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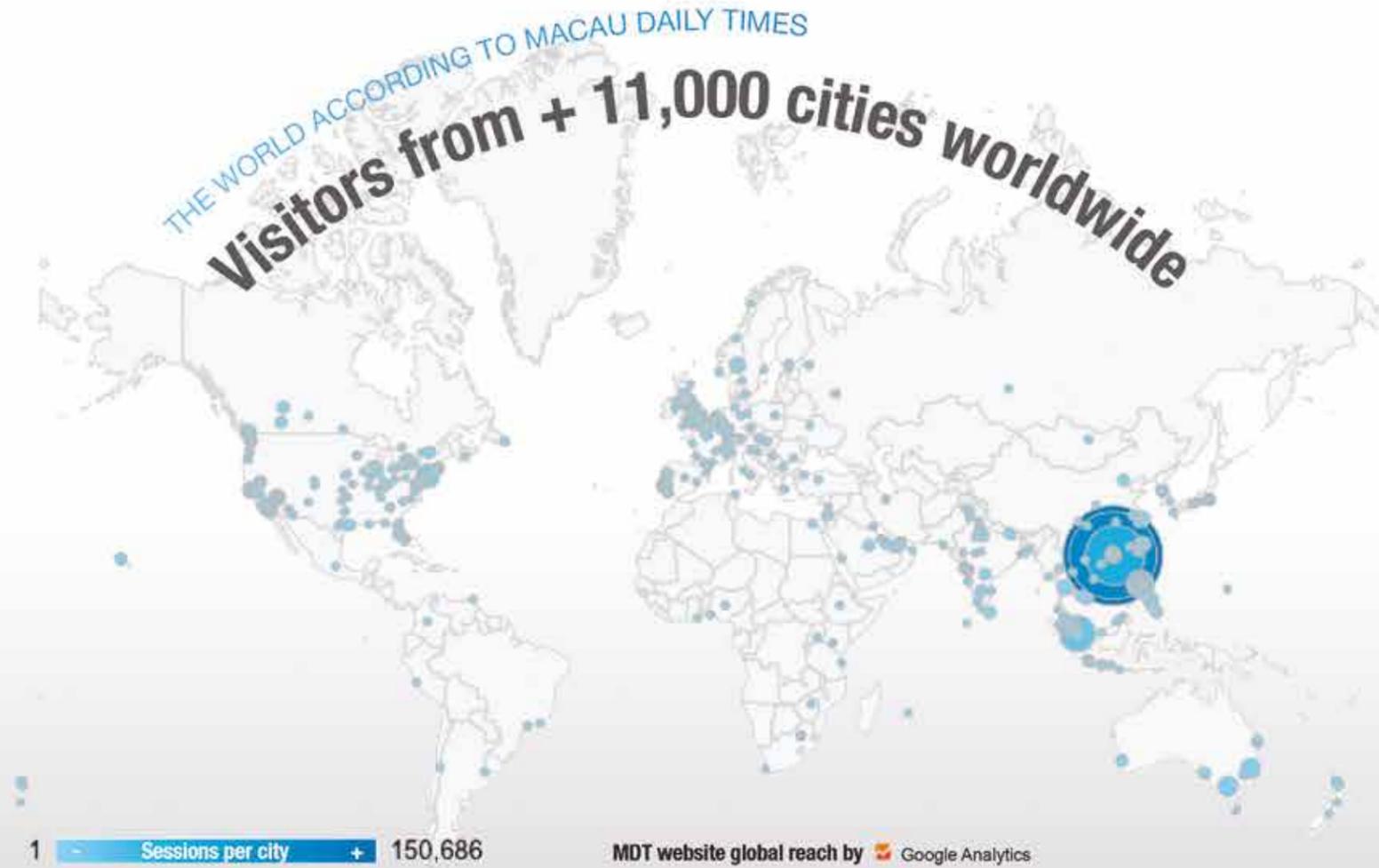
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HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATE DROPPED TO 45% LAST MONTH DUE TO STRICTER PANDEMIC PREVENTION MEASURES IN GUANGDONG AND MACAU IN EARLY JUNE

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JAPANESE OFFICIALS SOUNDED THE ALARM AS TOKYO REPORTED RECORD-BREAKING CORONAVIRUS CASES FOR THE THIRD STRAIGHT DAY WITH THE OLYMPICS WELL UNDERWAY

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Myanmar A strong, shallow earthquake shook northern Myanmar yesterday and was felt as far away as northern Thailand. The U.S. Geological Survey said the magnitude 5.5 quake occurred north of Mandalay about 46 kilometers northeast of Shwebo. It was centered 10 kilometers below the Earth's surface, the USGS said.



Thailand Health authorities raced to set up a large field hospital in a cargo building at one of Bangkok's airports yesterday as the country reported record numbers of coronavirus cases and deaths. Other field hospitals are already in use in the capital after it ran out of hospital facilities for thousands of infected residents. Workers rushed to finish the 1,800-bed hospital at Don Mueang International Airport, where beds made from cardboard box materials were laid out with mattresses and pillows. It is to be ready for patients in two weeks.

Afghanistan The Taliban say that 150 people have died in flooding in Afghanistan's mountainous northeastern Nuristan province. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid says offered little information yesterday about the deaths a day earlier. The spokesman for the provincial governor, Mohammad Sayed Mohmand, said water had inundated the village of Terdesh, destroying at least 100 homes.

Tunisia prosecutors have opened investigations into alleged foreign campaign funding and anonymous donations to Islamist movement Ennahdha and two other political parties, according to local media. Ennahdha is the dominant party in parliament, whose activities were suspended this week by President Kais Saied. Tunisia's leader also fired the prime minister and key Cabinet members, saying it was necessary to stabilize a country in economic and health crisis.

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SWEEPING CHANGES



The government will impose stricter cross-border regulations from tomorrow and has extended the scope of medium to high-risk areas after China registered spikes in locally transmitted cases

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LAWMAKERS MAK AND ZHENG CONCERNED ABOUT TENANTS, SENIORS IN URBAN RENEWAL PLANS

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKERS Mak Soi Kun and Zheng Anting have expressed concerns to the government regarding the fate of the tenants currently living in buildings targeted for planned urban renewal.

During the period before the agenda of yesterday's Legislative Assembly (AL) plenary session, Mak was the first to raise the matter. He questioned the government about the fate of people currently renting apartments in buildings that the government has signaled will be demolished and rebuilt under plans for urban renewal.

"After the demolition of an old building for urban renovation, where are the tenants who have been renting the cheap houses going?" Mak asked.

The same lawmaker cited the conclusions of a study released by Macau Urban Renewal Limited on a group of seven buildings located at Iao Hon neighborhood that the government aims to be the first targeted with this plan in estimating the impact. Mak stated there are "around



12,014 people living in these buildings, from which around 30% are the apartment owners, and 45% are occupied by tenants," adding that at least 30% of these units are occupied by non-resident workers who use them as dormitories.

Citing the same study, Mak also said that the average occupancy of these units is 5.3 people per apartment, a figure much higher than the general average of three people per unit in Macau.

The lawmaker noted that these people are part of the lower income population and so will suffer dramatically due

to the renewal projects.

"Around 3,000 house owners who live in these buildings will move to temporary housing, but there are at least 5,000 tenants who are renting houses in these buildings where the rent is cheap. Because of their limited economic capacity and with the current global unstable economic situation, if tenants are forced to move to another house with a higher rent, won't this affect their lives?" he continued, urging the government to prepare in advance for such problems to avoid future chaos resulting

from the lack of housing for those in need during the urban renewal process.

In a separate inquiry to the government, lawmaker Zheng also touched on the same topic, adding that senior citizens who own or rent apartments in the same area will suffer even more, as all of them must live in low-rise walkup buildings because of their inability to afford rental units in high-rise buildings equipped with elevators.

Zheng noted that over 4,000 elderly citizens live in their own homes in these five-story buildings, while the first phase of the new elderly residences presented recently by the government only offers around 1,800 units.

The lawmaker also noted that, as time goes by, the problem of the aging population only gets bigger. He believes therefore that the 1,800 units presented by the government will "hardly meet the growing demand," urging the government to plan accordingly with real demand and move forward with the second and third phases of this project.

Additionally, there is an even larger group of elderly citizens that are renting units in the same types of buildings and who do not have the economic capacity to handle a rent hike but at the same time will be excluded from applying to rent economic public housing, due to the assets they have accumulated over their lifetime.

TWO NEW LAWS FINALLY APPROVED BY AL

THE Legislative Assembly (AL) passed in the final reading the Urban Construction Legal Regime as well as a new Statute of the Staff of Security Forces and Services.

