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MACAU RCR electronics

FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY WILL BE INTRODUCED TO BORDER-CROSSING SERVICES STEP-BY-STEP: OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY

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ONE ACCOUNT: GOVERNMENT EXPEDITING DIGITAL IDENTITY

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COVID-19 CONSPIRACIES SOAR AFTER LATEST REPORT ON ORIGINS

P8



AP PHOTO



China-India The foreign ministers of India and China met yesterday on the sidelines of a gathering in New Delhi of top diplomats from the Group of 20 industrialized and developing nations, signaling a thaw in their relationship, which has been tense since 2020. Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said the talks with his Chinese counterpart, Qin Gang, “focused on addressing current challenges to the bilateral relationship, especially peace and tranquility in the border areas.”

AP PHOTO



India Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni (left) urged India yesterday to play a central role in facilitating negotiations to end Russia’s war against Ukraine. India, with the rotating presidency of could represent the needs of less-developed nations in such a process, Meloni said in a statement following talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. She condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and underscored its adverse impact on developing countries in terms of food and energy security.

Hong Kong police yesterday arrested a man accused of assisting another suspect in the gruesome killing of model Abby Choi, whose dismembered body parts were found in a refrigerator. The arrest of the 41-year-old man brought the total number of people allegedly involved in the case to six. Officers believed the man, who worked in a yacht rental company, had attempted to help another suspect flee Hong Kong, police superintendent Alan Chung told reporters. The gruesome killing of Choi, 28, has gripped many in Hong Kong and across the border in mainland.

More on backpage

DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION KEY

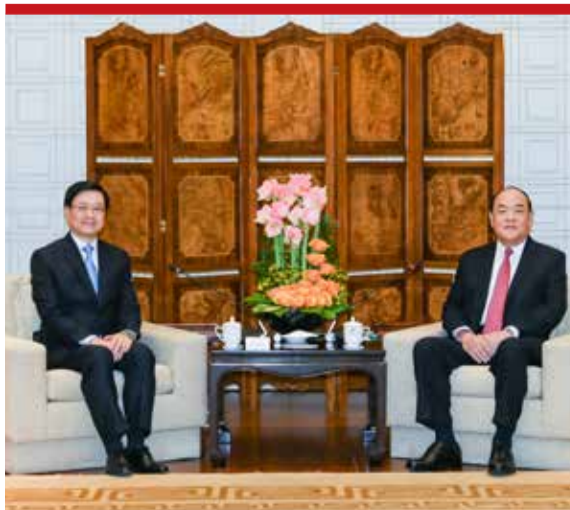
Upcoming NPC meetings to endorse Party orientation for domestic consumers to drive economic rebound P6-7

AP PHOTO



BORDERS HONG KONG E-CHANNEL LIMITED TO SOME RESIDENTS

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GBA JOHN LEE SHOWN TO MACAU’S NON-GAMING FACILITIES

P3

IFTM HOLDS CAREER DAY WITH 65 ORGANIZATIONS

A total of 65 organizations attended the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies' (IFTM) 2023 Career Day Taipa Campus, offering around 1,200 job vacancies. During the event, exhibiting representatives provided an introduction to the available career prospects and positions. According to the institution's Career Placement Survey for 2021/2022 graduates, 73.3% of Master's graduate respondents attained full-time employment, and those working full-time had a monthly median salary of MOP17,250, while the monthly median salary of Bachelor's full-time graduate respondents in Macau was MOP15,600.

LAWMAKERS TO PROPOSE FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS BE ALLOWED IN COOPERATION ZONE

Lawmakers including Ho Ion Sang, a delegate to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), will propose that foreign domestic workers be permitted to work in Hengqin. According to Ho, the move will encourage more Macau residents to settle in Hengqin. "We want to draw up and regulate the standards and conditions for foreign domestic workers to work in the Cooperation Zone," he said before leaving for Beijing, where meetings of the CPPCC will begin this weekend.

NO ADJUSTMENTS TO SCREENING RENT CONSIDERED

More than 1,400 films have been screened and 19 special film festivals have been held at the Cinematheque Passion since September 2020, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) stated. The new round of the theater's operation is open for bidding. According to the IC, income from renting the screening room as well as advertising proceeds will be collected as government revenue, and no fee adjustment has been considered yet.

94 JOB VACANCIES TO BE OFFERED IN DSAL MATCHING SESSIONS

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) and Macau Federation of Trade Unions will jointly hold three sessions of special job matching events to provide 94 job vacancies. Online registration will be open from March 3 to 8. Two sessions of service matching events for the catering industry will be held on March 9 with 79 job openings, including servers, cooks, and administrators. Security job matching sessions will be held in the morning of March 10 with 15 job vacancies, including airport security.

HONG KONG E-CHANNEL LIMITED TO SOME MACAU RESIDENTS

RENATO MARQUES

THE Hong Kong immigration automated passages (e-Channel) are not equally accessible to all residents of Macau. This is due to a rule established by the Macau authorities and comes as a result of the "Joint declaration of the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Portuguese Republic on the Question of Macau" also called "Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration," the Times learned in a response from the Identification Services Bureau (DSI) on the matter.

Non-permanent residents of Macau from all nationalities other than Portuguese or Chinese are currently unable to register their documents to use the fast channel (e-Channel) when arriving or leaving the neighboring region.

According to an inquiry from the Times to the Immigration Department of Hong Kong (IMMD), to be able to register for the e-Channel immigration simplified procedure, the non-residents of Macau must present their Macau identification cards (BIR) as well as a "Visit Permit for Residents of Macau to HKSAR." Both must be valid for a period of not less than one month.

While there are few questions on the first document (BIR), the same cannot be said for the "Visit Permit" also known as "Grey Passport" (a document with which many people in Macau are less familiar).

Such a document, as DSI confirmed to the Times, can only be issued to those residents of Macau who possess either Chinese or Portuguese nationality, a fact that necessarily excludes residents of Macau of any other nationality from the process (and thereby the possibility of using the e-Channels).

"According to prevailing laws and regulations, holders of Macau SAR Resident Identity Cards with Chinese or Portuguese nationality are eligible to apply for the Visit Permit to Hong Kong," the DSI said in a written reply to the Times.

"Before the handover to China, under normal circum-



stances, Portuguese nationals can visit Hong Kong with their Portuguese National Ordinary Passport. Macau residents of Chinese nationality can visit Hong Kong with the Visit Permit issued to Macau residents by the Hong Kong government and the Passport for Foreigners of Portugal," the DSI added.

"After the handover to China, since the Portuguese National Ordinary Passport and the Passport for Foreigners were no longer issued, and the Macau SAR Passport and the Macau SAR Travel Permit cannot be used when visiting Hong Kong, Administration Regulation No. 10/1999 (Regulations of Issuance of Visit Permit for Macau Residents from Macau SAR to Hong Kong SAR) was promulgated in December 1999, stipulating that the Identification Services Bu-

reau can issue the Visit Permit to HK to eligible Macau residents," the DSI further explained.

