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**A TOTAL OF 260 MILLION PASSENGER TRIPS WERE MADE DURING THE FIRST 10 DAYS OF CHINA'S SPRING FESTIVAL TRAVEL RUSH IN 2022**

▲ P6

**JUNKET CUSTOMERS TO 'RESURRECT' IN DIFFERENT SEGMENTS: GOLDSTEIN**

▲ P2

**BEIJING 2022 CHINA INVESTS BIG ON OLYMPICS WITH LONGER-TERM GOAL**

▲ P13



**South Korea's** top infectious disease expert defended the move to expand the use of rapid testing despite accuracy concerns, as the country broke its daily coronavirus record for the third straight day. The 14,518 confirmed new cases yesterday were 1,500 more than Wednesday and about double the cases reported on Monday, illustrating a tidal wave of infections driven by the highly contagious omicron variant.



**Thailand** An aircraft from a company specializing in recoveries from oil spills arrived yesterday from Singapore to join an urgent effort to clean up an oil slick before it could hit beaches in eastern Thailand. The C-130 joined other planes, ships and a helicopter deployed by the Thai navy to contain the damage from the Star Petroleum Refining Public Company's oil that leaked Tuesday night from a mooring station in the Gulf of Thailand.

**India** Tata Sons, India's oldest and largest conglomerate, has regained ownership of Air India, the country's debt-laden national carrier. Tata pioneered commercial aviation in India when it launched the airline in 1932. It was taken over by the government in 1953. Chairman N. Chandrasekaran met with Prime Minister Modi yesterday ahead of a meeting with Air India officials. In October, Tata's 180 billion rupee (\$2.4 billion) bid for the carrier prevailed over a smaller bid by India SpiceJet chief Ajay Singh.

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## Hong Kong shortens quarantine for foreign arrivals to 14 days, Macau keeps it unchanged

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## MACAU GP TO CONSIDER EV RACES IF THEY GAIN IN POPULARITY



▲ P8-9 MDT EXCLUSIVE





GAMING

# JUNKET CUSTOMERS TO 'RESURRECT' IN DIFFERENT SEGMENTS: LVS

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE customers in the junket business will resurrect in different segments and find new ways of materializing in the casino, said Rob Goldstein, chairman and CEO of Las Vegas Sands.

Speaking in an earnings call with analysts, the executive said that the business will just evolve to a different segmentation, adding the customers are here to stay.

"And it always is that way in any business. It goes back to any segment doesn't necessarily just go away because the mechanism goes away," he said.

"So we're pretty bullish that a business that was yielding 8%, 10% could be much more positively profitable as a resurrection of the segment," Goldstein added.

According to reports, junkets account for 75% of Macau's VIP gaming revenue, equating to around USD3 billion each year.

Recent data from the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau shows that the number of gambling promoter licenses in the city has decreased nearly 50% in just one year in the aftermath of the arrest of Suncity Group CEO and junket mogul, Alvin Chau.

Currently Macau has only 46 junket licensees for the current year: far fewer than the approved 85 license gaming promoters last year.

Following the release of the data, the bureau issued another statement noting that 29 other junket operators will be dealt with in accordance with the law after the parties have all the ne-

cessary documents.

Echoing similar sentiments as Goldstein, Grant Chum, senior vice president of Global Gaming Strategy, remarked that "some portion of it also dissipate and disappear [...] but that's probably the portion [of customers] that was not in the first place, that's sustainable in any event."

Chum opined that the core underlying demand will find its way into other segments over time.

Speaking on the company's opportunities in both the premium and mass customer segments amid Macau's market recovery, Goldstein disclosed that customer demand and spending in Macau have proven resilient at the premium mass level from both a gaming and retail perspective.

The parent company of Sands China expresses "great optimism" about the company's ability to perform at pre-pande-

mic levels once visitation returns.

"As the market recovers, both the Four Seasons and Londoner will provide growth opportunities. [...] We look forward to participating in the tendering process as it proceeds to fruition," he added.

## INVESTMENT FOR NEW LICENSE BIDDING

Gaming operators in the city are slated to prepare for the new license bidding as the current concession expiry will be on June 26, a deadline which officials have said will "likely be extended."

For Las Vegas Sands, there is no concrete dollar amount or specific approach in mind at this time. However, "We continue to be very bullish on the [Macau] market despite the last 24 difficult months. We like what we're seeing, the retendering process," said Goldstein.

According to the gaming law amendment draft, the number of new casino operators allowed to operate in Macau will remain at six concessionaires. However, the operating period will be halved to 10 years, compared to the current 20 years.

## SANDS CHINA LTD REPORTS NET LOSS OF USD245 MILLION IN Q4 2021

**TOTAL** net revenues for Sands China Ltd. decreased 4.3%, compared to the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2020, to USD643 million for the Q4 of 2021. Net loss for the gaming operator was USD245 million for the Q4 of last year, compared to USD246 million in the same period in 2020.

Full year 2021 total net revenues for SCL increased 70.4%, compared to the full year 2020, to USD2.87 billion. Net loss for the gaming operator was USD1.05 billion in 2021, compared to US\$1.52 billion

in 2020. For the full year 2021, the firm's adjusted property EBITDA was USD338 million, compared to an adjusted property EBITDA loss of USD431 million for the full year 2020.

Robert G. Goldstein, chairman and CEO of Las Vegas Sands, said, "We remain confident in the eventual recovery in travel and tourism spending across our markets and enthusiastic about the opportunity to welcome more guests back to our properties in 2022 and the years ahead."

# 29 junkets still awaiting license

LYNZY VALLES

**29** gaming promoters are still awaiting their license after the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) carried out the verification of 75 junket operators.

This comes after it was announced that the number of gambling promoter licenses in the city has decreased by nearly 50% in the space of just one year in the aftermath of the arrest of Suncity Group CEO and junket mogul, Alvin Chau.

Currently, Macau has only 46 junket licensees for the current year: far fewer than the approved 85 license gaming promoters in 2020.

This year's figure is only a fraction of the 235 licensed junket operators re-

corded in 2013.

Major junket brands such as Tak Chun, Meg-Star International and Golden Group remain in operation.

According to DICJ, the 29 junkets awaiting license will be dealt with in ac-

cordance with the law after the parties have all the necessary documents.

This implies that the junkets will have to provide documents in accordance with legal requirements.

Meanwhile, in a draft of the recently announced gaming law amendment, these gaming promoters may continue to operate

in the local gaming industry, provided they are attached to a single concessionaire.

It is stipulated that licensed junket operators may not pass on any of their activities and responsibilities to third parties to act on their behalf, and they are forbidden from exclusively using special areas of the casinos (VIP rooms).

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COVID-19

# Airport workers under close-loop management may swap positions

ANTHONY LAM

**O**N the humaneness of allowing some airport staff just seven days per month to spend time with families, a healthcare official has suggested they may be able to swap between positions to avoid such a cycle being constant.

The Macau International Airport Co. Ltd. announced yesterday that, in compliance with government's virus containment guidelines, staff working in "high-risk" positions will be required to work 14 days in a row, spend seven days in central quarantine and then spend another seven days at home.

The airport hangar has been converted to a makeshift hostel to accommodate these staff members.

A reporter scrutinized the requirement and questioned public doctor Leong Iek Hou, division head for prevention and control of contagious disease of the Cen-



tre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about the humaneness of the arrangement.

"Hearing you detailing the arrangement prompted me to think about the humaneness," Leong said. She thanked these staff for their contribution and selflessness for being able to see their families for only seven days a month, let alone the fact that Lunar New Year is a period celebrating family reunion.

The public health doctor elaborated, saying that the staff can take rotations so that they would not need to fall into the cycle unendingly. Therefore, they would have more time to see their families.

### VISUALLY IMPAIRED VIRTUALLY GROUNDED

Recently, a local news outlet reported on complaints made by the visually impaired, who could

not use footprint recording functions. Footprint recording is now made mandatory by the government for entrance to public venues, such as parks.

Not being able to scan QR codes implies that the visually impaired are virtually grounded.

"We hope to make a simplified version of the [Macao Health Code] app which elders and the physically impaired will find [...] easier to use," Leong said. "However, those with special needs will still need our help to use the app."

She hinted that it is impossible to completely satisfy the needs of all people.

She was also asked how the needy can have access to the printed version of the health code, as many entities that provide this service will be off during the Lunar New Year holidays.

The public health doctor said that many entities would still operate such a service during the holiday period, but did not speci-

fy which.

On the take-up of the Macao Health Code app, Leong boasted the rising download rate, downplaying the fact that the government requires entrants to public venues to record their footprints using the app. It means that without the app, many people, especially those whose jobs rely greatly on visiting public venues, such as post offices, cannot even work without the app.

### HONG KONG TO SHORTEN QUARANTINE TO TWO WEEKS

Yesterday afternoon, Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam told a press conference that the city will reduce the quarantine period for foreign entrants to 14 days. The new measure will take effect on February 5.

Lam justified the decision by citing the much shorter incubation period of the Omicron variant.

However, the city's social distancing requirements will be retained until February 17.

As of yesterday, Macau has no plan to follow suit. Leong was questioned on the matter at the regular local health press briefing, where the public health doctor responded that the local authority feared there would be loopholes letting in other variants – those with a longer incubation period.

AD

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### ZAPE, SAI VAN TO UNDERGO TRAFFIC CONTROL ON FEB 3

As part of the government's plan to hold a float parade on February 3, certain roads on ZAPE and Sai Van will be subject to traffic control, which will lead to detours or stop suspensions affecting 11 bus routes, namely No. 3A, 5, 8, 9A, 10A, 12, 18, 18B, 23, 26 and 32. Details can be obtained on the operators' websites. Meanwhile, parking spaces near Sai Van Lake Square will be suspended for 26 hours from 9 p.m. February 2. Suspended or limited traffic measures will be levied along the avenue from Macau Tower to the Macao Science Center.

### EXEMPTIONS WITHIN ELEVATOR BILL WORRY LAWMAKERS

A bill aiming to codify supervision for elevators and escalators has raised concerns in a parliamentary committee, as lawmakers worry that it might cause complications when such facilities located in residential buildings of heights between 9 and 20.5 meters are proposed to enjoy exemptions under the new bill. Exemptions are also proposed for such facilities located in construction sites. Moreover, the bill has no stipulations on the authorities who are authorized to suspend operations of malfunctioned facilities. The range of the proposed fines is also considered very wide. Committee members are awaiting explanations from the government.

# POLICE CONFIDENT IN PEDESTRIAN CONTROL DURING LUNAR NEW YEAR PERIOD

**W**HEN questioned about healthcare measures during the Lunar New Year period, when many people will visit temples and churches to take part in religious rituals, Ma Chio Hong, division head for operation and communications of the Public Security Police Force (PSP), stressed that the police will follow existing guidelines to ensure public order.

Ma added that the authority will adjust measures in proportion to actual crowdedness. Mass media channels will also be used to reflect the size of the actual crowd. As the authority expects most residents will remain in Macau during the period, the police have coordinated temples to provide sufficient space for worshippers to conduct health measures.

The nursery in Taipa and the elderly home in Areia Preta, both previously identified with close contacts with a mainland Covid-19 patient, have concluded their cordon period. The former will resume operations



tomorrow, while the latter will once again accept visitors.

Earlier this week, the Macao Government Tourism Office unveiled that it will present the "2022 Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Tiger" at the central and northern districts on the third day (February 3) and twelfth day (February 12) of Lunar New Year respectively to celebrate the Spring Festival

with residents and visitors under compliance with the pandemic prevention measures.

