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HO IAT SENG CALLS FOR 'EXTRA EFFORT' TO PUT 'ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS' INTO DAILY PRACTICE AT MSAR'S 23RD ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY

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MACAU-PLATED CARS TO START DRIVING IN GUANGDONG FROM JANUARY 1

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CHINA LIMITS HOW IT DEFINES COVID FATALITIES

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AP PHOTO



Afghanistan Taliban security forces in Kabul enforced a higher education ban for women by blocking their access to universities, with video obtained by AP showing women weeping and consoling each other outside one campus in Kabul. The country's Taliban rulers a day earlier ordered women nationwide to stop attending private and public universities effective immediately and until further notice. The Taliban-led administration has not given a reason for the ban or reacted to the fierce and swift global condemnation of it.

AP PHOTO



Thailand Rescuers found a survivor and recovered five bodies from a Thai warship that sank over the weekend in the Gulf of Thailand, navy officials said, as hopes faded for two dozen people still missing. Officials acknowledged there were not enough life jackets for all those aboard. The HTMS Sukhothai, a corvette in service for 35 years, sank Sunday night in rough seas with 105 people aboard. The navy said an earlier tally of 106 people on board was incorrect because one sailor failed to join the journey.

Yemen The Red Cross had conducted rare visits to thousands of prisoners on both sides of Yemen's eight-year civil war, a step that could pave the way for an exchange of detainees between the rival parties. Fabrizio Carboni, Red Cross's director for the Middle East, told AP that members of the organization had seen more than 3,400 individuals in visits to facilities in Saudi Arabia and Yemen's capital, Sanaa. Red Cross had been allowed access to some of the most "secret and sensitive places" in each country, and will be able to inform many detainees' loved ones of their whereabouts.

More on backpage

THE SERIOUSLY ILL

While most cases are mild or asymptomatic, some 100 of over 300 Covid-19 hospitalized patients are in critical condition, according to health authorities

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THE CONVERSATION WHO IS AT THE MANGER?

THE MARIAN LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON



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AP PHOTO



IF GGR TOPS MOP180B...
OPERATORS FACE EXTRA 20% INVESTMENT IN NON-GAMING

P5



A handmade Nativity from Kyrgyzstan by an unknown artisan. Instead of a stable, it features a yurt, the traditional home of nomadic Kyrgyz people

WHO IS AT THE MANGER?

NATIVITY SETS AROUND THE WORLD SHOW EACH CULTURE'S TAKE ON THE CHRISTMAS STORY

KAYLA HARRIS &
NEOMI DE ANDA
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

FOR many Christians around the world, celebrating the Nativity, or the birth of Jesus Christ, is the most important part of the Christmas season.

Among the most common Christmas traditions are small sets of figures depicting Joseph, Mary and Jesus that are displayed in individual homes, and live reenactments of the manger scene in communities and churches. While Nativity sets focus on the holy family, they can also include an angel, the three wise men bringing gifts, shepherds or some barnyard animals.

Around the world, it is common to see particular cultural and religious traditions incorporated through the materials used, the types of gifts presented to Jesus, or the people and animals present at the manger.

The Marian Library at the University of Dayton has over 3,600 Nativity sets, also

known as “crèches,” the French word for cribs. These Nativities are used to promote the study of culture and religion. Since one of us is a curator for this collection and the other is a religious studies scholar, we often notice how Nativities can be used to both depict the birth of Jesus and convey unique cultural beliefs.

TROUBLEMAKERS IN SCANDINAVIA

In Nordic folklore, “the tomte,” or “nisse,” is a small creature that looks rather like a garden gnome figurine. These long-bearded, red-capped little lads are associated with Yule, the celebration of the winter solstice in pre-Christian northern Europe.

While these folklore figures were often believed to be quite helpful around a farm, even doing chores in secret at night, they also have a mischievous or sometimes even scary side. For example, in one legend a young farm girl decides to put butter at the bottom of the porridge bowl left out for the nisse, instead

of on top. The nisse was so angry he immediately went and killed the farm's best cow. Once he discovered the butter at the bottom, he felt remorse, and to remedy the situation he stole a cow from the neighboring farm.

In Iceland, the mythical creatures are called Yule Lads, and they visit children's homes in the lead-up to Christmas. A 2003 Nativity scene by Icelandic crafter and artisan Kristin Karolina blends the two holiday traditions, depicting the birth of Jesus with a band of troublemakers. Made of knitted wool and sheepskin, the mischief-makers are licking the porridge spoon and stealing the Christmas meal through the chimney with a fishing pole.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Across the Atlantic, a different type of troublemaker can be found in Nativities: Devils are a common feature in Christmas rituals across Latin America.

Devils at the Nativity are a

physical representation of evil in the world, even in the presence of the Christ child. They sometimes specifically represent what Catholic teachings consider “the seven deadly sins”: lust, greed, pride, envy, gluttony, sloth and wrath.

The devil can be found in other popular religious traditions of the Advent and Christmas seasons. One of these practices is the appearance of the devil as a character in a “pastorela,” a popular Mexican dramatic portrayal of the shepherds making their way to visit Jesus. In these Nativity plays, a devil character plays tricks and sets obstacles in the shepherds' path, trying to keep them from Bethlehem.

Some pastorelas are set in modern times, with the devil role highlighting human sinfulness. But these plays end with a hopeful message: the love, peace and joy in the church's teaching that God became human.

Another practice called “la quema del diablo,” or “burning of the devil,” is held in Guatemala. Individuals and

groups set fires in front of their homes and around their communities to symbolize cleansing the world of all evil. It is held on Dec. 7, in anticipation of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8. This feast celebrates the church's teaching that the Virgin Mary herself was conceived without sin, preparing her to become the mother of God.

ALIKE IN THE EYES OF GOD

Contrasted against the vivid colors and expressions in the Latin American depictions, Nativities representing the Amish culture in the United States often feature faceless figures in plain clothing. Amish teachings highly value humility and simplicity – many churches, for example, forbid individuals to pose for a face-on photograph, as this can be seen as a form of pride. Even Amish dolls for children are often created without individual faces.

While each Nativity set incorporates a different set of values and beliefs surrounding the birth of Christ, they are all examples of taking tenets of faith, which can often be abstract ideas, and representing them physically. And for many Christians, such traditions help represent their beliefs in a particularly powerful way: by picturing Jesus within their own culture.

MDT/AP

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COVID-19

30% of hospitalized patients considered 'severe cases': Gov't

LYNZY VALLES

WITH over 300 Covid-19 patients currently hospitalized, some 100 cases are considered severe due to underlying diseases, according to the Health Bureau director, Alvis Lo.

Of the severe cases, 80% have been identified to have worsening underlying diseases.

Speaking at yesterday's TDM radio show, the official believes the new coronavirus strains currently spreading in Macau are BE7 from Beijing and BA5.2 from Guangdong. No scientific data is yet available to show which virus strain is more severe.

BE7 has recently been identified as the main variant spreading in Beijing and is contributing to a wider surge of Covid-19 infections in China.

Given the city's latest outbreak attributed to the move away from strict restrictions, the goal for now is to ensure the medical needs of those in need are met, according to Lo.

Currently, about 10% of the city's medical staff are infected.

In line with this, the government has mandated all medical institutions are to receive patients infected with or suspected of being infected with coronavirus.

However, patients are advised to make an appointment before heading to the hospital or clinic.

From yesterday, visits to the public hospital have been suspended until further notice.

The quick overhaul in the city's Covid-19 measures has led to a rise in case numbers, but the number of cases remain unknown as Macau has followed in Beijing's footsteps in halting the reporting of asymptomatic cases.

