



# MacauDaily 澳門每日時報® Times

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“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

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**CHINA SAYS IT'S BEEN 'OPEN AND TRANSPARENT' ON VIRUS ORIGINS**

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AP PHOTO



**China's** factory activity accelerated in February as the economy revived following the end of anti-virus controls that kept millions of people at home and disrupted travel and trade, two surveys showed yesterday. Purchasing managers' indexes issued by a business magazine, Caixin, and the official China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing rebounded to levels that show activity growing. Measures of production, exports and new orders all rose.

AP PHOTO



**Uzbekistan** U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is wrapping up a brief tour of Central Asia in Uzbekistan before heading to India for what is expected to be a contentious Ukraine-dominated meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of 20. Blinken met yesterday in Tashkent with senior Uzbek officials a day after warning his counterparts from all five Central Asian nations about the dangers posed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

AP PHOTO



**USA** Officials urged Congress to renew a surveillance program the government has long seen as vital in protecting national security but whose future is uncertain because of scrutiny from civil liberties advocates and some Republicans. The program, which is under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, grants American spy agencies sweeping powers to surveil and examine communications of foreigners located outside the U.S. It's set to expire at year's end unless Congress agrees to renew it.

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### DSOP CONCLUDES BARRA LRT STATION

The construction of Barra LRT station was completed in February after being delayed for over a year, according to the official website of Public Works Bureau (DSOP). Barra LRT station, located near the Barra transportation hub, can extend LRT service from Taipa to the Macau peninsula. This construction project was awarded nearly MOP1.2 billion with a construction period of 1,238 days. According to the DSOP, weather and the pandemic are the reasons for the delay. The pandemic caused 74 days of delay from 2020 to mid-2022.

### PERMANENT SECRETARIAT FOR FHH TO BE ESTABLISHED IN MACAU

The permanent secretariat of the Western Pacific Regional Forum for the Harmonization of Herbal Medicines (FHH) will be established at the University of Macau (UM). The secretariat will assist the local government in promoting economic diversification by developing the Chinese medicine industry into a "signature industry of Macau," according to a statement issued by UM. FHH was founded in March 2002 with seven countries and regions as its founding members, namely China, Hong Kong, China, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Vietnam.

### GAMING

# CASINO REVENUES SURGE 33% AS RECOVERY CONTINUES

LYNZY VALLES

**M**ACAU'S gross gaming revenue surged to MOP10.32 billion in February as the sector benefited from the city's easing of restrictions since early January. The figure is up 33.1% year-on-year, according to data released by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau.

Although the February figure is still down 59% when compared to pre-pandemic levels, analysts surveyed by Bloomberg predict that annual gambling revenue could jump almost four-fold to MOP158 billion.

Alidad Tash, managing director of consulting firm 2NT8, told Bloomberg that the city's gaming sector is "recovering far faster than anybody could have projected in November."

"We're definitely looking at a much healthier casino revenue picture," he said.

The city's GGR was recording a rebound, with an estimated MOP1.9 billion in the first five days of February, as the city has been swarmed by visitors amid the significant easing of restrictions.

Brokerage firm J.P. Morgan re-



marked that such a figure represents a recovery of 45% of 2019 figures.

In a note yesterday, analysts from the brokerage considered the figure a "robust recovery," as there was an increase in revenue even without any holidays.

However a challenge for the industry remains despite a robust comeback: will the VIP and premium market ever return?

"One [...] that [is] still a ques-

tion mark is the VIP and premium market in that after three years it's easy for premium players to request a visa and come over. But is China going to be able to allow these people to come back as frequently as they once did, which was quite often pre-pandemic?" Tash questioned.

In January, Macau recorded an 82.5% jump driven by a surge of visitors to Macau for the Lunar

New Year.

The Macao Government and Tourism Office director, Helena de Senna Fernandes, yesterday told the press that the number of tourists visiting Macau in February remained strong with an average of more than 40,000 or even 50,000 people per day, and even more on some days.

She added, however, that the occupancy of hotels has not yet reached 100%, noting "it will take time, but the overall environment is positive."

Meanwhile, despite a strong recovery driven by pent-up travel demand after Covid, spending could soon drop as other destinations like South Korea and Japan attract Chinese tourists, said Bloomberg Intelligence analyst Angela Hanlee.

Macau has eased its mask wearing mandate, allowing the private sector to decide whether they will require the public to wear masks when inside their properties.

For casinos, the gaming operators are passing on the decision to their workers and guests.

The move is also seen as a driver to boost tourists' confidence to enter the region.

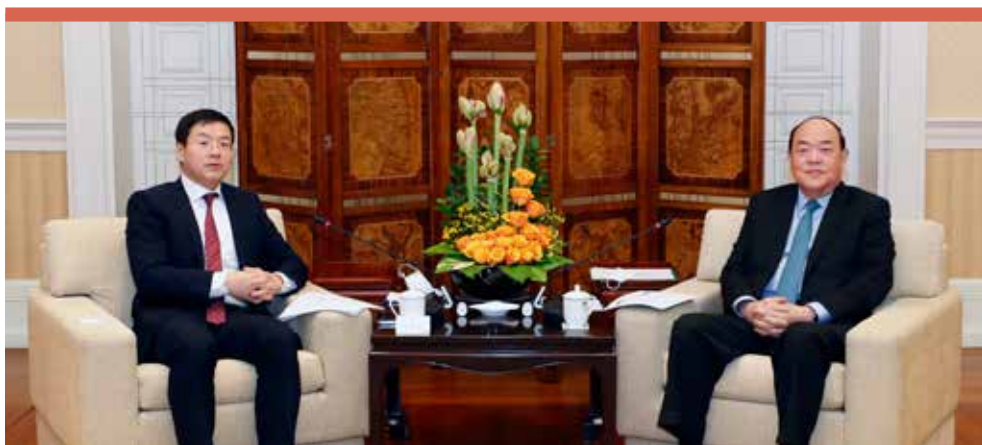
# CE holds talks with Chinese railway group, Singaporean investment company

ANTHONY LAM

**C**HIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng met separately with executives from Chinese railway manufacturer CRRC Corporation Ltd. and Singaporean investment company Temasek earlier this week.

Both meetings covered topics relating to the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. The CRRC meeting also discussed infrastructure in Macau and the Temasek meeting the city's economic diversification.

First, Ho commended the corporation's achieve-



Temasek president for China Region Wu Yibing and Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng

ments in railway development, describing its precedents as "a brilliant business card" for China for its developments. The CE further

pointed out that Macau has a number of MICE events each year catering to the railway industry, and hoped that CRRC will continue its

support for these events.

Represented by CEO Lou Qiliang, the CRRC delegation thanked the CE for the meeting and expressed ho-

pes that the corporation's greater participation in infrastructure development in various regions – including but not limited to Macau and Hengqin – will be achieved.

Meanwhile, the delegation from Temasek, led by its president for the China Region, Wu Yibing, expressed the company's interest in investing in the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

The Singaporean megacorporation is the owner of the Singapore Airlines and the full owner of the SMRT Corporation Ltd, the operator of Singapore's subway services.

The CE recapped that Temasek, being a globally renowned business, had invested in mainland China for over 20 years. He highlighted that the experiences of Temasek are surely worth learning for Macau amid its development towards modern financial services and integration with the GBA and Hengqin.

In response, Wu remarked that China accounted for 22% of the company's total global investments, and emphasized that the company has confidence in the future of the GBA and Hengqin, for which the CE expressed his appreciation.

Ho also disclosed that he would order the Monetary Authority of Macau to study how additional assistance could be offered to Temasek to support their investment in Hengqin.

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# Design firm hints at a new indoor theme park in Macau

RENATO MARQUES

**D**ESIGN firm Legacy Entertainment (Legacy) is said to have completed the design for a new large-scale indoor theme park, to be located at one of the gaming concessions in Macau.

The company, which has vast experience in the field and a significant and long-standing presence in the Pearl River Delta region of almost 15 years, has said in a release that the new development will be a 30,000 square-meter indoor park. It comes as part of the gaming concessionaires' commitment to develop non-gaming attractions under the new 10-year concessions that started in January.

