

THE MOST RECENT IMPORTED ASYMPTOMATIC CASE OF COVID-19 INFECTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE OMICRON VARIANT, AUTHORITIES ANNOUNCED

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CHINA URGES US TO PROTECT ITS SPACE STATION FROM SATELLITES

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THE 21ST MACAO CITY FRINGE FESTIVAL WILL BE HELD FROM JANUARY 12 TO 23, FEATURING 20 PROGRAMS AND 15 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

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AP PHOTO



Indonesia said yesterday it is lifting its ban on Boeing's 737 Max aircraft, three years after one crashed into the Java Sea shortly after takeoff killing all 189 people on board. The Transportation Ministry said in a statement that the aircraft will be permitted to fly in Indonesia, but only after airlines carry out airworthiness directives.

AP PHOTO



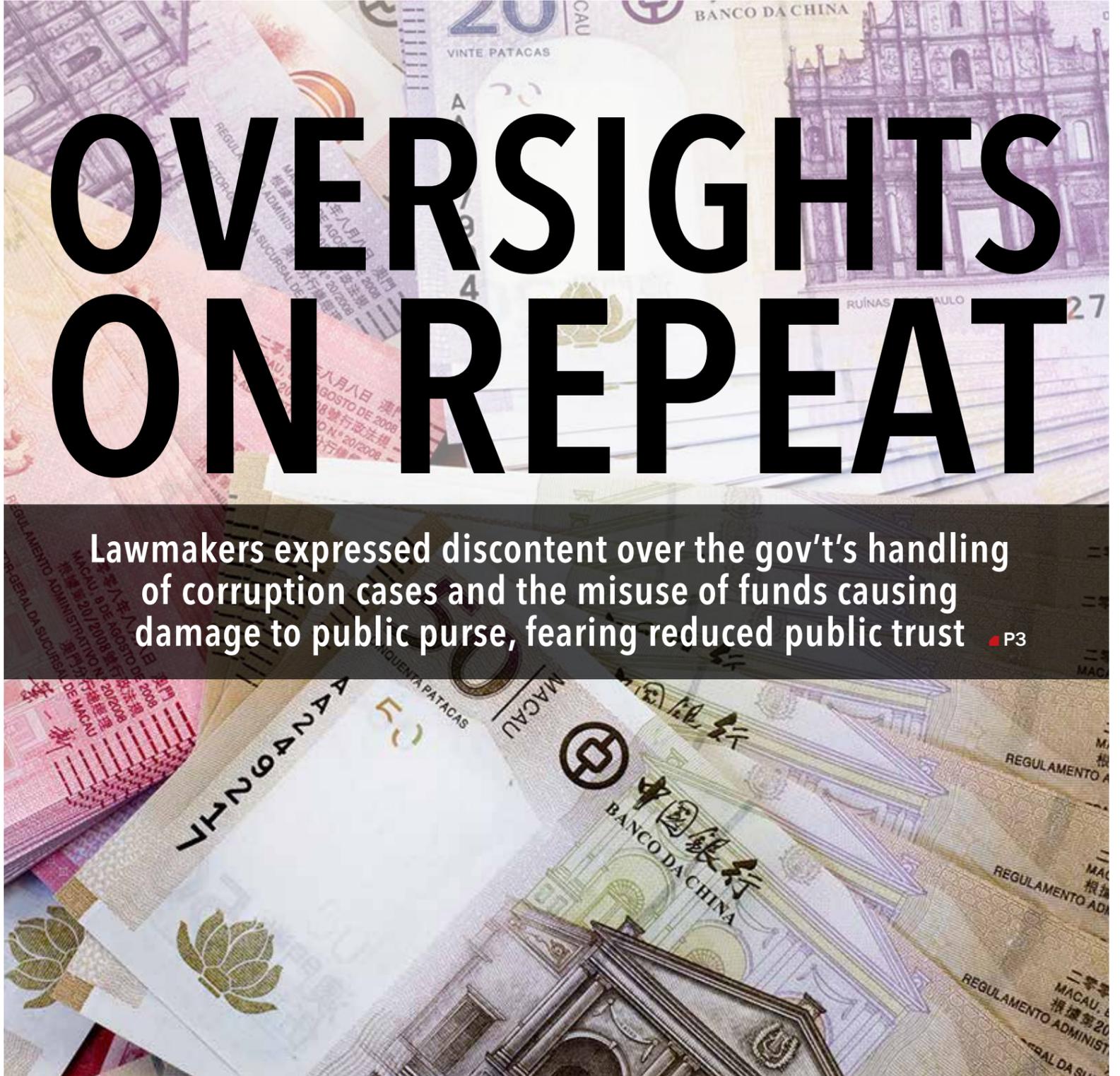
Japan The dozens of Type 90, or "Kyumaru," tanks rumbling through recent shooting drills on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido exemplify the challenge its arms makers face both at home and overseas as the country fortifies its defenses against strategic threats. The Self Defense Force needs the more advanced aircraft and weaponry sold by U.S. arms manufacturers as Japan's strategic focus shifts from Russia in the north to the south, where it faces incursions by Chinese fighter jets and naval vessels and North Korean missile launches.

AP PHOTO



Syria Firefighters contained a blaze that raged for hours in the port of Latakia, officials said, hours after Israel launched missiles from the Mediterranean Sea, igniting the fire in the container terminal. It was the second such attack on the vital facility this month. The early morning raid targeted the port that handles most of the imports to Syria, a country ravaged by a decade-old civil war and Western-imposed sanctions.

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OVERSIGHTS ON REPEAT

Lawmakers expressed discontent over the gov't's handling of corruption cases and the misuse of funds causing damage to public purse, fearing reduced public trust

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COVID-19
OMICRON SURGE MAY BE 'INEVITABLE'

AP PHOTO



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PERSONAL DATA LAW
LAWYER SUGGESTS RESORT REPRESENTATIVE IN MAINLAND NECESSARY

P2



THREE-METER PYTHON FOUND IN KA HO

The three-meter python found at a construction site on Estrada da Barragem de Ka Ho is now in the care of the Municipal Affairs Bureau. A preliminary check-up showed the python was apparently healthy with no injuries. However, even though all pythons are non-venomous, authorities decided not to release it back into the wild due to its large size. The python is a National Second-Class Protected Species, authorities confirmed.

69 SUSPECTED ILLEGAL WORKERS IN NOVEMBER

Authorities detected a total of 69 suspected illegal workers last month during joint and sole operations targeting illegal workers conducted by the Public Security Police Force, the Labour Affairs Bureau, and other authorities. The figure is more than twice the number of suspected illegal workers found in October, which was 34. However, the operations were larger than last month's, being conducted at 385 construction sites, private flats, commercial and industrial establishments.

AMCM SUMMONS DUO TO FACE UNLICENSED FINANCIAL SERVICES ALLEGATIONS

The Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) has issued a notice summoning the directors of Bluemount International Limited, Chan Wai Yuk and Chan Lan, both Hong Kong ID holders, to answer a current investigation into allegations that the company provided financial middleperson services without a permit from December 2019 to November 2020. The services in question are the trading of securities, including bonds, stocks, and funds. A failure to answer the summons could result in a fine ranging between MOP10,000 and MOP5 million. If the financial benefit gained is later proved to have exceeded MOP2.5 million, the fine could be increased to a maximum of two times the amount earned, plus sanctions.

LAWYER: RESORT REPRESENTATIVE IN MAINLAND NECESSARY UNDER NEW PERSONAL DATA LAW

ANTHONY LAM

THE new personal data protection law that took effect in mainland China last month means that it will be necessary in future for Macau resort operators to appoint a representative in mainland China, lawyer José Filipe Salreta said yesterday.

At the France Macau Chamber of Commerce (FMCC) breakfast briefing yesterday, Salreta was asked to clarify if local hotels and resorts are required to have representatives in mainland China to be compliant with the new law.

Hotels, resorts and entertainment venues all need to collect data as part of their service provision – commencing even before guests arrive, when reservations are taken.

Salreta clarified that there is no exclusion or immunity whatsoever which lifts the obligation to abide by the Personal Data Protection Law of Macau as well.

“And if you're handling personal data of customers who are currently living or situated in mainland China, you'll also have to respect [the] Personal Information Protection Law [of mainland China],” the lawyer added.

