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SECRETARY ROSÁRIO EXPECTS THE CABLE REPLACEMENT WORKS ON THE LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT TO BE COMPLETED ON SCHEDULE

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PROSPERITY INDICES EXPECTED TO RISE FROM FEB TO MAY

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JAPAN-US MARINE COMBAT DRILLS HELD AMID CHINA, RUSSIA WORRY

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AP PHOTO



Myanmar's military-led administration has agreed to accept Thai baht as an official currency in border trade dealings and plans a similar arrangement for use of India's rupee, seeking to limit the country's reliance on the U.S. dollar in trade. The State Administration Council said yesterday that Myanmar began allowing direct currency settlements using the Chinese yuan with its kyat earlier this year. Settlements in Thai baht will be done online according to regulations set by Myanmar's central bank, it said in a statement.

UK The London Metal Exchange resumes trading in nickel, a week after it was suspended when the price of the metal surged to over \$100,000 a ton. Trading will resume at 8 a.m. London time today. The LME said a major market client had confirmed it had gained support from banks that might forestall further "disorderly conditions." That followed an announcement by Tsingshan Holding Group, a Chinese metals giant, that it had struck a deal with a consortium of its creditors on a "standstill arrangement."

AP PHOTO

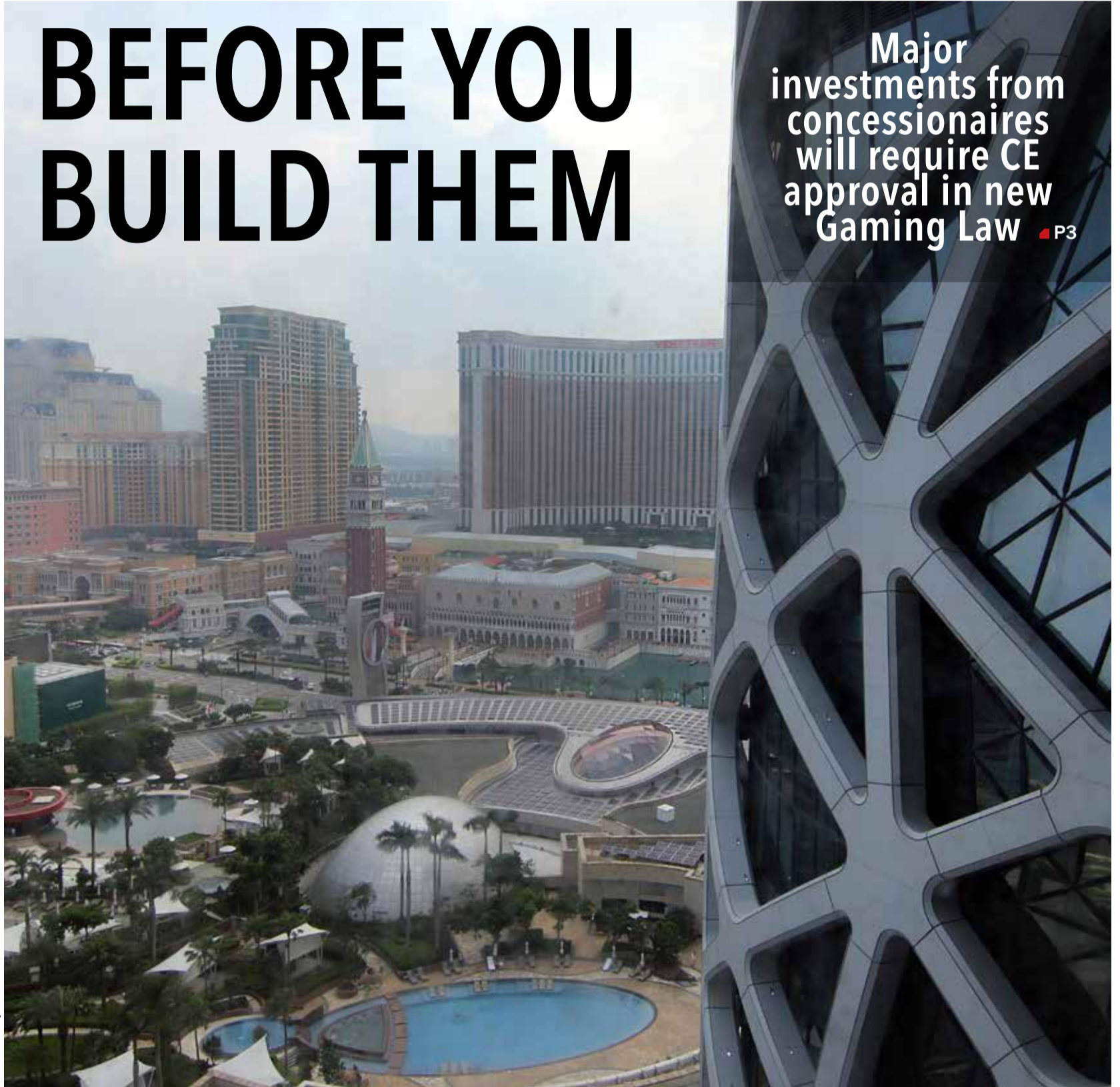


India's defense minister said the country's missile systems were "very reliable and safe" after one was accidentally fired last week and landed in a residential area inside nuclear-armed rival Pakistan. Defense Minister Rajnath Singh (pictured) told Indian lawmakers a formal inquiry was ordered to determine the cause of the firing as well as a review of the standard procedures for operations, inspections and maintenance of its weapons systems. Any shortcomings would be fixed immediately, he added.

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BERNSTEIN: THAILAND POTENTIALLY LVS'S NEXT INVESTMENT

BROKERAGE firm Bernstein has suggested that Thailand might be the “major country” Las Vegas Sands (LVS) executives were referring to when discussing the prospect of investing in a new integrated resort in Asia.

Recently, the chairman and CEO of LVS, Rob Goldstein, announced that the company is looking at building an integrated resort with a similar scale to Marina Bay Sands – but did not disclose which country would host the resort.

“A lot of countries in Asia have reached out to us over the years, but nothing’s happened. This one feels like it might be a major prospect. A major country, a top-tier country. I hope it’s real,” said Goldstein.

According to the executive, the company has had “some rather interesting conversations with a major country there that has reached out to us.”

Late last year, Thailand announced that integrated resorts could soon be a reality in the country, with the government creating five different casino sub-committees.



In light of this, analyst Vitaly Umansky said in a note that LVS may be referring to Thailand, noting that the Thai government has taken a step further in integrated resort exploration.

“We believe LVS is hinting at a potential opportunity in Thailand, which has seen an increase

in interest from the government in looking at gaming legalization,” said the Bernstein analyst.

“This is not the first time Thailand has been talked about as a gaming opportunity. The market potential could be substantial; however, as with all gaming legalizations, the devil is in the de-

tails,” he added.

Meanwhile, Goldstein has stressed that its plans in Japan are over.

In May 2020, the casino operator formally withdrew its interest in Japan, citing concerns about the legal and regulatory framework in the country. Among the issues at stake were the high

costs of developing an integrated resort, a relatively high level of taxation on gaming activities and likely restrictions on gambling by Japanese nationals.

“We went through a lot of work in Japan and it was very disappointing. [...] From our perspective, we could never get it to move along to our satisfaction, so we packed up and called it a day,” said the executive.

In the interview, Goldstein also noted that the company’s businesses in Macau and Singapore are the backbone of the firm.

“Singapore’s back to a U.S.-type trajectory. Demand is picking up. It’s opening up and they’ve done a terrific job. But Macau is still struggling. China and Hong Kong are going through a very tough time and our business there has been battered,” said the CEO.

In 2021, total net revenue for Sands China increased to USD2.87 billion, 70.4% up from 2020 revenue, while net losses for the gaming operator were USD1.05 billion in 2021, compared to USD1.52 billion in 2020.

Goldstein has previously said that, amid the junket turmoil in the city, customers in the junket business will re-emerge in different segments and find new ways to visit the casino.

