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Thailand will ease some entry requirements for foreign visitors as it balances a rising number of coronavirus cases with the need to rebuild its pandemic-damaged economy, the government announced yesterday. Beginning March 1, fully vaccinated visitors must take a RT-PCR test on arrival and spend their first night at an approved hotel while awaiting the results, but will no longer need to take a second RT-PCR test and spend another night at a hotel on their fifth day



Japan's Foreign Ministry said yesterday it has lodged a strong protest and demanded an apology after its diplomat was detained and questioned by authorities in Beijing. The diplomat from the Japanese Embassy was seized while on duty and held for several hours on Monday, the Foreign Ministry said. The diplomat was carrying out his legitimate work and the detention violated the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.



Cambodia began vaccinating three- and four-year-olds with Chinese-made Sinovac shots yesterday after finding young children accounting for many new infections. Prime Minister Hun Sen appealed for parents to get their children vaccinated as soon as they can and said five of his 21 grandchildren and one of his daughters have tested positive for the omicron variant of the coronavirus.

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MANDATORY JABS?

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THE CONVERSATION

THINK THERAPY IS NAVEL-GAZING? THINK AGAIN

STEVEN SANDAGE
BOSTON UNIVERSITY

MIDWAY through a recent lecture about my psychology research, a bright graduate student voiced a familiar question.

"I have heard psychotherapy makes people more self-absorbed," they said. "So how can you encourage a practice that has such a negative social impact?"

I am often struck by these negative stereotypes, despite growing demand for counseling – particularly amid the pandemic. The well-entrenched image seems to be that psychotherapy is an indulgent, narcissistic cocoon where therapists enable patients to "navel-gaze" and blame others for their problems.

Full disclosure: I have seen examples of this during my 27 years in practice. But most patients are genuinely trying to improve close relationships, recover a sense of meaning and purpose and live consistently with their core values.

Mental health care often focu-

ses on reducing patients' symptoms. However, a growing body of research, including a project I co-lead with psychologist Jesse Owen, investigates therapeutic approaches that also focus on increasing patients' overall sense of well-being, or "flourishing."

In many times and places, these kinds of concerns would be considered part of character development, or ethical or religious in nature. In fact, a large body of research shows that most people want to engage spiritual, religious or existential issues in mental health treatment, and that psychotherapies that engage patients' spiritual practices are effective for both mental and spiritual health.

DUAL-FACTOR TREATMENT

Decades of research show psychotherapy is effective for alleviating the most common forms of psychological suffering, such as anxiety and depression. But wellness is about more than reducing suffering.

Over the past three decades,

the field of positive psychology has grown, emphasizing how people can foster their strengths, virtues and well-being. Many thinkers, such as psychologist William James and minister and author Norman Vincent Peale, explored similar ideas in the 20th century. But now, empirical research has demonstrated that counseling informed by positive psychology can be effective in improving well-being and increasing such qualities as forgiveness, compassion and gratitude.

The project I am co-leading with Professor Owen, funded by the John Templeton Foundation, is part of a growing trend of researchers seeking to integrate practices of positive psychology, spirituality and holistic well-being into mental health care, with careful attention to individual patients' different needs.

For example, Mary Zanarini, an international expert on borderline personality disorder, is testing a group therapy that develops skills in such virtues as forgiveness, humility and gratitude alongside other strategies, such as reflecting on and regulating emotions.

In a 2020 study with patients diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, she found that patients' ability to forgive and accept was correlated with their long-term ability to sustain work or education and a close relationship, in addition to their symptom remission.

In a separate clinical study with patients also suffering from borderline personality disorder, my colleagues and I also found that as patients developed a greater capacity to forgive, they experienced fewer mental health symptoms and less anxiety and frustration in close relationships.

These projects reflect a move toward what psychologists call dual-factor approaches, which reduce symptoms of mental distress while also trying to increase flourishing.

Dual-factor frameworks recognize that experiencing mental health symptoms and well-being are not mutually exclusive. For example, in a study with patients 18-29 years old, our team at Boston University identified a subgroup of patients we labeled "resilient." They showed the highest rate of symptoms, the lowest levels of life satisfaction and multiple serious stresses. Yet this resilient group functioned better in relationships, work or school than would be expected. Over the course of treatment, many moved into the category of "flourishing."

CULTIVATING STRENGTHS

So what contributes to resilience in the face of suffering? A few months into the pandemic, we looked at that question in a follow-up study with adults.

Similar to the previous study, people in one group scored more highly on well-being than would

be expected, given their mental health symptoms. They demonstrated fortitude, finding opportunities for growth even amid stress. Those in another group, who also functioned better than expected given their mental health symptoms, demonstrated active forms of coping, such as deepening relationships or developing new hobbies, spiritual practices or creative interests.

Philosophers across many different cultures have suggested humans move toward flourishing by cultivating virtues amid hardships. The word "virtue" can imply rigidity or perfectionism, yet its original meaning is about drawing on human strengths and practical wisdom to navigate life – such as the fortitude participants showed in our study.

Humility, gratitude and forgiveness are what some psychologists call "relational virtues," ones that support healthy relationships. Our team is investigating how these three virtues might contribute to positive mental health over time.

Our initial evidence across two clinical studies is that patients generally tend to become less narcissistic and feel less superior to others over the course of psychotherapy. As patients develop more humility, their relationships improve and they report fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression.

For many people, relational virtues tie in with their spiritual or religious practices – which are themselves important to these patients' well-being. Among those who value spirituality, a sense of being connected to the sacred was positively related to their overall functioning.

Based on our research, a key factor linking virtue and positive mental health appears to be growth in emotion regulation, such as learning skills in mindfulness and processing complicated emotions such as shame, envy or pride. Our theory is that relational virtues often emerge in therapy when patients experience a balance of challenge and support and their core values are taken seriously.

We need much more research to further validate these connections among relational virtues, emotion regulation and flourishing. But there are already enough data points to paint a more complicated and constructive public image of psychotherapy than the cynical stereotype.

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JLL: Macau property prices to see another downturn

ANTHONY LAM

THE property market in Macau will enter a new downward cycle, considering factors such as crackdowns on illegal gambling, an international commercial property agency has forecast.

International commercial realty firm JLL pointed out that, despite signs of revival in mid-2021, several new outbreaks of Covid-19 in Macau and Hong Kong have hampered the recovery.

The firm attributed the cause of the slowdown not just to the pandemic, but also to economic and security operations.

"The global economic and political uncertainties, coupled with the recent government crackdowns on illegal gambling and money laundering, are expected to cast a shadow over the outlook of the property market," JLL noted.

"In 2021, the total property transaction value in Macau recorded [was] about MOP49.77 billion, down 2.6% year-on-year. Both the total number and value of transactions reached a record low since the subprime mortgage lending crisis," wrote Mark Wong, director of valuation advisory services at



NATHAN JOHN

JLL Macau.

He revealed that his company has recently received more enquiries for valuations of hotel properties. Operators sought valuations for reasons of investment and business strategy review and planning, because of "the current weak tourism [levels] and the crackdowns on illicit gaming operations."

Worryingly, dropouts are also on the rise.

"Some institutional investors are considering selling the hotel assets in their portfolios to raise funds for investing in the higher

quality projects in the peripheral areas," Wong revealed. "We expect hotels to become the focus among investors in 2022," he added.

Combining data from the government's Statistics and Census Service, the realtor saw decreases in both residential property demand and the number of new projects. Transactions therefore mainly occurred in the secondary market.

In 2021, the majority of vacant residential units were larger-sized units. With non-resident workers continuing to leave Macau, there was a fall in the rental of residential

properties.

However, the commercial property market is seeing better days.

