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EAST TIMOR CHOOSES PRESIDENT IN RUNOFF AMID POLITICAL FEUD

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AP PHOTO



Japan The health ministry yesterday formally approved Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine, a fourth foreign-developed tool to combat the infections as the country sees signs of a resurgence led by a subvariant of fast-spreading omicron. The ministry approval comes the day after its experts panel endorsed use of Novavax's protein vaccine, which is designed with similar technology used to fight diseases such as the flu and hepatitis B, for the first two shots and a booster.

AP PHOTO

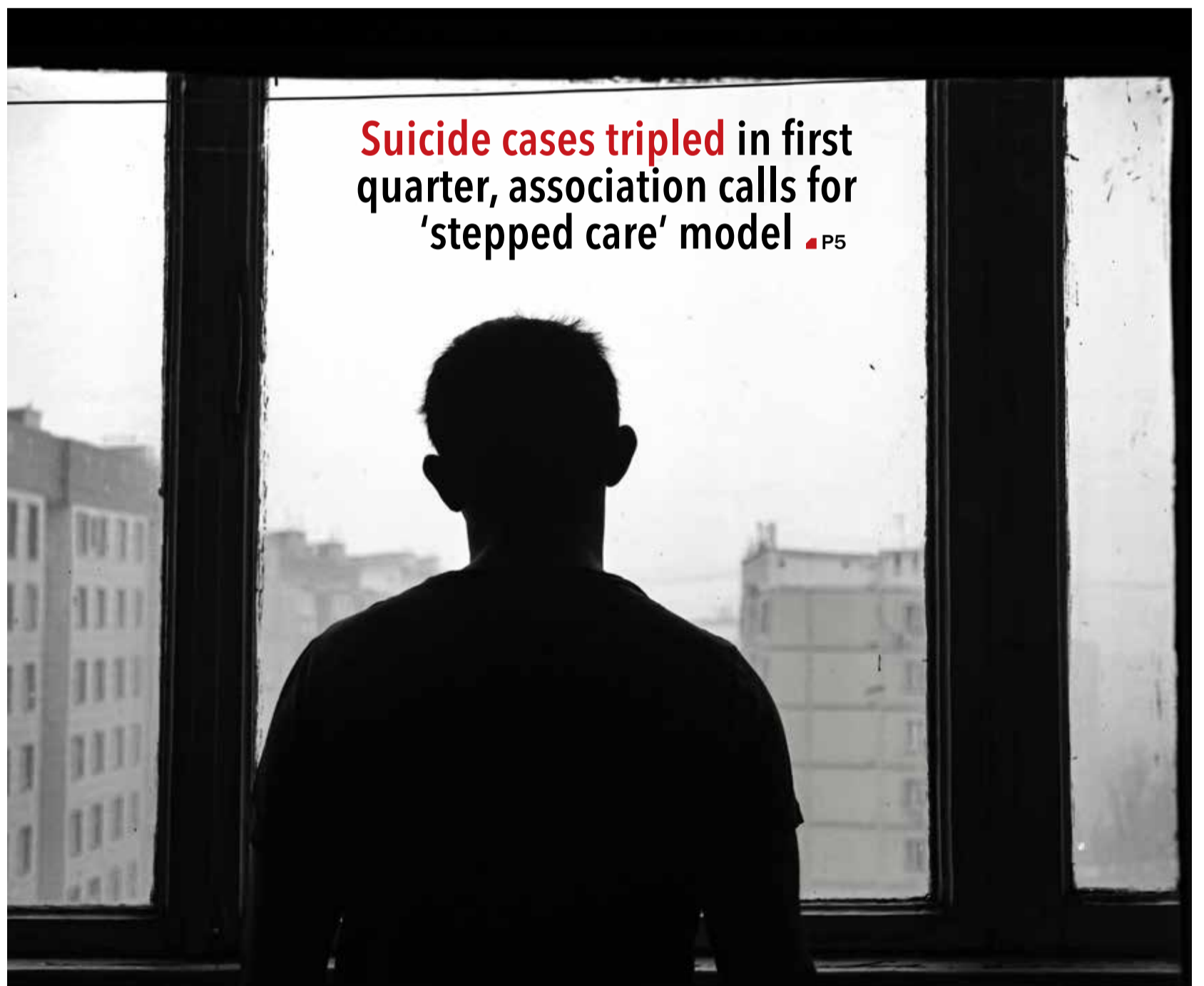


Afghanistan Explosions targeting educational institutions killed at least six people, including students, and injured 17 yesterday in a mostly Shiite neighborhood of Afghanistan's capital city, police said. The blasts, which occurred in rapid succession, were being investigated and more casualties were feared, according to Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadran and the city's Emergency Hospital. Several of the wounded were in serious condition and some had been treated and released.

Pakistan The Cabinet of newly-elected prime minister, Shahbaz Sharif, was sworn in yesterday during a brief ceremony. Acting President Sadiq Sanjrani administered the oath to the 34 ministers at the white marble palace known as the Presidency in the capital, Islamabad. Sharif also attended the ceremony. His election April 11 ousted former prime minister Imran Khan. Sharif's former political rivals are also part of his coalition government.

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ON THE LEDGE



Suicide cases tripled in first quarter, association calls for 'stepped care' model ▲ P5

SME SURVEY
PANDEMIC HALVED COMPANIES' REVENUES

MDT ARCHIVE



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64 SUSPECTED ILLEGAL WORKERS IN MARCH

Operations against illegal workers carried out by government agencies, acting both independently and jointly, found 64 suspected illegal workers during inspections across 295 locations. The operations were conducted by the Public Security Police Force, the Labour Affairs Bureau and other authorities in March 2022 at construction sites, private flats, commercial and industrial establishments. Last month, authorities detected a total of 30 suspected illegal workers in its inspection of 302 locations.

56% OF EMPLOYERS YET TO PAY FSS CONTRIBUTION

About 14,000 employers have not yet paid their employees' obligatory system contributions to the Social Security System for the first quarter of 2022, accounting for about 56% of the total number of employers required to pay contributions. The Social Security Fund (FSS) is calling on employers and residents to make greater use of the electronic payment channels or to use the appointment service. For the Social Security System, April is the contribution month for the first quarter of 2022. According to the law, businesses which miss the payment deadline must pay interest on the delayed payment, as well as a fine.