At 8 p.m. on the third night of Lunar New Year, 14 floats will join 22 mainland and local performance teams to set off from Sai Van Lake Square until the destination at Macao Science Center. From February 12 at 8 p.m., the floats will set off from Rua Norte do Patane and pass

through Av. do Conselheiro Borja, Estrada do Arco, Estrada da Areia Preta, Avenida de Veneslau de Morais, Rua Quatro do Bairro da Areia Preta, Avenida da Longevidade, Rua do Mercado de Iao Hon until the destination at Iao Hon Market Garden. Stage performances will take place at Iao Hon Market Garden from 8:15 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

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Valentine's Pastries at Anytime and Pastry Bar in MGM COTAI & MGM MACAU

# Romantic Rendezvous

Valentine's Day is just around the corner. Looking for unique date ideas to please your significant other? Look no further, treat your other half to a romantic outing for two at **MGM**. This year, **MGM** plays cupid by curating the love-is-in-the-air culinary experience for all lovebirds out there. From February 12 to 14, we have planned a selection of Valentine's dining specials, features decadent set menus, Teppanyaki, buffet, and wine pairing for a memorable date night with your loved ones.



Aux Beaux Arts in MGM MACAU

February is always the time of the year when couples all over the city search for the perfect restaurant to impress their significant other. **Aux Beaux Arts** in **MGM MACAU** have become the ideal place, with the hearty French cuisine. Splurge on a love-is-all-around menu in the dreamy brasserie, serving "Alaska King Crab - Seaweed Gelatin, Vichyssoise, Imperial Caviar", "Périgueux - Milk-Fed Veal Tenderloin, Morels, Parsnip" and "Pink Delight - Rose, Raspberry, Champagne", price from \$788\* per person. To spice things

up, top it off with a choice of wine pairing at \$380\* per person. Or elevate the experience and enchant your chérie, with our one-of-a-kind wine cellar opulent dinner, featuring a prestigious setting with a multi award-winning wine list.

Why not make the most out of this occasion and pamper your beloved at **Grill 58** in **MGM COTAI**? The top fine dining experience with the finest ingredients that creates luxurious repertoire dishes, begin the evening with "Hamachi Katsu - Ginger-Chili Emulsion, Ossetra Caviar, Shaved Fennel" to set the mood, then the classic "Dry-Aged Duck Duo - Grilled and Tamarind Glazed Breast, Crispy Leg, Sweet Potato", and a pre-dessert "Lychee, Rose, Raspberry, Sesame", to name a few, priced from \$788\* per person and paired with wine at \$380\* per person.

Or for a personalized experience, our chefs will prepare the exclusive *Teppanyaki Escapades "Crustacean"* at our live station. Commences with the palate-pleasing seafood courses loaded with "Botan Ebi, Soba Crepe, Caviar, Sea Urchin Sabayon", "Mixed Crustacean Donabe", "Souffle Pancake, Azuki Bean, Japanese Strawberry", and more to sweeten your night, priced from \$2,388\* per person. To complete the sumptuous dinner with beverage pairing at \$2,888\* per person, and what's best making the other half swooning over your romantic plans? Stargaze under *The Spectacle* with fabulous lights and encounter our lovey-dovey soaring penguins in the air of the most magical winter scenery you have seen. Be each other's penguin and stay together till the end of time.



Sea Odyssey at the Spectacle in MGM COTAI

If you are looking for something a little bit extravagant to pamper not only your sweetheart, but your little ones as well, spoil them with 'Valentine's Day Dinner Buffet' at **Coast** in **MGM COTAI** or at **Rossio** in **MGM MACAU** for a starry night view and observing the atrium at *The Grande Praça*. The delightful feast comes with a 'Rotisserie Carving Station', an array of hot chafing, fresh seafood, and a station of pastries to entice all palates, priced at \$528 per adult and \$268 per child. Spend an evening with your loved one with alluring privileges at **MGM**.

To end the night, take home our exquisite 'Valentine's Pastries' at **Anytime** in **MGM COTAI** and **Pastry Bar** in **MGM MACAU**, to continue the sweetness and romance with that special one of yours!

**For enquiries and reservations, please call (853) 8802 3888 or visit www.mgm.mo**  
\*Price is MOP and subject to 10% service charge



Valentine's Set Dinner at Aux Beaux Arts in MGM MACAU



Valentine's Set Dinner at Grill 58 in MGM COTAI



Valentine's Teppanyaki Escapades "Crustacean" at Grill 58 in MGM COTAI





## 50% HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATE IN 2021

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE average occupancy rate of hotel rooms was 50.0% for the whole year of 2021, up by 21.4 percentage points year-on-year, data from the Statistics and Census Service shows.

The number of guests of

hotels and guesthouses surged by 71.0% year-on-year to 6,624,000. Mainland guests leapt by 94.9% to 5,380,000 (81.2% of the total), whereas local guests rose by 41.7% to 892,000 (13.5% of the total).

In 2021, the number of local tour visitors soared by 112.2%

year-on-year to 40,000. Outbound residents using the services of travel agencies increased by 19.8% year-on-year to 150,000, and 98.0% of them visited mainland China.

Recent data shows that annual visitor arrivals rose by 30.7% year-on-year to

7,705,943 in 2021, a figure that remains far below pre-pandemic numbers, yet within the expectations of the tourism bureau.

Although the numbers represent a decline of over 80% compared to 2019, last year's arrivals grew from around 5.9 million in 2020 – which was a devastating year for the tourism industry.

Visitors travelling under the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) (2,449,128) grew by 31.3%, while visitors from the nine Pearl River Delta cities in the Greater Bay Area (4,117,836) surged by 59.9%.

In December, the average occupancy rate of hotel rooms was 54.7%, representing month-on-month growth of 8.2 percentage points and a year-on-year rise of 1.6 percentage points.

The rate for 3-star hotels stood at 66.2%, while that of both 4-star and 5-star hotels exceeded 50%.

The number of guests of hotels and guesthouses in December rose by 12.1% year-on-year to 650,000, with mainland guests (531,000) and local guests (85,000) increasing by 7.8% and 39.6%, respectively.

Meanwhile, the city's number of available hotel rooms increased by 10.3% to 39,000.

## 260M PASSENGER TRIPS MADE IN FIRST 10 DAYS OF SPRING FESTIVAL TRAVEL RUSH

**A** total of 260 million passenger trips were made during the first 10 days of China's Spring Festival travel rush in 2022, a transport official said yesterday.

The figure was 46 percent higher than the same period of 2021, Liu Pengfei, spokesperson for the Ministry of Transport, told a press conference.

As of Wednesday, the number of railway and road trips reached 54.12 million and 196 million, respectively, while waterway and air passenger trips hit 3.88 million and 8.72 million, Liu said.

The pre-holiday passenger flow is expected to peak around Jan. 30, while return trips are likely to peak during Feb. 5 to 8 and Feb. 16 to 17, he added.

During the 40-day travel season, also known as chunyun, many Chinese people will travel to reunite with their families for the Chinese Lunar New Year, or Spring Festival, which falls on Feb. 1 this year. **MDT/XINHUA**

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

# Melco's Splendors of China program promotes patriotism among colleagues and the community

## Holistic SoC Passport program courses completed by over 80% of colleagues

**M**ELCO Resorts & Entertainment has prioritized national education and developed a vast array of programs for the purpose of creating national pride.

Splendors of China is Melco's nationalistic learning program launched in 2016. It focuses on promoting China's cultural heritage, economic policies, social systems and values among colleagues and the wider community. The program provides a historical perspective on the wonders and growth of China, from its iconic and historic achievements to its modernization and path of becoming the world's second largest economy. The program also helps generate a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and helps learners appreciate the achievements of China.

The Melco Splendors of China learning program is delivered through a systematic framework. Activities are based on four main categories including the Splendors of China Passport program, Youth & Culture, National Education Forums and In-depth Studies. It provides comprehensive knowledge about China through promoting Chinese cultural heritage, economic policies, social systems and values whilst cultivating nationalism and patriotism.

The Melco Splendors of China Passport program was launched in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China. The program includes mandatory courses on Chinese culture and history, including idioms. Elective courses



include the fine arts and cultural aspects of understanding China, including Chinese tea culture, visits to nationalistic exhibitions and Cantonese opera, to name a few. Upon completion of such activities, colleagues will be eligible for entry to a prize draw for a paid trip to Guangdong Province sponsored by the company to further experience red tourism.

In the six months since its launch, more than 80% of the Melco management team and colleagues have completed the Splendors of China Passport program's mandatory courses, with online courses receiving more than 16,500 participations. Furthermore, nearly 7,000 colleagues have actively participated in nationalistic exhibition visits under the program.

To cultivate patriotism among young people and the community, the SAR government set up a youth education base a key patriotic education venue at the Handover Gifts Museum of Macau in December 2020. In strict compliance with government epidemic prevention guidelines, Melco has organized

for as many as 7,000 colleagues and their relatives and friends to visit the "Base of the Education of Love for Motherland and for Macau for Young People" since its opening. The event was warmly received – helping visitors generate a deeper understanding of Chinese history and culture to enhance national awareness and patriotism.

Furthermore, encouraging colleagues to participate in Chinese cultural enrichment activities even during the epidemic, the Splendors of China Passport program's "Panoramic Palace Museum" virtual tour of the Forbidden City enables colleagues to

appreciate the magnificence of the palaces' furnishings the countless precious Chinese handcrafts and cultural relics. So far, the virtual tour has been attended by nearly 8,000 colleague participants.

Further to hosting the Melco Han Hero Youth Chinese Knowledge Competition, Melco has also hosted the Han Hero Chinese Knowledge Competition for colleagues in recent months. Aimed at instilling patriotism and appreciation for mainland China by strengthening colleagues' Chinese cultural knowledge, the event saw employees from eight teams in different departments take part,

with officiating guests including Mr. Yang Yi, Deputy Director of the Economic Affairs Department of Liaison Office of the Central People's Government; Ms. Irene Lou, representative of the Director of Cultural Affairs Bureau and Curator of Macau Museum; Mr. Wong Kin Mou, Head, Department of Educational Research and Planning, Education and Youth Development Bureau; and Ms. Chan Kuan Chong, President of Macau Youth Education Promotion Association being welcomed by Melco's Chief Advisor, Dr. Kent Wong.

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China, Melco and the National Conditions Education (Macau) Association co-organized the Second Melco Star Youth Talent Competition to advocate greater appreciation and understanding of Chinese culture, and performing arts, especially among youth. The competition promotes patriotism and love of Macau and the Motherland and helps local youths understand the important milestones of the Communist Party of China's 100-year history. The competition has been open to students from major primary and secondary schools, kindergartens and art institutes. Students' original Chinese performing arts projects included singing, dancing, musical instruments, bands, recitals, Cantonese opera and martial arts. Around 900 children and youth performers from 55 schools and youth associations took part in the competition through more than 140 performances. The event has been warmly received by both students and the local community.

### MELCO SPLENDORS OF CHINA NATIONALISTIC LEARNING PROGRAM

Splendors of China Passport program	Youth & Culture	National Education Forums	In-depth Studies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory Courses</li> <li>Elective Courses</li> <li>Exhibition Visits</li> <li>Visits to Events &amp; Forums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Han Hero Chinese Knowledge Competition</li> <li>Melco Star Macao Youth Talent Competition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spirits of the "Two Sessions" Sharing Sessions</li> <li>"Modern Chinese history and the Great Achievements of the Founding of the People's Republic of China" Forum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Melco Management Executives' Nationalistic Tours</li> <li>Study Tours</li> </ul>





# Macau GP to consider EV races if they gain in

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Macau Grand Prix annual event may consider including races featuring electric vehicles (EVs) if this type of racing event gains more popularity and if it is feasible for the Guia circuit to have them, the Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee (MGPOC) has told the Times.