The Legacy team has previously served as lead design consultants for two other projects in Macau, including Galaxy Macau's Grand Resort Deck (2011) and Studio City Macau, which debuted in 2015.

The company was also more recently responsible for the design of the Chimelong Marine Science Park, in Hengqin, which comprises a 370,000 square meter complex that, according to the company, will claim the title of "World's Largest Indoor Theme Park" upon its debut later this year.

"Working shoulder-to-shoulder with icons like Ga-



Rendering of a section of the theme park

laxy's Francis Lui and Melco's Lawrence Ho has been among the highlights of my career. Together, we've helped shape the landscape of modern-day Macau. My entire team and I are thrilled to continue working in one of our favorite markets as Macau enters this new era," Taylor Jeffs, president and chief creative officer of Legacy Entertainment, said in the company release.

Legacy also noted the "historic move," of the granting of the new 10-year concessions in exchange for a commitment to a large-scale investment over the next decade, in which 90% will be directed towards non-gaming attractions and experiences.

The company said that given the current situation and the reopening of the borders, "the outlook is optimistic for

Asia's gaming capital of Macau," observing that in January the casino operators saw revenue increases up to 36%, with a full recovery to pre-pandemic levels anticipated to take two years.

Legacy noted that while "historically, non-gaming revenue has only accounted for less than 15% of the local government's revenue," the current shift, enforced in the new concessions "will fundamentally change the way Macau exists."

"The goal now is different than it was when we started designing Galaxy Macau in 2006, and Studio City Macau in 2011," Jeffs added. "Back then, the mandate was to create the world's most compelling gaming destination. Now we're out to simply create one of the world's top entertainment des-

tinations for all ages. It's a tall order, but I am confident my brilliant team of collaborators is up to the challenge."

Besides the projects in Macau and recently in Hengqin, Legacy has developed, designed, and produced over 40 projects worldwide, spanning mediums that include theme parks, hotels/resorts, casinos and aquariums.

Their project portfolio includes the Galaxy Macau Resort, Studio City Macau Resort, Vietnam's Sea Shell Aquarium, Lotte World Adventure Busan Theme Park (South Korea), Kingdom of Poseidon Resort (Harbin, China), and Haichang Ocean Park (Shanghai, China). Upcoming openings include Chimelong Marine Science Park in Zhuhai, China, and Batavia: The Floating City at PIK 2 in Indonesia.

## HK CE JOHN LEE TO VISIT MACAU TODAY

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu will visit Macau today for the first time after resumption of border normalcy. Among the delegation are Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration Cheuk Wing-hing, Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Kevin Yeung, Secretary for Transport and Logistics Lam Sai-hung and Director Carol Yip of the Chief Executive's Office. Last week, during Lee's visit to Guangdong, he announced his next visit would be to Macau. Last Friday, Lee received Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng at the Hong Kong Government House. At this meeting, the two CEs discussed regional integration and development.

## WTT TO BE HELD IN MACAU IN APRIL

World Table Tennis (WTT) announced yesterday that the WTT Champions Macau will be staged from April 17 to 23. The tournament will be held at the Tap Seac Multisport Pavilion and will feature 32 elite men's and women's singles players apiece, including defending champions Wang Chuqin and Sun Yingsha of China, with 1,000 ITTF world rankings points awarded to the winners. This marks the fourth time that the SAR will host a WTT event since 2020. "We are incredibly excited to be hosting the WTT Champions Macau again this April. We are delighted to be able to welcome back table tennis fans from all around the world to Macau to watch their favorite players in action," said Liu Guoliang, chair of the WTT board and ITTF deputy president.

## REGISTRATION SYSTEM FOR KINDERGARTENS RECEIVES 5,200 APPLICANTS

The Central Registration System for first-time kindergarten students in the 2023/2024 school year kicked off yesterday and will last for about one month. The list of accepted students will be announced on April 11. According to the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEDJ), three schools held admission interviews on the first day, and children can choose whether to wear a mask or not. Data from the bureau shows that more than 5,200 people have registered, a decrease from last year's 5,700. The Central Registration System allows parents and guardians to apply to up to six different schools.

## CNPC'S RMB65B PETROCHEMICAL PROJECT FULLY OPERATIONAL IN GUANGDONG

A petrochemical project of China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), China's leading oil and gas producer, has become fully operational in southern province of Guangdong this week. The project, with a total investment of 65.4 billion yuan, processes 20 million tonnes of crude oil per year, while producing 1.2 million tonnes of ethylene products and 2.6 million tonnes of paraxylene. As a key project to support the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area strategy, the Guangdong petrochemical project is a refining and chemical integration capable of producing a full range of petrochemical products, including more than 20 kinds of oil products and 200 kinds of chemical products.

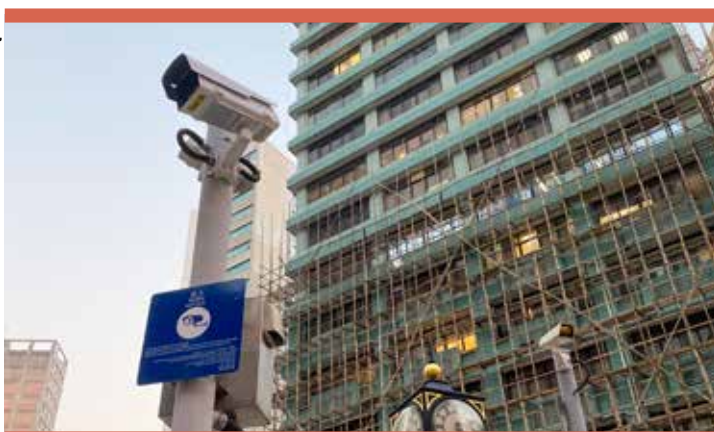
# 300 more 'Eyes in the Sky' from today

RENATO MARQUES

**A** total of 300 new surveillance cameras, part of the fifth phase of the "Eyes in the Sky" program, will commence operation from today, a dispatch from the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, announced on yesterday's official government gazette.

In a statement from the Unitary Police Services (SPU), it was also disclosed that to complete the fifth phase, there are only two more cameras to be installed, which are waiting for coordination regarding roadworks. The SPU said that these last two cameras should become operational this year.

Marking the conclusion of the fifth phase of the program, the Secretary, as well as high



officials from the police forces, have visited the "Eyes in the Sky" control center and several locations included in the fifth phase of installation of the system that was said to contribute to safety and public order and stability.

The "Eyes in the Sky" system was considered a priority project for urban security, and

one of the main measures included in the "Improvement of police work resorting to technology" concept embodied in the government's policy address.

In total, Macau has from today 1,920 surveillance cameras in operation from which 1,620 are related to the first four phases of implementa-

tion of the system.

According to SPU, the system is achieving the expected results, adding that last year, 3,665 cases were investigated with the use of the system. Among those cases are incidents involving homicides, drug trafficking, theft, arson, possession of prohibited weapons, offenses to physical integrity, fraud, and the illegitimate appropriation of found things.

This year, security authorities will carry out studies on the introduction of the sixth phase of the system, aiming to extend the coverage even further.

An expansion plan of the system to cover the new urban landfills as well, namely Zone A, is also in the pipeline to be presented soon.



CRIME

# NEARLY MOP4M REPORTED IN SERIAL ONLINE SHOPPING FRAUD

ANTHONY LAM

**A**N alleged online shopping scam has impacted at least four people, reporting a total loss nearing MOP4 million, and led to the arrest of a woman, the Judiciary Police (PJ) disclosed yesterday.

The suspect is a local resident surnamed Lei, 38, who reportedly works as a housewife.

Between Jan. 19 and 29, four local women separately reported cases of fraud to the PJ. All accused Lei of scamming them.

Police investigations discovered that Lei had operated an online shopping business with other shareholders. She had reportedly persuaded the four complainants to buy high-end fashion items, such as handbags and watches, through her connections, in addition to suggesting they sell their used items on her platform.

On Feb. 27, PJ inspectors arrested the suspect, who admitted committing the crime. She also confessed that since 2022, she could no longer help purchase merchandise at prices lower than rack rates because she had lost her connections. In addition, due to living expenses, she has spent the money she obtained from her clients.