"[The Grey Passport] aims to solve the issue of the document that Macau residents of Chinese or Portuguese nationality use to visit Hong Kong. Macau residents of other nationalities can enter Hong Kong upon obtaining prior permission from the Hong Kong Immigration Department," DSI concluded.

In short, and after phone contact with the IMMD, it was explained that the residents of Macau who are not of Chinese or Portuguese nationality must always present their country passports to the immigration checkpoint in Hong Kong, together with their non-permanent BIR of Macau. In this case, the amount of time granted in Hong Kong will be also based

on the immigration criteria for each country's passport and will not abide by the conditions specially granted to Macau residents.

Such a situation can only be overcome after the holders of a non-permanent BIR are granted permanent residency in Macau. In this case, they can apply to use the HKSAR e-Channel directly at the DSI in Macau without the need to register with the Hong Kong authorities, the IMMD also clarified.

The IMMD reminded that in the event that eligible Macau non-permanent residents are enrolled in the service but undergo any changes to their personal information – including the obtaining of a Macau permanent identity card – they must re-enroll to continue to use the system.

HK IMMIGRATION REGARDS QUERY TO MACAU RESIDENTS 'NORMAL'

WITH the reopening of the borders between the two special administrative regions, Macau and Hong Kong residents alike have resumed regular visits to one another. In the process, some local residents have reported being faced with uncommon queries upon arriving in Hong Kong.

Several members of a group from a local university visiting Hong Kong said to the Times that they found it odd that the immigration officers asked them about several personal matters including the purpose of their visit and the duration of their stay.

"I have never before been asked these questions when visiting Hong Kong," said a female member of the group who requested to remain

unnamed. She added, "I was born here and I have been traveling to Hong Kong as my second home for over 35 years and I can assure you that I have never before been asked about my purpose for visiting Hong Kong or how long I was going to stay, or if I had any hotel booking. It is just weird," she said.

Although the questions surprise some, an official named Marco from the Hong Kong Immigration Department (IMMD) told the Times via phone that such questions "are normal and acceptable to everyone entering Hong Kong."

"Immigration officers have the right to ask these random questions to anyone. It is part of their work," the same official said. **RM**

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EDUCATION

Pui Ching's Coloane international school operation confirmed

ANTHONY LAM

THE operator rights of Pui Ching Middle School in an international school in Coloane was confirmed by the head of the education bureau yesterday.

On the sidelines of an education event, Kong Chi Meng, director of the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), revealed that Pui Ching Middle School had been commissioned to operate one of the two international schools near the One Oasis residential estate in Coloane.

A formal announcement will be made in the Official Gazette next week, the education official added. The new school will start recruiting students for the 2024/2025 academic year.

As per an earlier announcement, the other international school will be operated by the Macau Sino-Luso International



School (Association).

Exactly one year ago, the Times revealed that Pui Ching was part of the race to obtain the operation rights of an international school in the aforementioned

location.

Commenting on the announcement, Pui Ching alumnus and incumbent school principal Kou Kam Fai said that he felt glad and that it had been a long journey

applying for the operation rights of the future school.

He revealed that the education bureau was aware of the lack of schools in Coloane and decided schools with internationalized

curricula would be needed there.

Further, the principal disclosed that the Coloane campus will offer an integrated curriculum, blending elements of the British General Certificate of Education (GCE) and the American SAT systems, among other curricula.

The curricula offered will depend on the needs of students, and will include consideration of where they will pursue their higher education and which disciplines they will study, Kou further explained.

When questioned about his confidence in recruiting sufficient teaching staff by the opening of the international school, Kou stated that he felt positively about staff recruitment given there is more than a year to go. Meanwhile, certain teaching staff at the current campus on Avenida de Horta e Costa are qualified and willing to transfer to the Coloane campus.

"We will strive to retain the Pui Ching characteristics," the principal said.

Having a Christian background, the school has a large population of influential alumni, such as former Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Alexis Tam, Joseph Lee Kok-long, former member of the Hong Kong SAR Legislative Council and Lam Sio Meng, national first-class actor.

HK CE shown to Macau's non-gambling facilities

HONG Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu visited Macau yesterday and was introduced to non-gambling facilities before meeting his Macau counterpart.

Before meeting with Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, Lee visited the latest meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) infrastructure in Macau. As per pictures released by the government, Lee, Secretary for Security in Hong Kong before assuming office as Chief Executive, was accompanied by Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak in his visit to the unopened Galaxy International Convention Centre (GICC). Galaxy Entertainment Group Vice Chairman Francis Lui was also seen in the pictures.

In a statement, the local government commented that the Hong Kong delegation's visit to non-gambling facilities embodies Macau's efforts in strengthening the development of non-gambling elements.

It added that as the city now possesses even more quality MICE and performance venues, there are more spaces for the city to conduct regional cooperation and explore "multi-stop" cultural



and sport activities to expand the overseas source market and attract tourists from these markets to visit both Macau and Hong Kong, as well as other cities in the Greater Bay Area.

Ho also admitted that in all these years, an enormous amount of cargo had been delivered to Macau through Hong Kong. He hoped that in the future, Hong Kong would provide additional support, so that the logistics between the two Special Administrative Regions (SARs) would continue to thrive under the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge's operation.

In response, Lee said in a statement: "being special administrative regions of the country, both Hong Kong and Macau will leverage on their unique advantages under 'One country, two systems' and further strengthen the co-operation between the two places, with a view to generating stronger impetus for the high-quality development of the GBA and making greater contributions to national development."

The two heads of governments also discussed matters related to Hengqin, urban planning and renewal, as well as public housing, among other topics. AL

FINGERPRINT-FREE BORDER CROSSING UNDERWAY

STAFF REPORTER

FACIAL recognition technology will be introduced to border-crossing services step-by-step, according to the Office of the Secretary for Security.

The iris recognition system will be the first to be introduced to a section of the automated passenger clearance channels at the border gate as moves are made away from fingerprint identification at the border crossing, said the office.

The system is also considered for installation in Hengqin port for 'non-contact border crossing,' according to the Judiciary Police (PJ). As the law and policies of the mainland are involved, communication with the mainland government is still required.

Border crossing with an e-identification card is also permitted. Bills about the e-identi-

cation card are currently being drafted, after which the e-identification cards generated by 'Macao One Account' mobile application will enable residents to undertake identity verification and border crossing without their physical ID, according to the office's reply to a written inquiry from lawmaker Leong Sun Iok, citing the information from the Identification Department.

The PJ and the Public Security Forces Affairs Bureau are evaluating the software and hardware to be used in ports for testing the border crossing system shortly after the electronic identification policy becomes operative.

