

THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARING TO BAN THE IMPORT AND MANUFACTURING OF ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES IN MACAU

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CHEONG: E-GOV IS MOVING FORWARD, NEW MEASURES IN H1 THIS YEAR

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AIRLINES WORLDWIDE RUSH TO CHANGE US-BOUND FLIGHTS

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Hong Kong activist Edward Leung, who coined the now-banned slogan “Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of our Times,” was released from prison yesterday after spending four years behind bars for a 2016 protest. Leung was a prominent independence activist and the spokesman of Hong Kong Indigenous, a pro-independence group in the city that was outspoken about “localism” and the need to preserve a distinct Hong Kong identity.



Cambodia A treason trial against Cambodia's opposition leader resumed yesterday, two years after it was adjourned due to the coronavirus pandemic. Kem Sokha (pictured) was head of the Cambodia National Rescue Party when he was arrested in September 2017 on the basis of an old video showing him telling a seminar about receiving advice from U.S. pro-democracy groups. If convicted, he could be sentenced to up to 30 years' imprisonment.



Indonesia An Islamic militant who eluded capture for 18 years was sentenced to 15 years in prison yesterday after an Indonesian court found him guilty of hiding information about the 2002 Bali bombings from authorities and harboring other suspects. Prosecutors previously demanded a life sentence for Aris Sumarsono, 58, whose real name is Arif Sunarso but is better known as Zulkarnaen, for his role in the October 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people.

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ZHUHAI SAFE ZONE

Nearly three million in Zhuhai test negative for Covid-19 after 24 positive cases detected P2



XINHUA

NO HAMSTERS IN MACAU TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19: IAM

P4



CE MOVES IC CHIEF TO SCIENCE CENTER

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has announced in the Official Gazette that Mok Ian Ian, the inaugural president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), has been assigned to "a position" at the Macao Science Center, S.A. (MSC). Mok's termination at the IC is sudden, as she was set to finish her appointment at the IC in February 2023. In a separate statement, the MSC announced that Mok will be the new Chairperson of the company. It is certain that under her leadership a new page will be written in the facility's history. Mok's appointment to the MSC took effect yesterday.

INTEREST FOR 2021 ALREADY PAID INTO THE CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND ACCOUNTS

The Social Security Fund (FSS) has announced that the fund's income from interest payments for the year 2021 was credited to the non-mandatory central provident fund system's government-managed sub-accounts on 13 January 2022, at an annual interest rate of about 1.63%. The interest is deposited once a year. If an account owner is eligible for the Special Allocations from Budget Surplus since 2010 and they have never transferred out, transferred in, or withdrawn funds from the government-managed sub-account, they will receive MOP1,416 in interest for the year 2021, and the cumulative appropriations together with the interest income will be MOP88,326.

UM HOLDS GBA CONFERENCE ON TRANSLATIONAL MEDICINE

The University of Macau (UM) Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) recently held the First Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area International Conference on Translational Medicine together with the Fourth Macao Stem Cell Symposium. Combining both online and in-person elements, the two-day event attracted over 400 participants. During the event, participants discussed recent progress in translational medicine, stem cell research, and the clinical application of research results in these two areas, UM said in a statement. The two-day conference included three keynote speeches and 17 session talks. The conference's review and award committee received over 100 entries, including over 70 posters and 30 research images.

THREE LOCAL RESTAURANTS LOSE MICHELIN STARS IN 2022

ANTHONY LAM

THREE local restaurants which have faced different battles during the past two years of the Covid-19 pandemic have seen their star-ratings drop in the Michelin Guide Hong Kong & Macau 2022.

The restaurants are: the Golden Peacock, an Indian restaurant in the Venetian Macao; Tim's Kitchen, a Cantonese restaurant originally located in Hotel Lisboa; and the Golden Flower, a northern Chinese restaurant at Wynn Macau.

Having suspended operations since the start of the pandemic, the Golden Peacock has lost its Michelin star this year, an accolade it had retained since 2014. It was the first Indian restaurant in Asia to receive a star from the Michelin Guide.

Tim's Kitchen – a Cantonese fine-dining hub nestled in Hotel Lisboa for years and popular among the city's connoisseurs – quietly slipped off from Macau's culinary map with its closure in February last year. Its star was canceled automatically.

After suspension of operations for a period, the Golden Flower has lost its two stars, following the new young Executive Chef, Zhang Zhi Cheng's re-launch of the culinary team in October last year.

Another curious decision



from the Michelin Guide's jury was Wynn Palace's Sichuan Moon – headed by celebrated Taiwanese Chef André Chiang – managing to retain its two-star accreditation despite not having operated in two years.

The reopening of the restaurant may, however, be on its way. When Sichuan Moon's two Michelin stars were revealed, Chiang spoke through a video-conference, against a backdrop which resembled a hotel room. It is unclear if he was undergoing quarantine to prepare for the relaunch of his fine-dining team.

The other revelations from Michelin did not cause any ripples, as the list of Macau restaurants awarded with stars remained otherwise unchanged

from last year. Worth mentioning is that the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies Educational Restaurant retained its Michelin Green Star, an accolade intro-

duced to the Macau and Hong Kong market last year.

The Green Star highlights input in promoting sustainability in gastronomy.

MICHELIN GUIDE MACAU 2022

3 STARS

Robuchon au Dôme (Grand Lisboa)
The 8 (Grand Lisboa)
Jade Dragon (City of Dreams, Macau)

2 STARS

Alain Ducasse at Morpheus (City of Dreams, Macau)
Feng Wei Ju (StarWorld Hotel)
Mizumi (Wynn Macau)
Sichuan Moon (Wynn Palace)
Wing Lei (Wynn Macau)

1 STAR

Lai Heen (Ritz-Carlton Macau)
8 ½ Otto e Mezzo - Bombana (Galaxy Macau)
Pearl Dragon (Studio City, Macau)
The Kitchen (Grand Lisboa)
Wing Lei Palace (Wynn Palace)
Ying (Altira Macau)
Zi Yat Heen (Four Seasons Macao)

GREEN STAR

Macao Institute for Tourism Studies Educational Restaurant

Nearly three million in Zhuhai test negative for Covid-19



THE second round of mass SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid tests (NAT) in Zhuhai has yielded only negative results, local media reports.

According to deputy director of the Zhuhai Health Authority Huang Yun, the mass NAT sampled about 2.8 million people. All tested negative.

For the time being, the city has detected 24 cases in its current outbreak, all 24 of which are in hospi-

tal. During the 24 hours between 9 a.m. January 18 and 9 a.m. January 19, the city detected six cases.

Partial lockdown has been implemented in Zhuhai, targeting Xiangzhou District and Nanping Township.

Meanwhile, in Zhongshan, about 5.2 million people were tested for the virus between January 17 and 18. It was the city's second round of mass NAT. On the first day, sam-

ples were collected from about 2.3 million people. On the second day, samples were collected from another 2.9 million.

During this period, a man who attended an unregistered wedding banquet in Luoding City was detained by the police. The city is located in the north of Guangdong Province. The man, however, resides regularly in Nanping Township of Zhuhai.

He was accused of not notifying the authorities about his trip to Luoding in advance.

The authorities categorized 115 banquet-goers as secondary close contacts. **AL**

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André Cheong: E-Gov is moving forward, new measures in H1 this year

RENATO MARQUES

THE implementation of expansion measures for the electronic government (E-Gov) system are currently being prepared and will be rolled out during the first half (H1) of this year, the Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong said yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Cheong attended the AL to respond to several spoken inquiries from the lawmakers on the second consecutive day of Q&A with the government.