"As tourists have generally adapted to the new way of travel, some retailers have taken up new space for expansion, taking advantage of the significant fall in rentals," said Oliver Tong, general manager at JLL Macau. "[But] some landlords hedging mortgage repayments with rental income have left their properties vacant," Tong said, since offering their properties at low rents may lead to decreased valuations.

CA ANNOUNCES NEW CHIEF OF COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

Ermelinda Maria da Conceição Xavier will be the new chief of the Audit Commissioner's office from March 1, a press statement from the Audit Commission (CA) has announced. The new appointment was officially announced yesterday in an order from the commissioner, published in the government's official gazette. Xavier's appointment to the new post is for a period of one year. She had previously served as vice president and president of the Pension Fund's board of directors, posts she was appointed to in 1999 and 2019 respectively.

RETURNING TRAVELLER FROM HONG KONG TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID

A resident returning from Hong Kong has tested positive for Covid-19 in test on Tuesday, authorities announced. The resident had received two doses of an mRNA vaccine in June 2021 and a booster shot this month. This woman has no symptoms of the infection and in light of her epidemiological history, clinical profile and test results has been classified as an imported case of asymptomatic infection and not a confirmed case of Covid-19 infection. So far, 80 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 29 asymptomatic infections have been recorded in Macau.

GREATER BAY AIRLINES TO OPERATE IN HONG KONG

The Air Transport Licensing Authority of Hong Kong has granted a five-year license to the Greater Bay Airlines Company Limited to operate scheduled air services. Under the license which came into effect earlier this week, the airline may operate scheduled journeys for the transport of passengers, cargo and mail on over 104 routes at an unlimited frequency to and from Hong Kong International Airport. The Hong Kong government said in a statement that it believes Greater Bay Airlines will offer diversified air services to the market and will further strengthen air transport connectivity between Hong Kong, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area and the rest of the world.

ART

'East meets West': debut exhibition at Sands Gallery

SANDS China officially launched the Sands Gallery yesterday, with a debut exhibition showcasing artworks featuring "East meets West" elements.

Titled "Innovation of Ink: Transformation and Reinvention of Oriental Aesthetics - Featured Exhibition of Wang Dongling & Xu Lei," the exhibition features over 30 imaginative works by Chinese artists Wang Dongling and Xu Lei.

Each artist has developed a mastery of traditional Chinese ink techniques - calligraphy in Wang's case and painting for Xu - and then applied them in ways that are original, inventive and contemporary.

Speaking at the opening ceremony yesterday, Wilfred Wong, Sands China's president, said, "In ope-



ning Sands Gallery, Sands China's ultimate objective has always been to help Macau establish itself as a multicultural exchange

and cooperation base with an emphasis on Chinese culture."

Sands Gallery is a permanent art space on the

6th floor of The Grand Suites at Four Seasons, created by Sands China with the aim of helping to "cultivate an environment that

nurtures creativity and art appreciation in Macau."

Xu, who attended the opening, explained that the exhibition presents his signature works that were created in the early stage of his career, before he changed his drawing style in 2010.

"The imagery of these works demonstrates the correlation between Western and Chinese culture, and how they affect and penetrate each other. It's my pleasure to be partnered with master Wang to showcase both of our works in a city that combines Chinese and Western cultures with a rich art atmosphere," he remarked.

Running until March 20, the exhibition has been curated by art historian Julia F. Andrews, a professor at Ohio State University.

Sands China has pledged to invest more resources into inviting local and international artists of different art forms to host exhibitions at the gallery, in a bid to enrich the cultural experience of Macau residents and visitors. **LV**

ANTHONY LAM

LAWMAKER Ron Lam said that the government has thus far not provided him with any updates on the cable replacement work of the Light Rail Transit (LRT).

He confirmed the lack of updates to the Times on the sidelines of a media event hosted by the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Lam had raised the question at an oral inquiry session in the parliament. Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário declined to offer any specific information in response. However, he stressed that the government has no financial responsibility for the project because the infrastructure is undergoing a period of maintenance.

"As you know, we have sent the Secretariat a formal request for information, to which it replied with a press release containing all information already available before then, only the information was rearranged," Lam said.

The lawmaker underlined his displeasure at the situation. "We have already sent another letter to the Secretary in the hopes of his upholding the law, as well as the rights of the legislature and legislators," Lam said.

Lam has been requesting the in-

LAWMAKER: NO UPDATES FROM GOV'T ON LRT CABLE REPLACEMENT

vestigative report on the problems that eventually led to the decision to replace all high-voltage cables throughout the whole system.

"The report is critical not only because the public will have a way to know what has happened, but also we can avoid the same problems based on the investigative report," Lam insisted.

He was also not happy with Rosário saying that the maintenance period of the LRT had been reset. "I must reiterate that the standard should be universal," Lam remarked. "Why did the Economic Housing estates with falling tiles not see their maintenance periods reset?"

Lam also slammed the government for its lack of respect for the AL. He reiterated that the Executive had replied to one of his written enquiries by stating that the matter had been addressed in a verbal inquiry session.

"The replies to written inquiries must be independent from those to verbal ones," he insisted.

ANTHONY LAM



MGTO PARTNERS WITH AIR MACAU, HOTEL BOOKING PLATFORMS TO BOOST TOURISM

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has launched a new promotional scheme to attract more visitors to Macau and to draw visitors from new regions.

The new scheme, titled "My Treat for You, See You in Macao," continues a partnership with Macau's flag airliner Air Macau, as well as online hotel and travel booking platforms, to present special offers on air tickets, hotels, and tour experiences in Macau, targeted at mainland visitors.

According to the MGTO, the initiative aims to attract more visitors to Macau as well as convince them to stay for a longer period, boosting consumption, reviving the local tourism industry and increasing the sector's contribution to the economy.

MGTO special offers will be available for booking on the official websites of Air Macau, Trip.com, Ly.com, Qunar.com and Fliggy.com.

At the same time, hotel discount coupons will be available to visitors through Trip.com, Meituan.com, Qunar.com, Ly.com, the



Zhixing App and Fliggy.com.

Offers will vary according to the length of stay: "the longer visitors stay in Macau, the more special offers they can enjoy," said the MGTO. The goal is to encourage visitors to experience different areas of the city, namely those that are less-visited by first-time visitors and tourists unfamiliar with Macau.

The initiative is part of a wider program which aims to highlight different market segments and themes, in parallel with festive holidays and events throughout 2022.

Notable offers include the "buy one get one free" air tickets as well as half-price hotel coupons. Other offers for shopping, dining and admission to tourist attractions are also available.

CNY CRIME PREVENTION OPERATION SNARES OVER 1,000 SUSPECTS

RENATO MARQUES

THE traditional local police forces' crime prevention operation over the Chinese New Year period has resulted in the detention of 1,129 suspects, of whom 240 were referred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) with clear evidence of felonies committed, the Unitary Police Services (SPU) announced in a statement.

According to the statement, the most frequently detected crimes in the operation were those related to illegal currency exchange (110 people), fraud (44 people), theft (32 people), drug-related crimes (14 people), crimes related to prostitution (11 people) and loansharking (six people).

In the course of the "winter crime prevention 2022" operation, a total of 15 people were also caught who were wanted by authorities and had pending arrest warrants against them. Three of these people were sent to prison to serve their sentences.

The month-long operation ran from January 11 to February 10, involving the



Public Security Police Force, Judiciary Police, and Customs Services (SA), with coordination from the SPU.

As part of the operation, the SA also intercepted a total of 277 people smuggling goods into Macau, including cosmetics, meat, electronics, cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. All 277 people have been charged under the provisions of the External Trade Law.

