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North Korea yesterday repeated a threat to respond to U.S.-South Korean military exercises it claims are an invasion rehearsal, while the United States insisted the drills were “purely defensive in nature” to maintain the South’s security. In a statement released by state media yesterday, senior North Korean official Kim Yong Chol condemned South Korea for continuing the allied drills and warned of unspecified counteractions that would make Seoul “realize by the minute” that it had walked into a security crisis.



Afghanistan The Taliban seized three more provincial capitals in Afghanistan and a local army headquarters completing their blitz across the country’s northeast and pressing their offensive elsewhere. The insurgents now control some two-thirds of the nation as the U.S. and NATO finalize their withdrawal after a decades-long war there. The fall of the capitals of Badakhshan and Baghlan provinces to the northeast and Farah province to the west put increasing pressure on the country’s central government to stem the tide of the advance.

Iran’s new president presented a Cabinet dominated by hard-liners yesterday, state TV reported, providing one of the first glimpses into the policies he might pursue over the next four years. The conservative cleric and former judiciary chief, Ebrahim Raisi, nominated hard-line career diplomat Hossein Amirabollahian to the crucial post of foreign minister as Iran and the U.S. seek to resuscitate Tehran’s landmark nuclear deal with world powers.

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AP PHOTO

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

MACAU BADMINTON OPEN CANCELED DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

RENATO MARQUES

THE 2021 Macau Badminton Open has officially been canceled by the Badminton World Federation (BWF).

In a statement, the international governing body of the sport announced that the local event, together with the Korean

round, have fallen victim to the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed to control and prevent the virus.

“The ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and complications left local organizers with no choice but to cancel the tournaments,” BWF said in the statement.

“Unfortunately, it is not feasi-

ble to conduct any tournaments in China this year,” the global organization said, adding that no dates or locations have been rescheduled.

The Macau Open was set to take place between November 2 and 7 this year, and it now joins a long list of other canceled events including the Korean Open

(August 31 to September 5), China Open (September 21 to 26), Japan Open (September 28 to October 3), Fuzhou China Open (November 9 to 14) and Hong Kong Open (November 16 to 21).

The Korean Open was expected to mark the resumption of the BWF World Tour, the calendar of which was interrupted

earlier this year. At the time the BWF decided to schedule only an All-England tournament: which was the only BWF event hosted this year before the Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Despite the large number of canceled events, the BWF says it is “still committed to delivering the remainder of the 2021 calendar as planned,” adding, “We look to provide players with a safe and structured platform to earn important world ranking points and prize money in these coming months.”

Two of the planned upcoming events are the Malaysian Open and Malaysian Masters, which are currently postponed.

On such a matter, the BWF added, “A few other remaining tournaments [the Malaysian ones] are still categorized as postponed. Final decisions on those tournaments will come at a later date.”

Also postponed are the World Junior Championships, scheduled for October 4 to 17 in China.

The Macau Badminton Open was part of the HSBC BWF World Tour - Super 300 series, a Grade 2 tournament awarding USD200,000 (1.6 million patacas) in prize money.

Mandatory quarantine constitutes 'justified leave': DSAL

WORKERS living in red or yellow zones who are in mandatory quarantine should be considered as being on justified leave, Chan Chon U, vice director of the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), said.

Since the city has recorded four new Covid-19 cases, certain areas on the Peninsula have been identified as red zones or yellow zones and have been cordoned off.

The four patients were circulating freely in the community before being diagnosed with the disease.

Residents living in the red zone are not allowed to leave their homes until August 17. Businesses within the zone must also suspend operation until then.

Residents living in the yellow zone, meanwhile, will need to conduct health self-



-management until August 17.

According to an Executive Order, they are not allowed to take public transport, and they may be prohibited from entering certain indoor venues, such as commercial

buildings.

The cordon will hinder and even obstruct residents needing to work. The DSAL stressed that quarantine conditions are government policy, meaning that it should not be considered within

the control of either the employers or the employees.

In his statement, Chan has urged employers to consider not deducting the pay covering the period their employees are in quarantine, or negotiating with the employees to take that period as annual leaves. Employers should also make special arrangements to the work of the affected workers.

Chan added that employers should not pressure employees with yellow health codes to take time off so that their salaries can be deducted. On the other hand, employees should not take time off on the grounds of having yellow health codes.

Any exemption from work should be mutually agreed upon through negotiation, the DSAL vice director hinted. **AL**

COVID-19

MAN FACES UP TO TWO YEARS IMPRISONMENT FOR SPREADING RUMORS

THE local resident who spread fake information on social media could face a sentence of up to two years in prison, according to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP).

Last week, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced the arrest of a 46-year-old local man, suspected of having committed crimes against public security, order, and peace during sudden incidents of a public nature. According to the report, the man is accused of fabricating and disseminating rumors online about the current Covid-19

pandemic situation in Macau, with intent to cause panic in the community.

This was, in the current climate, considered to be “enough to provoke panic or public anxiety, harming the security and public order and affecting the MSAR government’s epidemic prevention work,” the PJ stated.

The resident posted the rumors online during Macau’s “immediate prevention status,” which the Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng ordered on August 3 following the detection of four Delta cases. **MDT**

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MACAU RECORDS MOP659B IN FINANCIAL RESERVES

As of June this year, the city has recorded a total of MOP658.9 billion in financial reserves. Of this sum, the city has MOP309 billion in deposits and current accounts. It also holds bonds to the value of MOP180 billion. The amount in investments, meanwhile, totaled MOP169 billion. Macau also has approximately MOP1.6 billion in other assets. As for liabilities, the city has MOP3.7 billion in debt. In fiscal reserve capital, the city has MOP656.8 billion, of which MOP151 billion is in basic reserves and MOP494 billion is in surplus reserves. A surplus of MOP12 billion was recorded for this period.

140 REALTOR 'COLD-CALL' NUMBERS VOIDED BY OWNERS

In response to lawmaker Leong Sun lok's written enquiry, the Consumer Council (CC), citing information from the Personal Data Protection Office, revealed that as of July this year, about 140 Macau cellphone numbers used in real estate marketing have been terminated by their owners. About 10 further phone numbers are the subject of complaints filed by members of the public have registrations on the mainland. Therefore authorities were conducting their investigations in communication with their counterparts on the mainland.

IC EXTENDS BOOK LOAN PERIOD

The Macao Public Library is extending the book loan period during the closure of the public libraries. Therefore the members of the public do not have to hasten to return the materials to the public libraries, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced in a statement. Readers may also access free electronic resources on the Macao Public Library's website. IC pledged that it will closely monitor the development of the pandemic, follow the relevant guidelines of the Health Bureau.

COVID-19

Coming week the 'critical juncture': SSM

HONEY TSANG

THE coming week is considered the "critical juncture": the moment that will determine whether Macau can pull through the current wave of Covid-19, Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of the Health Bureau's (SSM) Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, predicted yesterday.

Therefore, certain entertainment venues will remain closed until further notice, Tai added, asking the public to tolerate the situation for a little longer.

His remarks came following a question from the media about the possible relaxations following the lifting of the immediate prevention status late in the evening of August 10.

The government will continue to monitor if there are any new cases identified among the people quarantined in red and yellow zones, and also the general public over the coming days.

To minimize the risk of contagion, people should make use of the complimentary Covid-19 test, which came in force yesterday, and to avoid crowds, Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), added.

In the ongoing epidemiological study of the four confirmed cases, the authorities discovered yesterday that the family had forgotten to report several visited locations.