The four victims reported a total loss of MOP3.89 million. According to the police report, the first woman paid MOP561,000 to purchase merchandise and gave MOP1.91 million worth of items for sale. She could get neither the money nor the products back.

The second victim paid MOP1.49 million for purchases and later had MOP210,000 refunded by the suspect. The rest of the

sum was neither refunded nor transformed into goods.

The third victim paid MOP104,200 and the fourth MOP35,520.

Cyberscams posing as employment opportunities were also logged, as the PJ disclosed in two similar cases yesterday.

The two victims were both in search of jobs and found a job posting online. After having initial

contact, the so-called employers requested that both victims download an app and register their personal information on it for recruitment purposes.

The following day, both victims received notice of spending from their mobile payment platforms. The first victim was notified of a spend on MPay for the sum of MOP1,447, which she did not conduct.

The second victim received a one-time password for a transaction during the small hours, which was ignored, but in the morning a purchase of MOP3,600 was reportedly made.

## CAUTION REQUIRED FOR PERSONAL BELONGINGS

At the same press conference, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) disclosed that three separate reports of theft were received on Feb. 23 and 25 in the core tourist district of the Macau Peninsula.

Two of the cases involved pedestrians' backpacks being secretly opened and property stolen. The remaining case concerned a shop from which an item was appropriated by the suspects.

After receiving the reports, the police reviewed footage from the public surveillance camera sys-

tem and shops' close-circuit television system. They discovered three highly suspicious people.

The three women suspects, all tourists holding Mongolian passports and aged 35 to 42 years, approached their targets as a group, with two of them helping to cover the targets' backpacks, while the remaining person took items from the backpack.

After stealing, they would leave the location immediately.

On Feb. 26, officers on patrol discovered three people resembling the suspects. As the three left a shop in the São Domingos area, the officers confronted them.

The officers found an item that did not belong to the three people but was for sale at the shop. It was a small bottle of edible supplements and was valued at nearly MOP700.

While collecting their personal information at the police station, the police discovered one of three had a criminal record in the local security system. The person also made a different new personal data disclosure from the record that the police possessed.

During search and seizure at their rented room at a hotel in the Central district, the police found the clothes they wore when they were caught on the public surveillance camera system and the items they had stolen, including a wallet, some bank cards, some ID documents, the edible supplements, a small handbag valued at about MOP800, as well as cash amounting to approximately MOP2,800.



EDUCATION

# CUHK recruiting MBA students in Macau

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Business School of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is recruiting candidates for the university's Executive Masters of Business Admi-

nistration (EMBA) in Macau this weekend.

"It is time to Learn, Unlearn, and Relearn with CUHK EMBA" is the motto with which CUHK is aiming to attract local students, deploying a team from the uni-

versity's admissions office to visit Macau and meet prospective candidates one-on-one.

Advertised as a "Coffee Chat" session, the initiative brings to Macau several management officials to talk about CUHK EMBA program highlights, as well as hear alumni stories about their EMBA experiences, career advancement and personal growth through EMBA study.

The sessions will start today and continue until Sunday (March 5), and will be headed by So Chun, administrative director of the Executive MBA at CUHK and also a graduate of the program himself.

Announced as the first-ever EMBA program in Hong Kong and running for almost three decades (since 1993) the program is presented as tailor made for Hong Kong and Macau markets, with a special focus on finance and banking sectors.

So Chun is also an expert in the finance sector, who started as an analyst and then migrated to be a private banker. He has held several senior positions in the banking sector, including overseeing credit card issuing and acquiring in Hong Kong and Macau for Standard Chartered Bank and Prudential Insurance Company.

MICE

# LOCAL BUSINESS SECTOR EXPLORES OPPORTUNITIES IN FOSHAN

**A** delegation of the local business sector organized by the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) has visited Guangdong's Zhongshan and Foshan to explore opportunities.

The delegation included representatives from the trades of MICE, industry, trading and major hotels and resorts. During the visit, they were introduced to enterprises and research entities in Big Health and innovative technologies.

An exchange session was also held with city officials.

Acting president U U Sang of the IPIM hoped that in the future, the IPIM will continue to facilitate interactions between the industrial, commercial and exhibition industries of Macau and those of Zhongshan and Foshan, cultivating new practices under "Industry+Exhibition".

A Zhongshan official stated that in 2022, the total Zhongshan-Macau imports and exports amounted to 1.238 billion Chinese yuan, with 157 newly established Macau companies, representing USD39.67 million on investments.

The official further emphasized that with regional road networks expected to open in the near future, the geographical importance of Zhongshan will become more significant.

A Foshan official, meanwhile, recapped that there are currently 453 Macau companies in Foshan, with registered capital reaching USD7.6 billion. He also hoped that in the future, the two places will seek wider fields and deeper cooperation in terms of traditional Chinese medicine, exhibitions, technology, tourism and food. **AL**



# Sands China nurtures emerging artists in new exhibition at Sands Gallery

**S**ANDS China has been championing young artists by providing opportunities for them to grow their crafts, by showcasing their works, and by hosting initiatives for these artists to emerge – as part of the company's support of Macau's integration into the national development plan.

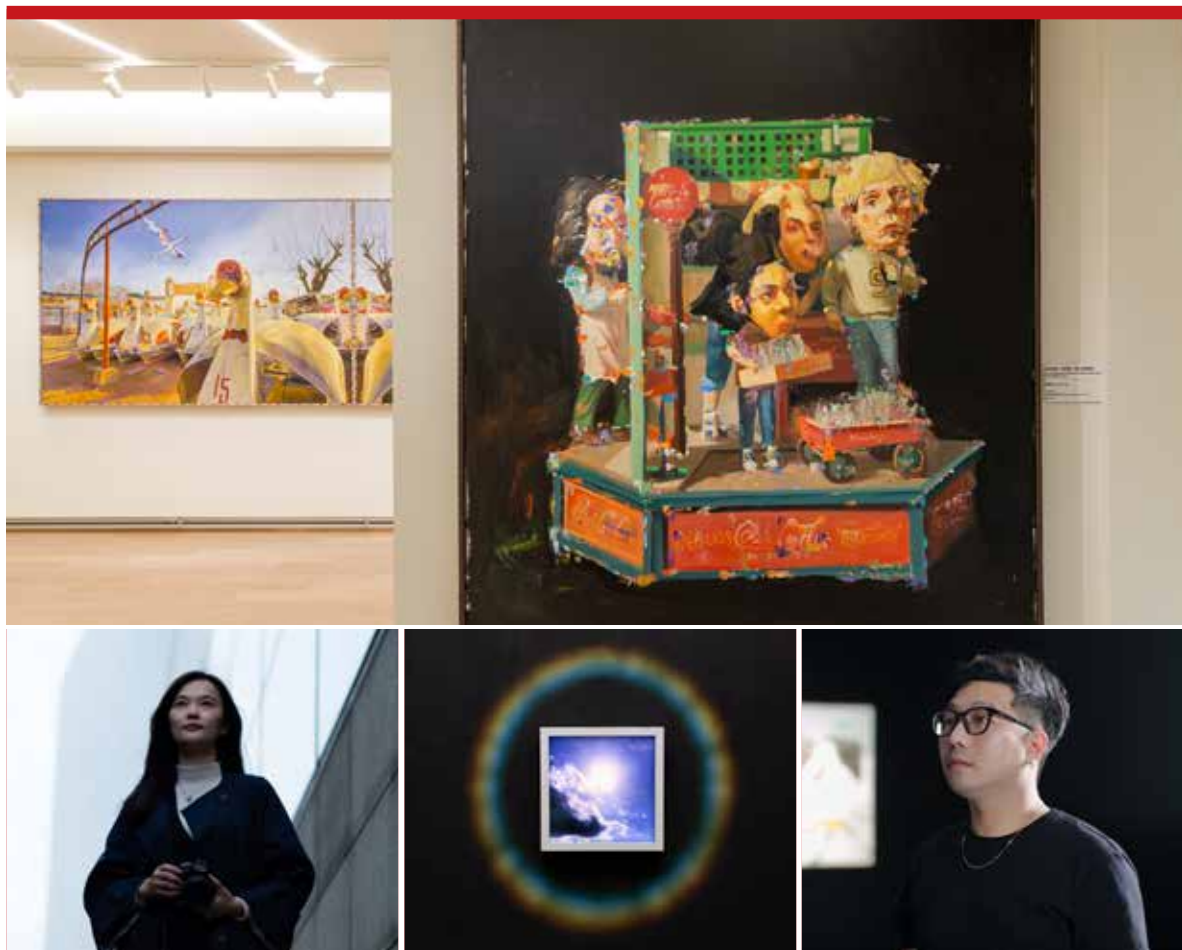
With the goal of establishing a platform for young artists – especially local ones – Sands China is boosting its efforts to cultivate an environment that nurtures creativity and art appreciation in Macau.

