



THE EASING ON THE CURRENT COVID-19 PREVENTION AND CONTROL MEASURES IS DEPENDENT ON THE RESULTS OF THE ONGOING MASS TESTING

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GOV'T SAYS HENGQIN 'NEW HEIGHTS FOR GREATER BAY AREA'

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THE BANK OF CHINA'S MACAU BRANCH ISSUED BIODIVERSITY-THEMED 'GREEN BONDS' AMOUNTING TO RMB1.8 BILLION

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AP PHOTO



Afghanistan The Taliban hanged a dead body from a crane parked in a city square in Afghanistan in a gruesome display that signaled the hard-line movement's return to some of its brutal tactics of the past. Taliban officials initially brought four bodies to the central square in the western city of Herat, then moved three of them to other parts of the city for public display, said Wazir Ahmad Seddiqi, who runs a pharmacy on the edge of the square.

AP PHOTO



Israel Five Palestinian gunmen were killed in shootouts with Israeli security forces during a sweeping West Bank arrest operation cracking down on the Islamic militant group Hamas yesterday. It was the deadliest violence between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants in the occupied West Bank in recent weeks and came amid heightened tensions following this year's 11-day war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

AP PHOTO



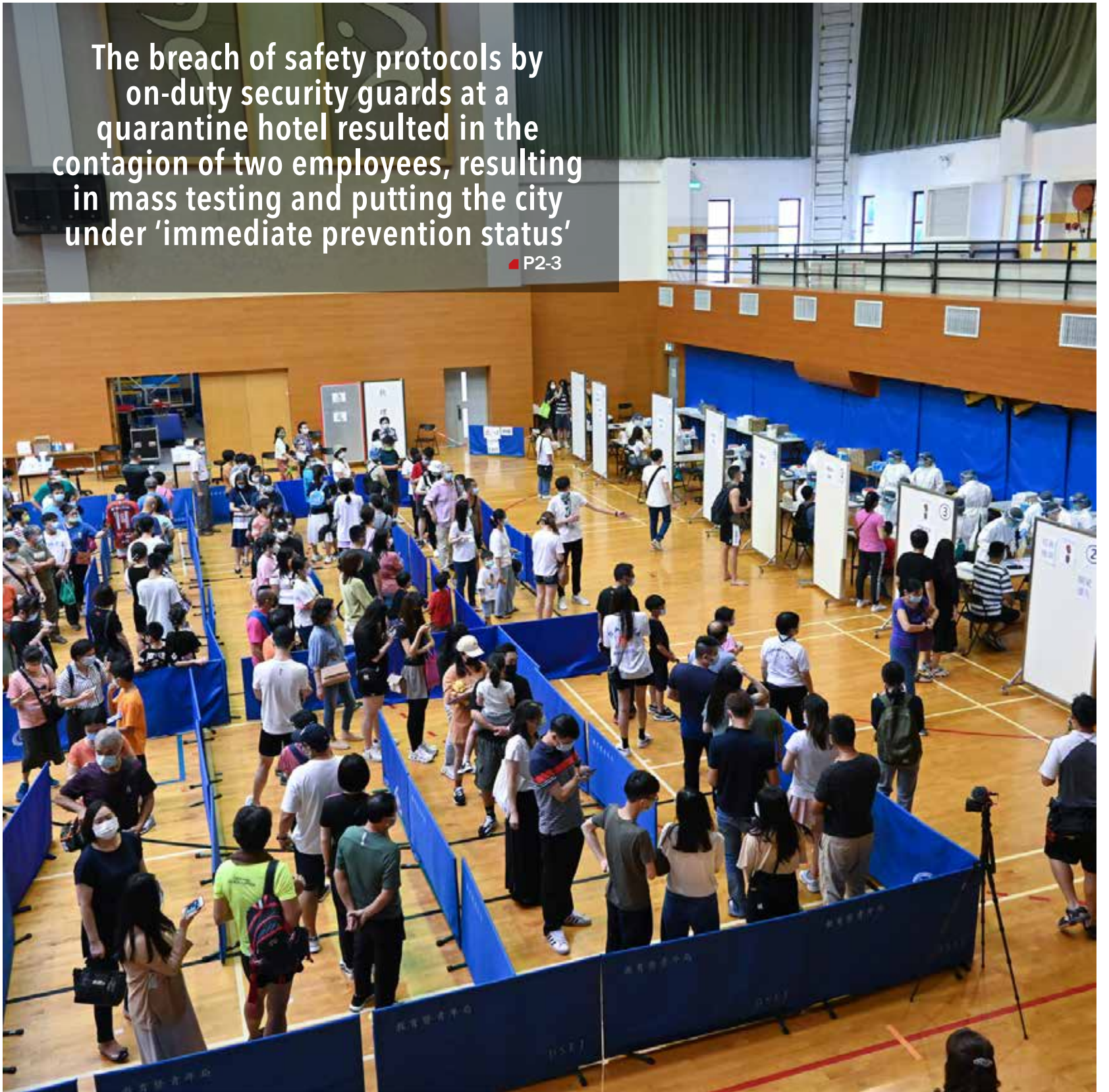
Russia's top diplomat defended the Mali government's right to hire a private Russian military company to help fight terrorists, accusing French troops in the country of failing to get rid of them and scolding the European Union for demanding that the Russian mercenaries leave. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the company has a "legitimate" right to be in the West African nation because it was invited by the transitional government, and insisted Russian government is not involved.

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MASS TESTING 2.0

The breach of safety protocols by on-duty security guards at a quarantine hotel resulted in the contagion of two employees, resulting in mass testing and putting the city under 'immediate prevention status'

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HUAWEI CFO, CANADIANS RETURN HOME IN PRISONER SWAP

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Breach of safety protocols by security guards

RENATO MARQUES

THE breach of safety protocols by on-duty security guards at the Golden Crown China Hotel resulted in the contagion of two staff members, who have been classified as case numbers 65 and 66 of Covid-19 infection in Macau.

The revelation came yesterday from director of the Health Bureau (SSM) Dr. Alvis Lo during the regular Covid-19 media briefing.

The two workers were working on the floor where the third newest patient—publicly known as Case No. 64, a returnee from Turkey—was being quarantined. They had the responsibility of taking body temperature.

According to Lo, following the investigation conducted by the health authorities, it was ascertained that both infections occurred due to contact with Case No. 64 while not wearing the personal protection equipment (PPE) properly—namely the improper usage of facemasks.

“We can confirm that the source of the infection is the 64th case and, according to footage from surveillance cameras that we request-

ed of the quarantine venue, the contagion would have happened when the two security guards had direct contact with the infected patient while using their facemask incorrectly. They were wearing facemasks but not properly,” Lo said in his reply to an inquiry from the media.

The SSM director also added that the health authorities are evaluating the situation to see how they can prevent similar cases from happening in the future.

Dr. Leong Iek Hou, coordinator of the New Coronavirus Contingency Coordination Center, added that, on principle, workers at quarantine hotel venues should not have any contact with people undergoing medical observation and—in cases where the avoidance of this contact is impossible—it should be minimized.