According to the laws of the mainland, e-identification cards of Macau residents cannot be used in the joint inspection and one-time release automated passenger clearance system.



ONE ACCOUNT

GOV'T WORKING ON DIGITAL IDENTITY

ANTHONY LAM

DIGITAL identity (ID) cards of users of government's One Account app are being constructed to facilitate a faster app experience, Deputy Director Ng Wai Han of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) disclosed yesterday.

The disclosure was made to a press conference held to announce new functions within the app.

In response to questions about the digital ID card, the public administration official recapped that legal review is a prerequisite for the functionality.

However, she added that the bureau was working on the technical development that would facilitate the creation of a digital identity for One Account users. The aim of this function is to allow users to use this form of identity, or personal data stored on the app's servers, to process applications or service request on the app.

In addition, Ng disclosed that her bureau had been in contact with various other bureaus to determine suitable scenarios for the digital identity function. The



official is confident that the functionality will be available within this year.

The digital identity function can be used for border clearance, the official said.

She also emphasized that digital identity and digital ID card are not mutually exclusive, highlighting that the Identification Services Bureau (DSI) will continue issuing physical ID cards, with the latest batch starting to roll out this year.

Another question was raised regarding the patient subsidy rush at Social Security Fund (FSS) counters earlier this year. About that time, the FSS discretely but abruptly reminded Covid-19 patients that they would be eligible for the fund's patient subsidy. The reminder was not even posted on the fund's website and the application process was fully offline.

In response, Ng pointed out that the rush was an exception as there were "not many times

there would be so many people applying for the subsidy at the same time." She said that SAFP and DSS had worked together on providing service digitization, and that digitized applications for the patient subsidy was on the cards.

Meanwhile, the SAFP announced several new service providers on the One Account app.

Three private universities, namely the Macau University of Science and Technology, the City

University of Macau and the University of St. Joseph, have migrated their physical student IDs to the app, joining three public universities.

Users can also sign up for events held by the Macao Science Center using the app. The government has also started recruiting volunteers for the National Games in 2025 using the app. Realtors and registered accountants will also be able to record their licenses on the app.

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CRIME

HK man detained for counterfeit Rolex fraud

RENATO MARQUES

A 42-year-old man from the neighboring region of Hong Kong was detained by the Judiciary Police (PJ) with the help of immigration officers while attempting to reenter Macau on Wednesday.

The man is being accused of pawning counterfeit luxury watches mimicking the well-known Swiss watch designer and manufacturer Rolex.

The fraud was first discovered when a storekeeper of a local pawnshop, located in the NAPE district, filed a complaint to PJ on February 27 stating that the man had pawned a watch at his shop, receiving HKD50,000, but that later the staff found the watch was a fake.

Upon investigation, the PJ found that the man had



already left Macau on this day and so when he returned last Wednesday, he was detained at the immigration checkpoint and taken for questioning.

Although the suspect refused to cooperate with the police and did not reply to any questions from inspectors, the PJ found two other

counterfeit watches in his possession. Together with the watches, they also found a list of pawnshops in Macau with some written notes on it.

Based on the list, the PJ later contacted another pawnshop also located in the NAPE, advising them to inspect a watch that the

man had apparently also pawned there.

The store workers realized that they had fallen for the same scam and had given the man some HKD60,000 for the fake watch.

So far, the PJ found the two related cases involving a total loss of HKD110,000 but, based on the man's immigration record and pawnshops list, they suspect there could be more cases worth an even higher amount.

Analysis of the watches by an expert revealed that the timepieces are forgeries of medium quality and should not be worth more than 2,000 to 3,000 patacas each.

The man was presented yesterday to the Public Prosecutions Office to be charged with the crime of fraud of a "considerably high amount."

GBA

159 PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE POWERS TO BE HANDED OVER TO THE COOPERATION ZONE

STAFF REPORTER

STARTING April 1, 159 provincial administrative powers will be adjusted and implemented by the Executive Committee of the Cooperation Zone and its working bodies. The 'Decision of Guangdong Provincial People's Government on the Adjustment of a Number of Provincial Administrative Powers to be Implemented by the Executive Committee of the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and Its Working Bodies' was photo released to the public.

This adjustment covers a wide range of fields, such as administrative licensing, penalties, ins-

pections, and confirmation, and will give greater autonomy to the Cooperation Zone in the areas of development and reform.

This Decision involves some of the administrative powers of 17 provincial departments. Of the powers to be handed over, 153 will be entrusted and six will be delegated. These powers include certification of legal professionals, annual inspection of joint ventures between law firms from Hong Kong, Macau, and the mainland, annual registration of Hong Kong and Macau, legal advisers, issuance of tour guide certificates, recognition of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan high-level talent, and others.

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ANALYSIS

China looks to consumers to drive economic recovery

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINESE leader Xi Jinping's agenda for the annual meeting of the legislature: Revive the economy by encouraging consumers to spend more now that severe anti-virus controls have ended, and install a government of loyalists to intensify Communist Party control over the economy and society.

Xi, China's most powerful figure in decades, has no formal role in the National People's Congress, which will convene a meeting of its full membership on Sunday. But he looms over every event: the 69-year-old entered a third five-year term as party general secretary in October, possibly making himself leader for life.

The two-week gathering of 2,977 NPC members is the year's highest-profile political event, but its lawmaking work is limited to endorsing ruling party decisions. Its more important function is to provide a platform to publicize government plans and give members instructions to take home to cities and provinces.

Xi and other leaders say their priority is to reassure consumers and entrepreneurs it's time to spend and invest after restrictions that kept millions of people

at home, temporarily shut down Shanghai and other industrial centers and wiped out jobs were lifted in December.

The economy faces challenges ranging from weak global demand for exports and lingering U.S. tariff hikes in a feud over technology and security to curbs on access to Western processor chips due to security fears. At home, the workforce has been shrinking for more than a decade, putting pressure on an economy that still relies on labor-intensive industry.

Economic growth fell to 3% in 2022, the second-weakest level since at least the 1970s.

The ruling party needs to "fully release consumption potential," Xi said at the party's annual planning meeting, according to a text published Feb. 16.

Xi gave no details but said Beijing should encourage spending on electric cars and medical and elderly care, home improvement, culture and sports. He warned at the December meeting that work "will be complicated."

A consumer-led rebound might take longer than stimulus spending or igniting a boom in real estate investment. But Chinese leaders are trying to avoid options that would push up debt they worry already is dangerous high.

AP PHOTO



Forecasters expect Premier Li Keqiang, the top economic official, to announce a growth target of 5% to 5.5% in a speech Sunday on plans for the year. Li, an advocate of free enterprise, is due to be replaced as premier at the congress after being sidelined as No. 2 party leader in October.

