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A 31-YEAR-OLD FOREIGN SECURITY GUARD IS ACCUSED OF PROVIDING UNLICENSED MEDICAL SERVICES TO SEVERAL PATIENTS: PJ

CHINESE VISA APPLICATION CENTER TO REOPEN ON DEC. 16

MYANMAR HALVES AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S SENTENCE FOR INCITEMENT TO TWO YEARS IN FURTHER BLOW TO DEMOCRACY

Taiwan Senior officials from the Slovak Republic are in Taiwan for talks on deepening ties with the island in the highest-level visit by the EU-member country since it opened a representative office in Taiwan in 2003. The visit by the delegation, which began Sunday, follows a mission last month by members of the European Parliament to the self-ruled island, which is also claimed by China.

GAME OVER

The Public Prosecutions Office has ordered notaries to immediately suspend the practice of notary acts involving the junket mogul Alvin Chau; Wynn will reportedly shut down VIP rooms



Philippines Motorcycle-riding gunmen killed a town mayor and wounded another in a brazen attack that also killed their driver and caused villagers to flee to safety in a coastal village in the southern Philippines. Mayor Darussalam Lajid of Al-Barka town was killed and Mayor Alih Sali of Akbar town was wounded by at least two men armed with pistols while walking in Zamboanga city shortly after arriving on a speedboat from their island province of Basilan, police said. A bodyguard of the two mayors was wounded and a driver who came to pick them up was killed.



Indonesia Rescuers dug out the body of 13-year-old boy with their bare hands yesterday, as improved weather conditions allowed them to resume their search after the highest volcano on Indonesia's Java island erupted with fury, killing at least 15 people with searing gas and ash and leaving 27 others missing. Mount Semeru in Lumajang district in East Java province spewed thick columns of ash as high as 12,000 meters into the sky in a sudden eruption Saturday triggered by heavy rain.



EASYTRANSFER

GOV'T ROLLS OUT SWIFT INTER-BANK TRANSFER PLATFORM

CRIME

PSP UNCOVERS THREE MORE FRAUDULENT MARRIAGES

RENATO MARQUES

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) has recently been notified of three more cases of allegedly fraudulent marriages, where Macau residents have apparently forged marriages with mainland residents so that they could apply for residency in Macau, the PSP revealed yesterday.

Two of the cases were forwarded to the PSP by the Identification Services Bureau (DSI) for investigation.

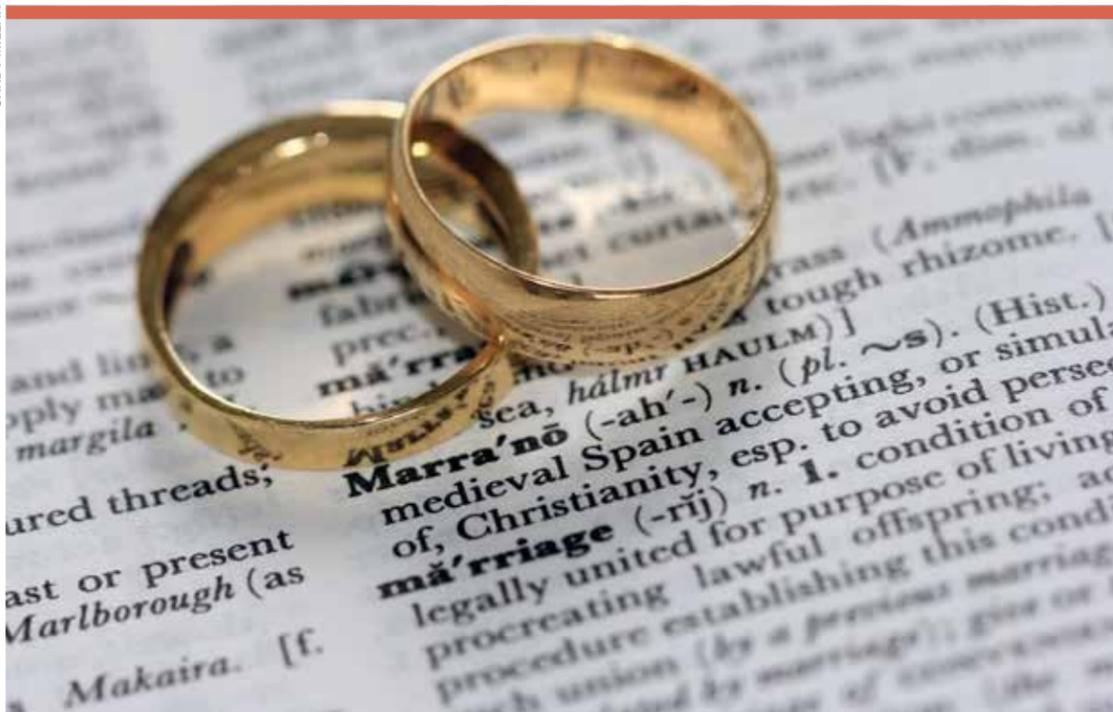
In the first case, a 68-year-old male from Macau reportedly married a 50-year-old mainland resident in the mainland in 2016 after divorcing his first wife two years earlier.

However, the man had no apparent relationship with the new wife and the authorities found that he continued to live with his ex-wife as a couple.

Upon searching the man's apartment, the PSP found no proof of the wife's existence or any of her belongings.

The man later admitted to the police that although they are legally married, they have never lived together.

SANDY MILLAR



Mobile phone records also show that the man has had no contact with his wife.

In the second case, a local 47-year-old woman also requested residency status for her husband, a mainland man whom she married in 2016.

As in the first case, the couple

lived separate lives. The husband spent most of his time traveling on the mainland for long periods without his wife.

According to the PSP's records, the two have never entered or exited Macau together over the past five years.

Upon being questioned by the

police, the woman confessed that she received compensation of 30,000 patacas to help the man obtain the local identification card so that he could engage in renovation and decoration activities.

In a third and separate case, the PSP found that a local 63-year-old

woman married a mainland man and requested residency status for the man as well as for his three children, who were from a previous marriage.

The case, which occurred about 10 years ago, was discovered following an anonymous report which prompted an investigation. It was found that the couple never lived together over the course of these years.

According to the PSP, both the husband and the three children now hold permanent residency status, and the man, since granted a Macau Identification card, has been working as a bus driver.

None of the suspects admitted the fraudulent marriages to the police, despite being unable to prove that they have ever lived as couples, or even maintained any form of contact with their supposed spouses.

All the cases were forwarded to the Public Prosecutions Office between December 2 and 4 and are being charged under the provisions of Article 78 Law 16/2021 (New immigration law) which states that anyone who simulates a marriage for the purpose of obtaining a residence permit or special permit to stay in Macau, whether for themselves or someone else, may receive a penalty of two to eight years imprisonment.

Additionally, the suspects are also charged with making false declarations and statements to the immigration authorities.

CRIME

PJ detains security guard illegally moonlighting as a physician

RENATO MARQUES

A 31-year-old Vietnamese man working in Macau as a security guard is accused of providing unlicensed medical services to several patients, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported yesterday during the regular joint police forces press conference.

According to the statement, the man, who has been a non-resident worker in Macau since 2014, established an illegal doctor's surgery at the apartment where he lives and provided unlicensed medical services to at least 40 people, charging each patient between 100 and 200 patacas.

The PJ received the case via a communication from

the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) who received a complaint from the Health Bureau (SSM).

According to the complaint, the SSM had received an anonymous letter from a resident who claimed that a domestic worker they were employing had sought the accused man's medical services after seeing his advertisements on social media.

The resident said in the letter that they suspected that this was an illegal clinic and hence decided to report it to the SSM.