According to the SPU, the operation achieved satisfactory results and helped maintain a safe environment in Macau during the festive season.

Traditionally, this operation aimed to prevent

seasonal criminal activities which used to occur during this season due to the high influx of visitors from the mainland.

In the past, criminals have taken advantage of holiday crowds and locals being on holiday to commit crimes such as house burglary, and shoplifting and pickpocketing in crowded tourist areas.

This year, the SPU mobilized almost 8,000 police officers who carried out a total of 24,963 investigation operations.

The vast majority of investigations targeted random people on the streets, as well as several types of establishments and vehicles on the streets of Macau.

GAMING

Galaxy reports strong 2021 rebound

LYNZY VALLES

WITH a significant increase in revenue last year, Galaxy Entertainment Group's (GEG) profit stood at HKD1.3 billion for 2021, compared to a HKD4 billion loss in 2020.

GEG recorded HKD19.7 billion in net revenue, an increase of 53% year-on-year, the firm announced yesterday.

Adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) was HKD3.5 billion versus the HKD1 billion loss recorded in 2020, which included a one-off expense reversal benefit of HKD200 million in the fourth quarter of 2021.

According to GEG chairman Lui Che Woo, the group has continued to invest in the advancement of Macau's economy. This includes the Cotai Phase 3 and 4 developments and the upgrading of existing resort facilities. The group plans to adapt its offerings at the upgraded resorts to the prevailing market conditions in this economically challenging period.

"We continue to pursue our project in Hengqin and are expanding our focus beyond Hengqin and Macau to potentially include opportunities within greater China, including the rapidly developing Greater Bay Area," Lui added.

For two years now, Macau has been affected by the pandemic and associated travel restrictions, which led to a 2021



gross gaming revenue figure of HKD84.3 billion. Although the figure was 44% higher than the previous year, the increase was from a low base.

Galaxy's total gross gaming revenue (GGR) on a management basis in 2021 was HKD17.3 billion, up 51% year-on-year. Mass GGR was HKD11.2 billion, up 83% year-on-year. VIP GGR was HKD5.5 billion, up 11% year-on-year, while electronic GGR was HKD642 million, up 35% year-on-year.

Reflecting on performance during the recent Chinese New Year holiday, Lui also conceded that visitor arrivals were lower than anticipated due to travel restrictions.

However, "gaming revenue was solid, driven by premium mass; hotel occupancy was higher and retail sales were strong. This is evidence of strong pent-up demand for tourism and leisure in Macau," he said.

Bernstein Research has previously forecast that GGR for February will likely be up 29% from January, which recorded a figure of MOP6.34 billion.

According to the brokerage firm, average daily revenue from February 1 to 6 stood at MOP333 million compared to MOP205 million in January.

Analysts at J.P. Morgan have also confirmed that GGR was likely over MOP300 million per day during the Chinese New Year, a significant recovery when compared to pre-pandemic figures during the same long-holiday (MOP500 million).

Lui added that the group's balance sheet also remains healthy and the group is well-positioned to navigate the pandemic.

The gaming operator also announced a dividend of HKD0.30 per share to be paid on or around April 29, 2022.

GALAXY SCRAPS RELATIONSHIPS WITH JUNKETS

GALAXY Entertainment Group confirmed yesterday that it no longer has any agreements with junket operators.

Speaking during the announcement of the gaming operator's 2021 earnings, the GEG executive director Francis Liu said, "as for VIP lounges and junket operators: I think this is an issue of grave concern for everyone, but I can tell you that our group no longer has any junket operations." It was also revealed in the announcement that during the fourth quarter of last year, in line with the broad

range of changes in the regulatory environment, the group suspended VIP gaming operations, pledging that they will continue to monitor the situation.

Other gaming operators including Wynn Macau, Sands China and Melco Resorts have confirmed that their agreements with gaming promoters have also ended.

This comes after the high-profile arrests of junket moguls Alvin Chau and Levo Chan amid expanded crackdowns on cross-border financial transactions due to gambling.

INFLUENZA INFECTION AT LOCAL DAYCARE

The Health Bureau was notified yesterday that a case of collective infection with influenza was detected in class E at the Creche S. João da Obra das Mães (University of Macau). There are six infected students, each of whom are three years old. From February 22, students had been showing symptoms of an upper respiratory tract infection including fever, cough and runny nose. Some of the children received medical treatment, but there were no serious cases or hospitalizations. The bureau said the daycare center has already implemented infection control measures.

UM STUDY MAKES PROGRESS ON BREAST CANCER METASTASIS RESEARCH

A research team led by Xu Xiaoling, associate professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at the University of Macau (UM), has made significant progress in its research on breast cancer metastasis. In a statement, UM said the team had used a whole genome knockout library, and confirmed that ATP11b is a suppressor in breast cancer metastasis. The team identified the mechanism of ATP11b-mediated metastasis and the corresponding targeted therapeutic agents through cellular and animal model validation, which is expected to improve treatment outcomes for patients with metastatic breast cancer. The study has been published in the Journal of Clinical Investigation.

BNU LAUNCHES 'BNU PAY'

Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) launched the "BNU Pay" Digital Payment Solution yesterday, allowing UnionPay cardholders to pay with their smartphone not only in Macau but also in mainland China and Overseas. Integrated with the BNU App, BNU Pay is an additional service available provided within this banking tool. Through BNU App customers can now bank online and pay at merchants with just one app. "BNU continues to focus on providing innovative features, with increasingly digital and simpler solutions, bringing mobility and convenience for its customers," said the firm.

CDC division head hints at mandatory Covid-19 vaccinations

ANTHONY LAM

ALTHOUGH the government has previously emphasized that vaccination against Covid-19 is voluntary, government public health doctor Leong Iek Hou has hinted at the possibility of mandatory vaccination.

Last week, a government press release stated that stricter restrictions might be possible if the risk of a Covid-19 outbreak intensifies in Macau. "It will be unavoidable that the unvaccinated population sees greater inconvenience," the government state-

ment warned.

On a local radio show, some audience members slammed the government for this statement, perceiving it as a threat.

When questioned about the measures that will be put in place, Leong, who is the division head for infectious disease prevention and control at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), refrained from mentioning specific measures, adding that the government will follow the example of other jurisdictions.

Neighboring Hong Kong has announced a "no

job, no job" policy.

Leong admitted that the introduction of a similar measure in Macau was possible, which may include the requirement to be fully vaccinated to enter certain venues. Different plans will be released as the pandemic develops, including, Leong hinted, mandatory vaccination if conditions require it.

Since February last year, the government has maintained that Covid-19 vaccination is voluntary.

Last month, when the Vaccination System Executive Regulation was updated, Covid-19 vaccines

were included. When questioned as to whether this is a step towards mandating vaccination, pulmonologist Alvis Lo, director of the Health Bureau, said that "as of [this] moment," Covid-19 vaccinations would be conducted in line with the previous approach.

In Macau, vaccination is governed by Executive Regulations, which are codified by the Chief Executive and the Executive Council. These regulations do not need to be passed by the parliament, which has seldom vetoed government legislation.

Separately, the CDC di-

vision head announced that the government has medications to treat Covid-19 infections. There are two types, both in the form of injections, one for mild cases and the other for severe cases.

Meanwhile, the government has also ordered several types of oral medicine, including a treatment which may arrive at the end of the first quarter this year. The government is also in possession of pre-manufactured Chinese medications that can slow the disease's progress.

Discussing plans for a massive outbreak, Leong said that diversified contingencies have been compiled. In the worst-case scenario, patients with mild and asymptomatic cases will be forced to stay home.