The new laws were approved in the final reading yesterday evening with votes in favor by all the lawmakers present at the plenary meeting.

During the short debate on specific details of the Urban Construction Legal Regime, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, emphasized that the new regime will enforce the responsibilities of unit owners towards a building's general maintenance and repair works.

The bill also offers added guarantees for property buyers among its provisions, such as a 10-year warranty for the foundations and main structural elements of a building and five years' warranty for other parts.

Sanctions such as fines will be also applied in cases where the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT)

finds that owners failed to comply with mandatory building inspection conditions and did not deliver the required report to DSSOPT.

Several lawmakers expressed concerns over the situation of illegal structures that exist on the rooftops of a large number of buildings in Macau.

On this topic, the government replied that it has been doing work on the matter and will continue to do so, but that due to lack of manpower in the bureau such matters have been taken care of on a case-by-case basis only, prioritizing urgent situations where risks are posed to others.

There are still two other bills currently in the possession of the AL standing committee that need to be discussed and approved by the plenary before August 15, when the sixth AL term ends. Otherwise, these bills will be dropped and must start from square one in the next legislative terms, following the September elections. **RM**

LAWMAKERS' AGENDA

BIRTHRATE INCREASE: Wong Kit Cheng wants the government to consider policies which promote an increase in the local birth rate. In a spoken inquiry, the lawmaker noted the recent policy from the central government regarding the promotion of a higher birth rate in the mainland, and called on the local government to establish a long-term demographic and population plan. "The government must define a short-, medium- and long-term demographic development and population plan, which corresponds to the needs of the development of society, so that the concept of incentive to procreation is [addressed by] future policies of government as well as in the work of the public service," she said.

HENGQIN 'GIFT': Leong Sun Iok and Chan Hong want the government to prepare for new opportunities that will come from the "deepening of cooperation between Guangdong and Macau for the development of Hengqin." Chan noted recent statements from the Chief Executive that a new step will be taken on this front and that will soon be officially announced by the central government. She called on the local government to prepare "to adjust and optimize Macau's general development planning and distribution in due time, to introduce a new thinking and a new vitality in its economic development, [which] everyone is eagerly awaiting." Leong also called on the government to take this new step as an opportunity to "optimize the employment space," offering new job opportunities for residents.

VACCINATION PAID LEAVE: Agnes Lam called on the government to offer paid leave to all civil servants for vaccination against Covid-19. The lawmaker said that "absence from work due to vaccination should be seen as a guarantee of the employee's health, rather than an incentive," adding that the government should provide such measures for its 38,000 civil servants as well as promoting the idea among other public service providers. Bus companies were one example Lam noted of those that should offer paid leave days to their workers after vaccination, so they can take enough rest and have time to recover fully from any side effects of the inoculation. This would be for their own protection and for public safety in general.

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China's recent controls to have limited impact on gaming: Morgan Stanley

HONEY TSANG

WHILST global investors have become edgy about the extended scope of mandates implemented by the central government on several industries, Morgan Stanley Asia Ltd assuages concerns in a memo, confirming the impact of these restrictions on the gaming industry would be limited.

According to a report published yesterday by GGRAsia, the international investment banking group stated in a release that these tightened controls are "less relevant" to the casino industry.

The stringent mandates cover several industries, including education, property and technology.

For instance, the State Council launched a string of reformatory regulations on July 24, which will see a ban on off-campus private tutoring firms making a profit, raising capital or going public. The new rules, according to the official document, are intended to help students further decrease their "burdens" related to homework and off-campus



training.

The document suggested that companies which offer tutoring to support the curriculum in primary and middle schools should register as "nonprofit institutions." These rules may wipe out the rapidly growing industry, which had been buoyed mainly by funding from global investors.

Another investment banking group, JP Morgan, opined earlier in a release that the new regime for China's education sector "makes

these stocks virtually un-investable."

Separately, China imposed a set of mandates on tech behemoths, such as new guidelines on the treatment of food-delivery drivers and requirements to fix particular anti-competitive practices, among others, giving rise to a slump in tech stocks this week.

Given these events, investors in gaming stocks have been worried about "regulatory tail risk," Morgan Stanley said.

Nonetheless, compared to the above regulatory measures, those imposed on gaming businesses are not new, the brokerage reassured investors.

As early as December last year, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, sanctioned an amendment to the national criminal law criminalizing anyone who "organizes [for] citizens of mainland China to participate in gambling outside the country (or

border), which involves a hefty sum or cases with serious consequences."

The amended law came into force on March 1 this year. Gaming experts regarded this as a "stricter" regulation, which would deal a huge blow to the city's VIP and premium mass market.

Morgan Stanley projected that base and middle mass or slot segments will fare better than VIP or premium mass segments, as China is stepping up efforts to develop "common prosperity," a development plan intended to build a modern socialist country.

The goal of common prosperity should be given greater prominence as China has entered a new stage of development, President Xi Jinping stated in an earlier study session of the Political Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee held in January this year.

Despite all these environmental factors, Morgan Stanley remains positive about Macau's gaming industry, eyeing border reopening and the extension of casino concessions in the second half of this year.

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LYNZY VALLES

THE city's property market remained stagnant with no significant improvement despite the increase in visitors since the reopening of the border with China last year.

This was the verdict of real estate firm JLL in its Macau Mid-year Review 2021.

During the first half of 2021, the city has seen a gradual improvement in an economy that was heavily affected by the pandemic.

The fixed capital formation, private consumption expenditure and government consumption expenditure all recorded growth in the first quarter (Q1), up 22.0%, 14.8% and 0.2% year-on-year respectively.

"Recently Hong Kong and Macau are exploring the easing of the travel restrictions between the two cities. This will create a positive effect on Macau's tourist and business sectors, and it's especially important for the recovery of the city's economy, retail and real estate markets," said Mark Wong, director of Valuation Advisory Services at JLL Macau.

"In the short term, central banks across the globe are expected to continue to adopt quantitative easing monetary policies. With the new normal post pandemic, pent-up property demand will be released gradually. We expect Macau's property market to remain stable in the second half of the year," he added.

RESIDENTIAL SALES TRANSACTIONS SEE UPTICK

The total residential sales transaction volume in Macau picked up in the first half of the year (H1), with

LONG WAY TO GO FOR REAL ESTATE MARKET RECOVERY: JLL



most transactions recorded in the first five months.

The sales market slowed down in June due to the new wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in Guangdong province.

According to the official statistics, a total of 3,297 residential sales transactions were registered as of June, up 8.5% compared to the same time last year.

Pre-sale transactions totalled 225, accounting for only 6.8% of the total residential sales volume, lower than average levels recorded in the past.

The fall in the number of pre-sale transactions is mainly attributable to the fact that new residential

supply has been gradually absorbed by the market. As there will be no new supply of large-scale private residential projects in the coming five years, the market is expected to remain in the same condition, JLL predicted.

Meanwhile, the rental values of high-end residential properties and mass-to-medium residential properties fell by 4.9% and 13.0% respectively in H1 from end 2020, with yields recorded at 1.6% and 1.5% respectively.

"The overall residential transaction volume recorded in H1 was similar to that in 2020, with most transactions recorded in the secondary market. Buyers were mostly

local first-time homebuyers, who comprised more than 70% of overall residential sales," explained Gregory Ku, managing director at JLL Macau.

"Due to the pandemic, residential buyers in general have bigger bargaining power and transaction prices are largely close to the appraised values. Coupled with the current low mortgage rate environment, it's now a good time for homebuyers to enter the market," he added.

OFFICE LEASING MARKET STABLE

In the first five months of 2021, a total of 2,459 new incorpora-

tions were registered in Macau, up 27.9% year-on-year. Travel restrictions between Hong Kong and Macau led to a delay in corporate decisions on leasing offices, creating pressure on the office leasing market.

However, despite the lack of new Grade A office supply, the leasing market still achieved satisfactory levels of transaction volume. Leasing demand mainly came from the insurance, finance and beauty sectors for business expansion. The achieved rentals were at similar levels as last year.

RETAIL PROPERTY RECOVERING

The retail property sales market recovered in the first five months of 2021. A total of 161 retail property transactions were recorded, up 47.7% year-on-year. During the first five months of 2021, the number of retail property transactions increased significantly in residential neighbourhoods. Most properties transacted could bring a rental yield of about 2.5%.

According to statistics, total retail sales were recorded at MOP 18.75 billion in Q1 this year, up 68.0% from the same quarter last year.

"The retail vacancy rates in the tourist areas remain trending upwards, reflecting the limited impact that the reopening of the border can bring to the retail trades that require a high customer flow," said Oliver Tong, head of Leasing of the firm.