“Regarding the security guards, we [the health authorities] have issued particular instructions to them. They must wear PPE at all times and use it correctly,” she said. “Also, cleaning staff has specific guidelines as well as for meals distribution and all that. All [guidelines] state that no contact should happen between staff and people in medical observa-



tion.” She noted that meals should be left by the room doors and people in quarantine can be informed via a phone call to the room that the delivery has been completed.

Regarding the details of the improper usage of facemasks, Leong said that it was possible to see in the surveillance footage that the two

guards working on the floor of case number 64 had direct contact with him on several occasions while their facemasks were not covering their noses, and sometimes not even their mouths, as the mask was underneath the chin.

“We verified that this happened when they had contact to measure

temperature,” Leong added. Lo added that it is already confirmed that the three new cases are infected with the delta variant of Covid-19.

“The two cases, linked to the imported case, are all in a stable situation and undergoing treatment at Coloane’s Public Health Clinical

Further Covid-19 measures depending on mass test results

RENATO MARQUES

EITHER the easing or tightening of the current Covid-19 prevention and control measures is dependent on the results of the ongoing citywide mass testing, the director of the Health Bureau (SSM) Dr. Alvis Lo said yesterday during the regular Covid-19 media briefing.

The potential changes to the current measures discussed by Lo include the mandatory quarantine for people who are in close contact with the infected, the reduction of validity of nucleic acid tests (NAT), and the suspension of school and university activities as well as other community-based institutions.

For the time being, health authorities have identified and isolated a total



of 680 people who are in some way connected to the two cases in the community. These people have performed their first round of NAT, and all results were negative.

Health authorities also announced that all the workers of the Golden

Crown China Hotel and the neighboring Treasure Hotel have been placed under quarantine for mandatory medical observation following the cases registered at the Golden Crown China Hotel.

According to Dr. Leong Iek Hou, as two security

guards were infected at Golden Crown China Hotel, “authorities have decided that there has been contagion in this hotel. This means, that all the workers from this hotel, from all departments, are being subjected to a 14-day quarantine in isolation.”

Leong also noted, “taking into account that this hotel and next-door venue Treasure hotel has a connection, all the other workers from the second [hotel] are also subject to a 14-day quarantine.”

CONTAGION TO AFFECT GUESTS

For the people who are currently undergoing quarantine at these venues, “some will have a longer quarantine stay,” Leong added. He said that this applies primarily to those whose quarantine period is finishing today or in the coming days.

“Those that finish [quarantine] tomorrow will have to stay more days under observation. The period will be considered case-by-case but will never be less than a week,” she informed.

According to figures cited by the official, among those undergoing quarantine there are a total of 42 security guards, and 146 hotel workers from different departments, including cleaning, food and beverage, and even administrative staff.

She also noted that the situation has been handled in an “enclosed manner,” with the people being called to stay in quarantine at the venue to avoid any possible spread of the infection.

The health authorities also said that the Municipal Affairs Bureau was called on to perform deep cleaning and disinfection in all the public spaces of both hotels, ensuring that there is no potential viral spread.

As of 9 p.m. last night, 383,222 residents have taken the test.

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reason for contagion



Centre. For the time being, none of the patients has had a fever or any other symptoms of the disease," Lo informed.

HOTEL MAY FACE CONSEQUENCES OVER RULE-BREACH

When questioned by the media, representative of the Macao Go-

vernment Tourism Office (MGTO) Liz Lam admitted that the Golden Crown China Hotel might face sanctions over the breach of the safety protocols which resulted in a potential community contagion. Said infections have led to a second round of mass testing for the whole population in Macau.

Lam added that regular inspections are being conducted to the quarantine venues. If the situation arises that a flaw is detected during one of these inspections, the MGTO issues a warning to the hotel. She also admitted that there is a sanction mechanism for the "more severe cases."

The official also noted, regarding the sanctions to be imposed on the hotel, that the "MGTO is evaluating together with the SSM if these breaches are a violation of the Law for Prevention and Control of Infectious diseases," hinting that added sanctions could come from such evaluation.

Previously, Lo has said that such behavior is cannot be excused by a lack of knowledge, as the SSM had provided both instructions and training to all the staff of quarantine hotels and regularly reminds them of their duties.

"We have been training them on how to prevent contagion and maintain distance. We will react to this and we will talk with the hotel to reinforce the safety. We will reinforce

on this matter with other hotels," Lo said, adding that the flaw might have also been caused by a relaxation on the enforcement of some procedures due to a long period of no cases in Macau.

"This is not lack of training nor lack of knowledge. Just sometimes practice is harder to enforce especially if there is a long time without any cases. We might see some loosening of the rules," he said. "Still, we cannot have inspectors for each worker, this is a responsibility of the companies [hotels] to their workers."

"Quarantine hotels have a potential risk. We know this. This is why we need to inspect the hotels to ensure that they are adequate to receive people under quarantine," Lo concluded.

SHERATON RESUMES STATUS AS QUARANTINE HOTEL

SHERATON Grand Macao hotel will resume operation as a quarantine hotel venue, the Macao Government Tourism Office confirmed yesterday during the Covid-19 briefing.

The hotel will supply a further 2,000 hotel rooms for use as quarantine so as to meet an expected increase in demand for medical observation facilities.

Sheraton Grand Macao stopped

its role as a quarantine facility in late July.

It was the first major hotel unit to be designated by the government as a quarantine facility back in March 2020.

Since then, the hotel has been in and out of the quarantine venues list, being called on to exercise these duties each time the authorities expected a sudden surge in demand for quarantine hotel rooms.

Mass testing rolled out following new Covid-19 cases

LYNZY VALLES

THE second round of mass testing commenced on Saturday following the discovery of two new Covid-19 cases among the security guards working at a designated quarantine hotel.

On Saturday morning, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong U announced in a special press conference that the second round of mass testing will commence at 3 p.m., and its registration opens at 10 a.m.

The nationwide plan comes after the detection of the 65th and 66th case involving a 27-year-old and 32-year-old Nepalese men working as security guards at the Golden Crown China Hotel.

The Macau SAR is under the "immediate prevention status" as of 12 a.m. on Saturday.

Just before midnight on Saturday, Acting Chief Executive André Cheong announced in a dispatch that Macau is now facing an "extremely high" contagion risk within the local community.

The government is urging residents to not leave Macau while the city is still facing an "extremely high" contagion risk within the local community.

The arrangements for the nationwide plan is being carried out according to the optimized plan announced in August.

Those who are considered elderly and living with a disability can choose not to make an appointment to undergo the nucleic acid test (NAT), while the rest of the population are required to book an appointment online.

Previously, the government said that "carrying out the second round of mass testing is certainly more effective in smoking out invisible transmission chain," and that the earlier the next round commences, the better and safer it is for public health.

The 65th case lives in Rua da Palmeira no. 31, Edf. Tak Lei, 4/B; therefore, Edf. Tak Lei, Edf. Veng Hoi and Rua da Palmeira no. 35 have been classified as part of the prevention and control zone. The red health code was issued to these



residents. They will undergo on-site nucleic acid testing, which is provisionally set to take place on the first, third and fifth day.

