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**Philippine** President Rodrigo Duterte said he may consider running for vice president next year when his term ends "if there is a space for me," although opponents have described such a prospect as "a joke of the worst kind." Duterte's televised remarks Monday night were the strongest sign that he is considering calls by governing PDP-Laban party allies for him to run for vice president to continue his government programs.



**Australia** is offering AstraZeneca to all adults in a bid to rapidly ramp up sluggish vaccination rates as more of the country on Tuesday locked down against the spread of Covid-19. The government yesterday agreed to indemnify doctors who administer the AstraZeneca vaccine that has been blamed for at least two fatalities from a rare blood clot complication in Australia since April.



**Russian** authorities yesterday morning raided the apartments of several investigative journalists and their family members, a move that comes amid mounting pressure on Russia's independent media outlets. Police searched the apartments of Roman Badanin, chief editor of the Proekt investigative online outlet, and Maria Zholobova, one of its journalists. Officers also raided the home of the parents of Badanin's deputy, Mikhail Rubin. Rubin was detained near Zholobova's residential building.

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# MIX AND MATCH

The SAR government is not ruling out the possibility of mandating the administration of a 'Covid-19 vaccine cocktail,' with an Oxford study showing that a mix-and-match approach can boost immunity P2



NATIONAL SPIRIT BEHIND CHINA'S SUCCESS IN FIGHTING COVID-19 P8-9

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COVID-19

# OXFORD'S STUDY SUPPORTS 'MIX-AND-MATCH' VACCINATION SCHEDULE

HONEY TSANG

ON the heels of the Macau SAR government saying it has not ruled out the possibility of mandating the administration of a "Covid-19 vaccine cocktail," — referring to the administration of different types of vaccines for the first and second shots — Oxford researchers announced later in the day that the so-called "mix-and-match" approach can indeed boost immunity against the virus.

"The preliminary data [by research conducted by other institutions] shows that the efficiency, or the antibody concentration, is higher [for people taking the vaccine cocktail] when compared with taking a single type of vaccine," Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of the Health Bureau's Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, said on Monday before the release of the Oxford study.



"However, it takes some more time [for the government] to fully study the safety of such use," Tai added.

Oxford's newly-published study, the Com-COV vaccination trial, seems to offer greater hope for the cutting-edge vaccination approach to be practiced in Macau.

According to the study, which examined the potency of a mixed vaccine schedule involving the Pfizer-BioNTech (Pfizer) and Oxford-AstraZeneca (AstraZeneca) vaccines, a mixed vaccine schedule was found to "generate a strong immune response" against coronavirus.

However, researchers stressed that the order that these vaccines are administered will give rise to different immune responses, with AstraZeneca followed by Pfizer

displaying "the better immune response."

The AstraZeneca-first, Pfizer-second approach is proven to induce "higher antibodies and T-cell responses" than the reverse order, the report stated.

More importantly, a mixed schedule of these two vaccines regardless of the order of administration was found to be more effective and induce a higher antibody response than the standard two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine alone.

Meanwhile, having two doses of the Pfizer vaccine was found to generate the highest antibody response, and the completed doses produced the highest T cell response.

This study investigated the mix-and-match approach, with two doses administered at a four-week interval.

"Today's data is a vital step

forward, showing that a mixed schedule gives people protective immunity against Covid-19 after four weeks," Jonathan Van-Tam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer Professor, stated in the report.

However, the most common interval for the AstraZeneca vaccine is eight to 12 weeks. A longer interval such as this creates a better immune response, according to Matthew Snape, Associate Professor in Paediatrics and Vaccinology at the University of Oxford and Chief Investigator of the study.

The study for the 12-week dose interval is underway, with results to be announced soon.

"The results for the 12-week interval, which are yet to come, will have an instrumental role to play in any decisions about the future of the U.K.'s vaccination program," Van-Tam said.

The Oxford report is considered to offer much-needed confidence to some European countries, which have offered other vaccine types as an alternative second shot to replace the AstraZeneca vaccine, after the AstraZeneca vaccine was found to be associated with rare blood clots.

COVID-19

# SINOPHARM RECOGNITION FROM EU IS JUST A 'MATTER OF TIME,' HEALTH AUTHORITIES SAY

RENATO MARQUES

THE recognition of vaccination certificates for individuals inoculated with Sinopharm's inactivated virus vaccine should be just a matter of time, Tai Wa Hou, medical director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital coordinator of the Health Bureau's Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, said on Monday during the local health authorities' Covid-19 press briefing.

Questioned on the topic by the media, Tai said, "The WHO [World Health Organization] already recognizes the Sinopharm vaccine. I believe that one-by-one, the [different] countries will also recognize it."

The official added that while the vaccine is being used not only within China but in a wide range of countries all over the world, the results from studies conducted on it are also known, having

been certified by the medical community and published in international research journals.

Tai was asked about the fact that the Sinopharm vaccine is the vaccine which has been administered in the majority of inoculations in Macau, and effect of this, given the recent exclusion of Sinopharm by the European Union (EU) for the establishment of the so-called EU vaccination passport that will allow vaccinated individuals to move freely through the EU countries without having to fulfil the Covid-19 test requirements.

In mid-June, the EU announced it had completed the legislative procedures for the establishment of the EU Covid-19 vaccine passport.

At that time, the presidents of the three main EU institutions, the Parliament, the Commission, and the Council, co-signed a law aiming to restore freedom of movement within the EU for those vaccinated with one of the vaccines approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

For the time being, the only four vaccines recognized are the BioNTech/Pfizer, Moderna, Vaxzevria (formerly known as AstraZeneca), and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

A total of 13 countries are already issuing the passports ahead of the date established for the official launch this tomorrow, July 1.

Not included in the list of eligible vaccines are currently the CVnCoV (CureVac), NVX-CoV2373 (Novavax), Sputnik V (Gam-COVID-Vac), and the Sinopharm Covid-19 (Vero Cell) Inactivated.

According to EMA, these four vaccines are currently undergoing review, and there is no clear timeframe as to when a final conclusion will be announced.

# ACTING HEAD OF CITY'S TAIPEI OFFICE DEPARTS AS VISA EXPIRES

FOLLOWING the expiration of his working visa, the acting director of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Macau has left his post and returned home to Taiwan, Taiwanese news agency Focus Taiwan reported.

According to the report, the outgoing acting director, Chen Chia-hung, could not get his visa extended by the Macau government. Currently, the local government requires Taiwanese officials at the Office sign an affidavit that recognizes the "One China Principle," which the officials have not been authorized by Taipei to sign.

Taipei, meanwhile, has accused the Macau government of levying extra barriers in the interactions between Macau and Taiwan with the affidavit requirement, which is seen by Taipei as not being part of the original consensus on the establishment of the representative offices.

The "One China Principle"

stems from China's insistence that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China.

As Chen returned home, the TECO in Macau now only has four staff members to keep the facility in operation, reported the news agency while citing the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) of Taiwan.

The MAC further stated that pro-Beijing individuals protesting at TECO Macau reflected an attitude of "disrespect and unfriendliness held by the government and people of Macau towards Taiwan."

Several days ago, a group of Macau residents held a demonstration at the Office to complain about Taiwan's alleged interference with Macau and Hong Kong affairs.

Taipei is making contingencies for the future of the TECO Macau.

Macau closed its representative office in Taipei on June 19. **AL**

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# DSPA head confident in eliminating older bikes as new standards arrive

ANTHONY LAM

**T**AM Vai Man, director of the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA), believes that some of the older or more poorly maintained motorbikes may not pass the new standards governing exhaust, which will come into effect on July 1. Similar to most environmental protection standards, the new exhaust standards will be tighter than the current ones.

Tam was speaking on the sidelines of the Green Hotel Award event organized by the bureau.

When questioned whether the authority has plans to tighten the standards governing the exhaust of other types of vehicles, Tam revealed that the bureau reviews the amount of exhaust and the condition of running vehicles each year. By this, it is understood that he means the DSPA will examine whether the standards need to be tightened.

He added that the tightened standards on motorbike exhaust apply to the carbon



Tam Wai Man

monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions.

The bureau head also suggested residents consider purchasing electric vehicles,

“as electric vehicles have zero emissions.”

However, questions have been raised on whether electric vehicles are actually eco-

-friendlier, or whether they are transferring the source of pollution to power plants that use unclean means to generate power.

The bureau head did not respond to whether the bureau has conducted or commissioned any studies to confirm the offset of pollution by changing to electric vehicles.

Nonetheless, Tam said that Macau uses natural gas to generate electricity. Meanwhile, it also purchases power from mainland China, which mostly relies on nuclear power, although solar, wind and water power sources are also used.

With that said, he believes the electricity used in Macau is relatively clean.

On another topic, the quantity of non-metal substances found in Macau waters has crossed the redline in the past ten years. The bureau director disclosed that 47 of 186 sewage pipe outlets citywide have been releasing dirty water directly into the sea.

The diversion facility in the underground pipe network, according to Tam, most of the time has been full, obstructing the water being diverted to the Sewage Treatment Plant. However, he did not explain why the capacity problem was not fixed.

He also blamed residents for disposing of waste water at inappropriate places or in an inappropriate manner.

In previous years, cholera has been detected in one of the two beaches in Coloane.

## MACAU-GUANGDONG UNION SUBMITS LIST OF 13 PEOPLE TO RUN FOR AL

The Macau-Guangdong Union yesterday submitted to the Legislative Assembly Electoral Affairs Commission the list of 13 candidates and their election platforms for the upcoming election. The first four people on the list were, in order, Zheng An Ting, Lo Choi In, Lau Ka Yue and Yiu Ming Lai. Zheng pledged that he will focus on supporting those who have become unemployed and underemployed as a result of the pandemic, the construction of apartments for seniors as well as housing under the sandwich class housing scheme, while pushing the government towards administrative reform and improve administrative efficiency.

## HEALTH BUREAU CALLS FOR QUITTING SMOKING TO PREVENT COVID-19

The Health Bureau encourages people in Macau to stop smoking as early as possible as in light of findings from the pandemic situation in Guangdong. It cited a study by Chinese epidemiologist Zhong Nanshan, reporting that smokers experience 2.4-fold higher odds of requiring intensive care, ventilator support or succumbing to Covid-19 and related complications. Meanwhile, the bureau also noted that unmasking to smoke presents an opportunity for contact between the hands, mouth and nose, thereby increasing the risk of contracting the virus and falling ill. The bureau also encourages people to get vaccinated.