SECRETARY ROSÁRIO EXPECTS LRT CABLE REPLACEMENT WORKS TO FINISH ‘ON TIME’

ANTHONY LAM



THE Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, expects the cable replacement works on the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) to be completed on schedule.

The LRT is currently suspended for six months to facilitate the replacement of its 124km network of high-voltage cables. The suspension period is set to end this month.

Speaking after a parliamentary committee meeting yesterday, the secretary said that there have been no delays so far, meaning that the work should conclude at the end of this month.

When questioned about whether works might be completed ahead of

schedule, the senior official explained that it is difficult to foresee this possibility, especially in the engineering field. “If I said I expect early conclusion, but it doesn’t [happen], I’ll be held responsible,” Rosário admitted.

He also said that the merger and restructuring of the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) and the Infrastructure Development Office (GDI) is in progress, with updates to be available soon.

In addition, he said that reclamation of the New Urban Zone C is also in progress. Updates on engineering difficulties that have delayed progress will be disclosed in due course, he added. **AL**

FOREX RESERVES DROP TO MOP214B BY FEBRUARY

THE preliminary estimate of Macau’s foreign exchange reserves amounted to 213.7 billion patacas at the end of February 2022, the special administrative region’s (SAR) monetary watchdog said yesterday.

The latest statistics from the Monetary Authority of Macao indicated that the reserves decreased by 1.3 percent from the revised value of 216.6 billion patacas for the previous month.

Macau’s foreign exchange reserves at the end of February

2022 represented 10 times the currency in circulation or 85.6 percent of pataca M2 at the end of January 2022.

The trade-weighted effective exchange rate index for the pataca fell 0.16 point month on month but rose 1.47 points year on year to 103.6 in February 2022, implying that the exchange rate of the pataca dropped against the currencies of Macau’s major trading partners on a monthly basis but grew on an annual basis.



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Gov't refuses to link gaming taxes to social welfare

RENATO MARQUES

THE local government has refused to specify in the new gaming law how much tax revenue from the gaming industry will be used for social welfare, the president of the Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly, Chan Chak Mo, revealed yesterday in a press briefing after a meeting between lawmakers and representatives from the government.

According to Chan, the proposal was initiated by several lawmakers on the committee which is currently analyzing the new law in detail. They called on the government to clearly specify in the new law what percentage of the casinos' taxes will be used for social welfare programs.

Chan reported that some members went even further, urging the government to raise the tax rate levied on casinos.

In response, the government explained that it has no intention of making any changes to the gaming tax rates, which are currently set at up to 5% of casino profits (in addition to the regular tax rate, amounting to 35%).

The government, according to Chan, noted that the two taxes account for almost 40% of casino profits and are the highest tax rates in force in any jurisdiction where casino activities are legal, remarking that there is no margin to increase these further.

The members of the executive also refused to link a fixed percentage of tax receipts to any specific budget item, saying that the government wants the discretionary

RENATO MARQUES



power to allocate tax funds "according to the need."

"Some members wanted more money dedicated to social welfare or a fixed percentage solely dedicated to this. But the government says it has no intention to do that, explaining that the law needs to be flexible. [...] Nonetheless, the government can exercise this management of resources [funds] from the income pool, allotting more or less to social welfare [when] it is needed," the president said.

The current law states that gaming concessionaires must make an annual contribution of up to 2% of gross income from gaming activities "in favor of a public foundation that aims to promote, develop and study cultural, social, economic, educational, scientific, academic and philanthropic activities," as well as another "annual contribution of up to 3% of gross income for urban development, tourism promotion and social welfare."

While the 2% contribution goes directly to the Macao Foundation fund, the 3% contributes to ge-

neral revenue, and the executive wants both aspects unchanged in the new law.

Yesterday's meeting was the tenth session of the committee that is analyzing the bill in detail, and the sixth with the government present. Another meeting is scheduled for tomorrow, with Chan ai-

ming to have the law approved on its final reading before the expiration of the current gaming licenses — that is, by June 26.

On a previous occasion, commenting on the committee's progress, Chan hinted that the review of the bill could be ready to table at the plenary by mid-April.

COMMITTEE SKIPS DETAILED EXAMINATION OF JUNKET PROVISIONS

DURING yesterday's meeting of the Second Standing Committee, one of the items under discussion was Article 23, which regulates and defines the role of gaming promoters (also known as junket operators). Although the article will be further discussed at tomorrow's meeting, the committee president Chan Chak Mo hinted that the committee will not dedicate much more time to the matter, since there is another forthcoming piece of legislation which will specifically regulate junkets.

Nonetheless, provisions in the gaming law continue to enforce the rule that each concessionaire can only partner with one junket operator at any given time, and is responsible for all junket activities operating under their roof. It is stated clearly that VIP rooms and other junket-operated facilities cannot be on separate premises from those of the gaming concessionaire. Last week Chan foreshadowed that the new law would be a simple in its provisions and should be passed before the end of the legislative year, which ends on August 15.

IAM DUMPS PALLET OF MILK AFTER CORONAVIRUS FOUND ON OUTER WRAPPING

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has destroyed another pallet of milk from Hong Kong yesterday, after detecting SARS-CoV-2 on the outer plastic wrapping of the cargo. The bureau did not disclose how much milk was scrapped, although another batch of milk destroyed on March 1 was reported by the bureau as weighing 720kg. The bureau said that it regularly sanitizes incoming cargo but did not explain why this batch of milk was destroyed rather than sanitized.

NATURE CONSERVATION EDUCATION ACTIVITIES OPEN

An exhibition featuring information about old trees is now open, running until May 29, on the fourth floor of the Iao Hon Market Shopping Building. Entry is free-of-charge and the exhibition is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday. It features information on the identification of old trees, the oldest trees in Macau and relevant historical knowledge. Meanwhile, regular activities are being held on the promenade of the Taipa Wetland Reserve to familiarize the public with the importance of conserving wetlands, dubbed "the world's kidneys" to highlighting their role in naturally filtering waste. The 41st Macau Green Week will be held between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., March 20 at the reserve.

GAMING

Major investments from concessionaires will require CE approval

RENATO MARQUES

UNDER the new gaming law, future gaming concessionaires must notify the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, of any major investments and seek the CE's approval before proceeding. The provision applies if investments or policy-related decisions alter the original investment plan submitted as part of the concessionaire's bid for the license.

This was one of the points which drew the attention of the Second Standing Com-

mittee of the Legislative Assembly which is reviewing the bill in detail.

The provision, Number 11 of Article 22, says that concessionaires must "compulsorily inform the Chief Executive of decisions on major financial initiatives with a value greater than one provided in the concession contracts, before carrying them out."

The committee president, Chan Chak Mo, noted that, although such provisions are not new, it has raised some questions about the reasons which justify such an autho-

rization from the CE to make higher investments than initially expected.


Government representatives justified the inclusion with the need to verify both the purpose of the investment as well as to ensure that the concessionaire has sufficient economic capacity to bear such an endeavor.

"According to the government, if this [additional investment] involves a grounded commercial decision this can be authorized by the CE, but the government needs to verify if they have



or [do not have] enough economic capacity," Chan said. He added that a failure to inform the CE could result in a fine ranging between MOP2 million and MOP5 million or, in more severe situations, even the cancellation of the concession.

"Maybe the government can even revoke the license if it is considered [that the non-communicated investment] constitutes an infringement of the concession contract. It will depend on each case," the president said.







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Prosperity Indices expected to rise from February to May

ANTHONY LAM

THE Macau Economic Association (MEA) has estimated that the Prosperity Indices will see rise in the period from February to May, according to a statement released by the association.

The MEA issues monthly sta-

tements alongside its estimates for the Prosperity Index. It also announces the figures for months the indices of which have been confirmed.

Its latest estimates for the city's Prosperity Indices range from 2.8 points in February to 3.0 points in May. Despite the estimated rise, the indices will still be within the

unsatisfactory range.

The Prosperity Index for January has now been confirmed at 2.8 points.

