of COVID-19, these death care workers are called in to investigate suspicious, unnatural deaths. The process of death investigation in the U.S. is complicated and bureaucratic, and each state sets its own criteria. Some states have medical examiner systems, others have a coroner system, while still others might have a hybrid approach.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for additional safety precautions to reduce exposure and spread for the protection of medical examiners, coroners and death investigation teams.

COVID-19 AND EXCESS DEATHS

Throughout the pandemic, public-facing offices of medical examiners' and coroners' offices might have closed, following COVID-19 guidelines, but the behind-the-scenes operations accelerated. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that COVID-19 contributed to more than 902,000 excess deaths – meaning deaths in addition to those statistically projected for an area based on past trends – in the U.S. as of late November 2021.

[Abridged]

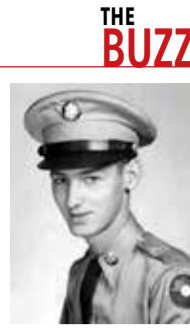
REMAINS OF US SOLDIER KILLED IN KOREAN WAR IDENTIFIED

Beverly Guliuzza was overcome with a mix of shock, sadness and relief when military officials told her they had identified the remains of her brother, Benjamin Bazzell, an Army corporal who went missing in action during the Korean War in 1950 when she was just 12.

The notification to Guliuzza, now 84 and living with family in Everett, Washington, came last year, seven decades after she had last seen her older brother in their hometown of Seymour, Connecticut. The identification

was publicly announced Tuesday by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, an arm of the U.S. Defense Department.

“When I found out all of this, it was just very sad but also very thankful that there was closure because it had always been missing in action and we never knew,” Guliuzza said in a phone interview Wednesday. “When someone is reported missing in action it's like you're in limbo. My mom never got to have closure.”



AP PHOTO

HONG KONG TYCOON, TWO OTHERS CONVICTED OVER TIANANMEN VIGIL

MATTHEW CHENG & ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

Hong Kong tycoon and prominent pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai and two others were convicted yesterday for their roles in last year's banned Tiananmen candlelight vigil, amid a crackdown on dissent in the city. Lai, together with Chow Hang-tung, a vice chairperson of the now-defunct vigil organizer in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, and activist and former reporter Gwyneth Ho were convicted for either taking part in or inciting others to join the candlelight vigil in 2020.

They are among 24 activists who were charged over their roles in the unauthorized assembly in Victoria Park on June 4 last year, during which thousands of people gathered to light candles and sing songs in the park despite police warnings that they may be breaking the law.

The Hong Kong Alliance previously organized a candlelight vigil in the city's Victoria Park on

June 4 each year to mark the bloody crackdown on protesters campaigning for more democracy in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Last year, authorities banned the protest for the first time in three decades, citing social distancing restrictions and public health risks due to the coronavirus. The protest was also banned this year.

Prior to the ban, massive crowds attended the annual candlelight vigil and it was the only large-scale public commemoration on Chinese soil of the 1989 crackdown in Beijing.

Lai was found guilty of inciting others to take part, while Ho was convicted for knowingly participating in the assembly. Chow, a barrister, was convicted for both inciting and participating in the vigil.

The trio had previously pleaded not guilty to the charges. Court will resume on Monday, when they can enter mitigation pleas before sentences are handed down.

“The Hong Kong government has once again flouted interna-

tional law by convicting activists simply for their involvement in a peaceful, socially distanced vigil for those killed by Chinese troops on 4 June 1989,” said rights group Amnesty International's deputy secretary general Kyle Ward in a statement.

“These convictions merely underline the pattern of the Hong Kong authorities' extreme efforts to exploit the law to press multiple trumped-up charges against prominent activists,” he said.

Ward added that prosecuting people who mourn and remember the victims of the Tiananmen crackdown is an “egregious attack on the rights to freedom of expression and assembly.”

Most of the activists who had been charged over the banned vigil had previously pleaded guilty, including outspoken activist Joshua Wong, who was given 10 months in jail for his participation in the vigil. He was already in jail serving time after previously being found guilty of other charges related to his activism. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

India An air force helicopter that crashed and killed the military chief, Gen. Bipin Rawat, and 12 others lost contact with air traffic control seven minutes before it was supposed to land and sent no distress call before it was found in flames in a forested area, India's defense minister said yesterday. In a statement in India's Parliament, Defense Minister Rajnath Singh did not indicate any SOS by the helicopter crew or bad weather in the region in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.



AP PHOTO

New Zealand's government believes it has come up with a unique plan to end tobacco smoking — a lifetime ban for those aged 14 or younger. Under a new law the government announced yesterday and plans to pass next year, the minimum age to buy cigarettes would keep rising year after year. That means, in theory at least, 65 years after the law takes effect, shoppers could still buy cigarettes — but only if they could prove they were at least 80 years old.



AP PHOTO

USA President Joe Biden is ready to urge participants at the first White House Summit for Democracy to reverse an ongoing “recession” of democracy that is playing out at a time of rising authoritarianism around the globe and extraordinary strains on foundational institutions in the U.S. The two-day virtual summit that starts today (Macau time) has been billed as an opportunity for leaders and civil society experts from some 110 countries to collaborate on fighting corruption and promoting respect for human rights.



AP PHOTO

Vienna Negotiations between Iran and world powers aimed at salvaging a tattered 2015 nuclear deal resumed in Vienna yesterday after a few days' pause, with tensions high after Tehran made demands last week that European countries strongly criticized. A meeting of all the deal's remaining signatories — Iran, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — was being chaired by European Union diplomat Enrique Mora.