RENATO MARQUES



Kong Chi Meng, director of the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) disclosed in yesterday's forum that an average of 1,000 residents visit the community clinic daily, implying that the cases may be approaching this figure, given that those who make bookings to the community clinic are those who have tested positive through the government platform.

Yesterday, the government launched a new community outpatient clinic at Travessa Central da Praia Grande (near Grand Emperor Hotel). It also set up at Seac Pai Van a temporary health station that same day to cater to outlying island residents, bringing the total number of clinics to accommodate Covid-positive patients to 14.

According to Lo, it is challenging to determine the actual number of infections as mass testing has not been conducted. In addition, not everyone who is infected may have been reported on the government's Covid-19 assessment platform.

He reaffirmed that the peak of the outbreak is expected to occur in a week or two.

Meanwhile, as most antipyretics are out of stock in pharmacies, the government has pledged it would try its best to ensure normal supply. It is currently discussing how to implement restricted purchases on certain items.

COVID FATALITIES RISE TO 17

Deaths linked to the coronavirus have been reported in the city, with a new case disclosed yesterday.

The Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre reported that a 95-year-old female resident with co-existing chronic diseases died from Covid-19 on Dec. 20. She was vaccinated with three doses. On Dec. 19, the Centre recorded three fatalities, including a 60-year-old man and two women aged 88 and 94 respectively. All suffered from chronic diseases, while two of the three had been vaccinated.

96 symptomatic cases were reported yesterday.

MOST NURSING HOME STAFF INFECTED

SOME 36 nursing homes are struggling with staffing, as 90% of their residents or employees have contracted the virus, said Hon Wai, director of the Social Welfare Bureau. Workers who have tested positive are still permitted to work if they are asymptomatic and

their physical condition is stable. Ho Wai also revealed that more than 1,200 elderly people and others in need of outreach services are receiving meal deliveries. He affirmed that such services will not be suspended even if they test positive to the virus.

CE IN BEIJING FOR FOUR-DAY DUTY VISIT

The Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng is in Beijing from Dec. 21 to 24 to report to state leaders on the government work done in the past year and the policy blueprint for next year. While the CE is in Beijing, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, Andre Cheong, will be Acting Chief Executive, according to the Government Information Bureau. Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee is also on the four-day duty visit, his first.

RESTAURANTS AND RETAIL FIRMS GROW IN OCTOBER

Restaurants and retail businesses in Macau grew in October compared with the previous month. The latest report from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicated the revenue of interviewed restaurants and similar establishments rose 3.2% in October from September and 15.1% from the same month last year. Sales of interviewed retailers increased by 27.3% year-on-year in October but dropped 3.2% month-on-month.

ART BIENNALE TO BRING LOCAL ART TO SHENZHEN

The 2022 Hong Kong-Macao Visual Art Biennale recently completed its exhibition in Beijing and will move to the Shenzhen Museum of Contemporary Art and Urban Planning on Dec. 30. The Hong Kong-Macao Visual Art Biennale has been held every two years since 2008 and is an important event that promotes integration, development, exchange and cooperation in art within the mainland, Macau and Hong Kong. This year's exhibition focuses on art and technology. Over 30 artists or art groups from Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China were invited to take part in the biennale and hold a parallel dialogue in three sections.

TOURISM

November visitors plunge 54%

VISITOR arrivals suffered a plunge of 54.3% year-on-year and 36.8% month-on-month to 366,511 in November, as the neighboring region saw a rise in coronavirus cases.

Initially, November was a hopeful month for the tourism sector following the reinstatement of eVisas for mainland visitors.

The issuance of group package tours to Macau

and eVisas under the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) has shaped up to be a massive boost for the SAR's gaming and tourism operators, which have been negatively affected since the pandemic began in early 2020.

However, in November, coronavirus lockdowns have been expanding across China, as the number of Covid-19 cases hit a daily record.

Overnight visitors (196,279) and same-day visitors (170,232) fell 31.7% and 66.9% year-on-year respectively, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). Meanwhile, the average length of stay of visitors extended by 0.6 days year-on-year to 1.9 days.

As regards the source of visitors, visitors from mainland China slid 56.8% year-

-on-year to 320,267, with 116,890 visitors travelling under the IVS.

Visitors from the nine cities in the Pearl River Delta in the Greater Bay Area totaled 184,163, 48.1% of whom came from Zhuhai. There were 38,562 visitors from Hong Kong and 5,569 from Taiwan.

Analyzed by checkpoint, the number of visitor arrivals by land fell 58.0%

year-on-year to 320,130 in November.

In the first eleven months of this year, the number of visitor arrivals fell 22.9% year-on-year to 5,310,949. Same-day visitors (3,056,366) and overnight visitors (2,254,583) went down by 14.7% and 31.7% respectively. The average length of stay of visitors decreased by 0.1 days year-on-year to 1.5 days. **LV**

CE CALLS FOR 'EXTRA EFFORT' TO PUT 'ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS' INTO DAILY PRACTICE

RENATO MARQUES

THE Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, has urged those from civil society and all walks of life to make a "further effort to put into effect the central government's decisions and plans, by upholding and perfecting the 'One country, two systems' principle and translating it into actual deeds," he said, during a speech at the reception to celebrate the 23rd anniversary of the Macau Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) establishment.

Ho said such an effort was necessary for everyone to "promote the stable and healthy development of Macau in the new era."

He explained that everyone should learn about the aspirations set out in the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which would act as the guidelines now and in the future.

Held by the government at the China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Commercial and Trade Service Platform Complex, the reception attracted approximately 350 guest attendees according to the organizers. The attendees included all the highest officials of the MSAR, the local delegates to the National Peo-



ple's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference as well as the representatives of the central government in Macau.

In his speech, the CE noted the severe impacts on the local economy caused by three years of Covid-19 restrictions, noting Macau's adherence to the national epidemic prevention policy, which included "prioritizing people's safety and health, and uniting all sectors of society" among its goals.

Despite noting that the "economy, the livelihoods of people, and local employment had been severely impacted," Ho said that in 2023, under "strong leadership and support from the central go-

vernment," Macau will continue to "optimize prevention measures as appropriate, and implement the '20 adjusted measures' and the '10 new measures' announced by the State Council."

In this sense, he said that the "focus of epidemic control changed from infection prevention and control to medical treatment, thereby safeguarding people's health and preventing severe cases." The ongoing monitoring of the pandemic will remain one of the main tasks for the upcoming year.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Reflecting on the past year, the CE highlighted the implementation of the "five-rung housing la-

dder" policy as well as works to facilitate the development of the "Big Health" industry.

The CE also noted the development of three other key industries, including modern financial services; high and new technology; and exhibitions and conventions. He also mentioned developments in the fields of commerce and trade as well as culture and sports that compose the so-called "1+4" strategy to advance economic diversification.

A significant achievement also mentioned was the completed revision of the gaming laws and regulations, as well as the public tender and contract signing for the new gaming concessions.

Regarding laws and policies,

the CE highlighted the legislation of the Legal System for Importing Talented People, which he described as part of an "effort to provide quality human resources as support for the development of the four key industries."

With such policies in place, the CE said, "Macau can definitely overcome its predicament, and embrace new horizons in terms of post-pandemic development."

Ho also said that over the past year, significant progress had been made in the construction of the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and "steady progress in the establishment of strategies relating to 'One Center, One Platform, and One Base.'"

GOALS FOR 2023

Looking forward to 2023, the CE said that in line with the national policies being followed, the government will "focus on promoting economic recovery, actively improving people's livelihoods, and solving the deep-rooted conflicts and problems in economic and social development." In addition, the government would "expedite adequate economic diversification and the development of the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin."