In line with this goal, Sands China has unveiled "Illumination – Zhaoying Zhang & Sisi Wong Dual Solo Exhibition" as Sands Gallery's first exhibition of 2023 at The Grand Suites at Four Seasons.

Artists Zhaoying Zhang and Sisi Wong were the first-prize winners in the painting and photography categories, respectively, in the "Time is on My Side – 2021 Greater Bay Area Young Artists Scheme – A Competition of Painting & Photography" launched by Sands China in support of the government's Art Macao event series.

The new Illumination exhibition is part of Sands China's goal to enhance extensive exchange and cooperation among local and international art talent as Sands Gallery showcases the works of professional artists in Macau and across the region – in a bid to bring a greater diversity of experiences to the city, while promoting and encouraging the diversification of art and culture in Macao.

Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., said: "Through presenting this exhibition, we hope to foster art appreciation among visitors, inspire local artists, bolster the vibrant growth



of Macao's cultural and creative industries, and help boost artistic exchange between artists in the Greater Bay Area."

For Dr. Wong, the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area has "endowed the city with a new mission of the times to establish itself as 'a multicultural exchange and cooperation base with an emphasis on Chinese culture.'"

The international enterprise expects more visitors to enter the region as borders have reopened, and while there is a wide variety in the character of visitors, Sands Gallery is currently focusing on contemporary art that should be able to play to the taste of some of these new visitors.

Illumination – Zhaoying

Zhang & Sisi Wong Dual Solo Exhibition has a reference to "intensity of illumination," a term that describes a given amount of light; the exhibition showcases nearly 60 magnificent works of diverse art forms and media including oil painting, sculpture, installations, photography and projection.

It probes into the cultural connotations of light through the exhibits, and explores, from the perspective of technique, how the artists interpret the diverse aspects of the artworks using light.

According to the exhibition curator, Professor Hu Bin, the juxtaposition of the two artists' works not only presents their contrasting responses on the theme and shows the similarities

and differences between various media such as painting and video, but also demonstrates the spirit of intention of each artist

"In Macau, a frontier where Eastern and Western cultures meet and collide, we are hosting an exhibition of works from two contemporary artists closely related to this idea, in hopes of exploring how the cultural and technical 'illuminations' clash with their multi-dimensional art forms," said Professor Hu.

Local artist Sisi Wong unleashes boundless imagination about the world across her photography and videos. The theme of light has been prominent in her works, where she explores the possibilities of light in various forms of media.

She said: "I look forward to

presenting my artworks in this exhibition, which express my feeling of nostalgia for Macau's culture as a local artist."

She has acknowledged that the Time is on My Side competition has opened doors for her, both in Macau and abroad, providing her opportunities to represent the city through her works.

"I really feel encouraged by Sands China's initiatives for local artists. [...] I hope this exhibition creates a dialogue for the development and outlook of contemporary art in Macau."

Meanwhile, artist Zhaoying Zhang has utilised materials across cultures and times to depict dazzling theatrical and carnival scenes, employing uncanny visual effects along with sharp contrast between brightness and darkness.

Zhang creates works with a broad international vision exhibited through themes that transcend time and continental boundaries, demonstrating a hybrid mentality across different media, languages, and times.

He said: "I'm honoured to have been one of the winners in the Time is on My Side competition, which was a great opportunity for me to grow as an artist."

"The fact that Sands China is offering us a platform to showcase our works is making a major impact in the development of the local art industry in Macau. The transition to supporting non-gaming activities means a lot to us artists," he added.

Illumination – Zhaoying Zhang & Sisi Wong Dual Solo Exhibition is open to the public 11 a.m.-7 p.m. daily until March 26 at Sands Gallery, a permanent art space on the 6th floor of The Grand Suites at Four Seasons that provides an opportunity for guests to explore an ever-changing variety of art exhibitions.





DIPLOMACY

# BELARUSIAN LEADER VISITS CHINA AMID UKRAINE TENSIONS

**B**ELARUSIAN President Alexander Lukashenko, a close ally of Russia, arrived in Beijing yesterday for a state visit that will be watched for hints about China's attitude to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

China claims neutrality in the war, but U.S. officials have warned recently that it is considering sending military assistance to Russia. Beijing has called the U.S. allegations a smear campaign, and said it is committed to promoting peace talks.

China has long had a close relationship with Lukashenko. But his trip also illustrates the depth of Beijing's ties to Russian leader Vladimir Putin and his allies.

Lukashenko's government has strongly backed Moscow and allowed Belarus' territory to be used as a staging ground for the initial invasion of Ukraine a year ago. Russia has maintained a contingent of troops and weapons in Belarus and the two neighbors and allies conducted joint military drills.

This stance left Lukashenko even more isolated in Europe, where his country faces sanctions from the European Union over both its role in the war and his repression of domestic opposition.

Beijing on Friday issued a proposal calling for a cease-fire and peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, but has also said it has a "no-limits friendship" with Russia and has refused to criticize Mos-



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko speaks during an exclusive interview with Xinhua

cow's invasion, or even to call it an invasion. It has accused the U.S. and NATO of provoking the conflict and condemned sanctions leveled against Russia and entities seen as aiding its military effort.

Last week, those sanctions were expanded to include a Chinese company known as Spacety China, which has supplied satellite imagery of Ukraine to affiliates of Wagner Group, a private Russian military contractor owned

by a close associate of Putin. A Luxembourg-based subsidiary of Spacety China was also targeted.

"The U.S. has no right to point fingers at China-Russia relations. We will by no means accept the U.S. pressure and coercion," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Monday at a daily briefing.

In a recent interview with Chinese media, Lukashenko said that now is "a unique situation ... to put a stop to the conflict."

## BELARUS AND THE CHINA EXPERIENCE

"I have the warmest, kindest memories from my first visit to China, from my first impressions of the country, and from my cooperation with the leaders of the People's Republic of China," Lukashenko told Xinhua in the exclusive interview ahead of his visit to China.

Lukashenko has "high hopes" for his visit to China. "I have been to China many times. I am very glad to visit China again in the co-

ming days and meet with the Chinese leader, my old friend President Xi Jinping, a very smart, wise, creative and modern person," the Belarusian president noted.

During the interview to Xinhua, Lukashenko looked back on his previous visits to China, recalling his first visit to China as the president of Belarus over two decades ago as well as his earlier trips as a member of parliament to China's special economic zones.

At that time, China was not the same as it is now, he said. "The population was huge ... Everyone had to be fed and dressed. China needed to strengthen national defense. Everything was not easy. However, China was determined to achieve all of these," Lukashenko said.

After visiting China, Lukashenko said he felt that in just a couple of decades China would achieve significant development, so China's experience should be learned.

The president noted that Belarus had drawn on China's experience, primarily that regarding special economic zones. "Based on this, we have established several free economic zones, including the Great Stone China-Belarus Industrial Park ... China's experience lay at the heart of it," he said.

The industrial park mentioned by Lukashenko is the largest project to attract investment in Belarus and a landmark cooperation project within the Belt and Road framework, which was promoted by the two heads of state personally and prized by the two governments.

The interview was first released last week, but parts of it were shared online again on Monday night by Belarusian state media. **MDT/AGENCIES**

DIPLOMACY

# China rips new US House committee on countering Beijing

**C**HINA lashed out yesterday at a new U.S. House committee dedicated to countering Beijing, demanding its members "discard their ideological bias and zero-sum Cold War mentality."

The House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party must "view China and China-U.S. relations in an objective and rational light," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing.