ANOTHER RETURNEE TESTS POSITIVE

A returnee from Singapore has been recorded as an imported asymptomatic case of Covid-19 following a positive nucleic acid test result on April 18. The 41-year-old resident was given three doses of the mRNA vaccine in July and December 2021 and denied ever having had Covid-19. Tests carried out in Singapore on April 11, 12 and 14 all returned a negative result. Although the man's test upon arrival was negative, the next day, the resident tested positive and was transferred to the medical isolation facility in Coloane. 87 cases of asymptomatic infection have been registered in Macau since the beginning of the pandemic.



MACAO DRONE GALA TO ATTRACT OVER 100,000 VISITORS ACROSS FIVE DAYS, MGTO FORECASTS

RENATO MARQUES

THE Light up Macao Drone Gala has earned its place in the annual events calendar this year, the director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said yesterday at the press conference to announce this year's event.

The drone gala was held for the first time last year as a replacement for the now-defunct Macao International Fireworks Display Contest, which was cancelled two years in a row due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We expect to attract around 100,000 visitors between April 30 and May 4. On these five days, we are forecasting that visitors' figures may reach at least around 20,000 per day," the MGTO director said.

Responding to questions from the media, Senna Fernandes said that the event has earned its place in the events calendar this year with its transfer from September to May.

"Last year we had this event for the first time in September to fill the gap left by the cancellation of the fireworks display contest. This year we decided to have this event in May because we understood that our annual event calendar was not balanced, ha-

ving many events in the second half of the year and fewer in the first half. We are trying to change that and introduce more events in the first semester," she said. "Also, we know that the second half of the year is often affected by the rain season and other weather-related events such as typhoons, being less suitable for the performance with drones," she added.

According to data analysis by the MGTO, last year's event proved popular and contributed to bringing to Macau "some extra 13,000 people to watch the drones show," Senna Fernandes said. She commented that the high visitor numbers are important not only for the event itself and for the image of Macau, but also for the Nam Van area, where the performances take place. The Van Nam neighborhood is an area with many small and medium enterprises related to cultural and creative industries, which stand to benefit from the event.

SAME BUDGET WITH LESS GOV'T INVESTMENT

The budget for the event will be of a similar size to 2021, that is, around 7.4 million patacas.

However, the director noted that this year the government investment is significantly less

(at only 4.4 million patacas): a reduction made possible by the sponsorship collected from the six gaming concessionaires who will sponsor the event this year.

Although it was not specifically announced, the amount involved (3 million patacas) suggests an equal investment from the six concessionaires of about 500,000 patacas each.

LARGER-SCALE AND HIGHER QUALITY DRONE SHOW

Although the Light up Macao Drone Gala 2022 comprises only eight performances over four days (one show fewer than in 2021), the MGTO explained that the event this year will be on a much larger scale and be even more spectacular, with the participation of a total of 880 drones (almost triple the number in 2021), creating even more fantastic three-dimensional images in the skies of Macau.

The shows will be held on the Labor Day Holidays (May 1 and 2) and the following weekend (May 7 and 8).

The Drone Gala, themed "Macao for All Seasons," will include different elements such as festivals, events, and unique architecture.

The MGTO also said that although there will be two 15-minute performances per night,

all the performances are unique and not repeated, and visitors are thus invited to watch all the performances over the four nights of visual entertainment. Performances will be held at Nam Van Lake at 8 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.

Additionally, a series of outreach activities will be held in parallel with the drone gala, including the exhibition of a large drone capable of carrying a passenger to take place at the Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre between 7 and 10 p.m. on April 25 and between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. from April 26 to May 8.

The event also includes a Photography Contest and a "Drone Sky Art" Formation Design Contest in which the citizens are invited to take part by submitting their creative ideas.

The public can also participate in interactive online games via the website "drone-games.ad-on.mo/temp.html" from April 19 until May 8, to save and redeem reward points for prizes, special offers and enter a lucky draw.

The prizes include hotel accommodation and dining coupons offered by the six partner entities for the event — Melco Resorts & Entertainment, Wynn, Sands China Ltd., Galaxy Entertainment Group, SJM Resorts, S.A. and MGM.

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

TOURISM

GOV'T TO RESUME 'MACAO WEEKS' ON THE MAINLAND IN H2

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is planning to resume its promotional campaigns for Macao as a tourism destination, known as "Macao weeks," in several mainland cities and provinces, the MGTO director said yesterday in reply to a media question on the sidelines of the press conference of the Light Up Macao Drone Gala 2022.

"We hope that in the second half (H2) of this year we can resume our promotion with the Macao Weeks in different provinces. We have been forced to push the promotion events back a little due to the Covid-19 situation in several provinces on the mainland but we hope to get back on track soon," Maria Helena de Senna

Fernandes said.

Also questioned on the cooperation between Macau and the mainland in regards to some of the events being hosted in Macau, she added that Macau has been in constant communication with mainland companies.

The Drone Gala is a case in point, since the drone team running all the performances comes from the neighboring city of Shenzhen. Senna Fernandes added that more cooperation is expected for the 'Macao Light Festival' at the end of the year.

"For the Light Festival, we are planning to partner with some Hengqin companies. We believe there is more room for cooperation with mainland companies," she concluded.



CE in Hainan to attend Boao Forum

RENATO MARQUES

THE Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, will visit Hainan to take part in the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022, the Government Information Bureau has announced in a statement.

According to the same statement, the CE will attend the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum set to take place tomorrow (April 21) as well as lead a Macau delegation, which will be in Hainan Province today and tomorrow to attend the Forum.

The event this year is themed "The World in COVID-19 & Beyond: Working Together for Global Development and Shared Future". It features six modules, namely: a summary of the global experience in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, and an exploration of how to narrow the "vaccine gap"; trends in the world economy; recovery of green



industry and sustainable development; the promotion of the long-term healthy development of the digital economy; international cooperation and global governance; and new developments for regional cooperation in Asia.

Delegates from governments, business, academia, and the media, who come from all over the world, will gather to discuss the post-pandemic development agenda for Asia and the world. They will focus on topics such as

green development, innovative development, inclusive development, and collaborative development, with the aim of promoting international solidarity and cooperation. The Forum will include in-person as well as online events.

The Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macau Special Administrative Region, Liu Xianfa, will join the local delegation as an adviser.

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SURVEY: SMES CONTINUE TO FACE GLOOMY BUSINESS PROSPECTS

LYNZY VALLES

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are facing a gloomy outlook, with nearly 10% of the interviewed local firms set to close their business, according to a survey conducted by the Federal General Commercial Association of Macau Small and Medium Enterprises.