AP PHOTO



Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying

CHINA SAYS US CREATING 'FEAR AND PANIC' OVER UKRAINE

CHINA yesterday accused the U.S. of creating "fear and panic" over the crisis in Ukraine, and called for talks to reduce rapidly building tensions.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said China is opposed to new unilateral sanctions imposed on Russia, reiterating a longstanding Chinese position.

She said the U.S. was fueling tensions by providing defensive weapons to Ukraine, without mentioning Russia's deployment of as many as 190,000 troops on the Ukrainian border. Hua also did not mention efforts by the U.S., France and others to engage Russia diplomatically.

China-Russia ties have grown

closer under Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin at talks in Beijing earlier this month. The two sides issued a joint statement backing Moscow's opposition to a NATO expansion in former Soviet republics and buttressing China's claim to the self-governing island of Taiwan.

"On the Ukraine issue, unlike the U.S., which keeps sending weapons to Ukraine, creating fear and panic and even playing up the threat of war, China has been calling on all parties to respect and pay attention to each other's legitimate security concerns, work together to solve problems through negotiations and con-

sultations, and maintain regional peace and stability," Hua said at a daily briefing.

The outcome of the Ukraine crisis is seen as having ramifications for China over its threat to invade Taiwan, a close U.S. ally, and its border dispute with India and its claims in the South China and East China seas, where it has raised concerns over conflict with Japan, the Philippines and others.

Hua said those accusing China of contradicting its stance on respecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity in relation to Russia's moves toward Ukraine were "either driven by ulterior motives or deliberately distorting or misinterpreting China."

"To correctly and objectively understand the Ukraine situation and seek a rational and peaceful solution, it is necessary to understand the merits of the Ukraine issue and properly address relevant countries' legitimate security concerns on the basis of equality and mutual respect," Hua said.

She said sanctions imposed on Russia by the U.S. and others have been ineffective in reducing tensions while causing "serious difficulties to relevant countries' economies and livelihoods."

"The U.S. should never undermine the legitimate rights and interests of China and other parties when dealing with the Ukraine issue and relations with Russia," Hua said. **MDT/AP**

LITTLE PLUM BLOSSOM

Investigation confirms chained woman was trafficked

CHINESE authorities have detained six people and fired eight lower-level Communist Party officials in a provincial-level investigation of the case of a trafficked woman that caused national outrage and frustration.

Just days before the Lunar New Year holiday, a video circulated of a woman who was chained to a small shed. The video, filmed by a blogger who was trying to solicit donations for poor rural families, immediately drew questions and concerns as the blogger said the woman was the mother of eight children. But when local officials responded with a series of inconsistent statements, the Chinese public only grew angrier, demanding accountability.

Authorities yesterday confirmed the identity of the woman in the video, who became known as Little Plum Blossom. She was from a village in Yunnan, authorities said, and not



Sichuan as some members of the public believed, and she had been trafficked multiple times.

The woman was born in 1977, and was first married in 1995. She divorced in 1997 and returned to Yagu village in Yunnan. A year later, a woman named Sang brought her

from her village in Yunnan all the way to coastal Jiangsu province, about 2,000 kilometers away, under the guise of getting medical treatment and finding a husband. But Sang then sold Little Plum Blossom to a man in Donghai county for 5000 yuan (\$790).

According to Jiangsu

authorities, Sang and her husband had both been sentenced to jail in 2000 for trafficking girls — one for five years and the other for seven.

Both were arrested by authorities on Tuesday.

After just a few months with the man in Donghai county, Little Plum Blossom

disappeared one morning. How she ended up in Feng county, where the video showing her chained up was shot, was the result of further trafficking, according to the report.

A couple who ran a hotel in neighboring Henan province found the woman wandering as a beggar and had taken her in, according to the report. After a month, they sold her to a construction foreman who then sold her to a man in Feng county. This man in Feng county then sold her to the family that she would "marry into" and end up having eight children in. Investigators said this chain of events was still under examination.

Authorities also addressed rumors about the marriage license, which was presented by a former investigative journalist on the social media platform Weibo.

Many of the public raised concerns over the age discrepancy in the marriage license, which indicated

the woman was in her 50s, though her appearance suggested otherwise. Authorities clarified it was due to the fact that the husband registered her with a different birthday, though it is unclear why.

Her husband was detained by authorities earlier this month. On Thursday, the procuratorate in Feng County approved his formal arrest on charges of abuse.

Police have also detained the first man Little Plum Blossom was sold to in Jiangsu in 1998, as well as those who later trafficked her to Feng county.

Eight lower-level officials have been fired and three have been "deprived of freedom of movement" as part of an internal Party investigation, for various reasons including issuing false information and failing to protect the public's rights. Six others have received internal punishments, such as demotion in rank. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



SOUTH KOREA

Presidential race puts misogyny in spotlight

JUWON PARK, SEOUL

AS South Korea enters a bitter presidential race, Hong Hee-jin is one of many young women who feel that the country's politics has become dominated by discrimination against women, even outright misogyny.

"Women are being treated like they don't even have voting rights," the 27-year-old office worker in the capital, Seoul, said.

For years, South Korean women have made slow but steady progress in the workplace as they confronted an entrenched culture of male chauvinism and harassment. But this extremely tight presidential race, which culminates March 9, has exposed the fragility of what's been won.

Top conservative candidate Yoon Suk Yeol and his liberal rival Lee Jae-myung — both men above 55 — are fighting for what they see as a "male" vote crucial for victory. They have increasingly focused their messages on young men who decry gender equality policies and the loss of traditional privileges in a hyper-competitive job market.

"Politicians are taking the easy path," Hong said. "Instead of coming up with real policies to solve problems facing young people, they are fanning gender conflicts, telling men in their 20s that their difficulties stem from women receiving too many benefits."

The tensions can be seen on

the streets. Hundreds of women have marched in protest against the "election of misogyny." Small but vocal groups of anti-feminist men have staged rallies in response.

Divisive gender politics has grown as South Korea deals with a fast-aging population, a plummeting birth rate, soaring personal debt, a decaying job market and stark inequality. There's also the growing nuclear threat from North Korea and fears of being squeezed in the confrontation between the United States and China.

No campaign issue, however, has caused more debate than Yoon's vow to abolish the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, which the candidate says promotes policies unfair to men.

A former prosecutor general, Yoon, 61, has also vowed stronger penalties for false sexual crime reports. Critics say this makes up only a small number of rape claims, and that the threat of tougher punishment could intimidate victims from coming forward amid a recent male backlash against the #MeToo movement.

Liberal ruling party candidate Lee, 57, has taken a cautious approach to gender issues, while clashing with Yoon over the economy and North Korea policy.

Narrowly trailing Yoon in the polls, Lee has faced calls to appeal to more young men, whose support of conservative candidates in mayoral by-elections in Seoul and Busan may have led to a sho-

cking double-defeat for the liberals.

Lee has described gender tensions as related to joblessness and says men shouldn't be discriminated against. He said he plans to keep the gender ministry, but under a different Korean name that no longer includes the word "women."

Yoon's campaign has been influenced by his party's chairman, Lee Jun-seok, a 36-year-old Harvard-educated "men's rights" advocate who describes hiring targets for women and other gender equality policies as "reverse discrimination." Lee calls feminist politics "blowfish poison."

Yoon during a presidential debate on Monday repeated an argument that South Korea no longer has any structural barriers to women's success, saying discrimination is now about "individual versus individual."

The World Economic Forum ranks South Korea 102 out of 156 nations in an index that examines gender gaps in jobs, education, health and political representation.

South Korea has by far the largest gender pay gap among developed economies at around 32%, according to the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and women remain significantly underrepresented in corporate boardrooms and politics. The country's record-low birth rate underscores how many women

find it impossible to combine careers and family.