The MEA noted several uncertainties surrounding the recovery of the city's economy. It noted that, despite a slight slowing in the rise of Covid-19 cases around the world, tourists remain wary of

travel because of unstable pandemic conditions in nearby regions, keeping Macau's tourist arrival counts at a relatively low level.

In addition, the share prices of the six casino operators, which are significant in determining the city's Prosperity Index, recently plummeted, dampening the forecasts of the Prosperity Indices.

Another factor is that demand for labor is still running low, with the local unemployment rate rising for three months in a row. Combined with weak consumer confidence in mainland China, the indices for the first two months of the year were calculated to be 2.8 points.

External uncertainties, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, are also affecting the city's economic recovery. These affect energy, food and major resources, as both countries are large exporters of goods. After the outbreak of war, prices for food, metal and energy have gone up, the MEA noted, causing global concern about inflation.

The invasion has also caused fluctuations in the price of petroleum, which went up to USD139 per barrel for a period of time. The US Consumer Price Index for February, meanwhile, has increased 7.9% year-on-year and 0.4% month-on-month, a height not reached in four decades.

News about U.S. plans to increase interest rates to 0.5%, if realized, will certainly affect Macau's own interest rates and flow of funds.

With an economy heavily reliant on imports, the MEA expects that global instability will eventually impact Macau's economy.

Moreover, as Macau relies heavily on tourists from Guangdong and Hong Kong, the new outbreaks of Covid-19 in these places are certain to affect Macau's tourism industry.

The MEA therefore estimates that the city's Prosperity Indices will remain at an unsatisfactory level.

MAN FALLS TO DEATH AT CONSTRUCTION SITE

A man has died yesterday after jumping from the roof of a building still under construction near the Ferreira do Amaral Plaza, the Judiciary Police (PJ) have confirmed.

According to a statement issued by the police, the security force was notified by the Fire Services Bureau (CB) at 9:32 a.m. yesterday of an incident in which a man was standing on the periphery of the under-construction Treasure Island Resort World Hotel and Shopping Center. The CB requested the police deploy its negotiation team to assist with the situation.

Upon arriving at the scene, the PJ negotiator began communicating with the man immediately, attempting to persuade him to return to safety.

The situation became a stalemate when the man showed no sign of being convinced.

CB rescuers attempted to grab him, but were not successful.

He was later found on the bamboo scaffolding between the 13th and 14th floors, showing no signs of life when paramedics reached him. He was later certified dead at the government hospital.

Police said that his identity was not yet clear.

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) encourages residents to be aware of their psychological and emotional state as well as that of their relatives' and friends'. For support, residents can call Caritas' Life Hope hotline (28525777) or IAS' counseling hotline (28261126). **AL**

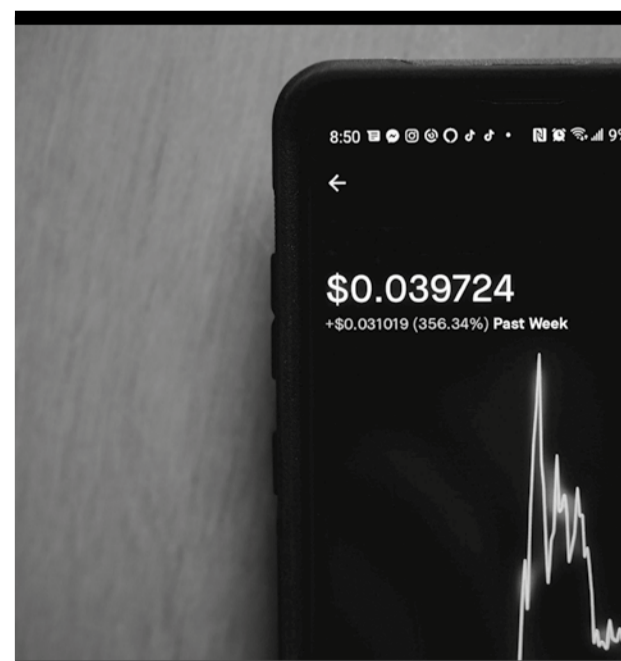
CRIME RELENTLESS SCAMS IN ONLINE INVESTMENTS

RENATO MARQUES

A 43-year-old local woman has become the latest to have fallen victim to an online investment scam. In a report filed with the Judiciary Police, the woman claimed to have lost the equivalent of MOP1,620,400 in investments made through a mobile application called "Lexin.fun."

She told the PJ that she was introduced to the app via a man she met on social media. He convinced her that she could make a lot of profit through the app, which offered a high return on investment.

From January this year she started to invest in an account she created on the app. Over the course



of three months she deposited on several occasions a total of RMB1,213,000 plus HKD80,000.

March 10 she opened

the account to check on the progress of her investment, and she discovered that her account balance was only US48 cents.

She also realized that she had lost all contact with the person who had convinced her to invest in the app originally.

In a different case, the PJ reported that a 42-year-old non-resident man had also fallen victim to a similar scam, this time by using an app that offered cash loans up to RMB69,000.

The man put all his data in an online form and submitted an application for a RMB53,000 loan but got no response.

A few days later he contacted the app's customer service and was told that there was some inconsistency in his data and that his loan application had been frozen.

He was then asked to deposit 50% of the loan requested (RMB26,500) in an account through the app. After making the deposit, he was never contacted again. He lost the RMB26,500.

DIPLOMACY

CHINA SAYS IT'S 'IMPARTIAL' ON UKRAINE, DENIES AIDING RUSSIA

CHINA yesterday said its stance on the Ukraine conflict is "completely objective, impartial and constructive," and repeated accusations the U.S. is spreading misinformation over reports Beijing has responded positively to a Russian request for military supplies.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian's comments came after U.S. adviser Jake Sullivan and senior Chinese foreign policy adviser Yang Jiechi met in Rome earlier, with the Biden administration increasingly concerned that China is using the Ukraine war to advance Beijing's long-term interest in its competition with the United States.

Also yesterday, the European Union ambassador to China, Nicolas Chapuis, called on China to support Ukraine. "There can be no so-called neutrality," he said.

Speaking to reporters at a daily briefing, Zhao said the "U.S. has created and spread disinformation ... This is not only unprofessional, but also immoral and irresponsible."

"What the U.S. should do is to deeply reflect on the role it has played in the development and evolving of the Ukraine crisis, and do something practical to ease the tension in Ukraine," he said, in a nod to China's contention that Russia was provoked by NATO's expansion and threats to its security.

At his meeting with Yang, Sullivan sought clarity on Beijing's posture, warning the Chinese



Zhao Lijian, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee (left) meets with U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Rome

anew that assistance for Russia — including helping it avert sanctions imposed by the U.S.-led bloc — would be costly for them.

The Kremlin has denied reports it requested Chinese military equipment for use in the war.

In keeping with Russian preferences, Zhao has referred to the war as the "Ukraine issue." Beijing also opposes sanctions that are pummeling the Russian economy.

Zhao repeated assertions that China was "deeply grieved" by "the situation today," and said it was committed to promoting peace talks.

"China's position and statement on the Ukraine issue is completely objective, impartial and constructive," Zhao said. "We have a clear goal, that is to promote the de-escalation of the situation and end the conflict as soon as possible."

Zhao also said a third batch of humanitarian aid sent by China for Ukraine arrived in Poland yesterday [Macau time].

In his comments, the EU's Chapuis urged China to support Ukraine and "help Europe to stop the war."

"We really call upon all our Chi-

nese friends to name the aggressor and to stand by the victim," the ambassador said at a roundtable hosted by the Center for China and Globalization, a Beijing-based thinktank, the Associated Press reported.

TAIWAN AND THE CHINA-US CONSENSUS

According to Xinhua, both sides conducted candid, in-depth and constructive communication over China-U.S. relations, as well as international and regional issues of common concern.

The two sides agree to jointly

implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state, increase understanding, manage differences, expand consensus and strengthen cooperation, so as to accumulate conditions for bringing China-U.S. relations back to the track of sound and steady development.