## MAJORITY OF GOLDEN ‘GREEN HOTELS’ LOCATED IN COTAI

**F**OUR out of the five hotels winning the gold tier in the Macao Green Hotel Awards conferred by the Macau government are located in Cotai, understood by many as being at the heart of the city's tourism.

The four Golden Green Hotels are: the Grand Hyatt Macao, The Venetian Macao, the Four Seasons Macao and The Parisian Macao.

The Wynn Macao also won the Gold Award in the selection.

The Silver Award went to the Galaxy Hotel and the Beverly Plaza Hotel. The Grandview Hotel and the Inn Hotel won the Bronze Award.

It is worth noting that the Pousada Marina Infante, although being a

designated quarantine hotel in the past year or so, has won the Award of Excellence.

A total of 13 hotels have been awarded with the recognition this year.

The awarding entity, the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA), noted that the award is valid for three years. It means that the winners of the 2018 accolades will enjoy their recognition until this year.

This explains why the list of winners for 2020 are mainly smaller hotels.

Counting the figures from 2018 to 2020, there are a total of 57 winning hotels. The award, meanwhile, boasts a 14-year history.

The DSPA revealed that all 57 winning ho-

tels have been installed with LED lighting. Some of the hotels have also installed solar panels to generate electricity for their own use.

In addition, 70% more charging stations for electric vehicles were recorded in hotels and resorts in 2020 than in the previous year. The number of hotels that use electric shuttle buses has also increased by 30%.

According to the DSPA, more than 70% of the 57 winners are practicing kitchen waste collection practices.

Around seven to eight hotels from the 13 winners in 2020 have donated their income from the mandatory plastic bag charge to charitable entities. **AL**

## COURT

## ASIAN AMERICAN OPPOSES INTERFERENCE OF LVS IN COMPANY LIQUIDATION

**M**ARSHAL Hao's Asian American Entertainment Corp Ltd (Asian American) has opposed what they claim to be the unlawful interference of Las Vegas Sands Corp (LVS) in the company's liquidation processes, the Times learned.

Asian American previously filed a lawsuit against LVS for a separate matter, where they accused LVS of violating the contract for a casino license in Macau in the 2001-2002 period. In the document submitted to the courts, Asian American is now opposing the intervention of LVS in their liquidation proceedings, aiming to stop the progress of the case. Notably,

the Asian American versus LVS trial has already commenced and is ongoing at the Court of First Instance.

LVS has argued to the courts that it is an interested party in the company's liquidation, a role that is normally reserved for the company's creditors.

Asian American opposes this interference since LVS is not a creditor but rather, a debtor from previous proceedings from which the company is calling for compensation amounting to USD12 billion (96 billion patacas).

By interfering in the liquidation of Asian American, LVS aims to be part of the liquidation process. LVS has requested the im-

peachment of its liquidators and, if recognized as an interested party, will seek to be involved in the appointment of the legal representatives of the company.

A previous case initiated by LVS in the U.S.A, saw the company seeking to include several of Hao's family members as witnesses to obtain their testimony in court.

In the extensive document now submitted by Jorge Menezes, the legal representative of Asian American and Marshal Hao, they request the court to refuse LVS' request as it would constitute a detriment to the company and to the pursuit of justice in the proceedings.



CRIME

# PJ DISMANTLES ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION SUPPORT GROUP

RENATO MARQUES

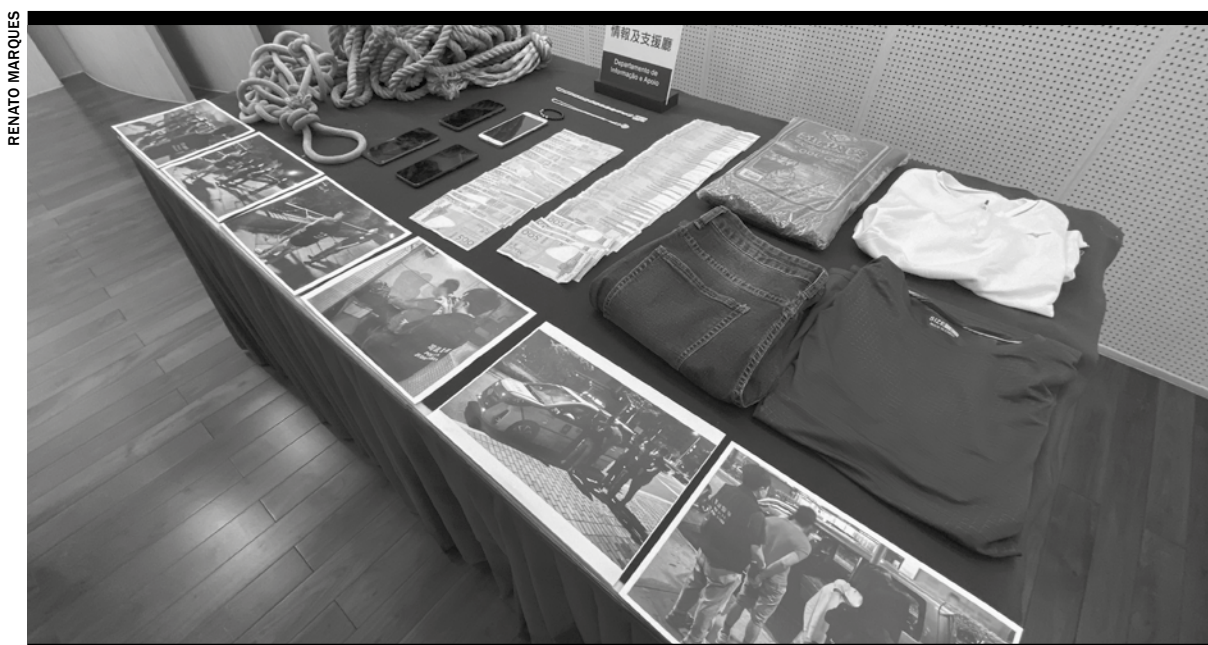
**T**HE Judiciary Police (PJ) has dismantled the operation of a group dedicated to helping people illegally cross Macau's border, the PJ announced in a special press conference.

In an operation held on the night of June 27, the PJ caught the group in the act, and detained three of its members. In the process, two illegal immigrants were also discovered. All people involved were Vietnamese nationals.

According to the PJ spokesperson, the case was first drawn to their attention across the course of another similar investigation, when on June 11 they found and detained two other Vietnamese nationals involved in the same illegal act.

While investigating that case, they became aware of a second group undertaking the activity and prepared an anti-crime operation to detain them.

On June 27, around 11 p.m., the PJ caught the members of the group helping two illegal im-



migrants from Vietnam to leave Macau and enter the mainland at Hengqin Island.

Further investigation revealed that the same group was responsible for the illegal movement of the same people into Macau approximately three months earlier.

The three group members are a 33-year-old male staying in Ma-

cau with a temporary permanence permit, his partner, a 43-year-old woman working in Macau as a domestic helper, and a second woman, aged 52, who is also a domestic helper.

The PJ said that while the man had the role of helping the illegal immigrants to leave and enter Macau, his partner was in charge

of getting the payments and maintaining contact with people interested in the scheme. The third woman worked as a go-between, attracting clients. To the PJ, she said she earned RMB2,000 for each client she would connect to the primary couple.

The PJ said that the two apprehended on June 11 refused

to cooperate with the police and have chosen to remain silent.

The police noted that in the course of the investigation, they determined that the group would charge RMB12,000 for each illegal entry to or exit from Macau. They would use tools such as a rope to help the illegal immigrants in and out of the water, as the illegal immigrants had to swim for a section of the journey and were picked up and dropped off by the facilitating group in the vicinity of the campus of the University of Macau in Hengqin.

The PJ was able to determine that the illegal immigrants sought to enter Macau to find jobs as undocumented workers. It is suspected that they were also illegally staying in the mainland for the same purpose.

The PJ also found that one of the men caught trying to leave Macau had been previously involved in another case of illegal residence and had consequently been punished with a ban against entry to Macau for a four-month period.

According to the PJ, all the members of the group lived in an apartment located in the San Kio neighborhood.

The PJ said it had not been able to ascertain the number of people that this group helped to illegally enter Macau.

## DEMENTIA RISKS CAN BE REDUCED BY A CHANGE OF LIFESTYLE: SSM

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE Health Bureau (SSM) and the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) have jointly launched online training sessions to raise public awareness on the lifestyle changes that may reduce the risk of dementia. Considering Macau's rapidly aging population and the fact that dementia is more common as people grow older, the SSM and the IAS have resolved to provide a program of assistance and education for the city's elderly residents and their caregivers.

In a statement released yesterday, the two bureaus cited a study published in an international medical journal that found that 40% of the risk factors for dementia can be reduced through the adoption of a better lifestyle.

"Practicing a healthy lifestyle can lower the risk of developing dementia, and thus prevent dementia," the statement added.



In view of such promising findings, the two bureaus organized four online training sessions for patients diagnosed with dementia over the past few days. The digital courses were attended by over 50 alliances and almost 200 representatives from related associations in the city.

The training course begins with an introduction of Macau's dementia poli-

cy, a dementia 101 and the concept of building an inclusive society. The course is intended to help alliance members learn more about dementia and encourage them to embark on community works to help those in need.

The authorities also urged the public to avoid stigmatizing people with dementia, and encourage them to engage in closer interactions with patients.

## GOV'T CLARIFIES THE 'PROPER OCCASIONS' TO USE NATIONAL SYMBOLS

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE government has made note of the activities, events, and occasions during which displaying the national flag of the People's Republic of China may be considered "improper."

The list of circumstances is contained within the final opinion of the first standing committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL), which analyzed the national symbols law in depth prior to the bill moving to the final reading.

In the committee's opinion and as reiterated by the government's clarification, the national flag should not be abused.

"In the government's opinion, it is not appropriate to use the national symbol while having meals at restaurants or when participating in ball games [and related] activities, but it is appropriate in activities that commemorate the country," the final opinion reads. The final opinion is broadly concerned with the use of the national flag on celebratory occasions and to express patriotic feelings.