The International Monetary Fund and some private sector forecasters expect much weaker annual growth, as low as 4.4%.

"It takes time to say whether the economy will turn around," said Song Huimin, a supermarket owner in the northeastern city of Jinzhou. He said sales are better than six months ago but not back to pre-COVID levels.

"People want to consume, but they still don't have enough income," Song said. "Some people still are out of work."

The former owner of a clothing factory in the eastern city of Changzhou said it shut down last year, throwing 20 people out of work. He got a job at another clothing company. Any spare cash goes to pay for his 14-year-old daughter's education.

"I have no house or car and no plans to travel," said the man, who would give only his surname, Wu. Since taking power in 2012, Xi

SOCIAL MEDIA

TikTok sets new default time limits for minors

TIKTOK said that every account held by a user under the age of 18 will have a default 60-minute daily screen time limit in the coming weeks. The changes arrive during a period in which there are growing concerns among different governments about the app's security and ability to alter its algorithm to push certain posts.

The update also mirrors gaming rules imposed on minors in China, where TikTok's parent company ByteDance was formerly based. ByteDance now says it has no headquarters because it is a global business and that instead it has leaders in Singapore, New York and elsewhere managing its business. In 2021, Chinese authorities issued new rules that let minors play online games for only an hour a day and only on Fridays, weekends and public holidays — an effort to

AP PHOTO



curb internet addiction.

In the U.S., families have struggled with limiting the amount of time their children spend on the Chinese-owned video sharing app. According to the Pew Research Center, about two-thirds of Americans teens use TikTok.

Cormac Keenan, head of trust and safety at TikTok, said in a blog post that when the 60-minute limit is reached, minors will be

prompted to enter a passcode and make an "active decision" to keep watching. For accounts where the user is under the age of 13, a parent or guardian will have to set or enter an existing passcode to allow 30 minutes of extra viewing time once the initial 60-minute limit is reached.

TikTok said it came up with the 60-minute threshold by consulting academic research and ex-

perts from the Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital.

There have long been concerns about what minors are exposed to on social media and the potential harm it might do. A report released late last year suggested that TikTok's algorithms are promoting videos about self-harm and eating disorders to vulnerable teens. Instagram, which is owned by Face-

book parent Meta, has also faced similar accusations.

Social media algorithms work by identifying topics and content of interest to a user, who is then sent more of the same as a way to maximize their time on the site. But social media critics say the same algorithms that promote content about a particular sports team, hobby or dance craze can send users down a rabbit hole of harmful content.

TikTok also said yesterday [Macau time] that it will also begin prompting teens to set a daily screen time limit if they opt out of the 60-minute default. The company will send weekly inbox notifications to teen accounts with a screen time recap.

Some of TikTok's existing safety features for teen accounts include having accounts set to private by default for those between the ages of 13 and 15 and

providing direct messaging availability only to those accounts where the user is 16 or older.

TikTok announced a number of changes for all users, including the ability to set customized screen time limits for each day of the week and allowing users to set a schedule to mute notifications. The company is also launching a sleep reminder to help people plan when they want to be offline at night. For the sleep feature, users will be able to set a time and when the time arrives, a pop-up will remind the user that it's time to log off.

Outside of exorbitant use by some minors, there is growing concern about the app around the world. The European Parliament, the European Commission and the EU Council have banned TikTok from being installed on official devices.

That follows similar actions taken by the U.S. federal government, Congress and more than half of the 50 U.S. states. Canada has also banned it from government devices. **MDT/AP**

ebound



has called for the ruling party to return to its "original mission" as China's economic, social and cultural leader and carry out the "rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation."

Entrepreneurs who generate China's new jobs and wealth have been rattled by tighter political controls and anti-virus curbs. Business

groups say global companies were shifting investment to India, Vietnam and other countries last year because China's travel curbs blocked executives from visiting the country.

The party has indicated it is winding down anti-monopoly and data security crackdowns on tech companies that wiped hundreds of billions of dollars off the stock market value of Alibaba, Tencent and other industry leaders. But it shows no sign of backing off a campaign to tighten political control over them.

The industry was shaken anew in mid-February when Bao Fan, a star banker involved in some of the biggest tech deals, disappeared. His company announced Bao was "cooperating in an investigation" but gave no details.

Companies still are "expected to prioritize party instructions," Neil Thomas of Eurasia Group said in a

report. He said measures announced during the NPC might give the ruling party "more direct oversight over policymaking" in technology and innovation.

A new government will be announced at the end of the congress in a once-a-decade change that gives Xi an opening to install his supporters as premier, finance minister and central bank governor.

Xi has promoted officials with whom he has personal history contrary to a party tradition that required leadership candidates to have served as Cabinet ministers or in other national-level posts.

The Communist Party needs to 'fully release consumption potential,' Xi said at the party's annual planning meeting

The official in line to succeed Li as premier and head of government is Li Qiang, a former party secretary of Shanghai who has no government experience at the national level. Li Qiang was named No. 2 party leader in October.

Li Qiang "will do whatever

it takes to ensure that Xi has no reason to doubt his loyalty," said Thomas.

The candidate expected to succeed Vice Premier Liu He, a U.S.-trained economist in charge of finance and banking, is He Lifeng. He is chairman of the Cabinet's planning agency, the National Development and Reform Commission, but has no finance background. Ding Xuexiang, who has acted as Xi's chief of staff, is expected to become an executive vice premier.

The government is expected to announce another boost in military spending, the second-highest after the United States following what the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute says is the world's longest string of increases at 29 years.

Beijing's economic plan has implications beyond business and trade, according to Harley Seyedin, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in South China.

Washington and Beijing are competing to show "which governance model can best solve global problems," Seyedin said in a February report. "Performance will drive perceptions of power." **MDT/AP**

TAIWAN

US approves selling the island munitions worth \$619 million

THE U.S. has approved more arms sales to Taiwan, including \$619 million worth of munitions for F-16 fighter jets, in a decision likely to be yet another point of friction between the U.S. and China, which claims the island as its own territory.

The State Department said in a statement yesterday [Macau time] it had approved sales of missiles to be used with the F-16s as well as equipment to support the missiles. That includes AGM-88 anti-radiation missiles, as well as air-to-air missiles and launchers.

Taiwan is unofficially supported by the U.S. and has a fleet of F-16s bought from the U.S. Tensions between China and the U.S. are at their highest level in years over American support for the self-governed island,



including visits by high-ranking politicians, and a host of other issues, including a suspected Chinese spy balloon that crossed the U.S. before being shot down last month.

The United States is

Taiwan's main supplier of military equipment, and China has objected to past sales with sanctions and other actions.

Once arms sales are approved, delivering them can take years, and Taiwan

has cited consistent delays in receiving weapons it has purchased.