According to the CE, these will help Macau to "continue breaking new ground in various undertakings and make new contributions to realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation through the Chinese Path to Modernization."

COURTS

GRAFT-BUSTER BOSS CAUTIONS ON ALLEGED CHUI'S ROLE IN CORRUPTION CASE

COMMISSIONER Against Corruption Chan Tsz King has urged members of the public to refrain from making unnecessary assumptions about the bribery case concerning former public works directors, where two defendants have insisted they had acted on indirect instructions from former Chief Executive Chui Sai On.

Commissioner Chan made the comments Tuesday to the media on the sidelines of a cocktail reception in celebration of Macau's handover to China 23 years ago, as reported by Chinese-language news outlet All About Macau (AAM).

The Commission Against Corruption conducts an inquiry "whenever there was a need for one regardless of the size of the case or the identities

of suspects," Chan added in the report.

Last month, Li Cafeng, former director of the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau, stated several times he had secured the backing of Chui Sai On to forge ahead with the construction projects associated with property developer Sio Tak Hong, a billionaire businessman who allegedly offered Li bribes in return for his speedy approval for Alto de Coloane land developments.

Chan told the media that Li Cafeng's words "should not be interpreted too liberally," pledging that the anti-graft agency would announce all information relevant to the public interest in due course.

STAFF REPORTER

GBA

MARINE TECHNOLOGY MAKES BAY AREA GREENER, SAFER

AN orange-colored flash in the shape of a surfboard cut through a raging sea off Weihai, Shandong province, on Aug 9, before quickly returning with a 15-year-old boy, who was scared and drenched, but otherwise unharmed.

This robotic device was controlled by a police officer on the shoreline. The teenager, who was washed out to sea about 100 meters off the coast, was almost lost to the depths. Had it not been for the device, it would have been extremely difficult to save him, as rescuers faced gale-force winds and tumultuous waves.

Police recorded video footage of the robotic rescue mission, and the special operation went

viral on the internet. Countless netizens said they were amazed by the robot.

The device, Hai Tun 1, or Dolphin 1, is 1.19 meters long and 0.85 meters wide, and is powered by two pump jets on each side of its tail. It was developed by Zhuhai Yunzhou Intelligence Technology, which is based in Zhuhai, Guangdong province.

The successful rescue operation also offered a glimpse of the robust marine technology industry in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, or GBA.

Zhuhai Yunzhou Intelligence Technology has been focusing on manufacturing multifunctional unmanned boats and above-water robots

for more than a decade. The company sells over 30 types of unmanned boats and rescue robots for use in environmental monitoring, marine surveys, and patrols and lifesaving missions on water.

The electrically powered device can travel over water at three me-

ters per second, carry a maximum weight of 150 kilograms and operate for 30 minutes on a full charge, according to the company.

The robot's controller resembles a pistol, with a screen displaying the device's speed, battery level, and other data. Holding the controller, rescue workers command the robot via microwaves, and it can be used for rescue work up to 800 meters offshore. **MDT/XINHUA**



Zhuhai Yunzhou Intelligence Technology, headquartered in Zhuhai, focuses on manufacturing multifunctional unmanned boats and above-water robots

GBA

Macau-plated cars to start driving in Guangdong from January 1

RENATO MARQUES

FROM January 1, 2023, non-commercial lightweight motor vehicles with only a Macau registration plate may be driven in Guangdong province, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) has announced.

The policy is subject to both a pre-registration and a control mechanism that allows a selection of private cars from Macau to enter the province of Guangdong for the first time without the need for a double-registration plate (on both sides of the border). Applications to participate in this scheme opened on December 20.

According to the DSAT, some 80,000 local vehicles and drivers should be eligible for this scheme. The scheme will not apply to Macau residents who are foreign nationals, consistent with other measures involving access to the mainland.

Information from DSAT notes that only residents of Macau who are holders of a "Mainland Travel Permit for Hong Kong and Macao Residents" – commonly known as a "homegoing card" – can apply. This measure exempts them from restrictions regarding investments or residency permits. Each vehicle can be used by a maximum of two designated drivers (pre-registered).

The system uses an electronic

RENATO MARQUES



entry technology, which means drivers can only enter the mainland through the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge.

Each license has a maximum validity period of one year and will only allow the vehicles to enter and exit the mainland once per day.

Vehicles are permitted to stay on the mainland for a maximum of 30 consecutive days, up to a limit of 180 days (six months) per license.

Officially termed 'Northbound Travel for Macau Vehicles,' the scheme aims to facilitate the transportation of those Macau residents who aim to live or work on the mainland. According to the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng,

the measure is intended to "create new opportunities for Macau people in terms of where they choose to live" and "aid Macau's participation in the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA), and support Macau's integration into the overall national development plan."

He thanked the central government for launching the scheme in a statement.

"The launch of the 'Northbound Travel for Macau Vehicles' policy was a further demonstration of the central government's care and support for the MSAR (Macau Special Administrative Region) and of its positive response to the issues that concern Macau peo-

ple," the CE said on the matter. He added, "This policy will make it much more convenient for Macau residents to take short-term business trips, study, work, live, or travel in the mainland."

He also noted that should the scheme eventually be extended to the nine mainland cities that form the GBA (together with Macau and Hong Kong), it will also "expand opportunities for Macau people in terms of where they wish to live and facilitate exchanges between Macau and other cities in the GBA."

According to DSAT, there is no fee to pay to apply for the scheme. However, the documents required for the application will involve some expenses, such as

requesting a cross-border vehicle information certificate from the DSAT (which carries a cost of 135 patacas).

Information on other expenses related to vehicle inspections, insurance, and the issuance of a border permit can be found through enquiries with San Tong Tat Commerce and Technological Industry Company and insurance companies.

All information on the scheme as well as applications can be consulted and processed through the DSAT's dedicated webpage (<http://www.dsat.gov.mo/mcars-to-gd/>).

SPECIAL INSURANCE REQUIRED

Although the new scheme exempts vehicles from registration on both sides of the border, additional vehicle insurance must be obtained to apply for the scheme, the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) noted. According to AMCM, the department has made contact with insurance companies to provide special packages related to this new cross-border scheme.

Macau vehicle owners may consult detailed information on the AMCM website and choose one of the products available from the different insurance companies.

The AMCM also noted that there are two types of insurance. One is mandatory, while the second is optional. The AMCM called on vehicle owners to choose to subscribe to the relevant type according to their needs.

According to information on the AMCM website, six insurance companies are providing additional insurance for driving in the Guangdong province.

GAMING

Operators to face extra 20% of non-gaming investment if GGR tops MOP180b

LYNZY VALLES

THE six gaming operators are expected to face another burden if gaming revenues reach MOP180 billion each year, as they will be required to invest an extra 20% in non-gaming spend.

Considering the fresh licenses that will allow the companies to operate for the next decade, the operators will have to exceed their pledged 108.7 billion patacas, which already accounts for more than 90% of their total investment.

The big six announced Friday that the amount would cover projects such as convention and exhibitions, entertainment and perfor-

AP PHOTO



mances, sports events, art and culture, health care and themed entertainment.

Brokerage firm Morgan Stanley predicts Macau's gross gaming revenue will exceed USD22 billion by 2027, as cited in a report is-

sued by Asia Gaming Brief.

Analysts consider the additional investment could "represent a much larger burden on FCFE (free cash flow to equity) and EBITDA," particularly for operators MGM China and SJM.

The additional investment is required by the largest gaming overhaul, despite the sector bleeding cash with no certainty on recovery.