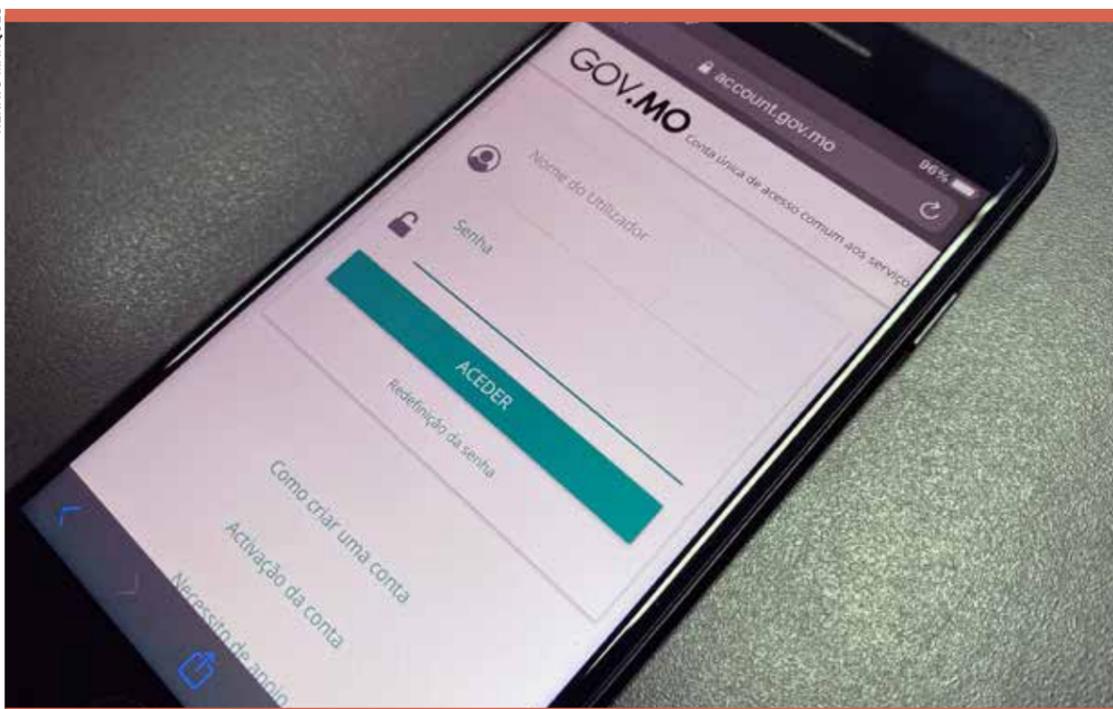
When asked by lawmakers about the progress of the E-Gov's development, the Secretary revealed that an updated version of the My Government Account system (individual accounts) will enter into force around April or May this year, with added services.

"Until now, nearly 300,000 people have opened accounts in My Government Account system, and the system's '2.0 version' will be launched in April or May this year," Cheong said.

"We will increase [the functionality of] several services, including the payment of traffic violation fines, licensing, and others." Cheong remarked that it would soon be possible to use this method for paying for utilities such as electricity and water.

Lawmakers asked to hear about the government's plans for further developments of the system, and called for the faster implementation of online and

RENATO MARQUES



non-essential services.

On the topic, lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho mentioned the example of Estonia, where the physical presence of staff performing bureaucratic tasks is limited to marriage, divorce, and Real Estate transactions. He noted that all other services and tasks can be done online.

In response, Cheong said that the government hopes to promote a simplification of the processes of both marriage and divorce next year, implementing a series of electronic related services.

Cheong said that the purpose of E-Gov is "not to simply pass from paperback to online servi-

ces and digital files but, most importantly, to review and optimize the bureaucratic processes and approval procedures to increase the overall efficiency."

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM ALSO ONGOING

Another matter concerning which lawmakers made inquiries was administrative reform. The Secretary said that "early this year" the executive will finally move ahead with the reorganization of the Infrastructure Development Office (GDI).

Cheong noted that, since last year, the restructuring, merging, and extinction of several depart-

ments has been ongoing. This will continue this year, starting with the GDI, a long-awaited measure by the Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário, now finally underway.

Cheong also noted that the government is currently avoiding, as much as possible, the establishment of non-permanent projects or task forces as has occurred in the past. These types of bodies include the Energy Sector Development Office, the Tourism Crisis Management Office, Protocol Office, and others of the same kind that have been restructured and merged into other services over the last couple of years.

The Office for the Planning of Supervision of Public Assets (GP-SAP) will continue operations. The Secretary for Administration and Justice said explained this decision by saying that it serves "an important role in supervising public assets and public capital enterprises." The Secretary also said that the office, led by the former Secretary Sonia Chan, is also currently working on a completely new regime to regulate the relevant matters, which is approximately halfway towards finalization.

Restructuring will be also expected to begin soon for three other projects. These are: the Human Resources Office, the Financial Intelligence Office, and the Supporting Office to the Permanent Secretariat to the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries.

At the AL, Cheong said that these three offices will either be merged into other existing entities or re-established independently within the course of this year.

In a review of the work completed, Cheong detailed the 15 departments — including sectors of the economy, tourism, education, culture, and information — that have been reorganized. Furthermore, six departments have been abolished, and only two new departments have been created. Cheong recalled that, currently, the government is also intending to restructure several public autonomous funds.

Gov't to ban import of e-cigarettes this year

RENATO MARQUES

THE government is preparing to ban the import and manufacturing of electronic cigarettes in Macau, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong announced yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Ao Ieong attended the plenary session for the second day of Q&A, with the government answering lawmakers' questions on several topics, including the problem related to the use of electronic cigarettes in Macau. She announced that "this year we will revise this law to forbid the import and manufacturing of electronic cigarettes and their



products," in reply to an inquiry from lawmaker Lam Lon Wai.

"It's a simple review, so I believe it will be concluded

within the year," she remarked after a short debate between the lawmakers and government officials.

The government was un-

der fire for having recently enacted a regulation which forbids the sale and promotion of electronic cigarettes but leaves a loophole

allowing their import.

According to the Customs Bureau, the services never received any request for the import of such products, and that no "legal" imports have ever been authorized.

According to the lawmakers, the problem is not with the law itself — which Ao Ieong said is one of the most restrictive worldwide — but with its implementation. Several lawmakers, including José Pereira Coutinho, accused the authorities of letting the products in via "ant carriers" — a name describing people who cross the border frequently, transporting contraband as personal items to avoid scrutiny of

the customs authorities.

Citing the current implementation of the law and general lack of supervision, lawmaker Lam said that he had attempted to search for the products online and that he had found several individuals and companies advertising them, some of whom included references to physical stores.

Concerning this, authorities stated only that it is difficult to inspect operations and transactions that occur online, but that with the amendments planned the matter would be solved.

In the inquiry, lawmaker Lam noted that electronic cigarettes were being used for the consumption of illegal substances other than tobacco — specifically some mixed with cannabis oils. The government confirmed it was aware of the matter.

POLICE, VICTIM ACCOUNTS OF DOG-KILLING CAR CRASH CONFLICT

ANTHONY LAM

THE owner of a dog killed in a car accident said the pet was on a leash, but the Public Security Police Force (PSP) has said otherwise.

A social media post published earlier this week detailed how a dog was run over by a heavy vehicle while the dog and its owner were using a zebra crossing near Macau Stadium.