The reply from the MGPOC comes after an inquiry from the Times on the topic following the latest developments in this field as well as the government's intentions of promoting EV use in Macau.

To the Times, the MGPOC explained that the organizers "have been in constant communications with different parties, including the FIA [Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile] and various race organizers, with regards to the organization of the Macau Grand Prix."

When considering the components of the race program, the bureau said that it takes into account the "popularity of the types of racing vehicles to residents, tourists, and motorsport fans, and the suitability and feasibility of hosting races for such types of vehicles within the capacity of the Guia Circuit."

"We are open to the idea of hosting more variety of races at the Macau Grand Prix in the future as we look to continue the long, distinguished history and to preserve the rich heritage of this prestigious event," the bureau added.

Currently, the new developments of the automobile industry and automobile racing are pushing forth the inclusion of more racing categories using EVs.

The recent addition of an FIA ETCR championship, as well as the FIA Electric GT Championship (eGT), planned to go ahead in 2023, are just two examples of additions to other competitions with long histories, namely the FIA Formula E World Championship (FE), which is now entering its eight-season.

In 2016, Lucas di Grassi, race driver, advocate of EVs, and one of the initial stakeholders of the all-electric racing cars, said in a discussion with the Times at the Hong Kong ePrix that the idea of bringing this race to Macau had always been in the minds of the FE owners and stakeholders, as these races take place exclusively in urban circuits and non-permanent race tracks in city locations, noting that Macau would be the perfect setting.

Without revealing many details, he explained that the idea was dropped due to "difficulties



related with the circuit facilities at the time," namely regarding space, charging stations, fire safety, and durability of the batteries used by these cars at the time, which had a low capacity.

Battery capacity complications were also related to the length of the Guia circuit (6.1 kilometres) which is thrice the average length of the FE circuits, which are normally around 2 km to allow more laps.

## PERFORMANCE IS NOT A CONCERN ANYMORE

Currently, and following the most up-to-date technological advances, each ePrix takes place in a 45-minute race with the use of a single car.

In the past, drivers would have to use two different cars, swapping cars mid-race due to battery range.

The same developments have now allowed FE cars to run as

much as 250kW of power (in attack mode) and 220kW in normal race mode. The figure means these EVs now run around 335 horsepower motors, just 10% less, approximately, than the current Formula 3 cars and with around 20% more power than the old F3 cars that used to be seen for many years around the Guia circuit.

The current top speed of FE cars also reached over 280km/h and have a similar performance to current F3 cars that use 3.4-litre, 6-cylinder naturally aspirated petrol engines.

## MR. MACAU AND MANY OTHERS

Known by the nickname of Mr. Macau due to his string of accolades, the Swiss-Italian-French racing driver, Edoardo Mortara,

is one of many racers known to Macau fans.

A winner in Macau in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2017 in different racing categories, Mortara is currently racing un-

## The new developments of the automobile industry and automobile racing are pushing forth the inclusion of more racing categories using EVs

der the colors of ROKiT Venturi Racing, having finished last season in second place overall behind Nyck de Vries from team Mercedes-Benz EQ.

Other Macau champions currently racing in FE include names as the Portuguese António Felix da Costa, representing Chinese team DS Techeetah and British racer Dan Ticktum, re-

presenting fellow Chinese team NIO 333, and the already mentioned Lucas di Grassi, who is teaming up with Mortara in Venturi.

## MORE NAMES FOR WTCR SUCCESSOR

Many other names and familiar faces can be found on the ETCR championship, which is this year launching its first world titles season.

After its groundbreaking season in 2021 as "PURE ETCR," the first multi-brand series for electric touring cars will evolve this year into the FIA ETCR eTouring Car World Cup, which will be run over seven



# popularity

events between May and November.

The series will kick off with two events on street circuits, on the legendary Circuit de Pau Ville and a brand-new track in downtown Istanbul, Turkey.

These will be followed by five events on permanent racetracks around Europe before the season finale at the Inje Speedium in South Korea.

On the launch of the new world series, the president of the series organizer and promoter World Sporting Consulting Limited (WSC) said, "We are very proud of the FIA World Cup status granted to the ETCR that follows in the steps of the successful WTCR."

**"We are open to the idea of hosting more variety of races at the Macau Grand Prix in the future as we look to continue the long, distinguished history and to preserve the rich heritage of this prestigious event."**

SPORTS BUREAU

## TWO-WHEELS AND A BATTERY PACK

The extension of EV races to motorcycles is no longer new. The legendary Isle of Man TT races, from where came practically all the racers participating from the Macau Motorcycle GP, has been running a TT Zero event dedicated to EVs since 2010.

The TT Zero event, an officially sanctioned Isle of Man TT race, is for racing motorcycles where "the technical concept is for motorcycles (two-wheeled) to be powered without the use of carbon-based fuels and have zero toxic/noxious emissions."

The inaugural TT Zero race was won by a very well-known name from the Macau race, the

American Mark Miller, riding a MotoCzysz E1pc motorcycle in 23 minutes and 22.89 seconds at an average race speed of 155.8 km/h for one lap (60.73 km) of the Mountain Course.

After taking their first victory in 2014, Team Mugen from Japan has been the dominant force, winning the event for six consecutive years from 2014-2019 and raising the average lap speed to 196.18 km/h.

Also on two wheels, the Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme (FIM) has officially launched in 2019 the inaugural season of the FIM Enel MotoE World Cup (MotoE).

The series has been running as a support race for the top category – MotoGP – at five of the European circuits.

Last year, the series also counted with the presence of a known name of the Guia circuit, the Portuguese rider André Pires, who raced with Avintia Esponsorama Racing.

Currently, the MotoE series uses the Ego Corsa motorcycle from the Italian manufacturer Energica, which can reach a top speed of 270 km/h and an acceleration of 0-100km/h in under three seconds. The motor has

a power of 120kW (161hp). The races usually take place over the course of seven laps.

Starting in 2023, motorcycle manufacturer Ducati will replace Energica as the official supplier of the MotoE championship.

Although details of the development of the motorcycle are not yet known, Ducati said the bike code name V21L will represent a "significant leap forward."

From tests being done to the machinery, it became clear that Ducati uses more lightweight materials aiming to lower the weight of the motorcycle, one of the top criticisms made by riders regarding the current bikes.

## ADVERTORIAL

# SANDS CHINA NEWS

## We Nurture: Sands China places its people first

**Sands China Ltd.** has long strived to nurture and improve local talent, contributing to Macau's development as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure.

As a leading developer of integrated resorts, the company places people at the heart of its strategy, fostering team members' development alongside company growth.

The longevity of team members' service testifies to that strategy's success: nearly 10,000 team members have reached their 10-year company anniversaries.

The pandemic has significantly impacted the operations and mode of work.

However, every cloud has a silver lining, and the company has taken the opportunity to innovate its team members' learning experience.

From developing more versatile talent and providing successful career paths to enhancing team members' quality of life – platforms to attain these goals are generously provided by the company.

As Dr. Wilfred Wong, Sands China's president, has pledged, "At Sands China, we spare no effort in talent development." "We care about team members' physical and mental health," he added, as the firm hopes to promote family harmony through its parenting education initiative, thereby propelling the development of the local community."

Some examples:

- Over 75,000 diverse local employment opportunities created
- Created 1,300 new non-gaming jobs, including in MICE, entertainment, retail, dining, property management, and training
- Local staff in management positions: grown from 20% in 2004 to 91% in 2021
- Nearly 9,900 team members have served the company for more than 10 years, representing 40% of all team members
- Over 3,700 team members have reached their 15-year milestones
- More than 1,200 team members have remained with the company since helping launch Sands Macao in 2004, representing one-third of its opening team
- Golden Age Programme offers elderly team members wide range of post-career benefits
- Convenient on-site COVID-19 vaccinations: 94% vaccination rate among team members
- Over 50 roadshows showing promotional clips produced by the Health Bureau and by the company
- Online learning platforms: LinkedIn Learning, Learning Lab, tailor-made Sands China Academy training courses
- Parenting Education Programme
- Annual discretionary allowance

*"Our team members continue to be our most valuable asset"*

Sands China Ltd. President Dr. Wilfred Wong



## FE AND UNESCO

**THIS** year, the FIA Formula E World Championship, which will kick off today and have its first races over this weekend, is debuting two new concepts: night racing and UNESCO heritage sites.

Following these ideas, the open-

ing two rounds of Season 8 will be conducted under the lights and around the walls of the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Diriyah, Saudi Arabia.

This will be also the longest series yet, with the title to be disputed over a 16-race calendar.



It has always been Sands China's mission to support local small and medium enterprises (SMEs), actively heeding the government's call to procure locally.

The leading developer, owner and operator of multi-use integrated resorts in the SAR has long played a significant role in the aim of Macao's economic growth since establishing its footprint in the city.

However, this growth would not be possible without local SMEs, whom Sands China views as its strategic partners.

In the past five to six years, Sands China has increased its percentage of local procurement spend from 84% to 91%. Among them are local SMEs, with whom Sands China has increased its procurement spend percentage from 14% to 21%.

Over the years, Sands China has worked with about 2,400 suppliers per year on average, with around 500-600 of them being SMEs.

Aiming to show appreciation to the company's suppliers, Sands China held the 2021 Sands Supplier Excellence Awards last week at The Londoner Macao, honoring some of its most outstanding suppliers. At the same event, Sands China also recognised local SMEs graduating from the 10th Sands Procurement Academy and launched a book highlighting the success stories of its local SME suppliers and the company's ongoing efforts to support Macau's SMEs.

The all-in-one event provided a valuable opportunity for the Sands Procurement Academy's latest cohort of graduating SMEs to gain encouragement from watching Sands China award some of its most outstanding suppliers, which include local SMEs.

"Sands China is very pleased to again recognize the outstanding services and products provided by our many suppliers, whose collaboration is essential for us to provide the world-class experience

# Sands China remains committed to support local SMEs and honors outstanding suppliers for 9th



our integrated resorts are known for," said Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd.

Now in its ninth year, the Sands Supplier Excellence Awards is a global initiative of Sands China's parent company, Las Vegas Sands Corp., and acknowledges the cooperation and service of some of the company's most noteworthy suppliers worldwide. Award winners in Macau are selected each year by a judging committee from Sands China's executive management.

Winners, meanwhile, expressed their appreciation for the gaming operator – not just for purchasing from their businesses, but for the vast knowledge that accompanies each transaction as they learn new techniques every time.

Local firm Victor Pacific Service Ltd. received an accolade in the Cost Management category. The logistics firm has been

working with the gaming operator since 2004.

Managing director of the group, Victor Lei, remarked, "Learning alongside [providing logistics services] has been a great opportunity for our team."

"Not only for our personal enterprise, but also to drive logistics practitioners in the whole of Macau. We can all have more opportunities to work and learn together," he added.

Victor highly applauded Sands China as, despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic over two years, Sands China's cooperation with SMEs has been uninterrupted.

Late last year, the integrated resort operator launched a financial support programme for its local SME suppliers, in support of the Macau SAR government's relief package, which included eight measures to assist SMEs struggling

## Sands Procurement Academy

At the graduation ceremony for the Sands Procurement Academy, Sands China recognised 52 local SMEs, including 16 exhibitors from the 2021 Sands Shopping Carnival.

Nearly 370 suppliers have enrolled in the academy since its founding in 2017, and 330 have graduated to date, including this latest group.

The Sands Procurement Academy, co-organized with the Macao Chamber of Commerce and the Macau Productivity and Technology Centre (CPTTM), is a first-of-its-kind industry training program. It delivers practical knowledge to local SME suppliers to help them

gain experience and capacity for working with large-scale international corporations. It does so by sharing business knowledge and skills to promote the development of their businesses.