With the embattled gaming sector suffering

slumps – particularly in July this year where it recorded the worst gross gaming revenue in decades – the potential return over the next 10 years is unclear, particularly amid the industry-wide reshuffle.

Whether Macau's golden years will return is also unclear.

However, with mandatory quarantine requirements easing and the city gradually coming to live with Covid-19, casinos hope that 2023 will usher in a new era for the sector.

Over the weekend, the government said the six concessionaires had made pledges according to their respective abilities, outlook

and financial status, which it sees as representing their confidence in the future of tourism in Macau.

In the note, analysts at Morgan Stanley predicted "Macau will allow operators to start investing only from 2024, given that 2023 will still be a recovering year."

Meanwhile, amid the billions of investments pledged, casino concessionaires must also pay an annual concession premium with a fixed amount of MOP30 million.

Variable amounts will be levied on the number of table games and gaming machines such as MOP300,000 for each VIP table game, MOP150,000 for each mass-market table game, and MOP1,000 for each gaming machine.

The total numbers of gaming tables and slot machines approved by Macau's gaming authorities are 6,000 and 12,000, respectively.

BEIJING HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST IMMOBILIZED BY COVID-19 APP

HUIZHONG WU, TAIPEI

WANG Yu, hailed by the U.S. as an International Woman of Courage, has already been arrested, imprisoned and politically harassed for her work as a human rights lawyer representing activists, Uyghur scholars and Falun Gong practitioners. This year, her movements within her home country also have been restricted by a color-coded app on her phone that's supposed to protect people from COVID-19.

The health codes have become ubiquitous in China as the country has struggled to contain the novel coronavirus, pushing the public to a breaking point that erupted in protests late last month. The government announced last week it would discontinue the national health code, but cities and provinces have their own versions, which have been more dominant. In Beijing last week, restaurants, offices, hotels and gyms were still requiring local codes to enter.

Even after lockdowns end, some dissidents and activists predict the health codes will remain in place in some form.

Drawing on telecommunications network data and PCR test results, health codes are



Activist Wang Yu

relatively simple. Everyone is assigned a QR code on their phone that switches between green, yellow or red, depending on factors such as whether they've been in the same spot as someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (yellow) or if they themselves have tested positive (red). Only people with green codes can go

about normal daily life.

Wang's experience, however, shows the codes can become another tool of social control in China.

In March, she travelled to Datong, an industrial coal-mining hub in northern China, to offer counseling. While largely prevented from practicing law in China, she said she still pro-

vides advice as a "citizen advocate" on human rights cases.

Located about 215 miles (346 km) west of Beijing, the trip required downloading a separate local health code. While most people have had two codes, a national one and one for the city or province they live in, people who travel have needed yet another one

from the place they're visiting. Without it, they can't enter a mall, restaurant or even book a hotel.

The day after Wang arrived in Datong, she said her local code turned yellow, which meant she would have to be centrally quarantined in a hotel.

"How did it suddenly become yellow?" she asked. "I didn't have a cough or any symptoms."

Wang wanted to get home before being quarantined, which could have lasted a few weeks. She bought a train ticket. After presenting her case for hours, submitting three negative PCR tests and her body temperature, she said the government official on the phone relented. "Why don't I change your code to green?" they offered.

Ten minutes later, the health code turned green, and the pandemic prevention workers at the station allowed Wang to leave Datong, she said.

"To some extent, it's become an electronic handcuff," said Wang Quanzhang, another human rights lawyer who is not related to Wang Yu. He said and another passenger ran into similar travel issues in January while flying from Wuhan to Beijing.

Wang Quanzhang said he eventually resolved the issue after calling a local Wuhan government hotline, complaining to airport staff and posting on Weibo. **MDT/AP**

PANDEMIC

China limits how it defines Covid deaths in official count

CHINA only counts deaths from pneumonia or respiratory failure in its official COVID-19 death toll, a Chinese health official said, in a narrow definition that limits the number of deaths reported, as an outbreak of the virus surges following the easing of pandemic-related restrictions.

Deaths that occur in patients with pre-existing illnesses are not counted as COVID-19 deaths, said Wang Guiqiang, the head of infectious disease at Peking University's No. 1 Hospital.

China has always been conservative in how it counts illnesses, whether from the flu or COVID-19. In most countries, including the United States, guidelines stipulate that any death where COVID-19 is a factor or contributor is counted as a COVID-19-related death.

In effect, Wang's com-



ments on Tuesday simply clarified publicly what the country has been doing throughout the pandemic.

Yesterday, China reported no new COVID-19 deaths and in fact subtracted one death from the overall toll, lowering it to 5,241, according to a daily tally is-

sued by the National Health Commission, which did not offer an explanation for the decrease.

The clarification of how China officially records COVID-19 deaths comes as cases have soared across the country amid the loosening of restrictions. Yet the over-

all count remains blurry, as China has stopped requiring daily PCR tests and many people are testing at home. Curiously, many people have fallen ill in cities like Beijing and Shanghai.

Earlier this year, Shanghai was hit by an omicron-

driven outbreak. Multiple people told the AP then that their elderly family members who tested positive for COVID-19 and died were not counted in the city's official death toll. When patients had underlying diseases, the deaths were attributed to those.

An AP investigation then showed that numbers "have been clouded by the way health authorities apply a much narrower, less transparent and at times shifting standard," as Shanghai changed how it defined positive cases.

That narrower criteria has meant China's COVID-19 death toll will always be significantly lower than those of many other nations.

An Associated Press reporter saw multiple people being wheeled out of funeral homes in Beijing last

week, and two relatives told the AP their loved ones had died after testing positive for COVID-19. Last week, however, the country did not report any deaths due to COVID-19.

Different countries count cases and deaths differently, and patchy testing means that direct comparisons are often misleading.

But experts have repeatedly advised that authorities should err on the side of caution while counting deaths. Problems in death counts have raised questions in countries ranging from South Africa to Russia.

The World Health Organization estimated in May that nearly 15 million people died from COVID-19 or due to overwhelmed health systems in the first two years of the pandemic. That is more than the official death toll of over 6 million for that period. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

Australia-China ministers meet in bid to repair ties

THE foreign ministers of Australia and China met in Beijing yesterday in a bid to restore high-level political contacts and return stability to a relationship that has undergone major turbulence in recent years.

Penny Wong's visit comes on the anniversary of 50 years of official diplomatic relations between the nations, a symbolic occasion the sides appear to hope will help maneuver ties back on track.

The Australian Associated Press said Wong met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in the first visit by an Australian foreign minister to China in four years.

"We all share an interest in a region that respects sovereignty, that is peaceful, that is stable and is prosperous," Wong was quoted as saying.

She added that "through a more stable relationship between Australia and China we can help ensure our people, our region and world can enjoy peace and security," AAP reported.

Wong's visit has raised hopes of an end to import blocks imposed by China and the possible freeing of two Australian citizens detained in China. Wong said she would continue to advocate for Australians held in China without giving details.

Wong's trip furthers a tentative

AP PHOTO



Foreign Minister Wang Yi welcomes Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong in Beijing, yesterday

thaw in relations between the two nations since Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese won an election victory in May, replacing the more conservative Scott Morrison in the top role.

Albanese and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit last

month in Bali, the first such formal meeting between the leaders of the two nations in six years.

Relations between Australia and China have been poor since China imposed trade barriers and refused high-level exchanges in response to Australia enacting rules targeting foreign interference

in its domestic politics and calling for an independent inquiry into the COVID-19 pandemic.

Albanese has also said he remained committed to building a fleet of submarines powered by U.S. nuclear technology despite the French president describing the plan as a "confrontation

with China."