Scrapping the gender ministry could weaken women's rights and "take a toll on democracy," said Chung Hyun-back, a scholar who served as gender equality minister in 2017-18, under current liberal President Moon Jae-in. It is also a key government department committed to helping single parents, sexual abuse survivors and the families of minorities and migrants.

The prospect frustrates Kang Ji-woo, a 36-year-old single mother who once struggled to find a job in a deeply conservative society and who receives child care support from the gender ministry. Unwed mothers in South Korea are sometimes pressured and shamed into having abortions or relinquishing their children for adoption.

"There's no candidate worth trusting on policies aimed at helping the disadvantaged," she said.

South Korean conservatives are galvanizing around a Trump-like brand of divisive "identity politics" that speaks almost exclusively to men after years of disarray following the 2017 ouster of the country's first female president, Park Geun-hye, over a massive corruption scandal, according to Park Won-Ho, a Seoul National University politics professor.

Park Geun-hye had drawn power from older conservative voters who saw her dictator father, Park Chung-hee, as a hero who lifted the nation from the devastation of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Yoon is tapping into the resentment of men in their 20s and 30s who face a bleak job market while agonizing over soaring housing prices and dimming prospects for marriage and parenthood. They are increasingly sensitive to competition from women, who often

outpace them at school and are more eager to break from traditional gender roles for professional advancement.

Even as many men cling to the notion that their female colleagues have it easier in the workplace — including being exempt from a mandatory 18-month military service — women have begun to more loudly criticize a male-centered corporate culture that exposes them to harassment, unequal pay and promotions, and often derails their careers after they have children.

Hong Eun-pyo, a 39-year-old who runs an anti-feminist YouTube channel, justifies higher pay for men, insisting they put in longer hours or perform more difficult tasks. "If they want to reach as high as their male peers and be paid the same wages, they should keep working and not get pregnant," he said.

Song Tae-woong, an office worker, says young men, worried about a life path that seems tougher than their fathers, resent women's increasing complaints about society.

"Our parents' generation, now in their 50s and 60s, got married early and progressed step by step," he said. "People today are ... extremely restless."

Some experts, including Chung, think politicians are overplaying the gender grievances of certain middle-class, college-educated men who have become radicalized over the internet as they compete with women for a shrinking number of decent jobs.

Recent surveys, however, show a striking political divide between increasingly conservative young men and their more left-leaning female peers, not just over gender issues but also on the economy and national security, says Park, the politics professor. This indicates conservatives are successfully mobilizing their young male supporters to back broader agendas, including tougher approaches on North Korea and policies emphasizing economic growth over welfare spending. Younger women are left feeling largely unrepresented, polls show.

Lee Ji-young, a teacher who has risen to the top of her field in the highly competitive private tutoring business, remembers years of verbal and physical sexual harassment and unwanted advances by male colleagues who constantly questioned her competitiveness.

One colleague told her that Korean society was stable during the medieval era "because women were quiet, but that now they have ruined South Korea," Lee said.

She said she once twisted the wrist of a male colleague when he tried to touch her backside.

"Usually women wouldn't react this way," Lee said. "I've witnessed women who would cry at home or quit work ... because they were afraid of being judged, personally and professionally." MDT/AP

'Thugs and bullies': Nations sanction Russia over Ukraine

FOSTER KLUG, TOKYO

WORLD leaders sought yesterday to back up their tough words over Russia's aggression against Ukraine, announcing financial sanctions, trade and travel bans and other measures meant to pressure Moscow to pull back from the brink of war.

Even as they ramped up penalties, however, nations in Asia and the Pacific also prepared for the possibility of both economic pain, in the form of cuts to traditional energy and grain supply lines, and retaliation from Russian cyberattacks.

"We can't have some suggestion that Russia has some just case here that they're prosecuting. They're behaving like thugs and bullies, and they should be called out as thugs and bullies," Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said while announcing targeted financial sanctions and travel bans as a first step in response to Russian aggression toward Ukraine.

The possibility of imminent war in Ukraine has raised fears not only of massive casualties but of widespread energy shortages and global economic chaos.

The punitive actions in Asia followed sanctions levied by U.S. President Joe Biden and European leaders against Russian oligarchs and banks in response to Russia massing 150,000 troops on three sides of Ukraine. While the larger army has yet to move, Russian forces have rolled into rebel-held portions of eastern Ukraine after Russian President Vladimir Putin recognized those areas' independence.

In Japan, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced sanctions targeting Russia and the two separatist Ukrainian regions.

Kishida told reporters that Tokyo will ban any new issuance and distribution of Russian government bonds in Japan because of "a series of actions Russia has been taking in Ukraine."

Kishida said Japan will also stop issuing visas to people linked to the two



Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison talks about the situation in Ukraine at a news conference in Sydney yesterday

Ukrainian rebel regions and will freeze their assets in Japan. Tokyo will also ban trade with the two areas. He said Japanese officials are finalizing further details and added that Japan could increase sanctions if the situation worsens.

Japan opened a temporary office in Lviv, in western Ukraine, to help evacuate about 120 Japanese citizens, and has arranged chartered flights in nearby countries, Kishida said.

Officials in South Korea, which relies on imports to meet nearly all fossil fuel demand, held emergency meetings yesterday to weigh how seriously events in Ukraine would hurt their country's economy.

The fallout has so far been limited, but First Vice Finance Minister Lee Eog-weon said things could worsen if the situation in Ukraine escalates and there's a "disruption of energy supply chains and an increase in market volatility."

While South Korea relies heavily on imports from Russia and Ukraine for wheat and corn, Lee said the country has enough reserves to last until June or July.

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy also discussed ways to secure alternative energy supplies in case the Ukraine crisis disrupts the current methods.

U.S. officials have said an invasion is all but inevitable. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken canceled plans for a Thursday meeting in Geneva with his Rus-

sian counterpart, saying it would not be productive and that Russia's actions indicated Moscow was not serious about a peaceful path to resolving the crisis.

More than two dozen European Union members unanimously agreed to levy their own initial set of sanctions against Russian officials. Germany also said it was halting the process of certifying the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia — a lucrative deal long sought by Moscow but criticized by the United States for increasing Europe's reliance on Russian energy.

The United States moved to cut off Russia's government from Western finance, sanctioning two of its banks and blocking it from trading its debt on American and European markets. The Biden administration's actions hit civilian leaders in Russia's leadership hierarchy and two Russian banks considered especially close to the Kremlin and Russia's military, with more than \$80 billion in assets. That includes freezing all of those banks' assets under U.S. jurisdictions.

Australia's cabinet approved sanctions and travel bans that target eight members of the Russian Security Council, and agreed to align with the United States and Britain by targeting two Russian banks.

"It's important that we play our part in the broader international community to ensure that those who are financing, profiting from an autocratic and authorita-

rian regime that is invading its neighbor should have nowhere to run and nowhere to hide when it comes to trying to move their money around," said Morrison, the prime minister.

Australia also warned businesses to prepare for retaliation through Russian cyberattacks.

There was a dissenting voice amid Asia's general tendency to back U.S.-style sanctions, as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said Beijing is opposed to new unilateral sanctions imposed on Russia.

In New Zealand, Russian Ambassador Georgii Zuev was summoned to meet with top diplomatic officials and "to hear New Zealand's strong opposition to the actions taken by Russia in recent days," said Foreign Affairs Minister Nanaia Mahuta in a statement. Mahuta is currently traveling abroad.

At the United Nations, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world is facing "the biggest global peace and security crisis in recent years." He called Russia's declaration of the "so-called 'independence'" of separatist areas in eastern Ukraine a violation of its territorial integrity and accused Moscow of "the perversion of the concept of peacekeeping."