Shuen Ka Hung, director-general of the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Center, said: "We are very pleased with Sands China's efforts in contributing to the development of local SMEs through its Sands Procurement Academy. Many local SMEs have expanded the scale of their operations after graduating from Sands China's procurement training programme."

After initially targeting a few key categories of local suppliers, the academy has been open to all local SMEs in Macau since 2019 – giving a broader range of SMEs the opportunity to benefit from the skills and knowledge offered by the academy's professionals.

"As Macau continues to carry on in the face of an ongoing pandemic, we are grateful for the continued cooperation of our suppliers, whether small or large, local or international. We are also glad to see the continued success of our Sands Procurement Academy in helping nurture Macau's local suppliers with skills and know-



Shuen Ka Hung

Ma Chi Ngai

ledge, as we celebrate the 10th group of local enterprises to graduate from the program," said Dr. Wong.

2021 was a tough year for SMEs – with all business owners trying to survive.

However, for Dr. Wong, the year was also an encouraging year, as local SMEs "not only managed to [survive] but also managed to develop and grow in size."

In the recent two intakes of the procurement academy, 110 enterprises participated, 33 of whom participated in the mega-scale Sands Shopping Carnival.

Ma Chi Ngai, president of the board of directors of the Macao Chamber of Commerce, said: "Sands China's Sands Procurement Academy is a great training initiative that means a lot

to local SMEs. It encourages the development and competitiveness of local SMEs by helping them gain experience and capacity for working with large-scale corporations through practical training courses. We are also very proud to have co-organised the Sands Shopping Carnival with Sands China for a second consecutive year during the pandemic. The 3-day event attracted a large flow of people, thereby helping local SMEs increase their product sales and brand reputation.

With uncertainty still looming, the president of the group assured that the company "will not stop just because there are some difficulties ahead. We will continue our commitment," said Dr. Wong.



# Supporting local enterprises, in a straight year



Homer Fung

Victor Lei



Anna Chang

Forest Tang

Che Weng Son

amid the pandemic.

Between November 1, 2021 and January 31, 2022, Sands China's SME partners can apply for the 2021 SME Expedited Payment Programme in order to have their payment terms shortened from the current 30 days to seven days. The initiative is expected to involve up to MOP 350 million.

Meanwhile, the winner of the Quality Management category, Companhia de Engenharia Hoi Pak Lda, said that the award is a great encouragement to the company, boosting its drive to deliver qua-

lity services to enterprises in the region.

"We are very grateful to Sands China for giving us the opportunity to serve them and we are very happy to cooperate with them. From the establishment of our company to now, they are very supportive of us; it is our solid backup force," Homer Fung, general manager of Hoi Pak Lda said.

"Despite the impact of the pandemic on the local economy, Sands China continued to carry out renovation and expansion works, allowing our company to secure

jobs during the difficult period of the pandemic," he added.

Over the past 20 years, Sands China has been forging ahead, hand-in-hand with local businesses. Sands China did not stop bolstering its efforts despite the effect of the pandemic on Macau's economy, especially its tourism industry.

As Dr. Wong has previously pledged, "We have not forgotten our roots, and are as committed as ever in supporting local enterprises as part of our corporate social responsibility efforts."

## ME BOOK LAUNCH

**SANDS CHINA** has recorded the milestones of the company's local SME support programme since 2015 and highlighted some of the success stories of local SMEs. The book is now available on the company's website at <https://l.lead.me/bcgb9q>.



## SUPPLIER EXCELLENCE AWARDS

**CORPORATE CULTURE, INNOVATION & SUSTAINABILITY:**  
Shanghai Shi Cheng Culture Communication Co., Ltd.

**PROJECT DELIVERY:**  
Top Builders Group Ltd

**COST MANAGEMENT:**  
Victor Pacific Service Ltd

**QUALITY MANAGEMENT:**  
Companhia de Engenharia Hoi Pak Lda

**SERVICE EXCELLENCE:**  
Winnerway Security Guards Company Limited  
Ou Tou Engineering Company Ltd.  
New Concept Food Limited  
East Sun Cleaning Services Ltd

**SMALL/MEDIUM ENTERPRISE (SME):**  
Quinquilharia Kuok Kuong

## WHAT OTHER WINNING SUPPLIERS SAY

### NEW CONCEPT FOOD LIMITED

We were introduced to Sands China through other SMEs, and after our initial cooperation with them, we have been gradually increasing our products, mainly seafood. We supply several tons of seafood every year, and this award is a great encouragement to us.

Che Weng Son,  
managing director

### QUINQUILHARIA KUOK KUONG

Over the years, thanks to Sands China's strong support of local SMEs, micro-enterprises have been able to grow more in the market. Sands China accounts

for 30% of our business, so it's very important to us. We have gained a lot of experience by working with them.

Anna Chang, manager

### TOP BUILDERS GROUP LTD

Our cooperation with Sands China has improved the level of our projects, because Sands China's management and quality requirements are relatively high. Therefore, we can do projects with them to improve our standards. We have learned new things every time and we have upgraded our technology to meet international standards.

Forest Tang, managing director



XINHUA



President Xi Jinping tours the National Speed Skating Oval, a competition venue for the 2022 Winter Olympics, Beijing

# CHINA INVESTS BILLIONS ON OLYMPICS WITH LONGER-TERM GOAL

**T**HE finance model for the Winter Olympics calls for the host country to spend several billion dollars, the IOC to earn a couple billion, and sports bodies to share around hundreds of millions.

Fortunately for China, turning a profit from the 2022 Beijing Games was not a priority even before the coronavirus pandemic wiped out some expected sources of income.

Chinese President Xi Jinping set a goal in 2015 to create a new tourism industry in the country.

"It will inspire over 300 million Chinese to participate in winter sports if we win, which will contribute greatly to the development of the international Olympic cause," Xi said back then, according to China's official Xinhua news agency.

The buildup to the Olympics, which open on Feb. 4 and close 16 days later, has brought high-speed train lines that will carry athletes to new ski resorts outside Beijing. For the next few decades, those same train lines will be shuttling Chinese tourists to the mountains.

## CHINA SPENDING

Russia reportedly spent \$51 billion on the 2014 Sochi Games, a price tag that is expected to stand as an Olympic record for many years. That huge amount made European voters nervous about hosting in the future and led the IOC to review how Games are awarded and organized.

But China's motivation, like Russia in 2014, is a state-backed

plan to create domestic leisure and tourism sectors with the big-ticket item again being a city-to-mountains transport system.

China allocated more than \$9 billion for a high-speed rail linking Beijing to nearby ski resorts in Zhangjiakou and Yangqing, where ski slopes have been carved out of mountains that get little natural snow.

The budget for Olympic-specific operations to host the Games is expected to be about \$4 billion. Venues built in Beijing for the 2008 Summer Olympics have been repurposed. The Water Cube for swimming is now the Ice Cube for curling.

Still, the overall investment on winter sports has been significant since Beijing won its Olympic bid seven years ago.

China now has more than 650 ice rinks and 800 ski resorts, China Daily reported this month, citing the National Winter Sports Administrative Center. Those numbers mark rises of 317% and 41%, respectively, since 2015.

## CHINA INCOME

China would have expected modest revenue from relatively few international visitors for the Winter Games even before the pandemic made their trips impossible.

Tickets also aren't being sold to residents of China, taking another of the host's income streams. The IOC's own figures show the highest Winter Games ticketing

revenue was \$250 million at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, which sold 1.5 million tickets.

Host city organizing committees keep income from domestic sponsor deals they negotiate. Sochi set the Winter Games record with almost \$1.2 billion from 46 sponsors.

The Beijing organizing committee's website currently lists 44 commercial partners, nearly all Chinese, in four tiers that include suppliers of goods and services. The 11 top-tier "partners" include Air China and Bank of China.

Sales of merchandizing such as gloves and mascots, worth \$79 million to Pyeongchang in 2018, also top up local organizers' income.

## The National Bureau of Statistics said this month the target set by President Xi of engaging 300 million people in winter sports had been hit

Still, the most important number has at least officially already been reached. The National Bureau of Statistics said this month the target of engaging 300 million people in winter sports had been hit.

## IOC INCOME

The IOC gets billions of dollars from broadcasters around the

world and from sponsors who get exclusive global rights.

Beijing is the first of American broadcaster NBC's \$7.75 billion, six-Olympics deal through 2032. It was said when signed eight years ago to be worth a combined \$2.5 billion for the 2022 Beijing Games and the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The Summer Olympics bring in about twice as much as the Winter Games.

The IOC now has 13 top-tier sponsors, including Chinese companies Alibaba and Mengniu, which is in the soft drinks category along with Coca-Cola. It was 11 for Sochi and Rio de Janeiro when their combined value was \$1 billion in cash and services in 2014 and 2016.

The so-called TOP program is set to be worth about \$3 billion for 2021-24, IOC president Thomas Bach told members last March. It was unclear if that reflected Tokyo being pushed back as host into 2021.

## IOC SPENDING

The IOC is giving \$880 million toward Beijing organizers' costs. That's only a few million less than Pyeongchang organizers got four years ago.

The IOC also shared \$215 million from its 2018 Olympic revenue among the seven governing bodies of Winter Games sports — skiing, skating, hockey, biathlon, bobsled, curling and luge.

In their 2020 accounts, the International Ski Federation listed \$13 million as its Olympic payment and the International Skating Union noted more than \$11 million.

Another \$215 million was distributed among national Olympic committees. Of the 206 NOCs, 92 competed in Pyeongchang.

## ATHLETES' SHARE

The 2,900 athletes at the Beijing Olympics do not get prize money from the IOC for competing or winning medals. Some of what the IOC pays sports bodies can trickle down to athletes, however.

The IOC will put \$590 million into the Olympic Solidarity fund for the 2021-24 period. That will give grants to train athletes, coaches and administrators. Less wealthy countries are prioritized.

The IOC said 420 athletes from 78 teams were awarded scholarships to help qualify and prepare for this year's Olympics. The program had a \$10 million budget for the 2018 edition.

In some countries, Olympic medalists get cash or gifts from sports bodies and governments.

The U.S. Olympic team's "Operation Gold" program has paid \$37,500 for a gold medal, \$22,500 for silver and \$15,000 for bronze.

Russia has a tradition of wealthy supporters rewarding Olympic success. Gold medalists at the Sochi Olympics were given \$120,000 and an SUV. **MDT/AP**



# Beijing wants US halt Olympics interference; implement consensus

**C**HINA is demanding the U.S. end "interference" in the Beijing Winter Olympics, which begin next week, in an apparent reference to a diplomatic boycott imposed by Washington and some of its allies.

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi made the demand in a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday, according to the Foreign Ministry.

According to Xinhua, the phone call was mainly to discuss the China-U.S. relations and the current situation in Ukraine.

The top priority for China and the United States at present is to truly implement the important consensus reached by Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden during their video meeting in November last year, said Wang, Xinhua reported.

During the video meeting, Wang recalled, Xi summarized the experience and lessons of China-U.S. exchanges over past more than half a century, and put forward three principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, charting the course for the healthy development of China-U.S. relations.

Biden responded positively by then, and said that the United States neither seeks a "new Cold War" with China, nor pursues a change in China's system, the revitalization of its alliances is not anti-China, and the country does not support "Taiwan independence," and has no intention to have conflict and confrontation with China, sending a positive signal which is different from the previous U.S. administration, said the Chinese foreign minister.

However, Wang said, what the world has seen is that there has been no substantive change in the tone of the U.S. policy towards Chi-



na and Biden's pledges have not been fully delivered.

The U.S. side is still making erroneous words and deeds related to China, which have dealt a new blow to bilateral relations, Wang added.