In order to be fully compliant with the laws of both mainland China and Macau, not only is a representative required on the mainland, the lawyer said, but risk assessments should also be conducted before the handling

ANTHONY LAM



Lawyer José Filipe Salreta

of personal data.

In summary, personal data collected by hotels and resorts to meet business needs must be handled in compliance with the mainland law that was enacted last month, in addition to Macau law.

While commenting on the need to handle pre-existing personal data in compliance with the new law, Salreta did not give a direct answer relating to the ambiguity on this topic. However, he said it was crucial to seek clarification from the authorities in mainland China.

Considering the extraterritorial nature of the law, entities “outside of the People's Republic of China dealing with personal information of natural persons within [it]” must abide

by the law.

It is clearly stated that entities providing products or services to domestic natural persons, which analyze and evaluate the behavior of natural persons in China or are otherwise in other circumstances stipulated by laws and administrative regulations are within the authority of the law.

A plus for businesses is that the law permits data to be transferred abroad, provided that certain requirements are met, such as passing a Chinese security assessment and obtaining a personal information certification.

The cornerstones of the mainland law are spelled out clearly. For example, personal information is defined by Article

4 of the law as “all kinds of information related to an identified or identifiable natural person recorded by electronic or other means, excluding [...] information after anonymization.”

Salreta stressed that the core of the laws in both mainland China and Macau is the consent for data provision. The data handler must obtain goal-specific consent separately in order to use the data for a particular purpose, such as providing the data to a third-party.

Salreta is a senior associate at MdME Lawyers who specializes in corporate compliance, data privacy and regulatory matters. He holds three postgraduate degrees conferred to him by universities in Lisbon, Paris, and Macau.

COVID-19

Second omicron case detected

THE Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center confirmed that the imported asymptomatic case of Covid-19 infection announced on December 27 is associated with the omicron variant, following genome sequencing of the virus on December 29.

As the patient has so far not

shown any symptoms, it is still classified as an imported case of asymptomatic infection.

The case is a 62-year-old man, a resident of Macau who left the United States of America (USA) on December 25 and arrived in Macau via Singapore on December 27.

He was subjected to nucleic

acid testing via a nasopharyngeal swab immediately on arrival, which produced a positive test result for Covid-19 and was classified as an asymptomatic infection.

This is the second case of the omicron variant detected in Macau. The first case was detected in a 23-year-old resi-

dent, a student in the USA who returned to Macau on December 26.

The resident tested positive for Covid-19 upon arrival in Macau and was confirmed as the 78th case of infection with the virus.

Health authorities stressed that the Omicron variant is more infectious than the Delta variant and urged Macau residents abroad to follow the principle of “travel only if strictly necessary.” LV

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Lawmakers grill gov't over corruption and misuse of funds

RENATO MARQUES

A group of lawmakers made use of the period before the agenda of yesterday's plenary session of the Legislative Assembly (AL) to ask the executive questions about the recently released reports from the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) as well as news that former director of the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) Li Canfeng, has been detained and is accused of corruption and abuse of power.

Leong Sun lok, Wong Kit Cheng, Ella Lei, Song Pek Kei, Lei Leong Wong, José Pereira Coutinho and Ron Lam presented separate spoken inquiries to the government on the matter.

Front and center was last week's release of a report by the CCAC implicating the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) over the management of the Education Development Fund (FDE).

In the report, the CCAC criticized the weak performance of the governing body in relation to the reviewing, vetting, and approving of grants to schools allocated by the fund, using the same characterization for its post-grant supervision.

Several lawmakers expressed their dissatisfaction with the situation, particularly because the same fund had been targeted with a similar audit report in the past.

"Back in 2015, an audit report revealed the existence of such problems, but the competent

services did not make improvements following the recommendations [of the Commission of Audit (CA) report]. Therefore, this time it can be considered a repeated mistake, which not only causes damage to the public purse but also affects society's trust in the government," lawmaker Song said in her speech.

The lawmakers also voiced added concerns about the fact that the AL is currently discussing a new legal regime that aims to merge three funds, including the FDE, into a single account. Lawmakers now fear this process could make flaws and mismanagement more likely, with bigger impact and misuse of public money.

Addressing the same case from a different angle, Lam noted that the problem with the FDE is structural, and that the issues revealed in the Commission of Audit (CA) report in 2015 had, in practice, a negative effect as they aggravated the distancing of the fund from its original purpose.

"Over the years, the education sector and teachers have criticized the cumbersome procedures for assessing and authorizing applications for grants from the fund, which represent less than 10 percent of total free-education subsidies, and believe it to be a waste of resources. However, the CA and the CCAC reports criticized the government's inspections for not meeting legal requirements. In my view, the government and society must pay attention to and solve the structural problems of these subsidies, otherwise, they will reoccur," Lam stated.

Previously, lawmaker Leong had remarked on the case of the former DSSOPT chief, in which he is alleged to have received significant benefits from businessmen.

While expressing his confidence that judicial authorities will investigate and judge this case "with independence and impartiality," and adopting a "zero-tolerance attitude towards corruption activities," the lawmaker also noted that the case is especially concerning because it is the se-

cond time that high officials connected to public works have been arrested for alleged involvement in corruption.

"I urge the government to reflect on the matter, as we have already had a Secretary and two directors from the public works sector practice acts of corruption and fraud. The government must carry out a review of current works for the land concessions and public works, reinforcing the supervision and transparency of the procedures for assessment

and authorization, especially regarding the areas where acts of corruption can easily occur, as gaps must be filled," Leong said.

Addressing the same case, Pereira Coutinho reaffirmed the need for the government to establish a system that protects and encourages whistleblowers so as to prevent cases of corruption and abuse of power by high-ranked officials continuing for long periods until they eventually get reported by the CCAC.

Pereira Coutinho said that it is clear that many staff members from the DSSOPT knew what was happening but did not have a way to report the case without being subject to retaliation from their superiors. He called on the government to implement an internal whistleblower system to tackle the problem right from the start.

WIRETAPPING BILL PASSES ON FIRST READING WITH ONE ABSTENTION

THE government's new wiretapping bill was passed on its first reading yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL) by the vast majority of lawmakers. Only one lawmaker, Ron Lam, voted to abstain, claiming that there is a need for the government to provide more of a guarantee to the population that the law's provisions would protect their privacy and that there are mechanisms in place to ensure that no unlawful uses occur.

"I voted [to abstain] not because I disagree with this bill, but because I think citizens cannot have enough guarantees [on privacy] and on the oversight [of the system], so I ask the government to do more to reinforce the confidence of the population including the data disclosure [of the number of wiretappings] and also on the wiretapping activities. I think citizens should have a way to appeal. [...] Only if this happens will I support this bill," Lam said in his vote declaration.

Potential violations of privacy and ensuring lawful use of the system were the main concerns expressed during the debate on the bill. The Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, assured lawmakers that the regime to be implemented in Macau follows the

strictest rules in the world for this type of law.

The Secretary noted on several occasions that most of the questions raised during the discussion of the bill, as well as during the public consultation, were not in fact problems, as he claimed they resulted from "misinterpretations" of the law and the regime's purposes.

On a justifying note, the government also stated that the bill aims to update a regime that has been in force for over 24 years but is not compliant with new technologies and modern times.

The Secretary also said the law was related to "an increasingly complex security environment, namely the state's security situation becoming more and more demanding."

The new regime adds new crimes to those currently listed, namely crimes against the state security, terrorism, and others.

