



THE FUTURE OF SEVERAL DEPARTMENTS UNDER THE PUBLIC WORKS PORTFOLIO WILL SOON BE REVEALED, SECRETARY RAIMUNDO DO ROSÁRIO SAID YESTERDAY

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OUTBREAK IN ZHUHAI LEADS TO TESTING 10,000 PEOPLE FROM 7 LOCAL SCHOOLS

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CHINA SAYS MILITARY DEVELOPMENT OF ISLANDS WITHIN ITS RIGHTS

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AP PHOTO

Japanese were urged yesterday to conserve energy as the government warned of potential blackouts in the Tokyo region due to a shortfall in power generation after several coal-fired plants temporarily stopped generating electricity following an earthquake last week. The rare alert came as people were using more heat than usual due to snow and unusually cold weather for the early spring.

Dubai's main airport, the world's busiest for international travel, will overhaul one of its two runways for 45 days, starting in May, the operator said yesterday. The closure will likely lead to flight reductions ahead of the traditional start of the summer season. The shutdown of the northern runway — part of a project to upgrade the airfield to ensure “safety and efficient operations” — will begin on May 9 and last until June 22, the airport said.



AP PHOTO

Russia Imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny is facing a lengthy prison term on top of the one he is already serving in a trial Kremlin critics see as an attempt to keep President Vladimir Putin's most ardent foe in prison for as long as possible. Navalny, who is serving 2 1/2 years in a penal colony east of Moscow, has been charged with fraud and contempt of court. The prosecution accuses him of embezzling money that he and his foundation raised over the years and of insulting a judge during a previous trial.

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TRAFFIC

TWO PROMINENT ROAD ACCIDENTS IN 12 HOURS, SIX INJURED

ANTHONY LAM

YESTERDAY morning, at 8:22 a.m. a taxi crashed into a median strip in Taipa while transporting a passenger. She suffered mild injuries and was alrea-

dy discharged from the hospital, the police told the Times.

The crash was first revealed by a video posted on social media.

It showed the taxi traveling at speed along the right lane of Es-

trada Almirante Marques Espar-teiro from the Altira Hotel in the direction of the Sai Van Bridge. It remained on the right lane until the turn to the Nobre de Cavalho Bridge.

At the turn-off, it did not make

a right turn as required or indicated by the traffic road signal.

The vehicle in the middle lane tried to make a right turn, which is legally permitted at the location. However, as the taxi did not make the right turn as required, it

crashed into the road separator.

From a picture sent to the Times, the front airbags in the taxi were triggered.

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) was contacted for verification of the accident but could not be reached by press time.

About 9 p.m. Monday, a public bus also crashed against the curbs on the right side of the flyover off from the porte-cochere of the Sands Macao Hotel, injuring five people. The right side of the front of the bus was damaged.

DSPA receives first batch of 27 obsolete motorbikes

THE Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) received yesterday the first batch of motorbikes considered obsolete as part of the plan to replace old motorbikes, namely two-stroke engine mopeds, with electric-powered ones.

The first batch of 27 motorbikes was received yesterday of around 170 applications received, so far, by the DSPA.

The plan, which runs from March 1 until December 31 this year, aims to target between 2,550

and 7,650 motorcycles first registered on or before June 30, 2009, regardless of the engine type (two- or four-stroke).

According to the DSPA, the bureau is expediting the processing of the applications received as well as the approval process, noting that the aforementioned 27 cases are part of them.

The bureau reminds citizens that, according to the procedures after the delivery of the old vehicle, the owners have to request the licen-

sing of the new vehicles within 165 days of the reception of the notification of the financial support.

This notification should occur within 60 days from the confirmation of the vehicle withdrawal procedure.

The government's financial support for the plan is allocating a subsidy of 3,500 patacas per vehicle to which are added other tax exemptions that amount to a total benefit of up to 8,800 patacas. RM



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Outbreak in Zhuhai leads to testing 10,000 people from 7 local schools

RENATO MARQUES

THE Covid-19 outbreak in the Nanping district of the neighboring city of Zhuhai has led, so far, to the testing of 9,300 people among students, teachers, and other staff members from seven local schools, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center has reported.

According to the same health authorities, the schools involved include Fukien School, Ilha Verde Secondary School of Macau Chamber of Commerce, Santa Teresa School, Saint Joseph Diocesan College (5th School), Choi Nong Chi Tai School, Our Lady of Fatima School, and the Sacred Heart Canossian College (kindergarten section).

The Health Bureau (SSM) decided to test a total of 9,300 people after four people were found to be close contacts of infected patients in Nanping and another 29 have been considered as secondary level contacts.

Undergoing testing are a total of 8,400 students, 720 teachers, and 170 staff members from the schools.



According to information from the Center, until around 5 p.m. yesterday, a total of 7,985 people had completed the test sample collection and, from those, 6,696 tests have already returned results, all being negative.

The SSM expressed hope

that the last few people yet to complete sampling could do so yesterday so that the testing and results can be completed today.

Some of the people listed to be tested have informed local authorities that they have already been tested through other methods, as they are currently

across the border.

The Education and Youth Development Bureau also noted that the decision to carry out tests upon the whole school population of the seven schools involved aimed to reduce the concerns of parents and students.

DIFFERENT PLACES SHOULD ADOPT TARGETED COVID-19 PREVENTION: CHINESE EXPERT

A leading Chinese epidemiologist said that it is essential for China to stick to its dynamic zero-Covid approach in the face of mounting anti-epidemic pressure both at home and abroad. Liang Wannian, head of the Covid-19 response expert panel under the National Health Commission, told a press conference yesterday that basic facts and conditions in the country "underpin the country's dynamic zero-Covid approach, and China is capable of implementing the policy." The expert also said different localities should be encouraged to adopt targeted prevention and control measures tailored to their respective conditions to bring the epidemic under control with minimal cost to society. He further noted that the essence of targeted prevention and control lies in a swift and effective response.

HO VOWS FULL SUPPORT FOR NEWLY-APPOINTED NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISERS

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng this week vowed full support for the work of national security advisers to the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Macau SAR. The State Council appointed Fu Ziyang as national security affairs adviser to the committee, as well as Zheng Xincong and Yin Shuhua as national security technical advisers to the committee. Ho welcomed the appointments, saying the government would, in strict accordance with the Constitution of China and the Basic Law, jointly perform the constitutional responsibility of safeguarding national security, and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests as well as the long-term prosperity and stability of the region. Fu serves as director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the MSAR, while Zheng is the deputy director of the office.

ANNUAL ROAD TAX PAYMENT DEADLINE TILL MARCH 31

The annual road tax payment is set to expire on March 31, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) has reminded citizens in a statement. As for this year, and following the regulations recently approved, no road tax stamp will be levied or placed at a visible point of the vehicle. According to data disclosed by the DSAT from a total of over 240,000 motor vehicles, some 184,255 have already settled their road tax for 2022 as of March 21. Of those, 108,640 (58.9%) have made this payment through electronic means without the need to go to DSAT service points. The Bureau notes that these results are positive and satisfactory following the purpose of simplification and government electronation for the reduction of bureaucratic procedures.

Transport secretary emphasizes news on DSSOPT future imminent

ANTHONY LAM

THE future of the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) will soon be revealed, Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário said yesterday on the sidelines of a parliamentary committee meeting.