The new amendments to



the existing law mostly aim to enforce the changes already enacted and enforced in the mainland on the use of the national anthem and flag, and regulate its display and presentation in Macau.

The revision in the mainland stipulates that the flag will be hoisted on a mandatory basis daily at schools and other academic institutions, as well as at all government and public services and cultural venues.

The new amendments also grant the Public Security Police Force and the Customs Service the power to

inspect all situations where the national flag is displayed in public so they can supervise and act in situations where the national flag is hoisted upside-down or thrown away disrespectfully.

Prior incidences of the national flag being hoisted upside-down occurred at venues under the responsibility of the same police forces that will now be in charge of its supervision.

The final version of the bill has already been submitted to the plenary, where it will likely receive final approval within the upcoming week.



# Galaxy Entertainment Group Supports Team Members' Career Advancement



GEG executive members participated in the IR-LEAD opening ceremony to welcome the more than 20 team members selected as the first batch of participants.

Understanding that talent cultivation is key to supporting Macau's evolution as a World Center of Tourism and Leisure, Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) is committed to supporting the Macau SAR Government's policies on local talent cultivation and investing in local team members' career development, including both upward and horizontal mobility. Over the years, the company has launched a wide range of talent development initiatives to facilitate local team members' career growth while nurturing talent for Macau's broader integrated-resort industry and supporting the city's economic diversification.

## IR-LEAD PROGRAM



Earlier, GEG held a series of activities at its properties to introduce team members to IR-LEAD.

Among various ongoing initiatives, this year, GEG launched the IR-LEAD Career Diversification Program, which aims to help participating local gaming team members to obtain work experience across different departments, enhance their professional skills and increase their competitiveness at work. Each participant will gain work experience in various areas of the hospitality sector through up to 800 hours of training. Selected as the first batch participants, more

than 20 team members recently started their new journey, and feedback has been resoundingly positive. Participant Cherry Tou thanked GEG for organizing a series of activities—roadshows, an open day and a career-planning day—to introduce the program and strengthen participants' confidence to start a new chapter of their careers. Andrew Chow said that working in groups with colleagues and under the guidance of experienced team members through the program's Buddy-Support Scheme and Sifu-Support Scheme had helped him adapt to new working environments as smoothly as possible.

To allow more team members to explore their cross-departmental talents based on their interests and the businesses' needs, GEG has also launched several sub-programs, each lasting between one and six months. In addition, GEG will be extending IR-LEAD to more departments and providing a wider range of training positions in order to equip more team members to excel in the integrated-resort industry and help them explore their talents and interests.

## DEEPENING EXPERTISE



A graduation ceremony was recently held for the GEG team members who completed the UM Advanced Diploma in Gaming Management.

GEG supports team members in deepening their expertise for further career advancement. IR-LEAD participants will be sponsored by GEG to enroll in the professional certificate programs provided by the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies. In fact, since 2007, GEG has been providing tuition support to outstanding team members who enroll in certain courses and programs at local universities and institutes, including the Diploma in Casino Management program and the Advanced Diploma in Gaming Management program at the University of Macau.



All GEG team members are expected to finish the Hotel and Catering Industry Safety Card Training Program this year.

In the meantime, GEG continues to design and roll out a broad range of training activities covering both soft skills and technical skills. Previously covered topics include: skills and knowledge development; GEG's mission, vision and values; health and safety; and more. In the first half of 2021, these training activities attracted over 100,000 participants, resulting in 350,000 training hours. Furthermore, GEG continues to cooperate with the Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL) on the Hotel and Catering Industry Safety Card Training Program, with over 95% of team members having completed the course with GEG. The company remains

steadfast in its commitment to maintaining a safe working environment for all its team members.

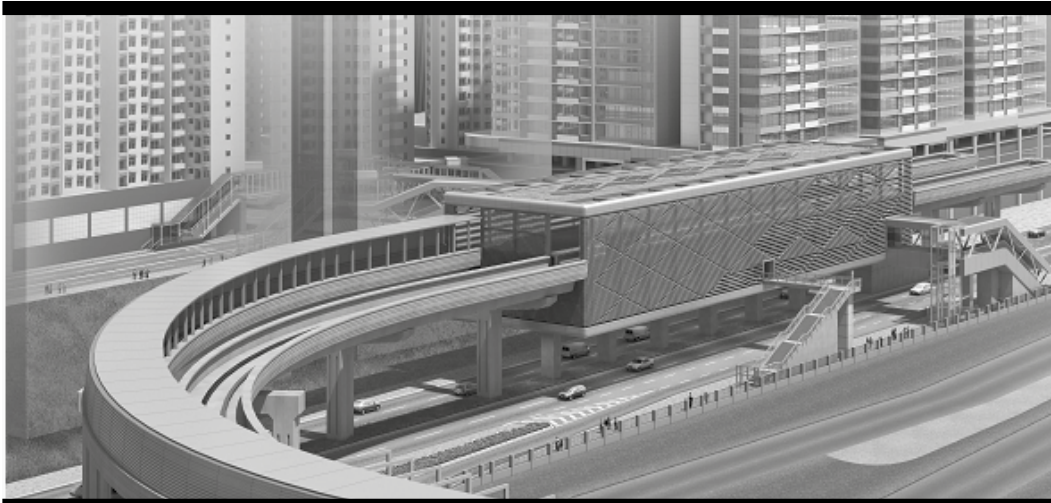
## DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES



GEG and DSAL co-organized a recruitment fair to local residents and fresh graduates.

With its new development projects in Cotai continuing to move forward, GEG will offer more job opportunities for local talents. GEG has co-organized a two-day recruitment fair with DSAL at Galaxy Macau for local residents and fresh graduates. At the recruitment fair, GEG held a series of workshops to help candidates learn about the leisure and tourism industry, positions open for applications, and interview skills and grooming tips. Committed to supporting the Macau SAR Government's policies on protecting the employment of local residents, GEG also supports graduates from DSAL's subsidized training courses in their applications to work at GEG. Additionally, GEG is committed to nurturing a diverse workplace and recruits people with disabilities to join the GEG family, providing specialized training so that all GEG team members can live up to their full potential and contribute to building an inclusive society.





# GOV'T RECEIVES 11 BIDS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEAC PAI VAN LINE

HONEY TSANG

**S**ecretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo Arrais do Rosário said that he hopes bidders in the second tender for the construction of the Seac Pai Van Line (Light Rapid Transit) will meet the official requirements.

In May of this year, the Infrastructure Development Office (GDI) re-invited tenders for the project yesterday and

received a total of 11 bids. The construction project is slated to commence in the second half of the year, to be completed in 890 working days at most.

Yesterday, do Rosário told the media that the construction period presented in some tenderers' bids received in the first round was considered "too short," as the government believed it was not technically feasible.

With regard to the second tendering process, do Rosário said it normally takes around one-and-a-half months for the government to evaluate the bids received. Including the process of awarding the tender and signing the contract with the selected firm, the entire tendering process will take around three to four months to be completed.

The GDI first invited tenders for the construction of

the Seac Pai Van Line back in July 2020, with a total of 10 bidding documents submitted to the government.

However, on May 20, the GDI announced its decision to revoke the tender due to a notable discrepancy in budget and timeframe between the tender proposals and official prerequisites demanded by the government.

"After analysis, we believed that the bidding amounts and construction periods proposed by the tenderers were obviously low, and not in line with the timetable for the installation of [light rail's] driving system, as stipulated in the tender document," the GDI stated in the earlier release.

As such, the GDI modified the evaluation criteria for proposals received in the second round. The adjustments include increasing the proportion of engineering costs to 50% (an increase of 5%) and reducing the construction period to 30% (a reduction of 5%).

The GDI has now clearly stated in the tender document that the bidders must take into account any additional time required for the supply and installation of the rail's driving system when proposing the overall construction time for the project.

## ROSÁRIO SATISFIED WITH SMG'S ABILITY TO PREDICT RAINSTORMS

STAFF REPORTER

**R**AIMUNDO Arrais do Rosário, Secretary for Transport and Public Works, said he is satisfied with the rainstorm forecasting ability of the Meteorological and Geophysics Bureau (SMG).

He described the bureau as having done a "good job and doing its job correctly."

"If the SMG really could predict so accurately, [the odds] almost mean that I can definitely win the Mark Six lottery," Rosário said, "Nowadays, it is not the case that you can know everything if you pay for a [weather forecasting] machine. There is no such machine."

The Secretary stressed that there is a big difference between the rainstorm and typhoon information released in Macau and its neighbors. Macau uses a "weather forecast system" while its neighbors use a "weather report system." The forecast system means that the amount of rainfall in an upcoming period of several hours is judged manually, so it may not always be correct.

"We can consider whether we should continue to use the weather forecast system or switch to the weather report system," he said.

Macau has recently been experiencing frequent rainstorms, and many citizens have expressed dissatisfaction with how the SMG's response, with many expressing frustration with the inconvenience caused by the SMG's forecasts.

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**M**ELCO Resorts & Entertainment's Splendors of China Passport has been launched in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China. The comprehensive learning program comprises of various training initiatives, and aims to enhance national knowledge, national pride and help colleagues develop a better understanding of China's history through understanding the great achievements of the Chinese Communist Party.

The program includes mandatory courses on Chinese culture and history, including Chinese idioms. Elective courses cover the fine arts and cultural aspects of understanding China, including Chinese tea culture, Cantonese opera and visits to nationalistic exhibitions, to name a few. Upon the successful completion of these activities, colleagues will become eligible for entry to a prize draw for a paid red tourism experience trip to Guangdong Province sponsored by the company.

Aside from the Splendors of China Passport, Melco's array of initiatives developed for the centennial celebrations of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party include the youth Chinese knowledge competition Melco Han Hero; Melco Star Macao – a youth talent competition which attracted participation from more than 650 children and young adults in over 170 Chinese themed original acts including singing, dancing, instrumental performances, recitals, Cantonese opera and martial arts; Melco Leadership Forum including a sharing session on the recent 'Two Sessions'; relevant Chinese historical learning topics as well as visits and executive tours to Chinese cities and nationalistic exhibitions.