Yang, also director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee, said the implementation of the consensus between the two heads of state is the most important task for China-U.S. relations.

He said that Chinese President Xi Jinping has proposed mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation as the three principles in developing China-U.S. relations in the new era, which has charted the course for the development of the bilateral ties.

U.S. President Joe Biden responded positively with such important commitments as that the United States does not seek a new Cold War or to change China's system, nor will it oppose China through strengthening alliances, support "Taiwan independence," or seek confrontation with China, Yang said as cited by Xinhua.

The Chinese side always views and handles bilateral relations in accordance with the three principles put forth by President Xi, Yang said, expressing his hope that the U.S. side can truly deliver on President Biden's promises.

Yang expounded on China's solemn position on issues related to Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, pointing out that these issues concern China's core interests and are China's internal affairs that allow no foreign interference. Any attempt to use these issues to suppress China will fail, he said.

MDT/AGENCIES

WAR GAMES

Japan-US marine combat drills held amid China, Russia worry

JAPANESE and U.S. Marines had their first airborne landing and combat training together yesterday near Mt. Fuji as the two allies strengthen military cooperation amid growing maritime activity by China and Russia in the regional seas.

Japan has been expanding its defense budget and capability for about a decade and is now revising its key national security strategy in the face of threats from China, North Korea and now Russia.

Yesterday, 400 troops from Japan's Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade and 600 U.S. Marines based on Japan's southern island of Okinawa jointly practiced



An MV-22 Osprey is seen in a joint military helicopter borne operation drill between Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and U.S. Marines at Higashi Fuji range in Gotemba, southwest of Tokyo

landing and combat operations in a scenario of an enemy invasion of a remote

Japanese island, using tilt-rotor Ospreys, amphibious armored vehicles and ar-

tilleries such as M777.

The exercise comes at a time when Russia's invasion of Ukraine has intensified worries about what could happen in East Asia, where China's growing assertiveness has escalated tension around Taiwan.

While Japan has shifted its security focus to the southwest, it also faces Russia's growing naval activity and its increased cooperation with China.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said the Japanese navy spotted a fleet of six Russian warships Monday passing the Soya Strait between Hokkaido and Sakhalin as part of Russia's major naval exercises,

days after another Russian fleet crossed the Tsugaru Strait between Aomori on the northern tip of Japan's main island and Hokkaido.

He said Russia also conducted a land-to-air missile firing last week on the Russian-held Kuril islands, which Japan also claims. The dispute over the islands Moscow took at the end of World War II has prevented Japan and Russia from signing a peace treaty.

"Russia's military has been escalating abnormal naval drills in areas including the Okhotsk in sync with their invasion of Ukraine," Matsuno said. "We told Russia we are watching its intensifying military activity

with grave concern."

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has repeatedly pledged to fundamentally strengthen Japan's defense power, including considering possessing a controversial preemptive strike capability. Japan has purchased American fighter jets, missile defense systems and other arsenals to increase interoperability as the two sides increasingly work together.

Yesterday's drill was part of a three-week joint exercise aimed at advancing interoperability between the allies to strengthen their deterrence and response capability, defense officials said.

MDT/AP

PUTIN'S WAR

Kyiv under fire; three EU nation leaders to visit

ANDREA ROSA, KYIV

RUSSIA'S relentless bombardment of Ukraine edged closer to central Kyiv yesterday, with a series of strikes hitting a residential neighborhood as the leaders of three European Union countries planned a bold visit to Ukraine's embattled capital in a show of support.

Shortly before dawn, large explosions thundered across Kyiv from what Ukrainian authorities said was artillery strikes. The shelling ignited a huge fire and a frantic rescue effort in a 15-story apartment building in a western district of the city. At least one person was killed in the blast.

Shockwaves from an explosion also damaged the entry to a downtown subway station that has been used as a bomb shelter. City authorities tweeted an image of the blown-out facade, saying trains would no longer stop at the station.

As Russia stepped up its assault on Kyiv, the leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia announced they would travel to Ukraine's capital yesterday on a European Union mission to show support for the country.

"The aim of the visit is to express the European Union's unequivocal support for Ukraine and its freedom and independence," Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala said in a tweet.

He will be joined by Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who is Poland's deputy prime minister for security and the leader of the conservative ruling party.

Russian and Ukrainian negotiators also planned to hold a second day of talks as Russia's invasion of Ukraine entered its 20th day. The Red Cross and the United Nations refugee agency say millions of people face food and medicine shortages along with the immediate conflict threats of shelling and air attacks.

OVER THREE MILLION FLED UKRAINE

The International Organization for Migration reported that the number of people who have fled Ukraine since Russia invaded on Feb. 24 passed 3 million. The U.N. has described the flood of people crossing into Poland and other neighboring countries as Europe's biggest refugee crisis since World War II.

When Russia launched the war

nearly three weeks ago, fear of an imminent invasion gripped the Ukrainian capital, and residents slept in subway stations or crammed onto trains to flee. But as the Russian offensive bogged down, Kyiv saw a relative lull.

Fighting has intensified on the city's outskirts in recent days, and sporadic air raid sirens ring out around the capital.

Early morning artillery strikes hit the Svyatoshynskiy district of western Kyiv, adjacent to the suburb of Irpin, which has seen some of the worst battles of the war.

Flames shot out of the 15-story apartment building and smoke choked the air as firefighters climbed ladders to rescue people. The assault blackened several floors of the building, ripped a hole in the ground outside and blew out windows in neighboring apartment blocks.

A firefighter at the scene confirmed one person had died and that several had been rescued, but others remained inside as rescuers tried to reach them.

A 10-story apartment building in the Podilsky district of Kyiv, north of the government quarter, also was damaged by unspecified ammunition. Russian forces also stepped up strikes overnight on Irpin and the northwest Kyiv suburbs of Hostomel and Bucha, said the head of the capital region, Oleksiy Kuleba.

"Many streets (in those areas) have been turned into a mush of steel and concrete. People have been hiding for weeks in basements, and are afraid to go out even for evacuations," Kuleba said on Ukrainian television.

Russian forces also stepped up their attacks on Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv in the east, with more than 60 strikes overnight, according to regional administration chief Oleh Sinehubov.

"Fires are raging in the city, and there are not enough firefighters," he said.

The strikes hit the city's historical center, including the main marketplace and Gagarin Avenue, a major thoroughfare.

Rescuers have pulled out "dozens of bodies of civilian residents," from the ruins of destroyed apartment buildings, he said on Ukrainian television.

ZELENSKY EXTENDS MARTIAL LAW

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is seeking to extend martial law until April 24 and to require men ages 18 to

60 to stay in the country to fight. Zelenskyy submitted the extension in a bill to parliament, which is expected to vote on it this week.

Talks between Russian and Ukrainian negotiators were due to resume today [Macau time], after failing to make a breakthrough — or to break down — on Monday. The two sides had expressed some optimism about the negotiations, which Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak said would discuss "peace, ceasefire, immediate withdrawal of troops & security guarantees."

Russia's military is bigger and better equipped than Ukraine's, but its troops have faced stiffer-than-expected resistance, bolstered by arms supplied by the West.

U.S. officials said Russian troops made little progress on the ground in recent days and were still about 15 kilometers from the center of Kyiv as of Monday. The Pentagon said Russian forces have launched more than 900 missiles but not taken control of the air above Ukraine.

U.S. administration officials alleged that China had signaled to Moscow that it would be willing to provide both military support in Ukraine and financial backing to help stave off effects of Western sanctions.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan warned China against helping Russia during a meeting in Rome on Monday with a senior Chinese diplomat. The Kremlin denied asking China for military equipment to use in Ukraine.

With each day, the human cost of the grinding war continues to rise. The Ukrainian general prosecutor's office released details of two deadly Russian attacks that took place Monday: an artillery strike that hit a university and open-air market in the northern city of Chernihiv, killing 10, and the shooting of a 65-year-old woman on a bus that was evacuating civilians from a Kyiv suburb.