The arms will be provided by Raytheon Missiles and Defense and Lockheed Martin Corporation. **MDT/AP**

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

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ABA Bar brings you the King of Champagne – KRUG, the first and yet the only Champagne house that creates a prestige cuvée each year. Like a match made in heaven, savor this advanced pairing versatility of Krug with us every Friday and Saturday between 6 PM and 12 AM. For early weekend relaxation, ABA Bar offers an expertly curated wine flight comprised of a selection of four French classic labels every Thursday from 6 PM to 8 PM. Enjoy the night and allow our sommeliers to guide you through the evening with background stories of each label.



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ANALYSIS

Covid-19 conspiracies soar after latest report on origins

DAVID KLEPPER,
WASHINGTON

COVID-19'S origins remain hazy. Three years after the start of the pandemic, it's still unclear whether the coronavirus that causes the disease leaked from a lab or spread to humans from an animal.

This much is known: When it comes to COVID-19 misinformation, any new report on the virus' origin quickly triggers a relapse and a return of misleading claims about the virus, vaccines and masks that have reverberated since the pandemic began.

It happened again this week after the Energy Department confirmed that a classified report determined, with low confidence, that the virus escaped from a lab. Within hours, online mentions of conspiracy theories involving COVID-19 began to rise, with many commenters saying the classified report was proof they were right all along.

Far from definitive, the Energy Department's report is the latest of many attempts by scientists and officials to identify the origin of the virus, which has now killed nearly 7 million people after being first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019.

The report has not been made public, and officials in Washington stressed that a variety of U.S. agencies are not in agreement on the origin. Earlier this week, FBI Director Christopher Wray told Fox News that the FBI "has for quite some time now" assessed that the pandemic's origins are "most likely a potential lab incident in Wuhan."

But others in the U.S. intelligence community disagree, and there's no consensus. Many scientists believe the likeliest explanation is that the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 jumped from animals to humans, possibly at Wuhan's Huanan market, a scenario backed up by multiple studies and reports.

The World Health Organization has said that while an animal origin remains most likely, the possibility of a lab



AP PHOTO

leak must be investigated further before it can be ruled out.

People should be open-minded about the evidence used in the Energy Department's assessment, according to virologist Angela Rasmussen. But she said that without evaluating the classified report, she can't assess if it's persuasive enough to challenge the conclusion that the virus spread from an animal.

"The vast majority of the evidence continues to support natural origin," Rasmussen told The Associated Press yesterday [Macau time]. "I'm a scientist. I need to see the evidence rather than take the FBI director's word for it."

Many of those citing the report as proof, however, seemed uninterested in the details. They seized on the report and said it suggests the experts were wrong when it came to masks and vaccines, too.

"School closures were a failed & catastrophic policy. Masks are ineffective. And harmful," said a tweet that's been read nearly 300,000 times since Sunday. "COVID came from a lab. Everything we skeptics said was true."

Overall mentions of COVID-19 began to rise after The Wall Street Journal published a story about the

Energy Department report on Sunday. Since then, mentions of various COVID-related conspiracy theories have soared, according to an analysis conducted by Zignal Labs, a San Francisco-based media intelligence firm, and shared with The Associated Press.

While the lab leak theory has bounced around the internet since the pandemic began, references to it soared 100,000% in the 48 hours after the Energy Department report was revealed, according to Zignal's analysis, which combed through social media, blogs and other sites.

Many of the conspiracy theories contradict each other and the findings in the Energy Department report. In a tweet on Tuesday, U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Republican from Georgia, called COVID-19 a "man made bioweapon from China." A follower quickly challenged her: "It was made in Ukraine," he responded.

With so many questions remaining about a world event that has claimed so many lives and upended even more, it's not at all surprising that COVID-19 is still capable of generating so much anger and misinformation, according to Bret Schafer, a senior fellow at the Alliance for Securing Demo-

cracy, a Washington-based organization that has tracked government propaganda about COVID-19.

"The pandemic was so incredibly disruptive to everyone. The intensity of feelings about COVID, I don't think that's going to go away," Schafer said. "And any time something new comes along, it breathes new life into these grievances and frustrations, real or imagined."

Chinese government officials have in the past used their social media accounts to amplify anti-U.S. conspiracy theories, including some that suggested the U.S. created the COVID-19 virus and framed its release on China.

So far, they've taken a quieter approach to the Energy Department report. In their official response, China's government dismissed the agency's assessment as an effort to politicize the pandemic. Online, Beijing's sprawling propaganda and disinformation network was largely silent, with just a few posts criticizing or mocking the report.

"BREAKING," a pro-China YouTuber wrote on Twitter. "I can now announce, with 'low confidence,' that the COVID pandemic began as a leak from Hunter Biden's laptop." MDT/AP

this day in history

1966 BBC TUNES IN TO COLOUR



The BBC has announced plans to begin broadcasting television programmes in colour from next year.

Britain will be the first country in Europe to offer regular programming in colour.

The announcement was made in the Commons by the Postmaster General, Anthony Wedgwood Benn.

The new service is expected to cost the BBC between £1m and £2m per year, for an initial four hours of television per week on BBC2, rising to 10 hours a week after 12 months.

The colour programmes will still be available on ordinary television sets in black and white. A colour receiver will cost about £250 and there will be a supplementary licence fee.

David Attenborough, controller of BBC2, will be responsible for overseeing the new colour service.

He said the promised four hours of colour programming was based on what the BBC could produce from its own studios and did not include imported programmes.

He said the popular Western series, The Virginian, and the Danny Kaye Show were both available in colour, but currently shown in black and white.

Mr Attenborough denied the colour programmes would all be re-runs of old shows: "We have to remember that 95% of people initially will not be seeing these programmes in colour, they'll be seeing them in black and white. The shows that BBC2 will be scheduling will be exciting new shows in black and white. They'll be that much more exciting and newer in colour."

The technique for delivering the colour service has not been finally agreed. European leaders are meeting in Oslo in Norway later this year to decide on a single system which will enable countries to be able to exchange programmes.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Europe adopted the Phase Alternation Line or PAL system for broadcasting in colour. It works at 50 frames per second, slower than the National Television System Committee adopted in the US, but with a higher resolution.

BBC2 broadcast its first colour pictures from Wimbledon in 1967. By mid 1968, nearly every BBC2 programme was in colour. Six months later, colour came to BBC1.

By 1969, BBC1 and ITV were regularly broadcasting in colour.

The number of households owning a colour TV licence shot up from 275,000 to 12 million by the early 70s.

David Attenborough began a career in broadcasting in 1952, one of his first series was the popular "Zoo Quest". He was made Controller of BBC2 in 1965, then Director of Programmes with responsibility for both networks. He resigned in 1973 to return to programme making.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Do your own thing and everything will settle down. Travel will result in new romantic attractions. You won't have much time for your mate today.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20

Do things you enjoy instead of being a chameleon. Don't hesitate to talk to your partner about rekindling your relationship. Protect your interests legally if necessary.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21

Try not to donate to organizations if you can hardly afford to take care of yourself. Property investments, insurance, tax rebates, or inheritance should bring you financial gains.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Family members may want you at home, when your heart is telling you to spend time with someone you recently met. Use your added discipline to get what you want.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You won't get the reaction you want from your mate today. Get involved in philosophic groups that will enlighten you. Empty promises will cause confusion.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You could be emotional if you didn't take care of problems with loved ones. Romance can surface if you get into some of those fitness programs you've been putting off.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You can make money if you put your mind to it. Trying to deal with your mate will be unproductive and possibly hurtful. You can make changes that will enhance your appearance.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Make alternate plans just in case you need to make a career shift. Keep important information to yourself. Sudden changes of heart may cause disruptions in your domestic scene.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Get out and rub shoulders with people in high positions if possible. Lighten up your serious attitude. Delays are evident. You need to get out and be an observer.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Be careful that you don't overextend yourself. Go with the flow and don't let the unsettled atmosphere get on your nerves. Don't offer to pay for others.

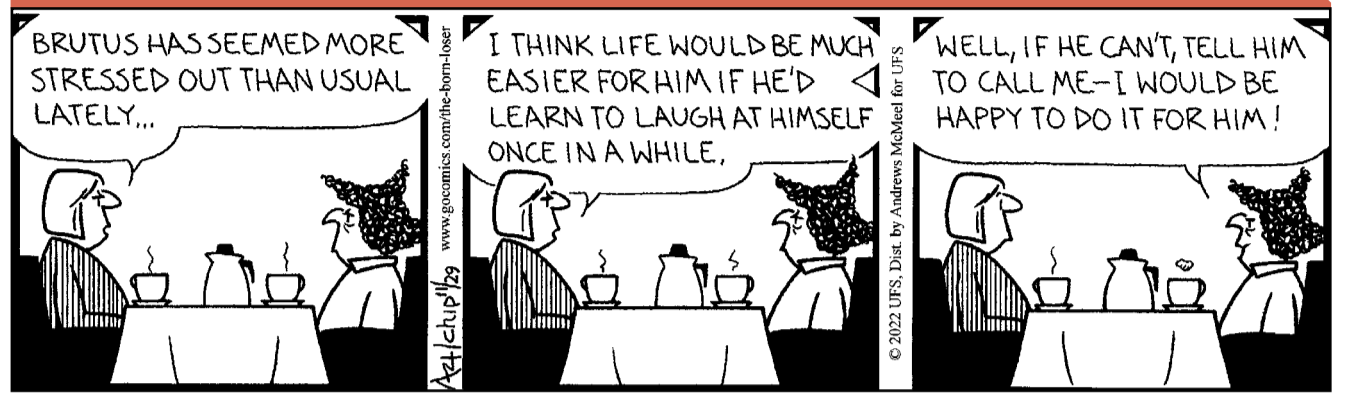
AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Don't be too quick to respond to a plea for help. You'll be angry if those you live with aren't pulling their weight. Take the time to close deals that have been up in the air.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Confusion at an emotional level will cause you to make wrong decisions concerning your personal life. Don't overreact to someone's advances. Take care of your personal needs.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

MEDIUM					HARD				
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7		9						2	
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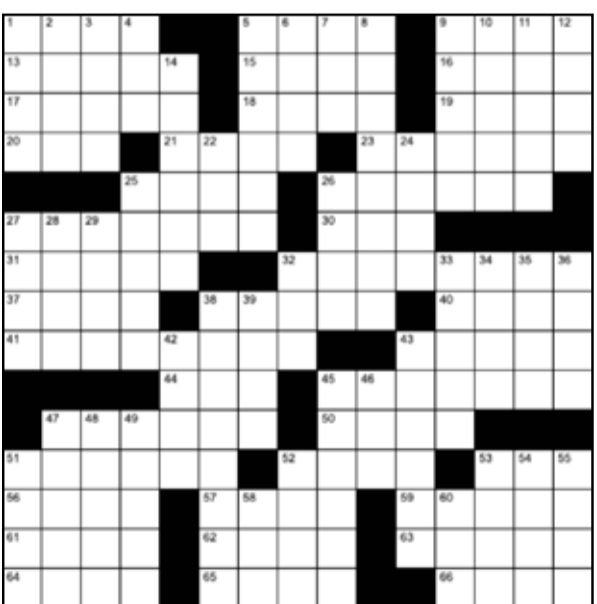
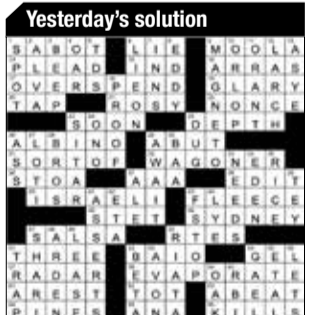
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	0	18	fine
Changchun	-6	7	fine
Chengdu	7	20	fine
Chongqing	11	17	cloudy
Fuzhou	7	20	fine
Guangzhou	12	24	cloudy
Guiyang	6	10	overcast
Haikou	17	23	cloudy
Hangzhou	4	13	cloudy
Harbin	-13	4	fine
Hefei	3	17	overcast
Nanjing	4	14	cloudy
Shanghai	5	13	cloudy
Taipei	12	16	cloudy
Wuhan	5	19	fine
Hong Kong	17	21	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	-6	1	snow
Frankfurt	-2	9	fine
Paris	1	11	overcast
London	3	8	cloudy
New York	4	7	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Luxurious; 5- Stuff; 9- Grave; 13- Alone, on stage; 15- Anger; 16- "A Jug of Wine..." poet; 17- One in a black suit; 18- Second hand, took advantage of; 19- "Peter Pan" dog; 20- Medicinal amt.; 21- More; 23- Conciliatory; 25- Leave in, to an editor; 26- Like toxic rainfall; 27- Apparel; 30- Grande; 31- Street show; 32- Salve; 37- Zip-_-Doo-Dah; 38- Dike, Eunomia and Irene; 40- Cosmetic additive; 41- Affluent; 43- Not moving; 44- Latin 101 verb; 45- Simulated military operation; 47- Dell dweller, traditionally; 50- Omnium-gatherum; 51- Prize; 52- OPEC units; 53- Bleat of a sheep; 56- Collar type; 57- Bedouin; 59- Perform or portray; 61- Author Jaffe; 62- Big name in PCs; 63- Japanese dish; 64- Autobahn auto; 65- Singer Adams; 66- Nair rival;

DOWN 1- Hey, over here!; 2- "My fault!"; 3- Hit with an open hand; 4- 1963 Paul Newman film; 5- Pie coverings; 6- Stand; 7- Malt beverage; 8- Tonic; 9- In shape; 10- Muscat native; 11- Frenzied; 12- Bric-a-_-; 14- Boil; 22- Appomattox figure; 24- Civil disturbance; 25- Alloy of iron and carbon; 26- Melody; 27- Stick in one's ___; 28- Put aboard; 29- Hurler Hershiser; 32- Metal in Montana's motto; 33- Tropical fruit; 34- Zeno of ___; 35- Standard; 36- Mal de ___; 38- Domestic; 39- Smell or fragrance; 42- Domesticated; 43- Van Gogh masterpiece; 45- Waver; 46- 100%; 47- Camera setting; 48- Make amends; 49- Pertaining to the kidneys; 51- Architect Saarinen; 52- Indonesian resort island; 53- Loyal voting bloc; 54- Hurt; 55- Arguing; 58- Flushed; 60- "The Sound of Music" extra;



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

Over 60 contemporary artworks from two young GBA artists at Sands Gallery



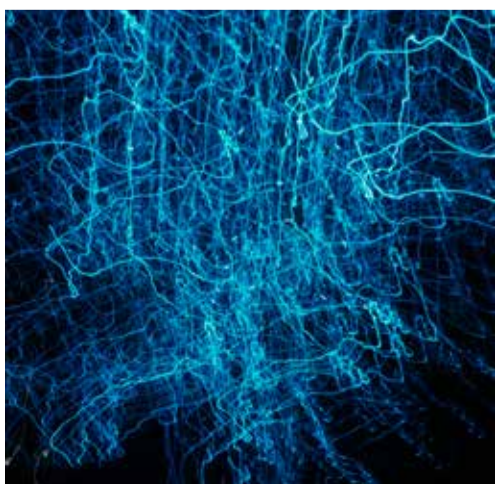
A new exhibition at Sands Gallery is showcasing nearly 60 works of diverse art forms and media including oil painting, sculpture, installations, photography and projection.

Titled *Illumination – Zhaoying Zhang & Sisi Wong Dual Solo Exhibition*, the exposition 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.

Exhibition artists Zhaoying Zhang and Sisi Wong were first-prize winners in the painting and photography categories, respectively, in the *Time is on My Side – 2021 Greater Bay Area Young Artists Scheme* launched by Sands China.

Professor Hu Bin, the exhibition curator, said: "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."

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, located on the 6th floor of The Grand Suites at Four Seasons.





Michael B. Jordan as Adonis Creed in a scene from "Creed III"

DRIVE IN

Michael B. Jordan delivers a brawler in 'Creed III'

LINDSEY BAHR

IT must be a daunting prospect to pick up a franchise on the third movie. Add in the pressure of following filmmakers like Ryan Coogler and Steven Caple Jr. in your directorial debut that you're also starring in and it's enough to make you wonder what on earth Michael B. Jordan was thinking.

But "Creed III," in theaters nationwide Friday, is a new start for Adonis Creed. He's finally out of the shadow of his father Apollo and Rocky Balboa, whose legacy loomed large over the first two films (Sylvester Stallone decided "Creed II" would be his last). With Rocky out of the way, and the younger Creed solidly in place as the

best in the world, the franchise can breathe a little and grow.

Enter the Dame (not that kind of dame).

This one is in the form of Jonathan Majors, an old buddy from their teenage years in a group home in the early 2000s. Dame, or Damian Anderson, is a bit older than Creed. He's the one who's boxing in the underground matches at night. The young Creed (Thaddeus J. Mixon), a little awkward, a little too eager to please and a little too ready for trouble, is the one carrying water (and bags and gloves) and helping him strategize. There is a palpable menace established early on with these two — an unequal power and age dynamic, sure, but also the implication that Dame (Spence Moore II) is

more than willing to play dirty. He carries a gun. He fixes games. And he has a hold on young Adonis. The flashback ends with a violent altercation outside a convenience store. Dame goes away. Creed becomes Creed.

This flashback is important but does get the film off to a bit of a slow start, jumping forward chronologically to Creed's last fight and then to his present-day retirement life — a luxurious and tranquil existence in the Hollywood Hills in a modernist mansion with his daughter Amara (Mila Davis Kent) and wife Bianca (Tessa Thompson), who has given up singing mostly to produce hit records. Life is nice for the obscenely rich in LA: The clothes are expensive, the cars are price upon

request, the house always spotless and the staff unseen (save for a chef in one scene). At the gym run by Duke (Wood Harris), he's trying to mentor the next generation of champions.

Then Dame re-appears and the movies gets its urgency back. His old pal was locked up for 18 years after that incident and is freshly out of prison, wanting to pick up his life and his boxing aspirations where he left off. Creed is pleasant but guarded — for much of the film he acts like an aloof celebrity, hyper conscious of not letting anyone in too close and compartmentalizing the uglier aspects of his past. Still, he takes him out to lunch and offers to help him in any way he can. This is both the right thing to do

and also a huge mistake.

"Creed III" is, among other things, about what happens when men don't talk about their feelings (and ignore Duke's advice).

At times, it also feels more like a thriller than a sports film as you watch Dame infiltrate Creed's world. It's always Creed's idea, there's always an invitation, but Dame's sudden omnipresence starts to feel unavoidable and ominous. Dame has a bit of Eve Harrington in him, but also a very real, very relatable chip on his shoulder for the time he lost. In another movie, he could very well be the underdog we're rooting for — some of the audience may be rooting for him even so.

Lurking behind everything is the madness that comes from not being able to do what you were born to do. It's something athletes grapple with earlier than most other professionals. An injury at 23 could take you out when you're just getting started and in this film Creed, Dame and Bianca are having similar existential crises — though Dame's desperation is the driving force behind everything that happens.

Jordan and his filmmaking team craft two particularly stunning matches full of suspense, drama and slow motion sweat beads flying through the air.

There's a comforting but predictable rhythm to a boxing franchise like Rocky and now Creed. The movies must keep justifying themselves, inventing new challenges that make them all feel different enough. But most essentially boil down to the same framework: You have to knock the champion down to a believable underdog again. While there is a case to be made for the final fight to, let's just say, go a different way than it does, "Creed III" is still a knockout.

"Creed III," an MGM release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for, "Violence, some strong language and intense sports action." Running Time: 116 minutes. ★★★★★

Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



THE CAGAYAN DE ORO (DIV 2) 1350M SAND 2023-03-04|Sat|16:55

Happy Cat has an entry in this Saturday's sand race meeting, I believe he got a good chance and with every intention to run out a big finish in this weak field. Barrier seven is not ideal but his liking on the sand track could offset the wide barrier draw. His track work is solid and in his last run he was squeezed between runners late in the finish, with no interference the result could probably much closer. **Happy Cat** get his chance to revert to winning ways for his connection this Saturday. He bears close watching in this grade.