He urged the international community to rally "to save the people of Ukraine and beyond from the scourge of war" without further bloodshed. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1955 BRITAIN'S BIG FREEZE



Deep snow and freezing temperatures continue across Britain leaving many parts of the country cut off from essential supplies.

More than 70 roads in Britain are blocked by snow, according to the Automobile Association and hundreds of vehicles have been abandoned in snowdrifts as high as 30ft (9m).

Rail travel has also been severely affected and some areas in northern Scotland have not had a train service for several days.

The RAF has been working flat out to drop food and medical supplies to affected areas.

Concerns for the welfare of the country's thousands of sheep are mounting as many are completely cut-off from food supplies.

The RAF has dropped nearly 40 tons of hay over the Scottish Highlands during the past week but reports of many sheep being buried deep in snowdrifts are continuing.

Sport has also been severely affected. Most race meetings have been cancelled and the Football Association has indicated it may consider extending the season to catch up on missed games.

Temperatures have fallen below 28 degrees Fahrenheit (minus three degrees centigrade) - four degrees below freezing and the lowest for 30 years.

The low temperatures have caused severe frosts and icy conditions across the country.

In total about 60 counties in Britain are affected by snow and ice, according to the AA.

One of the worst affected areas in the country is Caithness in the Scottish Highlands, which has been totally isolated and without power or light since 17 February.

Two days ago a light aircraft carrying two people crashed in the snow in Caithness. The pilot and his passenger were rescued by a naval helicopter.

Floods on Britain's east coast made conditions almost unbearable and the AA described driving conditions in the south as treacherous.

In the west country there are concerns for livestock on Exmoor and Dartmoor which are both cut off by snow.

Yesterday more snow and 60-mile-per hour (96 kph) blizzards in the west paralysed many parts of Devon and Cornwall. Cornish police reported that 70 vehicles had been abandoned in 10-foot (3m) snowdrifts.

Many people have also been stranded in the Pennines in northern England.

This current spell of freezing weather conditions began in the first week of January. There was a slight thaw towards the end of the month but more snow began to fall in the middle of February.

As yet there are no signs of improvement in the conditions.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The severe weather conditions continued across Britain into March.

Sheep farmers were probably the worst affected by the big snow of 1955. Despite the valiant efforts of the RAF many thousands of sheep died from exposure.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You can win if you're open and up front with your boss. Your mate will appreciate your honesty. Don't sign up for too many extra activities or you'll have trouble fulfilling your obligations.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You may find that children are not as accepting as you have been. Don't let siblings put pressure on you. Do not confront situations unless you are sure you have a good understanding of the dilemma.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Be aware of any deception on the part of those you deal with. If they're too demanding, reconsider this union. Be aware of any deception on the part of those you deal with.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Mingle with those who can help you get ahead. It might be best not to spend your money on luxuries today. Avoid getting too close to coworkers or employers.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Travel and family gatherings should be in order. You will have the discipline to make changes you feel are necessary. You will get along well in social situations.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Trips will be exciting. Make career changes that may increase your income. Avoid getting involved with married individuals. You can solidify your relationship if you plan a special evening with your mate.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You need to concentrate on the areas where you can make a difference. Opportunities to get ahead will be evident. Your greatest enjoyment will come through social activities and pleasure trips.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Channel your energy into decorating or household chores. Self-deception regarding your own worth may lead you down the wrong path. You will have to face each issue separately and in person.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Your irritability may drive your loved ones crazy. You will have to put those you live with in their place if they try to interfere with your work.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You may come down with minor infections. Your own small business on the side sounds pretty lucrative. Don't forget that your budget is limited right now.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Your professional attitude will not go unnoticed. Invite friends in for a visit. You need to focus on yourself, not on others. You are best to sign your partner up for activities that will be tiring.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Romantic opportunities are evident if you get involved in large groups or organizations. You can have an enjoyable time if you socialize with friends. Lovers will be demanding.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-6	9	fine
Harbin	-12	2	fine
Tianjin	-1	12	fine
Urumqi	5	10	overcast
Xi'an	6	14	cloudy
Lhasa	-4	7	fine
Chengdu	5	13	cloudy
Chongqing	4	14	cloudy
Kunming	-1	6	overcast
Nanjing	1	8	fine
Shanghai	1	8	cloudy
Wuhan	-2	8	fine
Hangzhou	-14	-1	fine
Taipei	-1	9	fine
Guangzhou	5	16	fine
Hong Kong	12	12	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	-5	0	overcast
Frankfurt	1	11	rain
Paris	3	12	rain
London	4	7	rain
New York	1	3	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Toothbrush brand; 6- Adversaries; 10- Rent-___; 14- Lover of Juliet; 15- Nose out; 16- Trent of the Senate; 17- Colorado resort; 18- Regan's dad; 19- Humble; 20- Monetary unit of Romania; 21- Cobb, e.g.; 23- Quotes; 24- Ornamental coronet; 26- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 27- Lacking movement; 29- Midway state; 31- Spouse; 32- Tooth; 33- To and ___; 36- Typical instance; 40- Frozen Wasser; 41- Seaport in the Crimea; 42- Air France destination; 43- Sleazy; 44- Like some salons; 46- Some hybrids; 48- Silvery fish; 49- Flat-topped hills; 50- Steal; 52- Hold up; 55- JFK postings; 56- Scent; 57- The Wreck of the Mary ___; 59- Staying power; 60- Rouse from sleep; 61- Adlai's running mate; 62- Low card; 63- ___ out a living (barely got by); 64- Judges;

DOWN 1- Word that can precede hygiene, tradition and agreement.; 2- Red flower; 3- Cuts off; 4- Bruce ___ was a famous kung-fu movie star; 5- Dwarfed tree; 6- Gal's guy; 7- Ancient theaters; 8- Crikey!; 9- Sun. talk; 10- White rat, e.g.; 11- Ring-tailed tropical carnivore; 12- Lost; 13- Hwys.; 22- Circle segment; 23- Snake charmer's snake; 25- Bit of gossip; 26- Apple variety; 27- "Peter Pan" pirate; 28- Prepare for takeoff; 29- Towering; 30- Hip bones; 32- Temperate; 33- Excellent; 34- Acting part; 35- Quartz variety; 37- Funeral fires; 38- Neighbor of Cambodia; 39- Labor; 43- Like expressionless eyes; 44- Ref's counterpart; 45- Required; 46- Unit just above a yard; 47- Practice; 48- Brought into being; 49- Dissolve; 50- Minn. neighbor; 51- Roused; 53- City near Provo; 54- Mamie's predecessor; 56- Be in arrears; 58- Compass pt.;

Yesterday's solution

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

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



PROPERTY OF THE MONTH

FOR SALE

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Unique location!

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SALE RENT

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AD



Clouds and nearby mountains are reflected in a polluted canal, once used as a boating dock, along the Salton Sea in Desert Shores, California

dance of oil.

Newsom said lithium extraction in California has the potential to boost national security by improving domestic supply chains and accelerating the transition away from fossil fuels in the transportation sector. Biden earlier noted the nation could produce a half-million electric cars per year by 2025.

"If it's as big as it appears to be, this is a game-changer in terms of our efforts to transition to low-carbon green growth and to radically change the way we produce and consume energy," Newsom said.

Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway Energy is among several companies working on extracting lithium from geothermal brine found around the Salton Sea, California's largest lake. Berkshire Hathaway has run geothermal plants around the lake for decades, but the lithium has historically been pumped back under ground with the brine after it's used to generate power.