The number of people killed in a Russian rocket attack on a TV tower in western Ukraine on Monday rose to 19, authorities in the Rivne region said yesterday. The Rivne regional government posted on its Facebook page that 19 people were killed and nine were injured in the strike on the TV tower in Antopol, a village that is about 160 kilometers from the border of NATO member Poland.

A Russian airstrike near a Ukrainian checkpoint caused extensive damage to a downtown Kyiv neighborhood, killing one



Firefighters work in an apartment building damaged by shelling in Kyiv

person, Ukraine's emergency agency said.

Kateryna Lot said she was in her apartment as her child did homework when they heard a loud explosion and ran to take shelter.

"The child became hysterical. Our windows and the balcony were shattered. Part of the floor fell down," she said. "It was very, very scary."

In an area outside Kyiv, Fox News reporter Benjamin Hall was injured while reporting and was hospitalized, the network said.

GLIMPSE OF HOPE IN MARIUPOL

There was a rare glimmer of hope in the encircled port city of Mariupol after a convoy of 160 civilian cars left along a designated humanitarian route, the city council reported Monday. Over the past 10 days or so, the lethal siege has pulverized homes and other buildings and left people desperate for food, water, heat and medicine.

Previous attempts to evacuate civilians and deliver humanitarian aid to the southern city of 430,000 were thwarted by fighting.

Ukraine's military said it repelled an attempt Monday to take control of Mariupol by Russian forces, who were forced to retreat.

Satellite images from Maxar Technologies showed fires burning across the city, with many high-rise apartment buildings heavily damaged or destroyed.

Ukraine claims its forces have killed 150 Russian troops and destroyed two Russian tanks in the battle for Mariupol.

The Kremlin-backed leader of the Russian region of Chechnya said on a messaging app that Chechen fighters were spearheading the offensive on Mariupol.

Elsewhere, the Russian military said 20 civilians in the separatist-controlled city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine were killed by a ballistic missile launched by Ukrainian forces. The claim could not be independently verified.

In Russia, the live main evening news program on state television was briefly interrupted by a woman who walked into the studio holding a poster against the war. The OVD-Info website that monitors political arrests identified her as a Channel 1 employee and said she was taken into police custody.

The U.N. refugee agency said Sunday that it had recorded at least 596 civilian deaths since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, though it believes the true toll is much higher. **MDT/AP**



Putin's war may lead to rethinking of US defense of Europe

ROBERT BURNS,
WASHINGTON

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine and his push to upend the broader security order in Europe may lead to a historic shift in American thinking about defense of the continent. Depending on how far Putin goes, this could mean a buildup of U.S. military power in Europe not seen since the Cold War.

The prospect of a bigger U.S. military footprint in Europe is a remarkable turnaround from just two years ago.

In 2020, President Donald Trump ordered thousands of American troops out of Germany as part of his argument that Europeans were undeserving allies. Just days after taking office, President Joe Biden stopped the withdrawal before it could start, and his administration has stressed NATO's importance even as Biden identifies China as the main long-term threat to U.S. security.

Then came Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We are in a new era of sustained confrontation with Russia," says Alexander Vershbow, a former U.S. ambassador to Russia and former deputy secretary-general of NATO. He argues that the United States, in cooperation with NATO allies, will need to establish a more muscular stance to deal with a more threatening Russia. That is especially so in Eastern Europe, where Russia's

proximity poses a problem for the three Baltic nations that are former Soviet states.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was flying to Europe today [Macau time] for his second recent round of Ukraine consultations at NATO headquarters in Brussels. He also will travel to two Eastern European NATO countries — Slovakia, which borders Ukraine, and Bulgaria, which does not. After a NATO meeting last month, Austin visited two other allies on the eastern flank — Poland and Lithuania.

In just the past two months, the U.S. presence in Europe has jumped from about 80,000 troops to about 100,000, which is nearly as many as were there in 1997 when the United States and its NATO allies began an expansion of the alliance that Putin says threatens Russia and must be reversed. By comparison, in 1991, the year the Soviet Union dissolved, the United States had 305,000 troops in Europe, including 224,000 in Germany alone, according to Pentagon records. The number then dropped steadily, reaching 101,000 in 2005 and about 64,000 as recently as 2020.

This year's U.S. troop additions are billed as temporary, but there's no certainty how long they'll stay. They include an armored brigade of the 1st Infantry Division, totaling about 4,000 soldiers, to Germany, and a similar-size infantry brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, to Poland. Numerous

Army headquarters units also have been sent to Poland and Germany. Austin also sent F-35A fighter jets to NATO's eastern flank and Apache attack helicopters to the Baltic states.

A recent Pentagon review of its worldwide military presence concluded that troop levels and positions in Europe were about right. But in testimony before a House committee several days after Putin invaded Ukraine, Mara Karlin, a senior Pentagon official who oversaw the 2021 review, said that conclusion will have to be reconsidered.

The Pentagon must "ensure that we've got deterrence of Russia and that we can absolutely 150% say that NATO is safe and secure," not just in light of Russia's invasion but for the longer term, she said March 1.

Putin's war in Ukraine has prompted a rethinking of regional defense needs not just by Washington but also some European allies, including Germany, which last month broke with a longstanding policy of not exporting weapons to conflict zones by sending anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to Ukraine. Germany also committed to a much bigger defense budget.

"A new reality," Chancellor Olaf Scholz declared.

Putin has not only demanded that Ukraine disavow its ambition to join NATO but also insisted the alliance withdraw its forces from NATO's eastern flank — demands the U.S. and NATO reject as counter

to the fundamental rights of nations to decide their foreign relations for themselves and of NATO's basic commitment to provide security for all members equally.

If Russia were to take control of the entirety of Ukraine, it would be on the border of additional NATO countries, including Romania, Slovakia and Hungary. Poland and Lithuania already share a land border with the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, headquarters of the Baltic Fleet of the Russian Navy. There is concern that Putin could decide to make a play for control of that 60-mile-long land corridor, known as the Suwalki Gap, that connects Kaliningrad to Belarus.

Vershbow, the former deputy NATO secretary-general who is now a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council, recommends that the U.S. and NATO move beyond their current reliance on light, battalion-size battle groups in Eastern Europe to instead deploy heavier, larger and permanent forces there.

Such a transition on NATO's eastern flank is just the sort of thing Putin says is a threat to Russia and says he will no longer tolerate. He has demanded a return to the arrangements that existed in 1997, when the NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed.

In that document, Moscow acknowledged that NATO would go ahead with plans to invite Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to join the alliance. Notably, the document also said that "in the foreseeable security environment," NATO would forgo "additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces on the territory of new members."

Does that foreclose the option of a U.S. troop buildup in Eastern Europe? No, says a new report by the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. It argues that the restrictions on NATO's military presence in Eastern Europe as described in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act are irrelevant in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We are in new, dangerous territory — a period of sustained tensions, military moves and counter-moves, and major intermittent military crises in the Euro-Atlantic area that will ebb and flow for at least the remainder of the 2020s, if not longer," the report says. **MDT/AP**

this day in history



1953 MARSHAL TITO MAKES HISTORIC VISIT TO LONDON



Marshal Josef Tito of Yugoslavia has arrived in Britain, the first Communist head of state to visit the country.

The Duke of Edinburgh, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden greeted him at Westminster at the start of his five-day visit.

He arrived by sea from Yugoslavia in the naval vessel Galeb (Seagull). He was then brought up river under Royal Navy escort.

Marshal Tito was invited to Britain last September by Mr Eden who was visiting Yugoslavia to strengthen ties between the two nations.

Talks this week are expected to centre on the aftermath of the recent death of Josef Stalin, who expelled Yugoslavia from the Cominform group of communist nations in 1948 for failing to adhere to Soviet policies.

Since that time Yugoslavia has come to rely on Western aid for certain foods and armaments.

They will also discuss ways of achieving a solution to the problem of the disputed region of Trieste, whose administration was divided last year between the United Nations and Yugoslavia.