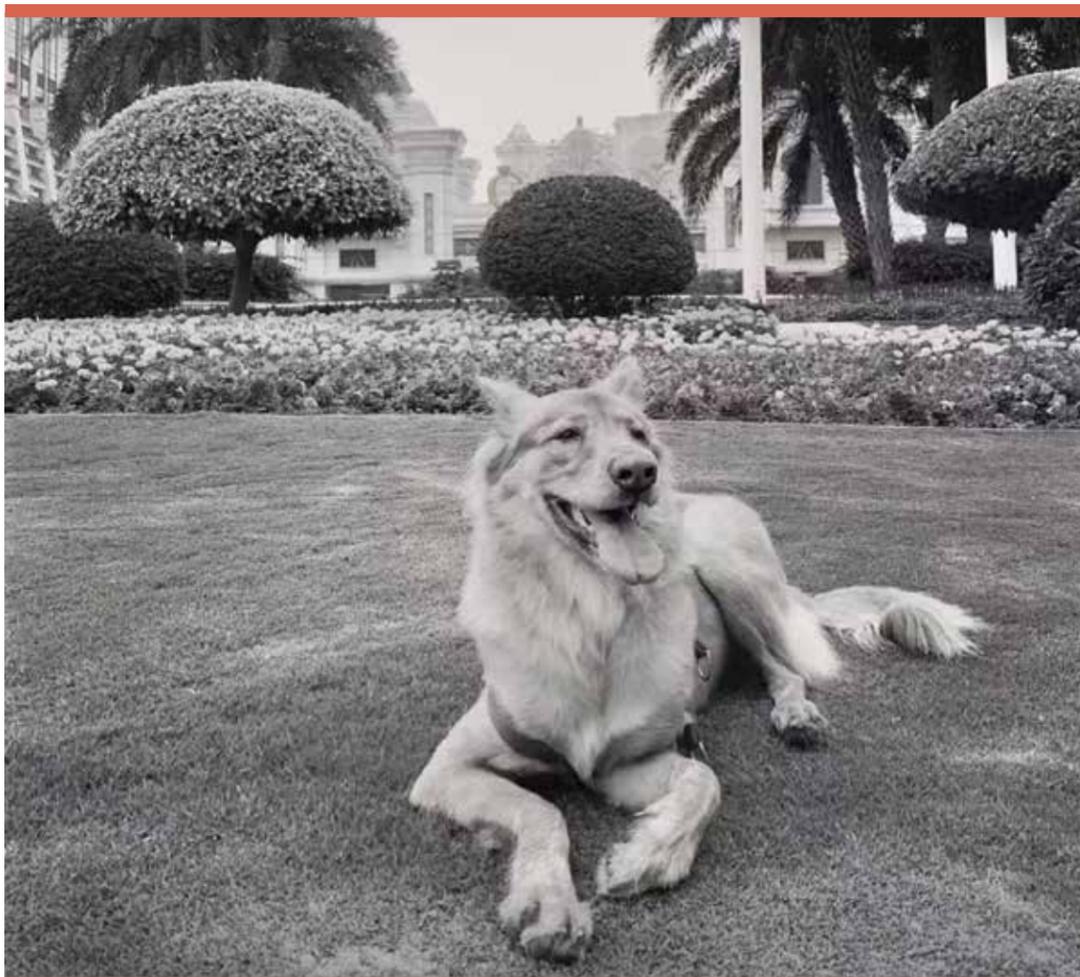
The owner noted in the post that the dog was on a leash and the vehicle showed some sign of slowing down: hence why the owner decided to cross the road with the dog.

However, according to a text message sent to the press by the PSP, the dog crossed the road without its leash being held. It also claimed that when the dog "ran to the zebra crossing", the vehicle also got its front off the zebra crossing.

According to the social media post, the police were notified immediately after the accident, which the police have confirmed. The driver fled the scene.

The owner said that the police officer on duty told the victim that there were no surveillance cameras near the site, but promised to inspect footage from other cameras to locate the driver. The pet owner has also provided information at the police station.

The PSP text message announced that the driver has



been found.

The viral social media post calling for witnesses has apparently been taken down by the pet owner.

In the case of another car accident, the PSP is calling for witnesses and leads. The crash occurred on Avenida de Dia de

Cidade, causing severe injuries to the left knee and the back of the head of a sexagenarian woman. She is reported to be in stable condition following her admittance to the hospital.

The accident took place about 6:32 p.m. on January 18 near the Ascott Macau near lamppost No.

085A02. Initial images show that the accident took place near a zebra crossing.

Preliminary investigations by the PSP require further details from eye witness, if available. Information about the accident can be provided to the police at 2837 4214.

CRIME MOTHER ATTEMPTS TO PROTECT SON FROM LIABILITY FOR TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

RENATO MARQUES

A 50-year-old local woman who works as a casino supervisor is being accused of attempting to protect her 18-year-old son from liability for a traffic accident, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) stated on Monday.

According to the police report, the woman visited the Taipa police station 30 minutes after an accident at Rua dos Açores in Taipa around 4 p.m. on January 13. She claimed that she was the driver in that accident.

The PSP had been alerted to the traffic accident by a witness a few minutes earlier who called the emergency hotline 999. Upon arriving at the scene, the officers found the vehicle abandoned.

The witness told the police that when they passed through that area, they saw the car flip and observed a man crawling out of it. The man then disappeared.

Questioned by the police, the woman delivered inconsistent testimony and was unable to explain how or why the accident occurred. According to the police, she provided vague and contradictory information.

A few minutes later, her son also showed up at the police station and was heard by the PSP. He initially refused to admit that he was the driver in the accident. Upon further interrogation and receiving warnings about the consequences of making false declarations to the police, the woman admitted that the car belonged to her but it was her son who drove it that day.

The woman provided new testimony, stating that she had asked her son to assist her with selling the car. However, the son had driven the car to an undisclosed location for a reason that was also undisclosed. As the son did not possess a valid driver's license, he fled the scene after the accident. The mother attested that she had attempted to cover up the fact that her son was the driver by taking the blame herself for the same reason.

According to information from the PSP spokesperson, both the mother and son are being charged in this case. While the son is being charged for driving while unqualified and abandoning the scene of an accident, the woman is being charged under the provision Article 331 of the Macau Penal Code.

IAM: No hamsters in Macau have tested positive for Covid-19



THE Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) have deployed more staff to carry out inspections of pet shops selling hamsters in Macau, and performed random nucleic acid tests for Covid-19 on pet shop hamsters yesterday.

This comes after Covid-19 was detected in multiple samples collected from hamsters in a pet shop in Hong Kong. About 2,000 small animals, including hamsters, were culled after several tested positive for the coronavirus at a pet store where an employee was also infected.

In a statement, the IAM has said that all the results are negative. According to import records, no hamsters have been imported into Macau by local pet shops since last year.

"IAM will closely monitor the development of the issue and carry out dynamic risk assessment jointly with the Health Bureau, and adopt prevention and control measures corresponding to the development of the pandemic," the bureau said.

IAM urges pet owners to adopt proper hygiene and disinfection measures for themselves and their

pets in, and not to abandon their pets because of any rumors.

Hong Kong has also halted the sale of hamsters and the import of small mammals, according to officials from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. The pet shop employee tested positive for the delta variant on Monday, and several hamsters imported from the Netherlands at the store tested positive as well.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, animals do not appear to play a significant role in spreading the coronavirus. However, Hong Kong authorities have said they are not ruling out transmission between animals and humans. LV/AP



SME seeks more possibilities through Sands China's SME Support Strategy

AS one of the leading integrated resort operators in Macau, Sands China Ltd. sets a high standard for the entirety of its operations. That includes its restaurants, for which high-quality and fresh ingredients are a prerequisite for delivering superior cuisine.

In sourcing those high-quality ingredients, Sands China searches locally through its pioneering local supplier support program. The company has thus been reinvesting in the community by helping local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and micro-enterprises to expand and flourish as they work with Sands China.

One of those local suppliers is New Concept Food Ltd. Established in 2013, the SME has engaged primarily in seafood, including live, chilled and frozen, supplying hotels and government departments.

The cooperation between Sands China and New Concept Food began with fish tank maintenance services. Apple Wong, general manager of New Concept Food, recalls: "Our professionals conducted a daily routine check on fish tanks for Sands China's restaurants, assuring the hygiene of the fish tanks. By observing the changes in water quality, we could maintain the freshness of edible fish and other seafood. If there were any problems, we would follow up."

Over time, the two parties expanded their cooperation by moving together into seafood procurement and processing services.

The partnership has lasted for over eight years.