Race 5 Horse no.6 Happy Cat Win & Place bets for the meeting



OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



**POPULATION DECLINE
 AND IMMIGRATION -
 IN CHINA AND OTHER
 COUNTRIES**

The recent news of China's dwindling population has called into question the demographic predictions of the UN and other experts. According to the World Economic Forum, after reaching 925 million in 2011, China's working-age population is expected to fall to 700 million by 2050.

Unlike many Western countries already in swift transition to a demographic winter, China and other major Asian powers (Japan and South Korea) are not using immigration to offset declining birth rates. In 2020, the relative share of immigrants as a percentage of the total population in Japan was 2% and in China, it was only 0.2%. It remains difficult for a foreigner to obtain residency in China and virtually impossible to obtain citizenship. On the other hand, 17% of people living in Germany in 2021 were born abroad and a third of them had obtained German citizenship.

The Pew Research Center has estimated that by the second half of the century, a third of the US population - more than 100 million people - will be immigrants and their US-born children. And immigrants to the US (and their children) have an even greater economic footprint: 44.6% of the 500 largest US companies were founded by immigrants or their children, from technology giants like Google to the wholesale chain Costco and the jeans brand Levi's. We did not find similar data in Europe but there is no shortage of cases of successful 1st or 2nd generation immigrant entrepreneurs; a good example is the ethnically Turkish couple - Uur ahin and Özlem Türeçli - who created German BioNTech.

Prof. Joseph Nye recounts a past conversation with former Singaporean PM (and advisor to several governments in China) Lee Kuan Yew, who is reported to have asked if China would surpass the US in total power; to which Lee is reported to have said no because America can source and recombine the world's talents in ways that are simply not possible under China's Han ethnic nationalism.

Simultaneously, there is still a large outflow of Chinese emigration. Demographers at the UN estimate that from 2023 to 2100, an average of 310,000 Chinese nationals will leave China per year, a total of c. 24 million people. It is not likely that China can prevent its nationals from leaving in search of a better life in other countries or to join family members.

Intense internal migration, from rural to urban areas, despite the problems it has created for the hukou (residence permit) system, has created an "industrial reserve army" in urban China that generates a permanent oversupply of unskilled labor. However, such migration is winding down and is expected to peak by 2030. Meanwhile, the Chinese government is developing incentives for an increase in the fertility rate, whose success nobody thinks it will be different from similar programs in other countries with declining (and aging) populations. Only an active immigration policy can solve or reduce the population decline in China. In times of exaltation of Han ethnic nationalism, strongly encouraged by the authorities, will the Chinese government be able to adopt a policy of attracting immigrants to restore balance in a number of economic sectors?

[linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira)

A human rights activist in Mexico's dangerous northern border city of Nuevo Laredo yesterday [Macau time] said that he suspects the Mexican army — and the government in general — are behind claims linking him to a drug cartel, which could put his life at risk.

The issue is a sensitive one in a country where dozens of activists have been murdered in recent years. In many parts of Mexico, being called a drug cartel collaborator can be a death sentence.

Over the last decade, activist Raymundo Ramos has investigated a number of killings and disappearances carried out by the military in Nuevo Laredo. On Sunday, Ramos denounced the

killing of five young men by soldiers, events the army eventually confirmed.

Carlos Dominguez, who runs a web site called Nacion 14, was the first person selected to ask a question at President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's morning press briefing, where he claimed Ramos worked for a drug cartel. Ramos has denied the accusations. Dominguez played a taped intercept of a telephone call purportedly between Ramos and a supposed drug trafficker.

López Obrador did not openly endorse the claims of Dominguez, whose news site largely echoes the president's statements.

AP PHOTO



"A joint international effort is now being launched towards achieving this.

PIETRO GIORDANO
 EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

OVER THE MOON

**EUROPE PUSHING FOR
 LUNAR TIME ZONE**

MARCIA DUNN,
 CAPE CANAVERAL

WITH more lunar missions than ever on the horizon, the European Space Agency wants to give the moon its own time zone.

This week, the agency said space organizations around the world are considering how best to keep time on the moon. The idea came up during a meeting in the Netherlands late last year, with participants agreeing on the urgent need to establish "a common lunar reference time," said the space agency's Pietro Giordano, a navigation system engineer.

"A joint international effort is now being launched towards achieving this," Giordano said in a statement.

For now, a moon mission runs on the time of the country that is operating the spacecraft. European space officials said an internationally accepted lunar time

zone would make it easier for everyone, especially as more countries and even private companies aim for the moon and NASA gets set to send astronauts there.

NASA had to grapple with the time question while designing and building the International Space Station, fast approaching the 25th anniversary of the launch of its first piece.

While the space station doesn't have its own time zone, it runs on Coordinated Universal Time, or UTC, which is meticulously based on atomic clocks. That helps to split the time difference between NASA and the Canadian Space Agency, and the other partnering space programs in Russia, Japan and Europe.

The international team looking into lunar time is debating whether a single organization should set and maintain time on the moon, according to the European Space Agency.

There are also technical issues to consider. Clocks run faster on the moon than on Earth, gaining about 56 microseconds each day, the space agency said. Further complicating matters, ticking occurs differently on the lunar surface than in lunar orbit.

Perhaps most importantly, lunar time will have to be practical for astronauts there, noted the space agency's Bernhard Hufnagel. NASA is shooting for its first flight to the moon in more than a half-century in 2024, with a lunar landing as early as 2025.

"This will be quite a challenge" with each day lasting as long as 29.5 Earth days, Hufnagel said in a statement. "But having established a working time system for the moon, we can go on to do the same for other planetary destinations."

Mars Standard Time, anyone? MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



British police said they found the remains of a 2-month old baby in woodland Wednesday after officers arrested the infant's mother and her boyfriend, who vanished after the child was born in early January. Constance Marten, 35, and her boyfriend Mark Gordon, 48, a convicted sex offender, had crisscrossed England for weeks to avoid authorities. Investigators suspect the pair (pictured) used large amounts of cash to live off the grid.

AP PHOTO



Greece Rescuers searched late into the night Wednesday for survivors amid the mangled, burned-out wrecks of two trains that collided in northern Greece, killing at least 43 people and crumpling carriages into twisted steel knots in the country's deadliest rail crash. The impact threw some passengers into ceilings and out the windows. "My head hit the roof of the carriage with the jolt," Stefanos Gogakos, who was in a rear car, told state broadcaster ERT. He said windows shattered, showering riders with glass.

AP PHOTO



USA Communities around the world emitted more carbon dioxide in 2022 than in any other year on records dating to 1900, a result of air travel rebounding from the pandemic and more cities turning to coal as a low-cost source of power. Emissions of the climate-warming gas that were caused by energy production grew 0.9% to reach 36.8 gigatons in 2022, the International Energy Agency reported.