On Monday, Portuguese public broadcaster Rádio Macau reported that the current Infrastructure and Development Office (GDI) would be transformed into the Public Works Bureau, which will lead to the Public Construction and the Infrastructure Construction Departments being subsumed into the current DSSOPT.

Meanwhile, the cur-

rent DSSOPT will be restructured and renamed as the Urban Construction Bureau.

In response to press enquiries, the secretary said news would be released "in a short period." He jokingly told journalists to refer to the dictionary definition to determine what he meant by "short period."

In addition, he explained that the transformation of the GDI is necessary. Although it was established as a project-based taskforce, it needs to be transformed because the need for it still exists.

The transformation and restructuring of the two government entities are also being undertaken to clarify the responsibilities of each entity. Rosário



highlighted that in the future, the GDI's successor will focus on government projects.

The DSSOPT's successor, meanwhile, will handle urban planning, land management, private

construction projects, as well as electrical and mechanical engineering affairs.



FDCT ALLOCATED MOP350 MILLION TO 639 PROJECTS LAST YEAR

RENATO MARQUES

THE Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT) allocated a total of 350 million patacas to 639 projects last year, the FDCT reported in their annual review.

According to the Fund, in the course of last year and following government policies and guidelines, most of the funded projects were for applied science and re-

search to convert research results into practical solutions that can immediately be put to use by the industry and have an immediate societal application.

This idea derives from the policies announced by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng aiming to encourage what he calls “industry-university-research cooperation,” putting academic resources and findings at the service of industries’ research

and development (R&D).

According to the FDCT annual fund allocation report, applied research registered an increase in weight, focusing mainly on the areas of health, information technology, engineering, and materials, with the percentage of projects aimed at application reaching 88.3% of the total financial support allocated.

Priority was given to a series of R&D projects with potential for

transformation/application, with an estimated investment of around 50 million patacas.

This group included projects to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, with, FDCT said, “some of [the projects] ... already being applied, including an intelligent robot for fighting the [pandemic], digital microfluidic chip for rapid detection of coronavirus, Covid-19 diagnosis system based on artificial intelligence and a Covid-19

nucleic acid test kit.”

Other subsidized projects included the self-service currency exchange machine, Chinese-Portuguese automatic translation system, cross-border e-commerce platform, nanofoam expanded clay lightweight concrete, a new technology applied in traditional Chinese, and enhanced immunotherapy with synergistic PD-1, among others.

According to the Fund officials, some of these projects, namely those regarding Chinese medicine research, also gathered fund partnerships from several companies with a total investment of RMB8.88 million.

For this year (2022), the FDCT will continue to support and give priority to the projects focused on the link between the universities and the industries aiming at the practical application of the research and development projects.

Following this idea, the FDCT will establish two or three new scientific research platforms, promoting interdisciplinary development and supporting R&D in collaboration with companies, and will also increase the support for results on technological transformation.

The organization of scientific research results roadshows to take the finding of research to meet the industries will also continue on the annual plan, such as seminars and training courses.

Another focus will be the development of the Macau Science and Technology Awards with a special focus on issuing recommendations and nominations to the best local projects to be part of the large pool of China’s Science and Technology Awards in the Mainland.

Gov’t to negotiate on availability of insurance for elevators, escalators

THE government has affirmed to a parliamentary committee that it would negotiate to seek the availability of insurance plans that cover third-party responsibilities related to elevators and escalators.

The First Standing Committee of the parliament discussed, with the participation of government officials, the draft law governing elevators and escalators. The discussion was presided over by lawmaker Ella Lei, president of the committee.

Lei admitted that the discussion had progressed quite slowly, as many committee members were concerned with the practi-

cality of the proposed provision that mandates the purchase of insurance to cover possible third-party responsibilities. Related to this, committee members also considered whether such insurance plans were available and, if so, how much insurance companies will charge.

The future insurance policy would be purchased by maintenance service providers. Lei added that the government, for the time being, has no intention to require inspection service providers to purchase the insurance.

The government will clarify the minimum Sum Assured in specific Executive Regulations after the

passing of the draft law in parliament.

Some committee members, Lei disclosed, support the government’s proposal in making maintenance compulsory, considering this a way to ensure public safety.

While citing government officials, Lei stressed that this draft law focuses on the separation of the maintenance and inspection functions.

Government officials admitted that conducting inspections could be a huge burden if the government is required to carry out that function. Therefore, it is more practical to allow private entities to conduct ins-

pections at facilities.

Committee members were also concerned with extra costs to users when this mode of management begins. Government officials revealed to the committee that most annual inspections are priced at MOP3,000 per inspection. They believed it would not be a heavy burden when shared among all users.

The officials also said that it would help ensure that sufficient technicians are in the market when the law takes effect.

Service providers will also need to ensure uninterrupted service so that in the case of machine malfunction, they can provide an immediate response. **AL**

ANTHONY LAM



ANTHONY LAM



SATELLITE CASINOS

3-year buffer period to start alongside new concessions

ANTHONY LAM

THE government has changed its mind and will only start counting the three-year buffer period concerning “satellite casinos” from the time new concession contracts take effect.

The news was disclosed yesterday by lawmaker Chan Chak Mo, president of the Second Standing Committee of the parliament. The committee held a meeting to discuss its opinions on the Amendment Bill of the Gaming Law (the Bill) with government officials, such as Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong.

Not a formal legal concept, the colloquial term “satellite casino” refers to casinos that are not located in real properties owned by the casino operators or concessionaires permitted by law to run gambling business. Slot machine halls, such as Mocha, are not stipulated.

The draft law proposes that concessionaires acquire the ownerships of casino areas within a three-year buffer period. The government has said that it would clarify the areas of each casino. On one hand, this is done to identify how large areas concessionaires with “satellite casinos” need to acquire. On the other hand,

it is to allow non-casino areas, such as shopping malls and restaurants, to continue operations.

The current proposal is that the buffer period will depend on the promulgation date of the future law. At the post-meeting press briefing, Chan made the disclosure on the change in the government’s position by saying that this proposed provision will be updated. The clock for the three-year period will only start ticking on the date when the new casino contracts take effect.

In other proposed provisions, Chan said, the way they were written was unclear. He said that the government had used the phrase “as soon as possible” in many of these draft provisions, such as Article 17, to determine concessionaires’ duty of notification. The provisions also come with penalties, such as fines ranging between MOP600,000 and MOP1.5 million.

Chan pointed out that the committee was not satisfied with these provisions, as they are not clearly written while they carry liabilities. Therefore, it was proposed that the government make changes to these provisions for refinement.

When questioned as to whether the government had hinted at its intention or not to extend the

three-year buffer period, the committee president highlighted government officials as having “strong poker faces”: “I could not read what they were thinking,” said Chan.

According to Article 50 of the draft law, the government proposed that concessionaires unsuccessful in re-bidding for the license dissolve their companies. In previous meetings, the government has already agreed to reconsider this, because the scope of business has expanded significantly compared with 20 years ago.

With the change, companies will remain and operate non-gambling businesses, such as hotels and catering.

Meanwhile, should there be a dissolution, shareholders in possession of 5% or more of the stakes of the company in question will bear joint liability, in relation to casino chips. This proposed provision – Clause 3, Article 50 – is different from the stipulations in the Commercial Code, among other laws.