According to Sands China's procurement and supply chain senior manager Amanda Li and assistant manager Alex Mok, the shift in business scope was prompted by observing SMEs' unique approaches to sourcing products. For example, the quality and taste of the yellow croaker sourced from around Macau did not meet Sands China's requirements. Mok and Li say that New Concept Food was able to draw upon its abundant knowledge of the mainland market to introduce a well-known Chinese yellow croaker brand to Macau through its SME network. Likewise, New Concept Food was provided the opportunity to be Sands China's supplier in seafood procurement and processing services by offering good quality at reasonable prices.

As a local SME supplier, New Concept Food is able to utilize its

advantages. It offers its clients a unique source of products, flexible delivery, and a storage facility equipped with a minus 45-degree freezer that can quickly freeze fresh seafood. Ms. Wong, the SME's general manager, revealed the secret of their efficient logistics service: "We have our processing plant in Macau, which enables us to deliver the processed fresh seafood to customers in the shortest time. In addition, the company also has its fleet for cold chain transportation, including water trucks for transporting live seafood and frozen trucks for refrigerated seafood after processing to ensure freshness."

According to Wong, the processing and delivery is usually complete within two hours of a restaurant making an order.

Working with a large-scale international corporation like Sands China also drove many changes

for New Concept Food. Foremost was the need to increase in the scale of its workforce: their staff grew from four to 22 people. Moreover, the standards and training received from the Sands Procurement Academy – a free SME training program offered by Sands China – naturally boosted the functioning of the SME.

The team at New Concept Food hope that they will continue to work closely with resorts in food supply and processing services. "We hope to make good use of our food processing plant," said Wong.

Mok and Li from Sands China suggested that, in the future, New Concept Food can provide even more high-end and diversified products. In addition to the Chinese mainland market, the business could also develop supply sources overseas.

Some restaurants at Macau re-

sorts have been temporarily closed due to the pandemic, though they are gradually returning to normal. Suppliers can expect to receive orders more frequently, and some orders may require urgent same-day delivery. Sands China encourages local SME suppliers to be well prepared to respond quickly and handle the expected urgent orders flexibly.

Sands China's long-standing commitment to support local suppliers is in line with the Macau government's initiative to "Buy Local," and the partnership between Sands China and SMEs has helped spearhead an industry-wide shift toward supporting local SMEs. It creates a mutually supportive environment in which SMEs gain business and experience, while also allowing Sands China to benefit from local expertise, timely customer service, and flexible delivery.



BEIJING RESIDENTS DISAPPOINTED OLYMPICS WILL BE CLOSED EVENT

WITH just over two weeks before the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics, residents of the Chinese capital say they're disappointed at not being able to attend events because of coronavirus restrictions that have seen parts of the city placed under lockdown.

Organizers announced Monday that no tickets will be sold to the general public and only selected spectators will be allowed. Access to the famed National Stadium, known as the Bird's Nest, and indoor venues in the heart of Beijing have been sealed off.

People interviewed yesterday appeared understanding of the restrictions. Many of them could be seen skating on Beijing's frozen lakes in a sign of continuing enthusiasm for winter sports.

Because China allows no public protests or opinion polling and tightly restricts free speech, any opposition to the Games or the restrictions would be muted.

Chen Lin had planned to buy tickets for speed skating, but gave up over personal concerns about the pandemic and after it became clear that tickets would only be offered to selected spectators.

"I went to the Beijing Summer Olympic Games in 2008. It's a pity that I won't be able to watch the Games this time during the Winter Olympics," the 38-year-old said. "Of course, we can still watch the Games with live broadcast on TV and live streaming online, but it doesn't provide as strong a

AP PHOTO



sense of engagement as watching the Games on the spot."

Beijing is the first city to be awarded the right to host both the Summer and Winter Games.

Chen said the level of excitement this year was far below that of 2008, when the Games brought an outpouring of national pride.

"On the one hand, the Winter Olympics don't get as much attention as the Summer Olympics. On the other hand, there is also the pandemic. Both of them are the reasons," he said.

Retiree and amateur photographer Wang Shaolan, who volunteered at the 2008 Games, said she had been hoping to take her camera along to events in order to

"be part of this."

"But now with the closed-loop management, we won't be able to be there ourselves. That's a pity," Wang said, referring to the restrictions separating participants from the general population.

The recent appearance of the more contagious omicron variant of the coronavirus in Beijing has heightened concerns about outbreaks, although the capital reported just one new case yesterday.

Elsewhere in the country, around 20 million people are under some form of lockdown and mass testing has been ordered in entire cities where cases have been discovered.

China has largely avoided major outbreaks with lockdowns, mass testing and travel restrictions, although it continues to fight surges in several cities, including the port of Tianjin, about an hour from Beijing.

Restrictions were also tightened in the Henan province city of Anyang south of Beijing, where an additional 29 cases of local transmission were reported yesterday, out of a national total of 55.

Games organizers have already announced that no fans from outside the country will be allowed.

The Olympics begin Feb. 4, just days after the start of Lunar New Year celebrations. Athletes, offi-

cials, staff and journalists are required to enter an anti-pandemic bubble without outside contact and undergo daily testing.

As an additional precaution, Beijing will require travelers to take nucleic acid tests within 72 hours of entering the city starting Jan. 22. Schools in Beijing have also closed early and moved classes online ahead of the winter holidays.

Along with coronavirus worries, the Games have been beset by political controversies, including a decision by the U.S. and its close allies not to send dignitaries in protest over China's treatment of its Muslim Uyghur minority and other human rights abuses.

On Tuesday, athletes were urged by human rights activists to avoid criticizing China because they could be prosecuted.

The International Olympic Committee has said athletes will have freedom of speech when speaking to journalists or posting on social media. However, the Olympic Charter rule that prohibits political protests at medal ceremonies also requires "applicable public law" to be followed.

The IOC has not responded to requests in recent days to clarify how Chinese law could apply at the Games.

Asked about the free speech issues at the Olympics, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said that China understood the IOC banned athletes from political protests.

"I would like to reiterate that China welcomes athletes from all countries to participate in the Beijing Winter Olympic Games and will ensure their safety and convenience," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

China condemns plans by Slovenia to upgrade Taiwan ties

CHINA yesterday condemned plans by Slovenia to upgrade relations with self-governing Taiwan, a move likely to spark diplomatic and economic retaliation against the tiny Central European country.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said China was "shocked by this and strongly opposed to it," but gave no immediate details on how Beijing would respond.

"It is a dangerous statement made by the Slovenian leader that overtly challenges the one-China principle and supports Taiwan independence," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing, referring to comments Monday by Slovenia's Prime Minister Janez Jansa.

AP PHOTO



Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian during a press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing yesterday

"No one should underestimate the strong determination, firm will and strong ability of the Chinese people to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity," Zhao said.

Slovenia follows Lithuania's

move allowing Taiwan to open a representative office in its capital under the name "Taiwan," rather than "Chinese Taipei" in a break with diplomatic convention.

American and Lithuania

nian officials say China has blocked imports from the northern European country since the Taiwanese government was allowed to open a trade office there under the name Taiwan.

The U.S. and most other governments, including Lithuania, have diplomatic relations only with Beijing but maintain commercial and informal political ties with Taiwan's democratically elected government. Most governments acquiesce to Chinese pressure by requiring Taiwanese entities to operate under the name Chinese Taipei.

Chinese pressure has reduced the number of Taiwan's formal diplomatic allies to just 14.

Beijing retaliated for Lithuania's move by expelling

the Lithuanian ambassador, and Lithuania has since closed its embassy in Beijing.

Taiwan responded by setting up a \$1 billion credit program aimed at funding projects by Lithuanian and Taiwanese companies, as well as creating a \$200 million investment fund to help the Lithuanian economy.

Both Lithuania and Slovenia are members of the European Union, which has taken an increasingly forceful stance against aggressive political and economic moves by Beijing. Both are also members of NATO and plan to set up their own representative offices in Taiwan, a close U.S. ally.

In his comments, Jansa

said ties with Taiwan would not include an exchange of ambassadors but would be at the same level as many of EU nations maintain with the island.