Noting that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the "Shanghai Communiqué," Wang said that China and the United States having no intention of changing each other is the precondition of the normalization of bilateral relations, and should be the guarantee of peaceful coexistence between the two countries in the future.

Competition between major countries is not the theme of a post-pandemic world that will encounter new situations and challenges, nor will it address the problems facing the United States and countries worldwide, Wang said.

China and the United States, as the world's two largest economies and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, should bear in mind the fundamental interests of the people of both countries, follow the trend of global development, and well implement the important consensus reached between the two heads of state, he said.

Wang said the two countries

must have a good grasp of the general direction of bilateral ties, take concrete actions to fulfill commitments, expand the positive aspects of bilateral cooperation, and manage differences constructively.

Pressure will only make the Chinese people more united, and confrontation will not stop China from becoming stronger, he stressed.

At present, the top priority for the U.S. side is to stop interfering in the Beijing Winter Olympics, stop playing with fire by playing the "Taiwan card," and stop forming all kinds of small cliques aimed at working against and containing China, he said, quoted by Xinhua.

For his part, Blinken said it is important for the two sides to maintain regular communication, stressing the position that U.S. President Joe Biden elaborated in the virtual meeting between the two heads of state has not changed.

The United States and China have shared interests as well as differences, Blinken said, noting the United States is ready to manage differences responsibly.

The U.S. stance on the one-China policy remains unchanged, he said, and the United States will cheer for its athletes who participate in the Beijing Winter Olympics and wish the Chinese people a ha-

ppy Chinese New Year.

Blinken then stated the U.S. position on issues including the issue of Ukraine.

The Chinese foreign minister said to address the tensions in Ukraine, it is necessary to return to the 2015 Minsk Agreements approved by the Security Council, which is a fundamental political document recognized by all parties and should be implemented in earnest.

China will support any effort that conforms to the direction and spirit of the agreements, he said, adding China calls on all parties to remain calm and refrain from inflaming tensions or hyping up the crisis.

According to Xinhua, Wang stressed that the security of one country should not be at the expense of the security of others, and regional security should not be guaranteed by strengthening or even expanding military blocs.

In the 21st century, all parties should completely abandon the Cold War mentality and form a balanced, effective and sustainable European security mechanism through negotiations, he said, adding Russia's legitimate security concerns should be taken seriously and addressed.

A brief statement from the State Department said that Blinken and Wang exchanged views on how to manage strategic risk, health security and climate change. It did not mention the Olympics or Taiwan, the Associated Press reported yesterday.

Blinken underscored the economic and security risks posed by Russian aggression against Ukraine, the statement said.

The phone call follows the appointment of veteran diplomat Nicholas Burns as the new U.S. ambassador to China, a position that has remained empty for more than a year. **MDT/AGENCIES**

## WTO RULING FINDS CHINA CAN PENALIZE USD645M WORTH OF US GOODS

**A** World Trade Organization arbitrator has decided that China can impose retaliatory tariffs on imports from the United States totaling up to \$645 million a year, capping a decade-long dispute over U.S. duties on some Chinese goods.

The dollar-value award issued this week follows a decision in July 2019 from the WTO's dispute resolution process, which the United States has since gummed up by refusing to allow for new judges to be appointed to its body that acts as a sort of appeals court.

China had originally sought an award of \$2.4 billion per year, while the U.S. had argued that fair compensation would have totaled no more than \$106 million annually.

The ruling allows China to take action to balance out what the WTO ruled were unfair U.S. fees on some Chinese goods, including thermal paper, solar panels, wind towers, steel sinks and several types of pipes.

The standoff pre-dates a string of trade disputes between the United States and China through the WTO during the Trump administration.

China still has not applied retaliatory penalties on U.S. goods up to an amount of nearly \$3.6 billion that were authorized by a WTO arbitrator in a separate decision in November 2019. **MDT/AP**

# EU launches action against China over Lithuania row

**T**HE European Union said yesterday it has launched action against China at world trade's governing body for engaging in discriminatory practices against Lithuania, saying that Beijing's spat with the Baltic country is hitting other EU exports.

Lithuania broke with diplomatic custom by

agreeing that the Taiwanese office in Vilnius would bear the name Taiwan instead of Chinese Taipei, a term used by other countries to avoid offending Beijing. China considers Taiwan part of its territory with no right to diplomatic recognition.

Beijing expelled the Lithuanian ambassador and

withdrew its own ambassador. Last month, Lithuania closed its own embassy in the Chinese capital. Tensions have mounted, and Lithuania accuses Beijing of holding up goods at China's borders. The EU is now turning to the World Trade Organization.

"Launching a WTO case is not a step we take lightly.

However, after repeated failed attempts to resolve the issue bilaterally, we see no other way forward than to request WTO dispute settlement consultations with China," European Commission Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis said.

"The EU is determined to act as one and act fast

against measures in breach of WTO rules, which threaten the integrity of our single market. We are in parallel pursuing our diplomatic efforts to deescalate the situation," he said in a statement.

The European Commission manages trade on behalf of the 27 EU member countries. It says it has built up evidence of Chinese restrictions. They include a refusal to clear Lithuanian goods through customs, the rejection of import applications from Lithuania, and pressuring Euro-

pean companies operating out of other EU countries to remove Lithuania from their supply chains when exporting to China.

The first stage of the EU's action under WTO dispute settlement rules involves a "request for consultations" under which the bloc will formally ask China for more information about its measures with the aim of resolving the dispute amicably.

If no results are achieved within 60 days, the EU can request that a WTO panel rule on the dispute. **MDT/AP**



## WHO'S IN TROUBLE

# Staff complaint, email allege racism and

MARIA CHENG,  
 MEDICAL WRITER

**C**URRENT and former staffers have accused the top director of the World Health Organization in the Western Pacific of racist, unethical and abusive behavior that has undermined the U.N. health agency's efforts to curb the coronavirus pandemic.

The allegations were laid out in an internal complaint filed in October and again in an email last week, sent by unidentified "concerned WHO staff" to senior leadership and the executive board and obtained by the Associated Press. Two of the authors said more than 30 staffers were involved in writing it, and that it reflected the experiences of more than 50 people.

The internal complaint and the email describe a "toxic atmosphere" with "a culture of systemic bullying and public ridiculing" at WHO's Western Pacific headquarters in Manila, led by Dr. Takeshi Kasai, director of a vast region that includes China and his home country of Japan. The AP also has obtained recorded snippets of meetings where Kasai is heard making derogatory remarks about his staff based on nationality. Eleven former or current WHO staffers who worked for Kasai told the AP he frequently used racist language.

Staffers, who did not identify themselves to WHO "for fear of retaliation," said in the email that Kasai's authoritarian style has led to the departure of more than 55 key staff in the past year and a half, most of whom have not been replaced. This resulted in a lack of understanding and involvement with member countries that "significantly contributed" to a surge of cases in many countries in the region, they said. However, other WHO staffers pointed out that spikes in COVID cases were due to numerous reasons, including countries' own resources and the timing of their national efforts.

The complaint and message also accused Kasai of improperly sharing potentially sensitive vaccine information with Japan, one of 37 countries in the region he leads.

In an email to the AP, Kasai denied allegations of racism and unethical behavior. He said that after receiving the email last week, he immediately took steps to communicate with all his staff.

AP PHOTO



World Health Organization Regional Director for Western Pacific Dr Takeshi Kasai - accused of racism

"I ask a lot of myself, and our staff," he said. "This has particularly been the case during the COVID-19 response. But it should not result in people feeling disrespected."

Kasai said he was committed to making changes that would ensure "a positive work environment" for all WHO staff in the region. However, an internal WHO message seen by the AP shows that in a meeting last week, Kasai ordered all his senior directors and country representatives to "reject" the accusations made in the email and to "totally support" him.

Among the most damning claims is that Kasai made "racist and derogatory remarks to staff of certain nationalities." The internal complaint filed to WHO alleges that Kasai once aggressively questioned a Filipino sta-

ffer during a coronavirus meeting, saying: "How many people in the Pacific have you killed so far and how many more do you want to kill further?" The complaint said he then asked "if she was incapable of delivering good presentations because she was Filipina."

## The regional director made numerous racist comments in meetings denigrating people from countries including China, the Philippines and Malaysia

Several WHO officials present when the statements were made confirmed to the AP that the regional director has made numerous racist comments in meetings denigrating people from countries including Chi-

na, the Philippines and Malaysia. They said the harassed staffers were sometimes driven to tears.

The email also said Kasai had blamed the rise in COVID cases in some countries on their "lack of capacity due to their inferior culture, race and socioeconomic level." Three WHO staffers who were part of the agency's coronavirus response team in Asia told the AP Kasai said repeatedly in meetings that the COVID response was hampered by "a lack of sufficiently educated people in the Pacific."

Kasai rejected allegations that he had ever used racist language.

"It is true that I have been hard on staff, but I reject the suggestion that I have targeted staff of any particular nationality," he said. "Racism goes against all of the principles and values I hold dear as a person....I believe deeply and sincerely in WHO's

mission to serve all countries and people."

The claims add to a litany of internal protests from WHO personnel about the agency's management of the pandemic during the last two years, including privately complaining about China's delayed sharing of information while publicly praising the government. In their complaint, WHO staff admonished Kasai for "not daring to criticize the Chinese authorities" and failing to disclose what happened during a trip to Beijing to meet President Xi Jinping shortly after the coronavirus was identified in Wuhan.

"We request your urgent intervention to address our serious concerns...which is negatively impacting WHO's performance to support (countries) in the region and WHO's ability to function as an effective public health organization, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic," the staffers wrote.

Kasai is a Japanese doctor



# abuse in Asia

who began his career in his country's public health system before moving to WHO, where he has worked for more than 15 years. He is credited with developing the region's response to emerging outbreaks after the SARS epidemic in 2003.

Lawrence Gostin, director of the WHO Collaborating Center on Public Health Law and Human Rights at Georgetown University, said he was in contact with many people at the office in the Western Pacific, and knew they felt battered during the pandemic.

"Dr. Kasai came into office with a good reputation, as a reasonably strong public health leader with his country's support," Gostin said. "But I was not surprised to hear these allegations."

Gostin said racism in a WHO office at the center of the pandemic would be "unconscionable," and that the allegations wounded WHO's credibility and capacity to do what was needed during the pandemic.

"If you ever needed WHO and its key regional offices to be acting with a single voice, with a single purpose and with great energy, it would be now," he said. "And the fact that the staff are so demoralized, feel so defeated, so humiliated and morale is so low, it hurts the pandemic response in the region."

In the email, staffers accused Kasai of not respecting WHO's own guidelines in the pandemic through a forced return to the office and to commutes during strict lockdown in Manila. In an internal email to staff from April 1, 2020, he said that three people on the Manila team had COVID but that "we must remain functional....This has meant keeping our country offices and the Regional office open to some level." Some staffers were concerned that parts of the advice — including car-pooling with other staff and continuing to share desks — could put them at higher risk of catching CO-

VID-19.

WHO staffers also alleged that Kasai abused his position to aid the Japanese government in COVID-19 vaccination planning by providing confidential data. Many countries expect WHO not to share details on sensitive issues like disease rates or vaccination unless they explicitly consent.

A WHO scientist who worked on COVID-19 vaccination in Asia told the AP that Kasai shared data with Japan so that the government could decide how to donate doses to its regional neighbors for a political advantage. The staffer, who asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation, said Kasai also pressured WHO personnel to prioritize vaccine donations from Japan over the U.N.-backed COVAX effort.

In his response to the AP, Kasai disputed that he had ever inappropriately shared information with Japan.