When questioned by the committee about the matter, government officials justified the proposal by highlighting the importance of the gambling industry to Macau and that of the public interest. That is why a specific law and stipulation are required, it was explained.

The statute of limitations of relevant liabilities is set to 15 years in the Civil Code. As to how shareholders are identified as liable, government officials plan to set to start limitation at the closure of contracts.

Officials also pledged to refine wording in the draft provisions to clarify this responsibility.

The parliamentary committee has finished its first phase of review on the draft law. The coming period will see the government considering the comments and suggestions made by the committee, before updating the Bill into a second draft for the committee’s further analysis.

The committee president estimated that the government may need three weeks to refine the draft and provide the committee with a second draft.

On the other hand, several entities, such as some existing casino operators and associations, have submitted their opinions to the parliament on the Bill. Chan was asked about the matter yesterday.

He said that there are many channels through which the public can express their opinions. The parliament will consider them and may present them at meetings.

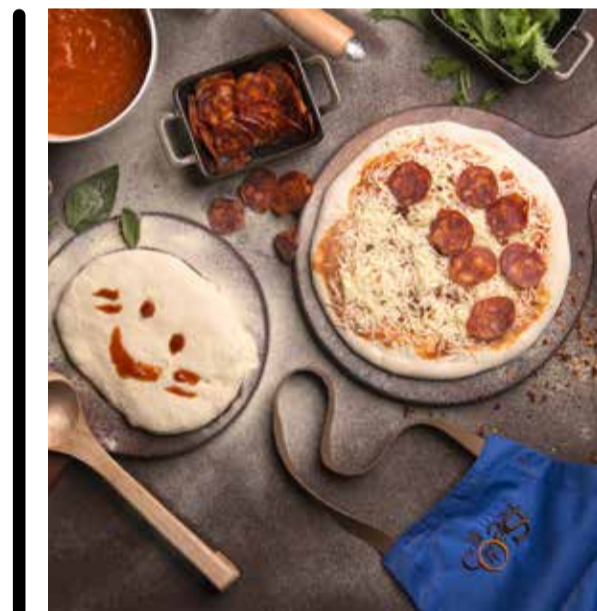
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GREAT TIMES

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SOUTH CHINA SEA

BEIJING SAYS MILITARY DEVELOPMENT OF ISLANDS WITHIN ITS RIGHTS

CHINA yesterday said it has the right to develop South China Sea islands as it sees fit in the wake of U.S. accusations that it has fully militarized at least three of several islands it built in the disputed waterway in violation of a previous commitment.

China's deployment of "necessary national defense facilities on its own territory is a right entitled to every sovereign country and is in line with international law, which is beyond reproach," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters at a daily briefing.

U.S. military activities in the area aimed to "stir up trouble and make provocations," Wang said. "That seriously threatens the sovereignty and security of coastal countries and undermines the order and navigation safety in the South China Sea."

On Sunday, U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander Adm. John C. Aquilino said China had armed the islands with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missile systems, laser and jamming equipment, and fighter jets, in an increasingly aggressive move that threatens all nations operating nearby.

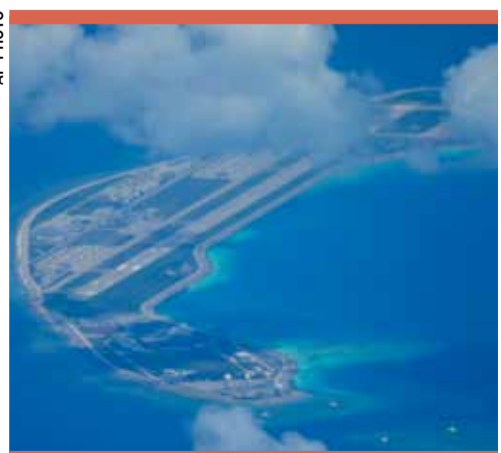
Aquilino said the hostile actions were in stark contrast to Chinese President Xi Jinping's past assurances that Beijing would not transform the artificial islands in contested waters into military bases. The efforts were part of China's flexing of its military muscle, he said.

"I think over the past 20 years we've witnessed the largest military buildup since World War II by the PRC," Aquilino told The Associated Press in an interview, using the initials of China's formal name. "They have advanced all their capabilities and that buildup of weaponization is destabilizing to the region."

China claims as its own territory virtually the entire South China Sea, home to fish stocks and undersea minerals, along with sea lanes through which an estimated \$5 trillion in global trade travels each year.

China refuses to acknowledge claims from five other governments to some or all of the waterway and dismissed the findings of a U.N.-backed arbitration tribunal that invalidated China's sweeping historical claims under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The fully militarized islands are among seven China has constructed in recent years by piling sand and concrete atop coral reefs, causing heavy damage to the marine environment. **MDT/AP**



XINHUA PHOTOS



MU5735

Wallets, IDs but no survivors

DAKE KANG & NG HAN GUAN, WUZHOU

MUD-STAINED wallets. Bank cards. Official identity cards. Poignant reminders of 132 lives presumed lost were lined up by rescue workers scouring a remote Chinese mountainside yesterday for the wreckage of a China Eastern flight that one day earlier inexplicably fell from the sky and burst into a huge fireball.

No survivors have been found among the 123 passengers and nine crew members. Video clips posted by China's state media show small pieces of the Boeing 737-800 plane scattered over a wide forested area, some in green fields, others in burnt-out patches with raw earth exposed after fires burned in the trees. Each piece of debris has a number next to it, the larger ones marked off by police tape.

As family members gathered at the destination and departure airports, what caused the plane to drop out of the sky shortly before it would have begun its descent to the southern China metropolis of Guangzhou remained a mystery. The search for the black boxes, which hold the flight data and cockpit voice recorders, would be difficult, the official Xinhua News Agency said, and involve drones and manual searching.

The crash left a deep pit in the mountainside, Xinhua said, citing rescuers. Chen Weihao, who saw the falling plane while working on a farm, told the news agency it hit a gap in the mountain where nobody lived. "The plane looked to be in

one piece when it nosedived. Within seconds, it crashed," Chen said.

China Eastern flight 5735 crashed outside the city of Wuzhou in the Guangxi region while flying from Kunming, the capital of the southwestern province of Yunnan, to Guangzhou, an industrial center not far from Hong Kong on China's southeastern coast. It ignited a fire big enough to be seen on NASA satellite images before firefighters could extinguish it.

No foreigners were on board the lost flight, the Foreign Ministry said, citing a preliminary review.

Dinglong Culture, a Guangzhou company in both mining and TV and movie production, said in a statement to the Shenzhen stock exchange that its CFO, Fang Fang, was a passenger. Zhongxinghua, an accounting firm used by Dinglong, said that two of its employees were also on the flight.

The crash site is surrounded on three sides by mountains and accessible only by foot and motorcycle on a steep dirt road in the semitropical Guangxi region, famed for some of China's most spectacular scenery.

Rain fell yesterday afternoon as excavators dug out a path to make access easier, state broadcaster CCTV said. The steepness of the slope made the positioning of heavy equipment difficult.

A base of operations was set up near the crash site with rescue vehicles, ambulances and an emergency power supply truck parked in the narrow spa-

ce. Soldiers and rescue workers combed the charred crash site and surrounding heavily dense vegetation.

"The plane looked to be in one piece when it nosedived. Within seconds, it crashed."