Security was tight as the occasion has been marked by a great deal of controversy, especially among those Yugoslav exiles who regard Marshal Tito as a dictator.

Spectators were kept well away from the River Thames embankment where the marshal disembarked this afternoon.

He shook hands with the Duke and made a short speech in faltering English greeting the people of Britain and expressing hope of mutual co-operation, understanding and peace.

"I wish to assure the peoples of Great Britain that they should consider the people of my country as their staunch allies because the people of the new Yugoslavia are striving towards the same ends as the people of Great Britain," he said.

He then inspected the Guard of Honour and was taken in a bullet-proof car escorted by police motorcyclists to Downing Street.

Later in the afternoon he laid a wreath at the Cenotaph and saluted Britain's war dead.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Marshal Josef Tito formed Communist Yugoslavia in 1945.

He maintained Yugoslavia's independence from the USSR and developed his own form of communism with power decentralised to workers' councils.

He dealt with nationalist aspirations by creating a federation of six republics: Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia.

But ethnic tensions were never far from the surface. Although the federation held together for 10 years after Tito's death in 1980, it fell apart rapidly after Slovenia's declaration of independence.

In 1954 the city of Trieste in the so-called Free Territory of Trieste and the northern zone of the region were returned to Italy. The rest of the area became part of Yugoslavia.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You may not see your situation clearly. Travel will entice you; however, a tendency to overspend is quite possible. Your lack of interest in your partner is a problem.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Relatives may not be telling you the whole truth about a family situation. Plan to do things with your faithful pet or with youngsters who have interesting hobbies.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 Entertainment should include your whole family. Don't be too open or put your faith in unreliable coworkers. You might find group functions tiring.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Get out and about. Be sure to pay attention to your bank account. You are best to be discreet. Make plans to meet again in the near future.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 This will not be the day to lend money to friends or family. You need to look into some private matters before you can proceed with your plans.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 A residential move may be necessary to get a better job. Your professional attitude will not go unnoticed. Travel should be on your agenda.
 LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Opportunities for romance will develop through activities with large groups. Do not invest in joint ventures. Your ideas may be good, but they aren't necessarily right for everyone.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Put your emotional energy into passion not anxiety. Be sure that you lay your cards on the table. Work quietly on your own and you will forge ahead.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Look into real estate. This is a great day to start that new health regimen you've been talking about. Do your work at home, if you can. Someone may be trying to make you look bad.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You can make money if you're willing to push your ideas on those in a position to support your efforts. Try not to be too aggressive or judgmental when talking to your mate.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Don't let your stubborn nature get the better of you. Partnerships could prove to be lucrative. You will benefit through hidden assets and property investments.	 PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 Take time to catch up on overdue correspondence. Be careful to avoid wrong doings. Be prepared to make changes to your personal documents.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	5	12	cloudy
Changchun	-5	0	cloudy
Chengdu	18	25	rain
Chongqing	20	29	rain
Fuzhou	17	26	overcast
Guangzhou	19	26	cloudy
Guiyang	13	23	rain
Haikou	22	29	cloudy
Hangzhou	14	29	overcast
Harbin	-5	0	cloudy
Hefei	13	28	overcast
Nanjing	13	28	cloudy
Shanghai	12	26	overcast
Taipei	19	23	cloudy
Wuhan	15	27	showers
Hong Kong	19	22	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	12	overcast
Frankfurt	5	16	overcast
Paris	9	21	overcast
London	2	13	rain
New York	8	16	overcast

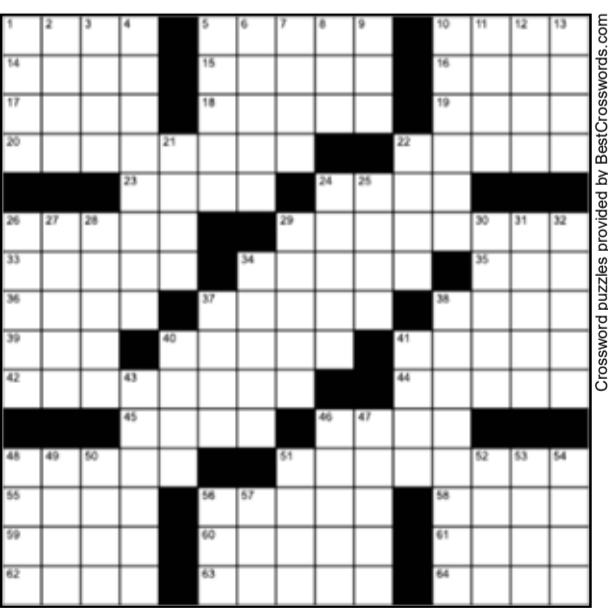
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Latin lesson word; 5- Sun-dried brick; 10- Em, e.g.; 14- Learned; 15- Back in; 16- Speaker of Cooperstown; 17- Smell or fragrance; 18- Disdain; 19- Ciao; 20- Authentic; 22- Conger catcher; 23- Scottish loch, home to a monster; 24- Juniors, perhaps; 26- Collection of maps, Titan of Greek mythology; 29- Strangle; 33- Food and water; 34- Defiles; 35- Swiss river; 36- Title for Agatha Christie; 37- Diary bit; 38- End in ___ (draw); 39- That, in Tijuana; 40- Bothered; 41- Piece of French bread?; 42- Watchdog; 44- Everglades bird; 45- Jewish month; 46- Legal rights org.; 48- Portion; 51- Fit for relating; 55- Prefix with skeleton; 56- Vinegary prefix; 58- Tolerate; 59- Barbershop request; 60- Medicinal shrub; 61- Old Fords; 62- Bristle; 63- Fuji rival; 64- 3:00;

DOWN 1- Mil. truant; 2- Calf-length skirt; 3- Beginning; 4- Sing for; 5- Upbeat, in music; 6- Ship floors; 7- Oklahoma Native; 8- Turn up the heat!; 9- Long, long time; 10- Swear; 11- Orenburg's river; 12- Evening, informally; 13- Boris Godunov, for one; 21- Not as much; 22- Grandson of Adam; 24- Tee, e.g.; 25- Air France destination; 26- Aconagua's range; 27- Mock, annoy; 28- Yellowish citrus fruit; 29- Bottom line; 30- Golden Horde member; 31- Singer Frankie; 32- Construct; 34- Twisted expression?; 37- Gas burner or Sicilian volcano; 38- Questionable; 40- Assistant, particularly to heads of state; 41- Cut down; 43- Puget Sound city; 46- MetLife competitor; 47- Loose outer garment; 48- Teachers' favorites; 49- As to; 50- Prepare for publication; 51- Look after; 52- Second letter of the Greek alphabet; 53- Scottish boys; 54- Formerly, formerly; 56- Inquire of; 57- Bus, bigwig;

Yesterday's solution


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



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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	




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AD

CHINESE VIRUS CASES CLIMB, RAISE THREAT OF TRADE DISRUPTION

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINESE authorities yesterday tightened anti-virus controls at ports, raising the risk of trade disruptions after some auto and electronics factories shut down as the government fights coronavirus outbreaks.

Stock prices in China and Hong Kong sank for a second day following the shutdown on Monday of Shenzhen, a tech and finance hub adjacent to Hong Kong in the south, and Changchun, an auto center in the northeast. Bus service to Shanghai, China's business capital and biggest city, was suspended.

China's case numbers are low compared with other major countries or Hong Kong. But authorities are enforcing a "zero tolerance" strategy that aims to keep the virus out of the country. It has temporarily shut down major cities to find every infected person.

The restrictions have wider potential ramifications, coming at a time when the global economy is under pressure from Russia's war on Ukraine, surging oil prices and weak consumer demand.

"We can think of no risk to the global economy, excluding nuclear warfare, that is greater than the risk of a COVID outbreak in China that shuts industrial production," Carl B. Weinberg of High-Frequency Economics said in a report. "Uncountable manufacturing supply chains pass through China."

