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**AL PLENARY: BILLS ON DIGITAL CURRENCY, MINOR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION BAN ENTER LEGISLATIVE PROCESS THIS YEAR**

**GBA: HENGQIN TO OFFER SUBSIDIES UP TO RMB60M FOR FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

**HO'S FAMILY TO CONTINUE OPERATING PORTUGAL'S BIGGEST CASINOS**



**Philippines** Suspected communist rebels killed two soldiers in an attack yesterday in a northern Philippine province where troops are helping residents recover from a strong earthquake, the military said. The attack by suspected New People's Army guerrillas in Malibcong town in Abra province also injured one soldier and left another missing, military officials said. It was unclear whether the missing soldier was seized by the rebels.



**Sri Lanka** Thousands of people marched in the capital yesterday to urge the government to halt its crackdown on protests against an unprecedented economic crisis that has engulfed the Indian Ocean nation for months. Trade union and civil rights activists, university students and others marched in the streets and then joined a rally in Colombo condemning the government's moves to intimidate protesters and its failure to ease people's economic woes.



**Egypt** The International Monetary Fund reached a preliminary agreement with the Egyptian government yesterday that paves the way for the economically troubled Arab nation to access a \$3 billion loan, officials said Thursday. IMF officials said a staff agreement between the Egyptian government and IMF leaders had been reached following months of talks, as Egypt struggles to combat surging inflation caused, in part, by the war in Ukraine.

More on backpage



FAI CHI KEI TESTS

# ZERO CONTAGION

**WEEKEND LUSOFONIA PARTY RETURNS FOR SILVER JUBILEE**



**MACAU-HENGQIN CRAFT MARKET CALLS FOR BOOTH OPERATORS**

The SAR government is calling for booth operators for the upcoming Macau-Hengqin Craft Market that will be held at Ocean Square outside Zhuhai Chimelong Ocean Kingdom from December 9 to 11. The call for booth operators will run until November 3. To promote artistic and cultural exchanges between the two regions, the Livelihood Affairs Bureau of the Cooperation Zone and Cultural Affairs Bureau are extending the Craft Market to Hengqin. There will be 112 booths for handicraft aficionados from Macau. The products registered must be original designs, and the minimum number of product types for sale is 10. Cultural and artistic experiences can also be included in the services provided.

**COURT REFUSES CIVIL COMPENSATION IN LEVO CHAN'S CASE**

The Court of First Instance has refused to accept the civil compensation claims presented in the case of junket mogul Levo Chan. Gaming concessionaires, including MGM, Wynn and Venetian Macao, have sought to claim compensation for losses caused by junket. The decision was communicated earlier this week to the lawyers for the operators and the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), TDM has reported. The decision was justified on the grounds of ensuring that the criminal process was upheld without being prejudiced by the civil processes that accompany it. Chan's trial is scheduled for December 5.

**COVID-19**

**PATIENT'S SON TESTS POSITIVE, FAI CHI KEI NATS NEGATIVE SO FAR**

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE son of the 66-year-old Covid-19 patient tested positive for the virus, authorities announced past midnight, after reports that it had not identified positive results from the nucleic acid tests (NATs) conducted on the population within the target zone of Fai Chi Kei district.

A statement from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention noted that the unvaccinated 31-year-old son lives with her mother and has recently participated in a class held by the Labour Affairs Bureau. He has been in quarantine since the morning of October 26 when he tested negative for Covid. However, a NAT result yesterday showed he was "weakly positive" for the virus.

Meanwhile, in a press briefing from the center yesterday, the coordinator of the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, said that since Wednesday 4 p.m. and until Thursday morning, health authorities tested 33,718 people within Fai Chi Kei. Residents and those who spent time in the area the previous day were tested. From these results, 10,548 NAT results available so far have been revealed to be negative.

She added the same authorities have collected and tested 15 environmental samples from the building where the 66-year-old woman who tested positive lives. All such samples are negative.

The 80 people who live in the same building have been tested, again with negative results.

Leong added that, according to the epidemiologic investigation,



255 people are being followed under close control, including five people who are close contacts with the patient, 122 who shared the same route and 70 general contacts. From these, 15 have been cleared as it was proven they had no contact with the patient.

She explained this finding is related to a change in the itinerary initially disclosed, which incorrectly identified a bus route the woman allegedly took from the Border Gate to the city.

Leong said the authorities are not considering extending any measures to other areas for now. Those in the marked zone will continue to be tested for three days.

"If, after these three consecutive days, there are no cases found in the community, this means that the risk of transmission is low," Leong said.

**MORE TESTS THAN EXPECTED**

Leong noted that, although the health authorities believe that the case could lead to the testing of around 26,000 people, a far hi-

gher figure had turned out to testing (around 38,000). She noted, "In fact, more people are going for NAT than what the government wanted. But this means that the citizens are being very compliant with the preventive measures and are very cautious." She added the data is currently being crosschecked to understand whether any people within the area are missing from the call for testing.

**BORDER MEASURES FOR UNVACCINATED RESIDENTS, TNR**

As a result of this case, health authorities noted that new measures will apply for unvaccinated residents and non-resident workers (TNR) returning to Macau from Guangdong province, including the city of Shenzhen.

Unvaccinated people will need to present a valid certificate of a negative NAT within 24 hours of crossing the border, while the vaccinated continue to be subjected to the 48 hour test.

This comes after the local authorities understood that both the patient and her son were not vaccinated, and they were crossing the border regularly, which "represents a risk for the population."

According to the statements, the rule only applies to local residents and TNR, but not to tourists arriving from the same area. Those under the age of five are exempted from the rule.

**RECENT COVID-19 CASE SHOULD NOT AFFECT NEXT MONTH'S EVENTS**

**T**HE recent discovery of a Covid-positive resident should not interfere with public events scheduled for November, the coordinator of the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, said yesterday in response to a media inquiry at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center press briefing. Leong said the situation is under control for the time being and no cases (except this recent case, involving a 66-year-old resident) have

been found. The nucleic acid test drive will continue until the end of today, with the final results only to be known at 9 a.m. Saturday (October 29). Leong said this case is unlikely to jeopardize upcoming events such as the Macau Grand Prix (November 17 to 20), the Macau Food Festival (November 18 to December 4), or the Macau Grand Prix - Family Carnival that will be held at Tap Seac Square on the weekend of November 5 and 6.

**Lusofonia returns for silver jubilee from today to Oct. 30**

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HIS year's Lusofonia Festival will return from today to Sunday at the Taipa-Houses Museum in the 25th anniversary celebration of Macanese culture.

It will also showcase the culture of each local Portuguese-speaking com-

munity at their respective stands, through music and dance performances, and food tasting and games, amongst other activities, highlighting the characteristics of the participating Portuguese-speaking countries.

Participating countries include Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Gui-

nea-Bissau, Goa, Daman and Diu, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, East Timor, in addition to the host city. Participants will introduce their traditional music, arts and crafts, costumes, typical drinks and tourist information, amongst others.

During the festival, the

Shenzhen An Zhishun Percussion Art Troupe and around 30 local Portuguese-speaking performing groups will bring percussion performances to the Taipa Houses Amphitheatre, as well as typical songs, dances and light music to the stage installed in Largo do Carmo, providing a Portuguese

touch to the atmosphere.