These include the visit at ICBC Branch at Macau Landmark from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on July 27.

The updates for their itineraries on July 29 are the visits to 3/F of the Public Administration Building at Rua Do Campo from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m., and 5/F of the Women's Association of Macau at 2:20 p.m. to 2:40 p.m., and ICBC Branch at Macau Landmark from 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The Public Administration Building will be closed for disinfection today.

Leong appealed to people who had attended these locations at these times to make contact with health authorities via SSM.

More than 10 days have passed since the dates of these previously omitted itineraries. The media questioned whether such a long intervening period would increase the risk of contagion within the community.

Leong responded by saying that the three-day city-wide mass test, in which all samples tested negative, has reassured the public. However, she acknowledged that the city should not become complacent following the negative results of the mass testing. The public should stay cautious about heightened contagion risks.

The missed information was put down to the vague memory of the family members, Leong said, adding that it is understandable that people might forget their exact whereabouts over the week just passed.

When asked about the source of infection of the 12-year-old girl, Leong said the government had conducted genetic sequen-

cing of the Delta virus afflicting the 12-year-old female student and found that it is "highly homologous" with the strain found in confirmed cases from the Nanjing Lukou International Airport and Chongqing.

However, the authorities cannot be completely certain of the exact point on the Xi'an trip at which the girl caught the virus.

VACCINATION RATE OF 40-49 YEAR-OLDS AS HIGH AS 70%

Macau registered an overall vaccination rate of 43.5%, with those aged 40-49 displaying the highest rate at 70%.

However, Tai stressed, the rate among the elderly (aged above 60)

and teenagers (aged below 20) is still considered "low," at only about 20%.

Currently, the city can offer upwards of 10,000 doses every day. Each vaccination center has sufficient walk-in capacity. Moreover, no upper limit is set for elderly residents wishing to receive immediate vaccination without making an appointment.

The emergence of four Delta cases should alert the public to the paramount importance of inoculation in fighting the coronavirus. Tai urged the public to receive their vaccinations as soon as possible.

He added that a high vaccination rate does not necessarily guarantee a full resumption of international travel due to the fickle nature of the virus.

TEMPORARY SHELTERS

Ever since the temporary shelter at Ilha Verde that was put into use on August 3, 382 people had stayed there up to August 10. Most of them are foreign employees, 71% of whom were mainland residents, 27% were Macau residents, and 2% were Hong Kong residents.

INVESTIGATION OF TWO PANDEMIC-RELATED VIOLATIONS UNDERWAY

THE Public Prosecutions Office (MP) has begun an investigation of the two cases of violations of pandemic control measures. The first case involves a man who refused to present a health code while entering a public market in the North District, and then assaulted the security guard with a trolley and the stick that held the thermometer. The assault left the security guard injured on the face and hand, and damaged the equipment. The second case involved a man who refused to wear a mask while attempting to enter a government building and then spat upon and hit the security guard, who was later

admitted to the hospital for medical treatment. According to the official document, the MP will bring charges of "Common Assault Causing Harm to Bodily Integrity," listed in Article 137 of the Penal Code. On conviction, the two individuals may face fines or imprisonment for up to three years. The two individuals committed blatantly violations of the anti-pandemic measures and attacked the staff who were carrying out their duties. Such "malicious" behavior will be considered as possibly justifying a harsher sentence, the statement added.

CRIME

'GOALKEEPER MAN' WHO BLOCKED POLICE MOTORCYCLE APPREHENDED

ANTHONY LAM

THE "goalkeeper man" who allegedly lay in front of a police motorcycle in an attempt to prevent the police officer from leaving the scene of an accident has been apprehended by the Public Security Police Force (PSP), the police announced yesterday.

The suspect is a local sexagenarian surnamed Ng, who claims to be unemployed.

The incident took place beside a car accident which occurred at about midday on August 7.

The accident involved a minivan and a light vehicle, which crashed on the intersection of Travessa dos Bombeiros and Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira. The minivan crashed first into the light vehicle at the intersection, then veered off the road, smashing into the glass façade of a clinic.

The minivan then reversed at high speed along the Travessa but left the road again, smashing the roller door of a shop on the Travessa. The vehicle also damaged a number of roadside safety pillars and fences.

The PSP revealed that after attending to the car accident, a police officer and a deputy chief officer stayed behind to assist with the towing of the minivan, which became undrivable after the second crash.

As the towing truck tried to pull out the stuck minivan, the deputy chief officer tried to ward



A screenshot of the man who blocked the police

off pedestrians for their own safety, among them the suspect. However, the suspect is alleged to have refused to stay out of the immediate area of the accident. He reportedly yelled at the officer, accusing him of unfair policing, and threatened the deputy chief officer that if the officer touched him, he would fall to the ground immediately.

The deputy chief officer chose to ignore the suspect.

At the conclusion of the operation, the deputy chief officer mounted his motorcycle to return to the police station.

The suspect then allegedly stood behind the motorcycle, preventing the deputy chief officer from leaving the scene.

When the officer tried to ward

off the suspect, the suspect is reported to have immediately fallen to the ground, calling for an ambulance and claiming to be injured. He also accused the police of pushing him to the ground.

He was then taken to the police station for questioning but did not cooperate. He was charged with false accusation, among other offences.

MANTAKES UPSKIRT PICTURES

A man accused of taking upskirt pictures has been apprehended by the PSP. He told the police that he works as a cook.

His latest attempt is alleged to have taken place at about 9 a.m. on August 4 in the elevator of the underpass at the Rua do Sintra.

That morning, the accused took the elevator with three other women, who were friends and in a group. One of the women reported noticing the man taking pictures from below the victim's skirt with his cellphone.

The witness immediately confronted the man and asked to have a look at his cellphone. However, the women did not find anything incriminating even in the folder of deleted material. Nonetheless, the witness insisted that they call the police.

Hearing this, the suspect fled the scene immediately.

After receiving the report, the PSP discovered that the man drove a car while fleeing from the scene. Additionally, the police also discovered that the man resides on Rua de Joao de Araujo, where he was apprehended by the police.

During the interrogation, the suspect confessed to the police about the crime. He said that he became sexually attracted to women in uniform skirt and stockings when viewing pornographic websites last year.

From the second half of last year, he has frequented the main commercial district, including the Praia Grande, to film his victims.

During his arrest, the police seized two other cellphones and a tablet computer. The three devices contained 4,200 copies of such pictures.

Cyclones moving east to west not unheard of, says weather bureau



ANTHONY LAM

TROPICAL cyclones with a movement path from the west coast to the east coast of the Guangdong Province are not unheard of, the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) suggested in a reply to an enquiry by the Times.

The recent meteorological system, named Lupit, which started near the west coast of the Guangdong Province on August 3, moved along the Southern Chinese coast and towards the east coast of the Province.

Public confusion has been expressed on social media platforms, with users questioning the uncom-

mon, if not bizarre, trajectory of the tropical cyclone.

Nonetheless, the SMG noted that the last time a tropical cyclone with such a movement path was seen in its records was in 2012.

In that year, Severe Tropical Storm Talim formed near the east coast of Hainan Province, about 400 meters from Macau and in the middle of the South China Sea. It then moved towards the Taiwan Strait.

Tropical cyclones affecting Macau normally incubate on the open sea of the Western Pacific Ocean or the southeastern part of the South China Sea, before moving towards the coast of China.