After identifying the suspect and the location of the apartment (in the surroundings of the Avenida de Hortas e Costa in Macau) on November 30, the PJ searched

his apartment and detained him.

During the investigation, the PJ also seized a large number of medicines, namely injectable medications as well as medical equipment.

Upon questioning, the man admitted to having performed the service, claiming to be knowledgeable in medicine, since he had studied and completed a medical degree in Vietnam before coming to Macau.

The man also said that he worked in a hospital in Vietnam for a couple of months, but decided to work in Macau instead, because his salary in Vietnam was very low.

He also told the PJ that he started the part-time practi-

ce three or four months ago to provide a little more income and as a way of continuing to practice medicine.

He said that he treated around 40 people, the large majority being Vietnamese nationals who discovered the clinic by word of mouth or social media advertising.

However, the complaint from the SSM to the MP calling for an investigation dates back to March this year, which hints that the unlicensed clinic has been operating for way longer than what he mentioned to the PJ.

According to information provided by the PJ, the case has been forwarded to the MP and the man is being charged with the crime of embezzlement.

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Notaries ordered to cease services to Alvin Chau and company

LYNZY VALLES

THE Public Prosecutions Office (MP) has ordered all notaries in the city to immediately suspend the practice of any notary acts or services involving the assets of Alvin Chau and related companies, the Times has learned.

In an "urgent" notice sent by the Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ) on December 2, reviewed by MDT, the MP noted that by the order of the Honorable Delegate Coordinator of Process No. 3472/2020, "we hereby notify your notary office to immediately suspend the practice of any notarial act involving the assets of the persons and companies indicated."



diately suspend the practice of any notarial act involving the assets of the persons and companies indicated."

First on the list was the junket king, Chau, and the following companies: Suncity Group Limited, UO Group Company, Soonest Technology LDA and Sun City Gaming Promotion Co Ltd.

According to a legal expert who wanted to remain anonymous, such urgent notices are "rarely sent to the Macau notaries." "Maybe once or twice a year," the source added.

The notice implies that nobody can conduct any business with the Suncity Group CEO and the cited companies.

The notice came over a week after the arrest of the CEO of the largest junket operator in Macau for alleged involvement in illegal activities related to online gaming and money laundering on November 27.

Authorities have previously said they had been investigating the case since July last year, adding that the gambling syndicate has 199 shareholder representatives, over 12,000 agents promoting its gambling operations and more than 80,000 gamblers in its network.

The case has put the city on maximum alert due to the potential direct and indirect repercussions.

On December 1, the leading operator of VIP rooms shut all of its clubs spread across the city's casinos.

The same day, Hong Kong Stock Exchange registered Suncity Group Holdings Limited suspended stock trading in Hong Kong at 9 a.m. (opening time) to prevent its stock value from plummeting further.

Trading only resumed the next day, when the stock's value had already plummeted by 48%, its lowest point this year with a value of HKD0.132 per share.

POLICE LOOK FOR WITNESSES TO LAST WEEK'S DEADLY COLLISION

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) is in search of eye witnesses of a collision involving a taxi that killed a 67-year-old woman at the intersection between Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga and Rua do Padre João Climaco last Thursday. After the crash, the victim fell to the ground and became unconscious. She was immediately sent to the hospital where she was declared deceased. Individuals who might have seen the collision are requested to contact the PSP at 28374214.

DSAMA: FERRY SERVICES TO RESUME WITHIN A WEEK OF BORDER OPENING

Director Wong Soi Man of the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) revealed that should the border between Macau and Hong Kong open, ferry services will resume within three to seven days as she was promised by operators. She added that her bureau has been in communication with the two ferry operators, who have retained their workforces. In spite of the promise given to the authority, Wong foresees that frequency of services may be reduced at first, however services may be added according to operating conditions.

WYNN MACAU TO CLOSE VIP CLUBS

WYNN Macau is set to close its VIP rooms by December 20 amid the arrest of Alvin Chau, CEO of the largest junket operator Suncity Group. According to All In Media, who cited gaming insiders, the operator has "taken the lead to make a move to get rid of all VIP rooms in order to clarify its relationship with the VIP lounges." No confirmation has been received from the gaming operator at the time of going to press.

Late last month, the Court of Final Appeal (TUI) ruled that Wynn Macau was jointly responsible for its debts with the operator of a VIP room. The case establishes an important legal precedent as it determines the legal responsibility of gaming concessionaires for the activities developed by junkets.

Chinese visa application center to reopen

RENATO MARQUES

THE Chinese visa application center located on the first floor of Nam Kwong Building in Macau will reopen to the public on December 16, the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in Macau has announced.

From December 16, holders of foreign passports are requested to submit their visa applications to this center, as the Consular Department of the Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Macau will no longer directly accept visa applications from ordinary passport holders.

For more information and appointment booking, interested parties can visit the website (www.visaforchina.org) to fill an online application form and make an appointment at a time convenient to them.

According to the Commis-



sioners' Office statement, the reopening of the Center at the No.223-225 of the Avenida Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues aims to offer "greater convenience and comfortable services for visa applicants in Macau."

The center will operate from Monday to Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with applications for express service to be submitted before 11:30 a.m.

Applications submitted to the center will be forwarded to the consular officer of the Commissioner's Office who will decide whether to issue a visa and its validity, dura-

tion of stay, and the number of entries based on the applicant's circumstances.

The consular officer may request the applicant to provide other supporting documents or supplementary materials according to the specific situation, or an interview.

According to statistics provided last week by the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, over 5,500 non-resident workers who were stranded in Macau after losing their jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic have been reemployed through the "China Visa" program.



TOUR SHOWCASES PROGRESS ON HENGQIN PROJECT

ABOUT a dozen Macau organizations have been invited by the Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) to examine the progress of the Macau New Neighborhood (MNN) project on Hengqin.

During the visit, representatives from the entities learnt about the MNN's design plan, pre-fabricated construction and soil improvement techniques with case analysis from professional engineers of the MNN project.

The visit also serves to prepare the indus-

try with the relevant skills and knowledge, because pre-fabrication could be the future of the construction industry in Macau.

These entities included associations in engineering and construction, higher-education institutions and social associations.

In a statement from the MUR, it is stated that pre-fabrication practice is adopted for such construction to ensure quality and efficiency through using less wooden molds, saving energy and re-

ducing construction waste. Pre-fabrication also allows for a better control of the project's quality and shorten construction period, effectively expediting the construction of MNN.

The pre-fabrication method has been used in projects in Macau, such as the One Central Residences project.

The MNN project features residential towers of 19 to 26 floors, and upon completion will provide over 4,000 flats and 205 units for professionals. **AL**



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EasyTransfer rolls out with 11 participating banks

ANTHONY LAM

FOLLOWING the rollout of the inter-bank money transfer platform yesterday, just 11 of the city's 31 banks are participating in the first phase of the scheme, a phase which features real-time transfer for free, Simon Tam, senior director of Financial Infrastructure and Information Department of the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM), revealed at a press conference.

On the question of the limited participation, the AMCM official noted that each bank may decide whether to participate and in what manner. For example, certain banks are participating in the first phase but will only provide prompt transfers, which may take up to a day for the transfers to complete.

The EasyTransfer platform is a function led by the AMCM to facilitate immediate or prompt fund transfers between accounts hosted by different banks without any service charge.

Explaining the need for the service, Tam pointed out that conducting multiple money transfers to and from different

banks is not rare. Even in the unusual case where the payer has accounts in all banks concerned, the practice is still inconvenient, especially when each transfer requires the input of a long account number.

Here, the new service shows its strength. In the same situation, "stakeholders" will only need to key in the meal payer's phone number or a dedicated eight-digit code issued by the recipient's bank to facilitate the transfer.