EYEWITNESS

Police restricted access, checking each vehicle entering Molang, a village near the crash site. Five people with swollen eyes walked out of the village, got into a car and left. Onlookers said they were relatives of the passengers.

Family members gathered at Kunming and Guangzhou airports. People draped in pink blankets and slumped in massage chairs could be seen in a traveler rest area in the base-

ment of the one in Kunming. Workers wheeled in mattresses and brought bagged meals. A security guard blocked an AP journalist from entering, saying that "interviews aren't being accepted."

In Guangzhou, relatives were escorted to a reception center staffed by employees wearing full protective gear to guard against the coronavirus.

At least five hotels with more than 700 rooms had been requisitioned in Wuzhou's Teng county for family members, Chinese media reported.

Workers in hazmat suits set up a registration desk and administered COVID-19 tests at the entrance to one hotel, outside of Molang. A sign read, "The hotel is requisitioned for March 21 plane accident emergency use." At another hotel, a group of women, some wearing vests with Red Cross markings, registered at a hotel desk set up outside.

NO MACAU RESIDENTS ONBOARD FLIGHT MU5735

LOCAL authorities have confirmed to the Times that no local residents were on board flight China Eastern Airlines MU5735, which crashed on Monday in Wuzhou, Guangxi. In response to the Times, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) stated, "As informed by the Civil Aviation Authority of Macao to our inquiry, China Eastern Airlines has confirmed that there was no Macau resident onboard the aircraft."

MGTO is also said to be closely monitoring the situation of the commercial aircraft that crashed on March 21 in Wuzhou, Guangxi, noting that as of the moment of statement, no inquiry of request for assistance had been received by MGTO concerning the incident. The Bureau also added that, if necessary, Macau residents may call the 24-hour Tourism Hotline at +853 2833 3000 for assistance.



found in plane crash

The nation's first fatal plane crash in more than a decade dominated China's news and social media. World leaders including Great Britain's Boris Johnson, India's Narendra Modi and Canada's Justin Trudeau posted condolences on Twitter.

Boeing Chief Executive Dave Calhoun said that the company was deeply saddened by the news and had offered the full support of its technical experts to assist in the investigation.

"The thoughts of all of us at Boeing are with the passengers and crew members ... as well as their families and loved ones," he wrote in a message to Boeing employees.

The plane was about an hour into its flight, at an altitude of 29,000 feet (8,840 meters), when it entered a steep, fast dive around 2:20 p.m., according to data from FlightRadar24.com. The plane plunged to 7,400 feet before briefly regaining about 1,200 feet in altitude, then

dove again. The plane stopped transmitting data 96 seconds after starting to dive.

The aircraft was delivered to the airline in June 2015 and had been flying for more than six years.

Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, where the flight was headed, is one of China's main aviation hubs. It is the home base for China Southern Airlines. As the pandemic upended air travel, it rocketed past Beijing and Atlanta to

claim the title of world's busiest airport in 2020 — the most recent year for which annual data is available — handling more than 43 million passengers.

Guangzhou is the capital of Guangdong province, home to export-driven factories making smartphones, toys, furniture and other goods. Its Auto City district has joint ventures operated by Toyota, Nissan and others. Kunming, the departure city which is 1,100 kilometers (680 miles) west, is the capital of Yunnan province, an agricultural, mining and tourism center that borders Southeast Asia.

China Eastern, which is headquartered in Shanghai, has grounded all of its 737-800s, China's Transport Ministry said. Aviation

experts said it is unusual to ground an entire fleet of planes unless there is evidence of a problem with the model.

The airline is one of China's three largest carriers with more than 600 planes, including 109 Boeing 737-800s. The grounding could further disrupt domestic air travel already curtailed because of the largest COVID-19 outbreak in China since the initial peak in early 2020.

The Boeing 737-800 has been flying since 1998 and has an excellent safety record, said Hassan Shahidi, president of the Flight Safety Foundation. It is an earlier model than the 737 Max, which was grounded worldwide for nearly two years after deadly crashes in 2018 and 2019. **MDT/AP**

CHINA EASTERN CRASH IS RARE DISASTER FOR STATE-RUN AIRLINES

CHINA is, along with North America and Europe, one of the world's top three air travel markets. It has dramatically improved safety since a string of deadly crashes in the 1990s and 2000s.

The crash Monday of a China Eastern flight comes after years free of major air disasters. The country has not reported a crash of a commercial flight with more than five fatalities since 2010. The ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, also has suffered fatal crashes, but few details are available.

CHINA EASTERN

China Eastern is, along with Air China, China Southern Airlines and HNA Group, one of four major carriers in China, all state-owned. Founded in 1995, the airline is headquartered at Shanghai's Pudong International Airport. Its fleet of 749 aircraft includes 291 from the Boeing 737 series, according to its mid-2021 interim report. The carrier has 79,913 employees, mostly in China. It carried 44.3 million passengers in the first half of 2021. China Eastern reported a loss of 5.4 billion yuan (\$850 million) in the first half of 2021.

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Carriers have suffered heavy financial losses as the government tries to eliminate COVID-19 with a "zero tolerance" strategy that



Tents with the characters that read "Disaster rescue" are erected at the entrance to Lv village which leads to the site of the China Eastern plane crash

bars most foreign visitors from China and has disrupted travel by suspending access temporarily to major cities. Passenger numbers within China exceeded the United States in 2020 for the first time, according to Boeing Co. That was partly because populous China reopened to domestic travel relatively quickly after the initial coronavirus outbreak. Boeing forecasts 5.4% annual traffic growth and says China should account for one-sixth of future added airline capacity.

State media reported all 737-800s in China Eastern's fleet were ordered grounded. Avia-

tion experts said it is unusual to ground an entire fleet of planes unless there is evidence of a problem with the model. China has more 737-800s than any other country — nearly 1,200 — and if identical planes at other Chinese airlines are grounded, it "could have a significant impact on domestic travel," said aviation consultant IBA.

LAST BIG CRASH

An Embraer ERJ 190-100 operated by Henan Airlines and carrying a total of 96 passengers and crew hit the ground short of the

runway on Aug. 24, 2010, while landing in the northeastern city of Yichun.

China Eastern's last fatal crash was in November 2004, when a bombardier CRJ-200 plunged into a frozen lake just after takeoff from the Inner Mongolian city of Baotou, killing 53 people on board and two on the ground. Regulators blamed ice that had collected on the wings.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China and China Eastern have sent officials to the crash site. The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board said a senior investigator was chosen to help, and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, which certified the 737-800 in the 1990s, said it was ready to help if asked.

AIRCRAFT MARKET

China is one of the most important markets for Boeing and its European rival Airbus Industries. They want Chinese carriers to drive sales as U.S. and European demand flatten.

The ruling Communist Party wants to compete with them by making its own jetliners and eventually exporting them.

State-owned COMAC, or the Commercial Aircraft Corp. of China, has released a short-range jetliner, the ARJ21, for up to 105 passengers, and the larger but short-range C919 with up to 190 seats. The company says it is working on a long-range, twin-aisle plane, the C929, for as many as 290 passengers. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

Ukraine retakes key Kyiv suburb; battle for Mariupol rages

NEBI QENA
& CARA ANNA, KYIV

UKRAINE said it retook a strategically important suburb of Kyiv yesterday, as Russian forces squeezed other areas near the capital and their attack on the embattled southern port of Mariupol raged unabated.