As the pandemic has not yet been fully contained on a global level, retail property landlords in tourist areas will remain flexible and are willing to offer tenants bigger rental discounts.

ZONE A ROOM FOR DISCUSSION ON ECONOMIC HOUSING PRICE: COUNCIL

STAFF REPORTER

CHAN Ka Leong, a member of the Council for Public Housing Affairs, said at a forum held yesterday that the price of economic housing in New Urban Zone A is not finalized and is only a reference, so there is still room for discussion.

"Recently, the Housing Bureau (IH) opened the economic housing show flats. It can be seen that the partitions and materials used are very high quality, the construction costs became higher, [therefore] the price per square foot will naturally be adjusted higher," he said.

Chan said that the overall pricing is "not outrageous" in his opinion, as he believed that the quality of the current economic housing is no less than that of private housing.



As for the Sandwich Class Housing Scheme, he expressed his belief that, firstly, the relevant legal support work should be done well, and secondly, that its interface with the economic and social housing should be effective, so that it can play a role on

the ladder of home ownership.

Opinions had been expressed that the proposed price of economic housing in Zone A is more expensive than that of other economic housing previously available.

HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATE DROPS TO 45% IN JUNE

LYNZY VALLES

THE average occupancy rate of guest rooms surged by 33.5 percentage points year-on-year to 45.3%, according to recent data revealed by the Statistics and Census Service.

However, the rate represents a drop of 16.8 percentage points compared with May (62.1%) on account of the stricter pandemic prevention and control measures in Guangdong province and Macau in early June, a result of the rise in Covid-19 cases.

The number of guests checking into hotels and guesthouses leapt by 245.9% year-on-year to 469,000 last month. Mainland

guests (357,000) surged by 418.2% and local guest numbers (83,000) saw an increase of 56.8%.

Local tourism-related operators remain optimistic about the prospects for business during this summer holiday, despite reports of fresh outbreaks in Zhuhai and Zhongshan.

Lou Chi Leong, director of the Macau Hoteliers and Innkeepers Association, recently stated that the city's average occupancy rate currently stands between 50% and 60%.

However, some travelers are canceling their bookings, which is believed to be due to new cases in Zhongshan and Zhuhai.

In the first half of the

year, the average occupancy rate of guest rooms was 50.4%, up by 23.2 percentage points year-on-year. The number of guests in hotels and guesthouses expanded by 84.5% year-on-year to 3,378,000, while their average length of stay grew by 0.1 nights to 1.8 nights.

There were no inbound package tour visitors in June, while the number of visitors joining local tours totaled 6,600.

In the first half of 2021, visitors joining local tours soared by 197.3% year-on-year to 28,000, whereas the number of outbound residents using the services of travel agencies increased by 3.5% to 91,000.



CELEBRATING the sea and highlighting the urgent need to protect it for future generations through the company's global Sustainability initiatives, Melco Resorts & Entertainment has unveiled the groundbreaking multimedia art exhibition 海洋LA MER between July 16 and October 31, at one of Macau's most iconic venues, the Dancing Water Theater, City of Dreams. As the Special Exhibition of Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale 2021, 海洋LA MER is under the patronage of the Secretariat for Social Affairs and Culture of the Government of Macao Special Administrative Region and Secretariat for Economy and Finance of the Government of the Macao SAR and supported by Cultural Affairs Bureau and Macao Government Tourism Office.

The exhibition, which forms part of Melco's efforts contributing to the city's cultural development and diversification, draws together a collection of leading artists and explorers to pay tribute to the beauty, sensuality, inspiration and fragility of the sea and its inhabitants through a series of innovative installations. On July 28, Mr. Clarence Chung, Board Director of Melco Resorts & Entertainment and Mr. Kevin Benning, Senior Vice President, Property General Manager of Studio City welcomed guests of honor to the exhibition's opening ceremony, including Ms. Lo Hou Chi, Advisor of the Office of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture of the Macao SAR Government; Mr. Sun Yaohua, Assistant Director of the Economic Affairs Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR; Ms. Mok Ian Ian, Director of the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao SAR

DIVERSIFICATION & SUSTAINABILITY

Melco pays tribute to beauty and fragility of the Sea in 海洋LA MER exhibition



Government; and Mr. Cheng Wai Tong, Acting Director of the Macao Government Tourism Office of the Macao SAR Government.

LA MER by Ange Leccia is a video work in which the artist records the endless movement of the waves as they emerge and then crash onto the beach. Through Leccia's unusual perspective, viewers are invited to contemplate the rhythm, colors and relentlessly shifting shapes of the sea, demonstrating why it has been a source of inspiration for artists since the beginning of time.

W/AV/E by Thomas Roussel sees the acclaimed French composer use music and Artificial Intelligence to immerse the audience in a constantly changing audiovisual seascape. Roussel wrote and recorded the score with an orchestra in Paris, with musical segments which are acti-

vated and transformed by real-time oceanographic data collected in the Pacific Ocean to create an ever-evolving symphony. A collective of artists crafted the visual illustrations from digital recordings of around 35,000 marine species.

SEPHIROTHIC FLOWER by Makoto Azuma chronicles the avant-garde Japanese flower artist's journey to the depths of the ocean. Having previously sent flowers into the Arctic and outer space, this installation follows the artist as he joins an underwater research team to take a bouquet of flowers 1,000 metres down to the bottom of Japan's Suruga Bay.

In OCEANS by Franco Dragone, the legendary artistic director uses the staging and machinery of the Dancing Water Theater to create a dramatic spectacle that combines baroque perfor-

mance with modern technology. Addressing the issue of marine pollution, the poignant work draws attention to the destruction of the ocean environment and shows how its beauty hides a manmade monstrosity.

In addition, City of Dreams is also hosting a series of activities and events allowing visitors the opportunity to deepen their appreciation of the sea and to make a meaningful contribution towards its protection. The LA MER Film Festival turns the spotlight on a selection of the greatest movies inspired by the sea, from arthouse films and documentaries to big-budget blockbusters, such as *The Big Blue*, *Finding Nemo* and *Life of Pi*.

The House of Dancing Water Underwater Discoveries, meanwhile, gives guests the opportunity to see Macau's most famous artistic extrava-

ganza from the perspective of the show's divers, revealing the secret design of the underwater stage and the skills required to control its submerged mechanisms.

Visitors can also connect with the oceans spiritually at the Flow Body Mindfulness classes. Led by the Head of Performer Wellness from The House of Dancing Water and featuring music composed by Thomas Roussel inspired by sounds of the sea, the guided session allows participants to clear their minds, stay positive and progress towards a state of wellness.

In SEA x ART Forum, freediver Wang Aolin, the first person from China to descend to a subaquatic depth of 100m, and underwater photographer Uncle J share their unique experiences below the waves, and how they relate to the fields of art and sustainability.

Melco has committed to reaching zero emissions and zero waste by 2030. Part of this program is the company's fight against Single Use Plastics. In the last few years, Melco has implemented actions that save 244,000 plastic bottles and 9.5 tonnes of plastic yearly in food and beverage operations by adopting biodegradable alternatives.



GOV'T IMPOSES BROADENED RESTRICTIONS TO KEEP COVID-19 AT BAY

HONEY TSANG

THE government has made sweeping changes to cross-border regulations, including a mandate from July 31 requiring flight passengers from all mainland provinces to present proof of a negative test for Covid-19 conducted within 48 hours before boarding.

The stricter regulations come after China registered spikes in locally transmitted cases in several regions including Nanjing and Zhangjiajie.

In addition, the government also extended the scope of medium to high-risk areas from what was previously certain regions in a community to now include entire cities.

Arrivals who have been to Zhangjiajie City, Nanjing City and Changde City from July 17 onwards are now required to undergo 14 days of mandatory quarantine upon arrival.

Meanwhile, arrivals who were in Chengdu, Shenyang or Dalian on or after July 17 will see their health codes changed from green to yellow. Although they do not need to observe medical observation, they must take a Covid-19 test on the first, third and fifth days after entering Macau.

Director of the Health Bureau (SSM) Alvis Lo announced the string of new rules at yesterday's Covid-19 briefing.



As of yesterday, the government registered upwards of 100 people who had recorded their travel history in Zhangjiajie since July 17 via the city's health code system. The authorities had contacted relevant individuals via SMS and required them to go to Pac On Terminal to take a Covid-19 test.

Mainland authorities traced the origin of some recent local cases back to a theatre show named "Charm Xiangxi" on July 22 in Zhangjiajie, with an audience of around 2,000. These cases were found to be linked to the Mainland's new Covid-19 epicen-

ter, the Nanjing Lukou International Airport.

Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention reassured the public that the government has so far received no information that any resident attended the theatre show in Zhangjiajie, nor had contact with any confirmed cases who had been to Zhangjiajie.

AVOID UNNECESSARY TRAVEL

Lo regarded these measures as "relatively bigger changes" in response to the current pandemic situation in China.

The director urged locals to stay aware of the coronavirus situation across different mainland cities, and to avoid going to high-risk areas. Lo advised against unnecessary travel during the summer holiday.

He also called on locals to make good use of their spare time during the summer holiday to get vaccinated, to protect themselves and the public.

The government also confirmed that the current hotel rooms designated for quarantine purposes are sufficient to accommodate a recent increase in the number of Hong Kong arrivals.

In June, the government received 10 queries about the quarantine measures for Hong Kong arrivals, but the tally in July as of yesterday had increased to 21, according to Lam Tong Hou, the representative of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

TEENAGER'S MYOCARDITIS MAY BE LINKED TO VACCINATION

A 17-year-old teenager is suspected to be suffering from myocarditis, a condition of inflammation in the heart muscle, after receiving the second shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine on July 26.

The case was reported yesterday and classified as a serious adverse event after inoculation.

The patient developed chest tightness on July 27 and sought medical treatment at Centro Hospitalar Conde de São Januário on the next day. The initial electrocardiogram and blood tests showed no abnormalities.

However, the man experienced worsened chest tightness the following afternoon and was diagnosed as having myocarditis in his second blood test.

Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of the Health Bureau's Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, said yesterday at a media briefing that the situation of the patient is now "stable," with his chest tightness alleviated.

The special evaluation team will investigate to examine whether there is any association between the vaccination and myocarditis in this case.

Prospective parents should consider the challenges in raising babies: ACAM

HONEY TSANG

RAISING a newborn infant can give rise to a whole slew of challenges and changes to a family. Prospective parents should consider these fully before giving birth to avoid unnecessary disputes, Director of the Against Child Abuse (Macau) Association (ACAM) Li Man Cheng said at yesterday's TDM's broadcast program Macau Forum.

Li found that many of these would-be parents had not expected a fundamental alteration in their everyday lives after childbirth. The ignorance of this may cause relationship problems be-



tween spouses and between parents and children. This may even extend to financial disputes.

The association had re-

ceived around 50 cases of child abuse in the first half of 2021, similar to the tally during the same period last year.

Li said that some parents report that taking care of their children causes stress and anxiety and sought help to avoid any possible inci-

dents of child abuse. The increase in parents seeking assistance from the association indicates that public awareness of safeguarding the rights of children has improved in Macau.

In both Hong Kong and Macau, there is a common saying: spouses should get a license before having a newborn. It suggests that many young parents nowadays are not mature and competent enough to raise a child.

To help prepare aspiring parents, the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) is teaming up with the city's six community associations to promote the Family Life Education Project, which targets newly married families and families with children aged 0 to 3, designed to help them prepare to enter a completely new stage of life.

The broadcast program was also attended by an ex-

pert in children's emotional expression and the director of a children's library.

The expert found some parents are experiencing stress while arranging activities for their children during the school summer holidays. She suggested that parents sign their children up for summer courses that suit their interests, and be more forgiving when children make mistakes.

The director of the children's library emphasized that every child has the right to play, under the provision of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

She urged local parents to arrange adequate rest time for the children, and they should not rely too much on electric devices as tools to calm their children. A quality family time should involve more reading and outdoor activities.

Gov't sends new ambassador to US amid strained ties

CHINA'S new ambassador to the United States outlined the challenges the two countries face in what has become an increasingly competitive and contentious relationship, while refraining from any criticism in short remarks after arriving to take up his new post.

"China and the United States are entering a new round of mutual exploration, understanding and adaptation, trying to find a way to get along with each other in the new era," Qin Gang said in remarks posted by the Chinese Embassy in Washington after his arrival yesterday [Macau time].

Qin's arrival comes as relations with the U.S. have plunged to their worst level in decades with no sign of bottoming out. The two sides remain sharply at odds over a host of issues, including trade, technology, cybersecurity, and China's foreign policy under President Xi Jinping.

Qin, 55, most recently was one of China's nine vice foreign ministers and has been ministry spokesperson twice, gaining a reputation for tart responses that have now become standard fare among those in that position.

"His open remarks towards the West and the U.S. are tougher than Chinese ambassadors of previous terms," said Shi Yinhong, professor of international relations at

AP PHOTO



Renmin University in Beijing.

The U.S. currently has no ambassador in Beijing, although President Joe Biden is expected to nominate Nicholas Burns, a former ambassador to NATO and State Department spokesperson.

Relations between the countries nosedived under Biden's

predecessor, Donald Trump, but high-level meetings this week in Tianjin, China, again lay bare the deep divisions between them.

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng told U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman that the United States was the "inventor, and patent and intellectual

property owner" of coercive diplomacy.

In a separate meeting with Sherman, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China would not tolerate what it considered U.S. interference in its internal affairs and key development interests.

Sherman, in an interview af-

ter the meetings, called on China to work with the United States on global issues as a responsible great power.

Qin replaces Cui Tiankai, who was ambassador to the United States for eight years during a steady deterioration in ties.

Qin served three tours at the Chinese Embassy in London and headed the Protocol Department but has not held any positions directly responsible for relations with the U.S., according to his official resume on the ministry website.

As head of protocol, he worked directly with Xi and has extensive experience accompanying Chinese leaders abroad.

Shi cautioned that the state of U.S.-China relations would limit the influence of any ambassador.

"Under the current circumstances of full-on competition and struggle between China and the U.S., I don't think any ambassador could have a significant impact on relations, no matter whether he is intended to be tougher or milder in implementing policies," he said. **MDT/AP**

AD



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The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the world's Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views. But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.



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TOKYO 2020

DOUBLE GOLD: CHINA'S ZHANG BECOMES A BREAKOUT STAR AT POOL

PAUL NEWBERRY, TOKYO

ZHANG Yufei had a much busier morning than she was expecting at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

It was worth the effort.

She left with a pair of gold medals and a couple of records, too.

Zhang started off yesterday with a dominating victory in the women's 200-meter butterfly, finishing more than a body length ahead of two Americans in an Olympic-record time.

"My coach told me I didn't have to think too much," Zhang said through an interpreter. "Just be myself. I really wanted this medal."

About an hour later, the 23-year-old returned to the deck to swim for China on the 4x200 freestyle relay.

It was a race she hadn't planned for. It was a race her teammates never expected to win.

After all, the Australians had double-gold medalist Ariarne Titmus taking the opening leg. The Americans countered with freestyle star Katie Ledecky handling

AP PHOTO



their anchor. The final was expected to be a duel between those two powerhouse teams.

Instead, it was the Chinese touching first in a race where all three teams eclipsed the previous world record.

China's time of 7 minutes, 40.33 seconds is the one that will go into the record books, sending Zhang to the top of the medal podium at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre for the second time.

"I didn't know I was doing

it until I'd finished the 200 butterfly and our coach told me, 'You're in the relay,'" she said. "I didn't even know how to swim the 200 free, although I have the training qualities and levels for the 200 distances."

Clearly, she's a quick study.

Zhang will go down as one of the breakthrough swimming stars at the Tokyo Games. She also won a silver in the 100 butterfly.

Not bad for someone who had never claimed a major international title before these Olympics.

Zhang's best showing in three appearances at the world championships is third. Her lone race at the 2016 Rio Games produced a sixth-place finish in the 200 fly.

Now, she's a double Olympic champion.

"We knew Zhang would be swimming in the relay, but the coach told us not to tell her," said Li Bingjie, who swam the anchor leg for China. "She was the last one to know."

Li conceded that her team went into the race merely hoping to get a bronze.

"We didn't expect to win the gold," she said. "We just tried to finish third because Australia and the United States are very strong."

The Chinese led the entire race, holding off a hard charge by Ledecky at the end.

Zhang, swimming the third leg, posted the slowest time among China's four swimmers. But it was a gusty performance after her individual victory.

"We were inspired by her 200 butterfly and we were excited," Li said. "It made us determined to do our best at the relay." **MDT/AP**

AD

合夥人 PARTNERS:

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- 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata*
- 趙魯 Zhao Lu*
- 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

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- 白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
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COVID-19

Officials in Tokyo alarmed as cases hit record highs

JAPANESE officials sounded the alarm yesterday as Tokyo reported record-breaking coronavirus cases for the third straight day with the Olympics well underway.

"We have never experienced the expansion of the infections of this magnitude," Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters. He said the new cases were soaring not only in the Tokyo area but across the country.