The 66th confirmed case lives in Avenida de Horta e Costa, Edf. Palácio, 3/C. As such, blocks C and D of Edf. Palácio have also been classified as a prevention and control zone.

No other positive cases have been detected so far.

SCHOOLS URGED TO CANCEL ACTIVITIES

In order to cooperate with the epidemic prevention and control work of the SAR government, and to guarantee the health and safety of teachers and students, the Education and Youth Development

Bureau (DSEDJ) has mandated that all tertiary education institutions and non-tertiary education schools cancel all activities and courses on campus, cancel or postpone all class outings and visiting activities, and suspend campus opening starting from Saturday.

The DSEDJ also strongly urges private supple-

mentary education support centers and institutions participating in Continuing Education Development Plan to suspend opening.

Ferry services between the Inner Harbour Ferry Terminal and Zhuhai's Wanzai Port have also been suspended temporarily from 2 p.m. on Saturday until further notice.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

GOV'T DESCRIBES HENGQIN AS 'NEW HEIGHTS FOR THE GBA'

ANTHONY LAM

THE Master Plan for the development of the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin will make the land a testing ground for China's new system of higher-level and an open economy, the SAR government described in a statement.

In addition, the Cooperation Zone will fully tap on the potential for institutional innovation in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), make full use of the favorable factors of Macau and Zhuhai, create a new highland for the construction of the GBA, and lead the development of the surrounding areas.

The Master Plan "covers a wealth of innovative policies and measures, which will enable the Cooperation Zone to reach new heights for the construction of the GBA and lead the development of surrounding areas," the Macau government stated.



The government added that the Cooperation Zone would break original constraints and barriers in order to actively promote system innovation and to synchronize with international high-level economic rules.

According to the authorization of the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee, the

government pointed out that relevant laws and regulations will be adjusted, suspended or modified to achieve it.

The government noted that the Cooperation Zone will be the first area in the GBA to have a system synchronized with both Macau and the world, realizing the efficient and convenient flow of personnel,

goods, capital, and information.

The Cooperation Zone will use a collaborative promotion mechanism to combine Hengqin's size and resourcefulness with the unique advantages of Macau's "one country, two systems" background, separate customs areas, free international trade ports and connections with Portuguese-speaking countries. It will also help Macau achieve an "adequately diverse economy."

Describing the Cooperation Zone as "a major historic opportunity, the government calls on all sectors of the Macau society to participate in the building of the area and transform the land into a strong and competitive zone that can position itself as a leading example of the GBA."

CE INVITES SICHUAN'S CO-BUILDING HENGQIN

In a meeting with Pang Qinghua, party secretary of Sichuan Province, Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng invited the province's input on the development of Hengqin. Hengqin has been set to transform into the Guangdong-Macau Intensive Cooperation Zone, which, according to the CE, is a "major decision planned, positioned and put forward by President Xi Jinping." To support his invitation, Ho explained

that the cooperation between Macau and Sichuan has a reliable foundation. Meanwhile, potential for further cooperation is significant. On the other hand, the province has been strong in developing traditional Chinese medicines. Cooperation between Macau and Sichuan in terms of improving quality and expanding development of the area should be sought.

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CE OFFICIATES OPENING OF MACAO WEEK IN SICHUAN

THE Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng officiated the opening of the "Macao Week in Sichuan-Chengdu" on Friday.

The event presented a mega roadshow at Jiaozi Plaza, Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone in Chengdu, to promote the city's diverse elements of tourism and commerce, showcase the diversity of "tourism +" and raise Macau's profile as a "healthy, safe and glamorous destination."

Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong, remarked that the roadshow is jointly presented by Sichuan and Macau, engaging various governmental entities, enterprises, commerce associations, performance groups and so forth to bring Macau's "tourism +" to Chengdu.

The event manifests the diversity of tourism elements Macau has to offer through the mega roadshow, and fosters cooperation among re-

lated industry operators from both sides through the Tourism and MICE Presentation Seminar and Trade Networking Session, among other highlights.

Member of the Standing Committee of Sichuan Provincial Committee of CPC and Vice Governor of Sichuan Province, Li Yunze, expressed in his remarks that Sichuan and Macau maintain a long-term close relationship.

He recalled that in the wake of the earthquake in Wenchuan on May 12 2008, the SAR extended "benevolence and generous help across miles, fully manifesting the great spirit of the Chinese nation in supporting each other through adversity."

In November 2018, Sichuan and Macau established the mechanism of Sichuan-Macau Cooperation Conference officially to unveil a new chapter for exchange and cooperation.

The two places have

attained significant results of exchange and cooperation in the fields of tourism, MICE, culture, finance, Chinese medicine, technology, professional services, commerce and trade, education and health among others.

Meanwhile, to boost commercial and trade exchange and cooperation between enterprises in Chengdu and Macau, the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) held the "Chengdu-Macao Business Matching and Networking Session."

103 enterprises from various industries including trade, food/product retail and distribution, electronic commerce, tourism, participated in the event.

A total 82 matching sessions took place, covering areas such as food souvenir and wine distribution, essential oil collaboration project, products' launch on e-commerce platform. LV

Tourist arrivals plunge as city enters 'immediate prevention status'

TOURIST arrivals recorded a significant plunge of 70% on Saturday compared to a day earlier due to the new Covid-19 cases in the region.

Authorities said that only 10,000 tourists entered the region on Saturday.

The number of border crossings also dived 43% to 214,000.

The tourism industry has been eyeing for a boost on tourist arrivals during the upcoming Golden Week, with authorities predicting approximately 40,000 arrivals during the seven-day national holiday.

In preparation for the upcoming holiday, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has been carrying out measures in



LYNZY VALLES

advance to promote the destination and different travel offers,

In a statement on Friday, the bureau said that it leverages different channels to inform visitors comprehensively about the pandemic situation and prevention, including posting pandemic prevention information

on its website and official accounts on WeChat and Weibo, distributing leaflets of "Pandemic prevention tips for mainland visitors in Macau" at MGTO's Tourist Information counters at various ports of entry.

However, due to the new cases, MGTO decided to postpone the "Light up

Macao Drone Gala" until further notice for the latest arrangements.

In addition, the bureau has cancelled the World Tourism Day activities including the Tray Race today, as well as the award ceremony for the Incubation Plan for Macau's KOLs in Tourism. LV

BOC ISSUES RMB1.8B BIODIVERSITY BONDS

THE Bank of China's (BOC) Macau branch issued biodiversity-themed "green bonds" amounting to RMB1.8 billion on September 23, the bank announced in a statement.

Issued in both the Chinese yuan and the Macanese pataca denominations, the bonds are the world's first batch from a financial institution with third-party accreditation on its theme and Asia's first biodiversity theme.

Funds raised by the bonds will be used on approved green projects relating to biodiversity.