Gourmets will be able to taste delicacies from various Portuguese-speaking countries at different hours of the festival. A pop-up diner will be operating at the Taipa Municipal Garden to serve grills and other gastronomic delights at lunch and dinner hours on the

weekend. Those on the go can grab snacks and drinks at the kiosk.

With this year's festival revolving around Macanese culture, the organizer encourages festival-goers to sample Pork Minchi, Cabbage Trouxas, Chicken Chau-Chau and other distinguished Macanese dishes.

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AL PLENARY

# Bills on currency, minor alcohol consumption ban enter legislation process

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE government presented two legislative bills to parliament yesterday. The first bill relates to currency establishment and issuance. The second bill concerns banning the sale to, and consumption of, alcohol by minors.

When presenting the currency bill, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong stressed the existing law – Decree-Law No 7/95/M – will be 27 years old this year. Accordingly, he said a new law is required to cope with future developments.

The bill proposes adding digital currency to the types of currency considered legal tender in Macau. Furthermore, the bill proposes governance over commemorative notes and the trading thereof.

Adjustments to the circumstances in which physical currency must be accepted are



also proposed, and refusing to accept such physical currency is proposed to constitute an administrative violation. The process through which curren-

cy will be retrieved may also be subject to changes.

In relation to the second bill on the sale and consumption of alcohol, Secretary for Social Af-

fairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong stressed harmful drinking has become a public health issue of paramount importance. Citing the World Health Organization,

she stated three million people succumbed to complications from excessive alcohol consumption each year.

Locally, the proportion of youths with a history of drinking rose from 70.8% in 2003 to 82% in 2018, the Secretary said, according to government five-year surveys.

The bill proposes the definition of 'alcoholic beverages' be expanded to include beverages with an alcohol concentration of more than 1.2%. Under the bill, selling and providing these drinks to minors, hiring or instructing minors to sell or provide these drinks, and selling or providing these drinks to minors remotely will be banned. The bill additionally proposes banning the sale and consumption of such drinks in public venues by minors.

It is also proposed that notices outlining the law be mandatorily displayed at vendors of alcoholic drinks.

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GBA

# HENGQIN TO OFFER SUBSIDIES UP TO RMB60M FOR FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

LYNZY VALLES

**M**EASURES to support financial institutions in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin will take effect from November 7, according to a statement issued by the Hengqin government.

The measures are intended to encourage the growth and development of enterprises and foster deeper cooperation between Hengqin and Macau.

Almost all financial businesses, including licensed institutions, private investment funds of local organizations, and other recognized financial institutions, will be eligible for subsidies of up to 60 million yuan.

Financial institutions will be supported across a range of operations, including settlement in the zone, capital raising, mergers and acquisitions, housing and such.

Financial enterprises in Hengqin can receive up to 50 million yuan depending on their operations, the statement read.

To introduce more Macau-funded financial institutions to the zone, eligible companies will be granted 1.2 times the relevant



support standard with a maximum 60 million yuan for settlement in Hengqin.

Tailored measures for cross-border insurance and foreign-funded equity investment enterprises are to be determined according to the status quo of the financial industry in the zone.

Insurance institutions in Hengqin that operate insurance businesses for cross-border motor vehicles and cross-border medical care for Hong Kong and Macau residents will be awarded 5% of their annual premium income, with the subsidy for each company capped at 10 million

yuan.

Up to 500,000 yuan will be given to enterprises that have acquired pilot licenses for wholly foreign-owned enterprise private fund management, qualified foreign limited partners, or qualified domestic limited partners since the establishment of the zone according to the actual amount raised.

Further, financial institutions, industrial associations, and social organizations in Hengqin will be subsidized up to 100,000 yuan for each forum, special training session, and exchange activity jointly organized with Macau counterparts.



## HOTEL OCCUPANCY IN Q3 DIPS 25% Y-O-Y

**T**HE average occupancy rate of hotel guest rooms decreased 12.9 percentage points year-on-year to 37.5% in the first three quarters of this year.

The number of guests dipped 25.5% year-on-year to 3,754,000, while their average length of stay increased by 0.1 nights to 1.9 nights.

According to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the occupancy rate of guest rooms in September dropped 11.9 percentage points year-on-year to 37.6%, with the rate for 4-star hotels falling 21.5 percentage points.

The number of guests of hotel establishments in September went down by 16.4% year-on-year to 440,000; the number of mainland guests (333,000) fell 20.3%, while local guests (80,000) rose 1.2%.

Visitors joining local tours in September leapt by 366.4% year-

-on-year to 3,600, albeit from a low base.

In the first three quarters of this year, local tour visitor numbers declined 31.4% year-on-year to 24,000, while Macau residents purchasing outbound services through travel agencies plunged 78.1% to 28,000.

The tourism and hotel sector is currently waiting on group travel packages that will recommence early November.

Some travel agencies in China have unveiled Macau's travel packages in advance, which show the earliest departure date is November 13.

There will be a limit in the number of people participating in each tour. Tour guides must take Covid-19 nucleic acid tests (NATs) once every seven days and both staff and participants must complete a 10-day travel history declaration. LV



## TRAVEL AGENCIES RECORD MOP119M DEFICIT IN 2021

**T**HE travel agency industry registered a deficit of MOP119 million in 2021, a smaller deficit compared to 2020 (-MOP186 million), according to the latest data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The number of people engaged in the travel agency sector dropped 985 year-on-year to 2,774.

Previously, the Macao Tourist Guides Union (MTGU) noted that there were around 1,000 tourist guides before the pandemic, of which over 70% were aged 40 years or above. In addition, fewer people are applying for jobs in the travel industry because there have been no visitors traveling to Macau during the pandemic, and no need of foreign language tour guides either.

Meanwhile, Compensation of employees totaled MOP423 million, down 23.4% year-on-year.

Operating expenses edged down 0.8% year-on-year to MOP422 million.

DSEC data shows industry revenue inched up by 0.7% year-on-year to MOP2.02 billion, whereas expenditure went down by 1.6% to MOP2.14 billion.

In 2021, the revenue of travel agencies from room reservation services (MOP682 million) and passenger transport ticketing (MOP399 million) showed year-on-year growth of 18.9% and 21.2% respectively, due to increased demand for travel agency services from visitors and local residents. Revenue from rental coaches with drivers (MOP476 million) nudged up by 0.8% year-on-year, while revenue from package tours (MOP206 million) fell by 36.7%.

There were 184 travel agencies operating in 2021, a decrease of 16 year-on-year. LV

ESTORIL SOL

# Ho's family to continue operating Portugal's biggest casinos

LYNZY VALLES

**F**AMILY of the late casino tycoon, Stanley Ho, will continue to operate two of Portugal's largest casinos after a commission jury dismissed a proposal made by a rival bidder.

This comes nearly three weeks after reports the Ho family is at risk of losing the licenses for Casino Lisboa and Casino Estoril following a higher offer from a rival bidder who proposed an additional 20 million euros per year for the 15-year concession.

Bidluck SA, the company that made the hi-



ghest bid in the tender, is involved in an illegal gambling scheme. The director of the company in Portugal, Jorge Manuel Galvão Miguel, is being tried for "illegal gambling exploitation," along with another official linked to Bidluck in Spain.