"We demand the relevant U.S. institutions and



Mao Ning, Foreign Ministry spokesperson

individuals discard their ideological bias and zero-sum Cold War mentality,"

she said. They must "stop framing China as a threat by quoting disinformation,

stop denigrating the Communist Party of China and stop trying to score political points at the expense of China-U.S. relations."

The committee began its work Tuesday with a primetime hearing in which its chairman called on lawmakers to act with urgency, framing the competition between the U.S. and China as "an existential struggle over what life will look like in the 21st century."

Relations between the U.S. and China have hit their lowest level in years,

with both countries enacting retaliatory tariffs and trading accusations over China's opaque response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

China's aggression toward Taiwan, drive to assert control over the South China Sea and the recent flight of a suspected Chinese spy balloon over the U.S. have fueled lawmakers' desire to do more to counter Beijing. Testifying to the strength of those concerns, the 365-65 vote to create the committee was bipartisan, a rarity in the deeply divided Congress.

The committee's chairman, Rep. Mike Gallagher, a Republican from Wisconsin who has been a fierce critic of Beijing, said the Chinese government has found friends on Wall

Street and in lobbyists in Washington who are ready to oppose the committee's efforts.

"Time is not on our side. Just because this Congress is divided, we cannot afford to waste the next two years lingering in legislative limbo or pandering for the press," Gallagher said. "We must act with a sense of urgency."

Addressing worries the new committee could stir more anti-Asian hate crimes, Gallagher said he is committed to ensuring the focus is on the Chinese Communist Party, not on the people of China.

Tuesday's hearing was interrupted by two protesters, one saying, "this committee is about saber rattling, it's not about peace." Both were ushered out by police. **MDT/AP**



COVID-19

# Beijing says it's been 'open and transparent' on virus origins

**C**HINA pushed back at renewed suggestions that the COVID-19 pandemic could have been the result of a lab leak, saying it has been "open and transparent" in the search for the virus' origins.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Energy assessed with "low confidence" that the pandemic that was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019 began with the leak of a virus from a lab. The report hasn't been made public and officials in Washington stressed that U.S. agencies are not in agreement on the origin.

China has "shared the most data and research results on virus tracing and made important contributions to global virus tracing research," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning Mao told reporters yesterday at a daily briefing.

U.S. officials and members of Congress have accused China of not been entirely cooperative

AP PHOTO



with inquiries into the origin.

A World Health Organization expert group said last year that "key pieces of data" to explain how the pandemic began were still missing. The scientists cited avenues of research that were needed, including studies

evaluating the role of wild animals and environmental studies in places where the virus might have first spread.

The Associated Press has previously reported that the Chinese government was strictly controlling research into the pande-

mic's origins, clamping down on some work and promoting fringe theories that it could have come from outside the country.

"Politicizing the issue of virus tracing will not smear China but will only damage the U.S.'s own credibility," Mao said.

Her comments came amid continuing questions about how the virus that has killed more than 6.8 million people worldwide first emerged.

The U.S. Department of Energy conclusion was first reported over the weekend in The Wall Street Journal, which said the classified report was based on new intelligence and noted in an update to a 2021 document. The DOE oversees a national network of labs in the U.S.

White House officials on Monday declined to confirm press reports about the assessment. John Kirby, the spokesman for the National Security Council, said Monday that "there is just not an intelligence community consensus" on the origin.

In 2021, officials released an intelligence report summary that said four members of the U.S. intelligence community believed with low confidence that the virus was first transmitted from an animal to a human, and a fifth believed with moderate confidence that the first human infection was linked to a lab.

Some scientists are open to the lab-leak theory, but many scientists believe the virus came from animals, mutated, and jumped into people — as has happened in the past with viruses. Experts say the true origin of the pandemic may not be known for many years — if ever. **MDT/AP**

AD



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### The Hong Kong SAR's 25th Anniversary: Lessons Learned and Future Perspectives

Presented by:  
Grenville Cross GBS, SC

#### britcham Business Lunch - Thursday 9 March 2023

Since 1997, Hong Kong has pursued the "One Country, Two Systems" policy, in good times and bad. It has faced various challenges, and its status as a financial centre, a trading hub and a place of legal excellence has evolved accordingly. It calls itself "Asia's World City", and, although much has changed, much also remains the same. When the National Security Law was enacted in 2020, it triggered global debate, with some predicting the worst. Given its experiences, there are lessons to be learned, by friend and foe alike. So how have its institutions developed, how strong is its rule of law, and what is its direction of travel? The answers will enlighten Macao, and benefit everybody who does business with Hong Kong.

Grenville Cross served as the Director of Public Prosecutions of the Hong Kong SAR from 1997 to 2009, and as the Deputy DPP of Hong Kong from 1990 to 1997. A barrister-at-law, he is the Vice Chairman (Senate) of the International Association of Prosecutors. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1990, becoming Senior Counsel in 1997. He is Honorary Professor of Law, at the University of Hong Kong, and Honorary Visiting Professor of Law, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In 2010, he was awarded the Silver Bauhinia Star, for services to the law, and, in 2021, the Gold Bauhinia Star, for services to the community.

Date : 9 March 2023 (Thursday) Venue : Mandarin Oriental Macao Harbour & Bay Room  
Fee : Members MOP480 Non-members MOP580 Time : 1215 - 1400 hours  
(Includes lunch. Vegetarian orders by request only)

Advance booking necessary. Email: [lvone@britchammao.org](mailto:lvone@britchammao.org) or call +853 6331 1124







A crane, firefighters and rescuers operate after a train collision in Tempe near Larissa city, Greece, yesterday

GREECE

# Head-on train crash kills 36, injures at least 85

COSTAS KANTOURIS & DEREK GATOPOULOS, TEMPE

A passenger train carrying hundreds of people, including many university students returning home from holiday, collided at high speed with an oncoming freight train in a fiery wreck in northern Greece, killing at least 36 people and injuring some 85, officials said yesterday.

Multiple cars derailed and at least three burst into flames after the collision just before midnight Tuesday near the town of Tempe as the passenger train was emerging from a highway underpass.

Rescue crews illuminated the scene with floodlights before dawn yesterday as they searched frantically through the twisted, smoking wreckage for survivors.

After sunrise, they turned to heavy machinery that had been brought in to start

moving large pieces of the trains. What appeared to be the passenger train's third carriage lay atop the crumpled remains of the first two, where emergency crews were directing their focus.

Officials said many of the passengers on board the Athens to Thessaloniki train had been university students returning home after celebrating Carnival over the long weekend.

"This is a terrible tragedy that is hard to comprehend," said Deputy Health Minister Mina Gaga. "I feel so sorry for the parents of these kids."

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis was to visit the scene later in the day.

Survivors said several passengers were thrown through the windows of the train cars due to the impact. They said others fought to free themselves after the passenger train buckled, slamming into a field near a gorge, about 380 kilometers north of Athens.

"There were many big pieces of steel," said Vassilis Polyzos, a local resident who said he was one of the first people on the scene. "The trains were completely destroyed, both passenger and freight trains."

He said dazed and disoriented people were escaping out of the train's rear cars as he arrived.

"People, naturally, were scared — very scared," he said. "They were looking around, searching; they didn't know where they were."

Eight rail employees were among those killed in the crash, including the two drivers of the freight train and the two drivers of the passenger train, according to Greek Railroad Workers Union President Yannis Nitsas.

The trains crashed just before the Vale of Tempe, a gorge that separates the regions of Thessaly and Macedonia. Costas Agorastos, the regional governor of the Thessaly area, told Greece's Skai Television the two trains collided

head on at high speed.

"Carriage one and two no longer exist, and the third has derailed," he said.

Rescuers wearing head lamps worked in thick smoke, pulling pieces of mangled metal from the cars to search for trapped people. Others scoured the field with flashlights and checked underneath the wreckage. Several of the dead are believed to have been found in the restaurant car near the front of the passenger train.

Greece's firefighting service said some 66 people were hospitalized, including six in intensive care.

"The evacuation process is ongoing and is being carried out under very difficult conditions due to the severity of the collision between the two trains," said fire service spokesperson Vassilis Varthakoyiannis.

The possible cause of the collision was not immediately clear. Two rail officials were being questioned by police but had not been detained.