With state and federal investments of about \$20 million, the company is working on projects to demonstrate it can extract the lithium and convert it to battery-grade in a way that's commercially viable, said Alicia Knapp, president of BHE Renewables.

The Newsom administration said it wants to ensure economic benefits from lithium extraction go back to the areas around the Salton Sea, which have been hit by economic hardship and environmental degradation as the lake dries up because of dwindling supplies from the Colorado River.

Silvia Paz, chairwoman of the state-created Lithium Valley Commission, told Biden communities in the region have seen "unfilled promises" before. She called for investments in career development and education for people in the region as well as improvements to basic services and environmental cleanup.

"We want to be at the table and help you understand what it means for us to have a prosperous economy," she said. **MDT/AP**

MINING

BIDEN WANTS TO CUT INTO CHINA'S ELECTRIC BATTERY DOMINANCE

KATHLEEN RONAYNE,
 SACRAMENTO (CALIF.)

PRESIDENT Joe Biden highlighted his efforts to counter China's dominance of the electric battery market yesterday [Macau time] as he touted domestic efforts to mine and process lithium and rare metals necessary to create the technology that powers cars, electronics, wind turbines and more.

The Democratic president announced his administration is giving \$35 million to MP Materials, a company that mines rare earth metals near the Nevada border in Southern California. The funding

will boost MP's ability to process the materials domestically for use in U.S. manufacturing.

He also touted efforts to extract lithium from geothermal brine found around California's Salton Sea. Biden said U.S. demand for such materials will grow by 400% to 600% over the next several decades.

"We can't build a future that's made in America if we ourselves are dependent on China for the materials that power the products of today and tomorrow," Biden said. "And this is not anti-China, or anti-anything else. It's pro-America."

Biden spoke virtually from

Washington with a group of California business and government leaders, including Gov. Gavin Newsom.

Las Vegas-based MP Materials runs the Mountain Pass mine and processing facility that is the only one of its kind in North America. It extracts rare earth metals and produces a concentrate that's exported for use in other countries. Such metals are used to produce magnets necessary for batteries in electric cars and many other items.

The federal money will help the company create a processing facility for "heavy" rare earth metals, and it follows a \$10 million award

last year for "light" rare earth metals. The company is spending \$700 million of its own money for improving processing and creating a manufacturing facility in Texas to produce magnets. The company has a deal with General Motors, said Matt Sloutcher, MP Materials' senior vice president for policy and communications.

"My team is committed to bringing this supply chain home," company Chief Executive Officer Jim Litinsky told Biden on the call.

Elsewhere, Biden touted lithium production efforts in California. Newsom has called the state the Saudi Arabia of lithium, a reference to that country's abun-

DEFENSE

Philippines signs USD624 million deal for 32 Black Hawks

THE Philippines signed a 32 billion-peso (\$624 million) deal this week to purchase 32 Black Hawk helicopters in the largest military aircraft acquisition contract under outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte, defense officials said.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana signed the deal with Janusz Zakrecki, president of Poland-based aerospace manufacturer PZL

Mielec, to acquire the S-70i Black Hawks, which can be used for troop transport, combat operations and disaster response. The deal includes a training package for pilots and maintenance crews and logistical backup, Department of National Defense spokesperson Arsenio Andolong said.

Lorenzana said it took time for the Department of Budget to allocate funds

for the deal, which was signed by Duterte, and he was concerned because the president's six-year term ends on June 30.

"We barely made it," Lorenzana said. "I think we will not be here anymore to receive these helicopters, but nonetheless, we will be happy to see the improvement of the capability of the Philippine air force."

Due to financial constraints, the Philippines has

struggled for years to modernize its military, one of the most underfunded in Asia, to deal with decades-long Muslim and communist insurgencies and to defend its territories in the disputed South China Sea.

The acquisition of the Black Hawks will allow the air force to retire its aging Bell UH-1 helicopters, which were used during the

Vietnam War. "The Philippine air force is so good at maintaining these helicopters that long. Long after the U.S. has already ditched their Hueys, we are still flying them," Lorenzana said.

The Philippines earlier acquired 16 Black Hawks from PZL Mielec, all of which have been delivered and were used widely to respond to the widespread

damage caused by a powerful typhoon in the central Philippines in December, Lorenzana said.

One of the 16 helicopters crashed last year during night flight training in northern Tarlac province, killing six air force personnel, but Lorenzana said it was an "acceptable risk of flying helicopters at night during bad weather." **MDT/AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

TENNIS

Stalker of star Raducanu gets restraining order

A man who was found guilty of stalking U.S. Open tennis champion Emma Raducanu was given a five-year restraining order yesterday.

Amrit Magar, a 35-year-old former delivery driver from London, also was sentenced to an 18-month community service order that includes 200 hours of unpaid work. He will be under curfew for eight weeks and monitored by an electronic tag.

Magar went to the 19-year-old Raducanu's home on three separate dates late last year, loitered outside, left unwanted gifts and cards, and stole property from the porch, a trial heard last month. On one occasion, he decorated a tree in the front garden with Christmas lights.

He also left a bou-



Emma Raducanu of Britain

quet of flowers with a personal note. Another time, he drew a map to show the 23 miles he had walked from his home.

Magar was arrested

after Raducanu's father was alerted by a doorbell camera, finding his shoe had been taken from the porch. He was found guilty at the trial at Bromley

Magistrates' Court.

Raducanu shot to fame last year by winning the U.S. Open as a qualifier in September, for one of the most unlikely sporting achievements of all time. Two months earlier, she had reached the fourth round of Wimbledon, also as a qualifier.

The trial heard that Magar told police officers he had been drawn to Raducanu "because of her high-profile status after her victory in the U.S. Open" and had taken the shoe believing it belonged to her as a "souvenir."

The order bans Magar from contacting Raducanu or her parents, coming within a mile of their street and attending any sports ground, stadium or training facility where she is in competition or attending to practice. MDT/AP



FOOTBALL

ROMA COACH JOSE MOURINHO GIVEN 2-GAME BAN AFTER RED CARD

ROMA coach Jose Mourinho has been banned for two games as punishment for his outburst during the latest setback when his team drew 2-2 with Verona in the Italian league.

Mourinho, who was red carded, encroached onto the field in Saturday's game to argue with the referee and then kicked the ball into the crowd.

The Portuguese coach acted in a "threatening"

manner, Serie A said in its disciplinary announcement yesterday [Macau time]. The league also fined him 20,000 euros (\$22,700).

Eighth-place Roma is winless in its last three league games — all draws, including one against relegation-threatened Genoa.

The ban means Mourinho won't be on the touchline for Roma's games at Spezia on Sunday and at home against Atalanta on March 5. MDT/AP

Macao Bond Market

Presented by:
Calvin Tinlop Chui
Partner at Rato, Ling, Lei & Cortés - Lawyers and Notaries
LEKTOU

britcham Business Lunch - Wednesday 16 March 2022

Join Calvin Tinlop Chui as he shares information on the development of the Bond Market in Macao; the recent trends of Macao's financial institutions, bond issuance and listing activities under the current legal framework, and case studies on RMB/HKD/USD denominated bonds.

Calvin is qualified to practice law in Macao and New York State. He focuses on capital markets (IPO and bond issue & listing), banking and finance, commercial and corporate matters. Calvin is President of the Board of Directors of Macao Financial Law Association, member of the supervisory committee of a local bank, and member of the bond specialist committee of a local trading platform. Calvin regularly teaches law subjects at universities and co-authors publications, including Chambers Global Practice Guide Banking & Finance 2021: Macao Chapter, Thomson Reuters Practical Law: Establishing a business in Macao, etc.