In the "2022 Macao SME Business Index Confidence Survey," the association surveyed some 500 SMEs, of which more than 85% responded that their business' revenue has decreased by nearly half compared to pre-pandemic times.

This is in addition to the series of hurdles the city has faced, which has affected local businesses, such as the steep downturn in gaming revenues, global economic turnaround and negative external factors and policy controls. Not to mention the fact that the operating costs of Macau SMEs, including rent and human resources, have risen sharply.

Executive vice president of the association, Melinda Chan, pointed out that the SMEs' business confidence index stands at only



30 points, far below the 100-point base line.

According to Chan, the government is aware of the increasing turmoil SMEs are facing, referencing the fact that the government has proposed a series of measures to alleviate the burden of these firms. However, she said, these are non-sustainable short-term mea-

asures, which can only solve the pressing needs of the moment.

She then called on the government for development policies capable of boosting revenue for local SMEs.

Meanwhile, 31.5% of the surveyed SMEs have laid off staff due to the pandemic, among which 53.7% of the tourism and enter-

tainment industry had laid off staff and 48% of the MICE and cultural sector had laid off staff.

A survey from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has shown that both the general unemployment rate and the unemployment rate of local residents for the three-month period between December 2021 and February 2022

has continued to grow by 0.1%, reaching 3.3% and 4.3% respectively as at the end of February.

The total labor force living in Macau is 386,300, with a labor force participation rate of 69.3%.

Meanwhile, 32.1% of the surveyed SMEs believed that the Hengqin Cooperation Zone would have a positive impact on their businesses, and 53.4% expressed their hope to relocate their businesses to Hengqin.

However, only about 7.7% of the companies are able to implement a plan to move or expand in the nearby region, reflecting that local SMEs are keen on establishing a firm in the neighboring region, yet are lacking a concrete direction or plan.

Just recently, Macau investors began setting up companies in the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin without leaving their locality.

A "cross-border handling" mechanism for commercial registration was recently launched by the Cooperation Zone's Commercial Services Bureau and the Macao Trade & Investment Promotion Institute.

Recently, the Macau Economic Association (MEA) has forecast that the Prosperity Index for March to June will likely fly low.

The projected values for the Index for these months are estimated to range between 2.5 and 2.7 points, on a scale of 0 to 7 points.

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MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Suicide cases in Q1 jumps 300% y-o-y, association calls for 'stepped care' model

LYNZY VALLES

MACAUI has recorded an alarming number of suicide cases in the first quarter of this year, which could be interpreted as hitting a crisis level.

The Times has observed that the Judiciary Police (PJ) has sent more suicide alerts and death notices due to 'falls' this year, compared to last year.

In a response to the Times, the PJ stated that between January to March 2022, there have been 28 cases of suicide, while the number of deaths due to 'falls' was 11.

These figures are much higher than those recorded last year.

In 2021, covering the same period, authorities recorded a total of eight cases of suicide, along with three cases of deaths due to falling, reaching an alarming increase of over 300%.

As of April 19, authorities have already reported eight suicide cases, including cases of deaths due to falling. The most recent case included a 12-year-old resident who 'fell' from her bedroom window onto the residential building's podium on the third floor. She was pronounced dead following efforts to revive her at the hospital. Although no suicide note was found, the PJ have classified the case as suicide.

In 2020, the education bureau urged parents and teachers to pay attention to students' needs, following the death of a 16-year-old male secondary student who jumped off a building.

That same year, suicide cases totaled 76, including 65 residents (41 men and 24 women), equating to a suicide rate of 11.1 per 100,000 inhabitants, an increase of 13.3% compared to 2019.

Data shows that Macau recorded a total of 60 suicides cases 2021, a decrease of 21.1% compared to the previous year. The figure represents a suicide incident once per week.

Despite 'decreases' being recorded during quarters, a single case of suicide is too many.

Back in 2020, the Times reported that the Macau SAR has not yet overcome the stigma of mental illness: a stigma which leads people with mental health problems to 'save face' and refrain from seeking help.

Two years later, the problem



remains: only now, it represents a more significant challenge. Besides the issue of the stigma of mental illness, mental health experts are now seeing an increase in the severity of cases (though not an increase in case numbers).

Henry Lao, chairman of the Macau Society of Registered Psychotherapists (MSRP), told the Times that 36% of all clients seeking help are teenagers and adolescents, double the former figure of 15%.

"The severity of clients' [cases has] increased. Prior the pandemic, 15 to 16% of the clients had suicidal ideation or self-harm. But now, around 44% are having suicidal ideation," Lao said.

On the question of the stigma around mental health, Lao said that Macau residents tend to be more reticent about seeking professional help, while those from the mainland are more open about it.

The chairman, who works for an NGO and teaches at a university, remarked that people in Macau, compared to other countries, or the mainland, have a totally different sense of mental health. "I spoke with some staff and colleagues in university settings and 80% of their clients are from the mainland. It's a local university, but clients who come to the counseling center [are mostly from the mainland]," he explained.

LACK OF RESOURCES AND PROFESSIONALS

Seeking help and having the available resources to help are two different aspects of the problem.

Findings within the UN health agency's new report suggest that the greatest deterioration in mental health took place in the areas worst-hit by the pandemic, where infections were high and social interaction was restricted.

Resources and professionals have not been increasing; resources are insufficient

According to the UN, the report is a wake-up call for all countries to pay more attention to the matter and do a better job of supporting their populations' mental health.

The Chief Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng said last week that at the end of 2021 there were 84 psychotherapists in Macau, which is 1.2 psychotherapists per 10,000 people.

However, Lao explained that, despite the disclosed figure, "We don't have that many people who are really working and [full-time] providing psychotherapy services in the field."

This has led to a persistent problem: resources and professionals have not been increasing,

resources are insufficient, and people are not aware of those resources, according to the psychotherapist.

ABSENCE OF INTERVENTION AMONG YOUNGSTERS

In Hong Kong, the government has a "stepped care" model for supporting youth mental health, as do many developed countries. It mainly comprises a hierarchy of detection and intervention of varying intensity to match the level of patient needs. The least resource-intensive treatment is delivered first, with the option to "step up" to intensive or specialist services after the severity of symptoms is assessed.

Lao hopes that such a model could be adopted in Macau. He lamented, "we don't even have [a] registered educational psychologist" to boost mental health awareness for young people.

The CE has also previously announced that UM will consider reopening the Master's program in clinical psychology.

In developed countries, in order to practice what is referred to in Macau as psychotherapy, an individual must possess at least a Master's degree in clinical psychology, the discipline which focuses on supporting people in a clinical setting.