Other crimes added in which wiretapping is said to be fundamental as a means of proof include cybercrime, phone and internet scams, with the government stating that the new regime will facilitate the investigation of these types of crimes more effectively. **RM**

LAWMAKERS ASK FOR SOURCE MARKET INTERNATIONALIZATION, FURTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORT

ANTHONY LAM

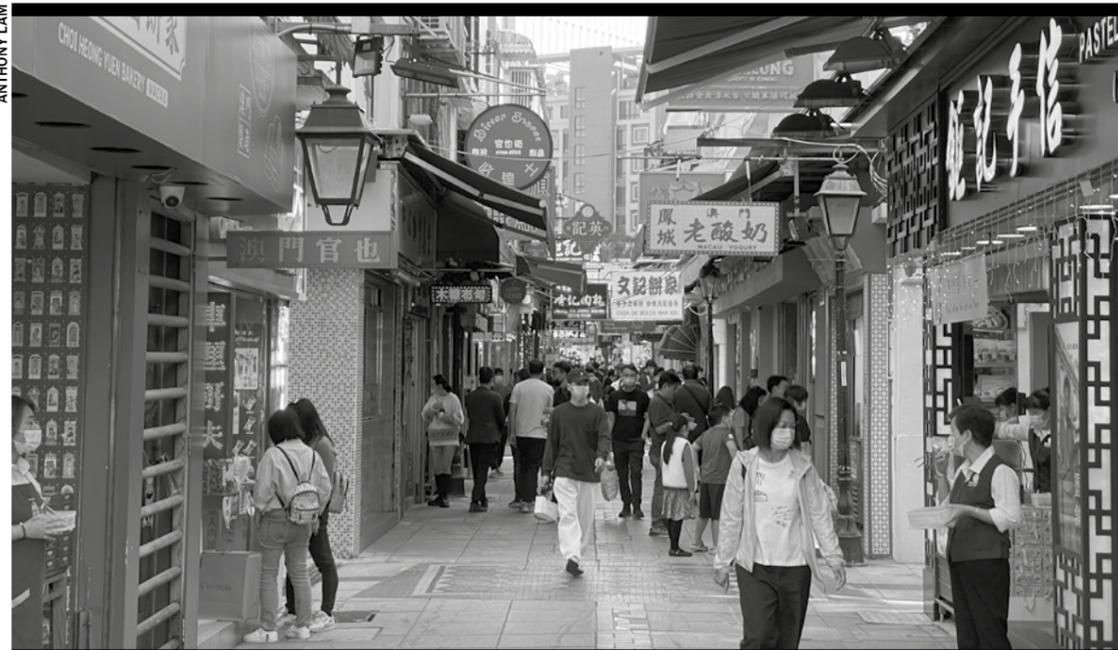
IN a recent written enquiry at the Legislative Assembly, lawmaker José Maria Pereira Coutinho asked the government about the internationalization of the city's tourism source market.

Coutinho pointed out that in the most recent national development plan, Macau is positioned as a global tourism and leisure center and is required to internationalize its source market in order to achieve this position.

He added that this goal is understood to be an indispensable step in fostering economic diversification for the city, and of benefit to local residents.

In addition, he pointed out that under the city's Five-year Plan covering the years 2016 to 2020, 22 specific targets, which would eventually converge into seven broader targets, should be achieved by the end of the half-decade.

Among these targets are strengthening regional cooperation and exploring international exchanges. The latter is embodied



in the construction of the "three centers" facilitating interactions between China and Lusophone countries.

Based on these projected statements, the lawmaker asked the government how much it has already achieved in those five years

in market diversification and internationalization, and what measures would be adopted to further these goals.

Coutinho also asked about the progress in regional cooperation, economic diversification and job-market expansion. Moreover, he

questioned about what the government would do in the coming years, until 2025, to achieve the unmet goals.

On the other hand, Coutinho's ally, lawmaker Che Sai Wang, asked the government for extra financial subsidies to small tra-

ders in an economy struggling to recover.

He opened by saying that local residents have been expecting the government to provide greater financial relief, given the uncertainty surrounding any potential recovery led by the casino industry.

Che cited news reports suggesting that a flea-market economy is emerging in mainland China. One freelance vendor has been using the trunk of her car to sell artifacts and toys in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, managing to earn RMB1,000 per day. She also has a full-time job.

Che also recalled that in the immediate aftermath of the handover, the government allowed stall-sellers to operate in a manner resembling sellers at flea markets.

The lawmaker suggests that the government allow such commercial practices on particular occasions so that vendors can sell local souvenirs, artifacts, foods and beverages, and other locally-made goods.

He also asked the government how it would provide greater conveniences to sole-proprietors who wish to conduct flea-market vending, in addition to what financial support it would offer to business owners in traditional civic shopping districts, such as the Red Market.

AD



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DESPITE HIGHER PIDDA EXECUTION RATE, ZERO PROGRESS ON EIGHT PROJECTS

THE execution rate of the second-quarter Government Investment and Development Expenditure Plan (PIDDA) has reached 30%, but eight projects are yet to record their commencement, lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng said yesterday.

Wong is the president of a parliamentary committee that has oversight of government expenditure and budget execution.

The committee studied the mid-term implementation of this year's budget and the PIDDA implementation of the second quarter of this year.

At the press briefing following the meeting, Wong revealed that the committee is yet to receive the third quarter PIDDA execution report. If no progress has been made on any of the eight projects, their project managers will be called to parliament to explain.

The PIDDA execution rate rose from 14.7% in the first quarter to 30% in the



second.

Fifteen projects were added to the PIDDA plan during the second quarter, including the purchase of the Ritz Building on Senado Square. Wong said that the committee will invite officials to justify the additional projects.

Moreover, the Environmental Protection Bureau has established an offshore landfill project. The project involves funds of MOP15.59 billion and implementation will span across 24 years.

Stressing the committee's understanding of the

necessity of landfill and providing assurance that construction waste will be contained, Wong said that committee members had raised concerns – mostly over the project's timespan – and will invite officials to provide explanations to the committee.

The permitted budget for second-quarter investments saw a quarter-on-quarter increase of about MOP29 million, with actual expenditure rising to MOP2.9 billion, as well as MOP550 million in reserve funds. **AL**



Curator Hua Yuzhou

Veteran curator reminds young artists to 'broaden horizons'

ANTHONY LAM

YOUNG artists should cultivate the ability to study the big picture for a greater chance of survival in the ever-changing field of art, said veteran art marketer and exhibition curator Hua Yuzhou in an interview.

Hua was in Macau over the Christmas period for the opening of an art gallery and an exhibition he curated at the Lisboaeta Macau.

His suggestion to young artists does not mean constantly learning new techniques because there are always newer techniques which will emerge. "The current art market is ever-changing," the veteran curator said. "[Artists]

cannot keep adjusting to external changes."

What he objects to is artists not making any changes or adjustments; nonetheless, he thinks their overall mentality or mindset should not change. "Young artists should have a larger view and a macro mentality, so as to stand tall enough to understand how they can survive in this forest of arts," Hua said.

Looking to the future of the art world, the curator foresees that works of art will feature greater involvement and immersion. "Participation and proactiveness may be inevitable topic for future artists," Hua said, but he thinks it will not be too difficult for artists to adapt. "When [artists] become aware of the problem, they know that

the arts have no spatial restrictions."

Macau artists, he added, will have the chance to participate, explore and transform.

"Macau residents are gradually adjusting to changes," Hua said, after seeing how the city's landscape has transformed, with particular focus on the tourism side. He thinks young people are more adaptable to new elements — although not everything new is accepted.

"Therefore, the generalization and transformation of lifestyle and art forms have a long way to go," Hua concluded.

Discussing the Lisboaeta, Hua considers the design concept of progressing from the old times to the modern very

attractive, as well as its incorporation of artistic elements. "Youths can bid farewell to the old times in a new manner here," he said. "I think this exhibition has a quality that suits the Lisboaeta very well."

Opened on Christmas Day, the arts gallery, Humarish Club, debuted with an annual exhibition titled The Journey Begins: From H853 to Contemporary Art, which is a joint exhibition featuring several contemporary Chinese artists, including Zhou Chunya, Ding Yi, Xue Song, Zheng Zaidong and Li Qiang.

The free exhibition is part of the Chinese and International Pop-Up Art Alliance – Super Art Fair. It will be open every day between 12 p.m. and 8 p.m. until February 20, 2022.

FRINGE FESTIVAL TO SHOWCASE PUBLIC'S ARTWORK IN 'ART EXHIBITION FOR ALL'

THE 21st Macao City Fringe Festival will be held from January 12 to 23, featuring 20 programs and 15 outreach activities.

This year's festival will offer programs which will bring brand-new artistic experiences to audiences. The Sound Theatre's "Back Hoe," from the Edinburgh Fringe Showcase, presented at General Ye Ting's Former Residence, is a unique participatory performance in which the audience will act as characters to narrate the stories, transcending the artistic boundaries of the past and demonstrating the charm of theatre.

In the Dancing Veins show, as part of the "Crème de la Fringe: Todos Fest!," the elderly will share their memories of Macau with the audience through dance, showcasing their creative flair.