As a treaty partner with the U.S., Australia is also viewed by China as part of a scheme to prevent it asserting diplomatic and military supremacy over the South China Sea and most of East Asia.

That has prompted many nations, including Australia, to seek a balance between their crucial economic ties with China and their long-standing security relations with the U.S.

Without mentioning Wong's visit, China's official Xinhua News Agency yesterday said Xi had exchanged greetings on the half-century of ties with Albanese and Australian Governor-General David Hurley.

Cooperation between China and Australia has "achieved fruitful results, bringing tangible benefits to the people of the two countries," Xi was quoted as saying.

Healthy ties are "conducive to promoting peace, stability and prosperity of the region and the world," Xi said, adding that the sides should "adhere to mutual respect (and) win-win principles."

Australia established diplomatic relations with the Republic of China in 1941, but those were severed following the Communist Party's overthrow of the Nationalist government in 1949 and not restored until 1972. **MDT/AP**

AD

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PUTIN'S WAR

Zelenskyy to meet Biden, address Congress as war rages on

ZEKE MILLER,
WASHINGTON

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was making his way to Washington yesterday for a summit with President Joe Biden and to address Congress in his first known trip outside the country since Russia's invasion began in February.

Zelenskyy said on his Twitter account that the visit was "to strengthen resilience and defense capabilities" of Ukraine and discuss cooperation between his country and the U.S with Biden.

The highly sensitive trip is taking place after 10 months of a brutal war that has seen tens of thousands killed and wounded on both sides of the conflict, along with devastation for Ukrainian civilians. It also comes as U.S. lawmakers are set to vote on a year-end spending package that includes about \$45 billion in emergency assistance to Ukraine and as the Pentagon prepares to send Patriot surface-to-air missiles to the country to defend itself.

Zelenskyy headed abroad after making a daring and dangerous trip Tuesday to what he called the hottest spot on the 1,300-kilometer (800-mile) front line of the conflict, the city of Bakhmut in Ukraine's contested Donetsk province. He praised Ukrainian troops for their "courage, resilience and strength" as artillery boomed in the background.

Poland's private broadcaster TVN24 said Zelenskyy crossed into Poland yesterday on his way to the U.S. The station showed footage of what appeared to be Zelenskyy arriving at a train station and being escorted to a motorcade. TVN24 said the video, which was partially blurred for security reasons, was shot yesterday morning in Przemysl, a Polish border town that has been the arrival point for many refugees fleeing the war.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, in a statement Tuesday night, said that Biden looks forward to Zelenskyy's visit and that the address to Congress will demonstrate "the strong, bipartisan support for Ukraine."

"The visit will underscore the United States' steadfast commitment to supporting



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (right) awards a serviceman at the site of the heaviest battles with the Russian invaders in Bakhmut

Ukraine for as long as it takes, including through the provision of economic, humanitarian, and military assistance," she said.

Zelenskyy was scheduled to meet with Biden at the White House in the afternoon and then join Biden for a news conference in the East Room. He was expected to address Congress in the evening.

In her invitation to Zelenskyy to address a joint meeting of Congress at the U.S. Capitol, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said "the fight for Ukraine is the fight for democracy itself" and that lawmakers "look forward to hearing your inspiring message of unity, resilience and determination."

U.S. and Ukrainian officials have made clear they don't envision an imminent resolution to the war and are preparing for fighting to continue for some time. Biden has repeated that while the U.S. will arm and train Ukraine, American forces will not be directly engaged in the conflict.

Biden and Zelenskyy first discussed the idea of a visit to Washington during their most recent phone call, on Dec. 11, and a formal invitation followed three days later, said a senior U.S. administration official, briefing reporters on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the visit. Zelenskyy

accepted the invitation on Friday and it was confirmed on Sunday, when the White House began coordinating with Pelosi to arrange the congressional address.

The White House consulted with Zelenskyy on security for his departure from Ukraine and travel to Washington, including the risk of Russian action while Zelenskyy was briefly out of the country, the official added, declining to detail the measures taken to safeguard the Ukrainian leader. The official said the U.S. expected Russia to continue its attacks on Ukrainian forces and civilian infrastructure targets despite the trip.

The tranche of U.S. funding pending before Congress would be the biggest American infusion of assistance yet to Ukraine — even more than Biden's \$37 billion emergency request — and is meant to ensure that support flows to the war effort for months to come.

Today [Macau time], the U.S. was also set to announce that it will send a major package of \$1.8 billion in military aid to Ukraine that will for the first time include a Patriot missile battery and precision guided bombs for its fighter jets, U.S. officials said.

The aid signals an expansion by the U.S. in the kinds of advanced weaponry it will send to Ukraine to bolster its air defenses against what has

been an increasing barrage of Russian missiles in recent weeks. The package will include about \$1 billion in weapons from Pentagon stocks and \$800 million in funding through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, officials said.

The decision to send the Patriot battery comes despite threats from Russia's Foreign Ministry that the delivery of the advanced surface-to-air missile system would be considered a provocative step and that the Patriot battery and any crews accompanying it would be a legitimate target for Moscow's military.

It's unclear when the Patriot battery would arrive on the front lines in Ukraine, since U.S. troops will have to train Ukrainian forces on how to use the high-tech system. The training could take several weeks and is expected to be done in Germany. To date, all training of Ukraine's forces by the U.S. and its Western allies has taken place in European countries.

The visit comes at an important moment as the White House braces for greater resistance when Republicans take control of the House in January and give more scrutiny to aid for Ukraine. GOP leader Kevin McCarthy has said his party's lawmakers will not write a "blank check" for Ukraine. MDT/AP

this day in history

1989 BRANDENBURG GATE RE-OPENS



Berlin's most famous landmark the Brandenburg Gate has been opened for the first time in almost three decades.

Thousands of people spilled on to the city's streets cheering in the pouring rain to watch the historic ceremony which effectively ends the division of East and West Germany.

East German army engineers worked through the night to tunnel through one of two crossing points in the gate, which stands in the "no man's land" on the eastern side of the Berlin Wall.

West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl walked through to be greeted by Hans Modrow, the East German Prime Minister.

Both leaders, flanked by their mayors, shook hands in a moment which signalled the first time a West German leader has officially entered East Berlin.

Delighted crowds popped bottles of champagne, hugged and kissed and waved flags of a united Germany.

Within minutes the gates had opened and thousands of people flooded through from either side of the city.

Hundreds more scrambled on to the top of the wall in jubilation chanting "Deutschland", "Deutschland".

Mr Modrow made an impassioned speech before an audience of millions, broadcast live on television to East and West Germans.

He first paid tribute to Romanians where dictator Nicolae Ceausescu has been overthrown. "The Brandenburg Gate is not just one of many," he said.

"The burning stench of war must never be smelled here. It must be a gate of peace."

His words were almost drowned out by cheers of "Helmut!", "Helmut!"

Dr Kohl responded to the people by declaring it the "most important moment of my life".

The decision to open the gate was taken on Tuesday in Dresden by Dr Kohl and Mr Modrow during their first meeting.

The 200-year-old gate was built as a monument to Prussian power and it embodied German unity until Hitler's defeat at the end of the Second World War.

It subsequently became one of the most potent symbols of Cold War division of Germany and of Europe.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Brandenburg Gate was opened as the political landscape of both Germany and Eastern Europe was transforming.

The Communist bloc was dismantling with change in Romania and Hungary and on 9 November protesters in Germany had started dismantling the Berlin Wall.

Two days after the Brandenburg Gate opened, on 24 December, compulsory currency exchange and visa requirements for West Berliners in the East was abolished.

On New Year's Eve more than half a million people celebrated festivities at the Brandenburg Gate. International and domestic discussions on the future of Germany in 1990 ended on 3 October when the country was formally reunited.