The batch issued in patacas takes a unified mode of sale that consolidates local issuance, listing, trusteeship and clearance. The batch in yuan, meanwhile,

will be listed on the Macao Financial Assets Exchange (MOX).

The institution emphasized that the primary reason for the issuance was China's hosting of the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, Yunnan Province.

The issuance also aligns with the national developmental strategy in green finance as part of the 14th Five-Year Plan. Moreover, it highlights Macau's catalyzing position in the national development of green finance.

The bank has previously issued other green bonds and blue bonds. The issuance of biodiversity bonds has filled the gap of such products in the market, the bank added. **AL**

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ROB GILLIES, TORONTO

CHINA, the U.S. and Canada completed a high-stakes prisoner swap with joyous homecomings for two Canadians held by China and for an executive of Chinese global communications giant Huawei Technologies charged with fraud, potentially bringing closure to a 3-year feud that embroiled the three countries.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau hugged diplomat Michael Kovrig and entrepreneur Michael Spavor on the tarmac after they landed in Calgary, Alberta early Saturday. The men were detained in China in Dec. 2018, shortly after Canada arrested Meng Wanzhou, Huawei Technologies' chief financial officer and the daughter of the company's founder, on a U.S. extradition request.

Many countries labeled China's action "hostage politics," while China has described the charges against Huawei and Meng as a politically motivated attempt to holdback China's economic and technological development.

"It's fantastic to be back home in Canada and I am immensely grateful to everybody who worked hard to bring both of us back home," a noticeably thinner Kovrig said after a Canadian government plane landed in Toronto and he was greeted by his wife and sister.

Meng's return to China later Saturday was carried live on state TV, underscoring the degree to which Beijing has linked her case with Chinese nationalism and its rise as a global economic and political power.

Wearing a red dress matching the color of China's flag, Meng thanked the ruling Communist Party and its leader Xi Jinping for supporting her through more than 1,000 days in house arrest in Vancouver, where she owns two multimillion dollar mansions.

"I have finally returned to the warm embrace of the motherland," Meng said. "As an ordinary Chinese citizen going through this difficult time, I always felt the warmth and concern of the party, the nation and the people."

The chain of events involving the global powers brought an abrupt end to legal and geopolitical wrangling that has roiled relations between Washington, Beijing and Ottawa. The three-way deal enabled China and Canada to each bring home their own detained citizens while the U.S. wrapped up a criminal case against Meng that for months had been mired in an extradition fight.

"These two men have been through an unbelievably difficult ordeal. For the past 1,000 days, they have shown strength, perseverance and grace and we are all inspired by that," Trudeau said of the two Canadians.

Meng's been out on bail living in a multimillion-dollar mansion

CHINESE EXECUTIVE, CANADIANS RETURN HOME IN PRISONER SWAP

in Vancouver since her arrest while the two Canadians were held in Chinese prison cells for over 1,000 days where the lights were kept on 24 hours a day.

The first activity came Friday afternoon when Meng, 49, reached an agreement with federal prosecutors that called for fraud charges against her to be dismissed next year and allowed for her to return to China immediately. As part of the deal, known as a deferred prosecution agreement, she accepted responsibility for misrepresenting the company's business dealings in Iran.

The deal was reached as President Joe Biden and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping have sought to tamp down signs of public tension — even as the world's two dominant economies are at odds on issues as diverse as cybersecurity, climate change, human rights and trade and tariffs. Biden said in an address before the U.N. General Assembly earlier this week that he had no intention of starting a "new Cold War," while Xi told world leaders that disputes among countries "need to be handled through dialogue and cooperation."

"The U.S. Government stands with the international community in welcoming the decision by People's Republic of China authorities to release Canadian citizens Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig after more than two-and-a-half years of arbitrary detention. We are pleased that they are returning home to Canada," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

As part of the deal with Meng, the Justice Department agreed to dismiss the fraud charges against her in December 2022 — exactly four years after her arrest — provided that she complies with certain conditions, including not contesting any of the government's factual allegations. The Justice Department also agreed to drop its request that Meng be extradited to the U.S., which she had vigorously challenged.

After appearing via videoconference for her New York hearing, Meng made a brief court appearance in Vancouver.

Outside the courtroom, Meng thanked the Canadian government for upholding the rule of law, expressed gratitude to the Canadian people and apologized "for the inconvenience I caused."

"Over the last three years my life has been turned upside down," she said. "It was a disruptive time for me as a mother, a wife and as a company executive. But I believe every cloud has a silver lining. It really was an invaluable experience in my life. I will never forget all the



Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou waves as she steps out of an airplane after arriving at Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport on Saturday



Michael Kovrig (right) waves to media with his wife Vina Nadjibulla (center) after his arrival at Pearson International Airport in Toronto, Saturday

good wishes I received."

Shortly afterward, Meng left on an Air China flight for Shenzhen, China, the location of Huawei's headquarters.

Huawei is the biggest global supplier of network gear for phone and internet companies. It has been a symbol of China's progress in becoming a technological world power — and a subject of U.S. security and law enforcement concerns. Some analysts say Chinese companies have flouted international rules and norms and stolen technology.

The case against Meng stems from a January 2019 indictment from the Trump administration Justice Department that accused Huawei of stealing trade secrets and using a Hong Kong shell company called Skycom to sell equipment to Iran in violation of U.S. sanctions. The indictment

also charged Meng herself with committing fraud by misleading the HSBC bank about the company's business dealings in Iran.

The indictment came amid a broader Trump administration crackdown against Huawei over U.S. government concerns that the company's products could facilitate Chinese spying. The administration cut off Huawei's access to U.S. components and technology, including Google's music and other smartphone services, and later barred vendors worldwide from using U.S. technology to produce components for Huawei.

The Biden White House, meanwhile, has kept up a hard line on Huawei and other Chinese corporations whose technology is thought to pose national security risks. Huawei has repeatedly denied the U.S. government's

allegations and security concerns about its products.

Former Canadian ambassador to China, Guy Saint-Jacques, Kovrig's former boss, said he was elated the two Canadians are home.

"Clearly, the Chinese were so eager to get Meng back that they jettisoned all pretensions that the two Michaels had been arrested for good reasons. They must acknowledge that their reputation has been severely tarnished," Saint-Jacques said. "There is grumbling in the Communist party of China, people saying, 'In which direction are we going, Xi Jinping? We are creating too many enemies. Why are we enemies with countries like Canada and Australia?'"

Saint-Jacques said he thinks China will think twice before using "hostage diplomacy" again. **MDT/AP**

AFGHANISTAN

Russia says it's in sync with US, China, Pakistan on Taliban

EDITH M. LEDERER,
UNITED NATIONS

RUSSIA, China, Pakistan and the United States are working together to ensure that Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers keep their promises, especially to form a genuinely representative government and prevent extremism from spreading, Russia's foreign minister said yesterday [Macau time].

Sergey Lavrov said the four countries are in ongoing contact. He said representatives from Russia, China and Pakistan recently traveled to Qatar and then to Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, to engage with both the Taliban and representatives of "secular authorities" — former president Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, who headed the ousted government's negotiating council with the Taliban.