Tokyo reported 3,865 new cases yesterday, up from 3,177 on Wednesday and double the numbers a week ago, setting an all-time high since the pandemic began early last year.

Japan has kept its cases and deaths lower than many other countries, but its seven-day rolling average is growing and now stands at 28 per 100,000 people nationwide and 88 in Tokyo, according to the Health Ministry. This compares to 18.5 in the United States, 48 in Britain and 2.8 in India, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

"While almost nothing is helping to slow the infections, there are many factors that can accelerate them," said Dr. Shigeru Omi, a top government medical adviser, noting the Olympics and summer vacation. "The biggest risk is the lack of a sense of crisis

AP PHOTO



and without it, the infections will further expand and put medical systems under severe strain."

Tokyo has been under its fourth state of emergency since July 12, ahead of the Olympics, which began last Friday despite widespread public opposition and concern that they could worsen the outbreak.

People are still roaming the streets despite stay-at-home requests, making the measures largely ineffective at a time the more infectious delta strain is spreading, he said. "We have never seen the infections spread so rapidly."

Alarmed by the surge in Tokyo, the governors of three

prefectures adjacent to the capital said they plan to ask Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to place their areas under the state of emergency too.

Tokyo officials said that two foreign Olympic athletes are currently hospitalized and 38 others are self-isolating at designated hotels in the city.

Gov. Yuriko Koike urged the organizers to make sure not to burden Tokyo's hospitals.

She said the medical system was under severe stress, and noted that experts have projected cases in Tokyo could hit around 4,500 a day by mid-August.

Japan's vaccine minister, Taro Kono, said in an interview with

The Associated Press on Wednesday that there is no evidence of the coronavirus spreading from Olympic participants to the general public.

"I don't think there have been any cases related to the Olympic Games. So we aren't worried about that issue," he said.

Nationwide, Japan reported more than 9,500 confirmed cases, a new record, on Wednesday for a total of about 892,000, with about 15,000 deaths.

As of Wednesday, 26.3% of the Japanese population has been fully vaccinated. The percentage of the elderly who are fully vaccinated is 70%, or 24.8 million people. **MDT/AP**

NORTH KOREA LEADER PAYS RESPECT TO CHINESE WAR DEAD AT MEMORIAL

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un paid tribute to China's war dead at a Pyongyang memorial and vowed to maintain firm ties with Beijing, state media reported yesterday, as he seeks to bolster relations with his country's main ally amid deepening hardships linked to the pandemic.

Kim's visit Wednesday to the Friendship Tower that honors Chinese soldiers killed during the 1950-53 Korean War was his third since he took power in late 2011. It came a day after the 68th anniversary of the end of the war.

"The noble soul and exploits of the Chinese people who aided the sacred historic struggle of the Korean people at the cost of their blood when [North Korea] was undergoing the hardships and most difficult trials will remain immortal," Kim said at the memorial, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

Kim stressed "the [countries'] friendship forged as kindred ties will be firmly carried forward generation after generation on the road for the common cause," KCNA said.

China fought alongside North Korea against South Korea and U.S.-led U.N. forces during the Korean War, which ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty, leaving the Korean Peninsula still technically at war.

Kim has vowed to upgrade his country's relations with China, its economic pipeline, as he struggles to navigate North Korea out of what he calls its "worst-ever" crisis caused by the pandemic, U.S.-led sanctions and last year's natural disasters.

Earlier this week, Kim agreed to restore cross-border communication channels with rival South Korea following a 13-month hiatus, and improve bilateral ties.

Some experts say Kim wants better ties with the outside world in the face of the economic difficulties. But others say North Korea may just want South Korea to convince the United States to make concessions when the long-stalled nuclear negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington eventually resume. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



BANGLADESH

Floods make thousands homeless in Rohingya camps

AP PHOTO



DAYS of heavy rainfall have pelted Rohingya refugee camps in southern Bangladesh, destroying dwellings and sending thousands of people to live with extended family or in communal shelters.

Just in the 24 hours to Wednesday alone, more than 30 centimeters of rain fell on the camps in Cox's Bazar district hosting more than 800,000 Rohingya, the U.N. refugee agency said. That's nearly half the average July rainfall in one day while more heavy downpours are expected in the next few days and

the monsoon season stretches over the next three months.

"The situation is further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is currently a strict national lockdown in response to rising cases across the country," the agency said.

The agency said it was saddened by the deaths of six people at the camps earlier this week, five in a landslide caused by the rains and a child swept away by floodwaters.

Citing initial reports, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said

more than 12,000 refugees were affected by the heavy rainfall while an estimated 2,500 shelters have been damaged or destroyed. More than 5,000 refugees have temporarily been relocated to other family member's shelters or communal facilities, the agency said in a statement.

Refugees said they were struggling to eat or drink properly.

"Due to the continuous rainfall for the last four days, today my house is full of water," says Khatija Begum, who has five children. "We are not even able to eat." Begum says she fears her children will drown and die in their sleep.

Cyclones, heavy monsoon rains, floods, landslides and other natural hazards are an annual difficulty in the camps. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

AstraZeneca to seek US approval of Covid vaccine in second half

DANICA KIRKA, LONDON

ASTRAZENECA said yesterday that it intends to seek U.S. authorization for its COVID-19 vaccine in the second half of this year, offering a new timetable for the much-delayed application.

The Anglo-Swedish drugmaker announced the

schedule as it released second-quarter financial results, which showed that the company and its sub-licensees delivered more than 700 million doses of the vaccine to over 170 countries in the first half of this year. That includes 80 million doses that went to the COVAX initiative for low- and middle-income countries.

The news on the U.S. filing is being closely watched, as the timeframe has slipped.

When AstraZeneca released data from its U.S. trial of the vaccine on March 22, company officials said they expected to seek authorization from the Food and Drug Administration in the first half of April. In April, the company said it

expected to submit a U.S. application in the "coming weeks."

The U.K., European Union and World Health Organization have already authorized use of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

AstraZeneca reported first-half revenue of \$1.17 billion from deliveries of 319 million doses of the vaccine that were supplied directly by the company. AstraZeneca has pledged to deliver the vaccine on a non-profit basis as long as the pandemic lasts.

Despite complaints from the EU about its vaccine supply, the 27-nation bloc received more doses directly from AstraZeneca than any other single entity in the first half of the year. The company shipped 97 million doses to the EU, while Brazil got 65 million and the U.K. 52 million,

AstraZeneca said. Gavi, an alliance that secures vaccines for low-income countries, received 49 million doses, and another 57 million doses went to other countries.

Sub-licensees, including the Serum Institute of India, supplied millions more doses, pushing global deliveries to more than 700 million doses.

The vaccine was developed by Oxford University researchers, who licensed the technology to AstraZeneca in an effort to tap into the company's global manufacturing and distribution capacity. AstraZeneca, in turn, authorizes other companies to produce the shots around the world. **MDT/AP**

US defense secretary visits Vietnam, vows support for region

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin is seeking to bolster ties with Vietnam, one of the Southeast Asian nations embroiled in a territorial rift with China, during a two-day visit starting Wednesday.

In a speech in Singapore, his first stop in the region he is visiting for the first time as a member of President Joe Biden's Cabinet, Austin said Tuesday he was committed to pursuing a constructive, stable relationship with China, including stronger crisis communications with the People's Liberation Army.

But he repeated that Beijing's claim to virtually the

entire South China Sea "has no basis in international law" and "treads on the sovereignty of states in the region."

He said the U.S. continues to support the region's coastal states in upholding their rights under international law, and remains committed to the defense treaty obligations the U.S. has with Japan and the Philippines.

"Unfortunately, Beijing's unwillingness to resolve disputes peacefully and respect the rule of law isn't just occurring on the water," Austin said.

In Beijing, Foreign Mi-

nistry spokesperson Zhao Lijian responded to Austin.

"The U.S. ignored the facts, deliberately smeared China, interfered in China's internal affairs and sowed discords among regional countries with the aim of serving its own geopolitical interest," Zhao said at a regular news briefing. "We admonish the U.S. side not to make an issue about China at every turn and do more for the benefit of peace and stability in the region."

Austin is scheduled to meet his Vietnamese counterpart, Phan Van Giang, yesterday morning. He leaves for the Philippines today.

Vietnam and the Philippines are among China's opponents in the territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Vietnam has previously accused China of obstructing its gas exploration activities off its southern shores.

Austin's visit comes as Vietnam is in the grip of a coronavirus surge, with Hanoi and half of the country in lockdown.