Explosions and bursts of gunfire shook Kyiv, and black smoke rose from a spot in the north. Intensified artillery fire could be heard from the northwest, where Russia has sought to encircle and capture several suburban areas of the capital, a crucial target.

Residents sheltered at home or underground under a 35-hour curfew imposed by city authorities that runs to Wednesday morning.

Russian forces also pressed their siege of Mariupol after the southern port city's defenders refused demands to surrender, with fleeing civilians describing relentless bombardments and corpses lying in the streets. But the Kremlin's ground offensive in other parts of the country advanced slowly or not at all, knocked back by lethal hit-and-run attacks by the Ukrainians.

Early in day, Ukrainian troops forced Russian forces out of the Kyiv suburb of Makariv after a fierce battle, Ukraine's Defense Ministry said. The regained territory allowed Ukrainian forces to retake control of a key highway and block Russian troops from surrounding Kyiv from the northwest.

Still, the Defense Ministry said Russian forces were able to partially take other northwest suburbs, Bucha, Hostomel and Irpin, some of which had been under attack almost since Russia's military invaded almost a month ago.

Russia's invasion has driven more than 10 million people from their homes, a number similar to the population of Portugal and almost a quarter of Ukraine's pre-war population, according to the United Nations. The U.N. has confirmed over 900 civilian deaths while saying the real toll is probably much higher. Estimates of Russian military deaths vary, but even conservative figures are in the low thousands.

Beyond the terrible human toll, the war has shaken the post-Cold War global securi-



Devastation at Kyiv's city center after constant Russian shelling

ty consensus and repeatedly raised worries it could set off a nuclear accident. Ukraine's natural resources minister said wildfires near the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in northern Ukraine have been extinguished and radiation levels in the area are within norms. Fires are not uncommon in the area, but raise concern about the potential release of radiation from fallout from the 1986 explosion and fire at the plant.

Concerns have been expressed for safety at the decommissioned plant since it was seized by Russian forces last month. The power supply was temporarily cut amid fighting earlier this month, and Ukraine's nuclear regulatory agency said Monday that radiation monitors around the plant had stopped working.

Facing unexpectedly stiff resistance, Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces are increasingly concentrating their air power and artillery on Ukraine's cities and the civilians living there.

U.S. and British officials say Kyiv remains Russia's primary objective. The bulk of Moscow's forces remain miles from the center, but missiles and artillery have destroyed apartment buildings and a large shopping mall, which was left a smoking ruin after being hit late Sunday by strikes that killed eight people, according to emergency officials.

A senior U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the military's assessment, said Russia had increased air sorties over the past two days, carrying out as many as 300 over a 24-hour period, and has fired more than 1,100 missiles into Ukraine since the invasion began.

U.S. President Joe Biden,

who is heading to Europe later in the week to meet with allies, suggested Monday evening that worse may be still to come.

"Putin's back is against the wall," Biden said. "He wasn't anticipating the extent or the strength of our unity. And the more his back is against the wall, the greater the severity of the tactics he may employ."

Biden reiterated accusations that Putin is considering resorting to using chemical or biological weapons, though Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said yesterday that the United States has seen no evidence to suggest that use of such weapons was "imminent."

As Russian forces try to squeeze Kyiv, talks to end the fighting have continued by video but failed to bridge the chasm between the two sides. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told Ukrainian television late Monday that he would be prepared to consider waiving any bid by Ukraine to join NATO — a key Russian demand — in exchange for a cease-fire, the withdrawal of Russian troops and a guarantee of Ukraine's security.

Zelenskyy also suggested Kyiv would be open to future discussions on the status of Crimea, which Russia seized in 2014, and areas of the eastern Donbas region held by Russian-backed separatists. But he said that was a topic for another time.

As part of a series of addresses to foreign legislatures to drum up support for Ukraine, Zelenskyy spoke to Italian lawmakers yesterday, telling them that the besieged port of Mariupol had been utterly destroyed in the Russian onslaught. He also spoke to Pope Francis.

"Imagine a Genoa comple-

tely burned down," he said to rapt lawmakers, citing an Italian port city of a similar size. Mariupol officials said on March 15 that at least 2,300 people had died in the siege, and they have not given an update since. Zelenskyy said 117 children had been killed in the war so far.

Some people managed to flee Mariupol, where weeks of Russian bombardment has cut off electricity, water and food supplies and severed communication with the outside world. The city council said yesterday that more than 1,100 people who had escaped the besieged city were on their way in a convoy of buses to another city to Mariupol's northwest.

But the Red Cross said a humanitarian aid convoy trying to reach the embattled city with desperately needed supplies still had not been able to enter.

Perched on the Sea of Azov, Mariupol is a crucial port for Ukraine and lies along a stretch of territory between Russia and Crimea. As such, it is a key target that has been besieged for more than three weeks and has seen some of the worst suffering of the war.

It is not clear how close its capture might be. Ukraine's Defense Ministry said yesterday that their forces were still defending the city and had destroyed a Russian patrol boat and electronic warfare complex. Britain's Defense Ministry said its intelligence showed that "Ukrainian forces continue to repulse Russian attempts to occupy" the city.

Those who have made it out of Mariupol told of a devastated city.

"There are no buildings there anymore," said 77-year-old Maria Fiodorova, who crossed the border to after five days of travel. **MDT/AP**

this day in history



1983 REAGAN LAUNCHES COLD WAR INTO SPACE



President Reagan has unveiled plans to combat nuclear war in space.

The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) proposes a defensive shield, using laser or particle beam technology to "intercept and destroy" incoming missiles as they travel through the stars.

Defense analysts have described it as the first major attempt to move away from the 30 year-old Cold War strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) - where the threat of nuclear attack acts as a deterrent.

In a televised address from the White House the US leader said: "We seek neither military superiority nor political advantage. Our only purpose - one all people share - is to search for ways to avert the danger of nuclear war."

Speaking just half an hour after the House of Representatives (HOR) had rejected the Republican Party's demands for 10% increases in defence spending, President Reagan attempted to justify his \$2 trillion, five-year military spending plans.

In the first major congressional revolt against Mr Reagan's economic policies the HoR have voted in Democrat proposals to reduce the Republican budget by more than half.

The President said: "They're the same kind that led the democracies to neglect their defences in the 1930s and invited the tragedy of World War II."

Senior White House aide Michael Deaver reported a positive reaction to Mr Reagan's scheme: "He has had the most favorable response to any speech since he was elected President."

Critics argue SDI contravenes the Soviet-American Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972.

Article V of the treaty states: "Each party undertakes not to develop, test or deploy anti-ballistic missile systems or components."