Ms. Akiko Takahashi, Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff to Chairman & CEO of Melco, said, "To support the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China, Melco has prioritized national education and developed a vast array of programs aimed towards instilling national pride through education and awareness. We are thrilled to introduce the Melco Splendors of China Passport program to help our colleagues develop deeper insight into understanding Chinese culture and to appreciate the achievements of Macau's mother country."



CELEBRATING 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA:

# Melco Splendors of China Passport promotes national pride



Furthermore, in its continued focus on promoting the importance of National Education, Melco is fully supporting the public screening of the 100-episode documentary series and first public screening of movie 'The Pioneer' to communicate the great history and achievements of the Party. The screening will take place on July 1 at Macau University of Science and Technology.

Melco is also title sponsor of the Melco Han Hero – Macau Youth Chinese Knowledge Competition for the fourth consecutive year in collaboration with the event's organizer Macau Youth Education Promotion Association.

The competition aims to instill national education, knowledge and patriotism in Chinese culture amongst young people in Macau, and forms part of Melco's signature Splendors of China learning program. With its objectives to strengthen participants' Chinese reading, writing, and language abilities, as well as enhancing knowledge of national education through culture and language, a total of 42 participants from 14 teams from local primary and secondary schools took part in the 2-day competition hosted at Studio City earlier this month.

Furthermore, colleagues from the Melco management team last

week toured the large-scale photo exhibition titled '100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China' on its opening day. Hosted at Complex of Commerce and Trade Co-operation Platform for China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, the purpose of the tour is to strengthen colleagues' national knowledge and identity and to gain a deeper understanding of important milestones accomplished by the Communist Party of China. A total of 300 Melco colleagues are scheduled to visit the exhibition in the coming weeks.

To commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China, the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, the Government of the Macau SAR of the People's Republic of China, and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau SAR are jointly hosting the large-scale photo exhibition. Featuring 298 classic photos, the exhibition is divided into four parts to form a comprehensive display of the centuries of struggle of the Chinese

Communist Party through text and imagery.

Mr. Raymond Lo, Senior Vice President, General Manager of Altira Macau & Mocha said, "I am grateful for this opportunity to learn about the Communist Party of China's accomplishments on its centennial celebrations through this thoughtfully curated photography exhibition. I look forward to participating in more of the company's initiatives with my colleagues to learn about the important history of our Motherland."

Splendors of China is Melco's nationalistic learning program launched in 2016 which focuses on China's cultural heritage, economic policies, social systems and values. The program provides a historical perspective about the wonders and growth of China, from its iconic and historic achievements to its modernization and path of becoming the world's second largest economy. It also creates deeper insight for Melco colleagues and the broader community into understanding Chinese culture and appreciating the achievements of China.





**X**i Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, yesterday conferred the July 1 Medal, the Party's highest honor, on model CPC members.

A total of 29 CPC members who have made "outstanding contributions to the Party and the people" received the honor, some posthumously.

This is the first time the medal has been awarded as the CPC is set to celebrate its centenary on July 1.

Over the past 100 years, the Party "has written a splendid chapter in the history of the Chinese nation's development and that of humanity's progress," said Xi, also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission.

In the Great Hall of the People, Xi draped the medals around the necks of the recipients, shook their hands and congratulated them.

Xi addressed the attendees after presenting the medals.

#### ROLE MODELS

Over the past 100 years, generations of CPC members have worked hard and made selfless contributions in the pursuit of national independence and the liberation of the people, as well as in striving for a prosperous and strong country and the people's well-being, said Xi.

## XI AWARDS HIGHEST PARTY HONOR TO ROLE MODELS



Noting that the awardees have been outstanding representatives of CPC members on all fronts, Xi said they embody Party members' staunch faith, fighting and dedicated spirit, integrity and devotion, and loyalty to the Party's fundamental tenet - putting the people at the very center of their hearts, and wholeheartedly serving the people.

To maintain staunch faith is to stay true to the Party's original

aspiration and dedicate everything, even one's precious life, to the cause of the Party and the people, said Xi.

All Party members should trust, love and devote themselves to the Party, he said.

Xi also told CPC members to work diligently, maintain high morale, tackle challenges and continue the fine traditions of hard work and plain living, and to put public interests above personal interests.

#### EVERYDAY HEROES

The recipients of the medals all come from the people and are rooted in the people. They are everyday heroes who have fulfilled their duties and made contributions, said Xi.

They include a veteran of the Red Army and those who fought in the War of Liberation and the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea. They also include a volunteer who has spent decades

serving her community, a Uyghur village official resolutely fighting ethnic separatist activities, a welder, a weaver, a veteran diplomat and a police detective.

A battalion commander who sacrificed his life defending the Chinese border, a Party official who was sent to a village to fight poverty and died on the front line, and a war hero who worked in obscurity after retiring from the military were awarded the honor posthumously.

Zhang Guimei, the principal of a senior high school that offers free education to girls from impoverished families, called herself an "ordinary teacher" when she delivered a speech on behalf of the honorees after receiving her medal.

The honor belongs to every CPC member working on different fronts," said Zhang. "What we've done is just what many CPC members are doing every day."

According to figures released last year, the CPC has more than 91 million members.

At the end of the speech, Xi called on CPC members and officials to boldly advance toward the second centenary goal of fully building a modern socialist country, as well as the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation. **MDT/XINHUA**

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## XINHUA ISSUES RESEARCH REPORT ON CPC'S POLITICAL COMMITMENT

**N**EW China Research (NCR), the think tank of Xinhua News Agency, on Monday released a research report on the political commitment of the Communist Party of China (CPC) ahead of the Party's centenary.

Titled "People First: Political Commitment of the Century-old Communist Party of China," the report examines the development of the CPC from a party of 50-plus members to the world's largest political party boasting over 91 million members. It notes that the process has become one of the most noteworthy political phenomena.

When Western academic theories cannot explain the success of the CPC, new research paradigms should be established to seek answers from the Party's own theories and practices, according to the report.

The report has three chapters: "why have the Chinese people chosen the CPC," "how does the CPC represent the people" and "what contributions does the CPC make to human progress."

The CPC enjoys the wholehearted support of the broadest possible majority of the people, which has not changed with the passage of time, the report says.

The CPC has made clear its commitment to its founding mission, adopted a tried-and-true democratic system, built a relationship of trust between the Party and the people, and formed an effective supervision system, the report says.

The report says that from the perspective of the political advancement of mankind, the secret to the CPC's success in making China increasingly prosperous and strong can provide other countries with a useful reference for party building and state governance.

The report encapsulates the secret of the CPC's success in five English letters: ABCDE, and stresses that the CPC does not seek to export China's model, nor does it ask other countries to follow in China's footsteps.

### A| ALL FOR THE PEOPLE

Standing on the people's side represents the fundamental political stance of the CPC, and the past 100 years saw the CPC make serving the people the starting point and ultimate purpose of all of its actions and institutional design.

### B| BLUEPRINT DRAWING

The past 100 years of the CPC is a history of continuous hard work. The CPC is adept at making long-term strategic plans based on the people's interests, setting goals for each stage of development, and translating a blueprint into reality with force and tenacity, like a hammer driving a nail.

### C| CAPACITY BUILDING

The governance capacity of the CPC is multifaceted and covers all fronts. Its capacity building concerning political awareness, theoretical competence, organization and conduct in particular attracts global attention.

### D| DEVELOPMENT SHARED

The CPC is working on the formulation of an action plan to promote common prosperity, under which more development outcomes could be shared by all the people in a fairer way. Efforts such as jointly pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative and promoting South-South cooperation also attest to the CPC's vision for promoting shared and common development worldwide.

### E| EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Be it everyday governance or emergency responses, human resources, as well as technological, material and financial resources, can always be effectively brought together across regions and sectors under the CPC's leadership.

Chinese and foreign scholars believe that the vision of a community with a shared future for humanity is a major theoretical innovation that goes beyond the differences of country, race and system in improving the global governance system and promoting sustainable development and the progress of human society. It is in the fundamental interests and meets the universal expectations of the international community, says the report.

The CPC explores ways to solve multiple prominent challenges facing the international community and develop a community with a shared future for humanity from three dimensions: promoting peace built by all, development beneficial to all, and mutual learning among civilizations, according to the report. **XINHUA**



### XINHUA COMMENTARY-EXPLAINER

# National spirit behind China's success in fighting COVID-19, poverty

**B**EIJING, June 28 (Xinhua) -- In the run-up to its centenary this year, the Communist Party of China (CPC) demonstrated its exemplary governance capability by leading the Chinese people in efficiently containing the COVID-19 outbreak and eliminating absolute poverty in the world's most populous country.

The national spirit behind both the victory over poverty and the strategic outcomes of COVID-19 control offers a glimpse into the Party's strong leadership and the nation's solidarity and strength.

### SPIRIT OF FIGHTING COVID-19

In early 2020, a previously unknown virus wreaked havoc in Hubei Province, prompting the Chinese government to take unprecedented measures to curb its rapid spread, including sealing off the hardest-hit provincial capital, Wuhan.

Defying the gloomy predictions of many foreign observers, China in just three months reduced new cases from thousands each day to zero. The Chinese leadership later attributed the success to the people's fighting spirit, which puts people's lives first and values nationwide solidarity, sacrifice, a respect for science, and a sense of purpose for humanity.

China has shown strong solidarity throughout the battle. With a mature mobilization system, China ensured that even villagers in remote mountains were aware that everyone must act as one to defeat the virus. Hundreds of millions of Chinese people answered the government's call to wear masks, stay at home and forego festive activities during the Spring Festival,

the most important holiday of the year for Chinese people. Public cooperation helped China build a people's "Great Wall" against the virus.

Medical staff and resources were poured into the worst-affected cities. At the peak of the epidemic, one in 10 intensive care medics in China was working in Wuhan. Backing the nationwide mobilization was science. China swiftly erected makeshift hospitals, set up quarantine facilities and made mask-wearing compulsory. Medical treatment, rapid contact tracking and mass nucleic acid testing all contributed to the efficient control of the epidemic in a short period of time in China.

Openness and internationalism have also been features of China's fight against COVID-19 since the very beginning. Often neglected by China critics is the fact that China began to regularly update the World Health Organization and relevant countries on the new disease as early as Jan. 3, 2020.