To explain the scenario, the SMG stressed that the movement of tropical cyclones depends on several factors. The last three cyclones that triggered the hoisting of the No.10 signal in Macau, namely Severe Typhoon

Hato, Super Typhoon Mangkhut and Typhoon Higos, had the more common paths, which were influenced by the easterly airstream to their south.

However, cyclones that form on the South China Sea will see irregular paths in the absence of an orienting airstream.

Considering the incubation location of Lupit, the seawater on the western coast of the Guangdong Province must have had a relatively high temperature. At the same time, vertical windshear around that area must also have been weak or even absent in order for a tropical cyclone to form successfully.

The SMG did not provide an answer on the question of how many times tropical cyclones with path or trajectory have been recorded in the history of the bureau, or as far back as it could trace.

AL Committee pushes for opening of gaming consultation

HONEY TSANG

The Legislative Assembly's (AL) Follow-up Committee for Land and Public Concession is pushing the government to launch the public consultation on amendments to gaming legislation as early as possible.

The committee delivered their suggestions to the government in a summary report, which was later published on AL's official website.

Adriano Marques Ho, director of the Gaming Inspection, and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) had earlier announced in a written inquiry that the consultation — which will deliberate the legislation concerning the renewal bidding process of gaming concessions and the operation of concessionaires — is timed to commence in the second half (H2) of 2021.

However, as the city enters the second month of H2, there is still no indication of when the public consultation will take place.



In the report, committee members raised doubts as to whether the heavy workload involved in amending the gaming bill can be handled in a short period.

The committee asserts the undertaking needs to be completed "within a limited time frame" and is "not an easy task," as it will involve many procedures: firstly, the

organization of a public consultation process and the collection of opinions from the community, then the analysis of the data and compilation of a summary report,

and then extra work in drafting final amendments to the bill.

"Hence, [we] hope the government can make overall arrangements, and launch public consultation as early as possible. [The government should] make the appropriate announcements and directions to the public in due course, and ensure the legislative proceedings can be done within the scheduled time to give enough time for the industry to prepare and formulate [their business plans]," the members declared.

To enable the public to better understand the current situation in the gaming industry, the committee suggests the government conduct a detailed review of important matters, such as concessions, experience, and operational problems.

The committee also urged the government to take stock of all the changes faced by the industry, especially those resulting from the uncertainties of the Covid-19 pandemic era.

The six gaming concessions and sub-concessions are due on June 26, 2022. Given the imminent deadline, and the fact that the industry is a key driving force of the city's economy, the committee emphasized that the government's handling of gaming bill and the industry's prospects are of great public interest.

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CHINA BOOSTS EFFORTS TO HIT GREEN TARGETS

HOU LIQIANG, CHINA DAILY

CHINA is bolstering efforts to tackle climate change by proactively promoting low-carbon projects as drivers of economic growth and reining in sectors with high energy consumption and emissions, experts said.

In late July, a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee had carbon emissions high on the agenda amid the worsening climate crisis that has seen extreme weather conditions across the globe.

The world's leading scientists warned in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report this week that climate change is "widespread, rapid, and intensifying".

The human-caused climate crisis is "unequivocal" and temperatures are likely to rise by more than 1.5 C over the next 20 years, triggering more extreme weather events worldwide, the report said. Many of the climate changes observed are unprecedented in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years, the report added.

The Political Bureau meeting urged a faster rollout of a national action plan to fulfill the country's target of reaching a carbon dioxide emissions peak before 2030, according to a statement released after the meeting.

Presided over by President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, the meeting set out key economic policy directions for the



second half of this year.

Aside from adhering to coordinated national action, the meeting stressed the need to correct "movement-style" carbon reduction measures, as the country forges ahead to fulfill its climate targets, which also include achieving carbon neutrality before 2060.

Fu Sha, program director of Energy Foundation China's Low Carbon Economic Growth Program, said many regions have included the development of hydrogen energy in their 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25).

An example of a "movement-style" measure is undertaking a hydrogen energy program without a proper assessment of local conditions. However, for the country to achieve its carbon neutrality target doesn't necessarily mean that each

region needs to go carbon neutral, she said.

Some regions may not only be able to achieve negative emissions but can help make up the gap in other areas. Other regions may not have the suitable conditions to develop new energy industries.

"Each region should proceed with carbon reduction in light of local conditions," she stressed, adding that different measures should be rolled out in a coordinated way.

The meeting called for the country's climate targets to proceed in a "build first, destroy later" manner. "The development of projects with high energy consumption and emissions will be rigorously curbed," the release said.

Fu said China will prioritize low-carbon, clean industries in new

projects to promote the construction of infrastructure for renewable energies.

As low-carbon projects start to dominate new developments, the country will target its "historical stockpile" of high-emission projects for further carbon reduction, she said.

In addition to infrastructure, policy and institutional mechanisms need to be put in place to create a favorable situation for the development of new energy and low-carbon industries.

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said only after the country builds the infrastructure for new energy, can it undertake large-scale reduction of the consumption of coal and other fossil fuels, which make up about 85 percent of China's energy mix.

The "build first, destroy later" strategy will help ensure energy security and a stable power supply to sustain economic growth, he said.

Steel, cement and the nonferrous metal industries are the main sectors with high energy consumption and emissions, and consume 21.5 percent of the country's power.

Efforts to contain these industries will reduce China's dependence on energy for economic development, and set the country on the path of high-quality development.

New projects with high energy consumption and emissions have been major targets of environmental inspections.

The inspection teams are usually headed by retired ministry-level officials, and these teams report to a central leading group headed by Vice-Premier Han Zheng. MDT/CHINA DAILY

Court sen

JOE MCDONALD & NG HAN GUAN, DANDONG

A Canadian entrepreneur was sentenced to 11 years in prison yesterday in a spy case linked to Beijing's effort to push his country to release an executive of tech giant Huawei, prompting an unusual joint show of support for Canada by the United States, Japan and 23 other governments.

China is stepping up pressure as a Canadian judge hears final arguments about whether to send the Huawei executive to the United States to face charges related to possible violations of trade sanctions on Iran. On Tuesday, a court rejected another Canadian's appeal of a death sentence in a drug case that was increased after the executive's arrest.

Entrepreneur Michael Spavor and a former Canadian diplomat were detained in what critics labeled "hostage politics" after Huawei's Meng Wanzhou, was arrested Dec. 1, 2018, at the Vancouver airport.

Spavor was sentenced by a court in Dandong, about 210 miles (340 kilometers) east of Beijing on the North Korean border. The government has released few details other than to accuse Spavor of passing along sensitive information to the former diplomat, Michael Kovrig, beginning in 2017. Both have been held in isolation and have little contact with Canadian diplomats.

China market turns frosty for Taiwan books, as tensions rise

HUIZHONG WU, TAIPEI

TAIWANESE author Iris Chiang hardly seems like the type whose work would be banned from publication in China. Yet four years after being sold to a Chinese publisher, her book teaching children how to appreciate art has yet to go to press, a victim of heightened tensions between China and Taiwan that are spilling over into the cultural sphere.

It's not just about losing access to the huge Chinese market, authors and publishers say. It's also about losing opportunities to exchange and connect, after three decades of growing contact between the two. In recent years, China has cut the flow of Chinese tourists and students to Taiwan and blocked its artists from taking part in Taiwan's Golden



Author Iris Chiang

Rooster and Golden Melody awards, regarded as the Oscars and Grammys for Chinese-language movies and music.