In a statement to the Portuguese stock ex-

change, incumbent concessionaire Estoril Sol said it was notified by the commission jury of the decision through a preliminary report on the proposals.

The concession may be renewed for a further five-year period.

Finansol, a holding company controlled

by members of the Ho family, owns a 57.8% stake in Estoril Sol. The chairwoman of Estoril Sol is Pansy Ho, the current managing director of MGM China. The company's revenue reached 133 million euros last year, slightly less than the 136 million euros recorded in 2020.

WHOLE PERSON DEVELOPMENT

# Melco promotes talent diversification for industry diversification needs

**M**ELCO Resorts & Entertainment continues to support local talent diversification to meet the needs of the integrated resorts industry's diversification. Implementing a systematic approach to accelerate talent growth through its Whole Person Development philosophy, Melco's dedicated talent diversification initiatives, such as its Foundation Acceleration Program (FAP) which was launched in 2015, nurture non-gaming and creative talent and contribute to industry diversification.

To date, Melco has provided over 195,000 FAP experiences to colleagues, of which 99% were taken by locals.

In collaboration with Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) and Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM), Melco recently celebrated the graduation of its 17 inaugural Culinary Foundation Acceleration Program (Culinary FAP) local colleague participants and welcomed a group of 15 colleagues who have joined the program's new term, almost a third of whom are from Melco's Table Games department.

The first 18-month Culinary FAP program has been warmly received, with approximately 90% of participants completing the program and over 50% of the graduates receiving promotions in their new roles. Introduced in 2021, Culinary FAP provides cross-functional exposure to the culinary sector for colleagues' foundation development. As Macau's first culinary program of its kind, Melco hopes to explore and nurture potential local culinary talent while contributing to the reinforcement of Macau's position as a Creative City of Gastronomy.

The event was attended by Mr. Wong Chi Hong, Director of DSAL; Dr. Fanny Vong, President of IFTM; Ms. Lei Lai Keng, Acting Deputy Director of DSAL; Dr. Connie Loi, Vice President of IFTM; Dr. Christy Ng, Assistant Professor and Coordinator for Culinary Arts Management Program of IFTM; and Ms. Wong Vai Ian, Head of Skills Training Division of DSAL.

Mr. Lawrence Ho, Chairman & CEO of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said at the event, "Talent diversification to meet the needs of the industry's diversification is a key objective of Melco's Culinary FAP. The program supports colleague trainees with the necessary culinary skills to meet the exciting prospects of the industry's development and offers career advancement opportunities."

Mr. Wong Chi Hong, Director of Labour Affairs Bureau, said,



"We appreciate Melco's support towards talent cultivation for local employees through initiatives that help to actively enhance professional skills and create conditions for upward career mobility. With talent being core to enterprise success, we were glad to work with Melco and IFTM on the inaugural Culinary FAP. The Bureau will continue to provide professional training, food safety knowledge, culinary skills certifications and other projects for Culinary FAP to help meet the industry's demand for professional culinary talent."

Dr. Fanny Vong, President of Macao Institute for Tourism Studies, said, "Macau's success as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy over the past four years has

been made possible through the concerted efforts of the government, enterprises and educational institutions. The parties have each fulfilled and utilized their respective functions and advantages to cultivate outstanding and creative culinary talent, laying the foundations for Macau's unique positioning in the development of a sustainable culture of gastronomy. Melco's FAP allows instructors to share their professional knowledge with trainee colleagues while providing an opportunity to stay up to date with the industry's latest trends for

the further enrichment of teaching and research materials."

Also, ahead of the opening of Melco's Studio City Phase 2, a spe-

**To date, Melco has provided over 195,000 Foundation Acceleration Program experiences, 99% of which were taken by local colleagues**

cial three stage FAP program has been formulated for colleagues to experience, receive exposure and enrich knowledge and skills in non-gaming hotel operations.

To date, there have been approximately 8,300 gaming colleague participations in the program to help broaden experience and perspectives and benefit personal and career development goals. The three stages of the Studio City Phase 2 FAP include Experiential Tours of the property to practice and observe typical working days in roles from various departments, Roadshows to help colleagues learn about further FAP or internal transfer opportunities, and Training for service immersion and brand training as well as on-the-job training and coaching.

According to a post-experience survey, 88% of Studio City Phase 2 FAP participants found the property tours helpful for developing a better understanding of different jobs within Melco's resorts, while 86% participants found the experience beneficial for their present roles, helping them appreciate how various departments support one another.

Melco is also aware of the importance of career development opportunities for talent retention.

The Company promotes career development through in-house opportunities, where policy mandates that most vacancies be internally posted, and where qualifications are equal, priority should be given to the internal candidate. Melco's hiring philosophy is "Hire for attitude, potential, and image, and train on skills". This approach facilitates cross-functional career paths because it relies more on transferrable

traits than prior experience of job specifics. As such, the Company has offered over 31,000 internal promotions and transfers since its inception.



LIU XIANFA

# TOP BEIJING OFFICIAL IN CITY REITERATES GOV'T'S STANCE ON MACAU

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE central government's overall jurisdiction and a high degree of autonomy in the special administrative regions should be ensured, according to Commissioner Liu Xianfa yesterday.

The Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in Macao Special Administrative Region held a press briefing at its headquarters yesterday to recap reports announced at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of China.

The briefing, held in English and presided over by Liu, saw the attendance of consuls-general in Macau, representatives from local foreign chambers of commerce, as well as local English or Portuguese press.

During the briefing, Liu highlighted that, according to the general report from the Congress, "we must ensure that the central government exercises overall jurisdiction over Hong Kong and Macau."

Liu said, "We must remain committed to law-based govern-



nance in Hong Kong and Macau and maintain constitutional order in [the two cities], as stipulated in China's Constitution and [the cities'] basic laws."

He described "One country, two systems" as "a great innovation of socialism with Chinese characteristics" and "the best institutional arrangement for ensuring sustained prosperity and

stability in Hong Kong and Macau after their return to the motherland."

He assured attendees that "[it] must be adhered to over the long term, in addition to with a high degree of autonomy." He added, "We must ensure that the capitalist system and way of life remain unchanged in Hong Kong and Macau in the long run and work

to promote long-term prosperity and stability in the two regions."

Moreover, Liu said that "Hong Kong and Macau [being] administered by patriots must be ensured and the laws and enforcement mechanisms for safeguarding national security [must] be implemented."

In terms of the form of governance, he said, "We must uphold

executive-led government in Hong Kong and Macau, and support the Chief Executives and governments of the two regions in exercising law-based administration, enhancing overall governance and management capacity, and improving judicial and legal systems."

"We will encourage Hong Kong and Macau to conduct deeper, closer and broader exchanges and cooperation with other regions and countries," Liu noted. "We will continue to develop the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and support Hong Kong and Macau in better integrating themselves into China's overall development and playing a greater role in realizing national rejuvenation."

In addition, Liu said, "We will inspire more people in Hong Kong and Macau to love both the country and their own regions, be more patriotic, and forge a broader united front at home and abroad in support of the One country, two systems policy."