Through the course of its intensive and wide-ranging emergency humanitarian aid, China has supplied more than 350 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines abroad, including donations to more than 80 countries.

In retrospect, the country's national spirit in combating COVID-19 has underlined the CPC's inherent people-centered philosophy, along with a globalist touch fitting into China's call for the construction of a global community with a shared future.

### POVERTY ALLEVIATION SPIRIT

In early 2021, China announced that it had eliminated absolute poverty,

after lifting its remaining 98.99 million rural residents out of poverty over the past eight years.

The announcement marked a complete victory in China's long-running campaign to end poverty. Since the late 1970s, China has lifted more than 770 million rural residents out of poverty due to continuous poverty relief efforts.

The great cause has contributed to the powerful national spirit, which also encompasses unity, innovation, bravery, dedication to the people, and targeted and practical approaches to challenges.

The spirit of the Chinese people has helped boost national morale and pool wisdom to tackle poverty in the country's poorest areas, helping China realize its goal on schedule despite the headwinds of the pandemic.

The accomplishment is a further testament to the CPC's commitment to the people. By positioning the fight against poverty as a top policy goal, the CPC has again shown that it is striving to ensure no disadvantaged groups are left behind in China's economic take-off.

Flexibility and ingenuity were highlighted in the process. China adopted a targeted poverty-relief approach and local authorities rolled out specific anti-poverty measures to suit local conditions. China has also offered to share its experience with other countries fighting poverty.

China's national spirit will continue to inspire Chinese people in their pursuit of better lives and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. **XINHUA**





# MYANMAR JUNTA GAINS HOLD ON JADE PROFITS AS FIGHTING FLARES

ELAINE KURTENBACH  
& JERRY HARMER, BANGKOK

**T**HE military takeover in Myanmar has given the junta full control of the country's lucrative and conflict-ridden jade mining, providing it with profits and leverage for consolidating power, researchers said yesterday.

A flareup in fighting around the mines in Hpakant, in remote Kachin state, also is adding to instability in the border region, independent research group Global Witness said in its report.

Army and ethnic guerrilla forces have been fighting in Kachin for years. But they had largely cooperated to share in profits from mining of the world's richest jade deposits, making the industry a hotbed for corruption instead of a national asset that could be invested for the public good.

Global Witness estimates the annual losses in the tens of millions of dollars.

It and other experts say the Feb. 1 coup has disrupted the de facto ceasefire that had held around the mines, with fighting breaking out even in the jade-producing zone.

"It's an extremely unstable si-

AP PHOTO



tuation where the rule of law is just completely broken down," Keel Dietz, one of the report's authors, told The Associated Press.

The civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi made halting progress in cleaning up the industry after taking power in 2016. It suspended issuing or renewing jade mining permits. A new law restricts licenses to a maximum of three years, adding to the incentive to mine illicitly and as quickly as possible.

Now the military, known as the Tatmadaw, controls who can

mine and who can't and can dole out licenses to buy loyalty and try to splinter rival groups, Dietz said.

Global Witness and other groups are calling for stronger sanctions against the junta to help counter what has become a free-for-all rush to dig out as much of the precious stone as possible.

"It is up to the international community to limit the amount of funding the military can receive from selling Myanmar's natural resources by preventing the import of those resources and blocking financial transactions that

pay for them," the report says.

In an earlier report, Global Witness documented how the industry is dominated by networks of military elites, drug lords and crony companies. The situation has barely changed, those familiar with the region say.

That has created incentives for both sides in the conflict to maximize production, at a huge cost to the environment. Nearly a half-million people migrate into the region to work in the mines or to pick through mine tailings, hunting for stones that might have

valuable jade inside. Hundreds of have died from landslides on the unstable slopes of the open-pit mines.

Profits from the industry are seized by those controlling the mines and trade routes.

"Jade probably has been the military's most lucrative sector except petroleum. Other mining like copper has made them a lot of money too. Rare earths less so, although not insignificant," said Edith Mirante, director of Project Maje, which researches Myanmar's environmental issues.

The U.S. government and United Kingdom have imposed sanctions on Myanmar Gems Enterprise, on key military-controlled companies, military leaders, their family members and other companies either controlled by or linked to the army.

The potential impact of sanctions against the gemstone industry is limited, however, since nearly all jade and a large share of other precious stones and pearls produced in Myanmar go to China, often through illicit channels.

Many of the mining operations are conducted by Chinese companies allied with Myanmar partners. Over the decades, the military have often extracted huge revenues from mining while the Kachin have arrangements to tax smuggling routes into China, the destination for most of the jade mined in the region. **MDT/AP**

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# Americans apologize to Tokyo court for role in Ghosn escape

YURI KAGAYEMA, TOKYO

**T**WO Americans charged in Japan with helping Nissan's former chairman, Carlos Ghosn, jump bail and escape Japan for Lebanon apologized yesterday in a Tokyo court.

"I deeply regret my actions and sincerely apologize for causing difficulties for the judicial process and for the Japanese people. I'm sorry," Michael Taylor, a former Green Beret said, bowing and holding back sobs.

Taylor, on trial in Tokyo District Court with his son Peter, said in response to questioning by his lawyer and by prosecutors that he had been misinformed by Ghosn and his wife, Carole Ghosn.

Carole Ghosn told Taylor her husband was "tortured" and grilled in solitary confinement, he said. Ghosn also said he was being mistreated, Taylor said.

Taylor said he has been well treated in Japan.

"I didn't know much about Japan. All I know is that the Japanese are the friendliest people I've ever bumped into," he said.

AP PHOTO



At the outset of their trial earlier this month, the Taylors indicated they weren't fighting the allegations, in Japan's equivalent of pleading guilty. They were arrested in Massachusetts last year and extradited to Japan in March.

Peter Taylor, who allegedly met with Ghosn to plan the escape, also apologized to the court

for the "trouble" he had caused.

"I must apologize to the people of Japan," Peter Taylor said, bowing to a panel of three judges.

"After more than 400 days in jail, I have had a lot of time to reflect. I take full responsibility and deeply apologize. I am sorry," he said.

If convicted of helping a crimi-

nal, the Taylors face up to three years in prison. Japanese trials often drag on for months, and their defense team has indicated they want the trial to finish as soon as possible. Showing remorse for wrongdoing is considered crucial for defendants hoping for judicial leniency.

Ghosn, who led Nissan for

two decades, was arrested in November 2018, and charged with financial misconduct, including falsifying securities reports to under-report his future compensation, and with breach of trust in using Nissan money for personal gain.

He says he is innocent, arguing that the compensation was never decided on or paid and the expenses were legitimate for his job.

Ghosn hid in a box for musical equipment and left Japan in a private jet in December 2019. He is now in Lebanon, which has no extradition treaty with Japan.

The Taylors, who have not been granted bail, are accused of playing leading roles in that escape. Prosecutors have described details of bank transfers and bitcoin payments, alleging Ghosn paid the Taylors the equivalent of more than \$1 million.

While in detention, prosecutors questioned Ghosn without a lawyer present, although he was allowed lawyers' visits. That's standard in Japan, where more than 99% of criminal cases end with guilty verdicts. Critics often point to human rights abuses in the judicial system.

Another American and former top Nissan executive, Greg Kelly, is on trial in Tokyo on charges of under-reporting Ghosn's compensation. Kelly says he is innocent and was only trying to pay Ghosn legally. **MDT/AP**

# Popular ex-prosecutor in S. Korea launches presidential bid

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

**S**OUTH Korea's former top prosecutor launched a bid to run in next year's presidential election yesterday, vowing to unseat the current liberal government that he once worked for and that he also investigated for possible corruption.

Yoon Suk Yeol tops surveys on the South Korean public's preferred future leader, and his announcement will likely heat up the race to find a successor for President Moon Jae-in, whose single five-year term has been marked by roller-coaster diplomacy with North Korea, a deepening domestic divide and varied economic woes.

"I'm stepping forward with a determination to change the government," Yoon said at a news conference. "I'll join forces with everyone yearning for a shift in power and achieve that surely."

Yoon, who resigned as prosecutor-general in March, had led Moon's push to root out corruption. But

AP PHOTO



their ties soured as some of Moon's political allies were investigated over corruption and other charges.

Moon's supporters have accused Yoon of using the investigations to boost his political standing or thwart Moon's prosecution reforms. Yoon has said the investigations were conducted in line with due procedures and principles.

While the infighting invited public criticism that Moon's anti-corruption campaign was only tough on his political opponents,

it also helped Yoon emerge as a potential opposition candidate as the conservatives still have no clear standard-bearer to fight against Moon's governing party in the presidential election set for next March.

During yesterday's news conference, Yoon called the Moon government "corrupt," "incompetent" and "arrogant." He said he wants to restore constitutionalism and the principle of fairness that he says have been marred by the Moon government.

Moon's governing Democratic Party hit back at Yoon, accusing him of failing to clearly explain his vision and why he is running for the presidency.

"Today's announcement of his election bid is full of vagueness and self-contradiction," party spokesperson Lee So-young said. "He only focused on criticizing the government that he himself served in, and the nature and contents of liberal democracy that Yoon Suk Yeol talked about were vague."

Yoon has not joined the

main conservative opposition People Power Party, though he said he shares its basic political philosophy. Some observers say Yoon may launch his own party if he maintains his current popularity.

The long-dominant People Power Party was in disarray following the explosive 2016 corruption scandal that led to the impeachment and ouster of then-President Park Geun-hye. Its popularity has revived since it elected a 36-year-old party member as its new chairman this month, sparking hopes for a generational change in local politics.

Yoon's main rival is governing party member Lee Jae-myung, the governor of Gyeonggi province that surrounds Seoul, the capital.

In a public survey conducted by the Seoul-based private Korea Society Opinion Institute last week, 32.4% of respondents choose Yoon as the most suitable figure for the next president, and Lee came in next with 28.4%.

Compared with Lee, who

has called for engagement with North Korea and drastic steps to reform family-run conglomerates and other establishments, Yoon's election platform is still unknown. Yoon stressed the need to cooperate with North Korea and restore frayed ties with Japan, but didn't elaborate.

Whoever becomes the next South Korean president will face a slew of daunting challenges such as an increasing North Korean nuclear threat, the U.S.-China rivalry, skyrocketing housing prices and high youth unemployment.