Lavrov said the interim government announced by the Taliban does not reflect "the whole gamut of Afghan society — ethno-religious and political forces — so we are engaging in contacts. They are ongoing."

The Taliban have promised an inclusive government, a more moderate form of Islamic rule, but recent moves suggest they may be returning to more repressive policies, particularly toward women and girls.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is seen on a video screen during a news conference during the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly

"What's most important ... is to ensure that the promises that they have proclaimed publicly to be kept," Lavrov said. "And for us, that is the top priority."

At a wide-ranging news conference and in his speech afterward at the U.N. General Assembly, Lavrov criticized the Biden administration including for its hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Later, in his assembly speech, Lavrov accused the United

States and its Western allies of "persistent attempts to diminish the U.N.'s role in resolving the key problems of today or to sideline it or to make it a malleable tool for promoting someone's selfish interests."

As examples, Lavrov said Germany and France recently announced the creation of an Alliance For Multilateralism "even though what kind of structure could be more multilateral

than the United Nations?"

The United States is also sidestepping the U.N., he said, pointing to the recent U.S. announcement of a "Summit for Democracy" despite, Lavrov said, U.S. President Joe Biden's pledge this week "that the U.S. is not seeking a world divided into opposing blocs."

"It goes without saying that Washington is going to choose the participants by itself, thus hijacking the right to decide to what

degree a country meets the standards of democracy," Lavrov said. "Essentially, this initiative is quite in the spirit of a Cold War, as it declares a new ideological crusade against all dissenters."

Lavrov was asked for Russia's reaction to U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' warning last week that the world could be plunged into a new Cold War potentially more dangerous than the lengthy one between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union unless the United States and China repair their "totally dysfunctional" relationship.

He replied: "Of course, we see the tension tightening in relations between China and the United States." He expressed "great concern" at the rising tensions, pointing to the Biden administration's recently proclaimed Indo-Pacific strategy — whose objectives, he said, include "deterring China's development," disputes over the South China Sea, and the recent U.S.-Britain deal to provide nuclear-powered submarines to Australia.

More broadly, Lavrov said, relations among the big powers must be "respectful." He emphasized that Russia was "keen to ensure that never will these relations morph into nuclear war."

The major powers have a "great responsibility," he said, to negotiate and make compromises on the critical issues facing the world and that Russia is now "revitalizing" its proposal for a summit of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — Russia, China, U.S., UK and France. He said discussions are under way on specific questions for an agenda, and "we may perhaps begin with an online meeting." MDT/AP

KOREAS

South urges North to restore hotlines for any talks

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

SOUTH Korea yesterday urged North Korea to restore dormant communication hotlines, a day after the North repeated an offer to open conditional talks.

The North might be seeking to extract concessions about two weeks after it raised tensions by carrying out its first missile tests in six months. North Korea has twice reached out to South Korea saying it's open to talks if conditions are met.

Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, said Saturday the two Koreas can take steps toward reconciliation if South Korea abandons "hostile po-



Visitors watch the North Korea side from the Unification Observation Post in Paju

lices" and "double-dealing standards."

She didn't elaborate on what specific steps she wants South Korea to take. But some experts say North

Korea wants South Korea to play a role in winning relief from U.S.-led sanctions, getting aid, or receiving other concessions such as international recognition as a

nuclear weapons state.

Yesterday, South Korea's Unification Ministry called Kim Yo Jong's statement "meaningful," saying the South has been consistently pushing to achieve denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula through dialogue.

To hold talks on beginning steps toward reconciliation, a ministry statement said that suspended cross-border communication lines must be reactivated quickly to promote stable communications between the divided countries. It said Seoul hopes the two Koreas can resume talks on many pending issues.

The South Korean statement refers to a set of pho-

ne- and fax-like communication channels between the rivals, which have been largely dormant for more than a year. The two Koreas briefly resumed communications over the channels for about two weeks this summer, but North Korea later refused to exchange messages again after Seoul staged annual military drills with Washington.

Earlier this month, North Korea carried out tests of ballistic and cruise missiles in its first such launches since March, displaying an ability to attack South Korea and Japan, both key U.S. allies. North Korea still maintains a moratorium on testing longer-range missiles capable of reaching the American ho-

meland, a suggestion that it wants to keep alive the chances for future diplomacy with the U.S.

Relations between the Koreas flourished in 2018, when Seoul helped arrange high-profile nuclear diplomacy between Washington and Pyongyang, including a summit between Kim Jong Un and then-U.S. President Donald Trump. But Pyongyang cut off ties with Seoul after the Kim-Trump diplomacy broke down in 2019 due to disputes over the U.S.-led sanctions.

The recent North Korean outreach came as a response to South Korean President Moon Jae-in's renewed calls for a political declaration to officially end the 1950-53 Korean War as a way to promote peace. The Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty, leaving the Korean Peninsula still technically at war. MDT/AP



Chancellor Angela Merkel and Governor Armin Laschet, top CDU candidate

GERMANY

Closely fought election ushers in post-Merkel era

GEIR MOULSON, BERLIN

GERMAN voters are choosing a new parliament in an election that will determine who succeeds Chancellor Angela Merkel after her 16 years at the helm of Europe's biggest economy.

Polls point to a very close race yesterday between Merkel's center-right Union bloc, with state governor Armin Laschet running for chancellor, and the center-left Social Democrats, for whom outgoing finance minister and Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz is seeking the top job.

Recent surveys show the Social Democrats marginally ahead. The environmentalist Greens, with candidate Annalena Baerbock, are making their first run for the chancellery, and polls put them several points behind in third place.

The Social Democrats have been boosted by Scholz's relative popularity after a long poll slump, and by his rivals' troubled campaigns. Baerbock suffered from early gaffes and Laschet, the governor of North Rhine-Westphalia state, has struggled to motivate his party's traditional base.

About 60.4 million people in the nation of 83 million are eligible to elect the new

Bundestag, or lower house of parliament, which will elect the next head of government.

No party is expected to come anywhere near an outright majority. Polls show support for all of them below 30%.

Such a result could mean that many governing coalitions are mathematically possible, and trigger weeks or months of haggling to form a new government. Until it is in place, Merkel will remain in office on a caretaker basis.

Scholz said as he voted in Potsdam, just outside Berlin, that he hopes voters "will make possible ... a very strong result for the Social Democrats, and that citizens will give me the mandate to become the next chancellor of Germany."

Laschet said in Aachen, on Germany's western border, that the election "will decide on Germany's direction in the coming years, and so it will come down to every vote."

Merkel has won plaudits for steering Germany through several major crises. Her successor will have to tend the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, which Germany so far has weathered relatively well thanks to large rescue programs that have incurred new debt.

Laschet insists there

should be no tax increases as Germany pulls out of the pandemic. Scholz and Baerbock favor tax hikes for the richest Germans, and also back an increase in the minimum wage.

Germany's leading parties have significant differences in their proposals for tackling climate change. Laschet's Union bloc is pinning its hopes on technological solutions and a market-driven approach, while the Greens want to ramp up carbon prices and end the use of coal earlier than planned. Scholz has emphasized the need to protect jobs as Germany transitions to greener energy.