Using the DanceAbility method and symbiotic dance elements, the Body-Specific! show in "Crème de la Fringe: Todos Fest!" will allow the audience to enjoy dances created with unique physical characteristics.

In addition, audiences of the show Tenant, part of "Crème de la Fringe: Iao Hon," will act as tenants who are looking for apartments to rent, experience the stories and changes of Iao Hon in person. The show Passerby from "Crème de la Fringe: Iao Hon" is a black box theatre performance, which will take a retrospective look at the changes in Iao Hon while imagining its future.

Meanwhile, the outreach activity "Not Junk Mail" will record the appearances and stories of Iao Hon on postcards and send them to different corners of the city. Another outreach activity, "Iao Hon Pop-up Store," will connect the whole community with a hawker stall and enable passersby and those from the Iao Hon neighborhood to exchange stories with second-hand items.

Adopting the concept of "all around the city, our stages, our patrons, our artists," this year's Fringe Festival will continue to bring art into the community and retain the participatory "Art Exhibition for All" to offer the public a space to display their creativity and talent.

The Cultural Affairs Bureau said in a statement that interested parties are welcome to submit artwork or improvise on the spot.

The "Art Exhibition for All" will be held at the space next to Flower City Park from January 12 to 17 and then move to the Leisure Area at Praça das Orquídeas from January 18 to 23. LV

HOTEL OCCUPANCY STABLE AT 47% IN NOVEMBER

THE average occupancy rate of guest rooms stood at 46.8% in November, an increase of 2% month-on-month and a rise of 2.8% year-on-year.

According to figures from the Statistics and Census Service, both 3-star and 4-star hotels outperformed the sector's average, at 53%

and 52.9% respectively.

Local guests (60,000) increased by 25.6%, while there was a 2.9% decline in Mainland guests (393,000).

From January to November this year, the average occupancy rate of guest rooms was 49.6%, up by 23.3% year-on-year.

The number of guests

in hotels and guesthouses surged by 80.9% year-on-year to 5,961,000, and their average length of stay increased by 0.1 nights to 1.8 nights.

There were about 1,600 visitors joining local tours in November. More than 5,000 outbound residents used the services of tra-

vel agencies, and 96.2% of them visited mainland China. From January to November 2021, the number of visitors joining local tours leapt by 124.4% year-on-year to 37,000, while outbound residents using the services of travel agencies increased by 23.5% to 138,000. LV



SPACE

BEIJING URGES US TO PROTECT TIANGONG STATION FROM SATELLITES

CHINA is calling on the United States to protect a Chinese space station and its three-member crew after Beijing complained that satellites launched by Elon Musk's SpaceX nearly struck the station.

A foreign ministry spokesman accused Washington this week of ignoring its treaty obligations to protect the safety of the Tiangong station's three-member crew following the July 1 and Oct. 21 incidents.

The Tiangong performed "evasive maneuvers" to "prevent a potential collision" with Starlink satellites launched by Space Exploration Technologies Corp., the government said in a Dec. 6 complaint to the U.N. Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

The United States should "take immediate measures to prevent such incidents from happening again," said the spokesman, Zhao Lijian.

Zhao accused Washington of failing to carry out its obligations to "protect the safety of astronauts" under a 1967

treaty on the peaceful use of space.

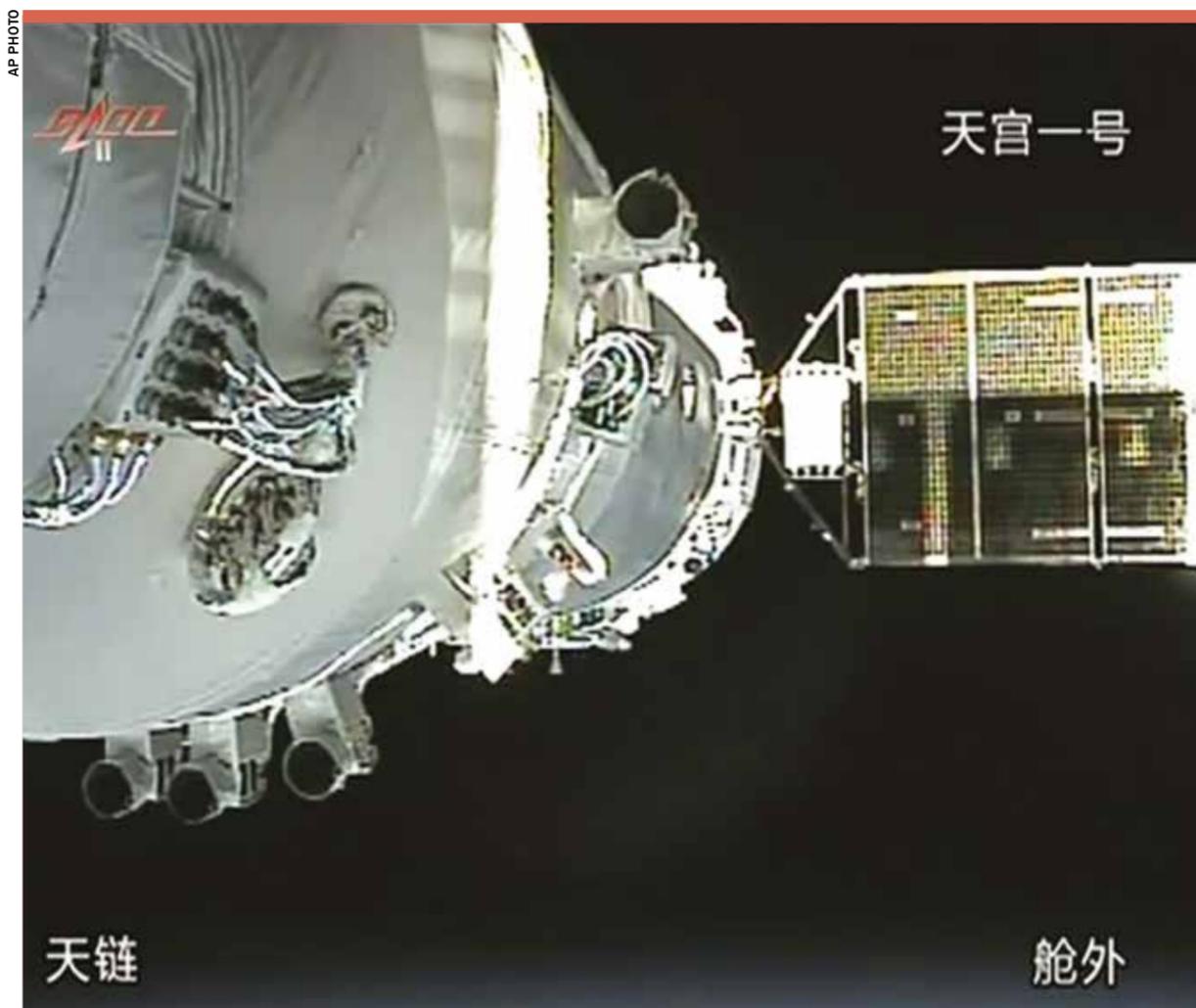
The American Embassy in Beijing didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Musk also is chairman of electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla, Inc. The company opened its first factory outside the United States in Shanghai in 2019.

The Tiangong, however, is a prestige project for the ruling Communist Party, making it unlikely Beijing would tolerate disruption even by a major foreign investor in China.

The main module of the Tiangong was launched in April. Its first crew returned to Earth in September following a 90-day mission. The second crew of two men and one woman arrived on Oct. 16 for a six-month mission.

SpaceX plans to launch some 2,000 Starlink satellites as part of a global internet system to bring internet access to underserved areas. In its 34th and latest launch, SpaceX sent 52 satellites into orbit aboard a rocket Dec. 18. **MDT/AP**



HONG KONG

Vocal news site closes after raid, arrests

A vocal pro-democracy website in Hong Kong shut down Wednesday after police raided its office and arrested six current and former editors and board members in a continuing crackdown on dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

Stand News said in a statement that its website and social media are no longer being updated and will be taken down. It said all employees have been dismissed.

The outlet was one of the last remaining openly critical voices in Hong Kong following the shuttering of the Apple Daily newspaper, which closed after its publisher, Jimmy Lai, and top editors were arrested and its assets frozen.