"At no time have I pressured staff to facilitate donations from Japan rather than COVAX," he said. "The vast majority of Japan's vaccine donations to other countries in the Western Pacific Region have been through the COVAX (effort.)"

Japan has donated about 2.5

million doses to countries in WHO's Western Pacific region via COVAX since June, according to data this month from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By contrast, Japan has donated more than 11 million doses bilaterally over the same period to countries including Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines.

WHO has dealt with internal complaints from staffers alleging systemic racism, sexism and other problems before; its director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus ordered an internal probe in January 2019 to assess such allegations. Last year, the AP reported that senior WHO management was informed of multiple sexual abuse reports involving its own staffers during the Ebola outbreak in Congo, but failed to act.

The authors of the WHO email in the Western Pacific said most of them had "exhaustively" filed complaints through various WHO mechanisms, including its ombudsman, ethics hotline, staff association and office of internal oversight, but have not been informed of any investigation into their allegations.

Under WHO's governance structure, regional directors

are largely answerable only to the member countries that elect them and to the executive board that confirms their selection. Kasai was elected by member countries in the Western Pacific in 2019 and could run again next year.

WHO's headquarters in Geneva said in an email that it was "aware of the allegations and is taking all appropriate steps to follow up on the matter." Kasai said in a statement that he was "ready to cooperate fully with any process to investigate the concerns which have been raised."

Kasai does not technically report to Tedros, but "all staffers are subject to the authority of the Director-General," according to the agency's staff rules. During a press briefing last April, Tedros praised Kasai as "my brother" and thanked him for "everything you continue to do to serve the people of the Western Pacific."

At a virtual meeting this week, WHO's executive board is slated to discuss issues including the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also on the agenda are various "management matters," including the prevention of abuse and harassment and "increased efforts to address racism." **MDT/AP**

AD



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A POEM TO MACAU  
BY NOBEL PRIZE WINNER KAZUO ISHIGURO



AFGHANISTAN

# UN chief urges major aid increase, unfreezing assets

EDITH M. LEDERER,  
UNITED NATIONS

**T**HE U.N. chief urged nations yesterday [Macau time] to greatly boost humanitarian aid for millions of Afghans living in "a frozen hell" and release nearly \$9 billion in frozen assets to pull Afghanistan's economy back from the brink of a collapse that could set off a mass exodus of people fleeing the country.

"Time is of the essence," Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the Security Council. "Without action, lives will be lost, and despair and extremism will grow."

Guterres said liquidity must be urgently restored to the Afghan economy. He said that means freeing up the country's frozen currency reserves, re-engaging with its Central Bank and finding other ways to inject money, including allowing international funds to pay the salaries of doctors, teachers, sanitation workers, electricians and other civil servants.

China and Russia reiterated their calls for unfreezing Afghan assets, while U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the Biden administration is examining "various options to ease the liquidity crunch."

She said the United States, which announced an initial contribution of \$308 million in humanitarian aid for Afghanistan on Jan. 11, remains the largest provider of assistance to the country. But she said that "much more support from the international community will be required to meet the extraordinary level of need the Afghan people are experiencing."

Afghanistan's aid-dependent economy was already stumbling when the Taliban seized power last August amid the chaotic departure of U.S. and NATO troops after 20 years. The international community froze Afghanistan's assets abroad and halted economic support, unwilling to work with the Taliban, given the brutality during their 1996-2001 rule and refusal to educate girls and allow women to work.

Guterres said the Wor-



AP PHOTO

ld Bank's reconstruction trust fund for Afghanistan transferred \$280 million last month to the U.N. children's agency UNICEF and the World Food Program. He said the remaining \$1.2 billion should be released urgently to help Afghans survive the winter.

Deborah Lyons, the U.N. special representative for Afghanistan, told the council that the more than \$4.4 billion humanitarian appeal the U.N. launched two weeks ago for Afghanistan -- the largest in the U.N.'s history for a single country -- "is roughly the same amount that donors spent on the entire operating budget of the government." Most of that budget support came from the United States.

The U.N. says 8.7 million Afghans are on the brink of starvation, and Guterres said over half the population faces "extreme levels of hunger."

"More than 80% of the population relies on contaminated drinking water, and some families are selling their babies to purchase food," he said.

The council adopted a resolution last month affirming that humanitarian aid to Afghans doesn't violate sanctions against the Taliban, but China's U.N. ambassador, Zhang Jun, claimed aid "is being used as a bargaining chip, a political tool."

That is "playing games

with the lives and well-being of 38 million Afghans who are in dire need of relief," Zhang said, saying that freezing Afghan assets and unilateral sanctions "are no less lethal than military intervention."

If Afghan women "can't even have food or survive, then the talk of education, employment and political participation will become empty words," he added.

Deputy Russian Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky warned that unless the issue of unfreezing Afghanistan's assets is quickly solved "Afghanistan has no long-term prospects to make it out of this crisis."

"We call on the United States and other Western donors to get the money back to the country," he said. "The money belongs to the Afghan people and cannot be used for bargaining or as a tool to punish the Afghans for the new reality that has evolved in their country."

Polyansky warned that the consequences of Afghanistan's economic collapse will not only increase the number of refugees but will "spread terrorist activity, boost drug production and, as a result, lead to even greater instability both in the region and beyond."

Lyons, the U.N. envoy, said in a video briefing from Kabul that it is clear donors are still not satisfied with political progress by the

Taliban, either in including greater ethnic diversity in its government or in ensuring girls' higher education and women's opportunities to work.

This week, a high-level Taliban delegation met with Afghan civil society representatives in the Norwegian capital, Oslo.

Lyons noted that a joint communique from the talks highlighted that "understanding and joint cooperation are the only solutions to all the problems of Afghanistan." She said now the Taliban "must act on it."

Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, whose country holds the Security Council presidency this month and chaired the meeting, said the Taliban delegation also held direct talks with representatives from Norway, the U.S., France and Britain, but he stressed that did not signify recognition of the Taliban government.

"We have to talk to them, engage them and present very clear expectations, because Afghanistan is today facing a dire humanitarian crisis and a million children may starve," Støre said in an interview with The Associated Press.

He said there were no negotiations, no agreement signed, but the talks as far as he could see were "the beginning of something that can lead to something." **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1986 SEVEN DEAD IN SPACE SHUTTLE DISASTER



The American space shuttle, Challenger, has exploded killing all seven astronauts on board.

The five men and two women - including the first teacher in space - were just over a minute into their flight from Cape Canaveral in Florida when the Challenger blew up.

The astronauts' families, at the airbase, and millions of Americans witnessed the world's worst space disaster live on TV.

The danger from falling debris prevented rescue boats reaching the scene for more than an hour.

In 25 years of space exploration seven people have died - today that total has been doubled.

President Ronald Reagan has described the tragedy as "a national loss".

The Challenger's flight, the 25th by a shuttle, had already been delayed because of bad weather. High winds, then icicles caused the launch to be postponed from 22 January.

But Nasa officials insist safety remains their top priority and there was no pressure to launch the shuttle today.

The shuttle crew was led by Commander Dick Scobee, 46. Christa McAuliffe, 37, married with two children, was to be the first school teacher in space - picked from among 10,000 entries for a competition.

Speaking before the launch, she said: "One of the things I hope to bring back into the classroom is to make that connection with the students that they too are part of history, the space programme belongs to them and to try to bring them up with the space age."

President Reagan has put off his state of the union address. He was meeting senior aides in the Oval Office when he learned of the disaster.

He has called for an immediate inquiry into the disaster but he said the space programme would go on - in honour to the dead astronauts. Vice-President George Bush has been sent to Cape Canaveral to visit the victims' families.

This evening, the president went on national television to pay tribute to the courage and bravery of the seven astronauts.

He said: "We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them this morning as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and slipped the surly bonds of earth to touch the face of God."

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

A memorial service was held three days later, in Houston, Texas, for the seven crew. It was addressed by President Reagan.

The Rogers commission reported on the cause of the Challenger disaster in May. It found the explosion had been caused by a leak through a faulty seal or O-ring in one of the solid rocket boosters.

The Challenger disaster was a severe blow to the American space programme. There were no further manned flights until September 1988.

On 1 February 2003 the space shuttle Columbia exploded as it was attempting re-entry after a 16-day mission. All seven astronauts on board, including the first Israeli in space, were killed.

Tributes to the astronauts were led by US President George W Bush.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Your best efforts will come through making changes in your home. Try to join groups of interest such as ballroom dance classes or perhaps an internet organization.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Do the necessary chores and then do things that please you. Your bankbook will suffer and your restrictions will put a damper on your relationship. Partnerships may be plentiful.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

If you are not already, think about going into business for yourself. Try to include the one you love in your plans today. Professionalism will be of utmost importance.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Avoid friction with your mate. Get out and experience the spice of life. You can expect changes in your financial situation as well as in your status.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Try not to lend or borrow money today. You will find that you are able to clear up a number of small but important details. Don't even bother trying to get their approval on the things you want to do.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You may be in love today, but who knows what tomorrow may bring. Older family members may take advantage of you by making you feel guilty.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You should be on the road. You can have a great time if you go out with the one you love. Put your efforts into making changes to your domestic scene.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Encourage the youngsters in your family. You can make reasonable bids on real estate or large items for your home. Get involved in groups that are creative in nature.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Try not to hurt your partner's feelings. Avoid overloading your plate. Opportunities to go out with clients or colleagues will be in your best interest.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You need to be around friends and family. Your tendency to vacillate will drive everyone crazy. You can bet that someone in a higher position is watching to see how busy you are.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Plan your day carefully. You will be emotional when dealing with coworkers or employers. It might be time to do some of those chores at home.

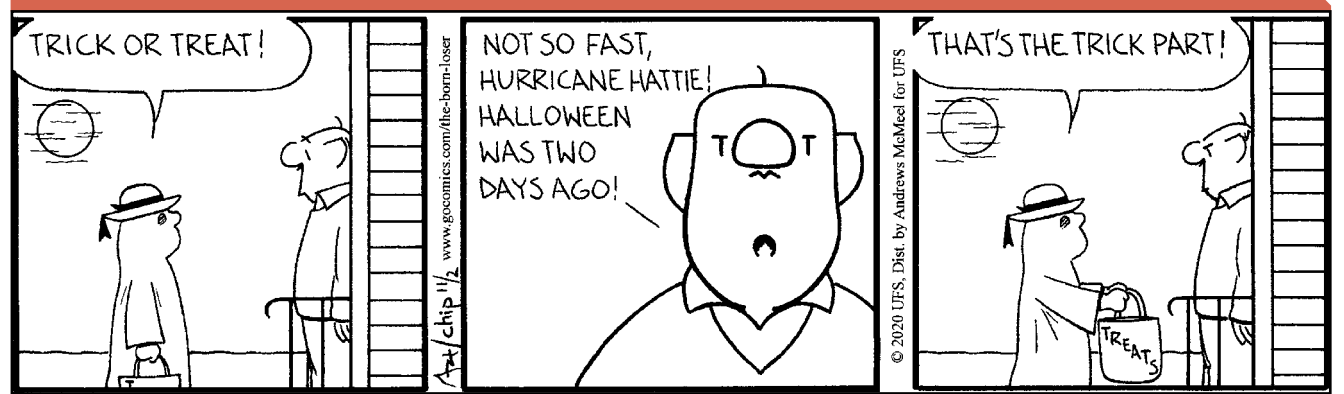


### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Don't donate more than you can afford in order to impress others. Problems with financial investments could make you nervous. Be careful when dealing with superiors.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

### EASY

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

### EASY+

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

### MEDIUM

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

### HARD

	7	3	2						
								5	1
				8					
6				5	8				
2							3		
1			3				2		
5								6	
			4						