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You may find that relationships are not going as well as you'd like. You will find that valuable knowledge can be gained if you are willing to listen. A little rest will do wonders.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You will gain valuable insight and knowledge through the experiences you have along the way. Socialize with friends, but don't overspend on lavish entertainment.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Avoid any intimate involvement's with coworkers or employers. Your willingness to help others can and will lead to fatigue if you don't learn to say no.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Don't let domestic problems interfere with your objectives. Expressing yourself in novel ways should lead you down new avenues. Go after your goals.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You should include children in your activities. Do you really want to start something with someone you can't reason with? If they're too demanding, reconsider this union.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You will be able to get your own way if you use your intellectual charm and know how. Older members of your family may try to take advantage of you.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Difficulties with females you live with could cause emotional stress. Sudden changes could result in estrangements. Your involvement in sports or entertainment will lead to new romances.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Sit back. This will be a very hectic day if you've made promises to too many people. Your sensitive, affectionate nature will capture the heart of anyone you are attracted to.

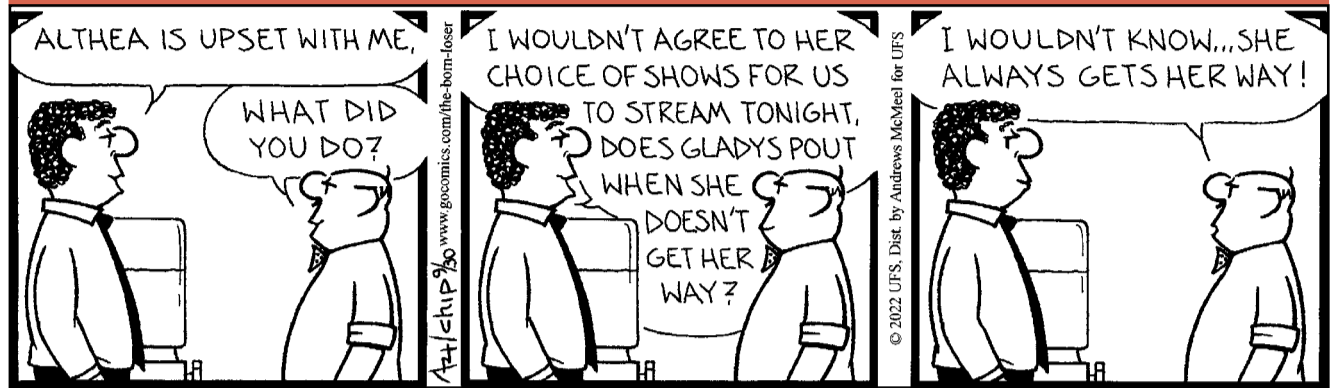
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Keep your thoughts and opinions to yourself and you won't get dragged into an unsavory debate. Courses dealing with psychology or health care will be of interest.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You will have to put those you live with in their place if they try to interfere with your work. Self improvement projects should be your key concern.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
If your lover tries to curtail your freedom, it may lead to conflict. Make sure that you have covered yourself legally and try not to let your temper get out of hand.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You may have more to do with children today; keep an open mind. Talk to the party involved and make sure that they are informed as to what actually happened.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-7	-1	fine
Changchun	-21	-14	snow
Chengdu	4	12	overcast
Chongqing	5	11	overcast
Fuzhou	8	18	fine
Guangzhou	6	21	fine
Guiyang	3	8	overcast
Haikou	14	20	cloudy
Hangzhou	0	8	fine
Harbin	-22	-15	snow
Hefei	-3	6	fine
Nanjing	1	5	fine
Shanghai	2	6	fine
Taipei	11	15	fine
Wuhan	0	10	fine
Hong Kong	14	19	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	1	2	snow
Frankfurt	8	11	rain
Paris	12	13	rain
London	8	10	rain
New York	9	10	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Configuration; 5- Island greeting; 10- Essential point; 14- Inter ___; 15- Trademark; 16- Bald eagle's relative; 17- Billy ___ had a hit song with "White Wedding"; 18- Due (to); 19- Haunted house sound; 20- Keeps; 22- Money put aside for the future; 24- "The Bells" poet; 25- Many moons; 26- City on the Rhone; 29- Draft org.; 32- Eats to a plan; 36- Coal-rich region; 37- Set upon; 39- Digit of the foot; 40- One recording the past; 43- Lion tail?; 44- Shrew; 45- Kind; 46- Model Campbell; 48- Porcine pad; 49- Iraqi port; 50- Aardvark morsel; 52- Petroleum; 53- Deceive; 57- Pledge; 61- Official records; 62- ___ luck!; 64- Inwardly; 65- Oboe, e.g.; 66- Writer of lyric poetry; 67- Lead; 68- Catch a view of; 69- Nick of "Lorenzo's Oil"; 70- Voluminous volume;

DOWN 1- Free from bias; 2- Shoppe sign word; 3- Public disturbance; 4- Impertinent; 5- Isolated; 6- Rules; 7- Japanese sash; 8- Coop group; 9- Aquarium buildup; 10- Third sign of the zodiac; 11- Wrinkle remover; 12- Obstacle; 13- Addition column; 21- Colorful moths; 23- Russian liquor; 26- Pale; 27- Mikhail's wife; 28- Dogie catcher; 29- Agitates; 30- European ermine; 31- Tending to droop; 33- Group character; 34- Start of a saying on forgiveness; 35- Simmons rival; 37- Jackie's second; 38- ___-Magnon; 41- Sheeplike; 42- Writer of Hebrew prayers; 47- Disease of the body; 49- Short life?; 51- Claw; 52- Use a soapbox; 53- Female horse; 54- Frozen treats; 55- Part of a process; 56- Extinct flightless bird; 57- Attention-getting sound; 58- Fascinated by; 59- Close with force; 60- Fictional Jane; 63- "... ___ the cows come home";

Tuesday's solution

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

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PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
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DRIVE IN

DEL TORO TAKES HIS 'PINOCCHIO' TO VERY DARK PLACES

JOCELYN NOVECK, MDT/AP

LET'S face it, "Pinocchio" has always been an odd choice for a children's morality tale.

Of course, lying is wrong. But that's not the only message the story sends. Even the classic 1940 Disney version — lighter and more kid-friendly than the 1883 Collodi tale — still sends the message that if you're not "good," you don't deserve to be human.

"A boy who won't be good might just as well be made of wood," the beneficent Blue Fairy admonishes Pinocchio in that film. Really? What happened to the idea that "to err is human?" Not to mention second chances, or learning curves? And what does "good" mean, anyway? Have they heard of value relativism? But we digress.

Because now comes Guillermo del Toro, with his blazing creative talent, to really stir things up. And boy, this is not your Disney "Pinocchio" — not the 1940 classic nor the remake of a few months ago. How will your kid feel about fascist salutes (or you about explaining them?) A guy named



Mussolini? Bombs falling from the sky? A father handing a gun to his son and saying "Shoot the puppet?" (Yes, sweet Pinocchio — THAT puppet.)

Of course, del Toro, whose take on "Pinocchio" is so distinct that the movie is called "Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio," has just the visual command you'd expect, partnering with co-director Mark Gustafson in this gorgeous stop motion project with a starry voice cast (including three Oscar winners — Christoph Waltz, Cate Blanchett and Tilda Swinton.)

The movie often looks stunningly beautiful, in color and texture. And you'll want to get on a plane right now and find the Italian village where Geppetto lives, with cobblestoned alleyways framed by snow-capped mountains jutting out in the mist.

Pinocchio, too, is way more interesting-looking than the blue-eyed, bow-tie wearing puppet we're used to. He's a lanky masterpiece in striated pine, with wooden curls, too, and something about him is heartbreakingly lovable. Maybe it's because he makes

mistake after mistake. And to err is ... oh, never mind.

We first meet Geppetto (David Bradley) as the happy father to a real son, Carlo. "All they needed was each other's company," says the narrator, namely Sebastian J. Cricket, voiced by Ewan McGregor. They spend their evenings reading stories by the fire, and Carlo accompanies Geppetto to his job restoring a huge Jesus altarpiece in the church. It's there that tragedy strikes one day; a warplane drops a bomb onto the church, killing Carlo. Geppetto

withdraws to drinking and mourning.

In grief, Geppetto cuts down a pine tree and makes a puppet.

Like in other versions, Pinocchio gets caught up with a money-hungry impresario, Count Volpe (Waltz) who puts him in a puppet show.

Did we mention that this movie is a musical? Freud would probably say there's a reason we forgot — the songs, some catchier than others, often seem to be dropped soon after they're started, petering out softly as we move to something else.

But "Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio" is clearly not aimed solely at kids, but rather is banking on the fact that adults, too, will be drawn to the striking visuals and mature themes at play.

Del Toro is also making clear references to the danger of groupthink. Indeed, he seems to have chosen the background of fascism to point out that the narrow-minded townspeople who suspect Pinocchio because he's different are the real puppets, not Pinocchio.

"Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio," a Netflix release, has been rated PG by the Motion Picture Association of America "for dark thematic material, violence, peril, some rude humor and brief smoking."

Running time: 114 minutes.



AD

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Redefining Luxury for the Young Generation
Speaker: Mr. Calvin Chen, Senior Sales & Marketing Manager & Senior Brand Ambassador for Louis XIII

The FMCC Breakfast Talk Rendez-Vous
Wednesday, 28 Dec 2022

Introduction:
The luxury sector is facing an emerging group of young consumers with exceptional expectations. By the year 2025, Millennial and Gen-Z buyers will make up almost half of the target market audience for luxury products. How does the traditional luxury industry appeal to these generations? What can this sector do to remain relevant and attractive to them? Join us and hear Mr. Calvin Chen giving insights on how to gain young generations' trust in this digital savvy and highly opinionated world.

Date: Wednesday, 28 Dec, 2022
Time: 9:00a.m. - 10:30a.m.
Venue: Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16 Baccara Ballroom, 6th floor

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HOLIDAY DRINKS

Advice for home bartenders, plus four festive cocktails

LOUISE DIXON,
MDT/AP, LONDON

LOOKING to create a bit of winter luxury when tending bar at home this holiday season? London's top cocktail-makers have some tips.

"Christmas is a special time when you want to join with friends and family. And sometimes, the centerpiece of any happiness is to have a good drink," says Salvatore Calabrese, an Italian-born drinks expert and author who has been making cocktails at top hotels, bars and private clubs for over 40 years.

Currently at the cocktail bar Velvet, at London's five-star Corinthia hotel, Calabrese goes by the nickname "The Maestro." And The Maestro's advice? First, choose the right glassware.

"The glass is the star. It's the canvas of the drink," he says. So if it looks elegant, things already feel festive.

Next, think about the quality of the ice and how it dilutes the drink.

"Remember, ice is like the heat for the chef when he is cooking," Calabrese says.

Cracked ice cubes that disintegrate in your palm are a no-go, as is crushed ice for Christmas. "It's not a Tiki night," he jokes. "It is about an elegant night, so make the effort and maybe you can make your own homemade ice."

Also, he advises, plan. Even prepare your cocktail in advance. Especially when a drink is a little complicated.

"Put it in the freezer or in the fridge, so it's nice and cold, so the only thing you have to do is to put it in a mixing glass or, to show off, put it in the shaker and shake," Calabrese says.

Jake Burger, co-owner of The Distillery, a 19th century pub and gin distillery in London's Notting Hill neighborhood, says that knowing when



WINTERTIME NEGRONI



SCROOGE SOUR



MASON'S CHOCOLATE ORANGE MARTINI



TRUFFLE SAZERAC

to shake and when to stir is something a lot of home mixologists get wrong.

"It's fun using a cocktail shaker, so people think we should shake everything," he jokes. But it's only really needed when using fruit juices, egg whites or cream, he says. Otherwise, stirring is best.

"As a general rule, if all the ingredients are alcoholic, you probably don't need to shake it," says Burger. "So as an Englishman, it pains me to say it, but James Bond got it wrong. A martini should definitely be stirred, not shaken."

Liana Oster, bar director at The NoMad Hotel London, suggests adding some seasonal luxury by decorating your glasses. She creates a peppermint-bark paint by melting equal parts cacao butter and white chocolate, with a few drops of peppermint essence added in. She then paints a swirl on one side of a cold glass, sprinkles some crushed-up candy cane on it, and then places it in the fridge until needed.

This works particularly well with a heavier cocktail with a lot of body, as at will "mellow it out" on the palate, Oster says.

Alex Girvan, brand ambassador for Masons of Yorkshire, has more ideas on garnishes. For his chocolate orange martini, Girvan explains how he creates simple yet delicious dipped-chocolate

candied fruits.

First, dehydrate orange slices by placing them on a baking sheet, sprinkling them with a bit of brown or fine granulated sugar (known in Britain as caster sugar), and then putting them in the oven on low heat for about an hour, until dried out. Then melt some dark chocolate and dip the slices. Place them in the fridge until hard.

To serve, balance them on the side of the glass. Girvan also suggests a sharing platter of garnishes, "almost like a charcuterie board." By laying out rosemary, orange peel and lemon zest on sticks, "everybody can just pick the one that they like and pop it into their drink, and maybe they'll try something that they've never had before," he says.

"Just make a little effort," Calabrese sums up, "because really, a great cocktail is a great journey from the beginning. "And when you taste something nice and delicious, the world seems to be a better place."

Four cocktail recipes:

WINTERTIME NEGRONI, FROM THE DISTILLERY

1 ounce London Dry Gin
1 ounce Campari
0.5 ounces sweet vermouth
0.5 ounces sloe gin
Mix ingredients together over ice and stir. Serve over fresh ice and garnish with an orange wedge studded with cloves.

SCROOGE SOUR, FROM COMMON DECENCY, AT THE NOMAD HOTEL LONDON

1 egg white
0.75 ounces simple syrup
0.75 ounces lemon juice
2 ounces Irish whiskey

Pour the egg white into the larger tin of your shaker, and the simple syrup and lemon juice into the smaller tin. Dry shake together in the shaker to emulsify the egg and the alcohol. Then hard shake with ice

and pour over a strainer into your glass.

Add 0.75 ounces mulled wine slowly into the corner of the glass, and then sprinkle edible gold dust over the half of the surface to cover and garnish.

TRUFFLE SAZERAC, FROM VELVET, AT CORINTHIA LONDON

0.8 ounces Bourbon
1 ounce Cognac
Homemade truffle syrup (you can make your own by heating a few drops of truffle oil with a teaspoon of sugar)
A few drops of orange bitters
Mix ingredients together over ice and stir. Serve over fresh ice and garnish with a slice of fresh truffle.

MASON'S CHOCOLATE ORANGE MARTINI

2 ounces chocolate vodka
1 ounce triple sec
Mix ingredients together over ice and stir. Serve in a martini glass and garnish with a chocolate-dipped, candied orange segment.