Police raided Stand News' office earlier in the day after arresting the six, including popular singer and activist Denise Ho, a former board member, on



Editor of Stand News Patrick Lam (center) is escorted by police officers into a van after they searched evidence at his office in Hong Kong

charges of conspiracy to publish a seditious publication.

More than 200 officers were involved in the search, police said. They had

a warrant to seize relevant journalistic materials under a national security law

enacted last year.

The six were arrested under a crime ordinance that dates from Hong Kong's days as a British colony before 1997, when it was returned to China. Those convicted could face up to two years in prison and a fine of up to 5,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$640).

Police did not identify who was arrested, but Hong Kong's South China Morning Post newspaper reported they were one current and one former editor of Stand News, and four former board members including Ho and former lawmaker Margaret Ng.

A Facebook post yesterday morning on Ho's account confirmed that she was being arrested. A subsequent message posted on her behalf said she was OK and urged friends and supporters not to worry about her.

That post drew nearly 40,000 likes and 2,700 comments, mostly from supporters.

Early yesterday, Stand News posted a video on Facebook of police officers at the home of a deputy editor,

Ronson Chan. Chan, who is also chair of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, was taken away for questioning, the organization confirmed in a statement.

Chan, who was later released, told media the police seized his electronic devices, bank cards and press card.

Stand News earlier this year said it would suspend subscriptions and remove most opinion pieces and columns from its website due to the national security law. Six board members also resigned from the company.

The journalists' association urged the city's government to protect press freedom in accordance with Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law.

"The Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) is deeply concerned that the police have repeatedly arrested senior members of the media and searched the offices of news organizations containing large quantities of journalistic materials within a year," it said in a statement. **MDT/AP**

PANDEMIC

Asia keeps omicron at bay, but a surge may be inevitable

MUCH of Asia has largely managed to keep omicron at bay even as the variant rages in other parts of the world, but the region that is home to most of the globe's population is bracing for what may be an inevitable surge.

Strict quarantine rules for arrivals and widespread mask wearing have helped slow the spread of the highly contagious variant in Asia. Countries such as Japan, South Korea and Thailand quickly reinstated entry and quarantine restrictions in recent weeks after relaxing them in the fall.

But cases are mounting, and experts say the next few months will be critical.

"Once the pace picks up, its upsurge would be extremely fast," said Dr. Shigeru Omi, a top medical adviser to Japan's government.

In India, which has been getting back to normal after a devastating COVID-19 outbreak earlier this year, omicron is once again raising fears, with more than 700 cases reported in the country of nearly 1.4 billion people.

The capital, New Delhi, banned large gatherings for Christmas and New Year's, and many other states have announced new restrictions, including curfews and vaccination requirements at stores and restaurants.

At the crowded Chandni Chowk market in New Delhi, many people were shopping without masks this week. Cycle rickshaw driver Mahesh Kumar said he is afraid of passengers who don't wear masks.

"There are many people who don't believe in this disease. They think it doesn't exist. But I am very scared. I have children and a family," he said. "If something happens to me, who will take care of them?"

Australia is already dealing with multiple COVID-19 surges, with a state leader saying yesterday that "omicron is moving too quickly." Elsewhere, Thailand has topped 700 cases, South Korea has more than 500 and Japan, over 300. China, which has some of the stric-

AP PHOTO



test virus controls in the world, has reported at least eight.

Only four cases have been reported in the Philippines, where people flocked to shopping malls ahead of Christmas and to Mass in the biggest Roman Catholic nation in Asia. Some hospitals have even begun dismantling COVID-19 wards in a move experts say could prove to be premature.

Japan managed to delay the spread of the new variant for about a month largely thanks to its reimposition of entry restrictions, mandatory COVID-19 tests for all arrivals and the isolation of all passengers on a flight if anyone tested positive for omicron.

But the barrier was broken last week when the first locally transmitted cases were confirmed in the neighboring cities of Osaka and Kyoto. Experts are urging the government to prepare for an imminent wave of infections by increasing testing, speeding up booster shots and preparing more beds at hospitals.

"We want to believe the omicron cases could be mild, but its fast-paced infections could quickly multiply the number of patients and could still overwhelm hospitals," Omi said.

Taiwan, where wearing a face mask is near universal in major cities, has started

to offer booster shots of the Moderna vaccine and is urging people get a third shot before an expected influx of people returning home for Lunar New Year at the end of January.

Preliminary research has shown that booster shots of the Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines offer continued, though diminished, protection against omicron.

Chinese officials have said their vaccines are still effective.

"Our inactivated vaccines are still rather reliable and cover a range of antigens. Therefore, they won't be completely ineffective against omicron," Zhong Nanshan, a top government doctor, said at a public forum.

Some countries that relied on the Chinese vaccines are turning to others for boosters.

Thailand, which largely used Sinovac and Sinopharm, another Chinese vaccine, is offering booster shots of AstraZeneca or Pfizer. Indonesia, where Sinovac has been the mainstay of a campaign to vaccinate its 270 million residents, is offering a Moderna booster for health care workers. The government is also planning boosters for the general population in January, though it hasn't said which vaccine.

China's attitude toward

the virus, omicron or not, is to stop transmission in its tracks, and the country appears to be getting even

tougher with the approach of the Beijing Winter Olympics in February.

Officials partially locked

down the city of Xi'an, a city and administrative area of 13 million people last week, amid a delta outbreak that has infected hundreds of people.

China quarantines those arriving from abroad for weeks, depending on the province, with three weeks being the most common.

How China's zero-COVID-19 policy will play out at the Olympics is a major question. Athletes and visitors will not be allowed to leave the Olympic zones, and those attending such as officials, journalists and venue staff will be tested every day.

To contain a deadly delta-driven surge in South Korea, the government this month restored its toughest distancing rules with a four-person limit on private gatherings and a 9 p.m. curfew on restaurants.

Health experts predict it's only a matter of time before omicron comes.

"Omicron has such a high transmission rate that it's too obvious that it'll become the dominant variant in South Korea at some point," said Jaehun Jung, a professor at Gachon University College of Medicine in South Korea. **MDT/AP**

AD

AP PHOTO



Residents clean out their flooded homes in Itapetinga, Bahia state

BRAZIL

Severe flooding spreads to 116 cities in Bahia and beyond

DÉBORA ÁLVARES,
BRASILIA

A total of 116 cities in the northeastern Brazilian state of Bahia were in a state of emergency because of flooding yesterday [Macau time] due to heavy rains that have been pounding the region since the end of November.

Cities in at least five other states in Brazil's north and southeast have also been flooded in recent days.

In Bahia, flooding has affected more than 470,000 people. In at least 50 cities, water surged into homes and businesses, and people were forced to abandon their belongings. Official data from the state government say 34,163 people have been made homeless and almost 43,000 are displaced. There have been a total of 21 deaths and 358 people injured since the beginning of the month.

This is the heaviest period of rainfall for Bahia in the last 32 years, according to the website of the National Center for Monitoring and Alerts of Natural Disasters, a government

agency. In southern Bahia, it rained more than five times the normal amount for this time of the year.

In an interview with local radio stations, Bahia Gov. Rui Costa compared the situation to a "bombardment." He also said that coronavirus vaccines were lost in the floods of some cities.

"Some municipal health offices and medicine depots were completely under water," he said.

Yesterday, the population of at least four municipalities in Bahia received warnings to leave their homes because of the increased flow of the Pardo River due to the opening of the Machado Mineiro dam's sluice gates in neighboring Minas Gerais state, according to the state government's advisory office.

Bahia's Civil Defense superintendent, Col. Miguel Filho, told The Associated Press that there are still flooded and isolated cities, and rains are still ongoing.

"Our first response is to help, then to shelter, to care for the population in the shelters by giving humanitarian aid, with sheets, blankets, food," he said.

He added that at least

five dams in Bahia are at risk of bursting. Bridges and federal and state roads in the state were destroyed and have been provisionally rebuilt to allow food and other items to be brought to people in need.

"We still don't have a complete list of all the damage caused, the amount of structures that will need to be replaced," Gov. Costa said. "It isn't possible to stipulate a timeframe for recovery, because we don't have that dimension. We're guaranteeing accessibility, the detour, the temporary structure so that people can come and go."

The above-average rainfall is due to the La Nina atmospheric phenomenon, which increases precipitation in some areas of Brazil, including Bahia, the government's science ministry said in a statement last week.