Some critics question if political novice Yoon can withstand the expected massive political offensive by his opponents.

In 2017, former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was once a favorite to replace the impeached Park, but questions about his political competence and corruption allegations forced his abrupt withdrawal from the race. Moon then scored an easy victory in the election. **MDT/AP**





# US troops in Syria attacked after airstrikes on militias

ROBERT BURNS &  
LOLITA C. BALDOR,  
WASHINGTON

U.S. troops in eastern Syria came under rocket attack yesterday (local time), with no reported casualties, one day after U.S. Air Force planes carried out airstrikes near the Iraq-Syria border against what the Pentagon said were facilities used by Iran-backed militia groups to support drone strikes inside Iraq.

Iraq's military condemned the U.S. airstrikes, and the militia groups called for revenge against the United States.

Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said the militias were using the facilities to launch unmanned aerial vehicle attacks against U.S. troops in Iraq. It was the second time the administration has taken military action in the region since Biden took over earlier this year.

There was no indication that Sunday's attacks were meant as the start of a wider, sustained U.S. air campaign in the border region. But a spokesman for the U.S. military mission based in Baghdad, Col. Wayne Marotto, wrote on Twitter Monday that at 7:44 p.m. (U.S. time) "U.S. forces in Syria were attacked by multiple rockets." He said there were no injuries and that attack damage was being assessed.

Marotto later tweeted that while under rocket attack,

U.S. forces in Syria responded in self-defense with artillery fire at the rocket-launching positions.

Kirby said the U.S. military targeted three operational and weapons storage facilities — two in Syria and one in Iraq. In its release of videos of the strikes by Air Force F-15 and F-16 aircraft, the Pentagon described one target as a coordination center for the shipment and transfer of advanced conventional weapons.

Kirby said the airstrikes were "defensive," saying they were launched in response to the attacks by militias.

"The United States took necessary, appropriate, and deliberate action designed to limit the risk of escalation — but also to send a clear and unambiguous deterrent message," Kirby said.

The Pentagon said the facilities were used by Iran-backed militia factions, including Kata'ib Hezbollah and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada.

A Pentagon spokeswoman, Navy Cmdr. Jessica McNulty, said that each strike hit its intended target and that the U.S. military was still assessing the results of the operation.

"The targets selected were facilities utilized by the network of Iran-backed militia groups responsible for the series of recent attacks against facilities housing U.S. personnel in Iraq," McNulty said. She said those groups have conducted at least five such "one-way"

drone attacks since April.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, speaking to reporters in Rome, said Biden has been clear that the U.S. will act to protect American personnel.

"This action in self-defense to do what's necessary to do to prevent further attacks, I think sends a very important and strong message. And I hope very much that it is received," he said. "I think we've demonstrated with the actions taken last night and actions taken previously, that the president is fully prepared to act and act appropriately and deliberately to protect us."

Two Iraqi militia officials told The Associated Press in Baghdad that four militiamen were killed in the airstrikes near the border with Syria. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to give statements. They said the first strike hit a weapons storage facility inside Syrian territory, where the militiamen were killed. The second strike hit the border strip.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based group that closely monitors the Syrian conflict through activists on the ground, reported that at least seven Iraqi militiamen were killed in the airstrikes.

The Iran-backed Iraqi militia factions vowed revenge for the attack and said in a joint statement they would continue to target U.S. forces. "We ... will avenge the blood

of our righteous martyrs against the perpetrators of this heinous crime and with God's help we will make the enemy taste the bitterness of revenge," they said.

The Popular Mobilization Forces, an Iraqi state-sanctioned umbrella of mostly Shiite militias — including those targeted by the U.S. strikes — said their men were on missions to prevent infiltration by the Islamic State group and denied the presence of weapons warehouses.

Iraq's military condemned the strikes as a "blatant and unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty and national security." It called for avoiding escalation, but also rejected that Iraq be an "arena for settling accounts" — a reference to the U.S. and Iran. It represented rare condemnation by the Iraqi military of U.S. airstrikes.

In Iran, foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh accused the U.S. of creating instability in the region. "Definitely, what the U.S. is doing is disrupting the security of the region," he said.

U.S. military officials have grown increasingly alarmed over drone strikes targeting U.S. military bases in Iraq, which became more common since a U.S.-directed drone killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani near the Baghdad airport last year. Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis was also killed in the attack. The strike drew the ire of mostly Shiite Iraqi lawmakers and prompted parliament to pass a non-binding resolution to pressure the Iraqi government to oust foreign troops from the country.

Sunday's strikes mark the second time the Biden administration launched airstrikes along the Iraq-Syria border region. In February, the U.S. launched airstrikes against facilities in Syria, near the Iraqi border, that it said were used by Iranian-backed militia groups.

The Pentagon said those strikes were retaliation for a rocket attack in Iraq earlier that month that killed one civilian contractor and wounded a U.S. service member and other coalition troops.

At that time, Biden said Iran should view his decision to authorize U.S. airstrikes in Syria as a warning that it can expect consequences for its support of militia groups that threaten U.S. interests or personnel.

"You can't act with impunity. Be careful," Biden said when a reporter asked what message he had intended to send. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1971 SPACE MISSION ENDS IN TRAGEDY



Three Russian cosmonauts have been found dead in their space capsule after it made what looked like a perfect landing in Kazakhstan.

Lieutenant-Colonel Georgi Dobrovolsky, Vladislav Volkov and Viktor Patsayev were found dead in their seats on the Soyuz 11 but did not appear to have suffered any physical injuries.

Post mortem examinations are being carried out and the Soviet Government has ordered an immediate inquiry into the tragedy.

The most likely causes are oxygen failure on re-entry into the atmosphere or unknown side-effects of their lengthy stay in space.

The crew had spent a record 24 days in space, the longest period anyone has yet remained "weightless" and experts believe this could be linked to their deaths.

The cosmonauts had become the first men to stay at a space station when they docked with the Soviet Salyut 1. They were conducting scientific experiments and observations during their trip which started when they launched on 6 June.

The tragedy follows a number of problems involving Soyuz craft and could seriously damage the future of the Soviet space programme.

In 1967 Vladimir Komarov became the first man to die in space when the parachute on his Soyuz 1 developed trouble on landing and, after several other troubled missions, the flight by Soyuz 10 was abandoned before any of the crew boarded the space station due to technical difficulties.

The men will be buried at the Kremlin wall alongside Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space.

To acknowledge the magnitude of what the crew undertook they were immediately named Heroes of the Soviet Union. Mr Volkov has been given a Gold Star medal as he was previously named a hero of Soviet Union.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The inquiry concluded the three cosmonauts on the Soyuz 11 were killed by a fatal rise in their blood pressure caused when the cabin became depressurised. The cabin became depressurised because air escaped through a hole created when the landing capsule separated from the main craft.

The crew who died - Georgi Dobrovolsky, Vladislav Volkov and Viktor Patsayev - had been brought in as replacements for the original crew when Valery Kubasov became ill.

It was two years before Russia sent another manned craft into space.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Aren't you curious to know what that is? Give them some but not all of your time. Make it clear that you have boundaries that you have no intention of crossing for them, at least not yet.



**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Call a spade a spade. People will respect your honesty and give you more responsibility because of it. If someone is bragging a bit too much, tell them not to be so pompous.



**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Whether or not you have a good day totally depends on your attitude this morning. If you're feeling up for a challenge, then you're going to be well pleased with how the day unfolds.



**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Be wary of extravagant gifts from co-workers or casual acquaintances. They could be giving you something with the expectation that they'll be getting something in return.



**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
It will be surprisingly simple to do, and it will give you one more achievement to celebrate. Ask around and you'll find out that a few of your friends have something to celebrate too!



**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Your growing confidence is helping you impress all the right people now, but too much action might cause you to get overwhelmed all over again. Do yourself a favor and scale back on your plans for the day.



**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
When it comes to making new friends, you're going to be absolutely unstoppable today. Everyone wants to be on your team, and they won't be shy about letting you know it!



**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Your ego is growing, and that is nothing but a good thing! Now might be the right time to take that risk that has intimidated you for so long. You may finally have the faith in yourself that you need to prevail.



**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
That grouchy person who tries to steal your parking space, the overbearing boss who spends more time breathing down your neck than doing their own job, the roommate who never cleans up their messes.



**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
They'll be flattered by the attention, which will encourage them to keep on going with this lifestyle renovation. Don't be afraid to let someone know you're proud of them.



**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
This day could unfold in some unpredictable directions, but not knowing exactly what's going to happen next might be a very good thing for you right now.



**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Someone you care deeply about has been living in a bit of a fantasyland lately, and it's going to be up to you to give them the reality check they need. It's never fun to burst someone's bubble...

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	26	33	thundershower
Harbin	18	31	cloudy
Tianjin	28	34	thundershower
Urumqi	17	24	moderate rain
Xi'an	19	36	clear
Lhasa	12	22	drizzle
Chengdu	19	31	clear
Chongqing	21	30	cloudy
Kunming	17	25	moderate rain
Nanjing	23	31	cloudy
Shanghai	23	28	drizzle
Wuhan	24	31	shower
Hangzhou	22	27	drizzle
Taipei	26	30	overcast
Guangzhou	26	33	thundershower
Hong Kong	27	32	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	13	18	moderate rain
Frankfurt	16	26	drizzle
Paris	14	21	cloudy
London	12	21	drizzle
New York	21	28	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

**ACROSS 1-** Indonesian holiday resort; 5- Inlets; 9- Closes; 14- King of comedy; 15- "East of Eden" director Kazan; 16- Golfer with an army; 17- Fast aircrafts; 18- Outstanding; 19- Reliable; 20- See-through material; 22- Miserly person; 24- Grandson of Adam; 25- Breadwinner; 26- Like life, supposedly; 29- Piles; 31- Guides; 32- Fish appendages; 33- Pro \_\_\_\_; 36- Open mesh fabric; 37- Develops in stages; 40- Before, of yore; 41- Broke bread; 42- Inwardly; 43- Mock, annoy; 45- Schoolbooks; 47- BB, e.g.; 48- Hold together; 51- Head for the hills; 52- Producing effects; 54- British soldier; 58- Tennis's Monica; 59- "Family Ties" character; 61- Dosage abbr.; 62- Govt. security; 63- High hair style; 64- Canadian gas brand; 65- Late bloomer; 66- Boris Godunov, for one; 67- Female rabbits;