Economists say for now, smartphone makers and other industries can use factories and suppliers in other parts of China. But a bigger threat looms if business is disrupted at ports in Shenzhen, Shanghai or nearby Ningbo.



They link Chinese factories at the center of global manufacturing networks with foreign suppliers and markets. A one-month slowdown at Shenzhen's Yantian Port last year caused a backlog of thousands of shipping containers and sent shockwaves through global supply chains.

"The risk here is whether COVID will be found at Yantian Port," said Iris Pang, chief China economist for ING. "If the port has to be suspended, it will affect a lot of electronic imports and exports."

There was no sign of major disruption, but port operators announced curbs on face-to-face contact with shippers and sailors.

The agency that manages the Shanghai port closed windows where customers submit documents and said that function would go online. It gave no indication cargo-handling or other opera-

tions were affected.

The port of Lianyungang, north of Shanghai, announced foreign sailors were barred from leaving ships or using the city to change crews.

Shenzhen suspended cross-border freight service at the Liantang crossing into Hong Kong. It said the Man Kam To crossing would be limited to handling fresh and live food to make sure Hong Kong gets adequate supplies.

The number of new cases reported yesterday on the Chinese mainland more than doubled to 3,507. Almost three-quarters were in Jilin province, where Changchun is located, with 2,601 cases.

Hong Kong, which reports separately, had 26,908 cases on Monday.

The Yantian Port tried to reassure customers operations were normal. A statement on its social

media account promised to "make every effort to ensure the smoothness and stability of this 'lifeline for port supply.'"

Stock prices fell after better-than-expected data on Chinese consumer spending and investment in February failed to dispel gloom about the shutdowns.

"There are plenty of storms blowing through China right now, not least the lockdown of Shenzhen," Jeffrey Halley of Oanda said in a report.

China, where the pandemic started in late 2019 in the central city of Wuhan, became the first major economy to rebound after Beijing closed factories, shops and offices to contain the disease.

This year, the ruling Communist Party's growth target is 5.5%. If achieved, that would be well below last year's 8.1% expansion. But forecasters consider it aggressive

at a time when construction, which supports millions of jobs, is in a slump due to a crackdown on debt in the real estate industry.

The ruling party is promising tax cuts for entrepreneurs and higher spending on building public works. That might help to boost consumer spending and cushion the economy from a slowdown in manufacturing.

The latest infection surge, blamed on a fast-spreading variant dubbed "stealth omicron," is challenging Beijing's pandemic strategy.

All businesses in Shenzhen and Changchun except those that supply food, fuel and other necessities were ordered to close. Bus and subway services were suspended. Millions of residents were told to undergo virus testing.

Anyone who wants to enter Shanghai, a city of 24 million people with auto factories, China's biggest stock exchange and offices of global companies, must be tested.

Elsewhere, the populous eastern province of Shandong had 106 new cases yesterday. Guangdong in the south, where Shenzhen is located, reported 48. Shanghai had nine and Beijing, six.

Jilin province, where Changchun is located, has barred residents from leaving the province and from traveling between cities within it.

Automakers Volkswagen and Toyota, iPhone assembler Foxconn and smaller companies have announced they are suspending production at some factories.

"We see disruptions to mechanical and electrical exports and services consumption," said Bank of American economists in a report yesterday. "The risk of broader lockdowns is increasing."

Volkswagen AG said its Changchun factories would shut down from Monday to Wednesday. It said the VW and Audi brands and component production would be affected. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Melco visits home for the elderly as part of 'kindness initiative'



Melco Resorts & Entertainment volunteers recently visited the Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) Coloane Ka Ao Elderly Nursing Home as part of its "Simple Acts of Kindness 2.0" initiative.

Lawrence Ho, chairman

and CEO of Melco, and Kent Wong, Melco's chief advisor, were joined by dozens of volunteers during the visit, according to a statement issued by the gaming operator.

After the Melco volunteers' performance for the elderly

residents, Ho played a board game with the seniors, learning first-hand how the game helps to exercise their cognitive skills.

After the visit, Ho and the volunteers went to Hac Sa Beach to help with a cleanup, clearing rubbish and debris. Ho remarked, "as a company that was born in Macau, it is crucial to give back to the community. When the pandemic hit in 2020, we launched 'Simple Acts of Kindness' to encourage colleagues to participate in volunteering. In 2020, over 8000 participants have taken part in volunteering [and] it makes me proud to see that, in 2021, that number has doubled to over 16,000."

MGM launches series of training programs



MGM has recently launched a series of diversified talent training programs, including a collaboration with the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) and Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) as co-organi-

zers, and the Macau Cuisine Association as a supporting organization, to roll out the "Tourism+" Cultural Diversity Development Exchange Initiative."

The scheme will include a series of strategic training programs intended to nurture

multi-talented industry practitioners and promote "Tourism+" synergy in Macau and the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

The initiative will endeavor to train workers with three key focuses, including the "Tourism+" Gastronomy Cultural Exchange for the development of the "Tourism + Food" cultural exchange platforms for the industry and institutions to further understand the attraction of gastronomic tourism.

The "Tourism+" Guangdong-Macau Synergy will host familiarization trips for GBA tourism practitioners, while "Tourism+" Inclusive GBA Travel will roll out activities promoting accessible travel for everyone in Macau.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

SLED DOG RACING

Iditarod finish nears with Minnesotan in commanding lead

MARK THIESSEN, ANCHORAGE

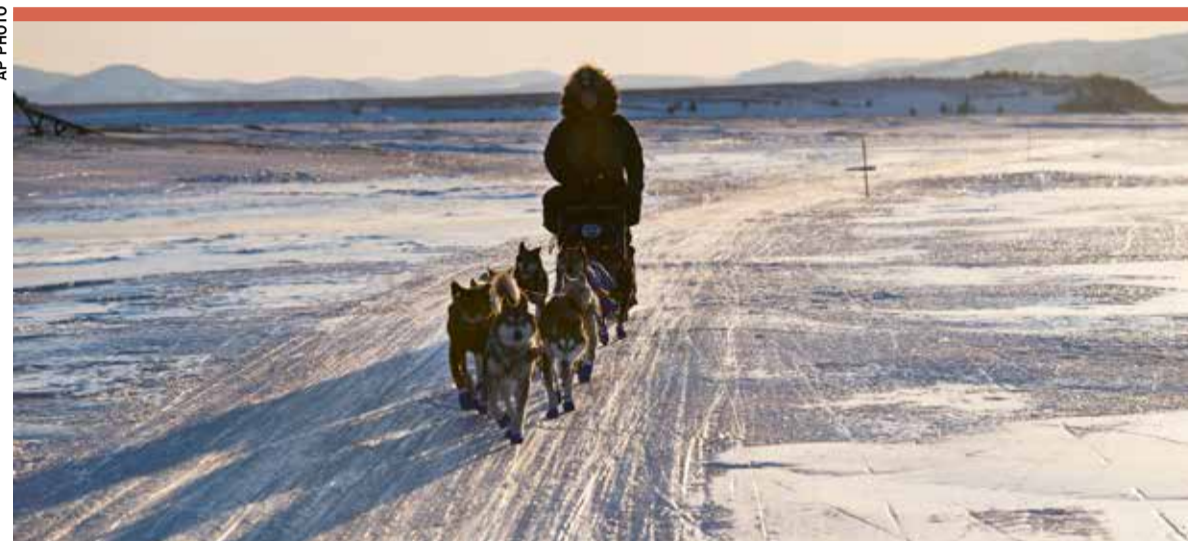
MUSHER Brent Sass was in the driver's seat, on track to win his first Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

Sass was the first musher yesterday to reach the checkpoint in Safety, which is only 22 miles from the finish line.

The 42-year-old native of Minnesota left the previous checkpoint in White Mountain Monday evening with a 2 1/2 hour lead over the defending champion, Dallas Seavey. All mushers must take a mandatory eight-hour break in White Mountain before making the final push for the finish in Nome. Safety is the last checkpoint before the finish line.