"It feels like in these few years, the flow of exchange is diverging. Taiwan is going further in one direction and China is going farther in one direction," said James Chao,

head of the China Times Publishing group, one of the largest publishers in Taiwan. "It's getting farther and farther apart."

China claims Taiwan, a self-governing island about 160 kilometers (100 miles) off China's east coast, as its territory. The election of Tsai Ing-wen, who favors

Taiwan's current de facto independence, as the island's president in 2016 ushered in a period of deteriorating relations. China has tried to isolate the island diplomatically and pressure it militarily.

While China's ruling Communist Party has long banned books on sensitive

issues from religion to the lives of Chinese political leaders, Taiwanese publishers previously sold a wide variety of other books to the mainland, drawing on a shared language and cultural history.

"Exchanges in publishing is really the exchange of ideas," said Linden Lin, the head of Linking Publishing Co. in Taiwan. "It's only through publishing that you can have this type of exchange."

Now, any Taiwanese book has become harder to publish in China, according to editors, academics, publishers and authors. It is not a blanket ban, and publishers blame self-censorship by their mainland counterparts rather than any official order.

Titles that have been frozen out include a Taiwanese-

-Japanese fusion cookbook, a self-help book and a book of travel sketches from a Taiwanese artist's travels in Beijing that featured cats roaming the city's traditional "hutong" neighborhoods.

One sticking point is any content that suggests a separate Taiwanese identity. Younger Taiwanese in particular have developed a distinct identity. A 2020 poll found that two-thirds of the respondents didn't think of themselves as Chinese.

"In the past, they would censor books about religion. ... But for example if a book's topic is Taiwan's food then that's fine," said Rosine Liu, an editor at Taiwan's Business Weekly, who previously sold two cookbooks by a Taiwanese author to China. "But now I feel like now if it's called 'Taiwan Cuisine,' even that's a little stressful."

sentences Canadian to 11 years in case tied to Huawei



Michael Spavor, director of Paektu Cultural Exchange (2017)

The Canadian government condemned Spavor's sentence. It said he and Kovrig are "detained arbitrarily" and called for their immediate release.

The legal process in Spavor's case "lacked both fairness and transparency," said Ambassador Dominic Barton outside a detention center where the sentence was announced.

Spavor has two weeks to decide whether to appeal, according to Barton.

"While we disagree with the charges, we realize that this is the

next step in the process to bring Michael home and we will continue to support him through this challenging time," Spavor's family said in a statement.

"Michael's life passion has been to bring different cultures together through tourism and events shared between the Korean peninsula and other countries including China and Canada," his family said. "This situation has not dampened, but strengthened his passion."

Diplomats from the United States, Japan, Britain, Australia, Germany and other European coun-

tries plus the European Union gathered at the Canadian Embassy in Beijing in a show of support. They also have issued separate appeals for Spavor and Kovrig to receive fair trials or to be released.

"These proceedings are a blatant attempt to use human beings as bargaining leverage," the top American diplomat in China, David Meale, said in a statement. "Human beings should never be used as bargaining chips."

Meng, the chief financial officer of Huawei Technologies Ltd. and daughter of the company's foun-

der, was arrested on U.S. charges of lying to the Hong Kong arm of the British bank HSBC about possible dealings with Iran in violation of trade sanctions.

Meng's lawyers argue the case is politically motivated and what she is accused of isn't a crime in Canada.

China's government has criticized the arrest as part of U.S. efforts to hamper its technology development. Huawei, a maker of network equipment and smartphones, is China's first global tech brand and is at the center of U.S.-Chinese tension over technology and the security of information systems.

Beijing denies there is a connection between Meng's case and the arrests of Spavor and Kovrig, but Chinese officials and state media frequently mention the two men in relation to whether or not Meng is allowed to return to China.

Earlier, Barton said he didn't think it was a coincidence the cases in China were happening while Meng's case was advancing in Vancouver.

Asked whether Canada was negotiating over possibly sending Meng home in exchange for the release of detained Canadians, Barton said, "there are intensive efforts and discussions. I don't want to talk in any detail about that. But that will continue."

Canada and other countries including Australia and the Philippines face trade boycotts and other Chinese pressure in disputes with Beijing over human rights, the coronavirus and control of the South China Sea. The United States has

warned American travelers face a "heightened risk of arbitrary detention" in China for reasons other than to enforce laws.

Diplomats from the United States and Germany went to the detention center in Dandong but weren't allowed in, according to Barton.

"Our collective presence and voice send a strong message to China and the Chinese government that the eyes of the world are watching," the ambassador said.

Barton said Chinese authorities cited photos taken by Spavor at airports that included military aircraft.

"A lot of it was around the photo evidence," the ambassador said. "He obviously had a different view on that."

Barton met with Spavor after the sentencing and said he sent three messages: "Thank you for all your support, it means a lot to me. Two, I am in good spirits. And three, I want to go home."

"He's strong, resilient, focused on what's happening," Barton said. "We had a very good conversation."

Kovrig, who also was detained in December 2018, stood trial in March. There has been no word on when a verdict might be announced.

The Canadian Embassy noted Spavor had been held for 975 days as of yesterday.

Spavor worked in China but had extensive links with North Korea in tourism and other commercial ventures that brought him into contact with the isolated communist state's leadership. **MDT/AP**

The soft-spoken Chiang thought she would market her book, "Play with Art," toward prosperous parents in China, where the government was encouraging many people to have more kids — a fact she learned from one of her students from the mainland.

Things went smoothly with the Chinese publisher at first. At their request, she agreed to change one chapter that used examples from art museums in Taiwan. A Chinese writer would substitute a chapter based on museums in China.

Then the other side went silent, she said. When she reached out more than a year later, she was told the review process was slower than normal.

"After we got a new president, the response from the other side — the harshness of the situation and the unfriendliness — has created a lot of tedious things that make it inconvenient to

have an exchange," Chiang said.

That's in sharp contrast to the 1980s and 1990s, when Chinese readers were drawn to Taiwanese writers such as Lung Ying-tai, whose essays contributed to the debate on Taiwan's transformation from one-party rule to democracy. Sanmao, a Taiwanese writer who wrote stories about her life in the Sahara desert, captured a generation of Chinese women's hearts.

There was also curiosity about the most basic things, after the two were cut off for decades following their split in 1949 during a civil war in China.

"Back then, relations were good and it seemed like there was a mood in China that they really wanted to understand Taiwan," Chiang said. "What kind of fruit do you guys eat? What's your art like? What's your life like? How do you celebrate New Year's? These small

things in life."

Now, Taiwanese are also sensitive to the heightened tensions, highlighted by debate last year over a children's book from China. "Waiting for Dad to Come Home," about a boy whose father was out of town during the Lunar New Year holiday treating COVID-19 patients, paints a rosy picture of China's efforts to fight the pandemic.

Some in Taiwan argued China was using the island's open environment to spread propaganda. But a government proposal to vet books from the mainland prompted criticism that the island would be falling back on authoritarian habits.

"If we say we are afraid that the people will see fake news, that I will help them filter information ... then how can you call this democracy?" said Lai Hsiang-wai, a professor of press freedom at National Taiwan University of Arts.

The government dropped the proposal, saying it would only censor books published by the Communist Party or its military, the People's Liberation Army.

Liu, the editor, said it was never a purely commercial exchange for her. She en-

joyed meeting her mainland counterparts at book fairs and learning about their way of doing things. In the current political climate, these very basic human moments of exchange, which had helped people forge a connection to each other, have

disappeared.