Date: 16 Mar. 2022 (WED) **Venue:** Mandarin Oriental Macao
Fee: Members MOP450 **Time:** 1215 - 1400 hours
Non-members MOP550
(includes lunch. Vegetarian request required by 11 March 2022)

Advance booking necessary. Email info@britchammacao.org or call +853 6331 1124

Sovereign Members: OCEAN GARDENS 海洋花園, LORD STOW'S BAKERY 澳門安樂餅家

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Casa do Brasil

INVITES

Carnaval Costume Party

Saturday March 5th
Live Show Dança Brasil
Live DJ
Free entrance
From 10pm till late

At The Roadhouse Macau

R/C, Shop E-G016-C019, Broadway Hotel, Rotunda do Dique Oeste, Taipa

OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

TIME TO JETTISON OUTDATED GEOPOLITICAL THINKING

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Tuesday appealed for an immediate cease-fire and a "return to the path of dialogue and negotiations", arguing that the "peace-keeping" troops Russia has sent into Donetsk and Lugansk "are not impartial".

The UN, he said, remains fully committed to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized boundaries.

For Beijing, which has friendly ties with both Russia and Ukraine, what is happening between the two is concerning and it hopes the present security quagmire can be resolved, as there are serious security concerns and issues to be addressed between Russia and Ukraine as well as Russia and the European Union and the United States. Until those concerns and issues are properly addressed, there is unlikely to be lasting peace in that part of the world.

Noting the trajectory of the evolution of the issue has to do with the failure to execute Minsk II — the 2015 multi-party agreement on implementing a cease-fire arrangement brokered the previous year in Minsk, the capital of Belarus — Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in a telephone talk with US State Secretary Antony Blinken on Tuesday, called on all parties to exercise restraint, keep in mind the importance of implementing the principle of the indivisibility of security and to resolve their differences through dialogue.

He also reiterated that the Chinese government's position on the issue has been consistent — all country's reasonable security concerns deserve respect and the purpose and principles of the UN Charter should be preserved.

Among the hazardous legacies of the Cold War, out-dated geopolitical thinking that defined that bygone era may be the most dangerous culprit responsible for many of the present-day world's troubles.

It is those who stubbornly view the world through the prism of that era and who approach today's state-to-state relations with yesterday's tools and mindset who are the architects of the present crisis.

And, not content with the extent of their trouble-making by besieging a historically insecure Russia, Cold War warriors of the West are seeking to reverse the trend of multipolarity by fabricating the impression of a China-Russia geopolitical monolith.

Beijing and Moscow do enjoy good relations and have a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination, and it is therefore natural that Beijing should call for Russia's genuine security concerns to be heeded. But that does not mean that the two countries form a united threat to the West as those mired in the past wish to portray in their bid to manipulate the gullible.

The Ukraine crisis is a significant moment for the world as it presents a fork in the road when the world can either continue on a path toward the annihilative potentialities of the past or take a step forward toward the possibilities of drawing a line under decades of suspicion and hostility.

AMSTERDAM APPLE SHOP HOSTAGE-TAKER SOUGHT 200M-EURO RANSOM

THE BUZZ

A gunman who held a hostage for hours in the Apple Store in Amsterdam demanded a ransom of 200 million euros in cryptocurrencies before he was run over by police as he chased his hostage out of the shop, police and prosecutors said yesterday.

The tense, five-hour standoff paralyzed one of Amsterdam's most popular nightlife neighborhoods for hours as scores of heavily armed police surrounded the store, managing to free about 70 people from the building that houses the shop before the suspect was detained.

Police Chief Frank Paauw said the suspect, a 27-year-old man from

Amsterdam armed with a handgun and an automatic weapon and wearing camouflaged clothing, was run over by police as he chased his fleeing hostage. The hostage was a Bulgarian man, police said. They didn't release his identity.

"The hostage played a sort of hero's role by, in that split second that he had, forcing a breakthrough in this situation," Paauw said at a news conference in the early hours of the morning. "Otherwise it could have been a very long and unpleasant night and maybe longer."

'SUPERBLY PRESERVED' PTEROSAUR FOSSIL UNEARTHED IN SCOTLAND

SYLVIA HUI, LONDON

THE fossil of a 170 million-year-old pterosaur, described as the world's best-preserved skeleton of the prehistoric winged reptile, has been found on the Isle of Skye in Scotland, scientists said yesterday [Macau time].

The National Museum of Scotland said the fossil of the pterosaur, more popularly known as pterodactyls, is the largest of its kind ever discovered from the Jurassic period. The reptile had an estimated wingspan of more than 2.5 meters, similar to that of an albatross, the museum said.

The fossil was discovered in 2017 by PhD student Amelia Penny during a field trip on the Isle of Skye in remote northwestern Scotland, when she spotted the pterosaur's jaw protruding from rocks. It will now be added to the museum's collection.

"Pterosaurs preserved in such quality are exceedingly rare and are usually reserved to select rock formations in Brazil and China. And yet, an enormous superbly preserved pterosaur emerged from a tidal



University of Edinburgh PhD student Natalia Jagielska poses for a photo with the world's largest Jurassic pterosaur unearthed on the Isle of Skye

platform in Scotland," said Natalia Jagielska, a doctoral student at the University of Edinburgh who is the author of a new scientific paper describing the find.

Steve Brusatte, a professor of palaeontology at Edinburgh University, said the discovery was the best one found in Britain since the early 1800s, when celebrated fossil hunter Mary Anning uncovered many significant Jurassic fossils on the southern English coast.

He said the fossil had "feather light" bones, "as thin as sheets of paper," and it took several days to cut it from rock using diamond-tipped saws as his team

battled against encroaching tides.

"It tells us that pterosaurs got larger much earlier than we thought, long before the Cretaceous period when they were competing with birds, and that's hugely significant," Brusatte added.

The pterosaur has been given the Gaelic name Dearnsgianach, which translates as "winged reptile."

Pterosaurs were the first vertebrates to fly, some 50 million years before birds. They lived as far back as the Triassic period, about 230 million years ago. They were previously thought to have been much smaller during the Jurassic period. MDT/AP



UN independent investigator on human rights in North Korea has called for the international community to provide 60 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to the isolated authoritarian nation, which has recently showed signs of easing one of the world's most restrictive pandemic border closures. Tomas Ojea Quintana said the doses would be enough to inoculate North Korea's population of more than 25 million people at least twice. He said the shots would possibly encourage Pyongyang's leadership to open up more after the country's self-imposed lockdown.



Germany Climate activists yesterday blocked roads leading to the country's three biggest airports, gluing themselves to the ground before police arrived. Members of the group Uprising of the Last Generation said they wanted to disrupt cargo and passenger traffic at the airports in Frankfurt, Munich and Berlin. The group has demanded that the government take measures to end food waste.

Germany's Cabinet yesterday approved raising the country's minimum wage to 12 euros per hour in October, making good on a key pledge in Chancellor Olaf Scholz's election campaign last year. Germany has had a national minimum wage since 2015. It was introduced at the insistence of Scholz's center-left Social Democrats, who at the time were junior partners in conservative Chancellor Angela Merkel's government.

Poland is lifting most Covid-19 restrictions including limits on the people inside restaurants and theaters from March 1, but will continue with mandatory face masks indoors and isolation rules. Health Minister Adam Niedzielski said the lifting of most of the restrictions was possible because the number of new daily infections and hospitalizations was falling significantly, and herd immunity was above 90% as a result of both vaccinations and infections.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Vadim Ghirda



Valentyna Konstantynovska, 79 years-old, holds a weapon during basic combat training for civilians, organized by the Special Forces Unit Azov of Ukraine's National Guard, in eastern Ukraine.