The U.S. has donated 5 million doses of the Moderna vaccine, part of the 80 million doses that Biden pledged to lower-income nations around the world. **MDT/AP**

this day in history



1973 FINAL DEAL FOR THALIDOMIDE VICTIMS



The drugs company who marketed thalidomide have agreed to pay more than £20 million in compensation to those born with birth defects as a result, at the end of an 11-year legal battle.

Over 400 British children whose mothers took the drug during pregnancy will benefit from the payout by Distillers Company, which marketed the German-manufactured drug in Britain.

The company will pay £6 million in direct claims and will also set up a £14 million trust fund to look after the children's future.

The court hearing follows a high-profile campaign in the media calling for more compensation for thalidomide families.

Amid mounting pressure from politicians and the public, including its own shareholders and workers, the company agreed a settlement representing about 40% of what each child might have received had his or her family sued Distillers individually.

The families have undertaken to withdraw all allegations of negligence in return.

Thalidomide became notorious in the 1960s when it was prescribed to pregnant women to ease morning sickness.

It was found to cause severe birth defects, and thousands of children across the world were born limbless or with severely shortened limbs.

More cases have come to light as a result of the publicity, with another 32 coming forward in the last six months alone.

The deal follows a long-standing challenge to Distillers over the amount of damages it offered in its original settlement in 1968.

Francis Purchas QC, the lawyer representing the children, paid tribute to the "courageous stand" taken by parents in disputing the amount offered by Distillers.

David Mason, whose daughter Louise was born without limbs after his wife took the thalidomide drug in early pregnancy, has led the campaign for greater compensation for victims.

Outside the court today he said, "I am happy at the result and the ending to this saga."

The lawyer for Distillers, John Wilmers QC, said the lengthy court proceedings had prevented the company from putting right what he called false allegations made against them over the years.

"My clients have always denied and continue to deny that either they or any of the scientists and medical men who advised them were in any way negligent," he said.

The families will receive cheques for £5,000 within the next few weeks as the first part of the settlement, but it may take more than a year to assess how much each child will receive from the £6 million lump sum and from the trust fund.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

There was further heartache for the thalidomide parents as they had to wait several months, and in some cases years, before assessments of individual cases could be made and payments released.

In addition, a so-called "Y-list" of thalidomide victims emerged - 98 children who were suspected of suffering deformities due to the drug, but who could not prove it and so were unable to claim compensation.

In 2005 Distillers, now part of Diageo, agreed an extra one-off payment worth 70% of the annual payments made to children from the trust fund.

The payment was intended to meet unforeseen costs incurred by thalidomide survivors as they became older.

There is also pressure for further compensation after thalidomide survivors began giving birth to children suffering similar physical deformities.

Thalidomide was available in the UK from 1958 and taken off the market in late 1961.

It is now being made available again after evidence that it could slow down a wasting disease suffered by patients with cancer. It is also licensed in the US for treating a complication of leprosy.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Things might not feel like they're moving along as quickly as you would like, which could cause a certain degree of fraying when it comes to your nerves right now. But don't worry...



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Once you do get out into the world, you will get going and get energized. Just be careful not to rush through the day too quickly. In the late afternoon, there will be some sweet moments.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Do you think someone is not being totally open with you right now? Your instincts are right on. But their tight-lipped status is not due to an inability to trust you.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Previously made plans with other people might need to get rescheduled or canceled altogether. What you need to do is very important, and it's something you should do by yourself.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

If you feel your blood pressure mounting today, you should do more than take a deep breath. Take a different attitude towards the situation! There is a funny side to any stressful situation...



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

For especially incisive insight on your latest problems, turn to one of your friends today. You need to consult someone who either is in the same situation as you are, or has been before.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

One of your friendships is starting to feel one-sided - and you are not on the right side. Do you feel like you are giving more than you get? Compromising more than they do?



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

If your routine is starting to get boring, resist the urge to create a problem just for the sake of having something to talk about! You need to avoid conflict now more than ever.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

If you are working on starting or strengthening or shoring up a romance today, you had better take it all the way! Have fun with it. Be over the top. Flirt to a ridiculous degree.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Plus, all this worry will drain away the positive energy you require to succeed. Toss worry out the window for today, and just do what you want to do - try what you want to try.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Don't be surprised if you meet up with a kindred soul who is motivated by altruism, too. They can stimulate your mind and engage your heart on a higher, newer level.

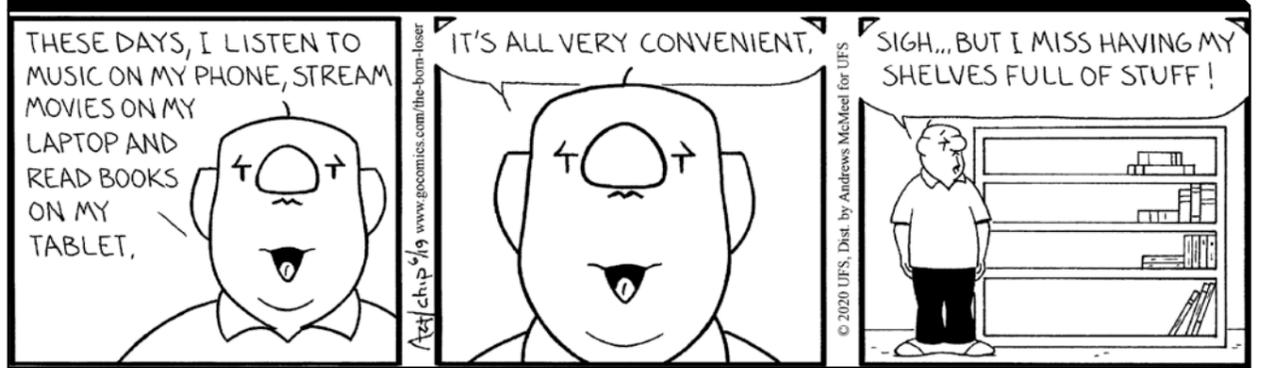


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

People are going to respond a lot better to concrete examples than to ambiguous concepts today, so if you are trying to make a point or sell an idea, you'll have to do it with facts and figures, set down in black and white.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY			EASY+								
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MEDIUM			HARD								
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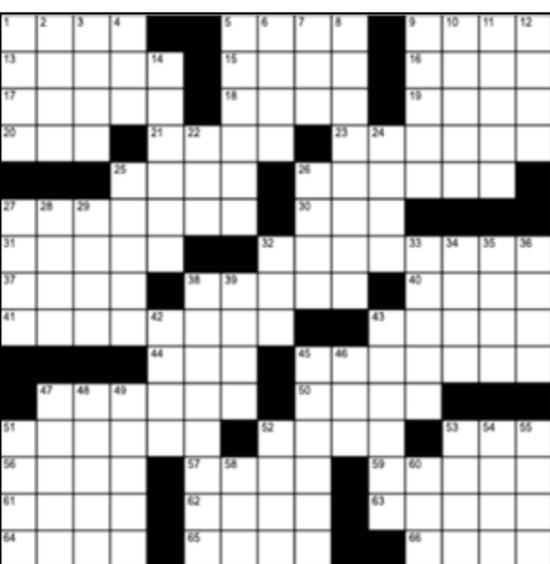
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	26	rain
Harbin	24	32	cloudy
Tianjin	26	35	cloudy
Urumqi	22	34	fine
Xi'an	26	37	fine
Lhasa	26	30	overcast
Chengdu	28	34	rain
Chongqing	27	34	thunderstorms
Kunming	28	37	showers
Nanjing	21	29	cloudy
Shanghai	26	32	thunderstorms
Wuhan	26	33	rain
Hangzhou	23	30	cloudy
Taipei	23	31	cloudy
Guangzhou	19	30	cloudy
Hong Kong	22	25	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	17	29	overcast
Frankfurt	16	26	rain
Paris	16	24	rain
London	15	22	rain
New York	22	33	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Blues singer James; 5- Custardy dessert; 9- Exec's note; 13- Loincloth worn by Hindu men; 15- Thick cord; 16- Tiger's choice; 17- Herbert Hoover for one; 18- Savvy about; 19- Go out with; 20- Ocean flier; 21- First-class; 23- Seed-bearing organ of a flower; 25- Overwhelmed; 26- Many; 27- Becomes visible; 30- Watched the kids; 31- In sorry shape; 32- Handicapped; 37- Rival rival; 38- Girder; 40- Ethereal; 41- Guns, knives, etc.; 43- Wash cycle; 44- ____ Today; 45- Clad; 47- Man of superior strength; 50- Eastern discipline; 51- Silkworm covering; 52- A party to; 53- Visit; 56- Gillette brand; 57- Austen novel; 59- Argus-eyed; 61- Hammer end; 62- Rich soil; 63- Russian revolutionary leader; 64- Flat sound; 65- It's used to walk the dog; 66- Notion;