Referring to Lithuania, he said it was "terrifying" how China was attempting to isolate small European nations, saying that would harm Beijing's interests in the long term.

In Taipei, government spokeswoman Joanne Ou on Tuesday praised Jansa as a "friend of Taiwan for many years" who has visited on multiple occasions.

"We would like to make a positive response to the establishment of representative offices, express a high degree of welcome and our sincere thanks," Ou told reporters. **MDT/AP**

TONGA

Three smaller islands badly damaged by tsunami

MOUSSA MOUSSA,
SYDNEY

THREE of Tonga's smaller islands suffered serious damage from tsunami waves, officials and the Red Cross said yesterday, as a wider picture begins to emerge of the destruction caused by the eruption of an undersea volcano near the Pacific archipelago nation.

Communications have been down throughout Tonga since the eruption on Saturday, but a ship made it to the outlying islands of Nomuka, Mango and Fonoifua yesterday, and reported back that few homes remain standing after settlements were hit with 15-meter-high waves, said Katie Greenwood, the head of delegation in the Pacific for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which had two people aboard the vessel to help assess the damage.

"Very unfortunate information has come to light overnight about the three islands that we were really worried about — that they have all suffered devastating consequences as an effect of these incoming waves," she told The Associated Press in an interview from Fiji. "Most of the structures and dwellings on those islands have been completely destroyed."

It is not clear yet what assistance Tonga needs or wants from the international community, and complicating matters is the country's concern over the possible spread of COVID-19, which it has effectively kept outside its borders except for one case reported in a traveler from New Zealand in October.

Tonga is hoping for "almost contactless disaster relief" as a precaution, Greenwood said, acknowledging that this would complicate efforts but is also understandable amid the pandemic.

"They really don't want to exchange one disaster for another," she said.

Some 60% of Tonga's 106,000 people have already received two doses of a



This satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies shows a general view of Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai volcano in Tonga on Tuesday

COVID vaccine, and nearly 70% have received at least one dose, according to Our World in Data.

In anticipation of the country's needs, New Zealand has already sent two ships. One is carrying 250,000 liters of water and a desalination plant with the capacity to produce 70,000 more liters per day, and another is bringing a survey and diving team to help assess the damage to shipping channels, ports and wharf infrastructure.

They're expected to take three to four days to arrive, though one estimate was that they could be there as early as Friday, said Peeni Henare, New Zealand's defense minister.

"We don't know what the shipping lanes look like, and so we want to, of course, proceed with a bit of caution as we get closer to the Tongan islands," he said.

New Zealand Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said the teams en route would also be available to help if needed with the evacuation of the approximately 150 people who live on the devastated outlying islands.

"We stand ready to assist where it is useful to the government of Tonga, and where they are satisfied with COVID protocols," she said.

Australia is also preparing to send aid by air and ship, and Prime Minister

Scott Morrison said he expected to talk with his counterpart in Tonga later yesterday to better understand what is needed.

"Our defense forces have stood up their operation and are deploying as necessary and directed," he said. "So we feel deeply for our family in Tonga."

The volcano coated the main island with a 2-centimeter layer of ash, which has rendered the 2.6-kilometer (1.6 miles) runway at Fua'amotu International Airport unusable.

Volunteers have been working to sweep ash away to clear a path for aid planes to land, and there was hope it may be ready as early as Thursday.

Mahuta said the runway was not thought to be damaged beneath the ash, but that they would not know for sure until it was all cleared.

A New Zealand reconnaissance aircraft has already flown over the impacted islands and provided the data to Tonga's government.

Communications have been severely restricted because the single underwater fiber-optic cable that connects Tonga to the rest of the world was likely severed in the eruption. The company that owns the cable said the repairs could take weeks.

Satellite images captured the spectacular eruption of the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai volcano,

with a plume of ash, steam and gas rising like a giant mushroom above the South Pacific. The volcano is located about 64 kilometers

(40 miles) north of Tonga's capital, Nuku'alofa.

The heavy amount of ash in the air has also meant that satellite communica-

tions have been sporadic but they are improving, Greenwood said.

So far, it seems the country has avoided the widespread devastation that many initially feared.

The government said Tuesday it has confirmed three deaths — two local residents and a British woman — though it has cautioned the toll is expected to rise as more reports come in from outlying areas.

On Tonga's main island of Tongatapu, perhaps the biggest problem is the ash that has transformed it into a gray moonscape, contaminating the rainwater that people normally rely on to drink.

Greenwood said people had been warned in advance to protect their water supplies, and that clean drinking water remained the top need.

"Water is definitely, 100 percent, the top priority at this point in time, along with shelter needs," she said.

Meantime, Tonga's Red Cross, which has about 20 people and 100 trained volunteers, is already distributing shelter kits and other supplies, she said. **MDT/AP**

AD



FRANCE MACAU
Chamber of Commerce
法國澳門工商會

FMCC champions Breakfast Meetings in town with key speakers sharing their views on current business affairs. Our monthly events take place every last Wednesday of the month at Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16. Open to all!

Hengqin: Seize the Opportunity. Now or Later?
Speaker: Mr. David Cheang, Founder of AHA Brand and Head of AHA HK & Macau Youth Incubation Center

FMCC Breakfast Meeting
Wednesday, 26 January 2022



Introduction:
The Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin was officially established in September 2021. It is a new platform not only to boost Macau's economic diversification and enrich "One Country, Two Systems" for realizing the free flow of goods, human resources, capital and information between the Zone and Macau, but also to create a new home for Macau residents to live and work. Is it now the right time to start your business in Hengqin? How to start? Join us and hear Mr. David Cheang's insights on the AHA Hong Kong & Macau Youth Incubation Center and the latest policies.

Date: Wednesday, 26 January, 2022
Time: 9:00a.m. - 10:30a.m.
Venue: Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16
Baccara Ballroom, 6th floor

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af



An Emirates jetliner comes in for landing at the Dubai International Airport

Airlines worldwide rush to change flights over US 5G problem

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI

AIRLINES across the world, including the long-haul carrier Emirates, rushed yesterday to cancel or change flights heading into the U.S. over an ongoing dispute about the rollout of 5G mobile phone technology near American airports.

The issue appeared to particularly impact the Boeing 777, a long-range, wide-body aircraft used by carriers worldwide — especially Emirates. Two Japanese airlines directly named the aircraft as being particularly affected by the 5G signals as they announced cancellations and changes to their schedules.

The cancellations come even after mobile phone carriers AT&T and Verizon said they will postpone new wireless service near some U.S. airports planned for this week. The FAA has cleared a number of aircraft to fly into airports with the 5G signals, but missing from the list is the Boeing 777.

Dubai-based Emirates, a key carrier for East-West travel, announced it would halt flights to Boston, Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, Miami, Newark, New Jersey, Orlando, Florida, San Francisco and Seattle over the issue beginning yesterday.

It said it would continue flights to Los Angeles, New York and Washington.

In its announcement, Emirates cited the cancellation as necessary due to “operational concerns associated with the planned deployment of 5G mobile network services in the U.S. at certain airports.”

“We are working closely with aircraft manufacturers and the relevant authorities to alleviate operational concerns, and we hope to resume our U.S. services as soon as possible,” the state-owned airline said.

The United Arab Emirates successfully rolled out 5G coverage all around its airports without incident, like dozens of other countries. But in the U.S., the Federal Aviation Administration worries that the C-Band strand of 5G could interfere with radio altimeters.

Altimeters measure how high a plane is in the sky, a crucial piece of equipment for flying, particularly at night or in bad weather.

The FAA will allow planes with accurate, reliable altimeters to operate around high-power 5G. But planes with older altimeters will not be allowed to make landings under low-visibility conditions.

Part of the problem, according to the FAA, are the signal strength of the 5G

towers.

“Base stations in rural areas of the United States are permitted to emit at higher levels in comparison to other countries which may affect radio altimeter equipment accuracy and reliability,” the FAA said in December.