Foreign policy hasn't featured much in the campaign, though the Greens favor a tougher stance toward China and Russia.

In Berlin, Wiebke Bergmann, a 48-year-old social worker, said Merkel's departure makes this a "really special" election.

"I really thought hard about which candidate I want as next chancellor — until this morning I hadn't made up my mind. None of the three really convinced me," Bergmann added. "All seem fine as human beings, but I'm not sure they can do a good job as next chancellor."

In the capital's Kreuzberg

district, a traditional left-wing stronghold, Jan Kemper, a 41-year-old manager at an online bank, said climate change and Germany's slow pace of digitalization were among his main concerns. He praised Merkel's crisis management style, but said key issues were left unattended.

"Previously, elections set the course for the next two to four years," he said. "Now decisions have to be made that will affect the next generations."

As they have struggled in polls, Laschet and other Union leaders have warned that Scholz and the Greens would form a coalition with the opposition Left Party, which opposes NATO and German military deployments abroad. Whether such a partnership is realistic is questionable, given foreign policy and other differences between the parties, but that line of attack may help turn out the conservative base.

Scholz has said he'd like a two-party coalition with the Greens, but that looks very optimistic. Absent a majority for that, his first choice would likely be an alliance with the Greens and the pro-business Free Democrats.

A coalition with those two parties is also Laschet's likeliest route to power. The Greens favor an alliance with the Social Democrats, while the Free Democrats prefer one with the Union.

The result may also allow a repeat of the outgoing "grand coalition" of the traditional big parties, the Union and Social Democrats, under either Scholz or Laschet.

The far-right Alternative for Germany party is polling a little below the 12.6% it won to enter parliament in 2017, but won't feature in any new government this time either. All other parties say they won't work with it.

The Bundestag has at least 598 seats, but Germany's complex voting system means it can be much larger. The outgoing parliament had a record 709 lawmakers; the new one is widely expected to be even bigger.

The number of people voting by postal ballot is expected to be higher than the 28.6% who did so four years ago. Also Sunday, voters in Berlin and in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in northeastern Germany — both states currently led by the Social Democrats — are electing new state legislators. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1968 MUSICAL HAIR OPENS AS CENSORS WITHDRAW



The American hippy musical "Hair" has opened in London - one day after the abolition of theatre censorship.

Until yesterday, some of the scenes in the musical, written by out-of-work actors Gerome Ragni and James Rado, would have been considered too outrageous to be shown on a stage in Britain.

The show, billed as an American tribal love-rock musical, first opened in New York on 2 December last year.

Many were angered by scenes containing nudity and drug-taking as well as a strong anti-war message at the height of the Vietnam conflict and the desecration of the American flag on stage.

The show's transfer to London's West End would not have been possible before the new Theatres Act which ended the Lord Chamberlain's powers of censorship dating back to 1737.

Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole introduced play censorship to silence shows like The Beggars' Opera which contained biting anti-government satire.

The new Theatres Act does not give playwrights a completely free hand. Strong language and obscenity will still be liable for criminal prosecution.

Hair does contain some blasphemous and sexually explicit language.

But the scene that has aroused most controversy in the musical so far is where the cast appears on stage in the nude, emerging from beneath a vast sheet.

The director of the London production of Hair, Tom O'Horgan, said: "I think that the famed nude scene has been greatly over-emphasised.

"It has very little importance in the show itself and much of the publicity has obscured the important aspects of the play, which are also perhaps shocking to people because they deal with things as they are. We tell it the way it is."

Asked whether the timing of the opening was significant, he said: "We couldn't have done the play the way we're doing it prior to this time without drastic modifications."

The cast of the West End production appeared on Eamonn Andrews Independent Television show last night but decided against performing the nude scene. Mr O'Horgan said it would have given the wrong impression of the show.

Hair had a shaky start in New York. Its first two runs were cut short before producer Michael Butler became involved. He brought in Tom O'Horgan as director.

It took three months to re-vamp the musical - and when it finally appeared at the Biltmore on Broadway it had 19 songs in the first act compared with just nine in the original production.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Hair ran on Broadway until 1 July 1972, when it closed after 1,742 performances.

It played to mixed reviews across the United States and was the subject of at least two prominent court battles, in Boston, Massachusetts in 1970 and Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1975.

In Britain, the play also opened to mixed reviews. Drama critic Irving Wardle writing in The Times said: "Nothing else remotely like it has yet struck the West End. Its honesty and passion give it the quality of a true theatrical celebration - the joyous sound of a group of people telling the world exactly what they feel."

Another critic writing in The Telegraph said the "taboo-flouting seemed too defiant".

The actor Oliver Tobias starred in the West End production. He subsequently took the show to Israel and Holland.

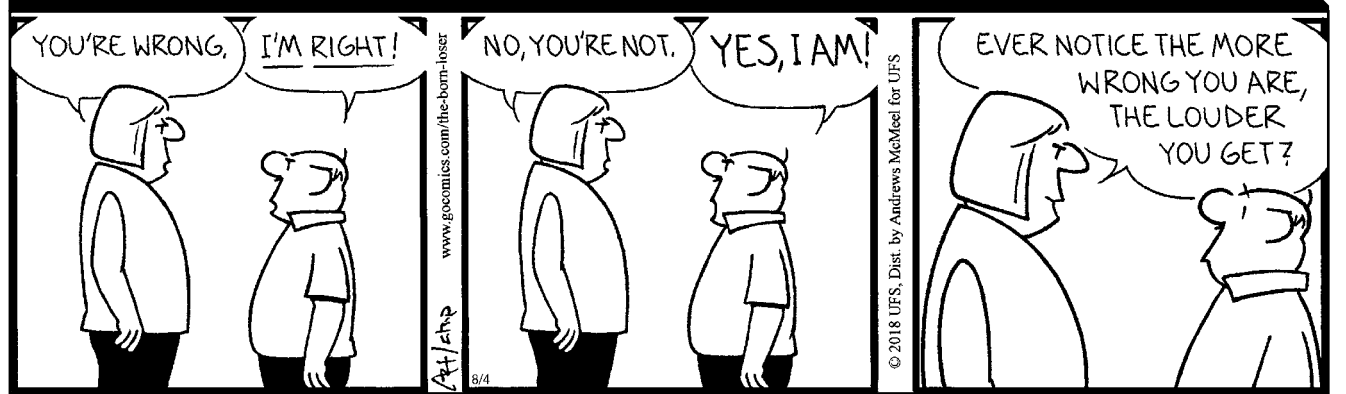
Despite the initial controversy, there have been numerous revivals of Hair.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