**DOWN:** 1- \_\_\_\_ California; 2- A Baldwin brother; 3- Like the White Rabbit; 4- As an alternative; 5- Gambler; 6- Healing plants; 7- Peke squeak; 8- Lip; 9- Subordinate ruler; 10- Mistakes; 11- Negatively charged particle; 12- Loyal subject; 13- Passover meal; 21- Licorice-like flavoring; 23- Discontinue; 26- Radius neighbor; 27- Nair rival; 28- Destiny; 29- Small mountains; 30- Covetousness; 32- Typeface; 33- Bluey-green color; 34- Limerick language; 35- Run into; 38- Female fox; 39- War horse; 44- Voted into a seat; 45- Cylindrical; 46- Rubber; 47- Small hammer; 48- \_\_\_\_ Rica; 49- Unfolds; 50- Serf; 51- "Band of Gold" singer Payne; 53- Lacking slack; 55- \_\_\_\_ buco (veal dish); 56- Church recess; 57- General \_\_\_\_ chicken; 60- CD precursors;

**Yesterday's solution**

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

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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**FOR RENT**



**Taipa Village** **HKD 11,500/mth**  
Ref: 2012 1001 900 ft<sup>2</sup> 2 1 1

**Rain Dance Property**  
"We dance until it's SOLD!"



**Traditional apartment** **HKD 2,680,000**  
Ref: 2103 6001 788 ft<sup>2</sup> 2 1 1



AP PHOTO



## SLOW TOURISM START ON GREEK ISLAND BUT BUSINESSES OPTIMISTIC

ELENA BECATOROS, KOKKARI

**T**HE picturesque seaside village of Kokkari on the Greek island of Samos is unusually quiet for this time of year. Sunbeds on its long pebble beach lie mostly empty; customers in the shops are few and far between.

About a month after Greece officially opened to international visitors, the uncertainty of travel during a pandemic is still taking its toll on the country's vital tourist industry.

Greece's travel receipts fell more than 75% last year compared with 2019, dropping from 18.2 billion euros to 4.3 billion euros. The government says it hopes to reach half the 2019 visitor level this year.

But the season's start has been slow. Business owners are putting on a brave face, opening hotels, shops and restaurants, hoping the

season will pick up as the summer wears on, vaccine drives speed up and confidence in travel increases.

Greece was one of the first European Union countries to declare itself open to tourism this year, allowing visitors in from mid-May with either a negative coronavirus test, proof of vaccination or proof of recent recovery from COVID-19. Apart from accepting EU-approved vaccine certificates, it also recognizes China's and Russia's vaccines.

But in a shifting landscape where countries' travel rules for their own nationals keep changing, the uncertainty has made many hesitant to make holiday bookings.

"The situation is really liquid right now," said Alexandros Malagaris, who runs two hotels and a scuba diving center in Kokkari. "Of course, tourism is very sensi-

tive to everything that happens in the world, and the pandemic is a really serious situation."

Although demand at his dive center was already high, hotel bookings were low. "But we are confident that come July they will pick up," he said. "We are already looking forward to a really strong August and September and it seems that our season will be extended till the middle of October."

His hopes were echoed by other Samos business owners looking to offset last year's losses. Beyond the pandemic, the island also faced damage from a powerful October earthquake and a severe storm in February.

Petra Marheinecke, a German woman who has run a gift and garment store in Kokkari since 1994, opened her shop in early June.

"But it's really not worth it to open. Many shops are closed, and

because of the earthquake (some of the) shops are broken, completely broken, and it's not busy at all," she said. "We opened to survive, to pay our rent, to pay the people which are working with us, my staff. But of course, I hope it's getting better."

Marheinecke used to employ four people, but she's been forced to cut back to just one and shorten her opening hours to make ends meet until business picks up, she said.

In early June, hotels were operating at around 20-25% capacity on average, said Manos Vallis, president of the Samos hoteliers' association and head of the Doryssa Hotels and Resorts group, which runs six hotels and has a seventh under construction. But there was optimism that would increase, with more last-minute bookings than usual and Greeks expected in August. Vallis estimated the year

would close with around 65% hotel capacity.

"This year, I believe no hotelier opened their hotel for profit. We all opened our hotels because we had to open, because you understand that if you're shut after a year, you're off the market," said Vallis. "We'll be forgotten both as a destination and as hotels."

For some visitors, however, the lack of crowds was part of the attraction.

"I won't hide it, we prefer it when it's quieter," said Alain Dumesnil, who wandered down to the cove of Agios Isidoros with his wife Corinne after swimming in the turquoise sea nearby. From Nice in France, the couple frequently visit Greece in late September when most tourists have left.

"Now, I'd say it's still quiet," he said. "But you can feel that people are preparing. The restaurant owners are repainting their chairs, the terraces are being organized — we can see the potential of Samos."

Business owners said many visitors so far were people who vacation on Samos every year.

Thanassis Safis, who runs a restaurant in Kokkari harbor, said repeat customers he was in touch with were waiting for the travel situation to stabilize.

"There is the will. It's the flights that aren't available," he said.

For now, his restaurant is only open for dinner on weekdays, instead of from lunch onward. But he's managing to fill nearly all his tables.

As a young entrepreneur in his 30s who launched his restaurant in 2015 at the height of Greece's financial crisis, he said he remains optimistic.

"We've been through many difficulties but we're always positive," he said. "It was very difficult in 2015 but we were very patient, and we endured, and we succeeded. It needs patience and a lot of willpower." **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS

### Melco announces senior notes listing on MOX



Melco Resorts & Entertainment has announced the listing of the 5.375% senior notes due 2029 issued by its subsidiary, Melco Resorts Finance Limited, on the Chongwa (Macao) Financial Asset

Exchange Co., Limited (MOX). The gaming operator said in a statement that the listing "supports the local financial trading platform and demonstrates the company's confidence in the city's fur-

ther development as a world-recognized financial hub and tourism center."

Listing of, and permission to deal in, the notes have been granted by the MOX effective yesterday, June 29.

The notes were issued by Melco Resorts Finance in December 2019 and January 2021.

Lawrence Ho, chairman and CEO of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said, "As one of the region's leading integrated resorts developer and operator, we gladly support the diversified development of local Macau industries through our wide-reaching series of corporate social responsibility initiatives.

### GEG donates groceries to Caritas Macau



StarWorld Hotel donated over 1,200 kilograms of food and groceries to Caritas Macau in hopes of alleviating the basic food needs of under-

privileged people during the pandemic.

According to Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG), the food supplies, which includes

rice, cooking oil, noodles, biscuits, and canned foods were collected earlier from the hotel's team members who donated them during the food collection campaign set-up at the property's back-of-house in support of Caritas Macau's food recycling scheme.

Caritas secretary-general Paul Pun said, "The pandemic has caused a surge in the demand for short-term food assistance. [...] These food supplies are a blessing for many people, including those who have been stranded in Macau due to the pandemic. We look forward to continuing our work with GEG and to spread love and care to the wider community."





# Switzerland beats France 5-4 on penalties at Euro 2020

**A**U revoir France, this summer belongs to Yann Sommer.

The Switzerland goalkeeper, who left in the middle of the European Championship's group stage to be with his wife for the birth of their second daughter, made the biggest save of his life against one of the best players in the world.

That gave the Swiss a 5-4 penalty shootout victory over World Cup champion France on Monday and a spot in the quarterfinals of a major soccer tournament for the first time in 67 years. The match had finished 3-3.

Sommer dived to his right to save the final penalty by Kylian Mbappé, the young France forward who became a superstar at the last World Cup by scoring in the final.

"I think that everything we had in us, we left out on the field," Sommer said. "I'm unbelievably proud of this team, how we've done it this evening."

Sommer, who flew back to Germany after the team's 3-0 loss to Italy to be home when his daughter was born on June 16, made the decisive save on the 10th penalty after the previous nine had all been successful.

"What an evening of football," Sommer said. "It was our chance to finally go through the round of 16, because we never made it before. It's incredible. We played



Switzerland's goalkeeper Yann Sommer

with heart and with character. It's amazing."

The Swiss haven't reached the quarterfinals at a major tournament since they hosted the World Cup in 1954. This team also ended a run of three consecutive exits in the round of 16. They were knocked out by Poland after losing a penalty shootout 5-4 at Euro 2016.

"We made history tonight," Switzerland captain Granit Xhaka said. "We are all very proud."

The Swiss will next play Spain in the quarterfinals on Friday in

St. Petersburg.

It was the third game in the round of 16 at Euro 2020 to go to extra time but the first to be decided by penalties.

Haris Seferovic put Switzerland in the lead with a header in the 15th minute as France struggled to work itself into the game. But that all changed early in the second half when the Swiss were awarded a penalty.

France goalkeeper Hugo Lloris, the team's captain, saved Ricardo Rodríguez's spot kick in the 55th minute and that seemed to

wake up his teammates. Karim Benzema scored moments later in the 57th, and then again in the 59th to give France the quick-turnaround lead.

"We went through every emotion possible and honestly that was football the way we like it," Lloris said. "The two goals we conceded in the last quarter of an

hour really hurt us."

Paul Pogba made it 3-1 in the 75th with a right-foot shot from 20 meters and it looked like the game was out of reach. But just as quickly as France had taken over the match, they let it go again.

Seferovic scored another header in the 81st minute and substitute Mario Gavranovi made it 3-3 with only seconds remaining.

France had been trying to win back-to-back major titles for the second time. The French won the World Cup in 1998 and followed that up with the title at Euro 2000. Five years ago, France lost in the Euro 2016 final, but then won the 2018 World Cup.

Mbappé was only 19 when France won that title in Moscow, and he became youngest player since Pele in 1958 to score in a World Cup final.

The Brazilian great was quick to offer his support after the heart-breaking miss in Bucharest.

"Keep your head up, Kylian! Tomorrow is the first day of a new journey, @K Mbappe," the Brazil great wrote on Twitter.

France coach Didier Deschamps played on those winning teams more than 20 years ago, and was trying to become the first man to achieve the feat as both a player and a coach.