Pursuant to Executive Regulation No. 23/2021, registrants in psychotherapy in Macau must

possess a Master's degree in clinical psychology. However, no Master's program is currently offered in the region.

Late last year, a mobile application to monitor users' mental health was launched to provide reliable and effective guidance for users trying self-help.

Aimed at university students, the 'Step by Step' app was jointly developed by the University of Macau (UM) and New York University Shanghai (NYU Shanghai), and is currently being trialed.

Meanwhile, the statistics and analysis on mental health topics that Macau currently possesses is not sufficient to forecast future needs.

According to the MSRP, the city's resources are currently highly under strain, therefore providing the same quality of therapy sessions and services is not feasible.

In Hong Kong, the average time limit of each session is between one hour and two, a "much longer" practice compared to Macau.

"We really need to improve and see whether we have a sufficient ratio of psychotherapists. We're not just looking at the number of ratio of [psychotherapists] and citizens. We need to rank the average rating time, time line for each session, the quality of each service," said Lao.

However, these kinds of statistics are not available in Macau.

DIPLOMACY

US OFFICIALS HEADING TO SOLOMONS OVER CHINA PACT WORRIES

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

THE U.S. is sending two top officials to the Solomon Islands following a visit last week by an Australian senator over concerns that China could establish a military presence in the South Pacific island nation.

The White House said yesterday [Macau time] that later this week, Kurt Campbell, the National Security Council Indo-Pacific coordinator, and Daniel Kritenbrink, the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, will lead a delegation of U.S. government officials to the Solomon Islands, and will also visit Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin yesterday said Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Solomon Islands counterpart, Jeremiah Manele, officially signed a security agreement "the other day." No specific date was given.

A draft of the pact, which was leaked online, said Chinese warships could stop in the Solomon Islands and China could send police and armed forces there "to assist in maintaining social order."

Wang told reporters at a daily briefing that the agreement covers "maintaining social order," along with protecting lives and property, providing humanita-

AP PHOTO



U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell

rian assistance and responding to natural disasters.

"We are committed to helping the Solomon Islands to strengthen its capacity building

to maintain national security," Wang said. He said the agreement does not seek to supersede the South Pacific nation's security ties with other nations.

The Solomon Islands has sought to downplay the significance of the agreement and says it won't lead to China establishing a military base there, but many nei-

ghboring countries and Western nations remain worried.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said the agreement could destabilize the Solomon Islands and would set a concerning precedent for the wider Pacific region.

"Despite the Solomon Islands government's comments, the broad nature of the security agreement leaves open the door for the deployment of P.R.C. military forces to the Solomon Islands," Price said.

The U.S. trip comes after a visit to the Solomon Islands last week by Australian Sen. Zed Seselja, the minister for international development and the Pacific.

Seselja said he met with Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and asked him to abandon the Chinese agreement.

The Solomon Islands portrayed the meeting in a more positive light, saying Sogavare and Seselja held productive discussions regarding the security concerns of the Solomon Islands and the wider Pacific region.

Last week, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman spoke with Solomon Islands Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele about Washington's plan to reopen an embassy in the capital, Honiara.

The announcement of the reopening of the embassy, which has been closed since 1993, came in February before the security pact came to light, but amid already growing concerns about Chinese influence in the strategically important country. **MDT/AP**

OBITUARY

Philippines ambassador to Beijing 'Chito' Sta. Romana dies

THE Philippines' ambassador to China, Jose Santiago "Chito" Sta. Romana, has died while in quarantine for COVID-19. He was 74.

Sta. Romana was a longtime resident of China and had been a correspondent for ABC News prior to being appointed ambassador in 2016.

He was among a small group of Filipinos who visited China during the rule of Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos and were subsequently barred from returning home. He remained in China from 1971 until Marcos' toppling in 1986 and joined ABC in 1989, the year Beijing was rocked by pro-democracy protests centered on Tiananmen Square that were crushed by the military.

The Philippine Depart-

AP PHOTO



Philippine Ambassador Chito Sta. Romana speaks during a forum on the South China Sea, in early 2019

ment of Foreign Affairs announced Sta. Romana's passing yesterday. No word was given on the cause of death.

Philippine media reports said he died the day before in the city of Huangshan, where he had been completing his 21-day

quarantine after returning from the Philippines with Foreign Minister Teodoro Locsin Jr., who visited China for talks with Chinese

Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Sta. Romana was appointed ambassador to China in 2016 "in recognition of his deep knowledge of China's history and people," the department said in a statement.

"Under his distinguished tenure, Philippine-China relations flourished despite differences; indeed they flowered all the more in maturity and were deeply strengthened. We honor his important legacy of selfless service to the Filipino in the most challenging foreign post," the department said.

Philippine relations with China have been roiled by disputes over rival claims to parts of the South China Sea, with China's much larger navy, coast guard and maritime militia accused of harassing Filipino fisher-

men and defense forces.

China has refused to recognize a 2016 Hague arbitration ruling that mostly invalidated China's South China Sea claims and continues to claim the strategic waterway and its resources virtually in its entirety.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Sta. Romana was "well known for his profound knowledge of China."

"He worked and lived in China for many years and was our old friend and good friend. After assuming the post of the Philippine ambassador to China in 2017, he worked actively and industriously, making important contributions to promoting bilateral relations and friendship between our two peoples," Wang said. **MDT/AP**

EASTTIMOR

People chooses president in runoff amid political feud

VOTERS in East Timor chose a president in a runoff yesterday between former independence fighters who've blamed each other for years of political paralysis.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jose Ramos-Horta had a commanding lead in the election's first round but failed to exceed 50% of the votes and avoid the runoff. Ramos-Horta received 46.6%, incumbent President Francisco "Lu Olo" Guterres won 22.1% and 14 other candidates split the rest of the votes in the March 19 election.

Ramos-Horta, 72, and Guterres, 67, were resistance figures during Indonesia's occupation of East Timor. More than 76% of the votes last month went to resistance-era figures, showing how much they dominate politics after two decades despite younger voices emerging.

Polls closed at 3 p.m. and vote-counting began at 1,200 polling centers across the tiny country. Preliminary results may not be known until today.

The winner of the runoff takes office on May 20, the 20th anniversary of the restoration of East Timor's independence.

"I call on people to accept whatever the results of this election wisely," Guterres told reporters while voting in Dili, the capital.

AP PHOTO



Ramos-Horta, 72, or Guterres, 67?

Ramos-Horta, East Timor's president from 2007 to 2012, and Guterres have blamed each other for years of political paralysis.

In 2018, Guterres refused to swear in nine Cabinet nominees from the National Congress of the Reconstruction of East Timor, known as CNRT, a party led by former prime minister and independence leader Xanana Gusmao, who backed Ramos-Horta's run for president.

Guterres is from the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, known by its local acronym Fretilin, which had led resistance to Indonesian rule.

Fretilin says Ramos-Horta is unfit for president, accusing him of causing a crisis as prime minister in 2006, when dozens were killed as political rivalries turned into open conflict on the streets of Dili.

The latest impasse led to the resignation of Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak in February 2020. But he agreed to stay until a new government is formed and to oversee the response to the coronavirus pandemic. His government has operated without an annual budget and has relied on monthly injections from its sovereign fund savings, called the Petroleum Fund.

During his campaign, Ramos-

Horta declared he would call an early parliamentary election if a new majority — based centrally on the CNRT — couldn't be negotiated among the parties in the current parliament. Many are concerned that calling an election early will inflame rather than calm inter-party tensions.

Ramos-Horta's commanding lead in the first round may yet weaken the current ruling alliance — Fretilin, People's Liberation Party or PLP, and Khunto — in backing Guterres. Ruak's PLP party and the rural-based Khunto party, have publicly committed to continuing their alliance with Fretilin until the

2023 parliamentary elections are due.

Ramos-Horta, after casting his vote in Dili, said people are too tired of the political feud, which he said has led to ignoring social and economic problems as well as soaring food prices. "People in East Timor want a new leader to solve the economic problems in this country," he said.

He pledged to reduce poverty, providing health services for mothers and children and create more jobs if he is elected, and vowed to build communication with the governing parties to restore the constitutional mandate and to prevent a more severe economic downturn.

He also said that he will push for East Timor to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the next two years. "This is a very important matter for us and I'll maintain diplomatic contacts with ASEAN leaders to make it happen," he told reporters.

The former Portuguese colony was occupied by Indonesia for a quarter century and gained independence after a U.N.-sponsored referendum in 1999. Indonesia's military responded with scorched-earth attacks that devastated the East Timorese half of the island of Timor.

The transition to a democracy has been rocky, with leaders battling massive poverty, unemployment and corruption. Its economy is reliant on dwindling offshore oil revenues.

Turnout in the March 19 election was 77.26%, or 6% higher than in 2017, the election commission said. Four women were among 16 candidates, the highest number of women taking part in the fifth election since independence. MDT/AP

Singapore and New Zealand to jointly tackle climate change

ZEN SOO, SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE and New Zealand will cooperate on green technologies in the fight against climate change, prime ministers from both countries said yesterday.

The joint efforts will be part of the new climate change and green economy pillar added to Singapore and New Zealand's enhanced partnership, and will involve adopting low-carbon and green technologies, Prime Ministers Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore and Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand said in a joint news conference.

"We cannot collectively simply return to a high carbon emissions business-as-

usual approach. Globally, we have entered what must be an age of action, and that includes the private sector as well," said Ardern.

"No government can do this alone. It takes a strong joint effort," she said.

Ardern arrived in Singapore on Monday for a three-day official visit to meet with Singapore's President Halimah Yacob as well as Lee.

Lee said that both countries will work on initiatives around energy transition technology, carbon markets, sustainable transport and waste management.

"This new culture of cooperation reflects our shared commitment to implement the Paris Agreement and work together to seize growth

opportunities in a green economy," he said.

Lee also said that both Singapore and New Zealand have strongly condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as both countries are "staunch supporters" of international law and the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

"What is happening in Ukraine is an assault on a country's sovereignty and their own territorial integrity," Ardern said. She added that New Zealand will also continue to encourage China to acknowledge what the "Ukraine conflict represents for the world."

"The geopolitical uncertainties, supply chain vulnerabilities and rising protec-

tionism make it all the more important for countries to work together to find a path forward and identify win-win opportunities," he said.

Lee said that both Singapore and New Zealand had a "vested interest" in China-U.S. relations being stable, and added that he hoped "wisdom will prevail" and that the conflict happening in Ukraine would not make things more complicated.

Ardern affirmed that New Zealand and Singapore were close and natural partners of trade, and that both remain committed to free and open rules-based trade and investment.

"There are also opportunities for our businesses to partner and deliver exports

AP PHOTO



Ardern and Lee

and services to South and Southeast Asia in coming decades," she said. "This is especially important at a time like this with global uncertainty around COVID and Ukraine."

Both leaders also discussed the reopening of borders to tourists from each other's countries. Currently, Singapore is open to New Zealanders to visit and Singaporean tourists likewise will be able to visit New Zealand from the beginning of May.

Singapore's Lee also noted that other countries have

asked to join the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement that Singapore, New Zealand and Chile signed together. The DEPA, which aims to make it easier for businesses to conduct trade activities digitally, went into effect in 2021.

During Ardern's visit, Singapore also named a new orchid hybrid in her honor — the Dendrobium Jacinda Ardern. Singapore often names orchids after visiting politicians and dignitaries, as well as celebrities and important guests. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Russian military vehicles move on a highway in an area controlled by Russian-backed separatist forces near Mariupol

PUTIN'S WAR

Russia ratchets up battle for control of eastern Ukraine

ADAM SCHRECK, KYIV

RUSSIA ratcheted up its battle for control of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, intensifying assaults on cities and towns along a front hundreds of miles long in what officials on both sides described as a new phase of the war.

After a Russian push to the capital failed to overrun the city, the Kremlin declared that its main goal was the capture of the eastern Donbas region. If successful, that offensive would give President Vladimir Putin a vital piece of Ukraine and a badly needed victory that he could present to the Russian people amid the war's mounting casualties and the economic hardship caused by the West's sanctions.

In recent weeks, Russian forces that withdrew from Kyiv have regrouped in preparation for an all-out offensive in the Donbas, where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces for the past eight years and have declared two independent republics that have been recognized by Russia.

While Ukraine's president and other officials said the offensive had started, observers noted that it was just the beginning of a new massive onslaught.

Ukraine's military said yesterday that a "new pha-

se of war" began a day earlier when "the occupiers made an attempt to break through our defenses along nearly the entire frontline." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview that "another phase of this operation is starting now."

In what appeared to be an intensification of attacks, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said that air-launched missiles destroyed 13 Ukrainian troop and weapons locations while the air force struck 60 other Ukrainian military facilities, including missile warhead storage depots. Russian artillery hit 1,260 Ukrainian military facilities and 1,214 troops concentrations over the last 24 hours. The claims could not be independently verified.

The Pentagon cast the stepped-up campaign as "shaping operations" setting the stage for a broader offensive in the mostly Russian-speaking Donbas region.

The United States believes that Russian forces are "continuing to set the conditions for what they believe will be eventual success on the ground by putting in more forces, putting in more enablers, putting in more command and control capability for operations yet to come," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Monday.

The assaults began that day along a boomerang-shaped front that stretches more than 300 miles from northeastern Ukraine to the country's southeast.

Russia said it struck several areas with missiles, including the northeastern city of Kharkiv as well as areas around Zaporizhzhia and Dnipro west of the Donbas. Five civilians were killed in a barrage on Kharkiv, Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said.

Moscow's troops seized control of one town in the Donbas on Monday, according to Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai. The breakthrough in Kreminna takes the Russians one small step closer to their apparent goal of encircling Ukrainian troops in the region by advancing on them from the north and south and squeezing them against territory held by Moscow's troops to the east.

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's national security council, said that the defensive line had held elsewhere.

The capture of Kreminna also takes the Russians closer to the city of Sloviansk, whose loss by the Russia-backed separatists represented a humiliating setback for Moscow in the early stages of the separatist conflict in 2014.

Key to the campaign to take the east is the capture of Mariupol, a port city in the region that the Russians

have besieged since the early days of the war.

Shelling continued there and Russia issued a fresh ultimatum yesterday to the Ukrainian troops holed up there to surrender, saying those who come out will "keep their lives." The Ukrainians have ignored previous such offers.

Securing Mariupol would free Russian troops up to move elsewhere in the Donbas, deprive Ukraine of a vital port, and complete a land bridge between Russia and the Crimean Peninsula, seized from Ukraine from 2014.

Denys Prokopenko, commander of the Azov Regiment of the Ukrainian National Guard that is guarding the last known Ukrainian pocket of resistance in Mariupol, said in a video message that Russia had begun dropping bunker-buster bombs on the Azovstal steel plant where the regiment was holding out.

Civilians are also believed to be sheltering at the plant, which covers the territory of over 4 square miles.

On Monday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video address that a "significant part of the entire Russian army" is now concentrated on the battle for the Donbas.

"No matter how many Russian troops are driven there, we will fight," Zelenskyy vowed. "We will defend ourselves." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1968 POWELL SLATES IMMIGRATION POLICY



The Conservative right-winger Enoch Powell has made a hard-hitting speech attacking the government's immigration policy.

Addressing a Conservative association meeting in Birmingham, Mr Powell said Britain had to be mad to allow in 50,000 dependents of immigrants each year.

He compared it to watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre.

The MP for Wolverhampton South West called for an immediate reduction in immigration and the implementation of a Conservative policy of "urgent" encouragement of those already in the UK to return home.

"It can be no part of any policy that existing families should be kept divided. But there are two directions on which families can be reunited," he said.

Mr Powell compared enacting legislation such as the Race Relations Bill to "throwing a match on to gunpowder".

He said that as he looked to the future he was filled with a sense of foreboding.

"Like the Roman, I seem to see the river Tiber foaming with much blood," he said.

He estimated that by the year 2000 up to seven million people - or one in ten of the population - would be of immigrant descent.

Mr Powell, the shadow defence spokesman, was applauded during and after his 45-minute speech.

However, it is likely his comments will be less warmly received by the Conservative party leader, Edward Heath.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Enoch Powell's so-called "Rivers of Blood" speech was his defining political moment.

It led to him being sacked from the shadow cabinet, ending his hopes of a post in a future Conservative government.

However, thousands of workers staged strikes and marches in support of his views and he was inundated with letters from well wishers.

In February 1974 Enoch Powell left the Conservative party because of his opposition to Edward Heath's intention to join the European Community.

He became an Ulster Unionist and represented the seat of Down South, Northern Ireland, from 1974 to 1992.

He died in 1998 aged 85.