<p>ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Don't let your work and your personal life interfere with each other. Be aware that you might be at fault as well. Expect to have more people on your domestic scene.</p>	<p>TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Strengthen your position among your peers. You should be in business for yourself. You must make sure that all your personal documents are in order.</p>
<p>GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Visitors may relieve the tension. Don't start a dispute unless you're prepared to accept irreversible results. Watch for empty promises that may give you false hope.</p>	<p>CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Look into attending seminars that can expand your perception. Don't divulge secret information. You may be in an extremely passionate mood today.</p>
<p>LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 New romantic ties can be made; however, you must make sure that your motives are not selfish before you make your move. Acceptance is the key.</p>	<p>VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Outbursts of passion may cause arguments with your mate. Think about your priorities. Your outgoing charm and obvious talent will be admired.</p>
<p>LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 You are best to be discreet. Someone you live with is ready to play emotional games. Dealing with in-laws or relatives will not be in your best interest.</p>	<p>SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Real estate investments will payoff. Your mate may want to pick a fight but if you're persistent with your affections their anger should dissipate.</p>
<p>SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Be quiet about your intentions or ideas that might bring added cash. Accept the inevitable. You should avoid getting involved in the personal problems of colleagues.</p>	<p>CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Be considerate and avoid being overly opinionated, or arguments will ensue. Kick your shoes off and relax. New interests are preoccupying your time.</p>
<p>AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 There'll be difficulties if you spend too much. Keep your thoughts to yourself for the time being. Put your emotional energy into passion not anxiety.</p>	<p>PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 Listen to reason. Try to curb overindulgence today. Moves or the possibility of having someone different living with you may be difficult at first.</p>

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	18	26	cloudy
Harbin	16	20	rain
Tianjin	26	36	fine
Urumqi	18	25	cloudy
Xi'an	23	31	cloudy
Lhasa	20	23	showers
Chengdu	22	34	fine
Chongqing	25	35	fine
Kunming	26	36	fine
Nanjing	17	28	cloudy
Shanghai	24	31	thunderstorms
Wuhan	21	32	fine
Hangzhou	12	19	showers
Taipei	22	29	cloudy
Guangzhou	11	23	cloudy
Hong Kong	17	24	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	6	10	cloudy
Frankfurt	11	21	overcast
Paris	11	19	rain
London	10	18	rain
New York	16	24	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Blind as ___; 5- Sun, talk; 8- Son of Adam and Eve; 12- Indonesian resort island; 13- State not to "mess with"; 15- Commedia dell'___; 16- Russian pancake; 17- Dress style; 18- Comic Rudner; 19- Angry dispute; 22- Thieves' place; 23- Small island; 24- River to the Ubangi; 26- Wide-mouthed bottle; 29- Sled; 31- Math subj.; 32- Glove material; 34- Called one's bluff; 36- Frat party purchases; 38- Beast of burden; 40- Horse of mixed color; 41- Magna ___; 43- "All My Children" vixen; 45- Female gametes; 46- Joint; 48- Tempestuous; 50- The closest one to us is the sun; 51- Gaster of "Saturday Night Live"; 52- Part of UNLV; 54- Recalling; 61- Et ___ (and other men); 63- Polite; 64- Fort ___ captured by U.S. forces in 1814; 65- Underlying cause; 66- Govt. security; 67- Actress Turner; 68- Family member; 69- Asian holiday; 70- Planetary revolution;


DOWN 1- Benny, Björn, Anni-Frid, and Agnetha; 2- Sphere; 3- Settled down; 4- Musical ineptitude; 5- Actress Ward; 6- Off-ramp; 7- Wife of a rajah; 8- Swiss river; 9- Newly married man; 10- Kitchen addition; 11- The Tower of Pisa does this; 13- Diplomatic; 14- Capital of South Korea; 20- Narrow inlets; 21- Require; 25- One with no capacity for veracity; 26- Lucid; 27- Offensive action; 28- Conger catcher; 29- Big rigs; 30- Leaden; 31- Pedigree org.; 33- ___ es Salaam; 35- Genetic letters; 37- Leave in, to an editor; 39- Fit for the stage; 42- Yonder; 44- Super; 47- Construct; 49- Seldom; 52- Pasternak heroine; 53- Baseball family name; 55- Aromatic herb; 56- Bacchanalian cry; 57- Baseball glove; 58- Dies ___; 59- Actress Foch; 60- Stuff; 62- "The Addams Family" cousin;

Friday's solution

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

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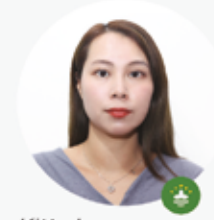
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HKD 10,880,000

1,707 ft²
2
2
1



Ref: 2107 6005



FOR SALE

Hellene Gardens
HKD 7,980,000

1,663 ft²
3
2
1



Ref: 2106 6005

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FOOTBALL | EPL

Fernandes misses late penalty as United loses to Villa

MAN UO, ASTON VILLA 1

BRUNO Fernandes missed an injury-time penalty as teammate Cristiano Ronaldo looked on in Manchester United's 1-0 home loss to Aston Villa in the Premier League yesterday (Macau time).

Villa defender Kortney Hause was the hero for the visitors after he flicked a header past goalkeeper David De Gea off a corner in the 88th minute for his team's first victory over United since 2009.

But Hause was then whistled for a handball to set up the dramatic spot kick as United tried to rescue a point at Old Trafford.

Fernandes, who had converted a penalty in all three of his prior Premier League appearances against Villa, adjusted the ball as Ronaldo stood nearby and then blasted it high over the crossbar.

"Bruno is very strong men-



tally, normally, and unfortunately today it just didn't go in," United manager Ole Gunnar

Solskjaer told club media in postgame comments. Solskjaer said Villa players

"crowded Bruno" at the penalty spot before the key miss, but he had stronger criticism for the officiating on Hause's goal. He said Villa forward Ollie Watkins was "clearly" offside.

"It's offside. As Hause is heading it, Watkins is actually touching David, so he's impeding with him. I can't see the consistency anywhere in this VAR and decision-making," Solskjaer said. "Definitely VAR has gone wrong again."

United amassed 28 shots but just four were on target as it failed to score in a home Premier League game for the first time in 16 games.

It was United's first loss of the Premier League season and second overall after a League Cup defeat in midweek. The team has 13 points after six games.

United defenders Harry Maguire and Luke Shaw came off injured during the game as the team looks ahead to a Champions League match at home on Wednesday against Spanish

team Villarreal. They'll have scans before decisions are made about their availability for Wednesday, Solskjaer said.

Maguire and midfielder Paul Pogba came close for United just before halftime. Maguire was given space at the far post on a Fernandes free kick but his powerful header was saved by goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez. Soon after, Pogba's header was just wide of the left post.

Villa's first-half opportunities were even better. Matt Targett just needed a simple touch into an open goal from Matty Cash's low cross to the far post, but he skied it over the crossbar in the 16th minute.

Watkins was then gifted the ball just inside the area after De Gea was forced to poke away an awkward back pass from Maguire in the 22nd. He shot it directly at De Gea for an easy save.

Villa hadn't beaten United since December 2009, also at Old Trafford. The Birmingham squad has 10 points from six games and plays at Tottenham next Sunday in its third consecutive away game in all competitions.