"For me, in this harsh environment, you will also shrink yourself, because that type of cooperation is mutual," said Liu. "Because in the end we are all still carrying this burden of country and this burden of history." **MDT/AP**

Safety precautionary measures for Tropical Cyclones

1T 3L 8▲ 8▼ 8▲ 8▼ 9X 10+

▲ 东北 NE ▼ 东南 SE ▲ 西北 NW ▼ 西南 SW

Pay attention to the latest information on tropical cyclones and adjust outdoor activities

Check windows, doors and objects that can be dragged by the wind and complete all precautionary measures as soon as possible

全球资讯网
Global Information Network



AP PHOTO

IRAN

Slow vaccinations fuel anger in unending pandemic

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI

IRANIANS are suffering through yet another surge in the coronavirus pandemic — their country's worst yet — and anger is growing at images of vaccinated Westerners without face masks on the internet or on TV while they remain unable to get the shots.

Iran, like much of the world, remains far behind countries like the United States in vaccinating its public, with only 3 million of its more than 80 million people having received both vaccine doses. But while some countries face poverty or other challenges in obtaining vaccines, Iran has brought some of the problems on itself.

After Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei refused to accept vaccine donations from Western countries, the Islamic Republic has sought to make the shots domestically, though that process lags far behind other nations.

The supply of non-Western shots remains low, creating a black market offering Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech shots for as much as \$1,350 in a country where the currency, the Iranian rial, is on the verge of collapse. Meanwhile, U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran mean the cash-strapped government has limited funds to purchase

se vaccines abroad.

And even as the delta variant wreaks havoc, filling the country's already overwhelmed hospitals, many Iranians have given up on wearing masks and staying at home.

The need to earn a living trumps the luxury of social distancing.

"What is next? A sixth wave? A seventh wave? When is it going to end?" asked Reza Ghasemi, a 27-year-old delivery man without a face mask, smoking a cigarette next to his motorbike on a recent day in Tehran. "It is not clear when this situation will change to a better one."

Since the start of the pandemic, Iran has recorded nearly 4 million COVID-19 cases and more than 91,000 deaths — the highest numbers across the Middle East.

In a video message broadcast yesterday on state TV, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei described the skyrocketing death toll as "very painful," urging officials to roll out free virus tests and the fatigued public to follow health measures.

The true count is believed to be much higher. In April 2020, Iran's parliament warned its case number was "eight to 10 times" higher than the reported figures, due to undercounting. While coronavirus testing capacity has surged since then,

officials repeatedly have suggested the case count remains far off. The death toll is likely three times higher, officials say, as Iran only counts those who die in a hospital while being treated for coronavirus.

Khamenei in January slammed shut any possibility of American or British vaccines entering the country, calling them "forbidden."

"I really do not trust," them, Khamenei said of those nations. "Sometimes they want to test" their vaccines on other countries.

The decision, after Khamenei earlier floated conspiracy theories about the virus' origin in March 2020, saw Iran turn inward and try to develop its own vaccines. Those efforts, relying on traditional "dead virus" vaccines rather than the Pfizer and Moderna method of targeting the coronavirus' spike protein using RNA, have yet to reach mass production. And while the government claims local shots are 85% effective, they've released no data from their trials.

For now, the majority of Iranians receiving vaccines rely on foreign-made shots. A health ministry spokesman clarified on Tuesday that Iran could import Western vaccines "as long as they're not produced in the U.S. or Britain."

Japan has donated 2.9

million doses of its locally produced AstraZeneca shots. China has sent 10 million doses of its shots. Iran also made a deal with Russia to buy 60 million doses of Sputnik V, but so far, Moscow has delivered just over 1 million shots.

Doctors received the first set of vaccines, while the government now offers shots to those 50 and older, as well as to taxi drivers, journalists and those with diabetes. But it hasn't been nearly enough to keep up with demand. Only 4% of the Iranian public are fully vaccinated, according to government statistics.

Those with residency permits have sought shots in the United Arab Emirates. Others have gone to Armenia where authorities offer free shots to visiting foreigners. In Tehran, word-of-mouth claims that Pfizer and Moderna shots smuggled in over the border from Irbil, Iraq, including the ultra-cold freezers needed for them, are now for sale in the Iranian capital.

A two-dose Moderna or AstraZeneca vaccine goes for \$390, while two Pfizer shots cost \$1,350. Those paying go on faith that the products have not expired — or are even legitimate vaccines.

Mahsa, a 31-year-old woman in Tehran, said she got the Moderna vaccine through her boyfriend's friend, a doctor working at a pharmacy.

"I am sure the vaccine is genuine because I trust the doctor," she said.

Amirali, a 39-year-old father of a baby girl, said he bought shots of the Japanese-made AstraZeneca vaccine from an Iranian doctor secretly vaccinating people for profit. Amirali said he took the chance as his wife, a permanent U.S. resident, received the Pfizer vaccine while visiting America.

"I was not sure when the government will provide vaccines for my age group, so I decided to vaccinate myself," he said.

Both Amirali and Mahsa spoke on condition that only their first names be used for fear of retribution from the authorities.

But for those who can't pay, there are no shots yet.

Iran's civilian government, now undergoing a transition of power to hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, has been overwhelmed by the crisis. And with the Islamic Republic also facing protests over economic issues, water shortages and blackouts, the government likely wants to avoid triggering wider unrest. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

2003 GILLIGAN: LANGUAGE 'WASN'T PERFECT'

The journalist at the centre of the controversy surrounding the death of weapons expert Dr David Kelly has admitted that his language "wasn't perfect" when he reported the government had "sexed up" its weapons dossier on Iraq.

Andrew Gilligan, defence correspondent for the BBC Radio 4's Today programme, was giving evidence to the Hutton Inquiry on its second day.

He stood by the main thrust of his report - that the government had exaggerated Iraq's weapons capability to make the case for war.

But it emerged during four hours of questioning by Lord Hutton that his reporting had been criticised in an internal BBC email as "flawed".

The inquiry is looking into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr Kelly, who apparently committed suicide in July after being named as the possible source for Mr Gilligan's report.

A transcript of the notes Mr Gilligan made from his last meeting with Dr Kelly on 22 May said the government's dossier was "transformed a week before publication to make it sexier... a classic was the 45 minutes" [referring to a claim that Iraq could launch weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes.]

It went on, "Most people in intelligence weren't happy with it, because it didn't reflect the considered view they were putting forward."

The transcript then showed a single word, "Campbell".

The prime minister's director of communications, Alastair Campbell, has vigorously denied ordering the dossier to be changed.

Andrew Gilligan was then asked about the controversial live report for the Today programme, broadcast at 0607 on 29 May.

In it, he said a "senior official" had told him that the government had "sexed up" its dossier with a claim which it "probably knew was wrong".

Mr Gilligan admitted he had not used exactly the right language.

The inquiry was then shown an internal BBC email from Mr Gilligan's editor on the Today programme, Kevin Marsh, a month after the controversial report was broadcast.

It said: "The story was a good piece of investigative journalism marred by flawed reporting. Our biggest millstone has been his [Andrew Gilligan's] loose use of language and lack of judgement in some of the phraseology."

Just before Mr Gilligan left the inquiry he was asked whether he had exaggerated or embellished what Dr Kelly had said.

"No," he replied.