"We stuck to our game plan and ran our own race, and we weren't worried about anybody else around us," Sass told Anchorage television station KTUU during his layover.

For his part, Seavey was resig-



Veteran musher Aaron Burmeister rides on a mostly bare-ice stretch of trail during the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, as he reaches Unalakleet, Alaska

ned to runner-up status. He flatly told KTUU that he couldn't win unless something goes wrong for Sass.

"I haven't looked at the time, but isn't he like three hours ahead?" Seavey said.

Seavey was attempting to become the race's most decorated

musher. He and Rick Swenson are tied with the most Iditarod victories at five.

He was still able to joke, saying: "We've got a pretty solid lead over third."

The third place musher, Jessie Holmes, was about 50 miles behind Seavey.

The nearly 1,000-mile race across Alaska began March 6 just north of Anchorage. The route took mushers along Alaska's untamed and unforgiving wilderness, including two mountain ranges, the frozen Yukon River and Bering Sea ice along the state's western coastline.

This is the 50th running of the race, which started in 1973. This year's event began with 49 mushers, and five have dropped out along the trail.

Sass was the Iditarod's rookie of the year in 2012 when he finished 13th. The next year he fell back to 22nd place, before skipping the 2014 race.

In 2015 he was disqualified when race officials found he had an iPod Touch with him on the trail, a violation of race rules banning two-way communication devices because the iPod Touch could connect to the Internet. He said he was clueless, and wanted his fans to know he had no intention of cheating.

Sass placed 16th the following year before taking a three-year break from the Iditarod. In 2020, he placed fourth and was third last year.

Sass, who lives in the tiny area of Eureka, about a four-hour drive northwest of Fairbanks, had more success meanwhile in the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race.

He claimed titles in that 1,000-mile race between Fairbanks and Whitehorse, Yukon, in 2015, 2019 and 2020. This year, the race was shortened to smaller races on both sides of the border, with Sass winning both the 350-mile Alaska race and the 300-mile Canadian contest. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

CHINA, US STILL MAKING EFFORTS TO FIND A WAY TO GET ALONG

In his virtual summit with US President Joe Biden in November, President Xi Jinping expressed his willingness to build consensus and take active steps to move China-US relations forward based on the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation.

Biden, too, struck a positive note saying that the US does not seek to change China's system or seek confrontation with China, and it upholds its commitment to the one-China principle.

Yet while China has sought to improve relations since then by always looking at the larger picture, Washington has made little effort to hold true to Biden's words.

The US has continued to rally support from its allies and to confront China on many strategic and economic fronts with the aim of containing China's development, and it has frequently made waves in the Taiwan Straits and breached its commitment to the one-China policy.

Thanks to the discrepancies between what the US leader has said and what his administration is actually doing, cooperation between the two countries has stalled. Such an undesirable state of affairs can neither contribute to the development of bilateral ties nor the addressing of pressing global issues.

From climate change to denuclearization to the Ukraine crisis, there are many challenges on which the US and China could and should coordinate their stances.

As such, China-US relations go far beyond bilateral scope. It was therefore good to hear Monday's "intense" seven-hour talks between top Chinese diplomat Yang Jiechi and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Rome described as candid, in-depth and constructive.

Despite the two countries' troubled relations amid the increasingly complicated international environment, the meeting showed the two sides' willingness to maintain open lines of communication.

More encouraging still, they reportedly agreed on the need to increase mutual understanding, manage differences, expand consensus and strengthen cooperation, so as to navigate their relations onto a sound and steady development course. Whether the two sides can properly handle their differences and deepen cooperation will have a direct impact on the two countries and the world at large.

With the fighting still raging, Yang and Sullivan discussed the situation in Ukraine. Whether or not they can find some common ground on the issue is being widely viewed as a touchstone of whether China and the US, as the two largest economies in the world, can work together to play a bigger role in promoting global stability.

China-US cooperation may not solve all the problems, but few problems can be solved without China-US cooperation. Washington should abandon its attempts to reanimate the follies of the Cold War and work together with Beijing to promote peace and development.

The United Nations chief warned yesterday [Macau time] that Russia's war on Ukraine is holding "a sword of Damocles" over the global economy, especially poor developing countries that face skyrocketing food, fuel and fertilizer prices and are now seeing their breadbasket "being bombed."

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told reporters that "Russia and Ukraine represent more than half of the world's supply of sunflower oil and about 30 percent of the world's wheat" and that "grain prices have already exceeded those at the start of the

Arab Spring and the food riots of 2007-2008."

He told reporters that 45 African and least developed countries import at least one-third of their wheat from Ukraine and Russia, and 18 of them import at least 50%. These countries include Egypt, Congo, Burkina Faso, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, he said.

"All of this is hitting the poorest the hardest and planting the seeds for political instability and unrest around the globe," Guterres warned.



ANTI-WAR ACTIVIST INTERRUPTS LIVE RUSSIAN STATE TV NEWS SHOW

A live evening news program on Russia's state television channel was interrupted yesterday [Macau time] by a person who walked into the studio holding a poster protesting the war in Ukraine.

The moment was a risky protest in a country where independent media has been blocked or shuttered and it has become illegal to contradict the government's narrative of the war.

An anchor was speaking during the newscast when a woman appeared on camera behind her holding a sign with "no war" scrawled in English across the top, with a message in Russian below calling on people not to believe Russian propaganda.

Within seconds, the news program cut away to another scene.

Russia's state TV regularly amplifies the government line that says troops

entered Ukraine to save people from "neo-Nazis" and to defend Russians from a country that was preparing to attack. The invasion of Ukraine is being characterized in Russia as a "special military operation."

An independent human rights group that monitors political arrests identified the woman as Marina Ovsyannikova. The group, OVD-Info, posted on its website that Ovsyannikova, who identified herself as an employee of the station, was taken into police custody.

Ovsyannikova spoke out against the war in a video on OVD-Info's website.

"What is going on now is a crime," she said. "Russia is an aggressor country and Vladimir Putin is solely responsible for that aggression."

Speaking in a video address yesterday,

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy praised Ovsyannikova.

People in Russia have limited access to information from outside their country.

Russian President Vladimir Putin recently signed into law a measure that criminalizes the spread of information that is considered by the Kremlin to be "fake" news.

Media outlets and individuals who publish information that deviates from Putin's narrative are being targeted.

There have been blocks imposed on the BBC, the U.S. government-funded Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, German broadcaster Deutsche Welle and Latvia-based website Meduza.

Russia has also blocked social media sites like Twitter and Facebook. MDT/AP



Turkmenistan established a political dynasty yesterday, as authorities said the son of the Central Asian country's leader won its presidential election after an unusual vote-counting delay. Serdar Berdimukhamedov, 40, was the overwhelming favorite in Saturday's election to lead the isolated, gas-rich country and succeed his father, Gurbanguly (pictured). The central election commission said Serdar won 72.97% of the votes.

USA A dissident legal scholar who was jailed for two years in China after participating in the 1989 Tiananmen Square movement was killed this week in his law firm's office in New York, where he had settled after seeking asylum in the U.S., police said. Li Jinjin, 66, was stabbed to death in the city where he had long worked as an immigration lawyer. An arrest was made in his killing. Xiaoning Zhang, 25, was taken into custody and faces a murder charge.



USA Police said yesterday they arrested a suspected gunman who has been stalking homeless men asleep on the streets of New York City and Washington D.C., killing at least two people and wounding three others in less than two weeks. Law enforcement arrested the suspect in Washington, D.C., and he was being interviewed by police, the Metropolitan Police Department said on Twitter.



UK Chelsea is asking for its FA Cup game against Middlesbrough to be played without a crowd because the government won't allow it to sell any tickets under the terms of its license to operate after owner Roman Abramovich was sanctioned. Chelsea said it had been in "extensive discussions" with the office of financial sanctions implementations ahead of Saturday's away game.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Markus Schreiber



Foreign Fighters. A man carries combat gear as he leaves Poland to fight in Ukraine, at the border crossing in Medyka, Poland, early March.