Carlos Nobre, a prominent climatologist, explained to the Associated Press that the intensity of rains observed in Bahia are due to global warming. "We have to expect that these kinds of phenomena become more and more common. It's how

the planet responds. The evaporation of the oceans is greater and, with more water vapor in the atmosphere, there are more conditions for more intense rains, as we saw in Europe and China months ago," said the expert, who also mentioned other climatic phenomena that are becoming more intense and frequent, such as droughts, hurricanes and fires.

The federal government has authorized emergency spending totaling 80 million reais (\$14.2 million) for Bahia alone. Additional funds will be directed to other regions also affected by the rains in recent weeks, and which are still suffering the consequences.

In Tocantins state, which is adjacent to Bahia in Brazil's northern region, 22 municipalities were affected by the rains by yesterday afternoon. The executive director of the state's civil defense authority, Maj. Alex Matos, told the AP this number is expected to grow in the coming hours.

"We're predicting an increase in the volume of the Araguaia River, which will fill the Tocantins River even more," he said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1958 CASTRO'S REBELS EDGE CLOSER TO CAPITAL



A vicious house-to-house battle between rebel guerrillas, led by Fidel Castro, and the Cuban army is raging around the town of Santa Clara, the capital of the province of Las Villas.

The capture of Las Villas is a key goal for the rebel force, known as the 26 July Army, before they advance on the capital, Havana.

Despite being heavily outnumbered by the Cuban army, the rebels have enormous popular support and have won a number of significant victories.

Just a few weeks ago, they were confined to their tiny mountain stronghold at the other end of the island. Now they have advanced into a position where they are poised to take the capital itself.

The guerrillas have been fighting to overthrow the military government of Fulgencio Batista for two years.

But in the last 48 hours about 3,000 people have been killed or injured in some of the bloodiest fighting in the history of Cuba.

The army has countered the rebel attack on Santa Clara with fighter and bomber aircraft, as well as guns and tanks.

One of the rebel leaders, Dr Ernesto "Che" Guevara, has appealed to the government commander in Santa Clara for a truce to clear the streets of the casualties.

Broadcasts on rebel radio said his appeal had been rejected.

The president is reported to be preparing to take personal command of his forces to destroy a convoy of guerrilla soldiers currently moving south from Santa Clara.

In a sign of how desperate the situation has become for the government, President Batista today removed the Commodore of the Navy's air force, Joaquin Yarela Canosa, from his post.

He was the second senior figure in the armed forces to be sacked this week. The army commander in Las Villas, General Alberto Rio Chaviano, lost his job a few days ago.

Meanwhile, amid rumours that President Batista is preparing to flee the island, two of his young sons arrived in New York, accompanied by their grandfather, Manuel Perez Benitoa.

Mr Benitoa denied that the two boys were being evacuated ahead of a government surrender, saying, "I bring them every year to see the snow."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Two days later, on New Year's Day 1959, President Batista fled the country to the Dominican Republic, his government overthrown and his regime at an end.

He was to live the rest of his life in exile in Portugal and Spain and died in Spain in 1973.

Fidel Castro was sworn in as premier on 16 February 1959. Since then, Cuba has been a one-party state in which Fidel Castro exerts control over virtually every aspect of Cuban life. From an early stage, his leadership put Cuba on a collision course with the United States.

Antagonism between the two nations led to economic sanctions against Cuba from 1960. Two years later, Fidel Castro brought the world to the brink of nuclear war as his alliance with the USSR provoked the Cuban missile crisis.

Diplomatic relations have never been restored, and the US continues to enforce trade sanctions against Fidel Castro's regime.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Change will be required to make your life more harmonious. Misunderstandings at work could easily lead to your demise. Do not let your mate annoy you; patience will be the key.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Things aren't as they appear. Keep an open mind when dealing with youngsters. You are best to work at home, clearing up overdue projects, make a list of things you need to do.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Sign up for courses that will help you understand yourself better. You may be looking through rose colored glasses. Changes in your home will be positive. Property investments should pay off.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Hold your temper and refrain from doing anything that might cause injury. Be an observer before getting involved. Plan some family outings or a gathering with friends.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You will have to be careful not to fall into traps set by jealous colleagues. Talk to someone you trust in order to see the whole picture. Investments may not be as lucrative as you thought.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Use your charm to get your own way. Your charm will attract members of the opposite sex. You are best to put in some overtime rather than get involved in family gatherings.
 LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Don't make any drastic changes or begin new projects today. If you're preoccupied, be careful while operating a vehicle or any kind of equipment or machinery.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 This may not be your day if you are overly melodramatic and unnerving everyone around you. Someone you work with may be withholding valuable information.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 They didn't fully understand what was expected. Those you care about may oppose your ideas. Rid yourself of that which is old and no longer of use.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You don't owe anyone an explanation. Do your own thing, you need time to yourself. Get involved in a competitive sport that will bring the challenges you thrive on.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Don't get involved in idle chatter that will hurt your position. Coworkers may not be on your side. Deal with the needs of children.	 PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 You will enjoy physical activities more than you think. Don't overextend your self in order to add luxury items to your entertainment center.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	5	fine
Harbin	-21	-14	cloudy
Tianjin	3	11	fine
Urumqi	1	9	fine
Xi'an	6	11	overcast
Lhasa	-5	0	fine
Chengdu	10	15	cloudy
Chongqing	5	15	cloudy
Kunming	1	6	overcast
Nanjing	17	20	cloudy
Shanghai	1	12	fine
Wuhan	-22	-16	cloudy
Hangzhou	-3	10	fine
Taipei	-15	-2	fine
Guangzhou	10	18	fine
Hong Kong	16	20	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	-12	-14	snow
Frankfurt	3	4	cloudy
Paris	8	11	overcast
London	7	12	rain
New York	1	3	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Singer DiFranco; 4- Fiddled; 9- Easy ___; 14- Lisa, to Bart, briefly; 15- D. ebum, a tropical tree; 16- Components; 17- Inhabitant of the grassland; 19- Healing plants; 20- Gnu cousin; 21- Biblical brother; 23- Tiered shelves; 24- Considers; 27- Denials; 30- Assume; 32- Einstein's birthplace; 33- Roman capital of Palestine; 37- Rope used to guide a horse; 39- Comfortably familiar; 40- Amusing; 42- Part of Hispaniola; 43- Dire warning; 44- Invoice abbr.; 45- Widen; 48- Midday; 50- Alternative; 51- Appraise, charge per unit; 55- Android; 57- Clear-headed; 58- Pixie; 60- Eradicate; 64- ___ of thousands; 65- Pardon; 66- Gumshoe; 67- Noted Civil War biography; 68- Old; 69- Ballpark fig.

DOWN 1- According to; 2- Nabisco's ___ Wafers; 3- Stern with a bow; 4- Look after; 5- Delivery room docs; 6- ___ Kippur; 7- Bambi's aunt; 8- Electric generator; 9- On ___ with; 10- Permanent place?; 11- Articulate; 12- Suffix with meteor; 13- Start of something?; 18- Publicity; 22- Mule's sire; 24- Hard, in Havana; 25- Pentathlon need; 26- Clean air org.; 28- "Pomp and Circumstance" composer; 29- Silvery fish; 30- Indian term of respect; 31- Violinist Mischa; 33- "Over There" composer; 34- Budget alternative; 35- Pertaining to redaction; 36- Atl. crosser; 38- Black gold; 40- Sign over; 41- River to the Baltic; 43- Cheering word; 46- Friend of Tigger; 47- Furry swimmers; 49- Scandinavian; 51- Jockey Turcotte; 52- Lessen; 53- French beans?; 54- Establish; 56- Unit of computer memory; 57- Construction locale; 58- At a great distance; 59- Point of no return?; 61- Permit; 62- "___ Believer" (Monkees hit); 63- Wire measure;

Yesterday's solution

ANTE	BCOW	ACTV
ROOST	TECH	SARI
TEACH	ALTI	CLIO
ELD	RAMS	TRAVEL
MULE	KEEPER	
ARTISAN	ALE	
REACT	DEILLADE	
ALFA	SRIZE	ATAN
MYTHICAL	AIOILI	
ASPIRE	HURRIED	
ASPIRE	ORES	
MANIAC	BLIN	RRS
ORAL	HEED	ABOUT
TORE	ESAU	SIDLE
ONES	REUP	BEEN

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300	
IAM 28 387 333	
Tourism 28 333 000	
Airport 59 888 88	



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INTERVIEW

JAPANESE TOURIST SAYS SPACE TRIP 'AMAZING'

HARRIET MORRIS & VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, MOSCOW

A Japanese space tourist rejected criticism from those who questioned his decision to pay a fortune for a trip to the International Space Station, saying the "amazing" experience was worth it.