The U.S. Federal Communication Commission’s chairwoman said in a statement that the 5G “deployment can safely co-exist with aviation technologies in the United States, just as it does in other countries around the world.” However, Jessica Rosenworcel added: “It is essential that the FAA now complete this process with both care and speed.”

AT&T and Verizon spent tens of billions of dollars for C-Band spectrum in a FCC government auction last year.

Of particular concern in the 5G rollout appears to be the Boeing 777, a major workhorse for Emirates, which only flies that model and the Airbus A380 jumbo jet. Its Mideast competitor, Qatar Airways, anticipates “minor delays” on return flights from the U.S. but says otherwise its dozen U.S. routes are operating as scheduled.

Japan’s All Nippon Airways Co. Ltd. said in a statement that the FAA “has indicated that radio waves from the 5G wire-

less service may interfere with aircraft altimeters.”

“Boeing has announced flight restrictions on all airlines operating the Boeing 777 aircraft, and we have cancelled or changed the aircraft for some flights to/from the U.S. based on the announcement by Boeing,” ANA said. It cancelled 20 flights to the U.S. over the issue to cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles and New York.

Japan Airlines Co. Ltd. similarly said that it had been informed that 5G signals “may interfere with the radio altimeter installed on the Boeing 777.”

“We will refrain from using this model on the continental United States line until we can confirm its safety and we regret to inform you that we will cancel the flight for which the aircraft cannot be changed to the Boeing 787,” the airline said. Eight of its flights were affected yesterday — three passenger trips and five for cargo.

Chicago-based Boeing Co. did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Air India also announced on Twitter it would cancel flights to Chicago, Newark, New York and San Francisco “due to deployment of the 5G communications” equipment. It said it would try to use other aircraft on U.S. routes as well.

Korean Air, South Korea’s biggest airline, switched four passenger planes from Boeing 777s to 787s and two cargo planes from 747-8s to 747-400s overnight, and will continue to avoid operating 777s and 747-8s at affected U.S. airports, spokeswoman Jill Chung said.

Hong Kong’s Cathay Pacific said it is deploying different types of airplanes where necessary to the affected airports and that its flights to the United States have not been affected so far. Taiwan’s EVA Air also said it had taken “contingency measures to ensure flight safety,” without elaborating.

German airline Lufthansa said it had substituted Boeing 747-400 aircraft instead of 747-800s on three flights from Frankfurt to Los Angeles, Chicago and San Francisco, while cancelling one connection from Frankfurt to Miami. Austrian Airlines swapped a Boeing 767 in place of a 777 for one flight from Vienna to Newark. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1961 JOHN F KENNEDY SWORN IN AS US PRESIDENT



The Democrat John F. Kennedy has been sworn in as the youngest ever elected president of the United States.

The 43-year-old Roman Catholic was inaugurated as the 35th president on a snow-covered Capitol Hill in Washington. He takes over from the oldest president in American history, General Dwight Eisenhower, who is bowing out aged 70.

The president’s Republican rival, Richard Nixon, who came a close second in the race for the White House, also attended the inauguration ceremony.

Millions watched the swearing-in of the new president on television. He chose to wear formal dress, including a top hat, for the occasion.

President Kennedy began his speech by addressing “my fellow citizens” — the term first used by President George Washington but rejected by later presidents in favour of the less formal “my fellow Americans”.

His ten-minute address appealed to Americans to unite in the fight against the common enemy of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

For the people of the world struggling against the “bonds of misery”, the president pledged, “our best efforts to help them help themselves”.

He continued: “If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”

He also appealed to the Soviet Union to begin a new quest for peace.

“Let both sides for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations,” he said.

President Kennedy closed his speech with the words: “Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.”

His words were greeted with rousing applause.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

President Kennedy was a Harvard graduate and a war hero.

He became a Democratic Congressman in 1946 and a senator in 1952. He married Jacqueline Bouvier in 1953. He ran against Richard Nixon for the White House. In September 1960 millions watched the pair battle it out in a series of television debates.

Shortly after his election, he supported a Cuban rebel attempt to overthrow the communist regime of Fidel Castro in Cuba.

It was unsuccessful and led the Russians to install nuclear weapons on Cuba in 1962 triggering what became known as the Cuban missile crisis.

The crisis was narrowly averted. In August 1963, Kennedy negotiated the first nuclear test ban treaty with the Soviet Union in what was seen as a first step towards ending the Cold War.

On 22 November 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated. He was shot in the head as he drove through Dallas, Texas on his way to a political festival.

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Investments that deal with property will pay off but could cause conflict with some family members. Make those phone calls and pay your bills. You could do extremely well in competitive sports events.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Don't let jealous friends put you down, making you insecure about your capabilities. Older relatives may make unreasonable demands. Don't let siblings put pressure on you.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Outings with relatives or good friends will provide you with stimulating conversation. You must strive to get the most important projects completed properly, rather than doling everything in a half baked way.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Relax and enjoy what you've accomplished when you're finished. You will be extremely receptive to new and progressive methods at work.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Organize your house and be sure to include the whole family in the projects you have set out to do. You may have to explain your actions to your family.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You must refrain from overspending on entertainment. You should get involved in competitive sports today. You might find added popularity with those around you today.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Don't lend or borrow. A trip to visit relatives should be rewarding. Tone down and put some of that hard earned cash into a safe, long-term investment.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Don't avoid situations that may deteriorate; try to mend them. Family trips or projects should be on your mind. Try not to say the wrong thing at the wrong time.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Don't forget to read the fine print. Children may be demanding, and entertainment could cost a lot more than you can really afford. Uncertainty about your relationship is prevalent.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Emotional disputes will only end in sorrow. Travel if it's needed to start the ball rolling. Your energetic nature and ability to initiate projects will add to your popularity.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You can write beautiful love letters today. You can make adjustments in your domestic scene today. Don't let peers distract you or push their work your way.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Avoid getting trapped in internal disputes. Outings with relatives or good friends will provide you with stimulating conversation. You may be sensitive concerning friends and their situations.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-8	3	fine
Harbin	-20	-13	fine
Tianjin	6	12	cloudy
Urumqi	5	12	cloudy
Xi'an	5	16	fine
Lhasa	-7	0	cloudy
Chengdu	11	13	rain
Chongqing	7	14	cloudy
Kunming	0	12	fine
Nanjing	6	12	fine
Shanghai	18	20	rain
Wuhan	5	13	cloudy
Hangzhou	-27	-17	fine
Taipei	0	12	fine
Guangzhou	12	16	rain
Hong Kong	14	18	cloudy
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

T	O	T	B	L	E	A	T	A	S	P	E	R
O	M	S	A	G	A	P	E	P	A	R	S	E
W	E	A	T	H	E	R	E	D	I	N	E	P
L	O	R	E	T	I	S	A	A	C			
E	A	S	T	R	E	A	U	T	A	I	D	A
R	E	N	T	H	E	A	D	M	A	N	P	U
A	B	S	C	I	S	S	A	O	S	I	E	R
P	E	N	A	L	T	Y	R	A	D	I	C	L
S	N	A	R	L	S	U	N	D	R	E	S	S
R	E	N	T	S	T	I	C	K	B	A	Y	
S	E	C	T	C	O	A	S	T	S	A	S	E
H	O	G	U	S								
A	K	I	R	A	T	I	D	A	L	W	A	V
D	E	N	S	E	L	O	N	S	R	E	C	
E	G	G	O	N	Y	U	C	C	A	M	R	T

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300	
IAM 28 387 333	
Tourism 28 333 000	
Airport 59 888 88	



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TECH

MICROSOFT BUYS GAME MAKER ACTIVISION BLIZZARD FOR ABOUT \$70B

MATT O'BRIEN

MICROSOFT is paying the enormous sum of nearly \$70 billion for Activision Blizzard, the maker of Candy Crush and Call of Duty, a deal that would immediately make it a larger video-game company than Nintendo while raising questions about the deal's possible anti-competitive effects.