Passengers who received minor injuries or were unharmed were transported by bus to Thessaloniki, 130 kilometers to the north. Police took their names as they arrived, in an effort to track anyone who may be missing.

A teenage survivor who did not give his name to reporters said that just before the crash he felt a strong braking and saw sparks — then there was a sudden stop.

"Our carriage didn't derail, but the ones in front did and were smashed," he said, visibly shaken.

He added that the first car caught fire and that he used a bag to break the window of his car, the fourth, and escape.

Rail operator Hellenic Train said the northbound passenger train to Thessaloniki, Greece's second-largest city, had about 350 passengers on board.

Agorastos described the collision on state television as "very powerful" and said it was "a terrible night."

"The front section of the train was smashed. ... We're getting cranes to come in and special lifting equipment clear the debris and lift the rail cars. There's debris flung all around the crash site."

Officials said the army had been contacted to assist.

Hellenic Train, which has added high-speed services in recent years, is operated by Italy's FS Group, which runs rail services in several European countries. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1969 CONCORDE FLIES FOR THE FIRST TIME



The supersonic airliner, Concorde, has made a "faultless" maiden flight.

The Anglo-French plane took off from Toulouse and was in the air for just 27 minutes before the pilot made the decision to land.

The first pilot, Andre Turcat, said on his return to the airport: "Finally the big bird flies, and I can say now that it flies pretty well."

The test flight reached 10,000ft (3,000m), but Concorde's speed never rose above 300mph (480kph). The plane will eventually fly at a speed of 1,300mph (2,080kph).

Mr Turcat, his co-pilot and two engineers taxied to the end of the runway at about 1530GMT. Strong winds meant the test flight was in doubt for much of the day.

Two previous test flights had to be abandoned because of poor weather conditions.

Concorde sped down the runway and there was a spontaneous burst of applause from watching reporters and cameramen as the wheels lifted off the ground.

The noise from the four Olympus 593 engines, built jointly by the Bristol division of Rolls Royce and the French Snecma organisation, drowned out any noise from the crowd.

Less than half-an-hour later, the aircraft was brought back down to earth using a braking parachute and reverse thrust.

The crew emerged at the top of the steps, led by Mr Turcat, who gave the thumbs up signal with each hand.

The first British test pilot, Brian Trubshaw, who watched today's flight from the news stand, said, "I was terribly impressed by the way the whole flight was conducted. It was most professional and I would like to congratulate Andre on the way he handled this performance."

The British government has so far invested £155m in the project. It is hoped Concorde will begin flying commercially in 1973, when it will cut the flying time between London and New York from seven hours 40 minutes to three hours 25 minutes.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

On 9 April 1969, Brian Trubshaw made his first flight in the British-built prototype. The 22 minute flight left from a test runway at Filton near Bristol and landed at RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire.

Concorde completed its first supersonic flight on 1 October 1969.

There were serious doubts at government level about the commercial viability of the Concorde project. Cabinet papers released under the 30 year rule warned the project would be a disaster, costing the UK £900m.

The first commercial flights took place on 21 January 1976 when British Airways flew from London Heathrow to Bahrain and Air France from Paris to Rio.

Concorde was launched at the height of the fuel crisis and a combination of its heavy fuel consumption and small tanks, which meant it could not enter the lucrative trans-Pacific market, made it uneconomic.

Concorde's final commercial flight was on 23 October 2003.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Older family members may try to put unreasonable demands on you. Don't spend more than is necessary on travel or friends. Your dramatic nature may be too much to handle.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
You can make changes to your living quarters that should please family members. Extravagance will be a problem. You can have a great time if you go out with the one you love.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
You've been a little down and you need a lift. You may find yourself mixed up in a triangle of sorts. Set your goals and stick to your guns.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Don't overreact if your partner has a poor attitude. Be prepared to step into the limelight if you wish to promote your ambitions. This is a great day to spend with family.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
You will have the getup and go to contribute a great deal to groups of interest. A change of attitude has probably disrupted your home environment. Help elders get their personal papers in order.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
This will not be the best day for communication or travel. Hassles with in-laws could put a damper on your day. Don't sign up for too many extra activities or you'll have trouble fulfilling your obligations.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Partnerships will be favorable and contracts can be signed. You need to clear up some important personal documents before the end of the year.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Don't be alarmed. You will be looking for creative ways to make a little extra cash. Deception is likely. Let them know what your intentions are.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Someone you like may be receptive and actively seeking your company. You may not be as well received in group endeavors if you try to force your will on others.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Your ideas can be put into action. It might be time to shake a leg and do a personal makeover. Curl up with a good book or go for a drive in the country.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Be sure to spend time helping children with projects that are too difficult for them to accomplish alone. You will enjoy socializing and unusual forms of entertainment.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Be sure that you lay your cards on the table. Anger might lead to carelessness and minor injuries. You should be able to tie up loose ends today.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sanson**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

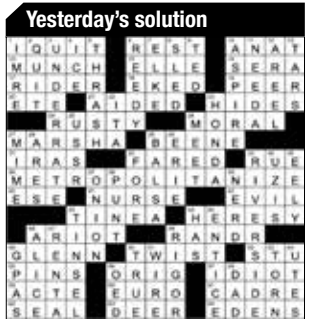
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-3	14	fine
Changchun	-9	4	fine
Chengdu	9	15	overcast
Chongqing	11	14	cloudy
Fuzhou	13	18	cloudy
Guangzhou	13	24	fine
Guiyang	6	9	overcast
Haikou	16	22	cloudy
Hangzhou	4	14	cloudy
Harbin	-10	1	cloudy
Hefei	4	15	cloudy
Nanjing	5	13	cloudy
Shanghai	5	12	cloudy
Taipei	12	14	cloudy
Wuhan	7	18	cloudy
Hong Hong	16	21	fine
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-3	-3	cloudy
Frankfurt	-1	11	fine
Paris	1	11	overcast
London	3	10	cloudy
New York	2	13	rain

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS** 1- Wooden shoe; 6- Fairway position; 9- Bread; 14- Make one's case; 15- Neither Rep. nor Dem.; 16- Rich tapestry; 17- Pay more than one can afford; 19- Quite bright; 20- Faucet; 21- Looking up; 22- Time being; 23- In a jiffy; 25- Profundity; 26- White rat, e.g.; 29- Border on; 31- Somewhat; 32- Cart driver; 36- Portico; 37- Car club; 38- Prepare a book or film for release; 40- Begin, e.g.; 43- Swindle; 45- Editorial notation; 46- Capital of New South Wales; 47- Chip dip; 50- Hwys.; 51- Trio; 52- Scott of "Charles in Charge"; 54- Mousse alternative; 57- Radiolocation; 58- Dissipate; 61- Give it \_\_\_\_; 62- Small child; 63- Skip \_\_\_\_; 64- Languishes with longing; 65- "SNL" alum Gasteyer; 66- Murders;

**DOWN** 1- Primer pet; 2- Thomas Edison's middle name; 3- High-pitched tone; 4- Dinghy thingy; 5- NFL 6-pointers; 6- Rest atop; 7- Hostelries; 8- Whirlpool; 9- Electric generator; 10- Lowermost deck; 11- Praying figure; 12- Coniferous tree; 13- \_\_\_\_ sow, so shall...; 18- Validation; 23- Lute of India; 24- Lennon's lady; 25- Made a hole; 26- Pompous fool; 27- Monetary unit of Lesotho; 28- Warner \_\_\_\_; 29- Expect; 30- Bleat of a sheep; 33- Food and water; 34- Biblical garden; 35- Starchy staple; 37- Pub pint; 39- Mystery writer Josephine; 41- States; 42- Greek H; 43- Camera setting; 44- Drain-cleaning chemical; 47- Puppeteer Lewis; 48- "As You Like It" forest; 49- Flat contract; 50- Lasso; 51- Pitfall; 52- Second letter of the Greek alphabet; 53- Mary Kay rival; 54- Scottish Celt; 55- Bibliography abbr.; 56- Permits; 59- Durable wood; 60- Slugger's stat;



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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AD



## The Art of Giving

Lurdes de Sousa \*



### ON THE 'DIFFICULTY OF GIVING'

**A**MAZON founder Jeff Bezos, when asked if he was committed to giving away most of his wealth in his lifetime, which represented a pledge worth \$122 billion, simply and casually declared that he was. Further elaborating on his philanthropic ideals, he added in a CNN interview about the challenges he faced as a donor: "The hard part is figuring out how to do it in a levered way (...) It's not easy. Building Amazon was not easy. It took a lot of hard work and a bunch of brilliant teammates, and I'm finding that philanthropy is very similar. It's not easy. It's really hard."