President Reagan has stressed SDI does not entail the actual development of a defensive shield, but is a programme for research and development.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Reagan's SDI became known as "Star Wars" - after the George Lucas film. President Andropov of the USSR was highly critical of the plan, saying it violated the 1972 ABM Treaty and there was little difference between building up weapons for purportedly defensive or offensive purposes. The Democrats in the US - and even some Republicans - claimed Reagan's initiative was an expensive and unfeasible diversion from his administration's domestic failures. SDI signalled a new round in the Arms Race and a worsening of the relationship between the US and the USSR. The increasing financial strain it placed the Soviet Union under contributed to the break up of the regime. SDI was abandoned in 1993.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You may have more people on your domestic scene than anticipated. You will need to take a look at the renovations that are necessary and try to find the cheapest way to get things done.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Your intuition will be right on. Follow your feelings in matters pertaining to financial investments. You could find yourself having problems with coworkers and employers.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
You may need help with your financial situation. Opportunities to meet new lovers will evolve through your interaction with groups or fundraising functions.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
If everyone wants to do their own thing, let them. Anger may cause you grief; control your temper and try to sit back and calm down. It's time you let your true feelings out.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Visitors are likely to drop by and chances are, they may even stay a little longer than you want them to. Too many opportunities and too many changes going on. Try to keep an open mind.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You will be accident prone if you aren't careful today. Try to be precise in your communications. The personal problems you may be having are interfering with your productivity.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Sudden changes in your financial situation are likely. Go to the top if you're being harassed or held back. Listen to a good friend who is truly looking out for your best interests.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Don't overextend your self in order to add luxury items to your entertainment center. Travel will promote new romantic encounters and additional cultural knowledge.

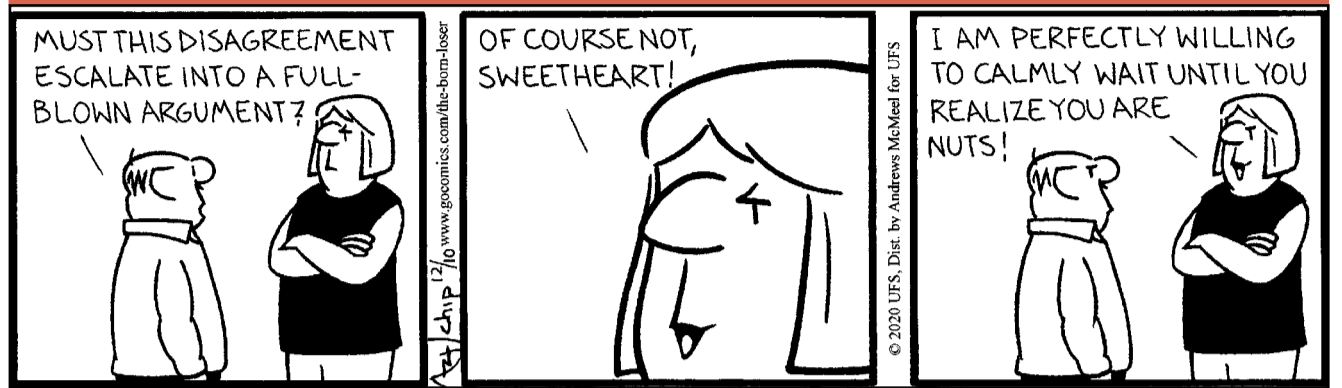
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Don't count on getting any help from those you live with. Try to have patience and refrain from being judgmental. Opportunities will come through behind the scenes activities.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You may find that purchases or entertainment could be expensive. Sit back and observe, regardless of how hard that might be. Unrealistic promises will only get you in trouble.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You are best to avoid joint ventures, and whatever you do, don't lend to friends or relatives. Get out and have some fun. Make the necessary changes that will enable you to advance financially.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Don't be too eager to cut those who have disappointed you from your life. Socializing or travel will lead to partnerships. You will do well with clients today.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

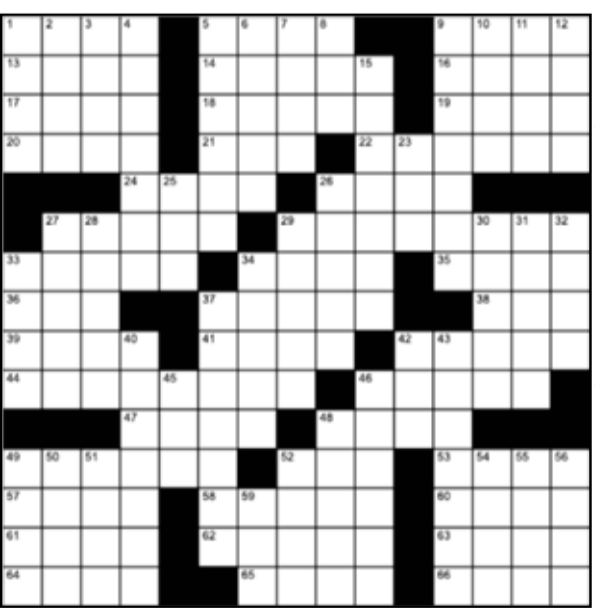
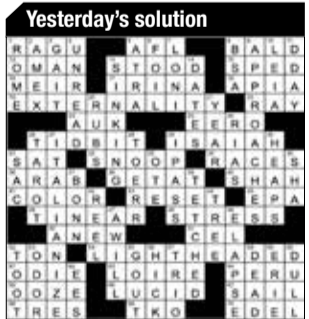
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	1	11	rain
Changchun	-7	6	fine
Chengdu	10	15	overcast
Chongqing	13	15	overcast
Fuzhou	12	17	rain
Guangzhou	21	26	rain
Guiyang	7	12	overcast
Haikou	24	34	cloudy
Hangzhou	6	9	rain
Harbin	-6	5	fine
Hefei	5	7	rain
Nanjing	4	8	rain
Shanghai	7	10	rain
Taipei	18	21	rain
Wuhan	6	7	rain
Hong Kong	17	19	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	-4	8	clear
Frankfurt	2	18	clear
Paris	6	19	clear
London	3	19	overcast
New York	6	9	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Unfeeling; 5- ___ de vivre; 9- Trumpet accessory; 13- La Scala solo; 14- Puzzled; 16- Like Nash's lama; 17- Animal house; 18- Stagers; 19- Small notch; 20- Go downhill fast?; 21- College sr's test; 22- Do a slow burn; 24- Langston Hughes poem; 26- Slippery; 27- Devoured; 29- Apparel; 33- Robbery; 34- Kiln for drying hops; 35- Evil is as evil ___; 36- Antiquity, old-style; 37- Secret agents; 38- CD earnings; 39- Stink; 41- Equal a bet; 42- Mexican money; 44- Commonplace; 46- Weighted down; 47- Pre-Easter season; 48- Burt's ex; 49- Banished; 52- Fleur-de-___; 53- Speedy; 57- Actress Hatcher; 58- ___ Irish Rose; 60- Alpo alternative; 61- Bartlett's abbr.; 62- Sudden forward thrust; 63- Small piece of wood; 64- Strong taste; 65- So-so grades; 66- Ballpark figs.

DOWN 1- Captures; 2- Caspian Sea feeder; 3- Bog; 4- Outlaws; 5- Gibberish; 6- Alamogordo's county; 7- Got it; 8- Long, thin snake-like fish; 9- Wealthy; 10- Ton, for one; 11- Word in many college names; 12- Actress Sommer; 15- Declares positively; 23- Freddie Krueger roamed ___ Street in the movies; 25- Hanoi holiday; 26- Backing for an exhibit; 27- Conger catcher; 28- Assisted; 29- Merrily; 30- Din; 31- Mortise insert; 32- Fast fliers; 33- Submarine; 34- Dizzying designs; 37- Public disgrace; 40- Murdering; 42- Bad review; 43- Building; 45- Miss-named?; 46- Setbacks; 48- Loyal subject; 49- Coup d'___; 50- TV's Warrior Princess; 51- Wrinkle remover; 52- ___ dancing is popular with cowboys; 54- Contented sighs; 55- Struck, old-style; 56- Dosage abbr.; 59- Tampa Bay player, for short.