"We will crack down hard on anti-China elements that attempt to create chaos in Hong Kong and Macau," the Commissioner warned. "We will take resolute action to prevent and stop interference in the affairs of Hong Kong and Macau by external forces."

He also said that "[China has] pursued a more proactive strategy of opening up."

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Chinese State Councilor and Minister of National Defense Wei Fenghe (right) holds talks with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu in July 2021

DIPLOMACY

# Chinese, Russia defense chiefs hold telephone conference

**C**HINESE Defense Minister Wei Fenghe held a recent telephone call with his Russia counterpart, Sergei Shoigu, to “exchange views on international and regional issues of mutual concern,” an official said yesterday.

Speaking at a monthly briefing, Defense Ministry spokesperson Col. Tan Ke-fei gave no further details

and did not say exactly when the call took place.

China has “tacitly backed Russia in its aggression against Ukraine, accusing the U.S. and NATO of provoking the conflict and refusing to refer to it as an invasion in deference to Moscow,” observers say. But China has stopped short of providing Russia with arms or becoming directly invol-

ved in the conflict.

Just weeks before Russia’s February invasion, Chinese President Xi Jinping issued a joint statement with Russian President Vladimir Putin saying their countries had a “no limits” friendship.

Putin reaffirmed that relationship most recently in a congratulatory message to Xi on Sunday on his receiving an unprecedented

third term as head of the Communist Party of China.

Shoigu called his counterparts in India and China on Wednesday to share Moscow’s concern about “possible Ukrainian provocations involving a ‘dirty bomb,’” according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

China and Russia have increasingly aligned their foreign policies in opposition to the U.S.-led Western world order. However, Russia’s setbacks in its invasion have seen Beijing take an increasingly dominant role in the relationship, although China is also currently dealing with a faltering economy.

The Russian invasion has refocused attention on China’s threat to use military force to annex Taiwan, the self-governing island republic and close U.S. ally that it claims as its own territory.

Taiwan has joined the U.S. and its allies in backing Ukraine. On Wednesday, Taiwanese minister Joseph Wu said Taipei would offer an additional \$56 million to Kyiv to reconstruct schools, hospitals and other infrastructure destroyed by Russia. Taiwan will also offer scholarships for Ukrainians to study on the island, Wu said.

Ukrainian legislator Kira Rudik, who is part of a delegation visiting Taiwan this week, said the island “could be the next front in the fight for democracy.”

“This is why we need to support each other, this is why we are getting closer and closer in our relationship. We are going to win this war together,” Rudik was quoted as saying by Taiwan’s Central News Agency. **MDT/AP**



TECH WAR

# Hard-drive maker Seagate Tech faces sanctions warning

**S**EAGATE Technology said yesterday the U.S. Department of Commerce has warned it may charge the computer hard-drive maker with violating restrictions on exports of high-tech products to China.

The company said in an SEC filing that it rejected the allegations. It says its hard disc-drives are not subject to U.S. Export Administration regulations, but troubles over the issue could affect its business.

“Seagate believes it has complied with all relevant export control laws and regulations,” it said.

Seagate said the allegation is over sales between August 2020 and September 2021 to “a customer and its affiliates.” It did not name the customer,

however, Seagate is a major supplier of hard drives to telecoms equipment giant Huawei Technologies, a major target of U.S. export controls.

The other major supplier, Western Digital, stopped sales to Huawei in 2019, not long after it had signed a strategic partnership with the Chinese company, the biggest maker of network gear for phone and internet carriers.

Huawei did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In reporting lower profit and revenues for its fiscal first quarter, Seagate said it was reducing its headcount by 3,000 people as part of a restructuring. It cited global uncertainties and slower demand. **MDT/AP**

**C**HINESE tech giant Huawei’s revenue rose in the latest quarter as infrastructure sales helped to offset damage to its smartphone business under U.S. sanctions, according to figures released yesterday.

Revenue in the first nine months of 2022 declined 2.2% from a year earlier to 445.8 billion yuan (\$63.1 billion), according to the company, the biggest maker of network gear for phone and internet carriers. Based on data released earlier, that suggested third-quarter revenue rose 6.5% from a year ago to 144.2 billion (\$19.9 billion).

Huawei Technologies

ECONOMY

# HUAWEI SAYS REVENUE DOWN 2.2% SO FAR THIS YEAR

Ltd., China’s first global tech brand, has struggled since then-President Donald Trump blocked access to U.S. processor chips and other technology in 2019. The company denies American accusations it is a security risk and might facilitate Chinese spying.

Huawei has stepped up development of network technology for autos, hospitals, mines and manufacturing. It says that is less vulnerable to U.S. sanctions.

The company said its

profit margin for the first nine months of 2022 was 6.1%, which would be about 27 billion yuan (\$3.7 billion). It said that was a decline from the previous year but gave no details.

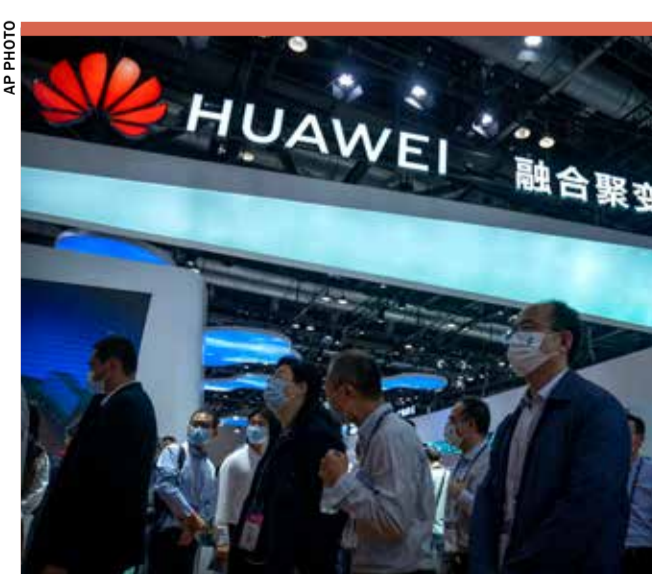
“The decline in our device business continued to slow down, and our ICT infrastructure business maintained steady growth,” said Eric Xu, one of three Huawei executives who take turns as chairman, in a statement.

This year “may prove to be the most challenging”

for smartphones and other devices, a separate company statement said. It gave no sales details.

Huawei’s auto venture has played a role in five models released by three Chinese automakers. Huawei supplies components and software for navigation, dashboard displays, managing vehicle systems and other services.

Huawei, founded in 1987, says it is owned by the Chinese citizens who make up half of its global workforce of 195,000. **MDT/AP**



## NEW ZEALAND

# Russia may again block Antarctic marine protections

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

**D**ELEGATIONS from Russia and Ukraine are among those meeting in Australia this week to decide the future of Antarctica's pristine waters.

Conservationists say new marine protected areas and rules to prevent overfishing are desperately needed, but that Russia could use its veto-like powers to once again block progress.

Achieving the required consensus for action among this diverse group of 27, which also includes China, the United States and the European Union, has always been an immense challenge.

And when two of the members are at war — and relations between China and many Western nations have deteriorated — consensus looms as an even bigger obstacle. Just this month, Russian bombing in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, partially destroyed Ukraine's Antarctic research center.