The hearings continue.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Lord Hutton published his report on 28 January 2004. It was highly critical of the BBC, saying the key allegations reported by Andrew Gilligan were "unfounded", and criticising "defective" BBC editorial processes. Lord Hutton absolved the government of any kind of "dishonourable, underhand or duplicitous strategy" in the leaking of Dr Kelly's name to the press. But he said the Ministry of Defence was "at fault" for failing to tell Dr Kelly that his identity as the suspected source would be confirmed to journalists who suggested it. Shortly after the report was published, BBC chairman Gavyn Davis and the corporation's Director General Greg Dyke resigned. Andrew Gilligan handed in his resignation on 30 January, describing the BBC as the victim of a "grave injustice". He joined the Evening Standard newspaper before returning to broadcasting, presenting a documentary for Channel Four. Mark Thompson, the former Chief Executive of Channel Four, took over as Director General in June 2004.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Luna's supportive link with grounded Saturn makes it an ideal day to enter into commitments or revisit the exchanges happening within present ones.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Luna's smooth connection with disciplined Saturn makes it easy to stay on task and put in long hours. Just be sure not to burn yourself out by ignoring your body.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
The moon's presence in artistically-inclined Libra encourages you to reconnect with your passions and sense of play, rather than dutifully submit yourself to mundane responsibilities.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
It's okay to withdraw from the world today, Cancer. You're likely to be craving quiet time to reconnect with family members and the sanctuary that is your home.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Don't go overboard with socializing today if you can help it, Leo. The moon's presence in reserved Scorpio encourages you to settle in on the home front and keep a low profile.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Put some of your talents to the test today, Virgo! The moon's presence in logical Libra implores you to activate any dormant skills and breathe fresh life into the dream.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Tend to yourself today, Libra. Rather than send your energy out into the world, seek to center some nurturing attention on your feelings, health, and body.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Pull away into a private world of your own today. You don't owe anyone an explanation; you just need to restore your energy levels and catch up on some downtime and reflective thought.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Reach out to your community of friends today. There's no need to keep tirelessly pushing ahead with your career goals right now - especially when you're running low on inspiration.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Let yourself go into full on productive Capricorn mode today. The moon's presence in balance-bringing Libra encourages you to direct your energy towards making strides on the career front.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Break free from the mundane today. You were born to be eccentric and let your freak flag fly - so, why are you continuing to submit yourself to limiting, mundane life circumstances?

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Slip away into a world of your own today, Pisces. You're not likely to be in the mood for meaningless small talk or light and fluffy encounters with other people.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

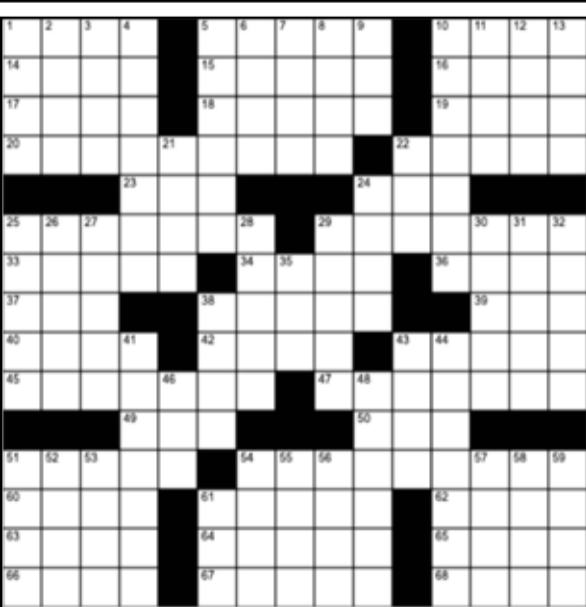
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	17	30	fine
Harbin	10	19	thunderstorms
Tianjin	18	26	cloudy
Urumqi	16	29	cloudy
Xi'an	18	30	cloudy
Lhasa	16	24	fine
Chengdu	22	32	rain
Chongqing	24	28	rain
Kunming	19	29	cloudy
Nanjing	15	24	cloudy
Shanghai	28	36	thunderstorms
Wuhan	20	26	cloudy
Hangzhou	9	18	thunderstorms
Taipei	16	28	cloudy
Guangzhou	12	26	fine
Hong Kong	18	31	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	17	31	clear
Frankfurt	8	14	rain
Paris	8	15	rain
London	7	16	cloudy
New York	14	24	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Jack of "Rio Lobo"; 5- Less common; 10- Gossip; 14- Garment of ancient Rome; 15- Actress Verdugo; 16- Switch back?; 17- Plastic clog; 18- Under way; 19- Coal-rich region; 20- First-rate; 22- Musical drama; 23- Former measure of length; 24- To's partner; 25- Sleep; 29- Electric appliance; 33- Emblem; 34- Roy's "singin' partner"; 36- Calamitous; 37- N.L. West team, on scoreboards; 38- Beaming; 39- Cut down grass; 40- Story, often rooted in folklore; 42- Intro to physics; 43- Honkers; 45- Voted into a seat; 47- Braided; 49- Samovar; 50- Aardvark morsel; 51- Egyptian peninsula; 54- Train; 60- Diploma holder; 61- Tennis's Monica; 62- ___ impasse; 63- Up ___ good; 64- Aggregate of qualities that make good character; 65- Depend; 66- "The Lion King" villain; 67- Snooped; 68- Village People hit.

DOWN: 1- Draw with acid; 2- Actress Singer; 3- Awestruck; 4- Swordlike knife; 5- For sure?; 6- Code word for A; 7- Classic autos; 8- Slaughter in Cooperstown; 9- Rodent, betrayer; 10- To be downcast; 11- Dies ___; 12- Din; 13- When said three times, a 1970 war movie; 21- Skelton's Kadiddlehopper; 22- Vein contents; 24- Soared; 25- Condition; 26- Every sixty minutes; 27- Useful; 28- Shoved aside; 29- Puff up; 30- Small change; 31- Uneven; 32- Marry again; 35- High-pitched; 38- Traditional prayer ending; 41- Republic in South America; 43- Fellow; 44- Tidal river; 46- Numerical prefix; 48- Elevated; 51- Cpls.' superiors; 52- Camaro model; 53- "Peter Pan" dog; 54- Submarine; 55- Pub offerings; 56- ___ noire; 57- Up and ___; 58- Apply powder to oneself; 59- "Only Time" singer; 61- Honshu honorific.



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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Taipa Village
Ref: 2007 6001
HKD 3,780,000
650 ft² 1 1 1

FOR RENT
One Central
Ref: 2106 1001
HKD 16,500/mth
1,292 ft² 2 2 2
REDUCED

Rain Dance Property
"We dance until it's SOLD!"
Traditional apartment
Ref: 2103 6001
HKD 2,680,000
788 ft² 2 1 1

AD

AVIATION

DUBAI'S BUSY AIRPORT SEES PASSENGER TRAFFIC DROP 40% IN 2021

ISABEL DEBRE, DUBAI

DUBAI International Airport, the world's busiest airport for international travel, handled some 40% less passenger traffic in the first half of 2021, compared to the same period last year, its chief executive said yesterday.

The decline came as more contagious coronavirus variants cut off the hub's biggest source markets and continued to clobber the global aviation industry.

However, CEO Paul Griffiths remains optimistic for the crucial east-west transit point as authorities gradually re-open Dubai's key routes to the Indian subcontinent and Britain.

The 10.6 million passengers that passed through the airport over the past six months "is still very positive," Griffiths told The Associated Press. "I think coupled with the restrictions easing that we're now seeing, (it) will bode very well for a satisfactory end to the year."