The eight-digit code, officially known as the Faster Payment System (FPS) code, is issued by participating banks to their clients regardless of whether they are immediate or prompt transfer, so that they do not need to give their cellphone numbers to facilitate the transfer. This method is useful for transfers from an unknown payer, for example, online barter or shopping.

During his introduction, Tam stressed that no registration is required for the payer or transfer initiator. On their cellphone app, participating banks have a dedicated page for EasyTransfer service.

When a payer wants to con-

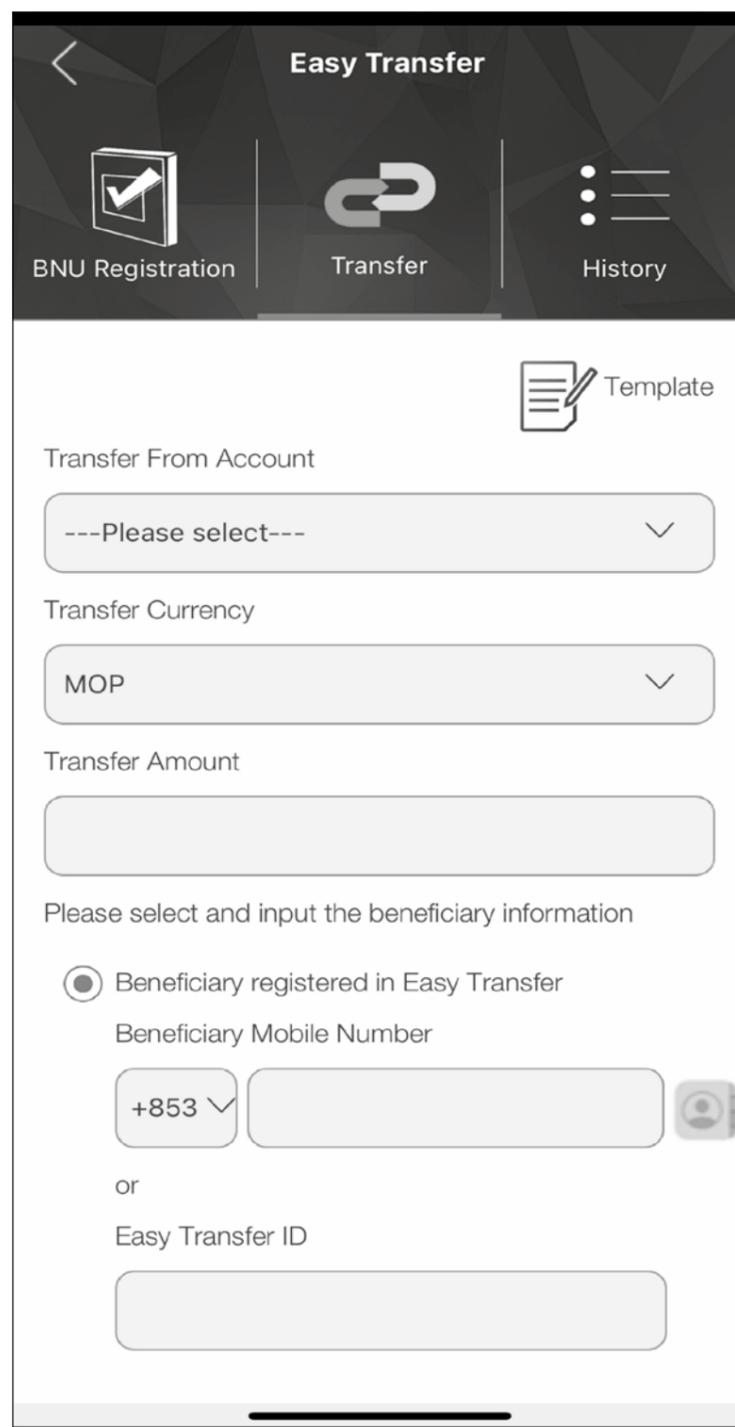
duct an inter-bank transfer, they need only to input the recipient's cellphone number or FPS code, and the amount to be transferred, and then the transfer will be processed.

In contrast, in order to receive funds using a cellphone number or the FPS code, the recipient will need to register for the service. Without doing so, they will still be able to receive funds but the sender will need to key in more information.

Clients of non-participating banks will not be able to conduct inter-bank transfers but will be able to receive funds through the mechanism.

The caps for personal transfers are MOP5,000 per transfer and MOP10,000 per day. For corporate-to-individual transfers, the caps are MOP50,000 per transfer and can be conducted multiple times a day to multiple individuals.

The AMCM said that the corporate-to-individual transfer will be useful for salary payments, meaning that employees need not use the same banks as their employer. This service may incur a service charge, Tam added.



Lawmaker calls for codified right to strike in trade union bill

LAWMAKER Lei Chan LU has challenged the government's intention not to include an explicit right to strike in the Trade Union Bill.

In a statement to the media, Lei stressed that the lack of an institutionalized right to take strike action is "more harmful to the society's harmony, which violates the intention of the legislation regarding trade unions."

He used the recent strikes conducted by workers regarding a food delivery app in Hong Kong as an example. He pointed out that because of the lack of a trade union, these workers directly initiated a strike. Businesses were shocked and could not respond effectively.

As Lei explained, this



is a clear example of the need for an institutionalized right to strike.

He went on to point out that opposite to employees' right to strike is the closure and dismissal rights of employers to avoid such "radical" actions.

Earlier, former lawmaker, Sulu Sou, made a post on his social media

page, slamming the government for not including the rights to protest and bargain in the current version of the Trade Union Bill.

Without provisions in the legislation, Sou said, workers might be penalized for carrying out strike actions or undertaking collective negotiations. **AL**

RESIDENT DEPOSITS, LOANS INCREASE IN OCTOBER

STAFF REPORTER

BROAD money supply increased in October, with a stable share of patacas, according to statistics from the Monetary Authority of Macao.

Currency in circulation rose 2.2%, while demand deposits dropped 0.5%. M1 increased 0.2% from the previous month, quasi-monetary liabilities grew 0.8%, and M2 rose 0.8% to MOP693.8 billion. Both M1 and M2 grew by 1.2% from the previous year.

Resident deposits increased 0.7% from the preceding month to MOP673.9 billion, while non-resident deposits fell 0.2% to MOP383.3 billion. Public sector deposits with the banking sector dropped 0.7% to MOP262.1 billion. As a result, total



deposits in the banking sector rose by 0.2% to MOP1,319.3 billion.

Domestic loans to the private sector grew 0.3% to MOP562.3 billion, and external loans also rose 0.6% to MOP754.6 billion. As a result, total loans to the private sector went up by 0.5% to MOP1,316.9 billion.

The loan-to-deposit ra-

tio for the resident sector remained at 60.1% at the end of October. The total ratio for both resident and non-resident sectors increased from 99.5% to 99.8%. One-month and three-month current assets to liabilities ratios stood at 72.8% and 62.2% respectively. The non-performing loan ratio was stable at 0.37%.

EAST CHINA SEA

JAPAN'S MILITARY, AMONG WORLD'S STRONGEST, LOOKS TO BUILDUP

MARI YAMAGUCHI,
ENIWA, JAPAN

DOZENS of tanks and hundreds of soldiers fired explosives and machine guns in drills yesterday on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, a main stronghold for a nation that is perhaps the world's least-known military powerhouse.

Just across the sea from rival Russia, Japan opened up its humbly named Self Defense Force's firing exercises to the media in a display of public firepower that coincides with a recent escalation of Chinese and Russian military moves around Japanese territory.

The drills, which foreign journalists rarely have a chance to witness, will continue for nine days and include about 1,300 Ground Self Defense Force troops. On Monday, as hundreds of soldiers cheered from the sidelines and waved unit flags, lines of tanks shot at targets meant to represent enemy missiles or armored vehicles.

The exercises illuminate a fascinating, easy-to-miss point. Japan, despite an officially pacifist constitution written when memories of its World War II rampage were still fresh — and painful — boasts a military that puts all but a few nations to shame.

And, with a host of threats lurking in Northeast Asia, its hawkish leaders are eager for more.

It's not an easy sell. In a nation still reviled by many of its neighbors for its past military actions, and where domestic pacifism runs high, any military buildup is controversial.

Japan has focused on its defensive capabilities and carefully avoids using the word "military" for its troops. But as it looks to defend its territorial and military interests against an assertive China, North Korea and Russia, officials in Tokyo are pushing citizens to put aside widespread unease over a more robust role for the military and support increased defense spending.

As it is, tens of billions of dollars each year have built an arsenal of nearly 1,000 warplanes and dozens of destroyers and submarines. Japan's forces rival those of Britain and France, and show no sign of slowing down in a pursuit of the best equipment and weapons money can buy.

Not everyone agrees with this buildup. Critics, both Japan's neighbors and at home, urge Tokyo to learn from its past and pull back from military expansion.

AP PHOTO



Japanese Ground-Self Defense Force Type 90 tanks drive toward a target during the annual drill with live ammunition exercise at Minami Eniwa Camp yesterday

There's also domestic wariness over nuclear weapons. Japan, the only nation to have atomic bombs dropped on it in war, possesses no nuclear deterrent, unlike other top global militaries, and relies on the so-called U.S. nuclear umbrella.

Proponents of the new military muscle flexing, however, say the expansion is well-timed and crucial to the Japanese alliance with Washington.

China and Russia have stepped up military cooperation in recent years in an attempt to counter growing U.S.-led regional partnerships.

In October, a fleet of five warships each from China and Russia circled Japan as they traveled through the Pacific to the East China Sea. Last month, their warplanes flew together near Japan's airspace, causing Japanese fighter jets to scramble. In fiscal year 2020 through March, Japanese fighters scrambled more than 700 times — two-thirds against Chinese warplanes, with the remainder mostly against Russians — the Defense Ministry said.

Russia's military also recently deployed coastal defense missile systems, the Bastion, near disputed islands off the northern coast of Hokkaido.

Japan was disarmed after its WW II defeat. But a month after the Korean War began in 1950, U.S. occupation forces in Japan created a 75,000-member lightly armed de facto army called the

National Police Reserve. The Self Defense Force, the country's current military, was founded in 1954.

Today, Japan is ranked fifth globally in overall military power after the United States, Russia, China and India, and its defense budget ranked sixth in the 2021 ranking of 140 countries by the Global Firepower rating site.

During archconservative former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's more than eight-year rule, which ended a year ago, Japan significantly expanded its military role and budget. Abe also watered down the war-renouncing Article 9 of the constitution in 2015, allowing Japan to come to the defense of the United States and other partner nations.

Japan has rapidly stepped up its military role in its alliance with Washington, and has made more purchases of costly American weapons and equipment, including fighter jets and missile interceptors.

"Japan faces different risks coming from multiple fronts," said defense expert Heigo Sato, a professor at the Institute of World Studies at Takushoku University in Tokyo.

Among those risks are North Korea's increased willingness to test high-powered missiles and other weapons, provocations by armed Chinese fishing boats and coast guard ships, and Russia's deployment of missiles and naval forces.

One of North Korea's missi-

les flew over Hokkaido, landing in the Pacific in 2017. In September, another fell within the 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone off northwestern Japan.

Under a bilateral security pact, Japan hosts about 50,000 U.S. troops, mostly on the southern island of Okinawa, which, along with Japanese units in Hokkaido, are strategically crucial to the U.S. presence in the Pacific.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who took office in October, said during his first troop review that he would consider "all options," including possibly pursuing pre-emptive strike capabilities to further "increase Japan's defense power" — a divisive issue that opponents say violates the constitution.

Japan has more than 900 warplanes, 48 destroyers, including eight Aegis missile-combating systems, and 20 submarines. That exceeds Britain, Germany and Italy. Japan is also buying 147 F-35s, including 42 F-35Bs, making it the largest user of American stealth fighters outside of the United States, where 353 are to be deployed.

Among Japan's biggest worries is China's increased naval activity, including an aircraft carrier that has been repeatedly spotted off Japan's southern coasts.

Japan has customarily maintained a defense budget cap at 1% of its GDP, though in recent

years the country has faced calls from Washington to spend more.

Kishida says he is open to doubling the cap to the NATO standard of 2%.

As a first step, his Cabinet recently approved a 770 billion yen (\$6.8 billion) extra budget for the fiscal year to accelerate missile defense and reconnaissance activity around Japanese territorial seas and airspace, and to bolster mobility and emergency responses to defend its remote East China Sea islands. That would bring the 2021 defense spending total to 6.1 trillion yen (\$53.2 billion), up 15% from the previous year, and 1.09% of Japan's GDP.

Experts say a defense budget increase is the price Japan must pay now to make up for a shortfall during much of the postwar era, when the country prioritized economic growth over national security.

As China is playing tough in the Asia-Pacific region, Taiwan has emerged as a regional flashpoint, with Japan, the United States and other democracies developing closer ties with the self-ruled island that Beijing regards as a renegade territory to be united by force if necessary.

China's buildup of military facilities in the South China Sea has heightened Tokyo's concerns in the East China Sea, where the Japanese-controlled Senkaku islands are also claimed by Beijing, which calls them Diaoyu. China has sent a fleet of armed coast guard boats to routinely circle them and to go in and out of Japanese-claimed waters, sometimes chasing Japanese fishing boats in the area.

Japan deploys PAC3 land-to-air missile interceptors on its westernmost island of Yonaguni, which is only 110 kilometers east of Taiwan.

In part because of a relative decline of America's global influence, Japan has expanded military partnerships and joint exercises beyond its alliance with the United States, including with Australia, Canada, Britain, France and other European countries, as well as in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Japan also cooperates with NATO.

Despite the government's argument that more is needed, there are worries domestically over Japan's rapid expansion of defense capabilities and costs.

"Although the defense policy needs to respond flexibly to changes in the national security environment, a soaring defense budget could cause neighboring countries to misunderstand that Japan is becoming a military power and accelerate an arms race," the newspaper Tokyo Shimbun said in a recent editorial. **MDT/AP**

GRANT PECK, BANGKOK

MYANMAR

Ousted Suu Kyi convicted in further blow to democracy

AUNG San Suu Kyi, the civilian leader of Myanmar who was ousted in a de facto coup this year, was convicted on two charges yesterday and handed a four-year sentence that was quickly cut in half—in proceedings widely criticized as a further effort by the country's military rulers to roll back the democratic gains of recent years.

The sentencing was the first in a series of cases in which the 76-year-old Nobel laureate is being prosecuted since the army seized power on Feb. 1, preventing her National League for Democracy party from starting a second five-year term in office. The ousted leader faces verdicts on other charges as early as next week.

If found guilty in all the cases she faces, she could be sentenced to more than 100 years in prison. The court yesterday did not make clear whether Suu Kyi would be sent to prison for the two convictions or placed under house arrest, the legal official said. In her long struggle for democracy, she has served 15 years of house arrest starting in 1989.

The official also said that Suu Kyi would be credited with 10 months for time already served in detention on the incitement case, leaving her with one year and two months to serve on that charge. There was no similar reduction on the charge of violating coronavirus restrictions.

The convictions were met quickly with severe criticism. Yanghee Lee, the former U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, described the charges as well as the verdict as "bogus," declaring that any trial held in the country is unfair as the judiciary is subservient to the military-installed government.

Rights groups also deplored the verdicts, with Amnesty International calling them "the latest example of the military's determination to eliminate all opposition and suffocate freedoms in Myanmar."

China, a neighbor which has maintained friendly ties with Myanmar's military leaders, declined to criticize the verdict against Suu Kyi.

Beijing hopes "all parties in Myanmar will bear in mind the long-term interests of the country, narrow differences and carry on the hard-won democratic transition process," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told reporters at a daily briefing yesterday.

The incitement case involved statements posted on the ousted ruling



There were protest marches on Sunday against the military government and calling for the release of Suu Kyi (file pic)

party's Facebook page after Suu Kyi and other party leaders had already been detained by the military. The coronavirus charge involved a campaign appearance ahead of elections in November last year which her party overwhelmingly won.

The army, whose allied party lost many seats in the election, claimed massive voting fraud, but independent election observers did not detect any major irregularities.

The ruling by the court in Naypyitaw was conveyed by a legal official

who insisted on anonymity for fear of being punished by the authorities. Suu Kyi's trials are closed to the media and spectators, and her lawyers, who had been the sole source of information on the proceedings, were served with gag orders in October forbidding them from releasing information.

Government officials could not immediately be reached for more details about the ruling. Special courts are a legacy of British colonial rule, appointed to hear specific

cases. They are most often used for political cases.

Defense lawyers are expected to file appeals in the coming days for Suu Kyi and two colleagues who were also convicted yesterday, the legal official said.

The cases against Suu Kyi are widely seen as contrived to discredit her and keep her from running in the next election. The constitution bars anyone sent to prison after being convicted of a crime from holding high office or becoming a lawmaker.

Opposition to military rule remains strong 10 months after the army's takeover, and the verdict may inflame tensions even further.

There were protest marches on Sunday against the military government and calling for the release of Suu Kyi and other detained members of her government. An army truck deliberately sped into a march by about 30 young people in Yangon, the country's biggest city, and at least three of the protesters may have been killed, according to unconfirmed reports. MDT/AP

- 合夥人 PARTNERS:**
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 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues^o
 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata^o
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 白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
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 陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo
 白穎怡 Iclia Berenguel
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 杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo
 宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção
 莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura
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 巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
 歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
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 吳佩愉 Ng Pui U
法律專家 JURISTS:
 羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues
 斐彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo
 潘卡莉 Candice Pun
 陳子健 Kimi Chan
 伍福賢 Domingos Ng
 劉慧敏 Amanda Liu
 楊詩婷 Si Teng leong



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AP PHOTO

WWII

101-year-old returns to Pearl Harbor to remember those lost

AUDREY MCAVOY & GILLIAN FLACCUS, HONOLULU

WHEN Japanese bombs began falling on Pearl Harbor, U.S. Navy Seaman 1st Class David Russell first sought refuge below deck on the USS Oklahoma.

But a split-second decision on that December morning 80 years ago changed his mind, and likely saved his life.

"They started closing that hatch. And I decided to get out of there," Russell, now 101, said in a recent interview.

Within 12 minutes his battleship would capsize under a barrage of torpedoes. Altogether 429 sailors and Marines from the Oklahoma would perish — the greatest death toll from any ship that day other than the USS Arizona, which lost 1,177.

Russell plans to return to Pearl Harbor today for a ceremony in remembrance of the more than 2,300 American troops killed in the Dec. 7, 1941, attack that launched the U.S. into World War II.

About 30 survivors and 100 other veterans from the war are expected to observe a moment of silence at 7:55 a.m., the mi-

nute the attack began.

Survivors, now in their late 90s or older, stayed home last year due to the coronavirus pandemic and watched a livestream of the event instead.

Russell is traveling to Hawaii with the Best Defense Foundation, a nonprofit founded by former NFL Linebacker Donnie Edwards that helps World War II veterans revisit their old battlefields.

He recalls heading topside when the attack started because he was trained to load anti-aircraft guns and figured he could help if any other loader got hurt.

But Japanese torpedo planes dropped a series of underwater missiles that pummeled the Oklahoma before he could get there. Within 12 minutes, the hulking battleship capsized.

"Those darn torpedoes, they just kept hitting us and kept hitting us. I thought they'd never stop," Russell said. "That ship was dancing around."

Russell clambered over and around toppled lockers while the battleship slowly rolled over.

"You had to walk sort of sideways," he said.

Once he got to the main deck, he crawled over the ship's side and eyed the

USS Maryland moored next door. He didn't want to swim because leaked oil was burning in the water below. Jumping, he caught a rope hanging from the Maryland and escaped to that battleship without injury.

He then helped pass ammunition to the Maryland's anti-aircraft guns.

After the battle, Russell and two others went to Ford Island, next to where the battleships were moored, in search of a bathroom. A dispensary and enlisted quarters there had turned into a triage center and place of refuge for hundreds of wounded, and they found horribly burned sailors lining the walls. Many would die in the hours and days ahead.

"Most of them wanted a cigarette, and I didn't smoke at that time but I, uh, I got a pack of cigarettes and some matches, and I lit their cigarettes for them," Russell said. "You feel for those guys, but I couldn't do anything. Just light a cigarette for 'em and let 'em puff the cigarettes."

Russell still thinks about how lucky he was. He ponders why he decided to go topside on the Oklahoma, knowing most of the men who stayed behind likely

were unable to get out after the hatch closed.

In the first two days after the bombing, a civilian crew from the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard rescued 32 men trapped inside the Oklahoma by cutting holes in its hull. But many others perished. Most of those who died were buried in anonymous Honolulu graves marked as "unknowns" because their remains were too degraded to be identified by the time they were removed from the ship between 1942 and 1944.

In 2015, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency exhumed 388 sets of these remains in hopes of identifying them with the help of DNA technology and dental records. They succeeded with 361.

Russell's brother-in-law was among them. Fireman 1st Class Walter "Boone" Rogers was in the fireroom, which got hit by torpedoes, Russell said. The military identified his remains in 2017, and he's since been reburied at Arlington National Cemetery.

Russell remained in the Navy until retiring in 1960. He worked at Air Force bases for the next two decades and retired for good in 1980.

His wife, Violet, passed away 22 years ago, and he now lives alone in Albany, Oregon. He drives himself to the grocery store and the local American Legion post in a black Ford Explorer while listening to polka music at top volume. When he's not hanging out with other veterans at the legion, he reads military history and watches TV. He keeps a stack of 500-piece puzzles to keep his mind sharp.

For decades, Russell didn't share much about his experiences in World War II because no one seemed to care. But the images from Pearl Harbor still haunt him, especially at night.

"When I was in the VA hospital there in San Francisco, they said, 'We want you to talk about World War II.' And I said, I told them, I said, 'When we talk about it, people don't believe us. They just walk away.' So now people want to know more about it so we're trying to talk about it. We're trying to talk about it, and we're just telling them what we saw," he said. "You can't forget it." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1979 LORD SOAMES TO GOVERN RHODESIA



Cabinet minister Lord Soames has been named transitional governor of Rhodesia to oversee its progress into legal independence.

He is to enforce law and order in the divided country, oversee fair elections and help form a government to advance the state to independence.

The newly appointed Rhodesian Governor has full authority for a transitional period, and his post is an outcome of the Constitutional Conference at Lancaster House, London, this autumn.

The all-party conference, which included opposition African Patriotic Front leaders, reached agreement on a new constitution, transitional arrangements and a ceasefire in Rhodesia.

Lord Soames said he hoped to turn the country away from war towards free and fair elections and majority rule.

The minister and his wife Mary, a daughter of Sir Winston Churchill, are expected to leave in the next few days.

Rhodesia, a British colony since 1923, has been dogged by violence and international alienation during its struggle for independence.

Strained relations

In 1964, the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia Ian Smith rejected British conditions for independence.

He made a unilateral declaration of independence a year later which was not recognised by London.

Britain cut all ties with the newly renamed Rhodesia, which was also then subject to UN sanctions.

The African nationalist Zapu and Zanu parties - although divided - are under the umbrella of the Patriotic Front.

They took up arms against the regime and African guerrilla groups were involved in clashes with Rhodesian security forces, who were backed by South African forces after 1967.

Constitutional settlement talks have taken place in the last decade but without success.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Elections in 1980 brought Robert Mugabe, leader of Zanu PF, to power, and the granting of independence to Zimbabwe as a member of the Commonwealth.

Seven years later white representation in parliament was no longer guaranteed and Zapu and Zanu united to form a single party with Mugabe as president.

Mugabe was re-elected in 1996 but the fairness of the elections was questioned.

He has only recently faced any serious challenge to his authority, in the form of popular protest and substantial gains for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

But he was declared winner of the 2002 presidential elections, considered seriously flawed by the opposition and foreign observers.

With Mugabe's collusion, a campaign of violent seizure of white farms by squatters began, leading to Western protests.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Try not to say the wrong thing at the wrong time. Don't let others make you feel guilty or insecure. You need to keep busy doing things that you both enjoy.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Your concern with older family members and those less fortunate than yourself will only add to your attractiveness. You may want to put your creative thinking cap on.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Don't trust others with private information that could be used against you. You may have ignored or neglected your mate lately. Don't take your frustrations out on the ones you love.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Don't blow situations out of proportion. Your ability to visualize will help you convince others of the possibilities. Your ability to work with detail will bring recognition.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Do the necessary chores and then do things that please you. Don't waste this exciting day by sitting at home. Look into ways to make your home more comfortable.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Leave things as they are for the moment and focus on reaching your highest potential at work. You can prosper if you invest in property or mutual funds. Don't let situations get out of hand.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Plan to get together with someone special later in the day. Don't ruffle the feathers of those you care about most. Opportunities to show your worth will enhance your reputation and bring possible advancement.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Do your job and then spend some time with family; you'll be glad you did. A romantic dinner, followed by a quiet evening with the one who is enticing you, should be most satisfying.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 You must be sure not to be frivolous, because as the saying goes, easy come, easy go. You may be experiencing emotional turmoil in regard to your mate. Financial investments can be extremely prosperous.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 You will have a great deal of insight when dealing with others. You need to get out and have some fun to reduce tension. Opportunities to meet new lovers will come through pleasure trips or social events.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 You might want to spend some time by yourself to decide how you feel. Minor fevers or infections will develop if you're over-stressed. Get together with friends who like to participate in indoor sports.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Expect to pay more than anticipated for entertainment or other purchases. Be sure to find out all you can before you commit to anything. Spend time with friends and relatives. Travel for pleasure.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

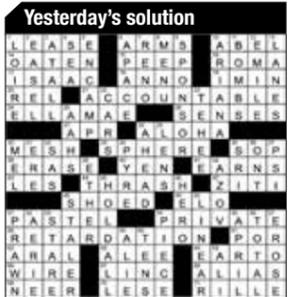
WEATHER

| | MIN | MAX | CONDITION |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----------|
| CHINA | | | |
| Beijing | 2 | 5 | rain |
| Harbin | -3 | -8 | cloudy |
| Tianjin | 4 | 8 | rain |
| Urumqi | -5 | -12 | fine |
| Xi'an | 2 | 10 | rain |
| Lhasa | -4 | 15 | fine |
| Chengdu | 10 | 13 | overcast |
| Chongqing | 11 | 13 | rain |
| Kunming | 7 | 17 | cloudy |
| Nanjing | 13 | 24 | overcast |
| Shanghai | 13 | 19 | rain |
| Wuhan | 5 | 19 | overcast |
| Hangzhou | 11 | 19 | rain |
| Taipei | 20 | 23 | cloudy |
| Guangzhou | 14 | 25 | fine |
| Hong Kong | 15 | 26 | fine |
| WORLD | | | |
| Moscow | -5 | -6 | snow |
| Frankfurt | 0 | 3 | snow |
| Paris | 2 | 6 | cloudy |
| London | 4 | 11 | cloudy |
| New York | 3 | 8 | cloudy |

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1-Island greeting; 6- On the main; 10- Salonga of "Miss Saigon"; 13- Seraglio; 14- Drive-___ window; 15- Explosive weapon; 16- Maker of Pong; 17- Feathered creature; 18- Farm dwellers; 19- Silage storage tower; 20- Mental strain; 22- Equine sounds; 24- Journey; 28- Assuage; 31- ___ Gay; 32- Knight wear; 34- Serpentine swimmer; 36- Rent-___; 37- Bambi's aunt; 38- Weariness; 41- Loss leader?; 42- It's owed; 44- Crosses (out); 45- High-minded; 47- Shady recess; 49- Natural gas component; 51- Virgin; 53- In and of ___; 56- Typical; 59- Decoy; 61- Adroit; 64- Flood survivor; 65- More delicate; 66- Factual; 67- Raison d'___; 68- Celestial being; 69- Nine-digit ID; 70- Prophet; 71- Actress Witherspoon;

DOWN 1- Cries of discovery; 2- Caesar's tongue; 3- Papal garment; 4- Bravery; 5- Bordeaux buddy; 6- Optimally; 7- Type of guard; 8- Goes astray; 9- Examine account books; 10- First name in horror films; 11- CPR giver; 12- Bodybuilder's pride; 15- Tropical fruit; 20- Chest; 21- Vein contents; 23- Flub; 25- Loud; 26- Delight; 27- Pasternak heroine; 29- Robbery; 30- Hosp. readout; 32- The end of ___; 33- Jewish scholar; 35- Crescent-shaped; 37- Dutch cheese; 39- Peg used on the first in golf; 40- Seemingly forever; 43- So far; 46- Direct route; 48- Increase, with "up"; 50- Upper; 52- Hawaiian state birds; 54- Sudden forward thrust; 55- Unties; 57- Routine; 58- Swiss river; 60- Della's creator; 61- Skid row woe; 62- Sounds of hesitation; 63- Amusement; 65- At a great distance;



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- 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
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E-COMMERCE

ALIBABA APPOINTS NEW CFO, RESHUFFLES E-COMMERCE BUSINESSES

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

CHINA'S largest e-commerce group Alibaba said it is appointing a new chief financial officer and reorganizing its e-commerce businesses amid a regulatory crackdown in the technology industry.

The company said in a statement yesterday that Toby Xu will succeed Maggie Wu as its new CFO from April 1, 2022. Xu joined Alibaba from PricewaterhouseCoopers three years ago and was appointed deputy group CFO in July 2019.

Wu, who has been Alibaba's CFO since 2013 and has helped lead three Alibaba-related company listings, will continue to serve as an executive director on Alibaba's board.

She will also remain as a partner in the Alibaba Partnership – a group of senior executives who have the right to nominate a sim-

ple majority of Alibaba's board of directors.

"We are focused on the long-term, and succession within our management team on every occasion is always in the service of ensuring Alibaba will be stronger and better positioned for the future," said Daniel Zhang, chairman and CEO of Alibaba Group.

Separately, Alibaba said that it would be creating an International Digital Commerce team to handle its e-commerce businesses in international markets. A China Digital Commerce team will be in charge of e-commerce operations inside China, according to a post on the company's Alizila news hub.

The international and domestic digital commerce teams will be led by executives Jiang Fan and Trudy Dai respectively.

Jiang has been in charge of Taobao and Tmall, Alibaba's core e-commerce sites in China. Dai was

the firm's chief customer officer.