"It hurts but we have to accept it," Deschamps said. "It's football. Everyone is really disappointed. Everyone's sad in the locker room. But the whole squad is still united in this difficult moment."

MDT/AP

## LATEST RESULTS

Croatia	3	5	Spain
France	4	5	Switzerland

# Spain taking six players from Euro 2020 to Tokyo Olympics

**T**AKING advantage of Spanish clubs' obligation to release players, Spain will take six members from its European Championship squad to the Tokyo Olympics.

Olympic coach Luis de la Fuente announced a list of 22 players yesterday including Unai Simón, Eric García, Pau Torres, Pedri González, Mikel Oyarzabal and Dani Olmo. They are in the Euro 2020 squad that on Monday advanced to the quarterfinals.

Simón, García and Pedri were in the starting lineup as Spain defeated Croatia 5-3 in extra time in Copenhagen. Torres and Olmo also have started for Spain at Euro 2020.

"These players will arrive greatly motivated, with greater experience," De la

Fuente said. "They are young players with spectacular quality. Hopefully they will arrive just after the (Euro 2020) final, after having won the title."

De la Fuente said some international clubs denied the request to release players, as is their right. Local legislation forces Spanish clubs to do it, though.

"We are lucky that the Spanish clubs have the obligation to release players," he said.

The only players from non-Spanish clubs in the Olympic squad are Olmo of Leipzig and Rafa Mir of Wolverhampton Wanderers.

The three players over 24 in Spain's squad will be Dani Ceballos, Marco Asensio and Mikel Merino.

Ceballos hadn't been called up for the senior team

because of an injury, while Asensio recently lost his place in the team coached by Luis Enrique.

The absence of veteran Sergio Ramos ended speculation about whether he would be on the Olympic list after being left off the Euro 2020 squad following a season plagued by injuries.

"I'm sure he understands the circumstances that made me make this decision," De la Fuente said. "I had to reward the players who helped us make it to the Olympic Games."

He said Spain and other associations have asked officials to allow national teams to take 22 players instead of the 18 that are currently the maximum allowed at the Olympic tournament.



Spain won the Olympics in men's soccer in 1992 in Barcelona. It won the silver

medal in 2000 in Sydney and in 1920 in Antwerp.

Spain is scheduled to

open its Tokyo Games campaign against Egypt on July 22. MDT/AP



OPINION

**China Daily**  
Editorial, China Daily

**TALKS SIGNAL  
SHARED INTENT TO  
UPHOLD RULES-BASED  
GLOBAL SYSTEM**

**Thursday** marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, and July 16 is the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good-neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation between China and Russia. The discussions between the leaders of the two countries at this special moment highlights their common will to push their comprehensive strategic partnership to a new height.

Comparing notes on a series of global and regional issues of common concern, the video conference between President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Monday has further deepened the strategic mutual trust between the two countries, and consolidated their shared determination to promote global development and safeguard world peace and stability.

While some big countries are attempting to hijack the global agenda, weaponize human rights and democracy, and backpedal on the achievements of global governance and economic globalization, close strategic coordination and cooperation between Beijing and Moscow are setting a good example of relations featuring high-level political mutual trust, close strategic coordination and win-win economic and trade cooperation, and helping to uphold the UN-centered rules that are the bedrock for the international order.

Rather than any need to counter the confrontational stance of Western countries, as some allege, it is their shared commitment to the UN-centered international system, multilateralism and economic globalization, as well as the strong complementarity between their economies, that has injected continuous vitality into Sino-Russian relations.

If interventionism, unilateralism and hegemony were to prevail, not only would the trend toward a fairer postwar order be brought to an abrupt halt, it would also undo the development achievements the world has made through multilateralism.

While the outbreak of the novel coronavirus has made exchanges between countries difficult, it has not prevented Sino-Russian relations from reaching their highest historical level, which is evidenced not only by the two leaders' frequent conversations by telephone and video links, but also the robust increase in the two countries' trade and economic cooperation, and the extending of the treaty which was due to expire this year.

Any countries hoping to sow discord between Beijing and Moscow are destined for disappointment, as the solidarity of the relationship between the two is based on a shared commitment to such basic principles as mutual respect, peaceful co-existence and equity.

The pragmatic cooperation between the two countries under various frameworks, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, has never targeted any third party, and will never do so in the future. What the two countries are trying to defend with other like-minded countries is the basic norms of international relations that concern the immediate interests of all countries.

It is to be hoped that the stable and healthy development of Sino-Russian relations will continue to serve the people of the two countries and those beyond.

**GREEK POLICE RECOVER PICASSO,  
MONDRIAN WORKS STOLEN IN 2012**

Greek police say they have recovered two paintings by 20th century masters Pablo Picasso and Piet Mondrian, nearly a decade after their theft from the country's biggest state art gallery in Athens.

A statement yesterday said the two works were in the hands of the police, but provided no detail on their condition and on whether any arrests had been made.

The paintings were stripped from their frames during a well-organized, overnight heist at the National Art Gallery on Jan. 9 2012. The burglars had also taken a pen and ink drawing of a religious scene by Italian 16th century painter Guglielmo Caccia. They had initially gra-

bbled a fourth work, also by Mondrian, but abandoned it as they fled.

Police said at the time that the heist was completed in about seven minutes.

The stolen Picasso was a cubist female bust which the Spanish painter had donated to Greece in 1949 with a dedication "in homage to the Greek people" for their resistance to Nazi German occupying forces during World War II.

The thieves also took a 1905 representational oil painting of a riverside windmill by Mondrian, the Dutch painter who became famous for his later, abstract linear works.

AP PHOTO



**ETHIOPIA DECLARES  
IMMEDIATE, UNILATERAL  
CEASE-FIRE IN TIGRAY**

**ETHIOPIA'S** government declared an immediate, unilateral cease-fire Monday in its Tigray region after nearly eight months of deadly conflict as Tigray fighters occupied the regional capital and government soldiers retreated in a region where hundreds of thousands are suffering in the world's worst famine crisis.

The cease-fire could calm a war that has destabilized Africa's second most populous country and threatened to do the same in the wider Horn of Africa, where Ethiopia has been seen as a key security ally for the West. It comes as the country awaits the results of national elections that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed promoted as the centerpiece of reforms that won him the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize.

Abiy's transformation from making peace to waging war has appalled many observers since the fighting in Tigray erupted in November. Since then, the world has struggled to access much of the region and investigate growing allegations of atrocities including gang rapes and forced starvation. Thousands of people in the region of 6 million have been killed.

Ethiopia's statement was carried by state media shortly after the Tigray interim administration, appointed by the federal government, fled the regional capital, Mekele, and called for a cease-fire on humanitarian grounds so that desperately needed aid can be delivered.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said

in a statement that he had spoken with the prime minister and "I am hopeful that an effective cessation of hostilities will take place."

Meanwhile, Mekele residents cheered the return of Tigray forces for the first time since Ethiopian troops took the city in late November and Abiy declared victory. The Tigray fighters, loyal to the former regional ruling party that for years dominated Ethiopia's government before being sidelined by the new prime minister, undermined the declaration by waging a guerrilla war in the region's rough terrain.

As Tigray forces occupied the airport and other key positions in Mekele and broadcast a message telling residents to stop celebrating and go home, retreating Ethiopian soldiers shot at students at Mekele University, killing two and wounding three, said a nurse at Ayder hospital, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of retaliation.

Ethnic Tigrayans, even those who didn't support the former ruling Tigray People's Liberation Front before the war, say they have been targeted harshly for suspected links with the Tigray fighters. Ethiopia has denied it.

But Abiy in an interview aired last week alarmed observers by recalling that aid to Tigray during Ethiopia's devastating 1980s famine had bolstered the Tigray fighters who eventually overthrew the ruling regime. Such a thing will "never happen" now, he said.

Monday's cease-fire declaration signaled a new

approach, at least for a while.

The cease-fire "will enable farmers to till their land, aid groups to operate without any military movement around and engage with remnants (of Tigray's former ruling party) who seek peace," Ethiopia's statement said, adding that efforts to bring Tigray's former leaders "to justice" continue.

Ethiopia said the cease-fire will last until the end of the crucial planting season in Tigray. The season's end comes in September. The government ordered all federal and regional authorities to respect the cease-fire — crucial as authorities and fighters from the neighboring Amhara region have been accused of atrocities in western Tigray.

Tigray in recent days has seen some of the fiercest fighting of the conflict. International pressure on Ethiopia spiked again last week after a military airstrike on a busy market killed more than 60 people, and after Doctors Without Borders said three staffers had been murdered in a separate incident.

Amid the upheaval on Monday, the United Nations children's agency said Ethiopian soldiers entered its office in Mekele and dismantled satellite communications equipment, an act it said violated the world body's immunity. UNICEF last week warned that at least 33,000 severely malnourished children face "imminent risk of death" without more aid reaching Tigray's people. **MDT/AP**

**Netherlands** Law enforcement officers seized nearly three tons of cocaine and 11.3 million euros in cash when they raided a farm near Amsterdam in one of the city's biggest ever drug hauls, police said yesterday. The cocaine, with an estimated street value of 195 million euros, was piled up in tightly wrapped blocks throughout the building about 20 kilometers south of the Dutch capital and in vehicles searched by investigators.

AP PHOTO



**Germany** Thunderstorms hit Germany yesterday and torrential rain poured down on southern and western parts of the country leading to dozens of accidents and hundreds of firefighter operations throughout the night. In Bavaria, some villages were flooded, including Moemlingen, near Frankfurt, where streets were completely covered by water and mud and many basements had to be pumped dry by firefighters.

**Spanish** Cabinet yesterday passed a draft bill on LGBTQ rights that will seek parliamentary approval to allow transgender people over 16 years old to freely change their gender and name in the official registry without doctors or witnesses intervening in the process. The proposal could still change during a lengthy parliamentary approval process that begins with the left-wing coalition government's move.

AP PHOTO



**Mexico's** Supreme Court ordered the government to issue permits for the personal use of marijuana and for the growing of limited amounts of pot plants, after the country's Congress took too long to approve a limited legalization law. In 2019, the court ruled that prohibiting marijuana was unconstitutional, and gave lawmakers until this past April 30 to pass a law. In March, the lower house approved a marijuana legalization bill, but it bogged down in the Senate.