"I might have a couple of beers tonight," Villa manager Dean Smith told club media. "We don't play until next Sunday now, so the lads can go and have a beer as well." **MDT/AP**



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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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AD

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**LESSONS OF MENG'S
 POLITICAL ABDUCTION
 MUST BE HEEDED**

The great attention given Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou's return to China on Saturday speaks volumes about the magnitude of the incident's influence, which has in essence been a political abduction of her by the United States, with Canada as its accomplice.

The heartfelt thanks Meng has extended upon her "release" to the Chinese people for their support and assistance, as well as the effusive, warm responses she has received in return from the nation, bear testimony to her gratitude that the motherland was always "a ray of light" that was never extinguished even in the "darkest moments".

Since she was detained by Canadian police at the behest of the US while changing flights at Vancouver airport on Dec 1, 2018, the motherland has left no stones unturned in its efforts to support her in her fight against the unfounded charges and to help her regain her freedom.

Having been detained in an illegal manner by the Canadian police, she was then subject to judicial investigations, hearings and trials, none of which lived up to the claims they were independent and impartial. And none of the so-called evidence Washington and Ottawa cobbled together has ever held any water.

Her release, which has not been obtained in exchange for an admission that she was guilty as charged, shows her ordeal has never been anything other than a dirty give-a-dog-bad-name-and-then-hang-it trick of the US, which wanted her as a political hostage as part of its efforts to break Huawei, the leading player in the global 5G market.

Those making the political abduction possible have every reason to feel ashamed of the fact that it was not brought to an end and corrected even after the whole world recognized it for what it was. And even after China did all it could to create opportunities for them to put a stop to it.

China's resolve to help protect Meng's legal rights and interests has never faltered, and has ensured she can make "the sweetest journey", returning home safe and sound.

The US likes to portray itself as the "beacon of freedom", and Canada presents itself as a model of human rights and judicial independence. But the incident speaks for itself — neither is true. The incident has already been recorded by history as marker how low the two countries are willing to stoop in their efforts to contain China.

And this is not the first time the US has resorted to such a dirty maneuver to hobble a technology enterprise it wants to make too big for its boots. Any senior executives of non-US companies leading their US counterparts in their respective fields should be wary of the risks of being taken political hostage by the US.

Whether Sino-US and Sino-Canada relations can now take advantage of what is a clear opportunity for a reboot depends on the extent to which Washington and Ottawa are willing to heed the lessons of their rash play.

If they are, then hopefully the two sets of relations can be put back on a more amicable track. That would be of benefit not just to Canada, the US and China, but also the world, which desperately needs greater stability and a concerted focus on addressing the grave global challenges that are becoming ever more acute.

The Hong Kong group that had organized annual vigils in remembrance of victims of the Chinese military's crushing of the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests voted to disband this weekend amid an ongoing crackdown on independent political activism in the semi-autonomous city.

Police had notified the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China last month that it was under investigation for working for foreign interests, an accusation the group denied.

While it called the probe an abuse of power, core members voted 41-4 at a meeting on Saturday to lay the 32-year-old group to rest. Tens of thousands of people had attended the annual vigil, until authorities banned it in 2020, citing anti-pandemic measures.

The government investigation came during heavy restrictions on Hong Kong civil society following mass pro-democracy protests in 2019 and the imposition of a sweeping national security law by NPC Standing Committee last year.



Eric Chu delivers a speech after winning in the Nationalist Party chairman election in Taipei

**UNDER CHINA PRESSURE,
 TAIWAN OPPOSITION
 CHOOSES NEW LEADER**

TAIWAN'S main opposition Nationalist Party chose former leader Eric Chu as its new chairperson this weekend in an election overshadowed by increasing pressure from neighbor China.

Four candidates, including incumbent chair Johnny Chiang, had competed for the leadership of the party that has advocated closer relations with Beijing. That means agreeing to Beijing's demand that it regards Taiwan as a part of China, something Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party has refused to do.

China has threatened to use force to bring Taiwan under its control and has increasingly mobilized military, diplomatic and economic pressure in an attempt to undermine the administration of Tsai Ing-wen and sway opinion among the Taiwanese people, who strongly favor the status quo of de-facto independence.

Mindful of public sentiments, the Nationalists have advocated a less acrimonious relationship with China, rather than direct moves toward unification between the sides, which are bound by

close economic, linguistic and cultural ties.

Chu ran and lost in a landslide against Tsai in 2016, prior to which he had served as party chair and head of the region just outside the capital Taipei.

He may emerge as the party's candidate in the next election in 2024, although that selection process has yet to begin. Tsai is constitutionally barred from running for a third term.

Under Chiang Kai-shek, the Nationalists rose to power in China during the 1920s and led the struggle against Japanese invaders until the end of World War II. Chiang relocated the government, still officially known as the Republic of China, to Taiwan in 1949 as Mao Zedong's Communists swept to power on mainland China.

Taiwan began transitioning from martial law rule to multiparty democracy in the 1980s and held its first direct election in 1996. Since then, power has shifted between the Nationalists, also known as the KMT, and the DPP, although Tsai has won twice by healthy margins and her party has control of the

national legislature.

China refuses to recognize Taiwan's government and ensures it is excluded from the United Nations and other international organizations.

Beijing says the island's participation in such roles as an observer to the World Health Assembly is dependent on it endorsing the "one-China principle" and "'92 consensus," named after an agreement reached that year between representatives of the Nationalists and Communists stating that the sides were part of single Chinese nation.

Following Tsai's first election victory in 2016, China cut off all formal contacts between the governments, banned Chinese tour groups from visiting the island and mounted a campaign to poach away Taiwan's dwindling number of diplomatic allies.

With increasing frequency, China has also sent military aircraft into airspace near Taiwan and staged threatening military exercises.

Partly in response, the U.S. has stepped up political and military support for the island, despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties between them. **MDT/AP**



Kosovo A public building in Kosovo was set on fire and another was hit by grenades that did not explode in what government officials described as criminal acts related to ethnic Serbs protesting a symbolic move on license plates. Serbian media quoted the head of the Zubin Potok fire department, Sasa Bozovic, as saying a fire that broke out overnight at the town's municipal building engulfed two offices.

Norway police yesterday reported dozens of disturbances and violent clashes including mass brawls in the Nordic country's big cities after streets, bars, restaurants and nightclubs were filled with people celebrating the end of COVID-19 restrictions. The Norwegian government abruptly announced Friday that most of the remaining coronavirus restrictions would be scrapped from Saturday and that life in the nation of 5.3 million would return to normal.



Swiss voters appear to have decided by a clear margin to allow same-sex couples to marry, according to a projection after a national referendum yesterday. The projection by the gfs.bern polling agency for Switzerland's public broadcasters showed the measure passing by 64% to 36%.

Mexico Fourteen Mexican army soldiers were briefly detained and then returned to Mexico after they crossed into the U.S. at a border bridge in El Paso, Texas. U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a statement that two Mexican military vehicles crossed the bridge that links El Paso to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico in the early hours of Saturday. CBP said the soldiers, their weapons and equipment "were secured for safety and processing," and noted the soldiers said "they did not realize they had entered the U.S."