DOWN: 1- Pop singer Brickell; 2- Red-bearded god; 3- Large village; 4- One ____ time; 5- Palm leaves; 6- Single; 7- Well-put; 8- Tumor; 9- Center; 10- Muse of lyric poetry; 11- Recurring theme; 12- Like Nash's lama; 14- Sort of; 22- ____ the land of the free...; 24- Scintilla; 25- Man of morals; 26- Bhutan's continent; 27- There oughta be ____; 28- Tent stick; 29- Insect stage; 32- Susan of "L.A. Law"; 33- Monetary unit of Oman; 34- Contact, e.g.; 35- Gaelic language of Ireland or Scotland; 36- Colored; 38- Madly; 39- Muffin choice; 42- Anise-flavored liqueur; 43- Pertaining to a reign; 45- Electric generator; 46- Outback hopper; 47- Carryalls; 48- Lots of lots; 49- Some horses; 51- Hats; 52- If ____ be so bold...; 53- Mail out; 54- Cleveland's lake; 55- Europe's highest volcano; 58- Sound of a cow; 60- Wreath of flowers;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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

FILM REVIEW

IN 'THE SUICIDE SQUAD,' AN ANTI-CAPTAIN AMERICA ROMP

JAKE COYLE, AP FILM WRITER

ONE little article separates James Gunn's "The Suicide Squad" from David Ayer's "Suicide Squad." But, oh, what a difference a word makes.

Just five years after the trainwreck that prompted Warner Bros. to retool its DC Comics universe, James Gunn's nearly wholesale re-do exists in an entirely different movie galaxy. "The Suicide Squad" may go down as one of the greatest, and quickest, do-overs in blockbusterdom.

Like Gunn's two "Guardians of the Galaxy" movies, "The Suicide Squad" is a chaotic, freewheeling inversion of much of what's expected in a comic book movie. Here, heroes die (a lot of them). Most aren't really heroes, either. Some aren't even human. But they've been sprung from prison for a kamikaze mission on behalf of the U.S. government. In this motliest of crews, no one has anything like a sleek shield or a clean caped suit.

Early on in "The Suicide

AP PHOTO



Squad" we get a sense that the mission is dubious. Amanda Waller (Viola Davis) summons a bunch of prisoners for Task Force X program. Exactly who are to be our main characters and who's head is about to sliced like a melon takes some sorting out. But in a clown-car of a superhero movie the most central protagonist is Idris Elba's Bloodsport, a mercenary only coaxed into joining the team when Waller threatens prison time or worse for his teenage daughter (Storm Reid, very good).

With him are Ratcatcher 2 (Daniela Melchior, a standout), a lachronic, warm-hearted Millennial with a very polite pet rat named Sebastian on her shoulder. The skills of Polka-Dot Man (David Dastmalchian) are initially hard to decipher, but the shy, stunted Abner proves surprisingly capable, even if he, himself, sheepishly apologizes for having such a "flamboyant" power.

There is also John Cena's Peacemaker, easily the most jingoist of the bunch, a kind of Captain Ame-

rica knockoff. Just what each squad member feels about their home country and its role in international backwaters is prominently in play in "The Suicide Squad."

Also in the mix is Margot Robbie's Harley Quinn. It's her third film in that character but the best yet in capturing Quinn's chipper mania. A brief romantic interest tells her he adores her for symbolizing anti-American fervor. Within minutes, he's lying dead on the floor.

Does "The Suicide Squad"

overdo it? Of course. It's a little absurd to even ask that about a movie with a talking shark that rips bodies in half and interstitial debates about, for instance, whether the phrase "tighty whities" is racist. Gunn throws so much into his superhero collider that he sometimes sacrifices depth (backstories are poignant but thin) for wit and idiosyncrasy.

But as over-the-top and thoroughly R-rated as "The Suicide Squad" is, it's not nihilistic. That's maybe a questionable argument to make for a film that includes an inside-the-body close-up of a dagger piercing a beating heart. But as much as Gunn steers his movies into chaos, they have a surprising amount of heart and thoughtfulness to them.

They are outcasts, weirdos, laughing stocks and whatever you call Nanaue. That makes "The Suicide Squad" — as ridiculous as it is to say about a movie that renders a bloody rampage with gushes of animated daisies and birdies — kind of beautiful. Plus, the shark in jams is funny.

"Suicide Squad," a Warner Bros. release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for strong violence and gore, language throughout, some sexual references, drug use and brief graphic nudity. Running time: 132 minutes. ★★★★★

AD

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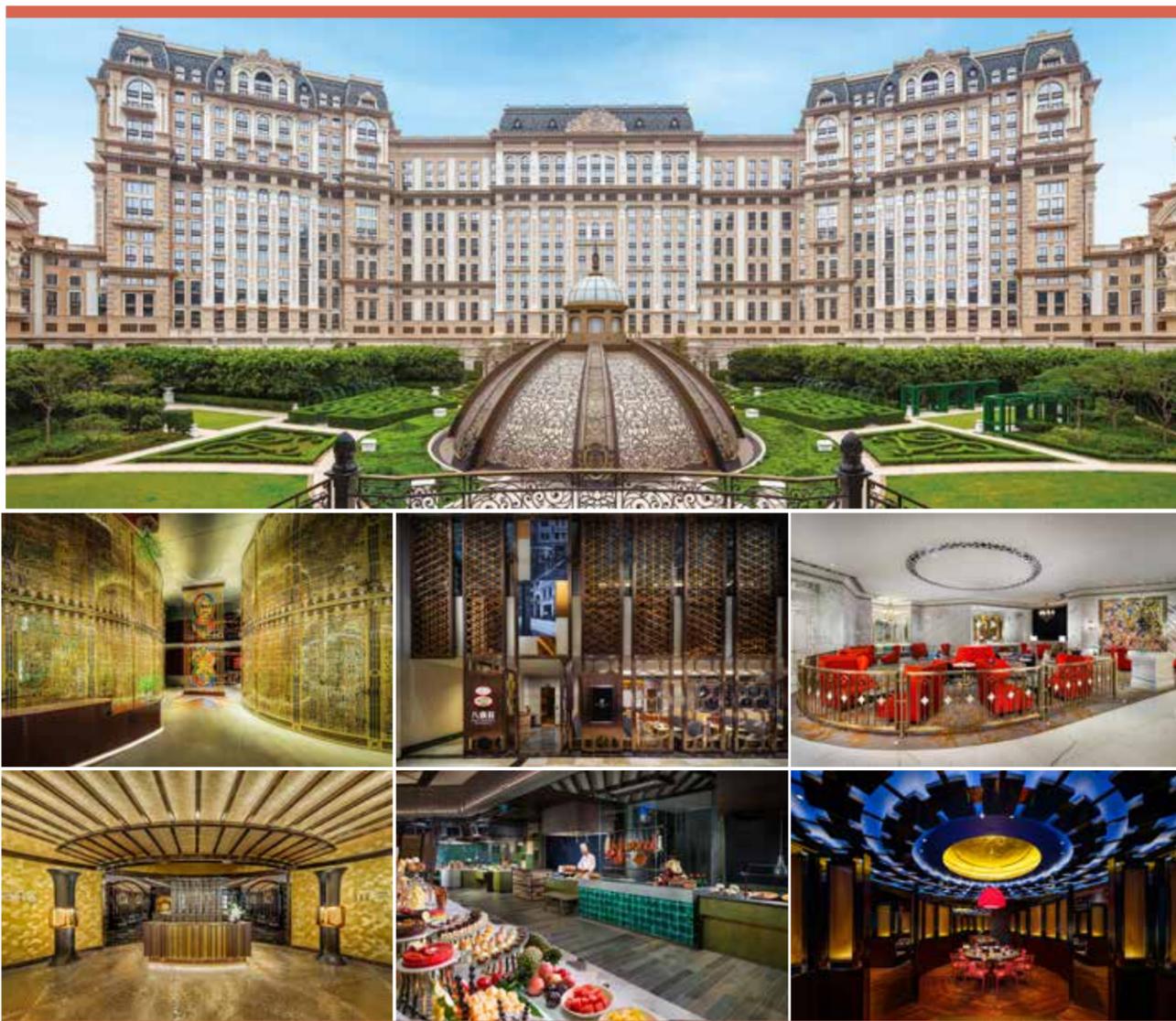


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As a sign of its commitment to supporting Only Watch and the Monegasque Muscular Dystrophy Association, Krayon has created a special timepiece for collectors and lovers of rare refinements who seek a singular complication. Anywhere Only Watch 2021 Edition indicates the time of sunrise and sunset at the precise location chosen by the client – anywhere in the world. Fittingly for the occasion, this oneoff is equipped with the prototype calibre that enabled the complication's development. The dial is a window to the sublime: a delicate miniature painting, a contemporary reinterpretation of Claude Monet's famous Impression, Rising Sun – orange, blazing, intense, the force at the origin of all life, reminding us there is something greater than ourselves to strive for.