Speaking to The Associated Press in a live interview from the orbiting space outpost, billionaire fashion tycoon Yusaku Maezawa said even though he had imagined what his mission would be like before the flight, he was struck by the reality of space travel.

"Once you are in space, you realize how much it is worth it by having this amazing experience," he told the AP in the first TV interview since he arrived at the station. "And I believe that this amazing experience will lead to something else."

Maezawa, 46, and his 36-year-old producer Yozo Hirano are the first self-paying tourists to visit the space station since 2009. Asked about reports claiming that he paid over \$80 million for a 12-day mission, Maezawa said he couldn't disclose the contract sum but admitted that he paid "pretty much" that amount.

In October, Russian actor Yulia Peresild and film director Klim Shipenko spent 12 days on the station to make the world's first movie in orbit, a project sponsored by Russia's space corporation Roscosmos to help burnish the nation's space glory.

Maezawa deflected the criticism from those who questioned his decision to spend money on his space travel instead of using it to help people back on Earth, saying that "those who criticize are perhaps those who have never been to space."

"The most memorable moments were when I saw the International Space Station from Soyuz just before the docking and when we entered after the docking," he said.

He admitted that space tourism is mostly for the super-rich now, but added that those who embark on space travel must be prepared for other challenges.

"Yes, it is still rather expensive, but it is not only about money," he told the AP. "It takes time for your body to adjust in this environment and the training for emergencies takes at least a few months. So, honestly speaking, it is only accessible for those who have time and are physically fit and those who can afford it. But we don't know if that is still going to be the case in 10 years, 20 years' time."

Maezawa told the AP he felt "a little bit of motion sickness" and it was "a little bit difficult to sleep," adding that future space tourists need to be aware of the need to spend up to five days to adapt to motion sickness in space.

He acknowledged that taking a nap still presents a challenge.

"I am not sleeping well, to be honest. A sleeping bag has been provided but it is too hot so I am not using it," he said.

He was happy with the length of his trip.

"Twelve days was about right for me," Maezawa added. "I am getting over the motion sickness so I can enjoy the remaining days. I am returning on the 20th and starting to miss Japan. Once I return, I want to have sushi!"

Maezawa and Hirano, who was filming his mission, blasted off for the International Space Station yesterday in a Russian Soyuz spacecraft along with Russian cosmonaut Alexander Misurkin.

AP PHOTO



Space flight participant Yusaku Maezawa attends a news conference ahead of the expedition

Space Adventures, a Virginia-based company that organized his flight, had previously sent seven other tourists to the space station in 2001-2009.

Maezawa expressed his profound admiration for the space station's crew. In addition to Misurkin, they include NASA astronauts Raja Chari, Thomas Marshburn, Kayla Barron and Mark Vande Hei; Russian cosmonauts Anton Shkaplerov and Pyotr Dubrov; and Matthias Maurer of the European Space Agency.

"They are like super-heroes who save Earth," he said. "Not only that they are ahead of the

latest science, but trained physically and mentally, and very brave. I can feel directly how human can develop this far, and our lives depend on these people – how it changes in the future. I respect them a lot."

He and Hirano will be returning to Earth with Misurkin on Sunday.

Before the flight, Maezawa had compiled a list of 100 things to do in space during his mission after asking the public for ideas.

"I am looking forward to doing some sports inside the space station – badminton, table tennis and golf," he told the AP. "What I

am not looking forward to that much is toilet-related stuff."

Maezawa made his fortune in retail fashion, launching Japan's largest online fashion mall, Zozotown. Forbes magazine estimated his net worth at \$1.9 billion.

The tycoon has also booked a flyby around the moon aboard Elon Musk's Starship, which is tentatively scheduled in the next few years. He'll be joined on that trip by eight contest winners.

"I am planning to go to the moon in 2023 – we are in the final stages of selecting the 8 people for the Dear Moon project," he said. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Galaxy to pay employee bonus



Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) has announced a one-off special payment equivalent to one month's salary will be awarded to eligible employees at senior manager grade and below,

covering around 97% of its workers, as a show of appreciation for their contributions in the last year and continued commitment. The one-off special pay-

ment, equivalent to one month of base salary and guaranteed tips if applicable, will be paid to eligible employees on January 28, 2022.

In a statement, GEG thanked its employees for standing "strong together through creative thinking and constantly striving for excellence" under the new normal.

Additionally, the gaming operator said that GEG team members were "proactive in participating in various training programs, granting unfailing support to related business arrangements, as well as supporting the Macau SAR Government's pandemic preventive work and contributing to solidifying the immunity barrier."

MGM collaborates with tech firms to aid smart city development



MGM has joined hands with two local tech enterprises to carry out "smart" upgrades at the gaming operator's properties. According to a statement, the digital enhancements will be "instrumental in elevating MGM's

hotel and marketing operations, meeting the demand for technologies among today's travelers."

MGM and Pachira Enterprises Limited inked a strategic cooperation framework agreement earlier

in December.

The collaboration will see a series of technological upgrades at MGM, like automated room reservations using AI-powered voice agents, smart dial-in and dial-out systems and smart marketing.

On the same day, MGM and DigitalBay, a digital marketing SME founded by a young entrepreneur in Macau using innovative approaches, also entered a partnership to jointly explore growth opportunities. Under the collaboration, the "MGM Room Service Mini Program" will be integrated with DigitalBay's latest WeChat community marketing Software-as-a-Service product, "Interactive Marketing Cloud."

FOOTBALL

Liverpool loses for second time in EPL, big blow to title hopes

LEICESTER 1, LIVERPOOL 0

LOSSES for Liverpool are about as rare as penalty misses by Mohamed Salah.

Both happened yesterday [Macau time] and, even at the halfway stage of the season, it could cost Jürgen Klopp's team the Premier League title.

Liverpool was beaten 1-0 by a patched-up Leicester team and could find itself nine points behind Manchester City heading into the new year, if the leaders win at Brentford today.

It's a cushion that might prove to be insurmountable given City is on a nine-match winning streak in the league and is looking unstoppable, scoring 17 goals in its last three victories.

Liverpool also will soon be without its two star forwards, Salah and Sadio Mane, who are heading to the African Cup of Nations next week. They were granted permission to delay joining up with their national teams ahead of the tournament so they could play for Liverpool over the festive period



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah reacts after missing a chance to score from penalty

but they couldn't make the difference at King Power Stadium.

Salah won a penalty but saw his weak effort saved by Kasper Schmeichel in the 16th minute, thereby failing to convert a spot kick for the first time in 16 attempts. His last penalty miss was against Huddersfield in October 2017.

Liverpool ultimately slumped to only its second loss in all competitions this season when substitute Ademola Lookman found space between Joel Matip and Virgil van Dijk and shot inside the near post in the 59th minute.

"There were too many performances below normal level,"

Klopp said.

"So often these boys give me the opportunity to say, 'Wow, what a game!' Tonight it's, 'Wow!' but in completely the other way."

Liverpool is tied on 41 points with Chelsea, and both are six points behind City. All three teams have played 19 games, with City and Chelsea — at home to Brighton — in action on Wednesday.

CONTE PHILOSOPHICAL

Denied victory at 10-man Southampton after having two second-half goals ruled out, Tottenham manager Antonio Conte remained philosophical.

"They are there to try to do their best," Conte said about the match officials after the 1-1 draw at St. Mary's. "We hope every time that they make the best decision."

Still, Conte said he felt Harry Kane's 53rd-minute goal, which would have put Tottenham 2-1 ahead, should have stood instead of being scrubbed off because the England captain's arm put him in an offside position when he was played through.

Then, 14 minutes later, Southampton goalkeeper Fraser Forster came out to catch the ball under pressure from Tottenham substitute Matt Doherty and dropped it onto his own heel. The ball ricocheted back into the net but the referee blew for a foul by Doherty, even though contact appeared minimal.

James Ward-Prowse's 25th-minute opener for Southampton was canceled out by Kane, who converted a penalty in the 41st after Son Heung-min was tripped by Mohammed Salisu. That earned the Southampton defender a second yellow card.