Yet despite the enormous political hurdles, some remain hopeful that scientific arguments will win through. The U.S. is paying more attention to the region under President Joe Biden, and this year has sent a relatively high-level delegation led by Monica Medina, an assistant secretary in the State Department.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Medina said Antarctica was "a really fragile, crumbling part of the planet that needs all our help to withstand the challenges we face with climate change."

The meeting in Hobart in the Australian island state of Tasmania is the first in-person gathering of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resource in three years, after the COVID-19 pandemic kept meetings online.

It comes as New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern makes a rare visit by a world leader to Antarctica, to see firsthand the scientific research taking place and to mark the 65th anniversary of New Zealand's Scott Base.

The two-week meeting in Hobart began Monday with a mass walkout when the



Aerial view of New Zealand's Scott Base in Antarctica late 2011

Aerial view of New Zealand's Scott Base in Antarctica late 2011

Russian delegates started speaking. Kostiantyn Demianenko, who is leading the Ukrainian delegation, said they were grateful for the international support and that Russia had no right to be at the table.

"A state that kills the civilian population, destroys the air and ground civilian infrastructure of another country and defiantly violates the basic provisions of international law should definitely be limited in its right to participate in the activities of international organizations such as CCAMLR," he wrote in an email.

Still, he acknowledged, Russia remained a member of the group.

He said that back home, Ukraine was trying to rebuild its National Antarctic Research Center in Kyiv, although ongoing drone attacks made that difficult.

"Cracks in the walls, broken windows, destroyed equipment led to the impossibility to use these facilities for work," he wrote.

Russia's delegation did not respond to a request for comment.

Medina said the U.S. backed the walkout because it condemns the war in Ukraine, but it remains hopeful for progress in Hobart.

"Right now, Russia is blocking consensus on adoption of three MPA (marine protected area) proposals, but China is as well," Medina said. "So we are here trying to work through the issues with both countries. Not one-on-one necessarily, although

we will be trying with the People's Republic of China to work through the issues informally."

She said Russia had been using what amounts to its veto power to block progress not only in Hobart but at a number of international forums.

"It can block consensus. That is a huge impediment to our ability to move forward on some things here, but other things do go ahead in a sort of ordinary course of business," Medina said.

Some hope the group could make progress on other agenda items, including new rules on krill fishing and reaching agreement on fishing for valuable Antarctic toothfish, marketed as Chilean sea bass.

Andrea Kavanagh, who directs the Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy Project's Antarctic and Southern Ocean protection work, said the problem with krill fishing around Antarctica has been that it's almost all concentrated in one small area.

She said the depletion of the small, shrimp-like creatures affects predators including seabirds, penguins, seals and whales. She said the fishery doesn't necessarily need to be reduced, just spread out.

Kavanagh said Norway is the biggest fisher of krill, which is used for human health supplements and feed for aquariums and salmon farms.

"It's not a food security issue," Kavanagh said. "Krill is used for luxury products."

Russia last year used its veto-like powers to reject the toothfish catch limits proposed by the commission's scientists. That led to Britain taking its own action by issuing licenses without CCAMLR approval, putting it offside with many other members.

Medina said Britain had been trying to sell some of the toothfish in America but the U.S. had refused to buy it. But she said it was not up to the U.S. to tell Britain to stop its fishing.

She said Britain's fishing was "within the bounds of what had been permitted in the past, and should not in any way be controversial other than the fact that Russia has blocked it."

One bright spot of the meeting so far has been that discussions with China appeared to have been more positive than in previous years, said Kavanagh. It was also helpful to have high-level support from the U.S. and resume face-to-face discussions, she said.

She pointed out the group had managed before to get Russia on board, back in 2016 when it created a marine protected area twice the size of Texas in the Ross Sea.

Countries should not interpret consensus as a veto power, Kavanagh added, but rather should offer counterproposals so everyone works toward a compromise.

But in recent years, she said, "nobody's offering counterproposals that are legitimate. It's all just 'No.'" MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1979 CHAIRMAN HUA ARRIVES IN LONDON



The first Chinese leader to visit Britain, Chairman Hua Kuo-Feng, has arrived in London at the start of a six-day visit.

He was welcomed at Heathrow airport by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who paid tribute to China as a "great and historical nation which has a crucial role to play in world affairs".

She said the two countries enjoyed a "close understanding in many fields" and she hoped their talks would further improve relations.

In his reply, Chairman Hua stressed "the important role Western Europe has to play in defending world peace".

He said this was why China had given "high priority to the development of good relations with the West European countries".

Chairman Hua was given the kind of treatment usually reserved only for royalty and presidents.

The Coldstream Guards formed a guard of honour before he was taken to the luxury Claridges hotel, where he and his party will be staying.

Chairman Hua has an invitation to lunch at Buckingham Palace where the Queen will personally take him on a tour of the state rooms.

This is the Chinese leader's first visit to the non-Communist world, apart from a short stay in Iran before Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was forced into exile.

During his visit, he is expected to discuss trade, various bilateral issues, including the future of Hong Kong, and world peace.

It is hoped he and Mrs Thatcher will sign a number of deals, including an air services agreement giving Chinese airlines the rights to fly to Britain.

Trade issues are expected to focus on the process of modernisation in China - in particular improvements to its armed forces, transport infrastructure and industry.

The Chinese delegation will pay a visit to Rolls Royce in Derby, BP and British Rail's technical centre.

Chairman Hua, who spent 20 years of his life in the Chinese agricultural sector, will also be shown a farm in Wallingford, Oxfordshire, and fit in a quick visit to Oxford University, before flying on to Rome on Saturday.

He has already spent a week each in France and West Germany.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

In an interview before his visit to Western Europe, Chairman Hua was quoted as saying he wanted to see for himself the reality of advanced economic, scientific and technological experience to see how they could benefit China's modernisation programme.

The trip paved the way to improved relations between Britain and China.

Official negotiations on the future of Hong Kong began in 1982 and were completed with the handover on 1 July 1997.

The Queen became the first British monarch to visit China in 1986.

China has since become of the world's leading growth economies, prompting greater trading links with the West.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES** Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Your high energy, original ideas, and excellent memory will aid your accomplishments. Sentimental feelings may make it difficult to get much done at work.

**TAURUS** Apr. 20-May. 20  
You can expect changes in your financial situation as well as in your status. You could be disillusioned if you let relative in on your emotional thoughts.

**GEMINI** May. 21-Jun. 21  
Acceptance will be necessary. Curb or cut out that bad habit you've been meaning to do something about. Someone you work with may be withholding valuable information.

**CANCER** Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Hassles with in-laws could put a damper on your day. You must deal with an emotional problem with your loved one that you have been avoiding for some time now.

**LEO** Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Loved ones may be annoyed if they feel restricted. Put your energy into home renovations. Friends and relatives may be hard to take today.

**VIRGO** Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Get together with people who stimulate you mentally. Concentrate on spending quality time with children and friends. Do a little shopping. You're likely to find a real bargain.

**LIBRA** Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Arguments could prevail. Opportunities may come up at prestigious affairs. Don't go hog wild when it comes to entertainment or you could find yourself short of funds at the end of the month.

**SCORPIO** Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Changes could be overwhelming. Your need to get away could lead you into greater debt. You may be experiencing emotional turmoil in regard to your mate.