TASTE OF EDESIA

Enticing dining options

IRENE SAM, MDT

THE soon to be launched integrated resort **Grand Lisboa Palace** is bringing a variety of enticing dining options to surprise both locals and visitors. Setting off the gastronomic journey upon opening

are The Grand Buffet, the returning legendary buffet restaurant in Macau; Mesa, a contemporary Portuguese restaurant featuring bold design with oriental inspiration; Chalou, a classic tea house designed by celebrated Hong Kong designer Alan Chan; Wulao, the highly sought-after Taiwanese

hotpot restaurant, in addition to casual dining options namely GLP Café, Eight Treasures and GLP Lobby Lounge. Other highly-anticipated dining options will be launched progressively over the coming 12 months to offer more sensational epicurean delights, such as Italian fine-

dining brought by a world-renowned Michelin-starred restaurant concept from Italy, Japanese Kappo cuisine presented by a Michelin-starred chef, a haute Cantonese restaurant and a microbrewery featuring authentic Bavarian beer. Stay tuned for more detailed reviews on MDT soon!

Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



THE SHUNDE 1800 METRES TURF

2021-07-31 | Sat | 16:35

FAIR DREAM from the in-form S.H Cheong yard caught my eye in this track work videos; checking on his performance not a single win recorded and his best came in a third place in all his past outings. Fair Dream is no superstar, but I reckoned you'll see a different Fair Dream in the making this Saturday. He is very energetic in his works which is a good sign that he is ready to taking up challenges in races before the MJC season end this August. May be you will see his true colour starting from this race onward, I see Fair Dream would put his best feet forward in this weak race for his connection this Saturday. He is my NAP this week I am confident to put my money for an each way chance on Fair Dream.

Race 2 Horse no. 6 FAIR DREAM Win & Place Bets



OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

HONG KONG WILL RESOLUTELY UPHOLD RULE OF LAW

In the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's first conviction under the National Security Law in effect in the region, a panel of three judges in the High Court found the suspect guilty of terrorism and incitement to secession. That a threatening phone call was made to the High Court within hours of the conviction, targeting the judges, is another telltale sign of the subversive forces' frustration, anger and desperation in the face of the powerful security law.

This was the second time in the same number of months that intimidation was attempted to pervert the course of justice. In early June, a judge who sentenced media tycoon Jimmy Lai Chee-ying and his cohorts for organizing and participating in an illegal assembly during the anti-government campaign in 2019 also received threats. Threatening the personal safety of judges, for merely exercising their judicial duties in accordance with the applicable law and evidence, shows how far the radical elements in Hong Kong are willing to go to undermine the rule of law in the SAR.

Although anti-China Western politicians and their propaganda platforms have wasted no time in attacking the verdict, such a blatant demonstration of contempt for the rule of law has revealed the subversive forces' claims to be championing their rights is nothing but camouflage for their obsessive pursuit of their political agenda, in which turning the SAR into a de facto independent political entity is the ultimate objective. They no longer bother to make any pretense of respecting the rule of law — the cornerstone of democracy, civil rights and individual freedom in any society. In a nutshell, the subversives have discarded even the fig leaf they were using to claim the "moral high ground".

The attempts to intimidate judges duty-bound to uphold the law reveal the desperation and frustration among the ranks of the subversives in the wake of the promulgation of the National Security Law for Hong Kong.

The law has effectively put an end to the months-long campaign of lawlessness initiated by the subversive forces in the SAR in 2019, which employed wanton violence and terrorist tactics in an attempt to force Beijing and the SAR government to accept their unconstitutional and unrealistic political demands.

The security law has totally shattered the illusions of Hong Kong independence they have harbored, plugging the legal lacuna in safeguarding national security in the SAR. That the subversives have turned their abhorrence for the law into hatred against the judges who handed down the first conviction under the law can also be understood in the context that the conviction has set a precedent case for future offenses, boosting the security law's deterrence effect by presenting the certainty, severity and celerity of punishment for offenses of this nature.

An American finished atop the podium in the women's Olympic gymnastics all-around, just like always.

Sunisa Lee became the fifth straight American woman to claim the Olympic title yesterday, edging Rebeca Andrade of Brazil in an entertaining and hotly contested final while defending champion Simone Biles watched from the stands.

Lee's total of 57.433 points was just enough to top Andrade, who earned the first gymnastics all-around medal by a Latin American athlete but missed out on gold when she stepped out of bounds twice during her floor routine. Russian gymnast An-

gelina Melnikova earned bronze two days after leading ROC to gold in the team final.

Lee and the Americans earned a silver in that event, one in which Biles withdrew after one rotation when she decided she was not mentally prepared to compete.

Lee, an 18-year-old Hmong-American from Minnesota, gutted her way through a nervy beam routine. She nearly came off while executing a wolf turn — basically a seated spin — and basically needed to suction cup her toes to the 4-inch slab of wood to stay on.

AP PHOTO



LAWYER FOR HONG KONG PROTESTER ASKS COURT FOR SHORTER TERM

ALICE FUNG, HONG KONG

A lawyer for the first person convicted under Hong Kong's national security law asked yesterday for no more than 10 years in prison instead of the possible life sentence faced by the former restaurant waiter in a closely watched case.

Tong Ying-kit was convicted Tuesday of inciting secession and terrorism for driving his motorcycle into a group of police officers during a July 1, 2020, pro-democracy rally while carrying a flag bearing the banned slogan, "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times."

Tong, 24, will be sentenced today, the Hong Kong High Court announced.

Beijing imposed the security law on the former British colony last year following anti-government protests that erupted in mid-2019.

The crackdown prompted complaints the ruling party is viola-

ting the autonomy promised when Hong Kong returned to China in 1997 and hurting its status as a global business center.

Officials reject the criticisms and say Beijing is restoring order and instituting national security protections similar to those of other countries.

Officials reject the criticisms and say Beijing is restoring order and instituting national security protections

At a hearing, Tong's lead defense lawyer, Clive Grossman, asked the three-judge panel for a sentence of no more than 10 years. He said the court hadn't found the attack was deliberate, no one was injured and Tong's secession-related offense qualified as minor under the law.

The court ruled Tuesday that Tong's actions were an act of violence aimed at coercing the Hong Kong and mainland governments and intimidating the public.

It said carrying the flag was an act of incitement to secession, rejecting defense arguments that Tong couldn't proven to be inciting secession just by using the slogan.

Prosecutor Ivan Cheung asked for at least three years.

Judge Anthea Pang said the court will follow the "usual statutory term" and legal interpretations of the national security law but gave no indication what that might be.

Tong, wearing a black shirt and tie with a blue blazer, talked with his lawyers before the hearing but didn't address the court. Relatives waved to Tong as he left and said, "see you tomorrow."

Tong's trial was conducted by judges without a jury under rules that allow an exception to Hong Kong's British-style common law system if state secrets need to be protected or foreign forces are involved. The judges were picked by Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam. **MDT/AP**

Russia A Moscow court ordered Google yesterday to pay a fine of 3 million rubles for refusing to store the personal data of Russian users on servers in Russia, a move that is part of the government's longstanding effort to tighten its grip on online activity. The fine is the first one given to Google in Russia over data storage regulations. Facebook and Twitter previously received similar penalties for allegedly violating Russian regulations.

Armenia's acting prime minister proposed stationing Russian border guards along the country's border with Azerbaijan, as tensions between the two ex-Soviet nations continue to simmer yesterday. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan floated the idea a day after three Armenian troops were killed in cross-border hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which for decades have been locked in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

AP PHOTO



Turkey Authorities evacuated homes in southern Turkey on Wednesday as a wildfire fanned by strong winds raged through a forest near the Mediterranean coastal town of Manavgat. Security forces helped move residents of four neighborhoods out of the fire's path as firefighters worked to control the blaze. Manavgat district governor Mustafa Yigit told the state-run Anadolu Agency.

AP PHOTO



Haiti's newly installed prime minister, Ariel Henry, held his first press conference on Wednesday as he pledged to hold elections as soon as possible following the slaying of President Jovenel Moïse. Henry said the government's mission is to hold free, honest and transparent elections with a large voter turnout as he stressed the need for security.