The all-cash \$68.7 billion deal will turn Microsoft, maker of the Xbox gaming system, into one of the world's largest video game companies. It will also help it compete with tech rivals such as Meta, formerly Facebook, in creating immersive virtual worlds for both work and play.

If the deal survives scrutiny from U.S. and European regulators in the coming months, it could be one of the biggest tech acquisitions in history. Dell bought data-storage company EMC in 2016 for around \$60 billion.

Activision has been buffeted for months by allegations of misconduct and unequal pay. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella addressed the issue yesterday [Macau time] in a conference call with investors.

"The culture of our organization is my No. 1 priority," Nadella said, adding that "it's critical for Activision Blizzard to drive forward" on its commitments to improve its workplace culture.

Activision disclosed last year it was being investigated by the Securities and Exchange Commission over complaints of workplace discrimination and in September settled claims brought by U.S. workforce discrimination regulators. California's civil rights agency sued the Santa Monica-based company in July, citing a "frat boy" culture that

AP PHOTO



had become a "breeding ground for harassment and discrimination against women."

Wall Street saw the acquisition as a big win for Activision Blizzard Inc. and its shares soared 25% in trading Tuesday, making up for losses over the past six months since California's discrimination lawsuit was filed. Shares of Microsoft slipped about 2%.

Last year, Microsoft spent \$7.5 billion to acquire ZeniMax Media, the parent company of video game publisher Bethesda Softworks, which is behind popular video games The Elder Scrolls, Doom and Fallout. Microsoft's properties also include the hit game Minecraft after it bought Swedish game studio Mojang for \$2.5 billion in 2014.

The Redmond, Washington, tech giant said the latest acquisitions will help beef up its Xbox Game Pass game subscription service while also accelerating its ambitions for the metaverse, a collection of virtual worlds en-

visioned as a next generation of the internet. While Xbox already has its own game-making studio, the prospect of Microsoft controlling so much game content raised questions about whether the company could restrict Activision games from competing consoles, although Nadella promised the deal would help people play games "wherever, whenever and however they want."

The acquisition would push Microsoft past Nintendo as the third-largest video game company by global revenue, behind Playstation-maker Sony and Chinese tech giant Tencent, according to Wedbush Securities analyst Daniel Ives.

"Microsoft needed to do an aggressive deal given their streaming ambitions and metaverse strategy," Ives said. "They're the only game in town that can do a deal of this size with the other tech stalwarts under massive tech scrutiny."

Meta, Google, Amazon and Apple have all attracted increa-

sing attention from antitrust regulators in the U.S. and Europe, but the Activision deal is so big that it will also likely put Microsoft into the regulatory spotlight, Ives said. Microsoft is already facing delays in its planned \$16 billion acquisition of Massachusetts speech recognition company Nuance because of an investigation by British antitrust regulators.

Microsoft is able to make such a big all-cash purchase of Activision because of its success as a cloud computing provider. But after years of focusing on shoring up its business clients and products such as the Office suite of email and other work tools, Ives said Microsoft's failed 2020 attempt to acquire social media platform TikTok may have "really whet the appetite for Nadella to do a big consumer acquisition."

Pushback against the deal was immediate from consumer advocacy groups.

"No way should the Federal Trade Commission and the U.S.

Department of Justice permit this merger to proceed," said a statement from Alex Harman, competition policy advocate for Public Citizen. "If Microsoft wants to bet on the 'metaverse,' it should invest in new technology, not swallow up a competitor."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki had no comment on Microsoft's announcement at her briefing, but emphasized the Biden administration's recent moves to strengthen enforcement against illegal and anti-competitive mergers.

Started in 1979 by former Atari Inc. employees, Activision has created or acquired many of the most popular video games, from Pitfall in the 1980s to Guitar Hero and the World of Warcraft franchise. Bobby Kotick, 59, has been CEO since 1991.

Microsoft said it expects the deal to close in its 2023 fiscal year, which starts in July. It said Kotick will continue to serve as CEO. After the deal closes, the Activision business unit would then report to Phil Spencer, who has led Microsoft's Xbox division and will now serve as CEO of Microsoft Gaming.

Kotick survived a number of executive shakeups at Activision last year after a series of controversies stemming from allegations of a toxic workplace culture. A shareholder lawsuit in August said the company failed to disclose to investors that it was being investigated in California and that it had workplace culture issues that could result in legal problems.

Activision reached a deal in September with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to settle claims that followed a nearly three-year investigation. The agency said Activision failed to take effective action after employees complained about sexual harassment, discriminated against pregnant employees and retaliated against employees who spoke out, including by firing them. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Conrad Macao offers CNY hotel package



Conrad Macao will present Chinese New Year Hotel Package from today until Feb. 28 as part of its Chinese New Year promotions for the Year of the Tiger.

Offering a true one-stop holiday experience, the package includes: two nights' accommodation in a Deluxe Room; a three-course dessert tasting journey with magical mocktails for two people at the British-themed Churchill's Table restaurant; a Conrad bear; and MOP500 in Resort Vouchers.

During this festive season, guests who stay at the hotel after Jan. 31, 2022 will receive an exclusive 2022 limited edition Conrad Chinese New Year Bear and Duck.

The designs are inspired by the striking fan pattern flooring at The

Londoner Macao which welcomes guests as they explore Macao's newest British-themed landmark. The distinctive fan design is adopted from the grand staircase at Tate Britain art galleries in London, and has been commonly used in flooring patterns in various forms for centuries.

For guests who wish to rejuvenate and pamper both the mind and the body ahead of the holiday celebrations, Bodhi Spa at Conrad Macao offers two exclusive treatments available from now until Feb. 28. SoapSmith Winter Retreat treatment includes a detoxifying steam and bath ritual, 90-minute deep sleep massage, and 30-minute brightening vitamin C facial to round out this top-to-toe experience.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

GOLF

McIlroy to take aspects of Woods' game to improve in 2022

STEVE DOUGLAS

RORY McIlroy made it something of a ritual to write his goals for the season on the back of his boarding pass on the flight to the Middle East for his first tournament of the year.

Gone, though, are the days when he might jot down the name and number of tournaments he wanted to win.

For McIlroy, it's now about smaller objectives that are more in his control. And to see the bigger picture, he's used the player he has called his hero growing up, Tiger Woods, as a benchmark.

"Not saying that my game compares to his in any way," McIlroy said yesterday of Woods, who he now regards as a close friend, "but there are certainly aspects of what he did so well in the past that I would obviously love to put into my game."

To that end, McIlroy thinks he needs to be "more of a measured



Rory McIlroy, of Northern Ireland

and a controlled golfer."

So, heading into his opening event of 2022 at the Abu Dhabi Championship starting Thursday, expect to see the four-time major champion be less aggressive off the tee, even if that potentially robs him of one of his best attributes — his driving distance.

"I'll certainly pick and choose

my spots where I can take advantage of the driver and hit it, but the best player of the last 30 years, Tiger, he picked and chose where he hit driver, and he played a very, very controlled game," McIlroy said. "It didn't work out too badly for him."

McIlroy had the second longest average drive on the PGA

Tour in 2021 — behind Bryson DeChambeau — but was below the average for fairways hit, tied in 145th place out of about 200 players.

His driving will certainly be tested at the Yas Links this week, with the fairways tight and the wind expected to pick up heading into the weekend.

For McIlroy and every other player, it will be a new experience this week with the tournament — a Rolex Series event and one of the most prestigious on the European tour — having been staged at the nearby Abu Dhabi Golf Club until this year.

The Northern Irishman had a solid record there — four runner-up finishes and four more top-three finishes in his 11 appearances — without ever getting over the line. Last year, he led after 54 holes only to shoot a final-round 72 and finish five strokes behind winner Tyrrell Hatton.

"Maybe this is what's needed to end up winning this thing at the end, a change of golf course," he said. "It always been a great place to start the year for me. I've always played pretty well and hopefully I can continue that trend this week."