Bezos, like other engaged mega-donors, is very eager to publicly make sure everyone knows how hard it is to give.

The "difficulty of giving," a concept that can be traced back to over a century of leading philanthropists' declarations, can represent the best (reflecting a donor's dedication to a vocation approached with deliberateness and care) and the worst (spotlighting big donor's removed from the problems they seek to address) of philanthropy.

Why is it so difficult to give? Some argue that it is because giving is paired with responsibility (and a massive exposure to public criticism...).

As part of LVMH's broad philanthropic longstanding support for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, the French luxury group recently funded (with a 43m bid) the acquisition of an Impressionist masterpiece by the French painter Gustave Caillebotte entitled 'Partie de Bateau', to be donated to the Musée d'Orsay Impressionist collection.

In early 2020, the painting was classified as a national treasure, which comes with a temporary export license ban. With a timeframe of 30 months and an annual acquisitions budget of just 3 million, the likelihood that the state-owned Musée d'Orsay would come up with the necessary funds to buy the work and keep it in the country was deemed to be low.

The donation immediately sparked avid criticism in the French press, amid the controversial law on corporate sponsorship, with some tweeting: "It's not a '43m donation from LVMH' since the operation allows the conglomerate a 90% tax cut on the 43m: in fact, it's [actually] only the French taxpayers who pay for it."

So Yes, But.

So, yes. LVMH is entitled to a massive tax break, which could be as much as 90 percent of the purchase price under the law of patronage.

But the Boating Party is one of the last Impressionist masterpieces, rarely seen in person because it was in private hands, able to be viewed by only the lucky few. Belonging to Musée d'Orsay represents a national cultural enrichment and a gift to the people, as the painting will next year tour France as part of the festivities marking the 150th anniversary of Impressionism, enabling a broad public to enjoy the masterpiece.

Ultimately, giving is always about free choice, whether corporate or individual. It's a freedom of choice that comes with responsibility. That's, perhaps, where most of the explanation for the "difficulty of giving" is located, which recalls the lessons of the great female American historian and educator, Edith Hamilton (1867-1963), concluding in her seminal essay on Classic Greek Athenian:

"When the Athenians finally wanted not to give to the State but for the State to give to them, when the freedom they wished for most was freedom from responsibility, Athens ceased to be free and was never free again."

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Macau Daily Times is the official media partner of the Associação Internacional de Filantropia (Macau).



Bolor-Erdene Battengel

### INTERVIEW | BOLOR-ERDENE BATTSENGEL

## PUTTING MONGOLIA ON THE DIGITAL MAP

BARBARA ORTUTAY,  
TECHNOLOGY WRITER

**BOLOR-ERDENE** Battengel wants to transform Mongolia into a "digital first" country — and help young people, especially girls in this sparsely populated nation of 3.3 million, to learn how to code.

During her time with Mongolia's digital development and communications authority, including a year as vice minister, Battengel, 30, worked on digitizing the country's government services so people in remote areas don't have to spend long days traveling and waiting in lines for access to things like passport renewals or filing taxes.

Today Battengel is completing a policy fellowship at Oxford University and runs Girls Code, which teaches girls from disadvantaged communities and nomadic families computer programming.

She spoke to The Associated Press about facing online harassment as a young woman in politics and about Mongolia's unique position as a democracy nestled between Russia and China. Over 84% of Mongolia's population is connected to the internet, up from just 18% a decade ago, according to the World Bank.

The interview has been edited for clarity and length.

- Why was this digitization project so important?

**Battengel** - Mongolia is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world. We have nomadic communities living in the countryside. Unlike the people in the cities, nomads would have to drive 5-10 hours just to

get to their government facility.

And then they would, you know, have to stay there for a week to wait for the passport or come back. So now it's very convenient. And one of the things I love about Mongolia is that now you can see a herder on a horse in the middle of nowhere, using e-Mongolia and registering a company or getting an ID card or looking at their social security etc.

- What is internet access like in Mongolia?

**Battengel** - We have 330 small villages and towns in Mongolia. It's a very big country for 3.2 million people and the most important thing I worked on was digital inclusion — I wanted to reach out to people who do not have regular access to the internet. Those are the communities who need to be connected, to be well-informed. So now we have internet in all 330 small villages and towns in Mongolia. And it's relatively free, we haven't banned any website or social media or anything like that. So actually the statistics on our spending on social media is quite high.

Mongolia is a democratic country. And it's very interesting actually, being stranded between Russia and China and trying to protect our democracy. When they travel to Mongolia, I know a lot of people are shocked there is free speech. And now with social media and internet, a lot of things are coming out. For example, currently the Mongolian prime minister has a big fight against corruption. So a lot of parliament members are being prosecuted, resigning because of the corruption issues.

- Why did you leave your government post?

**Battengel** - My vision has always been to transform Mongolia to a digital nation, because Mongolia is a very mining dependent economy. I genuinely still believe that digital technology will give us a second chance and it will be the second economic sector in Mongolia.

When I worked in government, it was typical that I would get a question asking me like, "Oh, whose assistant are you?" Or like, "Are you here to work as a waitress?" Whenever you see a young woman, it's the stereotype. And even from the public, it's an unusual image. And then I got a lot of cyberbullying from old male politicians because they would see me as a competitor. But I also got a lot of young supporters as well. So by the time I resigned, I needed to be able to fight against the system. But me being in the system, it was almost impossible to fight. I wanted to resign and then bring young people together, especially women together, and also tell them realistically what it is like to be in government as a young woman.

- What changes are you hoping for in Mongolia?

**Battengel** - I always feel bad that the world does not know what's happening in Mongolia, not aware of the things that we have done except like Genghis Khan or horses or these typical images. I really hope that the world learns about modern Mongolia. I believe it is the next tech hidden gem. **MDT/AP**



FOOTBALL

# Just Fontaine, who scored 13 goals at 1958 World Cup, dies



France's Just Fontaine (left) tries to go past Brazil's goalkeeper Gilmar tackles in their semifinal match in Stockholm, on June 24, 1958

**J**UST Fontaine, the French soccer great who scored a record 13 goals at the 1958 World Cup, has died. He was 89.

Fontaine's former club Reims announced his death yesterday.

Fontaine took six games to achieve his feat at the 1958 World Cup in Sweden, when he was a last-minute inclusion on the French squad.

Entering the tournament, the Moroccan-born Fontaine was a little-known forward outside of the French league. Yet he tormented opponents with his speed and finishing touch — and even with someone else's boots. He had to borrow a pair of cleats after damaging his own boots in practice.

Fontaine scored four goals in the third-place game against West Germany, but could have had five if he had taken the penalty kick.

In addition to his feats with the national team, Fontaine

won the French league title four times, the French Cup and reached the final of the 1959 European Cup during his club career with USM Casablanca, Nice and Reims.

After he retired, Fontaine briefly coached France's national team and then coached Luchon, Paris Saint-Germain, Toulouse and the Moroccan national team.

The highest scorer at a World Cup tournament is now acknowledged with the Golden Boot award. Fontaine set the record when FIFA did not present a specific award for the tournament's top scorer.

"Beating my record? I don't think it can ever be done," Fontaine told The Associated Press in a 2006 interview. "The person who wants to beat me has a massive task, doesn't he? He has to score two goals per game over seven games."

Playing in the days when no substitutions were allowed,

France lost 5-2 in the semifinals against a Brazil team featuring 17-year-old Pele.

Fontaine, who scored in every match, gave France an early lead with the first goal Brazil allowed in the tournament. But at 1-1, France defender Robert Jonquet broke his leg. Amazingly, he played on, trying to contend with the genius of Pele, but the French defense was considerably weakened.

The men's record for most goals scored in a World Cup career is 16 by Germany striker Miroslav Klose, who played in four tournaments. Fontaine, who broke the record of 11 goals scored by Hungary striker Sándor Kocsis at the 1954 tournament, only played at one World Cup.