Southampton was pinned back in the second half but held on for a point, leading to manager Ralph Hasenhuttl to say: "The brave guys get rewards."

ANOTHER GAME OFF

The 20th round was reduced to seven fixtures when the match between Everton and Newcastle was postponed yesterday because of a pile-up of COVID-19 cases and injuries in the Newcastle squad.

The Arsenal-Wolves and Leeds-Aston Villa games had previously been called off.

Everton-Newcastle had been scheduled to be played Thursday at Goodison Park.

It takes the number of Premier League games to be called off as a result of coronavirus issues to 16 matches in barely three weeks. MDT/AP

AD



HOLIDAY RENTAL HOUSES

Lugar das Letras  Casa de Gouvães 

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

But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.



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"TRY THIS" BY ALEX TORRAO



OPINION

China Daily

Zhang Zhouxiang, China Daily

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF A POTENTIALLY TRAGIC KIND

Elon Musk has become a target of Chinese netizens' ire after reports that the Chinese Permanent Mission to UN and other International Organizations in Vienna sent a note verbale earlier this month informing the secretary-general of the United Nations General Assembly of two close encounters China's space station has had with SpaceX Starlink satellites, "which constituted dangers to the life or health of astronauts" aboard the Chinese space station.

Between May 16 and June 24, the Starlink-1095 satellite descended from an orbit altitude of 555 kilometers to an orbit of around 382 km, forcing China's Tianhe space station core module to conduct an evasive maneuver on July 1 to avoid a potential collision.

On Oct 21, the maneuvers of the Starlink-2305 satellite brought it into dangerous proximity to the space station, forcing the latter to again perform an evasive maneuver to avoid the risk of collision.

SpaceX is yet to respond. However, this isn't the first time the company's satellites have posed a risk to astronauts. The US space agency NASA called off a scheduled space walk in November due to risks posed by Starlink satellites, which the company "had to shift to reduce the probability of collision," Musk tweeted. "Not great, but not terrible either."

However, the potential outcome of a collision would be terrible no matter how much Musk tries to downplay the risks. Any collision between a satellite and a manned spacecraft would likely prove fatal to the astronauts on board. Even if two satellites collided, it would cause dangerous space debris.

According to research by the Astronautics Research Group at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom, Starlink satellites alone are involved in about 1,600 close encounters between two spacecraft every week, accounting for about half of all such incidents. And there are many small satellites in space, not only those of Starlink, but others, which, if not well controlled, would almost inevitably lead to a collision of some kind.

According to the UN Online Index of Objects Launched into Outer Space, the total number of objects launched into space is 12,017, of which 5,860, more than one-third, belong to the United States.

The Chinese document calls for all parties who are utilizing space, whether government agencies or nongovernment entities, to do so responsibly. That is a call that must be heeded to prevent a space tragedy.



Elon Musk

WHO: GLOBAL COVID CASES UP 11% LAST WEEK, OMICRON RISK HIGH

THE BUZZ

The World Health Organization says the number of COVID-19 cases recorded worldwide increased by 11% last week compared with the previous week, with the biggest increase in the Americas. The gain followed a gradual increase since October.

The U.N. health agency said in its weekly epidemiological report released yesterday [Macau time] that there were nearly 4.99 million newly reported cases around the world from Dec. 20-26.

Europe accounted for more than half the total, with 2.84 million, though that amounted to only a 3% increase over the

previous week. It also had the highest infection rate of any region, with 304.6 new cases per 100,000 residents.

WHO said that new cases in the Americas were up 39% to nearly 1.48 million, and the region had the second-highest infection rate with 144.4 new cases per 100,000 residents. The U.S. alone saw more than 1.18 million cases, a 34% increase.

Reported new cases in Africa were up 7% to nearly 275,000.

The agency said that "the overall risk related to the new variant [...] omicron remains very high."



Bouquets of flowers are placed outside the door of a tattoo parlor along South Broadway in Denver, one of the scenes of a shooting spree

US POLICE: GUNMAN IN DENVER WHO KILLED FIVE TARGETED SOME VICTIMS

COLLEEN SLEVIN, DENVER

A gunman who went on a shooting rampage in several locations around the Denver area, killing five people and wounding two, targeted his victims based on previous personal and business dealings, authorities said.

Lyndon James McLeod, 47, was also killed Monday night after he shot a police officer who confronted him in a busy shopping district in the Denver suburb of Lakewood. The officer managed to fire back at McLeod, killing him, Lakewood police spokesperson John Romero said yesterday [Macau time].

Matt Clark, commander of the Denver Police Department's Major Crimes Division, said the gunman knew most of his victims but not the last person he shot — a clerk in a hotel in Lakewood's Belmar shopping area. Sarah Steck, 28, who died of her injuries yesterday, was apparently targeted because of a dispute with the hotel, not with her, Clark said.

McLeod once owned a business in Denver called Flat Black Ink Corp. at an address that is now World Tattoo Studio, according to records from the Colorado Secretary of State's Office. A man who answered the phone at World Tattoo Studio hung up after he was asked about McLeod yesterday.

The first shooting took

place at a tattoo shop less than a mile (1.6 kilometers) from that address. Four of the victims, including three who died, were shot at two tattoo shops in the Denver area.

Denver Police Chief Paul Pazen said during a news conference that McLeod was on the radar of law enforcement and had been investigated in both 2020 and 2021. He declined to say what McLeod was investigated for but said charges were not filed against him.

The shootings started around 5:30 p.m. in central Denver along Broadway, a busy street lined with shops, bars and restaurants, where two women were killed and a man was injured but expected to survive, police said. Soon after, McLeod forced his way into a home that also housed a business nearby, pursued the occupants through the building and fired shots, but no one was injured, Clark said. Then a man was shot and killed in a home near Denver's Cheesman Park, he said.

Later, Denver police chased the vehicle believed to have been involved in the shootings, and an officer exchanged gunfire with McLeod, Clark said. McLeod was able to get away, fleeing into Lakewood, after gunfire disabled the officer's cruiser, he said.

Just before 6 p.m., the Lakewood Police Depart-

ment received a report of shots fired at the Lucky 13 tattoo shop. Danny Schofield, 38, was killed there, Romero said.

When officers spotted the car suspected of being involved in the shooting at the Belmar shopping area — where shops line sidewalks in a modern version of a downtown — McLeod opened fire and officers shot back, Romero said. He ran away and allegedly threatened some people in a restaurant with a gun before going to the Hyatt House hotel, where he spoke briefly with Steck, the clerk, before shooting her, he said.

About a minute later, the Lakewood police officer saw McLeod and ordered him to drop his weapon. She was shot in the abdomen but fired back at him, Romero said.

The wounded officer, whose name has not been released, underwent surgery Monday night. She is expected to make a full recovery.

Alicia Cardenas is survived by her 12-year-old, Alfredo Cardenas said.

Yesterday, candles, flower bouquets and some containers of fruit rested in the doorway of Cardenas' shop as people, including her fiancé, Daniel Clelland, stopped by to remember a woman they said cared for so many.

"I don't know why someone would do this," Clelland said. MDT/AP



Lebanon's energy minister launched two projects in the country's north yesterday to facilitate the flow of natural gas from Egypt. The move aims to improve electricity production and expand the country's tanks to increase oil reserves. The revival of the Arab Gas Pipeline to deliver Egyptian gas to Lebanon comes as the small country is reeling from a crippling electricity crisis. The pipeline has been out of service in Lebanon since before Syria's 10-year conflict began in 2011.



Israel's defense minister approved a raft of measures aimed at improving relations with the Palestinians yesterday following a rare meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Israel. Defense Minister Benny Gantz (pictured) met with Abbas at his private residence in a Tel Aviv suburb. It was the first time Abbas met an Israeli official inside Israel since 2010. The two discussed security coordination between Israel and Abbas' Palestinian Authority, which administers pockets of the occupied West Bank.



Poland Donald Tusk, the leader of Poland's main opposition party, called for the creation of a parliamentary commission to investigate surveillance after reports that powerful spyware was used against three people associated with the political opposition. "This is an unprecedented thing in our history. This is the biggest and deepest crisis of democracy after 1989," said Tusk, who served as Poland's prime minister from 2007-2014 and president of the European Council from 2014-2019.