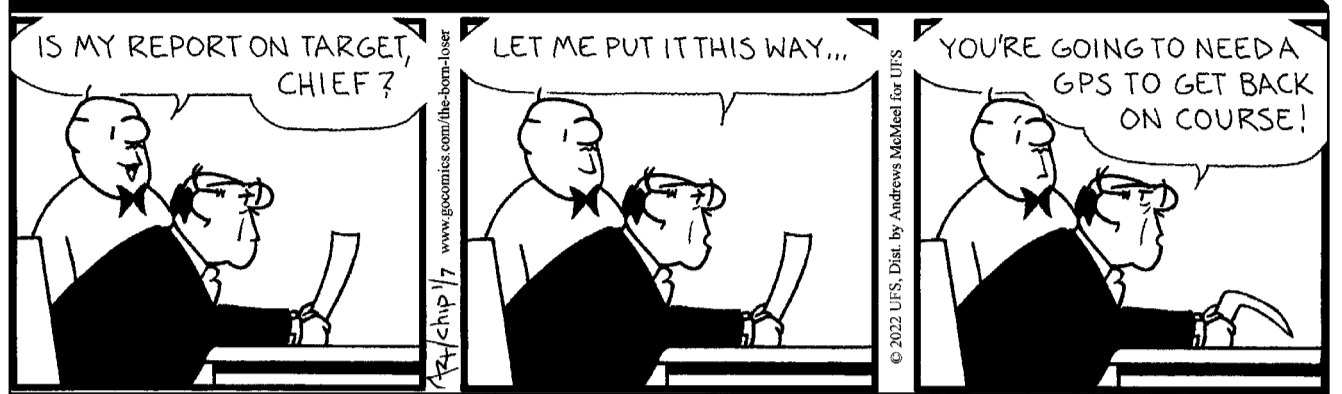
In 1968 he predicted that by the year 2000, up to seven million people living in Britain would be of ethnic descent. The Census in 2001 showed 4.6 million people living in the UK were from an ethnic minority, or 7.9% of the population.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You won't be well received by superiors or by your spouse. Your concern with older family members and those less fortunate than yourself will only add to your attractiveness.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Offer consolation, but don't give them any direction. Don't count your chickens before they hatch. Finish projects that have been hanging over your head.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 You are best to concentrate on your professional endeavors. Your ability to ferret out secret information will lead you to an inside scoop on an amazing financial deal.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Any financial limitations will probably have to be dealt with on your own. Your home environment may be hectic, which could result in emotional upset if you aren't well organized.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Do things because you want to, not because someone else thinks you should. Your boss may be on the rampage and you certainly don't want to be the one to take the brunt of a bad situation.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 You may not be that popular at home but you should be able to shine at social gatherings. Be discreet about your personal life or whereabouts. Be mysterious.
 LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Don't rely on others to do your work. You will be full of good ideas, and your choice of activities may bring you enrichment far beyond your expectations.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 They will not be in the right frame of mind to put up with tactless comments. Try to deal with the problems of those less fortunate; however, don't allow them to make unreasonable demands.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You will have no problem getting your point across to those in a position to help you. Look into physical activities that will help get rid of some of that tension you may be feeling.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Unexpected romantic connections can be made if you go out with friends or take a pleasure trip. Uncertainties regarding your home and family are evident.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Take part in stimulating debates that will allow you to show off your intelligence. Empty promises are evident and deception probable. You must not allow them to force you to rush.	 PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 You could meet an interesting individual you'll want to get to know better. It's a great day to attend social functions. Start sending out those resumes.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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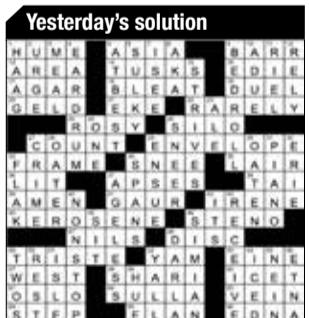
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	9	27	fine
Changchun	7	23	cloudy
Chengdu	10	22	cloudy
Chongqing	12	22	cloudy
Fuzhou	16	21	overcast
Guangzhou	15	18	rain
Guiyang	9	16	cloudy
Haikou	18	24	rain
Hangzhou	11	23	overcast
Harbin	7	23	fine
Hefei	9	23	overcast
Nanjing	14	19	rain
Shanghai	13	23	cloudy
Taipei	18	20	rain
Wuhan	12	24	fine
Hong Kong	22	24	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	6	14	overcast
Frankfurt	4	17	clear
Paris	8	20	overcast
London	7	17	overcast
New York	7	16	clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- More wise; 6- What's more; 10- Hats; 14- Foam; 15- Extol; 16- Rat-; 17- Chairs; 18- This can be guilty or not guilty; 19- Slight; 20- Georgia, once; Abbr.; 21- Group character; 23- Sumptuous meal; 24- Sleep issue; 26- Furning; 27- Important; 29- Celestial body; 31- Brief letter, paper money; 32- Cobb, e.g.; 33- "...and seven years"; 36- Typical instance; 40- Coloring material; 41- Lover of Juliet; 42- Frequently; 43- Piles; 44- Presidential middle name; 46- Let go; 48- Up; 49- Live's partner; 50- Son of Abraham; 52- Big bang producer; 55- Like the Sahara; 56- Polo of "Meet the Parents"; 57- Different; 59- Urm; 60- Ages; 61- Employ again; 62- Chemical used on trees; 63- ___-majesté; 64- Try;

DOWN 1- Flat sound; 2- Simians; 3- Ensure; 4- CPR expert; 5- Take offense at; 6- Omega's opposite; 7- Composer Schifrin; 8- Takes to court; 9- Room within a harem; 10- Attacked; 11- Bothered; 12- Analyze a sentence; 13- Editor's note; 22- Peg used on the first in golf; 23- "Band of Gold" singer Payne; 25- Composition in verse; 26- Apple variety; 27- Like a line, briefly; 28- Cunning; 29- Sidewalk eateries; 30- Assortment; 32- Ninny; 33- An urban shade tree; 34- Continue; 35- Fully aware of; 37- Primp; 38- Mutual fund fee; 39- Story, often rooted in folklore; 43- Guy who tends sheep; 44- Cinco de Mayo, e.g.; 45- Go with; 46- Untamed; 47- Mikhail's wife; 48- Worker's reward; 49- Magma; 50- Able was ___; 51- Ladies of Sp.; 53- Hotbed; 54- Corner; 56- ___ Avir; 58- Leaves in a bag;



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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AD

FILM

TURNER CLASSIC FESTIVAL RETURNS TO HOLLYWOOD WITH SPIELBERG, MORE

LINDSEY BAHRAP

CLASSIC film lovers know the importance of a grand entrance and the folks at Turner Classic Movies are pulling out all the stops for the return of the TCM Classic Film Festival this week in Hollywood.

After two years of virtual editions because of the pandemic, the festival kicks off Thursday with the help of Steven Spielberg, who will be on hand to celebrate the 40th anniversary of "E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial." He and stars Drew Barrymore, Henry Thomas, Dee Wallace and Robert MacNaughton will gather at the TCL Chinese Theatre for a discussion with TCM host Ben Mankiewicz before the new IMAX restoration of the 1982 film screens.

It's the first time Spielberg will be at the festival. He'll also make an appearance to introduce a 4K restoration of the George Stevens' film

AP PHOTO



ma Game," which has been tied up with rights issues for years, and also coincides with what would have been Doris Day's 100th birthday year.

"I get excited that people are going to go and discover things," said Charlie Tabesh, who is responsible for the programming.

He's especially looking forward to the showing of Herbert Ross's "The Last of Sheila," a cult favorite whodunnit from 1973 written by Anthony Perkins and Stephen Sondheim and starring James Coburn, Dyan Cannon and Richard Benjamin.

The festival will once again have its home base at the Hollywood Roosevelt, which since opening in 1927 has housed the likes of Marilyn Monroe, Charlie Chaplin and Montgomery Clift and played a supporting role in films like "Almost Famous" and "Catch Me If You Can." At the festival, it will serve as a headquarters, with panel discussions with honorees like Dern and Laurie and poolside screenings of "Fast Times at Ridgemont High," "Soylent Green" and "Blue Hawaii." It's also the location of the closing night party on Sunday.

They'll also have midnight screenings of "Miracle Mile" and "Polyester" and a live-read of "I Married a Monster from Outer Space" with David Koehn and Laraine Newman acting out roles from the 1958 sci-fi pic.

"One of the filters for us is 'What can we do live that you just wouldn't appreciate the same way if it was on the network?'" Changnon said. "Something like a live-read and a midnight screening brings a different kind of juice to the moment. You know things can go wrong! And just to hear others laughing around you makes it a special experience."

And every TCM festival has its special unprogrammed moments too, even seemingly small ones like watching a film legend watch one of their films. Changnon fondly recalls sitting in a theater years ago near Tony Curtis during a screening of "Some Like It Hot" and the joy of seeing him respond to the jokes.