**SAGITTARIUS** Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Sudden changes in your financial situation are likely. Don't let coworkers interfere with your objectives. You should make special plans for you and your lover.

**CAPRICORN** Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Your ability to be a self starter will help get things done and motivate others. Avoid disputes with family; their complaints can't change anything anyway. Changes at home will be necessary.

**AQUARIUS** Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Too much talk might lead to hassles. Minor health problems will cause setbacks if you haven't taken proper care of yourself. Problems with in-laws or relatives may be more damaging than you realize.

**PISCES** Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Hobbies will be good for your emotional well being. Avoid being intimately involved with clients or colleagues. Discord could be unnerving.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

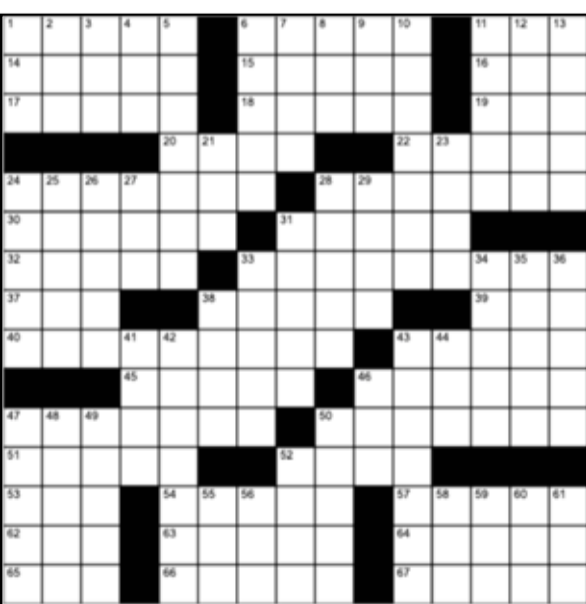
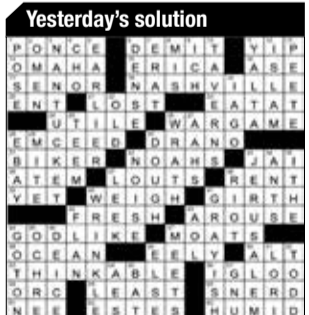
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	7	17	cloudy
Changchun	-4	8	fine
Chengdu	14	16	rain
Chongqing	16	21	overcast
Fuzhou	21	27	overcast
Guangzhou	18	31	fine
Guiyang	9	13	rain
Haikou	21	27	cloudy
Hangzhou	17	18	rain
Harbin	-5	8	fine
Hefei	12	20	overcast
Nanjing	14	21	cloudy
Shanghai	16	20	overcast
Taipei	21	24	rain
Wuhan	14	17	rain
Hong Kong	23	28	clear
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	7	9	rain
Frankfurt	11	22	overcast
Paris	16	24	overcast
London	12	19	cloudy
New York	6	14	overcast

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS** 1- Toothed wheels; 6- Michael of R.E.M.; 11- Scale notes; 14- Pending; 15- Ornamental coronet; 16- "You've got mail" co.; 17- "Lovergirl" singer \_\_\_ Marie; 18- Conger catcher; 19- Stab; 20- Burn slightly; 22- Roofing stone; 24- Duped; 28- Student; 30- Pay as due; 31- Pandemonium; 32- Glacial ridge; 33- Artisan; 37- Go head to head; 38- Still in the game; 39- Language ending; 40- Disqualify; 43- Aids; 45- Fastening device; 46- Carte blanche offer; 47- Movable cupboard; 50- Lounges; 51- Inclined; 52- Ale, e.g.; 53- Mil. officers; 54- Wears; 57- Overhead; 62- IV sites; 63- Viscounts' superiors; 64- Cupressus; 65- Heartache; 66- \_\_\_ Island; 67- "Hyperion" poet;

**DOWN** 1- Kind of reaction; 2- Hydrocarbon ending; 3- Corroded; 4- Oysters \_\_\_ season; 5- Shirker; 6- Lieu; 7- Stratum; 8- Proverb ending?; 9- Historic beginning; 10- Hearing distance; 11- Causing death; 12- Main artery; 13- More devious; 21- Not him; 23- A pitcher may take one; 24- Rome's Fontana di \_\_\_; 25- Gum; 26- Signed; 27- Alphabet trio; 28- Remove hair; 29- Latte spot; 31- Brittle; 33- Shut; 34- Donnybrook; 35- Easy \_\_\_; 36- Bird homes; 38- On \_\_\_ with; 41- Desktop image; 42- Slide; 43- Frame for hanging headgears; 44- 911 respondent; 46- Word used to precede a woman's maiden name; 47- Permit; 48- Back in; 49- Pool stroke; 50- Have a feeling about; 52- Not fearful; 55- Exclamation of relief; 56- Hit sign; 58- Honey insect; 59- Room within a harem; 60- Large container; 61- Trauma ctrs.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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



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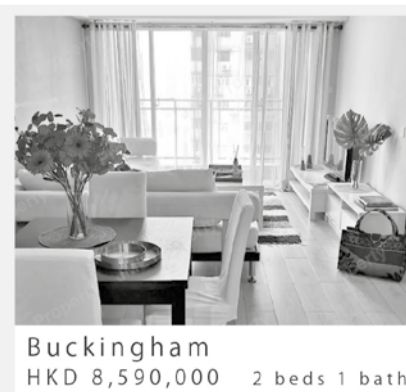
**jml property**  
RENT



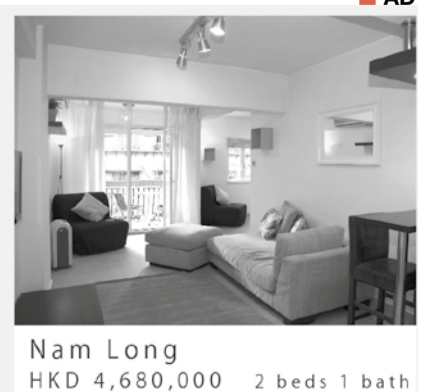
Hellene Garden  
HKD 7,680,000 3 beds 2 bath



Buckingham  
HKD 8,590,000 2 beds 1 bath



Nam Long  
HKD 4,680,000 2 beds 1 bath



AD

tTUNES

# TAYLOR SWIFT GETS DARK, ELECTRIC ON 'MIDNIGHTS'

ALL of me changed like midnight," Taylor Swift confesses halfway through her latest album, the aptly named and moody "Midnights." It's a moment on the electric "Midnight Rain" that finds lyricist Swift at her best, reminding you of her unparalleled ability to make any emotion feel universal.

The song's chorus begins: "He was sunshine, I was midnight rain." And continues: "He wanted it comfortable, I wanted that pain. He wanted a bride, I was making my own name. Chasing that fame. He stayed the same." Then, that lyric: "All of me changed like midnight." The sound feels experimental for Swift, opening with her own vocals artificially pitched down to an almost-unrecognizable tone. It's among the album's most sonically interesting, an indie-pop beat that feels reminiscent of her producer Jack Antonoff's work on Lorde's "Melodrama," but also fresh and captivating.

The song's words, by Swift and Antonoff, are steady and detailed, but not distracting —

allowing you to sink into the rhythm, flowing and feeling it with her.

On the 13 tracks of "Midnights," a self-aware Swift shows off her ability to evolve again. And in typical Swift fashion, she had more surprises up her sleeve — dropping an additional seven bonus tracks and a music video for "Anti-Hero" hours after "Midnights" released.

For her 10th original album, the 32-year-old pop star approaches the themes she's grown up writing about — love, loss, childhood, fame — with a maturity that comes through in sharpened vocals and lyrics focused more on her inner-life than external persona.

"Midnight Rain" could be a thesis statement for the project she's described as songs written during "13 sleepless nights," an appropriate approach to the concept album for someone who has long had a lyrical appreciation for late nights (think "Style": "midnight, you come and pick me up, no headlights..."). Of course, she's

centered her work around themes before — on "Red," an ode to the color and the emotions it stands for, "reputation," a vindictive reconfiguring of her own, and most recently on "folklore" and "evermore," quarantine albums that expressed vulnerability in ways only isolation could.

But Swift presents "Midnights" as something different: a collection of songs that don't necessarily have to go together, but fit together because she has declared them products of late night inspiration. Positioning listeners situationally — in the quiet but thoughtful darkness of night — instead of thematically, feels like a natural creative experiment for a songwriter so prolific that her albums have become synonymous with the pop culture zeitgeist.

And with that, comes a tone that is just a little darker, a little more experimental, and always electric.

Track one, "Lavender Haze," pairs a muffled club beat and high-pitched backing vocals

AP PHOTO



Taylor Swift "Midnights" (Republic Records)

from Antonoff with a stand-out, beckoning melody from Swift. "Maroon" is a grown-up and weathered version of "Red," a dive into lost love with rich descriptions of rust, spilled wine, red lipstick — images Swift is reconjuring with more bite.

"Labyrinth" makes clear she's carried the best of her previous pop experiments with her — the synth of "1989" and the softer alternative sounds of "folklore" — as she admits as only a songwriter can that a hear-

tbreak "only feels this raw right now, lost in the labyrinth of my mind," on top of a track featuring Bon Iver-esque electronic trills.

Swift shines when she is able to marry her signature lyrical musings with this new arena of electronic beats. And while this isn't another album of acoustic indie sounds like "folklore," it is clear that Swift has taken a step forward in the indie-pop genre — even if it's a step in a different direction. ELISE RYAN, MDT/AP

AD

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DRIVE IN

# A 1960s underground abortion network in 'Call Jane'

JAKE COYLE,  
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

**I**N Phyllis Nagy's "Call Jane," Joy (Elizabeth Banks) is a 1960s housewife married to a defense attorney (Chris Messina) with a teenage daughter (Grace Edwards) and a baby on the way. A heart condition, though, threatens her life in childbirth. The only treatment, her doctor tells her, is "to not be pregnant."

When they, acting on the doctor's advice, appeal to the hospital's board for permission to conduct a therapeutic termination, this critical moment in Joy's life passes curtly. The all-male board members discuss it briefly while not acknowledging Joy, across the table. "No regard for her mother?" she asks. Their votes sound the answer. "No." "No." "No." "Call Jane," which opens in theaters Friday, is set more than 50 years ago but it could hardly be more up-to-the-minute. Following the Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade earlier this year, abortion — which Pennsylvania Senate Republican candidate Dr. Mehmet Oz recently described as between "a woman, her doctor and local political leaders" — is again a hotly debated issue in upcoming elections.

Nagy, the screenwriter of Todd Haynes' radiant '50s-set 2015 drama "Carol," again illustrates how the past can illuminate the present. "Call Jane," made before the end of Roe v. Wade but when its future was increasingly precarious, dramatizes the Jane Collective, a Chicago network of women activists who in the years before legalized abortion, clandestinely helped other women obtain safe abortions.

"Call Jane" is just one of the films about abortion rights that by happenstance have debuted this year. Audrey Diwan's piercing "Happening," about a young



Elizabeth Banks in a scene from "Call Jane"

woman in 1963 France, remains one of 2022's standouts. Tia Lessin and Emma Pildes' HBO documentary "The Janes" grippingly recalled the Jane Collective, with colorful reflections from the women who helped run it.

"Call Jane," the glossiest of the bunch, lacks the vivid detail of "The Janes" or the riveting visual intimacy of Diwan's movie. But all three films bear an of-the-moment urgency and a deep sense of empathy for the adversities faced by women whose choice has been taken from them. "Call Jane" distinguishes itself as a stirring portrait of the birth of an unlikely abortion-rights activist.

Banks, always good but especially strong here, plays a woman who looks more '50s than '60s. But she is slowly awakening to the changing times. In the opening scene, she walks through an elegant hotel lobby with sumptuous music playing — a moment that would fit right in in "Carol" — only to be struck at the raucous sound of women protesting outside. "You can feel a shifting current," she tells her husband.

Their family life is traditional, loving and

— aside from a Velvet Underground record — conservative. Centering the story on a straight-and-narrow character like Joy is, itself, a reminder of the wide spectrum of people who might one day reluctantly seek an abortion. Joy's options, initially, are terrible. "There's always insanity," the doctor tells her. One woman suggests: "Just fall down a staircase."

It's a paper ad at a bus stop that brings Joy to Jane. After a hesitant phone call, she's brought to their offices by blindfold. But "Call Jane" doesn't play up the covert aspect of the group's activities. Nagy instead stays focused on Joy's awakening to a wider world of female fellowship that's more frank about sex and its repercussions. Virginia (Sigourney Weaver) is the group's leader and a natural hippie foil to Joy. She calls Joy "Jackie O." Soon after Joy's own procedure, Virginia lures Joy into volunteering with the collective. At first, Joy isn't entirely convinced. One young woman who comes to Jane is having unprotected sex with a married man, Joy is appalled to learn. But Virginia lays down the law: "We help

women. We don't ask any questions."

"Call Jane" loosens up

notably inside the collective, a varied group of women that inclu-

des a Black Power activist (Wunmi Mosaku) and a nun who fields phone calls (Aida Turitto). There may have been more possibilities here for the film, which spends a lot of time with the group's less valorous doctor (Cory Michael Smith), who performs the procedures. But that, too, becomes part of Joy's storyline, as she gets more and more deeply involved with Jane. For Joy, it's more than a cause. For the first time, she realizing her own power.

There are probably many more stories that could be told about the Jane collective, which facilitated an estimated 12,000 abortions in the years before Roe v. Wade. But few know how to tease out threads of repression in a society like Nagy. The conventional approach of "Call Jane" is a statement, itself. This could be anyone's story.

"Call Jane," a Roadside Attractions release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for some language and brief drug use. Running time: 121 minutes. ★★★★★

AD

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**

Xin Ping, China Daily

**DEMOCRACY DIES  
 WHEN MONEY  
 KNOCKS ON THE DOOR**

Dark money is pouring into the US political arena as the 2022 midterm elections approach. According to The New York Times, Barre Seid, a secretive electronics magnate, has donated a record \$1.65 billion to a new conservative nonprofit led by the Co-Chairman of the Federalist Society Leonard Leo, an activist who has used his connections to Republican donors and politicians to help engineer the conservative dominance of the Supreme Court and to finance manipulation over abortion rights, voting rules and climate change policy. As CNN reports, this is the largest single contribution ever made to a politically focused nonprofit.