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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E-COMMERCE

ALIBABA RAISES BUYBACK TO \$25B TO BOOST SLUMPING STOCK

ALIBABA Group, the world's biggest e-commerce company, increased a share buyback to \$25 billion from \$15 billion yesterday to prop up a stock price that has fallen by more than half since the ruling Communist Party tightened control over tech industries by launching regulatory crackdowns.

The increase is a "sign of confidence in the company's continued growth," Alibaba said. The company said it has paid out \$9.2 billion so far in the buyback announced earlier.

Alibaba's U.S.-traded shares have fallen 56%, wiping out hundreds of billions of dollars of stock market value, since the ruling party launched anti-monopoly and data-security crackdowns in 2019. Alibaba has been fined and a planned stock market debut by Ant Group, an online finance company spun off from Alibaba, was postponed.



Alibaba's Hong Kong-traded shares were trading 4.8% higher yesterday.

Chinese leaders tried last week to stop the stock market slide by promising support for technology companies but gave no details of possible initiatives.

The ruling party has expressed concern private sector tech giants such as Alibaba and

Tencent Holding are too independent and might use their market dominance to suppress competition and hurt economic growth.

Alibaba earlier reported profit for the final quarter of 2021 fell 74% from a year earlier to 20.4 billion yuan (\$3.2 billion). Revenue rose 10% to 242.6 billion yuan (\$38 billion). MDT/AP



AUTOMAKER

TESLA OPENS 'GIGAFACTORY' NEAR BERLIN, ITS FIRST IN EUROPE

ELECTRIC car manufacturer Tesla is opening its first European factory yesterday on the outskirts of Berlin in an effort to challenge German automakers on their home turf.

The company says its new "Gigafactory" will employ 12,000 people and produce 500,000 vehicles a year.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Economy Minister Robert Habeck attended the opening ceremony in Gruenheide, southeast of the German capital, with Tesla boss Elon Musk.

Habeck said the opening of the factory was "a nice symbol" that gasoline-powered cars can be replaced with electric vehicles at a time when Germany and other nations are trying to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and

wean themselves off Russian oil.

Tesla began building the vast facility less than three years ago, before it received official permits to do so. Had those permits not been issued, the company would have had to level the site.

"That's a different company risk culture," Habeck said, after being asked to compare Tesla's approach with the slow pace of German construction projects — such as Berlin's nearby new airport, which opened with a nine-year delay.

Environmental campaigners have warned that the factory could affect drinking water supplies in the region.

Tesla has dismissed those warnings. The company refused most media access to the site and the ceremony yesterday. MDT/AP

AD

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Urology : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

Paediatrics : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery : Dr. Lam U Lin

Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

ENT : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang

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FOOTBALL

Bids raised to take ownership of Chelsea from Abramovich

ROB HARRIS

THE public lobbying to be chosen as a preferred bidder for Chelsea stepped up yesterday as increased offers were being mullied by bankers tasked with selling the English Premier League club for sanctioned owner Roman Abramovich.

British property tycoon Nick Candy revealed he "significantly" increased the amount offered, having already submitted a bid of more than 2 billion pounds (\$2.6 billion) for the club on Friday to the New York-based bank the Rainey Group, overseeing the process.

Abramovich is being forced to sell the reigning world and European champions after he was sanctioned in Britain and his assets were frozen as part of a crackdown on oligarchs following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Russian was also disqualified from running the west London club and being a director by the Premier League.

The British government has to

AP PHOTO



approve a license for the buyout which cannot see Abramovich receive any proceeds from the sale.

Candy's "The Blue Football Consortium" features proposed investment from South Korea companies including Hana Financial Group, C&P Sports Group and a third undisclosed entity.

The unusual public tussle to buy such a significant team in world football is reflected in the public declarations of the bidders seeking to win over fans as well as

the decision-makers.

"This remains a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to give football back to the fans and put them at the heart of the operations and strategy of Chelsea Football Club," Candy said.

A new bidder emerged on Monday from London-based global investment firm Centricus, which says it oversees \$38 billion in assets.

Another consortium that bid features Todd Boehly, part owner

of the Los Angeles Dodgers, Swiss billionaire Hansjorg Wyss, and Jonathan Goldstein, a London-based property investor who is CEO of Cain International. They are said to have raised a bid to exceed 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.3 billion).

Michael Broughton, the former chairman of Liverpool and British Airways, is leading a consortium that includes track great Sebastian Coe, who is president of World Athletics, an IOC member and a Chelsea fan.

The Ricketts family, who own the Chicago Cubs, have linked with hedge fund manager Ken Griffin in a consortium. The family fortune was made by Joe Ricketts as chairman of electronic trading platform TD Ameritrade. His son, Tom Ricketts, serves as Cubs chairman.

Chelsea has won 21 trophies in 19 years of Abramovich's ownership, relying on his lavish investment to become one of Europe's most successful clubs.

Until a new owner comes in, or the government eases restrictions, Chelsea's ability to spend and generate revenue is curbed under the terms of the license. That means being unable to sell tickets to games, meaning only season-ticket holders can go to Stamford Bridge for Premier League games.

The home leg of the Champions League quarterfinal against Real Madrid is due to be played in an empty stadium.

But FA Cup organizers are trying to find a way of selling tickets for Chelsea's semifinal against Crystal Palace next month at Wembley. The English Football Association said it was anticipating a sold out national stadium.

"We are working with the government on a method to achieve this whilst respecting the sanctions that are currently in place on Chelsea," the FA said in a statement. **MDT/AP**

AD



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The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the world's Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views. But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.



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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

PRECISE VIRUS CONTROL TO MINIMIZE THE COST

The most difficult stage of a battle often harbors a key turning point in a war.

With the Chinese mainland reporting 2,281 locally transmitted novel coronavirus infections and 2,313 asymptomatic cases on Monday, it is clearly facing a difficult test from the recent resurgence of the virus, driven by the highly transmittable Omicron variant.

As of last week, the cumulative local infections on the mainland so far this year had surpassed that of last year. And the country has to guard against imported cases as well as domestic rebounds.

This is a battle from which there can be no retreat. Not only to protect nearly one-fifth of the world's population but also to maintain the stability of the global economy and international supply chains.

Adhering to the tried-and-proved dynamic clearing strategy, local governments are required to take swift, strict and effective measures to control the spread of the virus as soon as it appears. That means comprehensive nucleic acid test screening and epidemiological probes to cut transmission chains and find their source, and strengthening cross-regional coordination.

But while doing so, governments at various levels need to increase the accuracy of their epidemic prevention and control measures to minimize the economic costs. That means substantially enhancing their ability to spot any infections at an early date. The public and governments should not regard the Omicron variant as being another "seasonal flu". The pandemic is far from over.

Because China has done a good job in controlling the virus, some local governments and people have relaxed their vigilance, but the recent uptick in infections show there can be no letup in the fight against the virus.

No matter how weary of the pandemic they are, it is important that everyone appreciates the significance of the battle being waged and the part they play in it. Everyone must do their bit to defeat the virus.