Brazil striker Marta has scored 17 goals at the Women's World Cup, playing in five tournaments.

Fontaine's meteoric rise as a scorer saw him get 200 goals in 213 games. He scored 30 goals in 21 games for France

Fontaine's career was dramatically cut short when he was only 28. The Frenchman — renowned for his lightning pace and ruthless finishing — suffered a horrendous leg fracture after a mistimed tackle in March 1960. **MDT/AP**

AD

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**OPINION**

**The Conversation**

Haleluya Hadero



**WHY TIKTOK IS BEING BANNED ON GOV'T PHONES IN US AND BEYOND**

The United States is ratcheting up national security concerns about TikTok, mandating that all federal employees delete the Chinese-owned social media app from government-issued mobile phones. Other Western governments are pursuing similar bans, citing espionage fears.

So how serious is the threat? And should TikTok users who don't work for the government be worried about the app, too?

The answers depend somewhat on whom you ask, and how concerned you are in general about technology companies gathering and sharing personal data.

The White House said Monday it is giving U.S. federal agencies 30 days to delete TikTok from all government-issued mobile devices.

Congress, the White House, U.S. armed forces and more than half of U.S. states had already banned TikTok amid concerns that its parent company, ByteDance, would give user data — such as browsing history and location — to the Chinese government, or push propaganda and misinformation on its behalf.

The European Union's executive branch has temporarily banned TikTok from employee phones, and Denmark and Canada have announced efforts to block TikTok on government-issued phones.

China says the bans reveal the United States' insecurities and are an abuse of state power. But they come at a time when Western technology companies, including Airbnb, Yahoo and LinkedIn, have been leaving China or downsizing operations there because of Beijing's strict privacy law that specifies how companies can collect and store data.

Both the FBI and the Federal Communications Commission have warned that ByteDance could share TikTok user data with China's authoritarian government.

A law China implemented in 2017 requires companies to give the government any personal data relevant to the country's national security. There's no evidence that TikTok has turned over such data, but fears abound due to the vast amount of user data it collects.

Concerns were heightened in December when ByteDance said it fired four employees who accessed data on two journalists from BuzzFeed News and The Financial Times while attempting to track down the source of a leaked report about the company. TikTok spokesperson Brooke Oberwetter said the breach was an "egregious misuse" of the employees' authority.

There is also concern about TikTok's content and whether it harms teenagers' mental health. Researchers from the nonprofit Center for Countering Digital Hate said in a report released in December that eating disorder content on the platform had amassed 13.2 billion views. Roughly two-thirds of U.S. teens use TikTok, according to the Pew Research Center.

U.S. Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco has expressed concerns that the Chinese government could gain access to user data.

"I don't use TikTok, and I would not advise anyone to do so," Monaco said earlier this month at the policy institute Chatham House in London.

TikTok said in a blog post in June that it will route all data from U.S. users to servers controlled by Oracle, the Silicon Valley company it chose as its U.S. tech partner in 2020 in an effort to avoid a nationwide ban. But it is storing backups of the data in its own servers in the U.S. and Singapore. The company said it expects to delete U.S. user data from its own servers, but it did not provide a timeline as to when that would occur.

But the amount of information TikTok collects might not be that different from other popular social media sites, experts say.

Its unclear how much the government-wide TikTok ban might impact the company. Oberwetter, the TikTok spokesperson, said it has "no way" of knowing whether its users are government employees.

The company, though, has questioned the bans, saying it has not been given an opportunity to answer questions and that governments were cutting themselves off from a platform beloved by millions.

[Abridged]

**POPULAR CHINA-LINKED STORE STIRS DEBATE AMID KENYA INFLATION**

THE BUZZ

Hundreds of Kenyan traders protested yesterday in the capital, Nairobi, over a popular new Chinese-affiliated shop selling goods they say undercut their businesses. But some people pinched by inflation accused the locals of offering the same goods at higher prices.

There have been tensions from time to time in Kenya, East Africa's economic hub, over China-linked investments and business dealings.

The latest incident involving the China Square store drew opposing statements from members of President William Ruto's Cabinet.

The trade and investment minister, Moses Kuria, said last week that Chinese investors are welcomed but as manufacturers, not traders.

He also wanted the store's lease bought out and given to local traders.

But Kenya's foreign affairs permanent secretary, Korir Sing'oei, sought to reassure all investors, "no matter their nationality" — a sentiment welcomed in a tweet by China's top diplomat for African affairs, Wu Peng. The diplomat added that back home, "international supermarkets, chain stores can be seen everywhere in China and we welcome more to come."

The China Square store, meanwhile, has said it will close "until further notice." One of the owners, Lei Cheng, told local media that he believed the pressure was political.

AP PHOTO



**CHILEAN CIRCUS HAS FOUGHT LGBTQ DISCRIMINATION FOR 54 YEARS**

PATRICIA LUNA, SANTIAGO

THE transformation begins as night falls on this semi-desert esplanade on the outskirts of Chile's capital, with Arturo, Alejandro and René applying makeup and donning wigs, feathers and sequins to become "Verónica Power," "Alexandra" and "The Crazy Purse Woman."

The characters are classics of the Timoteo Circus, a show that has fought prejudice and discrimination against Chile's LGBTQ community for more than a half century, even through a military dictatorship, in a country known for its devout Catholicism.

"Alexandra" — played by 65-year-old Alejandro Pavés — recalled life for the performers under the regime of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, which governed the South American country from 1973 to 1990.

"It was terrible to work under the dictatorship ... there was a lot of hatred for gays in Chile at that time," Pavés told The Associated Press, recalling the num-

ber of times he had been arrested, insulted and mistreated.

"The police would arrive and take us prisoner and if they found you dressed as a woman they would give you a sodomy" charge, which would mark you for the rest of your life, Pavés said. "The owners had to hide us."

Although it is called a circus, it is more of a sexual diversity show with humor, song and dance under a big top, and has 30 employees. At its peaks it had up to 70. The Timoteo Circus is one of the best known of Chile's 120 circuses.

"All Chileans know Circo Timoteo, it's like an institution," said Stéfano Rubio, a conductor and administrative manager of the circus.

The show began in 1968 when one of the circus' female dancers was absent for a performance. Its founder, René Valdés, had one of the male performers dress as a woman and replace her on stage. The performance was so popular the dancer did

five curtain calls to receive applause. The transformation circus was born and has been committed to sexual diversity ever since.

Arturo Peña, who plays "The Crazy Purse Lady," said that during the dictatorship the performers used to receive kicks and blows for their appearance, and the idea of carrying a purse in her act was to use in self-defense.

Pavés, who comes from a family with a strong military and religious tradition, hid his sexual identity from his family until a television program revealed what he did.

His family eventually accepted him but he says there always was the "shame of having a gay son, uncle or cousin."

Now, he cannot see himself having any other job than the Timoteo Circus, and that when he dies he wants his funeral to be held under the circus' big top.

"Today I work with more security, they accept me more" and the public understands the message better, he said. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



**USA** The family of the late Kobe Bryant has agreed to a \$28.5 million settlement with Los Angeles County to resolve the remaining claims in a lawsuit over deputies and firefighters sharing grisly photos of the NBA star, his 13-year-old daughter and other victims killed in a 2020 helicopter crash, attorneys and court filings said. The figure includes a newly agreed upon payment from the county of \$13.5 million along with the \$15 million a federal jury awarded Bryant's widow, Vanessa Bryant, at a trial in August.

AP PHOTO



**USA** Mexico's President Andrés Manuel López (pictured) said his country is more democratic than the United States. Obrador's testy comments came after U.S. officials took note of heated public debate in Mexico over López Obrador's recently approved electoral reforms, which critics allege could weaken Mexico's democracy. The reforms would cut spending for the country's electoral authorities.

AP PHOTO



**Nigerians** awoke to a new president yesterday, with ruling party candidate Bola Tinubu declared the winner of the country's election. As he thanked his supporters he appealed for reconciliation with his rivals, who are already demanding a revote in Africa's most populous nation. The announcement by election officials overnight was likely to lead to a court challenge by the second- and third-highest finishers in the weekend vote. Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi.