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ANOTHER TWO RESIDENTS HAVE REPORTED LOSING A TOTAL OF HKD900,000 OVER SO-CALLED ‘HEALTH BUREAU’ SCAM CALLS

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CHINA CITES CORONAVIRUS ON PACKAGING, DESPITE DOUBTS ABROAD

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AP PHOTO



China Only “selected” spectators will be permitted at next month’s Beijing Olympics because of the coronavirus pandemic, organizers said yesterday. Beijing had already announced that no fans from outside the country would be permitted at the events, and had not offered tickets to the general public. Monday’s announcement posted on the organizing committee’s website confirmed expectations that the Winter Games would have few onlookers at the venues.

AP PHOTO



Sri Lanka's leader yesterday promised human rights reforms and “justice” for missing persons from the country’s civil war, after years of resisting calls for such measures. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was speaking before a new session of Parliament as the Sri Lankan government looks for international support in dealing with a heavy fiscal and debt crisis.

AP PHOTO



EU Roberta Metsola, a Christian Democrat from Malta, was elected president of the European Union’s parliament yesterday, putting women in three of the four biggest jobs in the 27-nation bloc. Metsola succeeds Italian Socialist David Sassoli, who died last week. She is only the third woman elected to the post. At age 43, she is the European Parliament’s youngest president.

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CLOSE CONTACTS OF RECENT CASES TESTED NEGATIVE

Health authorities said that as of yesterday, all close contacts in Macau and those who had traveled to the high risk areas of Zhongshan and Zhuhai received negative test results. Four people were listed as close contacts of cases in Zhuhai and Zhongshan, three of whom were in Macau. So far, a total of 13 nucleic acid test results have been negative. A total of 18,769 people who voluntarily declared themselves as close contacts through the Macau Health Code saw their code change to yellow.

529,000 MACAU HEALTH CODE DOWNLOADS

As of 4 p.m. yesterday, the cumulative number of registered users of the Macau Health Code mobile application exceeded 529,000. Authorities have appealed to residents to download it as soon as possible, and young people have been encouraged to help older residents download and use the application. Amid worries of personal data breaches, the Health Bureau provided assurance that health codes will not be screen-captured and that the data will only be stored for 28 days. No identifiable personal data will be collected, the bureau promised.

GOV'T ADVISES PUBLIC TO DISINFECT OVERSEAS PARCELS

The government advised residents to disinfect parcels received from overseas, following recent reports of Covid-19 cases in China linked to packages that arrived from abroad. "When opening a postal item, they should try to do it outdoors. If they need to take it home, they can use a chlorine disinfectant [...] to completely disinfect the inside and outside of the package," the statement from the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau read. The bureau acknowledged that procedures for disinfecting the post offices could result in delivery delays.

GAMING

SVA WARNS NEW LAW COULD DETER INVESTMENT AMID HEIGHTENED NATIONAL SECURITY EMPHASIS

LYNZY VALLES

THE reduced timeframe of gaming concessionaires that was set at 10 years in the amended gaming law could deter investment – particularly in the second half of the term – according to political and corporate risk consultancy firm Steve Vickers Associates Ltd (SVA).

However, this should be manageable for investors if the incumbents win new concessions.

A report on its assessment on Macau and the new gaming law was published following the announcement of the proposed gaming law amendment on Friday, which has caused casino stocks to attract billions of patacas in investment.

The city's six operators are scheduled to see their coveted gaming privileges expire on June 26 this year.

With the expiration date just a few months away and no clear directives, a new tender by June seems unlikely.

According to Steve Vickers, CEO of SVA, a more realistic timeframe might be later on 2022, or potentially 2023.

This delay implies that the government will have to extend the concessions.

Vickers had previously stated that the "tendering process remains opaque, leaving the casino sector in a state of limbo," adding that the city is potentially more



acutely impacted by political risk than other PRC cities.

In the new report, Vickers expressed that major sources of risk to gaming operators are "not regulatory but nakedly political."

"The primary factor which the Chinese and Macau authorities consider when evaluating concession renewals and new regulations is clearly the national security criteria and whether, for example, capital flight can be contained, especially when linked to US operators seeking to repatriate dividends," Vickers stated.

The firm believed that the new law has an emphasis on national security, therefore posing heightened political risk to foreign investors.

Investors in the sector that

generates 80% of Macau's gross domestic product have been anxious for some time, as it was formerly announced that the law may include rules mandating the appointment of government representatives and specific restrictions on dividend payments.

The announcement on January 14, which did not include the rumored changes and was not as strict as previously feared, was a big win for the big six.

However, Vickers advised investors to take all risks into consideration "before being swept up too far in the current market euphoria."

"Understanding and being able to gauge political risk has never been more important in this respect," the expert added.

NOT ALL MAY SURVIVE

As the draft law provides little detail on how the tender will operate and which businesses will be encouraged to tender, Vickers warned investors to be mindful that geopolitical tensions are high and liable to rise.

The current operators will obviously be among the tender applicants.

"Macau's government may favor domestic champions, or at least demand changes in ownership structure to foreign controlled entities, which may be problematic," the report stated.

"Therefore, not all current concessions may survive the process."

CURTAILED SHORT-TERM GROWTH

It was announced yesterday that junkets will be able to continue to operate in the local gaming industry as long as they are attached to a single concessionaire.

The possibility of exploring special areas of the casinos (VIP rooms) exclusively and under a special contract is barred to junkets, under a provision that aims to ensure that VIP rooms are the responsibility of the concessionaires.

In the report, Vickers believed that restricting any sharing of revenues with junkets will deter short-term growth, as reliance on junkets had hitherto underpinned VIP gaming and illegal capital outflows in the mainland.

DSAL refers over 850 gaming practitioners to operators

THE Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) referred 854 former junket employees to participate in job-matching interviews with the six gaming operators on Monday. Six job-matching sessions will be completed on January 25, the bureau said in a statement.

After coordinating with six gaming operators to organize the first round of meetings with junket employees in December last year, the second round of job-matching meetings was held on January 17 and co-organized with Wynn Macau. A total of 86 people were referred to the

company for interviews for positions including roles as marketing business representatives, membership business representatives, telemarketers, reservation agents, and wait staff.

As of January 17, a total of 2,358 employees from the gaming industry have

registered with the DSAL as job seekers, and 1,890 people have been contacted in the two rounds of matching sessions. Among those willing to attend, nearly 100 are currently employed as a result of the job-matching session.

Figures from DSAL show that a total of 802

complaints have been filed regarding the subsidiaries of junket operator Suncity, businesses which have ceased trading.

In addition to the subsidiaries, the bureau received 21 complaints from employees of "companies related to Suncity."

The bureau pledged that it will hold more matching meetings shortly to provide further interview opportunities to match job seekers with prospective employers as soon as possible. LV

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NEW GAMING LAW

Junkets permitted if attached to a single-concessionaire

RENATO MARQUES

GAMING promoters (junkets) will be able to continue to operate in the local gaming industry as long as they are attached to a single concessionaire, the draft law on the gaming industry, submitted by the Executive Council to the Legislative Assembly establishes.

In Article 23 solely dedicated to the junkets, the bill notes on clauses 2 that "Each gaming promoter can only perform the activity of gaming promotion in one concessionaire."

The bill further notes in subsequent sections that licensed junkets cannot pass on any of their activities and responsibilities to third parties to act on their name, with the exception of cases where it is necessary to do so by a stakeholder, board members or employees in the performance of the regular activity or the performance of tasks



MICHAL PARZUCHOWSKI

that support this activity.

Also barred to the junkets is the possibility of exploring special areas of the casinos (VIP rooms) exclusively and under a special contract, a provision that aims to ensure that VIP rooms fall within

the responsibility of the concessionaires and cannot be detached or independently operated in any way.

Nonetheless, the possibility of having selective rooms catering to a particular group of players is

regulated and provided for in Article 5B.

The provision settled on number 4 of Article 23 also clarifies that junkets can only operate within a system of commission agents.

Article 29 completes the delineation of the relationship between junkets and concessionaires by providing that the concessionaires should retain the taxes attributable to the commissions paid to junkets at the source, calculated according to the gross gaming revenues. A 5% tax over these commissions is also fixed in the draft law.

GOV'T TAKES ALL IN CONCESSION TERMINATION

The new bill also clarifies that when a gaming concession is terminated or voided, all the assets from the concessionaire revert to the Macau Special Administrative Region including all the casinos, equipment, and utensils as well as all unfinished gaming investment projects. This reclaiming of assets

by the government does not imply the payment of any compensation to the concessionaire, except in the cases where the concession is terminated unilaterally by the Chief Executive (CE) invoking the public interest.

CASINOS ABROAD TO REQUIRE SPECIAL AUTHORIZATION

Another area in which the new gaming law aims to promote changes to the Law 16/2001 is with regard to the authorization needed by local concessionaires to explore gaming activities in other jurisdictions.

While under the current law, the exploration of gaming activities abroad was only subject to authorization from the CE, the new gaming law proposes a preliminary stage during which a Gaming Committee will issue an opinion on the topic before the CE makes a final decision.

The listing of concessionaires on stock exchanges is also subject to prior authorization from the CE and to a baseline rule which states that concessionaires cannot hold over 30% of the total shares on the market. This provision aims to exercise greater control over the ownership and stakeholders of gaming companies, by preventing instances where a non-verified stakeholder can assume a major position within the company via a subsequent acquisition.

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CONSTRUCTION BUDGET OF LRT HENGQIN, SEAC PAI VAN LINES SET UP TO MOP5B

ANTHONY LAM

The government revealed yesterday that the budgets allotted to the construction of the Hengqin and Seac Pai Van Lines of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) are MOP5 billion and MOP3 billion respectively.

Secretary of Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário disclosed this information at the parliamentary plenary question session yesterday.

The senior official added that the budget for the construction of the Taipa Line was MOP11 billion, but only MOP10.2 billion was spent. The construction cost has already included provision for the construction of the car park.

The operating costs will remain at MOP5.88 billion to be paid over 80 months under the terms of the service contract signed between the government and the operating entity, the MTR Corporation.

The Barra extension of the Taipa Line, meanwhile, is expected to cost the government MOP4.5 billion.

Rosário expects the final costs to be lower than the budgeted amount. Approximately MOP10.7 billion has been incurred so far.

Lawmaker Leong Sun Iok opened the parliamentary plenary question session by listing several flaws of the LRT system, including its unpopularity and high construction and operating costs. He pointed out that in the less than two years of operation since its launch, about a dozen system malfunctions have been recorded.

The system has now been suspended from operation because all the high-voltage cables need to be replaced to ensure safety. The lawmaker questioned whether



the government had commenced investigations into the flaws that caused the problem with the cables. He demanded to know whether anybody should be held accountable, and suggested that an overall inspection was required to ensure similar faults would not impact the system in the future.

Rosário defended the reliability of the system. "The whole system was run through many tests before its opening and no problem was detected back then," he recalled. "Mitsubishi has admitted responsibility."

He added that the new cables have two-year warranty.

As he has been criticized by lawmakers on several occasions regarding the flaws of the LRT system, Rosário requested yesterday that lawmakers not "judge the past with present standards."

Lawmaker Pereira Coutinho was infuriated and accused the official of being irresponsible and downplaying the role of the parliament. He stressed that someone should be held accountable

for such matters.

Rosário responded that he had been in the parliament on several occasions to provide an explanation to other lawmakers. "I'm here to take responsibility," he said. "I mean, with technical progress, you can't judge old problems with new perspectives."

He further explained that with the benefit of hindsight an earlier problem might seem minor or resolvable, despite appearing significant at the time.

In response to lawmaker Zheng Anting's question about whether commercial activities could be introduced at LRT stations to help generate income, the senior official said the East Line will have an underground shopping mall.

"However, there is no plan for commercial spaces at existing stations," Rosário said.

Lawmaker Ron Lam complained to Rosário that his previous request for information was not properly addressed. The senior official gave no elaboration or response.

widened to allow for more convenient walking and running to take place, the IAM official said.

According to the previously announced plan, the government will extend the promenade and add running and cycling trails, ball courts and playgrounds to the area. The promenade will eventually reach Barra.

Currently, the promenade connects the Macao Science Center with the Kun Iam Ecumenical Centre, which was opened to public use in May 2021.

The anticipated promenade will measure 5km from the Macao Science Center to Barra.

Lam also asked if the government has plans for the short, mid and long term to refine the coastal areas for public use.

The government has disclosed that the existing promenade in Taipa, located on both sides of the Sai Van Bridge, will be extended to connect the running and cycling trail under the Lotus Bridge. The entire promenade, once extended, will measure 6km. The lawmaker hence asked about the progress of these projects.

He also questioned how the government will implement the requirements of the Master Urban Plan to improve marine lifestyle.

In response, Rosário disclosed that the government is working on the Executive Regulations in support of the Master Urban Plan. He also assured the lawmaker that there will be a circumnavigation promenade on New Urban Zone A.

Adding to the senior official's response, the IAM official explained that connecting the Taipa trails faces certain difficulties. For example, there is a part on the promenade that requires a bridge and must be technically able to cater to both bicycles and yachts.

FIRST EXTENSION OF ZAPE PROMENADE EXPECTED IN 2024

Lawmaker Ron Lam asked yesterday about coastal leisure areas in Macau and questioned Rosário about when the second phase of the ZAPE coastal promenade would be concluded.

The first section of the extension to the promenade would only be completed in 2024, an official from the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) who attended the question session with Rosário disclosed.

The IAM official added that the second phase of the promenade will only connect the Kum Iam Centre to the Macau Tower. The remainder of the coastline will be part of the third phase of the transformation project.

The design plan for the second phase of the promenade will be available in March, according to the IAM official. Similar to the current promenade on ZAPE, there will be a number of facilities including playgrounds and ball courts.

Before the second phase commences, certain parts of the sidewalk along the coast will be

Talent committee secretary-general sacked, Elsie Ao leong takes new authority

SECRETARY-GENERAL of the Talent Development Committee (SCDT), Chao Chong Hang, will be removed from the position from Lunar New Year's Day, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng announced in the recent Official Gazette.

Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao leong, has been ves-

ted with Chao's executive power at the SCDT, the government head announced in an Executive Order.

Appointed to the position on October 15 last year, Chao was set to serve for at least a year, according to local news outlet All About Macau.

Despite this, Ho has authorized Ao leong, vice president of the SCDT,

to make decisions relating to the assignment of construction and engineering bids of up to MOP90 million and product and service bids of up to MOP45 million.

Power that is barred from downstream authorization by law will remain with the government head, who is also the president of the SCDT.

The government has so far not provided a justification or explanation behind the change in position, nor has it announced any successor for the position.

The public consultation on talent acquisition concluded on December 24, 2021. The concluding report for the consultation is still being compiled. **AL**



CRIME

Another HKD900,000 lost on 'Health Bureau' scam call

RENATO MARQUES

OVER the past few days, two local residents have reported losing a total of HKD907,551 over so-called "Health Bureau" scam calls, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported.

Although this illegal scheme is not new and local authorities have issued several warnings about it on multiple occasions, residents of Macau are still falling victim to the scam.

Two residents separately claim to have lost HKD801,000 and HKD106,551 respectively in scams involving fraudulent phone calls that claim to alert the victims to an illegal importation of Covid-19 vaccines via courier from the mainland.

Upon the victims responding that they have not acquired such a product, the call was allegedly transferred to a different department claiming to be a police department in the Mainland. On this call, the victims were informed that their



personal data and banking information might have been stolen.

The scammers then asked the victims to transfer the funds in their bank accounts to a "safe account" for investigation and to provide access to this account (i.e. username and password) to the scammers.

The victims then lost con-

tact with the scammers and later learned that the funds they moved had been transferred out of the account.

In the first case reported by the PJ, a resident who lost HKD106,551 told the PJ that he was asked to transfer the funds to an account located in the neighboring region of Hong Kong.

Multiple victims informed the PJ that they believed the call was legitimate because, after the call was transferred to the alleged police authorities in the Mainland, they were connected to a video call with a man dressed in a police uniform who claimed to be a police officer responsible for the investigation.

MONETARY AUTHORITY ASSIGNS ISIN TO BONDS ISSUED IN MACAU

THE Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) joined the Association of National Numbering Agencies (ANNA) in order to facilitate the attribution of International Securities Identification Numbers (ISINs) to bonds issued in Macau and enable the development of the bond market.

As of yesterday, ISINs can now be assigned to bonds issued in Macau, allowing bonds to be issued more efficiently. The ISIN is a code that identifies securities from different jurisdictions (both countries and regions) and is accepted throughout the world, allowing investors to accurately and quickly identify a particular security for trading purposes. It also constitutes important information for the trading and settlement of securities.

In the past, the assignment of ISINs to bonds issued in Macau was carried out by foreign numbering agencies. This resulted in delays due to time differences and other conditions affecting information exchange.

The AMCM submitted an application for membership to the ANNA last year and began work on establishing a bond numbering system. Having now joined the ANNA, the AMCM will attribute ISINs to bonds issued in Macau in its capacity as a national numbering agency in Macau. **LV**

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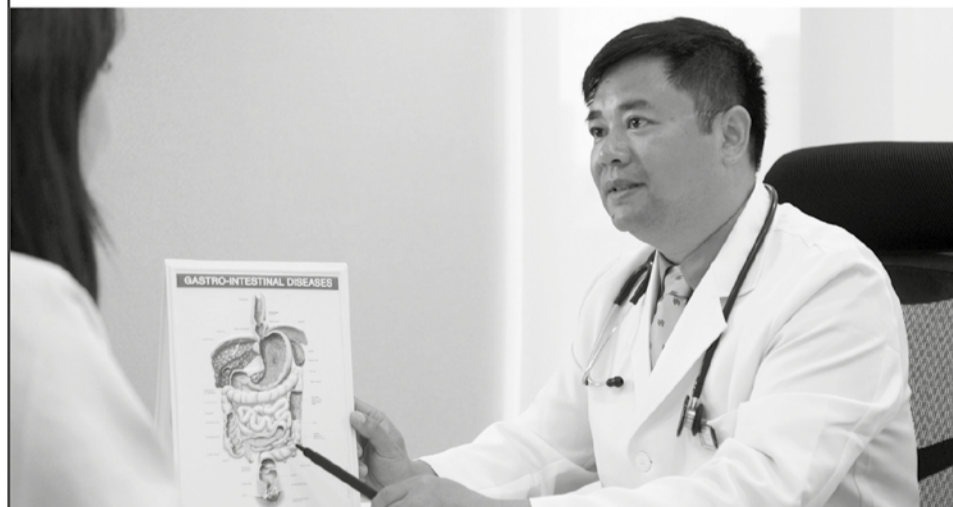


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TAIWAN PAYS USD900,000 FOR ALLY GUATEMALA TO LOBBY WASHINGTON

JOSHUA GOODMA, MIAMI

GUATEMALA has hired for \$900,000 a major supporter of former President Donald Trump to seek influence with U.S. officials in an unusual lobbying contract paid for by its ally Taiwan, foreign lobby records show.

Ballard Partners registered as a foreign agent with the U.S. Justice Department on Jan. 13, according to filings made public over the weekend. The contract, dated Jan. 12, was signed by Alfonso Quinonez, Guatemala's ambassador to the U.S., and Brian Ballard, president of the namesake lobbying firm and a longtime Trump ally.

It's not clear how hiring Ballard, who years before Trump ran for the White House worked for him as a lobbyist in Florida, will be able to help Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei draw closer to the Democratic administration of President Joe Biden, which has repeatedly expressed concerns about corruption in the Central American nation.

On Sunday, the U.S. State Department blasted Giammattei's government for seeking to lift the immunity from prosecution of a judge who has won high honors in Washington for exposing bribery in Guatemala.

"This action against an internationally recognized independent judge weakens a vital pillar of Guatemala's democracy and judicial system," spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.

In its registration, Ballard only said it would provide "strategic consulting and advocacy services" related to Guatemala's interactions with the U.S. government

AP PHOTO



Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei

and U.S. officials.

Justin Sayfie, a partner in Ballard's Washington office, declined to comment further. But he said the request for Taiwan to assume responsibility for payment was not the firm's idea.

"It's unusual for one government to be paying the fees for lobbying for another government," said Robert Kelner, an attorney specializing in compliance with foreign lobbying laws for Covington & Burling. "It's not illegal. But it does raise a question of whether the government that pays also needs to be listed by the lobbying firm as a foreign principal."

Guatemala in a statement thanked Taiwan for "the support

that allows us to strengthen our positioning in the U.S." It said the one year contract with Ballard, for which it is paying \$75,000 a month, will focus on strategic communication, investor outreach and promoting tourism.

Guatemala is one of only 13 mostly small, developing countries that still have full diplomatic relations with Taiwan, which split from mainland Communist-run China amid civil war in 1949.

Responding to questions from, Taiwanese government spokesperson Joanne Ou yesterday said the arrangement followed the principle of "mutual assistance and mutual benefit to promote pragmatic diplomacy," based on the needs of

governments friendly to Taiwan.

Ou said the assistance complied with U.S. law and was endorsed by both Guatemala's government and its political opposition.

"In the future, the two countries will continue to promote various programs beneficial to their nations and peoples on the basis of the existing good cooperation," Ou said in an emailed statement.

Taiwan in the past has donated fleets of buses, agricultural equipment and other high-profile gifts to its allies. But it's been unable to compete with China, which considers Taiwan a breakaway territory and has aggressively worked to isolate it on the world stage.

Recently, Beijing secured diplomatic recognition from Guatemala's neighbors Nicaragua and El Salvador. Honduras' new president, Xiomara Castro, as a candidate also threatened to open ties to Beijing but has since backtracked on the idea.

Giammattei, a law and order conservative, managed to bypass criticism in Washington and forge a productive relationship with the Trump administration by yielding to the White House's pressure to embrace an asylum agreement negotiated by his predecessor that he opposed when he ran for the presidency in 2019.

But he's struggled to build close ties to the Biden administration, which has sought to undo Trump's immigration policies and taken a harsher look at corruption and rule of law issues in the so-called "Northern Triangle" nations of Central America.

Biden didn't invite Giammattei to his Democracy summit last

year and in June Vice President Kamala Harris, in a visit to Guatemala, described having a very frank conversation with the Guatemalan leader about the importance of maintaining an independent judiciary.

The shift toward a less independent justice system began before Giammattei took office but has continued on his watch.

Ballard will manage the account along with two associates with extensive ties to the Republican Party: Jose Diaz, a former Florida state representative who is a managing partner of Ballard's office in Miami; and Sayfie, a one time adviser to former Florida Governor Jeb Bush who also headed the president's commission on White House Fellowships during the Trump administration. A third associate representing Guatemala, John O'Hanlon, is a longtime Democrat.

Ballard amassed dozens of foreign and domestic lobbying clients during the Trump presidency — including Qatar, the Dominican Republic and Zimbabwe — when he was described by Politico as "The Most Powerful Lobbyist in Trump's Washington."

More recently, it has added a number of influential Democratic fundraisers and named former Congressman Robert Wexler, a Florida Democrat, as managing partner of its Washington office to bolster its credentials with the Biden White House.

Despite losing diplomatic allies to China, Taiwan has maintained robust ties with the U.S. and most other major nations. European politicians have visited the island in defiance of threats of retaliation from Beijing, and Taiwan has extended economic aid to Lithuania after China imposed an import ban on the Baltic nation for allowing Taiwan to open a representative office there under its own name. **MDT/AP**

China cites coronavirus on packaging, despite doubts abroad

CHINESE state media say parcels mailed from overseas may have spread the omicron variant of the coronavirus in Beijing and elsewhere, despite doubts among overseas health experts that the virus can be transmitted via packaging.

The State Post Bureau said it has ordered stronger measures to ventilate and disinfect sites where items mailed from overseas are handled. Postal workers must wear protective equipment, receive booster shots and undergo regular testing, it said on its website. International packages must be isolated, cleaned and held for a waiting pe-

AP PHOTO



riod to ensure they are free from the virus, it said.

Global health experts say the virus mainly spreads

through respiratory droplets when infected people breathe, speak, cough and sneeze.

The World Health Organization says coronaviruses "need a live animal or human host to multiply and survive and cannot multiply on the surface of food packages."

However, China has repeatedly emphasized what it calls the danger of infections from packaging, despite only trace amounts of the virus being found on such items, and has boosted testing of frozen food and other items shipped from overseas.

The Communist Party newspaper Global Times cited the Beijing Center for Disease Control and virologists as linking recent infections to packages from

abroad. It said yesterday that investigators found people newly infected had picked up packages mailed from Canada and the U.S.

China has locked down parts of Beijing's Haidian district following the detection of three cases, just weeks before the capital is to host the Winter Olympic Games. Another person in the southern technology hub of Shenzhen who tested positive for omicron handled packages sent from North America, the newspaper said.

China has largely avoided major virus outbreaks with lockdowns, mass testing and travel restrictions, although it continues to

fight surges in several cities, including the port of Tianjin, about an hour from Beijing.

One city that has endured weeks of lockdown under China's "zero-COVID" policy appears to have received some relief. Falling numbers of cases in Xi'an, a city of 13 million famed as the home of the Terracotta Warrior statue army, have prompted authorities to gradually allow people to leave their homes and return to work.

Just one additional case was reported in the city among China's 127 new domestically transmitted cases announced yesterday. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



This photo provided by the North Korean government shows what it says a test-fire of tactical guided missile in North Korea, Monday

ANALYSIS

North Korean Missile tests signal return to brinkmanship

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

GRAPPLING with pandemic difficulties and U.S.-led sanctions over his nuclear ambitions, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un could be reviving his 2017 playbook of nuclear and missile brinkmanship to wrest concessions from Washington and his neighbors.

North Korea's short-range missile launches on Monday were its fourth round of missile tests this month and signaled a refusal to be ignored by the Biden administration, which has focused more on confronting bigger adversaries such as China and Russia.

The tests could also reflect a growing urgency in its need for outside relief after its economy decayed further under the severe sanctions and two years of pandemic border closures, experts say.

The two missiles launched Monday near the capital, Pyongyang, followed a resumption of railroad freight traffic with China that had been suspended over pandemic concerns, in what is likely an attempt to revive the desperate economy.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said

that trade between Dandong in China and Sinuiju in North Korea will be maintained while pandemic controls stay in place.

While North Korea is likely to continue showcasing its weapons in the coming weeks, it could keep things relatively quiet before the opening of the February Winter Olympics in China, its main ally and economic lifeline, launching known short-range missiles rather than more provocative systems.

But it could dramatically raise the ante once the Beijing Games end. Du Hyeogn Cha, an analyst at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said Kim could resume testing nuclear explosives and intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Kim suspended nuclear and ICBM tests in 2018 while engaging in talks with former U.S. President Donald Trump. But the diplomacy remains derailed since their second summit in 2019, when the Americans rejected North Korea's demand for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

North Korea in recent months has ramped up tests of short-range missiles designed to defeat missile defenses in the region.

Its leaders may think it needs

to stage more provocative tests to move the needle with the Biden administration, which has offered open-ended talks but has shown no willingness to ease sanctions unless Kim takes real steps to abandon his nuclear weapons program.

It's unclear whether nuclear or ICBM tests would extract a compromise from Washington, which is more likely to respond with further sanctions and military pressure, possibly including a resumption of major military drills with South Korea, Cha said.

Nam Sung-wook, a North Korea expert at Seoul's Korea University, said a nuclear test is more likely than an ICBM test because it would send a greater level of shock. The North may use that test to claim it has acquired an ability to produce a nuclear warhead small enough to fit on its purported hypersonic missile, which it first tested in September.

Nam said North Korea would time the test to maximize its political effect, with South Korean presidential elections scheduled in March and President Joe Biden facing crucial midterm elections in November. North Korea conducted its sixth and last test of a nuclear explosive device in September 2017.

"In Pyongyang's mind, there is no other way to grab Washington's attention than a major provocation," Nam said.

North Korea strengthened efforts to expand its weapons capabilities following Kim's 2021 announcement of a new five-year plan to develop his military forces, with an ambitious wish list that included hypersonic missiles, solid-fuel ICBMs, spy satellites and submarine-launched nuclear missiles.

However, the frequency of tests since then exceeds usual technological timelines and apparently reflects Kim's desire to break out of the country's current deepening economic problems and international isolation — what appears to be the toughest period of his decade-long rule.

"Externally, North Korea is trying to make a statement that it will continue to go its own way regardless of sanctions. Internally, the leadership is trying to tell its people that the supreme leader's promises will be realized no matter what, whether they be weapons development or overcoming sanctions through a self-reliant economy," Cha said.

"But they are proceeding with the tests at a very fast pace, and this reveals a sense of alarm wi-

thin Pyongyang's leadership, that they must get something done with the United States in 2022 or there could be trouble."

According to South Korean estimates, North Korea's trade with China shrank by about 80% in 2020 before plunging again by two-thirds in the first nine months of 2021. The contraction in 2020 was the biggest since 1997 as grain production dropped to the lowest level since Kim took power in 2011.

Describing its anti-coronavirus campaign as a matter of "national existence," North Korea has severely restricted cross-border traffic and trade for the past two years and is even believed to have ordered troops to shoot on sight any trespassers who cross its borders.

Experts say a major COVID-19 outbreak would have devastating consequences because of North Korea's poor health care system, and could even trigger instability.

Its resumption of the train route with China indicates how hard it has become for its leadership to withstand the economic strain caused by border closures, said Park Won Gon, a professor of North Korea studies at Seoul's Ewha Womans University.

For decades, North Korea has mastered the art of brinkmanship, manufacturing diplomatic crises with weapons tests and threats before offering negotiations aimed at extracting concessions. Kim sped up the process in 2017 with a highly provocative run of nuclear and ICBM tests while exchanging threats of nuclear annihilation with Trump before beginning their diplomacy in 2018.

North Korea began 2022 with what it claimed were two successful tests of a hypersonic missile, which Kim said would significantly enhance his "war deterrent." After the Biden administration imposed new sanctions over those launches, North Korea vowed stronger and more explicit action and fired two missiles from a train on Friday.

State media photos of Monday's launch suggest the North tested a weapon that looks similar in appearance with the U.S. MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System. The missiles, which North Korea first tested in 2019, are part of the country's expanding short-range weaponry designed to be maneuverable and fly at low altitudes, which potentially improves their chances of evading missile defense systems in South Korea and Japan.

Park said North Korea's push to develop and mass-produce such missiles is a key part of its efforts to cement its status as a nuclear power. Its pressure campaign is not only aimed at winning economic benefits but also to negotiate with Washington from a position of power and convert the nuclear diplomacy into talks for mutual arms reduction, he said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



In a satellite photo by Planet Labs PBC, smoke rises over an Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. fuel depot in the Mussafah neighborhood of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Monday

UAE

Satellite photos show aftermath of Abu Dhabi oil site attack

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI

SATELLITE photos obtained by The Associated Press yesterday appear to show the aftermath of a fatal attack on an oil facility in the capital of the United Arab Emirates claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

The attack brought the long-running Yemen war into Emirati territory on Monday. That conflict raged on overnight with Saudi-led airstrikes pounding Yemen's capital, Sanaa, killing and wounding civilians.

The images by Planet Labs PBC analyzed by the AP show smoke rising over an Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. fuel depot in the Mussafah neighborhood of Abu Dhabi after the attack. Another image taken shortly after appears to show scorch marks and white fire-suppressing foam deployed on the grounds of the depot.

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., known by the acronym ADNOC, is the state-owned energy firm that provides much of the wealth of the UAE, a fed-

eration of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula also home to Dubai.

ADNOC did not respond to questions from the AP asking about the site and damage estimates from the attack. The company had said the attack happened around 10 a.m. Monday.

"We are working closely with the relevant authorities to determine the exact cause and a detailed investigation has commenced," ADNOC said in an earlier statement.

The attack killed two Indian nationals and one Pakistani as three tankers at the site exploded, police said. Six people were also wounded at the facility, which is near Al-Dhafra Air Base, a massive Emirati installation also home to American and French forces.

Another fire also struck Abu Dhabi International Airport, though damage in that attack could not be seen. Police described the assault as a suspected drone attack. The Houthis have described using cruise and ballistic missiles in the attack, without offering evidence.

Meanwhile yesterday,

the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen announced it had started a bombing campaign targeting Houthi sites in the capital of Sanaa.

Overnight videos released by the Houthis showed damage, with the rebels saying the strike killed at least 12 people. An international aid worker in Sanaa said there were civilians among the dead. He said the airstrike hit a house for a senior military official who was killed along with his wife and son. The worker spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

For hours Monday, Emirati officials did not acknowledge the Houthi claims over the Abu Dhabi attack, even as other countries condemned the assault. Senior Emirati diplomat Anwar Gargash broke the silence on Twitter, saying that Emirati authorities were handling the rebel group's "vicious attack on some civilian facilities" with "transparency and responsibility."

The office of South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who had been in the

Emirates on a state visit, said he spoke to Abu Dhabi's powerful Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, immediately after the attack.

The statement quoted Sheikh Mohammed as saying the attack had been "anticipated." The two had been scheduled to meet during Moon's visit but the event had been cancelled prior to the attack over an "unforeseen and urgent matter of state," according to Moon's office.

The Emirati Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment over Moon's statement.

Although the UAE has largely withdrawn its own forces from Yemen, it is still actively engaged in the conflict and supports Yemeni militias fighting the Houthis.

The incident comes as the Houthis face pressure and are suffering heavy losses. Yemeni government forces, allied and backed by the UAE, have pushed back the rebels in key provinces. Aided by the Emirati-backed Giants Brigades, the government forces took back the province of Shabwa earlier this month in a blow to Houthi efforts to complete their control of the entire northern half of Yemen.

While Emirati troops have been killed over the course of the conflict, now in its eighth year, the war has not directly affected daily life in the wider UAE, a country with a vast foreign workforce. **MDT/AP**

this day in history



1966 INDIRA GANDHI TAKES CHARGE IN INDIA

Indira Gandhi, only daughter of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, is to become the country's next leader.

She was chosen at the end of a bitter leadership battle with former finance minister Morarji Desai.

Following her win, Mrs Gandhi pledged herself to serve the Congress

Party and the country, and said she would "strive to create what my father used to call a climate of peace."

Crowds had gathered outside Parliament House while the election was held, and cheered Mrs Gandhi wildly as she went to the President's House to report.

She will not become prime minister until she submits her cabinet to the president.

Mrs Gandhi did not confirm she would be a candidate until four days ago, when chief ministers from 11 of India's 16 states let it be known they would support her to take over.

Another leading candidate, Gulzarilal Nanda, withdrew once it was clear Mrs Gandhi would be running.

He has been acting as prime minister since the unexpected death of Mr Nehru's successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, earlier this month.

Mr Desai was under extreme pressure to pull out as well and avoid a potentially damaging leadership contest, but he insisted on going to a vote.

It was predicted he would get less than 100 of the 526 votes from Congress MPs, but he surprised many by winning 169 votes to Mrs Gandhi's 355.

Afterwards, Mr Desai pledged to cooperate fully with Mrs Gandhi. It is the second time running he has been defeated in a leadership contest: the first time, against Mr Shastri, he withdrew his candidacy without a vote.

Mrs Gandhi, 48, was educated at West Bengal and Oxford and has two sons, Rajiv and Sanjay, who are both studying in England.

She gets her name not from Mahatma Gandhi, the legendary independence campaigner and founder of the Congress Party, but from her husband Feroze Gandhi, a lawyer who died in 1960.

The couple spent 13 months in prison for subversion after fighting against British rule in India during the 1940s.

She has played a key part in the Congress Party since 1955, and served as information minister in Mr Shastri's government.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Morarji Desai went on to form a right-wing faction opposed to Mrs Gandhi within the Congress Party.

Nevertheless, she won general election victories in 1967 and 1971.

She presided over the 1971 conflict with Pakistan which created Bangladesh, and then in 1975 she was convicted of corruption and banned from holding office for six years.

She responded by refusing to resign and declared a highly controversial national state of emergency which lasted for nearly two years.

She subsequently lost the 1977 general election to Morarji Desai, who headed Janata, part of an alliance of opposition parties.

His coalition broke apart in 1979, however, and Mrs Gandhi returned to power.

In 1984 she ordered the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar to flush out Sikh militants pursuing self-rule for Punjab.

Two months later, she was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards. About 1000 people, mostly Sikhs, died in the four days of rioting which followed her murder.

Her eldest son, Rajiv, succeeded her as prime minister. He too was assassinated in 1991.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Romantic opportunities are evident. Opportunities for romance are present. Help an older member with a problem that faces them. Try making changes to your appearance and your attitude.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Don't let your partner start any arguments. Passion should be redirected positively. Your ability to see other people's points of view will allow you to come to reasonable agreements.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Communication will be your strong point and you should be able to persuade others to see things your way. Travel will lead you in new directions. Don't hesitate to sign up for lectures or seminars that will enlighten you.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You may find that others do not do things the way you want; however, if the job gets done, let it pass. Take a short business trip if possible. Your partner may make you feel jealous and unloved.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Look into alternate means of supporting your financial burdens. This will not be the day to have minor surgery. Have some fun, but draw the line if someone tries to fast talk their way into your heart.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Try to be reasonable. You can expect to experience delays or additional red tape if you deal with institutions. Be careful when dealing with female members of your family.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You have to let go of your past if you wish to get out of any sentimental mood that might be hanging over your head. Your flair for dramatic appeal will unleash itself at social functions.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Sudden changes regarding your circle of friends could prove interesting and stimulating. You need more space for the whole family. Be careful that you don't spend too much time with a person belonging to someone else.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

They will not have the patience to wait for you to complete things that they've asked you to do. Travel will be most enticing. Consider a cruise. Avoid getting involved with married individuals.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You may find yourself caught in the middle of an argument that has nothing to do with you. Don't hold yourself back because you think you're too old.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Romantic opportunities will be plentiful if you get out and mingle. An older member of your family may have left you with a pressing situation. Don't make any unreasonable promises.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Stay out of other people's affairs. Make changes that will heighten your appeal. Relationships have not been the best for you lately and it's left you somewhat gun shy.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

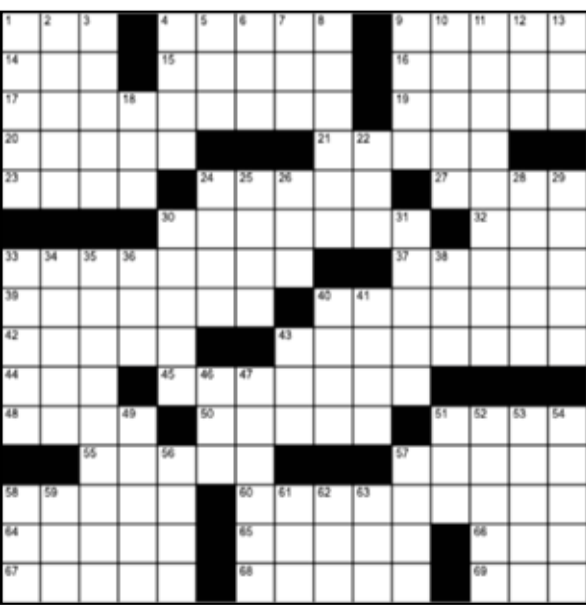
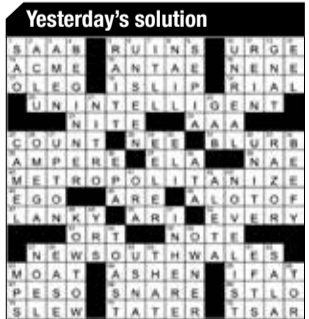
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-7	-1	cloudy
Harbin	-22	-13	fine
Tianjin	2	14	cloudy
Urumqi	5	12	cloudy
Xi'an	5	17	cloudy
Lhasa	-10	1	cloudy
Chengdu	11	19	overcast
Chongqing	6	19	cloudy
Kunming	2	13	cloudy
Nanjing	6	14	cloudy
Shanghai	15	20	cloudy
Wuhan	5	15	fine
Hangzhou	-27	-15	fine
Taipei	0	13	fine
Guangzhou	12	20	cloudy
Hong Kong	14	18	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-10	-11	overcast
Frankfurt	2	3	overcast
Paris	2	6	rain
London	1	10	overcast
New York	1	8	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Small drink, young child; 4- Sheep cry; 9- According to; 14- Mantric syllables; 15- Slack-jawed; 16- Analyze a sentence; 17- Seasoned; 19- Bumbling; 20- Everglades bird; 21- Stern with a bow; 23- Final; 24- Lulu; 27- Opera set in Egypt; 30- Chief; 32- Young dog; 33- The x-coordinate of a point; 37- Bendable twig, usually of a willow tree; 39- Punishment; 40- Embryonic root; 42- Growl angrily; 43- Hot-weather wear; 44- Med. specialty; 45- Ship hospital; 48- Faction of a group, often religious; 50- Seashore; 51- Freelancer's encl.; 55- Hoax; 57- Conger catcher; 58- Director Kurosawa; 60- Tsunami; 64- Slow on the uptake; 65- Birds on Canadian coins; 66- VCR button; 67- Goad; 68- New Mexico's state flower; 69- Mohawk-sporting actor;

DOWN 1- Absorbent cloth; 2- Last letter of the Greek alphabet; 3- Former Russian rulers; 4- Monetary unit of Thailand; 5- Bigger than med.; 6- Auditory apparatus; 7- Copy; 8- Boredom; 9- Capital city of Western Samoa; 10- Capital of Yemen; 11- Cliff face; 12- Clairvoyant's claim; 13- Not emp.; 18- Hanoi holiday; 22- RR stop; 24- Top; 25- Like pie?; 26- Oklahoma city; 28- Affairs of honor; 29- ___-ski; 30- Small mountains; 31- Simpleton; 33- Chevets; 34- Sesame plant; 35- Grabbing; 36- Jalopy; 38- Poitier role; 40- Applies friction to; 41- Med school subj.; 43- Jamaican popular music; 46- Hosp. area; 47- Expensive; 49- Trunk; 51- Use a Singer; 52- Warning; 53- Cleave; 54- Upright; 56- Capital of Calvados, in NW France; 57- Socialite Maxwell; 58- Summer drink; 59- Frat party staple; 61- Acknowledgment of debt; 62- ER VIP; 63- Mandela's org.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Ref: 2109 6001 1,663 ft² 3 1/2

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

ENERGY

IN TINY WYOMING TOWN, BILL GATES BETS BIG ON NUCLEAR POWER

BRADY MCCOMBS
& MEAD GRUVER,
KEMMERER

In this sleepy Wyoming town that has relied on coal for over a century, a company founded by the man who revolutionized personal computing is launching an ambitious project to counter climate change: A nationwide re-boot of nuclear energy technology.

Until recently, Kemmerer was little-known for anything except J.C. Penney's first store and some 55-million-year-old fish fossils in quarries down the road.

Then in November, a company started by Bill Gates, TerraPower, announced it had chosen Kemmerer for a nontraditional, sodium-cooled nuclear reactor that will bring on workers from a local coal-fired power plant scheduled to close soon.

The demonstration project comes as many U.S. states see nuclear emerging

AP PHOTO



The Naughton Power Plant in Kemmerer, Wyoming

as an answer to fill the gap as a transition away from coal, oil and natural gas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Many residents in Kemmerer, where the population of 2,700 is little-changed since the 1990s, see the TerraPower project as a mu-

ch-needed economic boost because Rocky Mountain Power's Naughton power plant will close 2025. The plant employs about 230 and a mine that supplies coal exclusively to the plant — and is also at risk of closing if it can't find another customer — almost 300.

"Kemmerer needs something or it'll become a dust bowl," said Ken Spears, a 69-year-old retired coal mine worker whose family has depended on the mine and power plant for generations.

Spears was among a group of men who gathered recently in a downtown bar, Grumpies, near a park with statue of James Cash Penney and his first store. They played pool near an antique piano and signs reading "Let's go Brandon" and "Trump 2020 No More Bull..."

Kemmerer is a quaint town of old-time storefronts and rolling hills, off the beaten path other than for occasional tourists who pass through on a slower, more scenic route to Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. Residents speak proudly of the coal heritage, quiet lifestyle and easy access to open lands where they can fish, hunt and hike. A river that is iced over in the winter runs through town nearby a railroad track that is down the hill from neighborhoods of older houses where families of deer roam at sunset.

Wyoming has the biggest coal industry in the U.S. by far. Trump won the state with some of his highest margins, almost 70%, in 2016 and 2020 on promises to shore up coal mining.

Yet concerns about TerraPower's unusual, coal-replacing nuclear plant seem few and far between in this town.

"This isn't a Chernobyl-type thing," said Spears, wearing a camouflaged jacket and University of Wyoming cap with the bucking-horse-and-rider logo. "Kemmerer needs something."

The U.S. nuclear industry has been at a standstill, providing a steady 20% of the nation's power for decade amid the costly and time-consuming process of building huge conventional nuclear plants.

Only one new commercial nuclear project, the Tennessee Valley Authority's Watts Bar No. 2, has come online in the U.S. in the past 25 years.

By cooling the planned Kemmerer reactor with liquid sodium, a metal that boils at a temperature much higher than water and solidifies at well above room temperature, TerraPower says its relatively small, 345-megawatt plant, able to power about 345,000 homes, will be safe and less expensive than conventional, water-cooled nuclear plants. The company's Sodium plant will use a simpler and less expensive system of unpressurized coolant and vents not dependent on electricity to halt fission during an emergency.

The approach isn't new. Russia has had a commercial sodium-cooled reactor in use at full capacity since 2016 and such designs have been tested in the U.S.

TerraPower plans to make its plant useful for today's energy grid of growing

renewable power. A salt heat "battery" will allow the plant to ramp up electricity production on demand, offsetting dips in electricity when the wind isn't blowing and sun isn't shining.

"It should provide a more useful reactor, really, for operating on a grid that has a much greater amount of wind and solar than in the past," said TerraPower President and CEO Chris Levesque.

At peak capacity, the plant could generate 500 megawatts, enough for 500,000 homes, he said.

The project will cost up to \$4 billion, half of it from the U.S. Department of Energy, but costs should come down as demand for carbon-free energy grows and more are built, said Levesque.

"If we can show that the plant can be built affordably and on time, we'll have orders for additional Sodium reactors even before the first one starts up. In the 2030s, there will be massive demand for this kind of power," Levesque said.

One downside: The plant's fuel, at least at first, would need to come from Russia. The plant will require uranium fuel enriched to 20%, four times higher than in conventional nuclear plants. The U.S. doesn't currently enrich fuel to that level for commercial power.

For that matter, Levesque pointed out, about one-fifth of conventional nuclear fuel also is imported.

So far, concerns in Wyoming about the project have been few. The Wyoming Outdoor Council, noting the declining cost of solar and wind power, points out that nuclear remains costly and sodium-cooled in other countries have had leaks leading to fires and shutdowns.

Kemmerer beat out three other Wyoming cities for the nuclear plant: nearby Rock Springs, Gillette in a coal-rich northeastern part of the state and Glenrock in east-central Wyoming. The Naughton plant employees, with experience on equipment such as generators that are used in both coal and nuclear plants, were a major reason for putting the plant in Kemmerer, according to TerraPower.

The plant remains years off — 2028 is the current estimate — but already has triggered interest in real estate and "breathes new life into the town," Mayor Bill Thek said. **MDT/AP**

AD

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AP PHOTO



TENNIS

Andy Murray wins in Australia for first time since 2017

Andy Murray of Britain reacts after defeating Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia

JOHN PYE, MELBOURNE

FIVE years and five long sets later, five-time Australian Open runner-up Andy Murray finally has won another match at the season-opening Grand Slam tournament.

The former No. 1-ranked Murray, playing thanks to a wild-card invitation as he continues his career comeback from hip operations and thoughts of retirement, beat 21st-seeded Nikoloz Basilashvili 6-1, 3-6, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-4 yesterday to reach the second round at Melbourne Park.

He lost a five-setter in the first round in 2019 — a match he, and everyone else, thought might have been his last in Australia — after missing the 2018 edition with an injury. He missed the 2020 tournament with a pelvic injury and last year's event because of COVID-19.

"It's been a tough three, four years. Put in a lot of work to get back here," Murray said in his post-match TV interview at John Cain Arena, which was formerly known as Hisense and is parochially referred to as the People's Court. "I've played on this court many times, the atmosphere is incredible. This is the one where I thought I'd played my last.

"Amazing to be back, winning a five-set battle like that. Couldn't ask for more."

Murray beat Basilashvili

in a three-hour three-setter last week in Sydney, where he reached the final of the tuneup tournament. This one went almost four hours.

When the 34-year-old Murray clinched it on his third match point, he turned to the back of the court, closed his eyes and pumped his fists to celebrate.

After walking over to his courtside chair and dropping his racket, he returned to the court, punched the air and yelled "Let's go!"

It was Murray's 49th win in an Australian Open singles match, moving him ahead of Andre Agassi and Ivan Lendl into fifth-place all-time.

Match win No. 50 is the immediate priority.

"I think there's things in my game I can do better," said Murray, who lost the 2010 final to Roger Federer and four others to Novak Djokovic. "Would love to have a deep run here, if possible.

"It's something I've not had in one of the Slams since I've come back from the injury, and it's something that's motivating me."

Murray wasn't the only dramatic five-setter that finished in the early evening on Day 2.

Ninth-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime fended off Emil Ruusuvuori 6-4, 0-6, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, and Maxime Cressy overcame 20 double-faults to upset fellow American and No. 22-seeded John Isner 7-6 (2), 7-5, 6-7

(4), 6-7 (4), 6-4.

Second-seeded Daniil Medvedev, one of the biggest potential beneficiaries of Djokovic's deportation, had a much more routine first round.

Nine-time champion Djokovic was already back in Serbia — two days after losing his legal challenge to stay in Australia despite being unvaccinated against COVID-19 — when Medvedev went into Rod Laver Arena for a 6-1, 6-4, 7-6 (3) win over Henri Laaksonen.

Aiming to be the first man in the Open era to win his second major title in the very next Grand Slam appearance after his first such trophy, Medvedev joined No. 5 Andrey Rublev, No. 11 Jannik Sinner, No. 13 Diego Schwartzman, No. 15 Roberto Bautista Agut and No. 27 Marin Cilic in the second round.

Nobody has dominated in Melbourne like Djokovic, who is unbeaten in the 18 combined semifinals and finals he's reached at the Australian Open, including last year's victory over Medvedev for the title.

But Medvedev avenged that with his breakthrough major title at the U.S. Open, where his victory meant Djokovic's bid for a calendar-year Grand Slam finished one win short.

"I like pressure," Medvedev said. "Always want to do better than I did last year, (but) it's not going to be easy."

That's something Leylah Fernandez has had to confront.

The 19-year-old Canadian lost 6-2, 6-4 to 133rd-ranked wild-card entry

Maddison Inglis in her first Grand Slam match since her runner-up finish at the U.S. Open.

Fernandez made 30 unforced errors, dropped her

serve three times and hit only eight winners on 1573 Arena against Inglis, who converted her third match point to complete her very first win in the main draw of a major.

"Today was just not a good day. Too many mistakes," Fernandez said.


The venue and the vibe were a long way from her run to the final against Emma Raducanu at Flushing Meadows. Raducanu was scheduled to play later yesterday against 2017 U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens.

Third-seeded Garbiñe Muguruza, meanwhile, kept a perfect streak intact when she won her first-round match at the Australian Open for the 10th straight time, beating No. 77-ranked Clara Burel 6-3, 6-4.

"I am aware, I am aware," Muguzura said, laughing, when asked if she knew her Melbourne Park streak. "Very tricky. You're always nervous going out there on Rod Laver, which I love, and starting a Grand Slam campaign. I've always gone through the first round.

"Very happy the way I played and, of course, controlling the nerves." **MDT/AP**

AD



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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

PARTY WILL CONSTANTLY CARRY OUT SELF-REFORM AS GUARANTEE FOR THE COUNTRY'S MODERNIZATION

The multiple angles the outside world adopts to analyze and speculate on the Communist Party of China's anti-graft campaign, ranging from its motives and objectives to its effects and direction, to some extent, reflect the campaign's multifaceted and multipronged characteristics as a significant endeavor for the Party, the country and society.

Given this, and that the 20th National Congress of the Party will be held in the second half of this year, the wide attention cast on the ongoing sixth plenary session of the Party's top discipline department is understandable.

During the session, which is being held in Beijing from Tuesday to Thursday, the 19th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection is expected to not only summarize its performance over the previous year, but also unveil this year's work plan that will also see the formation of the next commission after the congress.

In the speech he made at the opening of the plenum, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, said the anti-graft campaign is a protracted war in which there must be zero-tolerance, as all hidden dangers must be rooted out. Just as the CCDI's brief on its work over the past year indicates, its anti-corruption efforts are in step with the development of the Party and the country and they penetrate into all areas where power might seek rent.

From January to September last year, discipline inspection and supervision organs nationwide registered 470,000 cases and punished 414,000 people, including 22 officials at the provincial or ministerial level and 2,058 officials at the municipal or bureau level. And from January to November, a total of 1,114 corrupt officials were brought back from the countries to which they had fled, with 16.14 billion yuan (\$2.54 billion) connected with their cases recovered, 5.6 times that of the same period the year before.

Moreover, regular discipline inspections for all departments at various levels that are funded with taxpayers' money and State-owned enterprises have become normalized since 2012. These efforts, along with the construction of an anti-graft legal system, are forming an institutional cage of power that is evolving from one intended to make the holders of power dare not capitalize on the power in their hands to one in which they cannot, with the ultimate goal being that none wants to do so.

The fight against corruption, which remains a chronic disease in developed and developing countries alike, is comparable to sailing against the current. But while it is an arduous endeavor, it is one whose worth is evident in the trust, honesty, unity and efficiency it garners.

The anti-corruption cause played an important role in enabling the country to realize its first centenary goal of building a moderately well-off society in all respects on schedule last year. More important, the Party has reinvigorated itself through constant self-reform.

As Xi said, the Party has no self-interest, nor does it represent any interest groups. That should be ingrained in all Party members' hearts, prompting them to always put the people first in the efforts to realize the second centenary goal of building a modern socialist country by the middle of this century.

OUT OF THIS WORLD: 555.55-CARAT BLACK DIAMOND LANDS IN DUBAI

Auction house Sotheby's Dubai has unveiled a diamond that's literally from out of this world.

Sotheby's calls the 555.55-carat black diamond — believed to have come from outer space — "The Enigma." The rare gem was shown off yesterday to journalists as part of a tour in Dubai and Los Angeles before it is due to be auctioned off in February in London.

Sotheby's expects the diamond to be sold for at least 5 million British pounds. The auction

house plans to accept cryptocurrency as a possible payment as well.

Sophie Stevens, a jewelry specialist at Sotheby's Dubai, told The Associated Press that the number five bears an importance significance to the diamond, which has 55 facets as well.

"The shape of the diamond is based on the Middle-Eastern palm symbol of the Khamsa, which stands for strength and it stands for protection," she said. Khamsa in Arabic means five.



HONG KONG TO CULL 2,000 ANIMALS AFTER HAMSTERS GET COVID-19

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

HONG Kong authorities said yesterday that they will cull some 2,000 small animals, including hamsters after several of the rodents tested positive for the virus at a pet store where an infected employee was working.

The city will also stop the sale of hamsters and the import of small mammals, according to officials from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. The move came after the pet shop employee tested positive for the delta variant on Monday. Several hamsters imported from the Netherlands at the same store tested positive as well.

"If you own a hamster, you should keep your hamsters at home, do not take them out," said department director Leung Siu-fai at a news conference.

"All pet owners should observe good personal hygiene, and after you have been in contact with animals and their food, you should wash your hands."

"Do not kiss your pets," he added.

Even though authorities acknowledged that there is "no evidence" that pets can transmit the coronavirus to humans, as a precautionary measure, customers who had purchased ham-

sters from the affected store after Jan. 7 will be traced and be subject to mandatory quarantine.

They must also hand over their hamsters to authorities to be put down.

Authorities said that all pet stores selling hamsters in Hong Kong must cease operations and that around 2,000 small mammals, including hamsters and chinchillas, will be culled in a humane manner.

Customers who bought hamsters in Hong Kong from Dec. 22 will also be subject to mandatory testing and are urged not to go into the community until their tests have returned negative. If their hamsters test positive, they will be subject to quarantine.

For now, authorities said they would not rule out transmission between human and animals.

Separately, Hong Kong police have arrested two former flight attendants for allegedly leaving their homes when they should have been in isolation for possible coronavirus infections, which were later confirmed.

The two arrived from the U.S. on Dec. 24 and 25. While in medical surveillance, they had "conducted unnecessary activities," according to a government statement posted late Monday.

While the statement did not name their employer,

the arrests came after flagship carrier Cathay Pacific said it had fired two crew members for breaching coronavirus protocols. Both later tested positive for the omicron variant.

Cathay previously said the actions of the crew who had broken coronavirus protocols was "extremely disappointing" and apologized for the disruption. The company had to cut back on flights — both passenger and cargo — in January amid tightened virus curbs.

The duo have been released on bail and will have their case heard in court on Feb. 9. If convicted of violating anti-epidemic regulations, they could face up to 6 months imprisonment and a fine of up to HKD5,000 (\$642).

Hong Kong has been grappling with a local omicron outbreak traced to several Cathay Pacific crew members who had dined at bars and restaurants across the city before later testing positive for the omicron variant.

Previously in Hong Kong, certain air and sea crew members could isolate at home under certain quarantine exemptions. Regulations tightened Dec. 31 require crew members to isolate in a designated quarantine hotel for about a week to safeguard public health. **MDT/AP**



Russia's top diplomat angrily rejected U.S. allegations that Moscow was preparing a pretext to invade Ukraine, as Russian troops that are amassed near the Ukraine border launched more drills yesterday. The White House said Friday that U.S. intelligence officials had concluded that Russia had already deployed operatives to rebel-controlled eastern Ukraine to carry out acts of sabotage there and blame them on Ukraine in a "false-flag operation" to create a pretext for possible invasion.



Ukraine Former President Petro Poroshenko yesterday returned to Ukraine to face court on treason charges he believes are politically motivated. At the Kyiv airport, where he arrived on a flight from Warsaw on Monday morning, Poroshenko was greeted by several thousand cheering supporters. Some carried banners reading "We need democracy," and "Stop repressions."



French far-right presidential candidate Éric Zemmour was convicted yesterday of inciting racial hatred over 2020 comments he made about unaccompanied migrant children. A Paris court ordered Zemmour to pay a fine of 10,000 euros and several thousand euros in damages to anti-racism groups. Zemmour said he will appeal the decision.

Peru Unusually high waves attributed to the eruption of an undersea volcano in Tonga caused an oil spill on the Peruvian coast, but authorities said yesterday the spill was controlled within hours and there's an ongoing process to clean the area. The Peruvian Civil Defense Institute said in a press release that a ship was loading oil into La Pampilla refinery on the Pacific coast on Sunday when strong waves moved the boat and caused a spill.