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OPINION

World Views

Molly Jackson, MDT/The Conversation



WHY WINTER SOLSTICE MATTERS AROUND THE WORLD: 4 ESSENTIAL READS

If you've already spend hours shoveling snow this year, you may be dismayed to realize that technically, it's not yet winter. According to the astronomical definition, the season will officially begin in the Northern Hemisphere on Dec. 21, 2022: the shortest day of the year, known as the winter solstice.

The weeks leading up to the solstice can feel long as days grow shorter and temperatures drop. But it's also traditionally been a time of renewal and celebration — little wonder that so many cultures mark major holidays just around this time.

1. Journey of the Sun. First things first: What is the winter solstice?

For starters, it's not the day with the latest sunrise or the earliest sunset. Rather, it's when "the Sun appears the lowest in the Northern Hemisphere sky and is at its farthest southern point over Earth," wrote William Teets, an astronomer at Vanderbilt University. "After that, the Sun will start to creep back north again."

"Believe it or not," he added, "we are closest to the Sun in January": a reminder that seasons come from the Earth's axial tilt at any given time, not from its distance from our solar system's star.

2. Ancient astronomy. Many Americans picturing winter solstice celebrations may immediately think of Stonehenge, but cultures have honored the solstice much closer to home. Many Native American communities have long held solstice ceremonies, explained University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign scholar Rosalyn LaPier, an Indigenous writer, ethnobotanist and environmental historian.

"For decades, scholars have studied the astronomical observations that ancient indigenous people made and sought to understand their meaning," LaPier wrote. Some societies in North America expressed this knowledge through constructions at special sites, such as Cahokia in Illinois — temple pyramids and mounds, similar to those the Aztecs built, which align with the Sun on solstice days.

"Although some winter solstice traditions have changed over time, they are still a reminder of indigenous peoples' understanding of the intricate workings of the solar system," she wrote, and their "ancient understanding of the interconnectedness of the world."

3. Dazzling light. Rubén Mendoza, an archaeologist at California State University, Monterey Bay, made an accidental discovery years ago at a mission church. In this worship space and many others that Catholic missionaries built during the Spanish colonial period, the winter solstice "triggers an extraordinary rare and fascinating event," he explained: "a sunbeam enters each of these churches and bathes an important religious object, altar, crucifix or saint's statue in brilliant light."

These missions were built to convert Native Americans to Catholicism — people whose cultures had already, for thousands of years, celebrated the solstice Sun's seeming victory over darkness. Yet the missions incorporated those traditions in a new way, channeling the Sun's symbolism into a Christian message.

"These events offer us insights into archaeology, cosmology and Spanish colonial history," Mendoza wrote. "As our own December holidays approach, they demonstrate the power of our instincts to guide us through the darkness toward the light."

4. Victory over darkness. Our next story goes halfway around the world, describing the Persian solstice festival of Yalda. But it's also an American story. Growing up in Minneapolis, anthropologist Pardis Mahdavi explained, she felt a bit left out as neighbors celebrated Hanukkah and Christmas. That's when her grandmother introduced her to their family's Yalda traditions.

Millions of people around the world celebrate Yalda, which marks the sunrise after the longest night of the year. "Ancient Persians believed that evil forces were strongest on the longest and darkest night of the year," wrote Mahdavi, who is now provost at the University of Montana. Families stayed up throughout the night, snacking and telling stories, then celebrating "as the light spilled through the sky in the moment of dawn."

For renewable energy companies in India, it's a good time to be in business.

One of India's largest renewable energy firms, Renew Power, will be among the corporations big and small hoping for a piece of a \$2.6 billion government scheme that encourages the domestic manufacturing of components required to produce solar energy. It's the biggest such incentive in India's history.

Renew Power's CEO Sumant Sinha said the government funds for clean energy send "a strong signal" that the coun-

try wants "to become a manufacturing location for renewable energy equipment and a global alternative to China eventually."

"We are excited to be a part of this journey," he said.

The company has over 100 clean energy projects across India and has become the world's tenth largest solar and wind energy company in just over a decade.

Full story on macaudailytimes.com.mo/category/buzz

AP PHOTO



Lily Collins arrives the World Premiere of the Netflix Series "Emily in Paris" season 3, at the Theatre des Champs Elysees, in Paris

TV SERIES

VOILÀ! 'EMILY IN PARIS' RETURNS, WITH SURPRISES IN STORE

HILARY FOX, PARIS

EMILY in Paris" fans will get a few surprises in their Christmas stockings, when the third season of the hit show arrives on Netflix today [Macau time].

Even the cast were shocked by the number of cliffhangers in the new series when they first read the scripts.

"I'm like, how are we going to film all — like, what?" says Lily Collins, who portrays the titular American marketing executive making her social media presence felt in France.

"But it was a real ride. It was a real rollercoaster to shoot. And it was really fun too," she adds.

Season three provides more career choices, designer dilemmas and romantic revelations for the fashionable female lead character.

Although Lucas Bravo — who portrays Emily's full-time neighbor and sometime love interest, the chef Gabriel — reckons that she isn't the only one wrestling with problems this series.

"Before it was only

Emily's chaos," says Bravo. "Now everybody has his own story with his own chaos. And it's a big soup of chaos and drama."

Season one arrived in October 2020, followed by a second last December. Three years into playing their characters, the cast members are keen to point out where their roles start and finish.

Collins — who is also an executive producer — says that she has always fit in better than Emily in France because she actually knows the language and culture.

Which, with Emily's questionable French pronunciation, leads to tongue twisters.

"It's a little bit difficult to pretend like you don't know how to say something," Collins explains. "To mispronounce it over and over and over again, it's like ... I just want to answer it fully in French. So it is tricky."

Kate Walsh plays Emily's American boss Madeline and would like everyone to know that she has very different taste in clothing from her brash and brightly colored character.

"I would never dress like that. But I love it because it's critical to the character," Walsh says.

Likewise, Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu claims there's a stark difference between her and her role of Sylvie, Madeline's trop chic Parisian business rival.

Leroy-Beaulieu says she's nowhere near as snobbish, even though Sylvie's arrogant attitude is "so much fun."

But Bravo, in a twist, reckons that all the actors are more like their characters than they realize: "What's so good about (showrunner) Darren (Star's) casting is that he always finds, you know, actors that are the essence of the characters. So there's always a part of us in every character."

"I don't know what the differences are. I think I would own up to my mistakes a bit more than Gabriel. But we're very similar in many ways in terms of vulnerability, femininity and sexiness in general," he jokes.

The third season will encompass 10 episodes.

"If you like chaos, you'll be served," Bravo promises. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Ukraine The upscale Venice hotel on the outskirts of Kyiv is now a rehabilitation center housing children who have experienced the horrors of the Russian invasion. In a carpeted meeting room of what used to be a posh hotel, children are screaming with happiness at a performance put on for them and the joy of opening presents. In a country where children have seen the horrors of a 10-month war, there are people trying to bring some peace and happiness to them, at least for a moment during this holiday season.

AP PHOTO



Mexico Migrants along the U.S. border with Mexico sought shelter from the cold yesterday as they waited for the Supreme Court to rule on whether and when restrictions that prevented many from seeking asylum in the U.S. would lift. Pandemic-era limits on border crossings had been slated to expire today [Macau time] — and the federal government opposed an effort by some conservative-leaning states to keep them in place. But hours before they were about to end, the Biden administration asked the court not to remove them before Christmas.

AP PHOTO



USA Concerns about illness or inflation aren't stopping Americans from hitting the roads and airports this holiday season. But a massive winter storm might. Forecasters predict an onslaught of heavy snow, ice, flooding and even tornadoes from today to Saturday in a broad swath of the country, from the Plains and Midwest to the East Coast. A surge of Arctic air will follow. The Christmas weekend could be the coldest in decades.

HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Wednesday December 28. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.