The Hangzhou-based firm was fined a record \$2.8 billion for anti-trust violations and is under scrutiny as regulators step up oversight of the technology industry at a time when the economy is slowing.

Last month, Alibaba cut its sales outlook for the year amid mounting competition from rivals such as Pinduoduo. It expects growth for its current year to be the slowest since it listed in New York in 2014.

Alibaba's flagship Singles' Day shopping extravaganza also posted its slowest-ever growth this year, amid muted marketing campaigns and a shift to sustainability and philanthropy amid Chinese President Xi Jinping's calls for "common prosperity."

Alibaba's New York stock price has plunged more than 50% over the last 12 months. The company's Hong Kong-traded shares were down 4.9% Monday. MDT/AP

PROPERTY

China tries to reassure on Evergrande as default fears rise

CHINA'S central bank released extra money for lending yesterday as the government tried to reassure the public it can contain the potential fallout if a troubled real estate developer's \$310 billion mountain of debt collapses.

The People's Bank of China said it freed up 1.2 trillion yuan (\$190 billion) for banks to lend by reducing the amount of money they must hold as reserves. Its announcement made no mention of Evergrande, but the move was expected after regulators promised to keep lending markets functioning following the company's warning Friday it might run out of cash to pay debts.

The ruling Communist Party can prevent a credit crunch but wants to avoid

sending the wrong signal by bailing out Evergrande in the middle of an official campaign to force companies to cut debt. Beijing worries is dangerously high, economists say.

The central bank said it wanted "support the development of the real economy" and reduce finance costs for businesses. It said the reserve cut represented no change from its "prudent monetary policy."

Reducing financial risk has been a priority for Chinese leaders since 2018. The first bond default of the communist era was allowed to occur in 2014. Defaults have gradually been allowed to increase in hopes of forcing borrowers and investors to be more disciplined. MDT/AP



CORPORATE BITS

Sands China hosts film screening as part of education efforts on professionalism



Sands China Ltd. recently hosted a special film screening of "The Battle at Lake Changjin" for its team members at Cinema Alegria. This is the fourth film screening which

Sands China hosted for its team members, as part of the company's ongoing efforts to build professionalism and deepen understanding of national development and the

Mainland within themselves.

According to a statement, the company also invited members of three local community organizations to join the screening: the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, the General Union of Neighbourhood Associations of Macau, and the Women's General Association of Macau.

The film "The Battle at Lake Changjin" portrays the awe-inspiring encounter between the Chinese People's Volunteer Army and the U.S. Army in a fierce battle fought during the winter of 1950, when the Chinese forces managed to achieve a key victory in the Korean War.

Melco co-organizes 2021 WUCL Finals



Melco Resorts & Entertainment brought an e-sports experience to Macau as co-organizer of 2021 World University Cyber League (2021 WUCL) Finals.

For the first time, under a "one game, two places" model, the 2021 WUCL Finals were held between December 4

and 5 at Novotown in Hengqin and Studio City in Macau.

The initiative demonstrated Melco's commitment to local economic diversification and the strengthening of Macau's position as a world-class tourism destination. Now in its third year, WUCL is the most influential and comprehensive college and university level e-Sports event of its kind, the gaming operator said.

For the WUCL Finals, contestants from 32 colleges and universities across the country gathered offline at the event to compete in popular games such as League of Legends, Honor of Kings and Game for Peace. The event was broadcasted nationally on Tencent platforms.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

A look at what's at stake in the final round of Champions League matches in the group stage, with five last-16 places up for grabs and three group winners still to be determined:

LAST-16 PLACES

Barcelona's first Champions League campaign without Lionel Messi in nearly two decades may come to an end in the group stage if it doesn't find a way to beat Bayern Munich on Wednesday. It would be the first time since the 2003-04 season that the Catalan club didn't play in the knockout stage of the competition. Barcelona is second to Bayern in Group E, and two points ahead of third-place Benfica. But a draw or a loss in Germany would allow Benfica to advance with a home win against already eliminated Dynamo Kyiv. Atlético Madrid is another Spanish club in danger of not advancing, as it sits last in Group B. It has to win at second-place Porto on Tuesday and hope that AC Milan draws or loses at home against group-winner Liverpool. Villarreal can advance in Group F on Wednesday if it avoids defeat at Atalanta, which will move on with a win. In Group G, Lille, Sal-

FOOTBALL

Benfica, Barcelona, AC Milan among teams seeking last-16 spots in CL

zburg, Sevilla and Wolfsburg can still advance, with Lille and Salzburg needing draws. Lille is at Wolfsburg and Salzburg plays Sevilla.

GROUP WINNERS

Titleholder Chelsea and 13-time European champion Real Madrid are among those looking to clinch first place in their groups, which is more likely to secure an easier match in the last 16. Both teams have secured a last-16 spot. Chelsea is tied on points with Juventus in Group H and is ahead courtesy of a superior head-to-head record, so a win at Zenit St. Petersburg on Wednesday will guarantee top spot for the defending champions. Juventus finishes group play at home to Malmo, which won the Swedish league on Saturday to retain its title. Madrid, meanwhile, hosts Inter Milan Tuesday in a match between two teams who have already secured a last-16



spot and who can both still win Group D. Madrid leads Inter by two points so a point will be enough for Carlo Ancelotti's team. Then there's the intriguing Group G finale on Wednesday, where all four teams — Lille, Salzburg, Sevilla and Wolfsburg — can still finish first.

EUROPA LEAGUE CHASERS

Club Brugge, Leipzig and Young Boys have no chance of reaching the last 16 but they can still join Borussia

Dortmund, Sheriff and Zenit St. Petersburg in the playoffs for the Europa League knockout phase. Club Brugge and Leipzig are fighting for third place in Group A

behind group winner Manchester City and runner-up Paris Saint-Germain. Leipzig will host Man City on Tuesday in an empty stadium due to coronavirus restrictions and with an interim coach in charge after deciding to part ways with American Jesse Marsch on Sunday. Marsch himself missed the team's last three games due to his own COVID-19 infection amid an outbreak at the club, but he paid the price for three successive Bundesliga defeats. PSG hosts Club Brugge in the other group game. Both Leipzig and Brugge have four points. Swiss team Young Boys only has a slim chance of finishing third in Group F, needing a win at group winner Manchester United on Wednesday and hoping for a favor from Villarreal at Atalanta. **MDT/AP**

SNOOKER

Zhao Xintong secures another big title for China in York

ZHAO Xintong became the second Chinese player this year to capture one of snooker's three major titles when he won the UK Championship yesterday [Macau time].

Competing in the first final of his career, the 24-year-old Zhao beat Luca Brecel 10-5 in the northern English city of York to become only the fourth non-British winner of the event.

"It was the biggest match for me and it was my first time, so I tried my best," Zhao said. "I feel very, very happy now. I am very excited."

China has long been viewed as the country that will break Britain's stranglehold on the table sport and another of its talented young players, Yao Bingtao, won the Masters in January.

The world championship is the biggest event in snooker and no



Chinese has ever won it. Ding Junhui, the long-time star of Chinese snooker and a three-time winner of the UK Championship, was the runner-up at the worlds in 2016.

The manner of Zhao's win suggested there might soon be a shift in balance of power in the sport toward China, with big names like Jimmy White and Ronnie O'Sullivan describing Zhao as the next big thing in snooker.

"He's got the credentials to be the first Chinese world champion," six-time world champion Steve Davis said. "Everyone thought it might be Ding but who is to say Zhao won't be the one to do it?"

Zhao, who will move up to ninth in the world rankings, collected 200,000 pounds (\$265,000) in prize money and earned a place in next month's Masters tournament in London. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

World Views

Editors, MDT/AP

**AUNG SAN SUU KYI: THE
 LEGAL CHALLENGES**

The prison sentence given to ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday on charges of incitement and failing to observe pandemic restrictions is one small shot in a legal offensive intended to deal her and her National League for Democracy party a crippling political blow.

Suu Kyi's supporters and legal experts generally believe the cases against her have been contrived to discredit her and justify the military's seizure of power in February.

Suu Kyi and her co-defendants have been charged under a wide range of laws and have pleaded not guilty to every charge.

Suu Kyi is charged with improperly importing the walkie-talkies. It was the first charge filed after her house was raided when the military seized power on Feb. 1, and was used to initially detain her. Maximum penalty is three years' imprisonment and a fine. Verdict expected Dec. 13.

Suu Kyi is charged with two counts of violating coronavirus restrictions during campaigning for last year's election, which her party won overwhelmingly and the military refuses to recognize. The offense falls under the Natural Disaster Management Law. Ousted president Win Myint also is charged under the law. Maximum penalty for each count is three years in prison and a fine. She was found guilty on one count yesterday and sentenced to two years in prison. A verdict on the second count is expected Dec. 14.

Suu Kyi was also found guilty of incitement, defined as spreading false or inflammatory information that could disturb public order, and sometimes referred to as sedition. Her co-defendants on the incitement charge were ousted President Win Myint and Myo Aung, the former mayor of the capital, Naypyitaw. They were also found guilty. Maximum penalty is two years in prison and a fine. All three received the maximum sentence of two years.

The Official Secrets Law, also known as the State Secrets Law, is a legacy of the British colonial era that criminalizes the possession, collection, recording, publishing or sharing of state information that is "directly or indirectly, useful to an enemy." Suu Kyi's co-defendants in the case are three former members of her Cabinet and Sean Turnell, an Australian economist who served as her adviser. The details of the alleged offense have not been made public, though state television has said Turnell had access to "secret state financial information" and tried to flee the country. Maximum penalty is 14 years in prison. Verdict expected next year.

A special court is hearing four corruption cases against Suu Kyi. She faces two charges covering her own actions, and two in which she allegedly conspired with other defendants to carry out corruption, which involves abuse of authority. Testimony included an allegation by a former political ally of Suu Kyi that he handed her a bribe of \$600,000 and seven gold bars in 2017-18. Suu Kyi dismissed his allegations as "absurd."

Suu Kyi has also been charged with diverting money meant as charitable donations to build a residence, and misusing her position to obtain rental properties at lower-than-market prices for a charitable foundation named after her mother that she chaired. The Anti-Corruption Commission has alleged such actions deprived the state of revenue it would otherwise have earned.

Maximum penalty for each offense is 15 years in prison and a fine. No date yet set for verdict.

A fifth corruption charge, also involving the rental of real estate, has not yet gone to trial. The authorities announced last week they have filed a sixth charge against her and Win Myint in connection with granting permits to rent and buy a helicopter.

Myanmar's election commission announced it is prosecuting Suu Kyi and 15 other political figures for alleged fraud in last November's general election. The action by the Union Election Commission could result in Suu Kyi's party being dissolved and unable to participate in a new election the military has promised will take place within two years of its takeover.

China yesterday threatened to take "firm countermeasures" if the U.S. proceeds with a diplomatic boycott of February's Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian accused U.S. politicians of grandstanding over the issue of not sending dignitaries to attend the events that China hopes will showcase its economic development and technological prowess.

Speaking to reporters at a daily briefing, Zhao said such a move would be an "outright political provocation," but gave no details on how China would retaliate.

U.S. President Joe Biden has said he is considering a boyco-

tt, under which American athletes would still compete, and an announcement is expected this week. Supporters of such a step cite China's poor record on human rights as justification, saying China is using the games to whitewash its ill treatment of civil rights activists, political dissidents and ethnic minorities.

"Without being invited, American politicians keep hyping the so-called diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympic, which is purely wishful thinking and grandstanding," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing.

"If the U.S. side is bent on going its own way, China will take firm countermeasures," Zhao said.



AP PHOTO

**UNVACCINATED ITALIANS
 FACE NEW RESTRICTIONS
 AS HOLIDAYS NEAR**

COLLEEN BARRY,
 MILAN

ITALY is making life more uncomfortable for unvaccinated people as the holidays draw near, excluding them from indoor restaurants, theaters and museums to reduce the spread of coronavirus and encourage vaccine skeptics to get their shots.

Starting yesterday through Jan. 15, Italian police can check whether diners in restaurants or bars have a "super" green health pass certifying that they are either vaccinated or have recently recovered from the virus. Smart phone applications that check people's health pass status will be updated and those who have merely tested negative in recent days for COVID-19 will no longer be allowed into concerts, movies or performances.

The number of new COVID-19 infections in Italy has been on a gradual rise for the past six weeks, even before concerns arose about the new omicron variant. That's a worrying trend as Italians plan holiday parties and getaways to spend time with friends and family. Christmas

travel and holiday gatherings were strictly limited last year due to a steeper rise in contagion.

While both Germany and Austria are moving toward making vaccines obligatory, Italy is instead tightening restrictions on the unvaccinated at the most convivial time of the year — while allowing those who are vaccinated go about life more or less as usual.

Italy's vaccination rate is higher than many of its neighbors, at 85% of the eligible population aged 12 and older and 77% of the total population. But people in their 30s, 40s and 50s have proved the most reluctant to get vaccinated, with nearly 3.5 million still not having received their first doses.

They are also the same age group that is now being hardest hit by the virus, according to Silvio Brusaferrero, head of Italy's National Health Institute.

Also starting Monday, people must have a health pass to access local public transportation and stay in hotels — that can be acquired also with a negative recent test. In Milan, the prefect said health passes will be che-

cked before people are allowed onto the subway or buses.

With the holiday shopping season heating up, many cities including Rome and Milan have ordered mask mandates even outdoors.

Public health officials say vaccinations, along with prudent public behavior including wearing masks in crowds, are key to reducing infection levels as winter weather pushes more activities indoors. They credit Italy's relatively high level of immunization as one reason that the infection curve is not as steep as last winter, when broad restrictions were imposed with the spread of the delta variant.

"It is clear that after two years of the pandemic, we cannot easily close schools to physical classes and shut down economic activity," said Gianni Rezza, the health ministry's director of prevention.

"Therefore, you can try to keep the virus spread down with measures that are sustainable, and with proper use of the health pass. Then the big bet is on the vaccinations," he said. MDT/AP

Nepalese authorities yesterday reported the first cases of the omicron variant in the Himalayan nation. A Health Ministry statement said a 66-year-old foreign national who arrived by air on Nov. 19 tested positive for the variant along with another 71-year-old person who was in contact with the tourist. Both are being kept in isolation under the supervision of a medical team.



Saudi Arabia's crown prince was heading yesterday to Oman, the first stop of a tour of Gulf Arab states that will see him meet neighboring rulers and allies as the kingdom closely watches negotiations in Europe to revive Iran's nuclear deal with world powers. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's (pictured) visit coincides with a flurry of other diplomatic meetings in the region, including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to ally Qatar and a visit by a high-ranking security official from the United Arab Emirates to Iran.



USA A Norwegian Cruise Line ship with at least 10 passengers and crew members infected with COVID-19 docked in New Orleans, where health officials said they were trying to disembark people without worsening the spread of the coronavirus illness. Local news outlets in New Orleans confirmed the Norwegian Breakaway had arrived in the city. The ship departed New Orleans on Nov. 28.



India-Russia Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin today [Macau time] to discuss defense and trade relations as India attempts to balance its ties with the United States. The agenda for the annual summit includes political and defense issues, Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi said. The two countries are expected to sign several agreements, particularly in trade and defense.