The airport, which saw 86.4 million people squeeze through before the pandemic hit in 2019, has held the title of the world's busiest since it beat out London's Heathrow seven years ago. It even kept the crown as the virus turned the world's biggest airports into massive voids. But the once-teeming terminals still have a long way to go before seeing pre-pandemic passenger levels.

The hopes stoked by the United Arab Emirates' speedy vaccination campaign took a hit as the



delta variant emerged, prompting familiar border closures and capacity cuts, and hurting the mammoth airport, hub of long-haul carrier Emirates. Dubai World Central, the Gulf city's second airport that went out of use for commercial flights during the pandemic, appears to be a parking lot for Emirates' iconic fleet of double-decker Airbus A380s.

Although the UAE recently lifted an entry ban on India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, which are home to most of the vast foreign workforce in the federation, stringent vaccination requirements still bar many from boarding flights to the country.

"All of those South Asian markets are incredibly important to Dubai, they're a very important transit opportunity, of course, as

people go to all parts of northern Europe," said Griffiths. "It's very important we get those traffic flows back."

There are reasons to expect a rebound, Griffiths added. One of the airport's two main terminals, mothballed amid the pandemic, returned to use last month to prepare for an influx of holiday-makers escaping wintry weather and attending the World

Expo in October.

And after months of frustration and confusion, the U.K. last week removed the UAE from its "red list" that ordered all travelers to quarantine for 10 days in costly, government-approved hotels. The upgrade to "amber" elicited a strong sigh of relief throughout the federation of seven sheikhdoms, home to some 120,000 British expats. London was ranked as the top destination city for Dubai's airport in 2020, with 1.15 million customers.

Griffiths declined to put a number on the financial hit, but said the "loss of traffic (to the U.K.) has had a very, very significant impact on the economy of both countries."

So thrilled was Emirates about the flight resumption that the airline plopped a woman on the pinnacle of the tallest tower on the planet, Burj Khalifa, and filmed her raising placards that implored Brits to fly Emirates.

The stakes are indeed high for Dubai, where the economy thrives not on oil, like in other Gulf Arab sheikhdoms, but on travel and tourism. Emirates remains the linchpin of the wider empire known as "Dubai Inc.," an interlocking series of businesses owned by the city-state.

There are signs of looming uncertainty, with the airport yet to hire back any of the 5,000 employees it furloughed during the devastation of the pandemic last year. But when asked whether Dubai Airport would hold onto its title — one of many prized superlatives in the extravagant emirate home to the world's tallest building and biggest mall — Griffiths didn't miss a beat.

"I have no doubt in my mind," he said. "We're gearing up to expect a huge surge in volume." **MDT/AP**

China's foreign trade growth rate hits 10-year high

THE volume of China's foreign trade, exports and imports all hit record highs in the first seven months of 2021, while their year-on-year growth rates set 10-year highs compared with the same period in previous years, the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) said this week.

The country's total imports and exports expanded 24.5% year on year to 21.34 trillion yuan (about 3.3 trillion U.S. dollars) from January to July. Exports rose 24.5% from a year ago, while imports jumped 24.4% in the first seven months, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

In July, imports and exports rose 11.5% year on year to 3.27 trillion yuan, with the volume becoming

the second highest in history only after that in June, the MOC said.

China's exports to developed markets such as the United States, the European Union and Japan rose 22.6% in the first seven months. Its trade with emerging markets continued to grow, with exports to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Latin America, Africa and other emerging markets rising 26.5% year on year, boosting the overall exports growth by 13 percentage points, the MOC said.

Various market entities have been dynamic in foreign trade, the MOC said.

Exports of private enterprises rose 30.1% year on year in the first seven months, exports of foreign-funded enterprises climbed

17.9%, and exports of state-owned enterprises gained 16.7%.

Nearly 95% of the new businesses that engaged in foreign trade in the first seven months are privately owned.

New growth drivers for foreign trade continued to grow. In the first half of the year, cross-border e-commerce exports rose 44.1% year on year. Driven by new-energy vehicles, automobile exports rose 102.5%, a record high compared with that for the same period in previous years.

Despite the rapid growth in foreign trade, the economic recovery still faces uncertainties due to the pandemic and the risks in industrial and supply chains, the MOC said. **XINHUA**

BLOOMBERG



FOOTBALL

Lionel Messi eyes Champions League trophy with PSG

LIONEL Messi said he's "in the right place" to win another Champions League trophy and cited a reunion with Neymar as a key factor in his decision to sign with Paris Saint-Germain.

The 34-year-old Argentina star spoke at his introductory news conference at Parc des Princes stadium yesterday, the morning after signing a two-year deal with the option for a third season after leaving Barcelona.

"My goal and dream is to raise another Champion's (League Trophy) and I believe that I am in the right place to have the best chances to achieve that," Messi said.

"When you see this squad, you really want to play with them because there are so many possibilities," he added. "We have the same goal. And Neymar of course did a lot and was important for my choice."

Qatari-backed PSG has been desperate to win the Champions



Change of mood: A smiling Messi addresses reporters at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris yesterday

League, falling just short when it lost the 2020 final to Bayern Munich. Messi helped Barcelona win four Champions League trophies.

Messi's arrival gives PSG formidable attacking options as he links up with not only Neymar — his former teammate at Barcelo-

na — but also France World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe.

"I'm going to play with best players, it's very nice, it's incredible to be able to experience this," said Messi, who also cited Argentina teammates and PSG players Ángel di Maria and

Leandro Paredes.

"Obviously, one of the reasons (I came) was the locker room: Neymar, Di María, Paredes, whom I know."

Messi said he is "ready" to start playing with PSG, which hosts Strasbourg on Saturday night.

"When I feel it, when the staff thinks I'm ok, I'll be ready. I'm willing to play," he said.

Messi became the most high-profile free agent in soccer history after his attempts to stay at Barcelona were rejected last week by the Spanish league because the salary would not comply with financial regulations, with the Catalan club burdened by debts of more than 1.2 billion euros (\$1.4 billion).

PSG moved quickly to sign the Argentina star. The team, Messi said, "positioned themselves and everything went really fast and it was easy. It happened in little time. It was a difficult situation and they were efficient."

PSG coach Mauricio Pochetti-

no quickly made contact with his fellow Argentine after Barcelona announced last Thursday that Messi would be leaving the club he joined as a 13-year-old boy.

Messi won every major honor with Barcelona and was granted a tearful exit news conference on Sunday to signal the end of an era. Only Cristiano Ronaldo in the current era challenges Messi's status as an all-time great.

While PSG had to pay 222 million euros (then \$261 million) to sign Neymar from Barcelona in 2017, there was no transfer fee for Messi.

No salary details were given, but a person with knowledge of the negotiations earlier told The Associated Press that Messi is set to earn around 35 million euros (\$41 million) net annually. The person said on condition of anonymity before the contract was signed.

PSG will be hoping not only that Messi helps the team regain the French title it lost to Lille last season but finally win the Champions League.

Paris Saint-Germain president Nasser Al-Khelaifi praised "a historic day for the club, football world and it is a fantastic moment for us."

Messi said it was "very hard" to leave Barcelona after so many years but added "the moment I arrived here I felt very happy."