## WEATHER

### CHINA

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
Beijing	-5	3	fine
Harbin	-18	-6	fine
Tianjin	3	5	rain
Urumqi	4	7	rain
Xi'an	8	10	rain
Lhasa	-6	-2	fine
Chengdu	13	20	overcast
Chongqing	6	8	rain
Kunming	2	5	rain
Nanjing	20	24	cloudy
Shanghai	5	7	rain
Wuhan	5	6	rain
Hangzhou	-22	-11	cloudy
Taipei	0	3	snow
Guangzhou	-11	-1	fine
Hong Kong	16	21	rain

### WORLD

Moscow	-10	-7	snow
Frankfurt	3	6	rain
Paris	8	10	overcast
London	2	10	overcast
New York	-3	1	clear

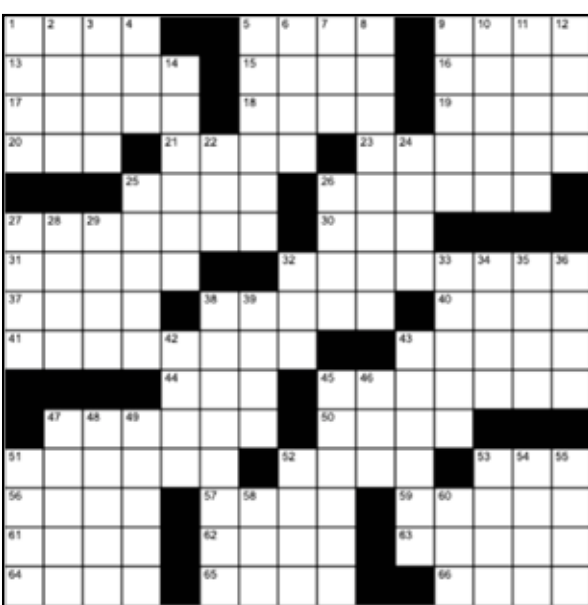
## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Blend; 5- Mandlikova of tennis; 9- Small change; 13- Great Lakes tribesmen; 15- "Trinity" author; 16- Carpeting calculation; 17- Make into a statute; 18- Floor coverings; 19- Torn clothing; 20- Thrice, in prescriptions; 21- Deeply moved; 23- Hams it up; 25- Quote; 26- "I, Robot" author; 27- Bewhiskered; 30- Queue after Q; 31- Aquarium buildup; 32- Division of the United Kingdom; 37- Fall faller; 38- Copter part; 40- Girder type; 41- Of the third order; 43- Foyer; 44- Falsehood; 45- Solidarity; 47- White rat, e.g.; 50- Mines; 51- Sort of; 52- Electric fish; 53- Monetary unit of Albania; 56- Comic Rudner; 57- Fix hose; 59- Butler's love; 61- Grace period?; 62- Zenith; 63- Like a subway; 64- Japan's first capital; 65- Age unit; 66- Logical beginning?;

DOWN 1- Run into; 2- Bald eagle's relative; 3- Make-up artist?; 4- Last mo.; 5- Having a rounded protuberance; 6- Smell \_\_\_; 7- It may be picked; 8- Estimator; 9- Billiards shot; 10- Sister of Calliope; 11- Israeli desert; 12- Soviet news service; 14- Walk with long steps; 22- Had a little something; 24- Baseball glove; 25- Skill; 26- With the bow, in music; 27- Latvian, e.g.; 28- Gen. Robert \_\_\_; 29- Petri dish gelatin; 32- Hog home; 33- Big cats; 34- French clergyman; 35- Apprehends; 36- Prohibitionists; 38- Future time of need; 39- Nabisco cookie; 42- Hip bones; 43- Reveals; 45- Kitchen utensil; 46- Zip; 47- Inner self (Jung); 48- "See ya!"; 49- African sir; 51- Teheran's country; 52- Writer Bombeck; 53- Put down; 54- Limerick language; 55- Deck; 58- Opening-day starter; 60- \_\_\_ polloi;

Yesterday's solution

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



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



AD

**FOR SALE**

**FOR RENT**

**Rain Dance Property**



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



Tim Roth in a scene from "Sundown"

DRIVE IN

# TIM ROTH DROPS OUT, IN PARADISE, IN 'SUNDOWN'

LINDSEY BAHR, MDT/AP  
FILM WRITER

A man sits on the edge of an infinity pool contemplating his existence in Michel Franco's "Sundown." It's one of many such ennui-laden images, though the settings get less luxurious as we go along on this strange journey with Neil, a man who decides to drop out of his own life suddenly and with no explanation.

Tim Roth, in a quiet and

intentionally inscrutable turn, plays Neil who is vacationing with family members, Alice (Charlotte Gainsbourg) and teenagers Colin (Samuel Bottomley) and Alexa (Albertine Kottling McMillan) at a tastefully extravagant resort near Acapulco. Fans of the beautiful, unhappy families on holiday in "The White Lotus" may find "Sundown" a natural companion to that, at least at the start. Polite hotel workers shuffle in and out of their pala-

tial suite that includes a private infinity pool, ocean view and in-room massages. They collect empty bottles of beer and replace them diligently. In the morning, they greet the jaded sunbathers with margaritas in frosted martini glasses. It is serene and peaceful — you can almost feel the warm breeze coming through the screen.

But just as they're sipping their morning drinks, Alice gets a phone call. Her mother is hospital bound and they

must leave immediately. She dies before they even reach the airport. Alice is in shambles. Neil, meanwhile, is the picture of calm. Then at the airport, as they're being rushed to check-in, Neil says he's left his passport at the hotel and that he'll catch the first flight out.

Whether or not he actually forgot the passport quickly becomes beside the point. He hops in a cap and tells the driver to take him to a hotel. "Hotel?" the driver asks. Neil simply nods. They drive into Acapulco, to a place called Hotel Camelinas, a beachside party spot that is not quite a roach motel but still worlds away from the place he had been.

Seaside, there are waiters and unlimited beers too, but they come in buckets and the chairs are cheap plastic. Neil doesn't seem to care. He's still sitting in his own mind and taking the occasionally call from Alice, panicking about the funeral and decisions that need to be made. "He's sorry, he can't find it, the consulate is closed until Monday, blah blah blah..." he assures her half-heartedly as he goes back to stare at the coast.

What's extraordinary about "Sundown" is just how little it tells you, how little you get to know the characters, how little actually happens and yet how wholly captivating it is as your mind spins trying to figure out what Neil is doing and how you feel about it too: confusion, frustration, rage, jealousy, admiration or all of the above? He doesn't care when he returns to his room to find all his possessions stolen. In fact, he tells Alice that he wants to give up his shares in the family company. They are, it turns out, heirs to a billion-dollar slaughterhouse and pork empire. Ah, you start to think, this isn't "The White Lotus," this is Season 8 of "Succession."

At only 83 minutes, "Sundown" remains withholding until the very end. It's not even made entirely clear for quite sometime what Neil and Alice's relationship actually is, and Franco does an excellent job escalating the discomfort and alienation that culminates in a truly shocking turn. The movie doesn't quite recover after that, however.

Ultimately, "Sundown" is more of a spiritual sister to "Melancholia" with shades of "Somewhere." It is a portrait of a body whose soul has long since departed.

"Sundown," a Blecker Street release in theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "violence, language, some graphic nudity, sexual content." Running time: 83 minutes.



BOOK IT

# ALLENDE'S 'VIOLETA,' AN EPIC SOUTH AMERICAN TALE

CHILEAN writer Isabel Allende's latest novel is "Violeta," an epic tale that transports readers across a century of South American history, through economic collapse, dictatorship and natural disasters like an earthquake and a hurricane.

From the aftermath of World War I to the present day, narrator Violeta del Valle recounts the story of her life in an unnamed South American country with a book-long letter to her grandson Camilo.

Violeta tells of living through the Spanish flu pandemic as the youngest child and only daughter in a family of five sons. After her father loses everything in the Great Depression, the family must relinquish their comfort in an old mansion in the nation's capital and adopt a more modest life in the country's rural south.

"Violeta" recalls Allende's best known and highly successful novel, "The House of Spirits," which weaves together the personal and the political in a saga stretching across decades.

"Violeta" also details the horrors of the 1970s dictatorships in South America, which saw tens of thousands of suspected political opponents kidnapped, tortured and killed, often through Operation Condor, a U.S.-backed alliance among the region's right-wing military governments.

"The government was committing atrocities, but you could walk down the street and sleep soundly at night without worrying about common criminals," Violeta writes of those repressive times.

Violeta's son is a journalist who seeks exile, first in Argentina, then in Norway after learning he is on the dictatorship's black list.

Violeta suspects her son's father of involvement in the repression through his work as a pilot. Much of the book involves Violeta's long, passionate, but troubled relationship with her son's father following a short, unsatisfying marriage. Ultimately, she obtains contentment late in life with a retired diplomat and naturalist.

Considered the world's most widely read Spanish-language author, Allende is known for her many novels including "Eva Luna," "Of Love and Shadows" and "A Long Petal of the Sea," as well as nonfiction books such as "Paula," a 1994 memoir.

Allende left Chile for exile two years after Salvador Allende, her father's first cousin, was overthrown in a 1973 coup. Isabel Allende lived for years in Venezuela before settling in the United States. ANITA SNOW, MDT/AP

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**VIOLETA**  
a novel  
**ISABEL ALLENDE**  
New York Times bestselling author of  
A LONG PETAL OF THE SEA  
"Violeta," by Isabel Allende (Random House)





Executive Sous Chef at The Manor, Michele Dell'Aquila

TASTE OF EDESIA

# Exquisite Celebrations

IRENE SAM, MDT

**F**EBRUARY is almost here and it's the special time of year to spend with loved ones. For both Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day, St. Regis Macao has arranged culinary delights and experiences for celebrations.

Stories of the Sea – The Tenth Chapter has debuted at The Manor. The six-course menu focuses on the freshest seafood and finest ingredients, setting the perfect stage to celebrate the abundance of the Lunar New Year.

For the first course, Executive Sous Chef Michele Dell'Aquila introduces Brittany Lobster with heirloom tomato, white asparagus, burrata cheese topped with Calvisius Oscietra caviar. As fish symbolises abundance and prosperity in the Chinese culture, it is apt for him to showcase three different fish dishes. The delicate Red Trout is paired with seasonal vegetables while the grouper is pan-seared with baby fennel, ginger and lemongrass butter sauce. The succulent Mediterranean turbot is cooked in cocoa crust and Barigoule sauce topped Lingotto dried caviar is a must-try. For the ideal finale, the bright red Raspberry soufflé is dressed with wild berries, Azuma Rikishi sake ice cream and cheesecake cream. A specially

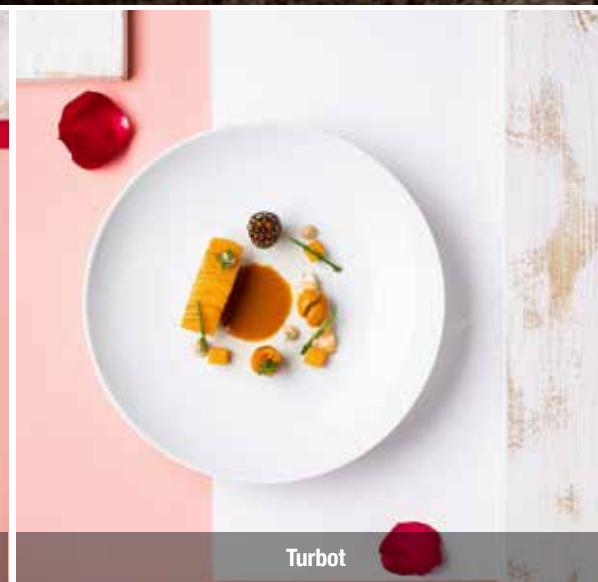
curated wine pairing by resident Sommelier, David Duan, enhances each course and elevates the dining experience even further.

Spoil your beloved on Valentine's Day by treating her to a decadent five-course dinner. The Romantic Indulgence menu at The Manor showcases the luscious ra King salmon from New Zealand, red mullet with French bouillabaisse sauce, fleur d'acacia and baby fennel, Boston Lobster risotto with Champagne beurre blanc sauce, turbot with langoustine, sea urchin and chestnut sauce. Steak lovers will appreciate the premium Akaushi A5 wagyu beef sirloin with maple artichoke purée. For desserts, the La Fraise white chocolate sphere, raspberry jelly with tangy yuzu ice cream will definitely impress.

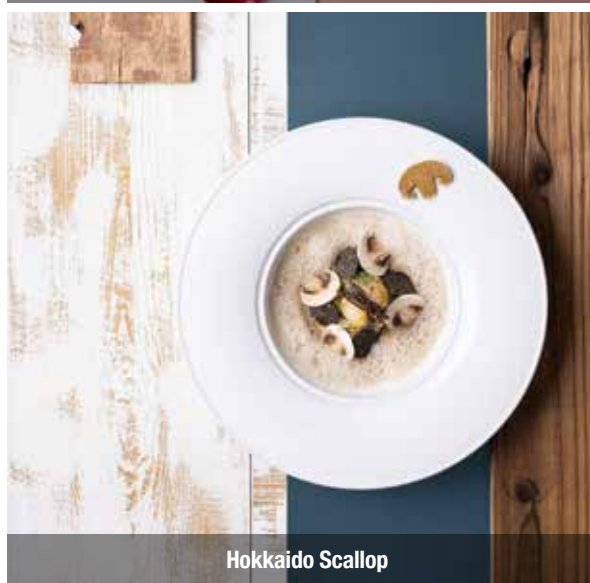
For an impeccable afternoon tea experience, the intimate setting of The St. Regis Bar is always a treat. This Valentine's Day, one could indulge in the Baikal Oscietra Caviar Afternoon Tea with Baikal Oscietra caviar and two glasses of Billecart-Salmon Champagne served in the Royal Albert 100 Years collection to celebrate the occasion, or tease the taste buds with delectable desserts intricately handcrafted by our pastry chefs including the signature 'Rose' dessert - raspberry and mascarpone mousse accented with almond and lemon.



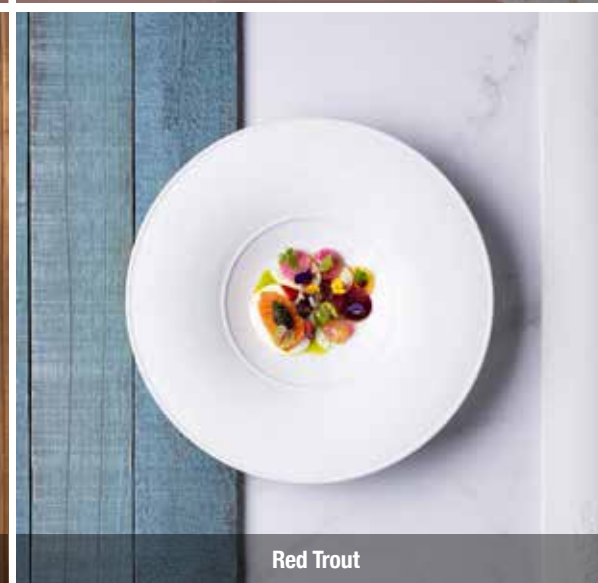
Red Mullet



Turbot



Hokkaido Scallop



Red Trout



Brittany Lobster



Grouper



**OPINION**

**World Views**

Editors, MDT/The Conversation

**OMICRON OR CURBING  
 THE PANDEMIC**

In the short time since the omicron variant was identified in South Africa in November 2021, researchers have quickly learned that it has three unique characteristics: It spreads efficiently and quickly, it generally causes milder disease than previous variants and it may confer strong protection against other variants such as delta.

This has many people wondering whether omicron could act as a vaccine of sorts, inoculating enough people to effectively bring about herd immunity and end the Covid-19 pandemic.

Two immunology researchers at the University of South Carolina who are working on inflammatory and infectious diseases, including Covid-19, "find the characteristics of omicron in the pandemic setting particularly intriguing. And it is these characteristics that can help answer that question."

According to available data, some 4.73 billion people across the globe – about 61.6% of the world's population – have received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine.

So, how does omicron mimic a vaccine?

All vaccines work on "the principle of training the immune system to fight against an infectious agent. Each vaccine, regardless of how it is made, exposes the human or animal host to the critical molecules used by the infectious agent – in this case, the SARS-CoV-2 virus – to enter the host's cells," the two scientists argue.

In an article on "The Conversation," Dr Prakash Nagarkatti and Dr Mitzi Nagarkatti add that some vaccines expose the host only to select portions of the virus.

In some respects, they say, omicron mimics these "live attenuated vaccines because it causes milder infection and trains the body to trigger a strong immune response against the delta variant," as shown in a recent study that is not yet peer-reviewed from South Africa.

The high transmission of omicron combined with ongoing vaccination efforts could help attain herd immunity soon and end the most acute phase of the pandemic. However, there is little chance of it eradicating Covid-19, since all signs point to the likelihood that the virus will become endemic – meaning SARS-CoV-2 will be in circulation but will likely not be as disruptive to society.

So what exactly triggers strong and lasting immunity? The lifelong immunity seen in certain infections such as smallpox can be explained by a phenomenon called "immunological memory."

"After the B cells and killer T cells first encounter the virus, some of them get converted into what are called memory cells, which are known to live for several decades."

For this reason, memory cells are critical for establishing strong, long-lasting immunity. This is evidenced from studies with smallpox in which people that were infected or vaccinated were found to have the antibody response even after 88 years! Why some infections or vaccines trigger long-lasting memory and others do not is under active investigation. Because Covid-19 is only two years old, researchers don't know yet how long the memory B and T cells last. All of these considerations leave room for hope that when new variants of SARS-CoV-2 inevitably arise, omicron will have left the population better equipped to fight them. So, the Covid-19 vaccines combined with the omicron variant could feasibly move the world to a new stage in the pandemic – one where the virus doesn't dominate our lives and where hospitalization and death are far less common.

The scientists warn, however, that omicron should not be considered a viable alternative to the existing vaccines.

For one, Covid-19 infection can result in severe illness, hospitalization or death, especially in vulnerable individuals with underlying conditions. It can also cause long-term health effects in some people, called "long Covid."

Holocaust survivors and politicians warned about the resurgence of antisemitism and Holocaust denial as the world remembered Nazi atrocities and commemorated the 77th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp yesterday.

"I have lived in New York for 75 years, but I still remember well the terrible time of horror and hatred," survivor Inge Auerbacher, 87, told the German parliament. "Unfortunately, this cancer has reawakened and hatred of Jews is commonplace again in many countries in the world, including Germany."

Commemorations are taking place amid a rise of antisemitism

that gained traction during lockdowns as the pandemic exacerbated hatred online.

"This sickness must be healed as quickly as possible," Auerbacher said.

German parliament speaker Baerbel Bas noted that the coronavirus pandemic has acted "like an accelerant" to already burgeoning antisemitism.

"Antisemitism is here - it isn't just on the extreme fringe, not just among the eternally incorrigible and a few antisemitic trolls on the net," she said. "It is a problem of our society — all of society."



Marina Picasso (right) granddaughter of artist Pablo Picasso, and her son Florian

**PICASSO HEIRS LAUNCH  
 DIGITAL ART PIECE TO  
 RIDE 'CRYPTO' WAVE**

JAMEY KEATEN, GENEVA

**P**ABLO, meet Crypto. Heirs of Pablo Picasso, the famed 20th-century Spanish artist, are vaulting into 21st-century commerce by selling 1,010 digital art pieces of one of his ceramic works that has never before been seen publicly — riding a fad for "crypto" assets that have taken the art and financial worlds by storm.

For an exclusive interview before the formal launch this week, Picasso's granddaughter, Marina Picasso, and her son Florian Picasso opened up their apartment — which is swimming in works from their illustrious ancestor — in an upscale Geneva neighborhood. There they offered up a glimpse, however tantalizingly slim, of the piece behind what they're billing as an unprecedented fusion of old-school fine art and digital assets.

They're looking to cash in on and ride a wave of interest in non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, which have netted millions for far-less-known artists and been criticized by some as environmentally costly get rich schemes.

A Picasso, his family's promoters say, would mark the entry of a Grand

Master into the game.

In economics jargon, a fungible token is an asset that can be exchanged on a one-for-one basis. Think of dollars or bitcoins — each one has the exact same value and can be traded freely. A non-fungible object, by contrast, has its own distinct value, like an old house or a classic car.

Cross this notion with cryptocurrency technology known as the blockchain and you get NFTs. They are effectively digital certificates of authenticity that can be attached to digital art or, well, pretty much anything else that comes in digital form — audio files, video clips, animated stickers, even a news article read online.

"We're trying to build a bridge between the NFT world and the fine art world," said Florian Picasso, the artist's great-grandson.

The artist's descendants are playing close to the vest, to drum up interest and protect — for now — a family heirloom. They're showing only a sliver of the underside of the work linked to the NFTs, a ceramic piece about the size of a large salad bowl. The exposed parts show forms like a thick yellow line, a dribbling green splotch, and a brushed-on number

"58" at the base.

Marina Picasso says the cherished pottery piece dates to October 1958, when she was a child.

"It's a work that represents a face, and it's very expressive," she said. "It's joyful, happy. It represents life ... It's one of those objects that have been part of our life, our intimate lives — my life with my children."

Cyril Noterman, a longtime manager for Florian Picasso, and Kathryn Frazier, a publicist for the project, told The Associated Press that Sotheby's would host an auction in March that will include a unique NFT as well as the actual ceramic bowl.

Noterman and Frazier said a first-phase, online sale of more than 1,000 other NFTs starts today through the Nifty Gateway and Origin Protocol platforms.

Florian Picasso said they agreed on the colorful ceramic piece because it was "a fun one" to start.

An NFT Picasso brings with it almost epochal symbolism, something like when the Beatles collection was finally put up on iTunes. The family and its business managers say the aim is to create a younger community of Picasso fans. **MDT/AP**



**Tonga** British and Australian navy ships arrived in Tonga and attempted to deliver aid without making contact with anybody ashore to avoid spreading the coronavirus in a nation which has never had an outbreak. The danger of spreading the disease was underscored when nearly two dozen sailors aboard an Australian ship were reported infected on Tuesday, raising fears they could bring the coronavirus to the small archipelago devastated by an undersea volcanic eruption and a tsunami on Jan. 15.



**Ukraine** The U.S. rejection of Russia's main demands to resolve the crisis over Ukraine leaves little ground for optimism, the Kremlin spokesman said yesterday, while adding that dialogue was still possible. Tensions have soared in recent weeks, as the United States and its NATO allies expressed fear that a buildup of about 100,000 Russian troops near Ukraine signaled Moscow planned to invade its ex-Soviet neighbor. Russia denies having any such designs — and has laid out a series of demands it says will improve security in Europe.



**France-Ukraine** There's still room for diplomacy in the Ukrainian crisis. At least that's the conviction of French President Emmanuel Macron, who continues to push for dialogue with Russia despite signs pointing to a potential war. His stance reflects France's post-World War II tradition of carving its own geopolitical path, refusing to line up blindly behind the U.S. It's also part of Macron's domestic political strategy amid campaigning for April's presidential election and a war in Ukraine could prove an unwelcome distraction.