"There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money, and I can't remember what the second one is". Senator Mark Hanna said in 1895 when he talked about his success in helping William McKinley win the US presidential election twice. Not shying away from the truth, he told the secret of the long-standing "money politics" in the United States.

In various elections across the US, it takes a lot of money to remind the public of a candidate's existence.

How much does it cost to become President of the United States? In 2004, \$700 million was spent in total. In 2008, that figure quickly rose to \$1 billion, and in 2012, it doubled to \$2 billion. In 2016, a total of \$6.6 billion was spent on US elections, both presidential and congressional. In 2020, the figure soared to nearly \$14 billion, a record high.

There is no such thing as a free lunch in the world. As dark money pours in, it will undoubtedly influence the behavior of candidates, the attitudes of political parties and the decisions of the government. Take gun control as an example. As the "boss" of the anti-gun control bloc, with more than 5 million members and a scandalous amount of money, the National Rifle Association (NRA) has penetrated deeply into all levels and all areas of American electoral politics. Interest groups such as the NRA continue to provide enormous political donations, lobbying politicians and hindering gun control legislation.

Why hasn't Martin Luther King's dream come true after 59 years? Why is the racial-economic divide still widening and inequality increasing? Why are African Americans and other people of color so much more impoverished than white people? Why do anti-Asian hate crimes occur frequently, discrimination against Muslims continues unabated and racial-profiling persists? The deep-seated cause of such injustice is that the US government and political parties have been under the thumb of interest groups for a long time, while the disadvantaged have little, if any, influence.

Noam Chomsky, a social critic, political activist and Institute Professor Emeritus at MIT, has pointed to a positive correlation between Americans' influence over policy-making and their level of wealth. About 70 percent of Americans have no such influence at all.

Although on the surface everyone has a vote in the elections, a few people actually have disproportionate sway over the outcome of the elections. "This extraordinary flow of huge contributions is providing the "Super Rich" with magnified influence over elections and corrupting influence over government decisions. It is also creating deep cynicism among the American people about their interests being fairly represented in Washington. This is not the way our democracy is meant to work or the way our country is meant to be governed," said Fred Wertheimer, the Founder of the nonprofit and nonpartisan organization Democracy 21.

From "Occupy Wall Street" to "Black Lives Matter", the justice American people have been longing for remains elusive. Perhaps the knocking of dark money is too loud for American politicians to hear the voice of the people. As the 39th US President Jimmy Carter put it: "We've become now an oligarchy. Democracy is dead".

[Abridged]

China has reportedly established dozens of "overseas police stations" in nations around the world that activists fear could be used to track and harass dissidents as part of Beijing's crackdown on corruption.

The Dutch government said this week it was looking into whether two such police stations — one a virtual office in Amsterdam and the other at a physical address in Rotterdam — were established in the Netherlands.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said yesterday that Beijing wasn't doing anything wrong. "Chinese public security authorities strictly observe the international law and fully respect the judicial sovereignty of other countries," Mao said.

"We are investigating the activities of these so-called police centers. Once there is more clarity on the matter, we will decide on appropriate action," the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement sent to the AP.

Another Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, described the foreign outposts identified by Safeguard Defenders as service stations for Chinese people who are abroad and in need of help with, for instance, renewing their driver's licenses.

Wang added that China also has cracked down on what he called transnational crimes but said the operation was conducted in line with international law.



In this photo taken from video, Garry Pang Moon-yuen is seen outside the West Kowloon Court on Nov. 29, 2021

**HONG KONGERS WHO  
 CLAPPED IN COURT JAILED  
 ON SEDITION CHARGES**

**KANIS LEUNG,  
 HONG KONG**

**T**WO Hong Kong residents, including a pastor, were found guilty of sedition and sentenced to jail yesterday for clapping and criticizing a judge during a previous trial over a banned vigil in the city.

The Rev. Garry Pang Moon-yuen and Chiu Mei-ying, a housewife, were arrested in April for disturbances during a court hearing in January in which a leader of a group that organized a vigil commemorating China's 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square was sentenced for inciting others to join the prohibited event last year.

Hong Kong is undergoing a political crackdown following widespread anti-government protests in 2019 and the imposition of a National Security Law in 2020, with many prominent democracy activists arrested and jailed.

In addition to the National Security Law, a growing number of dissidents have been charged with sedition under a colonial-era law.

Instead of being charged with contempt of court, Pang and Chiu were accused of uttering seditious words. Pang reportedly told the judge "You have lost your conscience" and Chiu reportedly accused the magistrate of not complying with the law and deciding the case arbitrarily.

Magistrate Cheng Lim-chi convicted the two for attempting to make others feel hate and contempt toward the administration of justice, saying their comments were "definitely not a slip of tongue."

Pang was also found guilty on an additional charge of acting with seditious intention for YouTube videos he published between 2020 and this year. In the videos he criticized how judges handled other cases, the court heard.

He was sentenced to

one year in prison for his two convictions, while Chiu was ordered to serve a three-month jail term.

Sedition is punishable by up to two years in jail for a first offense and three years for a subsequent offense.

This past June, authorities banned the annual commemoration for a third consecutive year in what was seen as a move to snuff out political dissent and a sign that Hong Kong is losing its freedoms as Beijing tightens its grip over the semi-autonomous city.

The World Justice Project announced on Wednesday that Hong Kong has fallen three places to 22nd in the world in its latest Rule of Law Index.

A Hong Kong government spokesman on Wednesday said the city's ranking was still better than some Western countries, which he said have "unreasonably" criticized the rule of law in Hong Kong. He said the ranking change could stem from a lack of understanding of the city. **MDT/AP**

**Qatar** will drop most of its coronavirus restrictions beginning Nov. 1, just before it hosts the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Qatar's Health Ministry made the announcement Wednesday. In a statement, it said that PCR or rapid-antigen test results would not be required for those flying into the country.



**Russia** Moscow-appointed authorities have fled the capital of southern Ukraine's Kherson region along with tens of thousands of residents as Ukrainian forces attacked Russia's hold on the city yesterday while fighting also intensified in the country's east. Amid the battles, a senior Russian official warned that Western commercial satellites used for military purposes in support of Ukraine were a "legitimate target for a retaliatory strike."

**Germany** The European Central Bank piled on another outsized interest rate hike aimed at squelching out-of-control inflation, increasing rates yesterday at the fastest pace in the euro currency's history and raising questions about how far the bank intends to go with the threat of recession looming over the economy. The 25-member governing council raised its interest rate benchmarks by three-quarters of a percentage point at a meeting in Frankfurt, matching its record increase from last month and joining the U.S. Federal Reserve in making a series of rapid hikes to tackle soaring consumer prices.



**Poland** yesterday dismantled four communist-era monuments to Red Army soldiers in a renewed drive to remove symbols of Moscow's post-World War II domination and to stress its condemnation of Moscow's war on neighboring Ukraine. Workers used drills and heavy equipment to destroy the 1945 monuments at four different locations across Poland. Most of them were in the form of concrete obelisks dedicated to Red Army soldiers who fell while fighting to defeat Nazi German troops.