MDT/AP

AD



HOLIDAY RENTAL HOUSES

Lugar das Letras Casa de Gouvães

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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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

BOOMING TRADE REFLECTS STEADY RECOVERY

In a sign that China's economy is recovering well from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's total foreign trade, exports and imports all hit record highs in the first seven months of the year, with their respective year-on-year growth rates — at 24.5 percent, 24.5 percent and 24.4 percent — setting 10-year highs compared with the same period in previous years, according to data released by the General Administration of Customs on Tuesday.

The figures indicate that momentum in trade for the first half of the year continued into July, a trade volume of 3.27 trillion yuan (\$505.72 billion) being recorded that month, the second-highest in history after that in June, according to the Ministry of Commerce. This bodes well for China's economic performance for the rest of the year.

The vibrancy in trade may come as a surprise to many, given the serious pandemic prevention and control measures still in force in the country, as sporadic infections are being reported in many places nationwide and the pressure of imported cases remains high. Not to mention the negative impacts on Chinese companies from the US-China trade war and the disruptions in global supply chains caused by tensions in their relations and COVID-19.

That China's foreign trade has beaten all odds to continue making headway results from many factors, ranging from the government's timely policy support and the resilience of Chinese enterprises, to the country's much improved trade structure that features exports of more sophisticated products. For example, driven by new-energy vehicles, automobile exports rose 102.5 percent, a record high compared with that for the same period in previous years.

Another noticeable point is the fact that trade with the United States, China's third-largest trading partner, rose 28.9 percent in the first seven months to reach 2.62 trillion yuan despite the higher tariffs the US government has imposed on Chinese goods and its sanctions on Chinese enterprises.

Which begs the question when will Washington end the lose-lose trade war it started and begin rebuilding a mutually beneficial and win-win trade relationship. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has already admitted that the tariffs that remain in place have harmed US consumers. And in a letter sent to Yellen and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai last week, more than 30 major US business groups, from the agriculture to the semiconductor and pharmaceutical sectors, called on the White House to restart trade talks with China and cut import tariffs.

The robust Chinese trade performance will be a boon not only to China but the rest of the world as well, including the US. Washington should reflect on whether continuing to wage its trade war against China is in the best interests of the US.

CHINESE OUTBREAK TRACED TO MAHJONG, TESTING SITE

State media said one of China's most serious recent outbreaks of COVID-19 partly stemmed from people gathered at mahjong parlors and at a virus testing site.

The city of Yangzhou in the eastern province of Jiangsu added another 54 confirmed cases yesterday, bringing its total to 448 since the outbreak spread from the international airport in the provincial capital of Nanjing on July 20.

Reports said the cluster has been traced partly to a 64-year-old woman who visited several mahjong parlors after returning from Nan-

jing and was positive for the virus during mass testing following the outbreak.

Dozens of others were infected at a testing site in the village of Lianhe on the outskirts of Yangzhou, the ruling Communist Party newspaper People's Daily said. While China has imposed stiff rules on testing, lockdowns and mask wearing, test sites in Beijing and elsewhere have experienced crowding and relatively little social distancing.

China currently has 1,789 COVID-19 patients in treatment, 666 of them in Jiangsu.

THE BUZZ



AP PHOTO

GAMING

IN-PERSON GAMBLERS LIFTING US CASINO MARKET TO ITS BEST YEAR

GAMBLERS anxious to hit the slot machines and table games in person after a year of coronavirus restrictions are lifting the U.S. casino industry to its best year ever.

But the great unknown is whether a new, more contagious variant of COVID-19 will slow an industry that is now winning money at a record pace.

Data released Tuesday by the American Gaming Association, the casino industry's national trade group, show that America's casinos had their best second quarter in history, taking in \$13.6 billion.

The report also shows the industry has nearly equaled all the revenue U.S. casinos took in during 2020, amid widespread casino shutdowns and restrictions that lingered even after they reopened.

It is clear that 2021 could be the best year in history for U.S. casinos. The gambling halls are on track to surpass 2019 (\$43.6 billion) as the highest-grossing year ever. Nearly \$25 billion has been won during the first six months of this year.

"These first half results are truly remarkable," said Bill Miller, the association's president and CEO. "COVID-19 is not yet in the rearview mirror, but I'm confident the record first half of 2021 has laid a strong foundation for the industry's full recovery."

The more contagious delta variant of the virus, which became a worsening problem at the end of the second quarter, now accounts for most new cases in the U.S.

"We've had a setback for sure with the Delta variant and some challenges with vaccinations, but I think we're going to get through it," he said. "We have, as an industry, focused very strongly on ensuring that we're providing both a safe environment for our employees and our guests."

"We also continue to listen to where our governmental leaders tell us what we need to do," he said. "I was out in Las Vegas about two and a half weeks ago to witness a couple of different trade shows. During that time, if you were vaccinated, you didn't have to wear masks. Guidance has changed. There may well be guidance that changes a couple more times."

Many gamblers say they are happy to be able to visit casinos in person this year after enduring pandemic shutdowns.

"I am not concerned; I am vaccinated," said Jeanne Bachard of Bridgeport, Connecticut. "I live by the rule I will take care of myself and not worry about how anyone else lives their lives. I do what I feel is right for me."

Mike Wolk Sr. of Sewell,

New Jersey, is fully vaccinated and plays eight hours in a casino poker room once a week. He has diabetes and prostate cancer.

"I don't wear a mask but I am getting a little concerned," he said.

Gene Brandon of Ridgefield, Connecticut, said he used to go to the casino twice a month before the pandemic. He has started to go again now that he's vaccinated.

"When going now, I still mask up to reduce the chance of inadvertently contracting and transmitting to those that are not vaccinated, especially those under 12," Brandon said.

The association said casinos remain open without capacity restrictions in all 25 states that currently have commercial casinos (those not run by Indian tribes).

Twenty-two of those states saw increases in gambling revenue in the second quarter compared with the second quarter of 2019, excluding last year's comparison that's skewed by months of closures. And 19 of the 25 states surpassed their totals for the first half of 2019.

Sports betting and internet gambling helped keep the casino industry alive last year when physical casinos were shut down. But it is in-person gambling that is fueling the industry's recovery this year. **MDT/AP**

India A landslide struck several vehicles traveling on a highway in the hills of northern India yesterday, trapping as many as 50 people, officials said. A bus, a truck and a few other vehicles were buried under mud and rocks following the landslide in Himachal Pradesh state's Kinnaur district, said Vivek Kumar Pandey, a spokesman for the Indo-Tibetan Border Police.



AP PHOTO

Poland's right-wing ruling coalition has collapsed after a small coalition partner announced yesterday that it was leaving the government amid a rift over legislation it views as an attack on media freedom. The media bill, which is scheduled for an afternoon vote, would prevent non-European owners from having controlling stakes in Polish media companies. It is viewed as a crucial test for the survival of independent media in the former communist nation, coming six years into the rule of a populist government that has chipped away at media and judicial independence.



AP PHOTO

German prosecutors said yesterday they have detained a British citizen who is accused of spying for Russia while working at the British Embassy in Berlin. Federal prosecutors said in a statement that the man was detained on Tuesday in the city of Potsdam southwest of the capital based on cooperative investigations by German and British authorities. In keeping with German privacy laws, he was only identified as David S.

Turkey Heavy rains that triggered floods and mudslides left a woman missing yesterday in northern Turkey's coastal Bartın province, officials said. The floods in the Black Sea province came as firefighters in southwest Turkey worked to extinguish wildfires a wildfire in Mugla province, which runs along the Aegean Sea. At least eight people and countless animals have died in more than 200 wildfires in Turkey since July 28.