Hatton, an Englishman ranked No. 22, is back to defend his title but said yesterday he has been struggling to get motivated to practice.

"I'm not really that focussed whilst I'm there. It can be a little bit of a waste of time," Hatton said. "Going through the motions of almost what I do when I warm up before I go and play, just kind of go through every other club in the bag and that's kind of me done on the range. Generally that's how I've been for a long time." **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**ACT FOR THE BEST,
 PREPARE FOR THE
 WORST**

Four days into the official annual Spring Festival transport season, which started on Monday and will last until Feb 25, and two weeks to go before lunar New Year's Eve, the highly transmissible Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus, in tandem with the Delta strain, is dampening the festive atmosphere of the year's most important holiday.

Since the initial curb on domestic travels following the COVID-19 outbreak in January 2020, this will be the third Spring Festival to be disrupted by pandemic containment restrictions. Many people working away from home may have canceled Spring Festival family reunions in the past two years due to rigid restraints on holiday travel. Chances are they may have to do so for a third time.

Following the Omicron discovery on home soil, national and local public health authorities have issued travel alerts for the Spring Festival holiday, which, like the past two holiday seasons, generally urge people to avoid cross-region trips and celebrate the lunar New Year wherever they are. Considering Omicron has spread to six provinces and nine localities in 10 days following its detection in Tianjin, such vigilance and precaution are understandable.

Yet some local authorities are obviously going too far, by wantonly erecting artificial obstacles against the spirit of rule of law. The ongoing infections in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, have been a costly reminder of the virus' dangerous potential to affect entire communities, from neighborhoods to cities of dozens of millions.

To discourage cross-region travel, for instance, some localities have significantly widened the scope of compulsory quarantine. Specifically, those whose electronic itinerary card carries a star, indicating his or her itinerary in the previous 14 days includes a city with a high- or medium-risk community, may face compulsory quarantine when they travel across regions.

Having been to an area that includes a high- or medium-risk place doesn't equate to physically being in a risk area. The star mark is only a reference for further verification, and doesn't mean the bearer's own health status is problematic.

A dozen central government agencies have issued a joint directive meant to prevent local authorities from unnecessarily restraining holiday travel. Considering the pressure on local authorities for pandemic control, we can only hope they will be as sensible in implementing prevention and control measures. But should they cross the line and do things that are not legally permissible, they should be held accountable.

Given the notoriously high transmissibility of the new variant, not only localities where Omicron cases have been identified, but actually all local authorities have raised their alarm levels. But they should not resort to a one-means-suits-all approach for the sake of convenience. They need to be prepared, not over-zealous.

**UK'S JOHNSON FACES PARLIAMENT
 AS OUSTER BID GATHERS STEAM**

**THE
 BUZZ**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson faces a grilling from opponents in Parliament today [Macau time] — and a more worrying threat from his own party's restive lawmakers, dozens of whom are plotting to oust him over a string of lockdown-flouting government parties.

Conservative legislators are judging whether to trigger a no-confidence vote in Johnson amid public anger over the "partygate" scandal. It's a stunning reversal of fortune for a politician who just over two years ago led the Conservatives to their biggest election victory in almost 40 years.

Johnson and loyal ministers were using a mix of pressure

and promises in an effort to bring rebels back into line before they submit letters to a party committee calling for a vote of no confidence.

Under Conservative Party rules, a no-confidence vote in the party's leader can be triggered if 54 party lawmakers write letters to a party official demanding it.

So far only a handful of Conservative members of Parliament have openly called for Johnson to quit, though several dozen are believed to have submitted letters, including some legislators elected as part of a Johnson-led landslide in December 2019.

AP PHOTO



Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla

**PFIZER CHIEF ALBERT
 BOURLA WINS \$1 MILLION
 GENESIS PRIZE**

**JOSEF FEDERMAN,
 JERUSALEM**

ALBERT Bourla, chairman and chief executive of global pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc., was awarded yesterday the prestigious Genesis Prize for his efforts in leading the development of a COVID-19 vaccine.

The \$1 million award is granted each year to a person for their professional achievements, contributions to humanity and commitment to Jewish values. The Genesis Prize Foundation said Bourla had received the largest number of votes in an online campaign in which some 200,000 people in 71 countries participated.

It commended him for his "leadership, determination, and especially for his willingness to assume great risks." It cited Pfizer's decision to turn down U.S. government funding early in the pandemic, a decision that helped the company reduce bureaucracy and expedite development of the vaccine.

Its partner, BioNTech, received funding from the German government, and Pfizer later signed a large supply contract with the United States. The strategy put Pfizer at the forefront of global efforts to fight the coronavirus, with its vaccine the first to be authorized

for use in the U.S. and Europe.

The Greek-born Bourla, the son of Holocaust survivors, plans to donate his prize to projects aimed at preserving the memory of Holocaust victims, especially in Greece, the foundation said. Bourla's parents were among the few survivors of Thessaloniki's Jewish community, which was all but wiped out by the Nazis during World War II.

In a statement issued by the foundation, Bourla said he was accepting the prize "humbly and on behalf of all my Pfizer colleagues who answered the urgent call of history."

"I was brought up in a Jewish family who believed that each of us is only as strong as the bonds of our community; and that we are all called upon by God to repair the world," he said.

Pfizer's vaccine was the first to win U.S. approval for emergency use in December 2020, and Israel quickly became one of the first countries to inoculate its population with the vaccine. It later struck a deal with the drug maker to exchange vast troves of data with the company in exchange for continued supplies of what was then a hard-to-get vaccine.

The deal helped turn Israel into an early global leader in the fight against COVID-19 and has provided

valuable data for researchers — though it also was criticized by some on privacy grounds and for shining a light on disparities in access to vaccines between rich and poor countries.

Bourla joins a list of business leaders, artists and entertainers to win the prize. Last year's winner was Hollywood mogul Steven Spielberg.

Previous winners have included businessman and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, actor Michael Douglas, violinist Itzhak Perlman, sculptor Sir Anish Kapoor, actress Natalie Portman; New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft and former Soviet political prisoner Natan Sharansky.

In 2018, Portman snubbed the prize ceremony because she did not want to appear to be endorsing then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The same year, the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was granted a special lifetime achievement award.

The prize is usually awarded in Jerusalem each June at a dinner attended by Israel's prime minister. But the ceremony has been called off the past two years due to the pandemic.

Bourla said he hopes to travel to Jerusalem this summer for the event. **MDT/AP**

Japan Tokyo and a dozen other areas in Japan will face new COVID-19 restrictions effective Friday, with local leaders shortening hours for restaurants, as omicron cases hit a record high in the capital. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced that the areas will be placed under a three-week restraint through Feb. 13 following endorsement by experts and the parliament.

AP PHOTO



Russia is sending an unspecified number of troops from the country's far east to Belarus for major war games, officials said yesterday [Macau time], a deployment that will further beef up Russian military presence near Ukraine amid Western fears of a planned invasion. Amid the soaring tensions, the White House warned that Russia could attack its neighbor at "any point," while the U.K. delivered a batch of anti-tank weapons to Ukraine.

Germany New Chancellor Olaf Scholz called yesterday for a "paradigm shift" in the way the world approaches climate policy, saying his country would leverage its presidency of the Group of Seven industrial nations this year to push for standards to fight global warming. Discussions on energy use and ways to fight climate change have been a key theme this week at the World Economic Forum's virtual meeting known as the "Davos Agenda".

AP PHOTO



Norway Anders Behring Breivik (pictured), the Norwegian far-right fanatic who killed 77 people in bomb-and-gun massacres in 2011, argued yesterday [Macau time] for an early release from prison, telling a parole judge he had renounced violence even as he professed white supremacist views and flashed Nazi salutes. Breivik, 42, is serving Norway's maximum 21-year sentence for setting off a bomb in Oslo's government district and carrying out a shooting massacre at a summer camp for left-wing youth activists. Under Norwegian law, he is eligible for his first parole hearing after 10 years in prison.