To ensure that people adhere to the prevention and control measures, those implementing them should do so rationally taking into account people's livelihoods and normal socioeconomic activities. They should also ensure that people's basic needs and any necessary medical treatment are provided for in areas where lockdowns are in place.

With this in mind, local officials should coordinate the relationship between epidemic prevention and control and economic and social activities, implement precise control, quickly and efficiently demarcate the boundaries of the lockdown areas, and strive to maximize the prevention and control effect with minimum inconvenience to the people.

At the same time, the fight against the virus is a major test of the innovation capabilities of China's biomedical industry. The institutes and companies must expedite their research and development of neutralizing antibody drugs and new detection technology and products, so as to guarantee the country has the necessary "weapons" to defeat the virus.

A Russian newspaper claimed its website was hacked after it published casualty figures running into thousands, BBC reported.

The story on tabloid Komsomolskaya Pravda's website, citing a Russian Defence Ministry briefing, initially reported 9,861 Russian soldiers had been killed and 16,153 were wounded.

No other Russian media carried these figures. The story was later removed, and the paper issued a statement saying that the "website admin interface was hacked and a fake

was added to a publication".

Russian casualty figures are contested. The last official figures from the Russian government claim that 498 soldiers have died.

But a BBC Russian investigation has identified 557 named Russian soldiers who have died during the conflict. That figure doesn't include reports where casualties could not be identified.

The Ukrainian government claims more than 14,000 Russian soldiers have died, while a US intelligence report last week put the toll at more than 7,000, calling it a "conservative estimate."

UKRAINE CALLS ON CHINESE DRONE MAKER TO STOP USE BY RUSSIA

UKRAINE is appealing to a Chinese maker of civilian drones to block what the Ukrainian government says is their use by the Russian army to target missile attacks.

Vice Prime Minister Mykhailo Federov's appeal to DJI Technology Co., publicized on Twitter, highlights the tensions over Ukraine for Chinese companies. Foreign Minister Wang Yi said this month Moscow is Beijing's "most important strategic partner" at a time when Western tech and other companies have withdrawn from Russia over its Feb. 24 invasion.

Russian forces "are using DJI products in order to navigate their missile," Federov wrote in a letter to DJI. He appealed to DJI to deactivate drones in Ukraine that were purchased and activated in Russia, Syria or Lebanon: "Block your products that are helping Russia to kill the Ukrainians!"

DJI, in a letter on its own Twitter account, responded that it can't deactivate individual drones but can impose geofencing, or software restrictions that usually are used to keep drones away from airpor-



This satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies shows burning buildings in Irpin, Ukraine

ts or other sensitive areas. The company said that would affect all DJI drones in Ukraine.

DJI, headquartered in Shenzhen, near Hong Kong, is one of the biggest makers of civilian drones used by photographers, businesses and hobbyists. It is a leader in technology that uses satellite navigation to guide drones to precise locations.

Beijing says Washington is to blame for the conflict and earlier endorsed Moscow's "security concerns" about Ukraine and the expansion of NATO, the U.S.-European military alliance, which President Vladimir Putin cited as the

reason for his invasion.

Federov said Russian attackers used a version of DJI's AeroScope technology acquired in Syria. The company says that is a safety feature built into all its recent drones that broadcasts their location and tracks other drones up to 50 kilometers (35 miles) away to prevent collisions.

That system "cannot be turned off," DJI said. As for geofencing, the company warned it is "not foolproof" and won't take effect in drones that aren't connected to the internet for software updates.

The company is "available to discuss these issues," DJI said. MDT/AP



German retirees will get a hefty pension increase this year, a result largely of higher wages in Europe's biggest economy as inflation has climbed sharply, the government said yesterday. The Labor Ministry said pensions will increase by 5.35% in the former West Germany on July 1 and by 6.12% in the formerly communist east. There was no increase in the west last year and an increase of 0.72% in the east as the economy was hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Sweden Two teachers were killed by a student at a high school in southern Sweden, police said yesterday. The 18-year-old student was arrested at the scene. The victims were two women in their 50s, police said. The suspect wasn't previously known to the police and had no criminal record, and police didn't disclose how the teachers were killed. A motive hasn't been established.

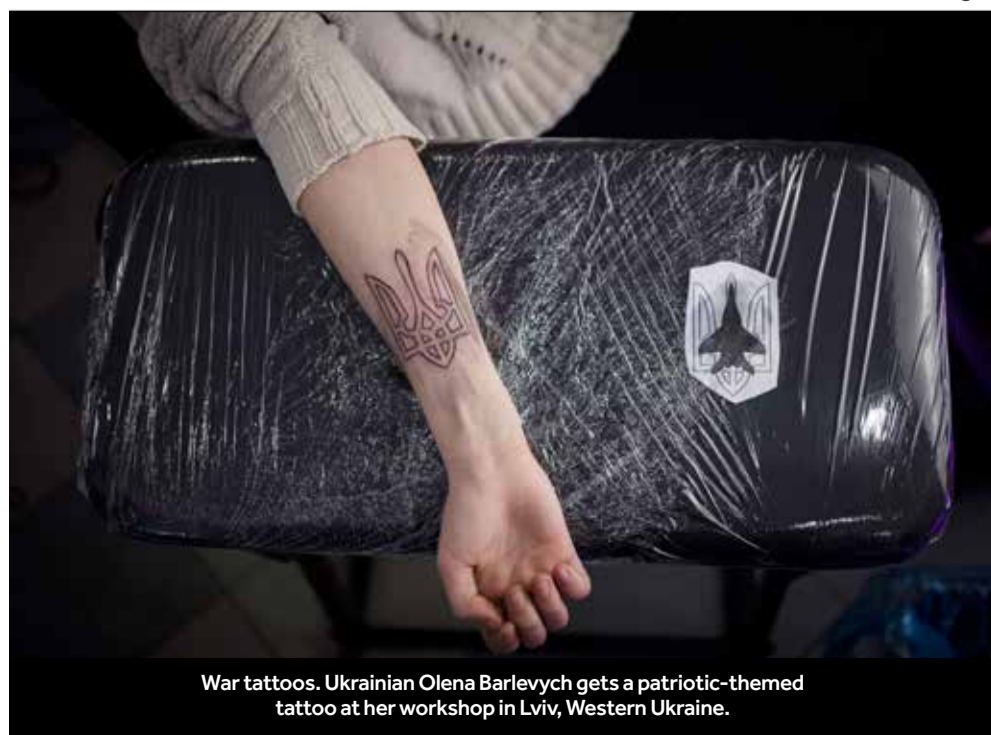


UK A British ferry operator owned by the government of Dubai faces a deadline to explain why it fired 800 workers without notice, while British authorities say they may seek criminal penalties if the company is found to have acted illegally. P&O Ferries fired the crew members over a Zoom call last week and then sent security teams onto ships to evict workers, touching off protests at ports around the U.K. Unions allege their members have been replaced by foreign workers who were hired through a third-party agency and are being paid \$2.38 an hour.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal party and the opposition New Democratic Party have reached a tentative agreement that would see Trudeau's Liberals keep power until 2025, a senior government official said. The official said the agreement still needed approval from NDP lawmakers but the leadership of both parties had signed off. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak publicly about the matter.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Bernat Armangué



War tattoos. Ukrainian Olena Barlevych gets a patriotic-themed tattoo at her workshop in Lviv, Western Ukraine.