"Some of this talent haven't seen an audience in a long time," she said. "Understanding that their work lives on, that new audiences are seeing their work and that it's still regarded and respected? There aren't a lot of venues for that opportunity." MDT/AP

"Giant," starring Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson and James Dean.

"E.T." isn't the only 40-year reunion on the slate. Kevin Bacon, Tim Daly, Steve Guttenberg and Paul Reiser are reuniting for a discussion and screening of Barry Levinson's "Diner." And Aileen Quinn is joining Alicia Malone to talk about playing the lead in John Huston's "Annie."

The festival will celebrate talent like 85-year-old Bruce Dern, Piper Laurie, the now 90-year-old star of "Carrie," "The Hustler," "Twin Peaks" and "Children of a Lesser God" and Floyd Norman, the 86-year-old animator who has had a hand in everything from "Sleeping Beauty" and "The Jungle Book" to "Toy Story 2." Cast members of "Cooley High" and "A League of Their Own" will be on hand to discuss their films and Lily Tomlin will also cement her Hollywood legacy with a hand and footprint ceremony outside of the TCL Chinese Theatre.

"It's a proverbial embarrassment of riches," said Pola Changnon, TCM's general manager. "Having people back together again in these venues is just so special."

Changnon and others

behind the festival are "giddy" to finally get to gather again at the historic spots along Hollywood Boulevard, from the Chinese Theatre to the Hollywood Roosevelt hotel. Both venues have been the site of past Academy Awards ceremonies and are just steps away from the Dolby Theatre, the Oscars current home. Red lipstick and fedoras aren't required, but many attendees like to use the occasion to dress to the nines and pay homage to the fashions of Hollywood's golden age for spirited film screenings and talks.

In addition to screenings of well-known standards like "Singin' in the Rain," "Tootsie," "Spartacus" and "Paper Moon," the schedule also boasts "obscure jewels" that aren't widely available.

"Our fans have eclectic tastes," Changnon said. "Some want to see things they've seen before. Some want to see things that they've never seen. They want the discoveries."

One such find is the 1945 romantic comedy "The French Way," starring Josephine Baker as the owner of a nightclub in WWII France which has never been shown before in Los Angeles. Another is a new digital copy of "The Paja-

AD

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RUNNER'S DIARY

Ukrainian runs Boston Marathon to help homeland

IGOR KRYTSAK, BOSTON

IGOR Krytsak, a 33-year-old Ukrainian, is a sporting event organizer who planned to run the Boston Marathon after qualifying in London last year with a personal best 2 hours, 57 minutes, 33 seconds. When Russia invaded his homeland, he sent his wife and two daughters to safety in Spain, but he could not leave the country without a special permit.

Krytsak received permission to run in Boston for humanitarian purposes and arrived in the United States on Saturday. He completed the race on Monday in 3:22:41, wearing a yellow and blue headband and waving a Ukrainian flag that read "I Am Ukrainian And I'm Proud Of It" as he crossed the finish line.

Even as other runners continued on the course through the afternoon, Krytsak departed for New York; today [Macau time], he will catch a plane to Warsaw, where he will meet his family and return to Ukraine by car.

Krytsak discussed his experience with The Associated Press via text chat. (His comments have been edited for clarity, style and space):

WHEN the war broke out, I completely stopped training and preparing for the marathon and devoted all my time to volunteering to support the army and the settlers. My colleagues and I have established a large charitable foundation that

deals with humanitarian issues and provides the Ukrainian army with ammunition and other military equipment.

Eventually, I realized that I had to switch and spend time running, because running for me is a kind of meditation. During the next run, I thought about what I was doing to support my people and army, I was constantly squirming and thinking that I could do more. It was then that I came up with the idea to make every effort and get permission to travel abroad to transport humanitarian aid (I am bringing back to Ukraine a lot of help from Ukrainian and American friends) and participate in the Boston Marathon to inform society about events in Ukraine.

In my opinion, it is very important now to explain to the world what Russia is doing to us. Since 2014, Russia has been doing everything to destroy our state, and on Feb. 24 it moved to the next phase and launched a full-scale war that has already killed tens of thousands of civilians. This is the genocide of the Ukrainian people. The Russian army cannot capture Ukraine, so it kills and bombs civilians; rapes and kills our women, children and men; loots; organizes concentration camps and sends our citizens from our territory to the Russian Federation.

The whole civilized world must stop this madness. We ask for maximum support for Ukraine, because this war concerns not only our country. This is a war for

freedom and democracy around the world. The Ukrainian army is currently defending the entire civilized world from fascism (just now there are fierce battles in the Donbass). If Putin passes Ukraine, then I have a question for you: Who will be next?

I am a volunteer of several volunteer organizations. Our teams submitted official requests for permission to cross the border for humanitarian purposes. I received it and plan to continue to deal with humanitarian issues and support the Ukrainian army.

My mission here was to establish humanitarian channels of aid to Ukraine, to collect and bring aid to Ukraine, to take part in a marathon and to tell the world the terrible truth that I, my family and my whole Ukrainian people are experiencing.

I didn't think about the marathon, and even more so I didn't think about the result. I wanted to draw a parallel between the events that took place in Boston in 2013 and the events that are taking place here in Ukraine.

During the marathon, I thought about those people who are now surrounded, about those who are hiding and fleeing shelling, about those who are now defending our state and about those who will never wake up and start a new day. Participating in a marathon is a great holiday. This is my fifth major from the Marathon Major series. However, today in the distance, I cried several times when I watched happy and carefree families who, toge-

ther with their relatives, are safe, have fun and actively spend their time here. I, like millions of Ukrainians, DREAM that the war will end as soon as possible, and all those involved in those atrocities and crimes must be punished.

For me, this is an opportunity to tell or remind about the war crimes against humanity that the Russian Federation is currently committing against our people. It is very important for us to always be on the air and to remind that the sacred war for freedom and democracy of the whole civilized world is taking place on the territory of our state. We need help. Please do not forget about us. Support us; stop the war right now. Go to the central squares of your cities and countries, ask the government for more sanctions against Russia and Belarus, give more weapons for us, and our army will protect the whole world.

One more thing: Taking part in the marathon, it was important for me to feel and see with my own eyes whether there is understanding and support among the people of America and other countries and it was very nice to understand that there is support. Thank you to everyone who does not stand aside, and helps us.

I saw and heard many different people standing with the Ukrainian flag and shouting words of support. I am very grateful to these people for not keeping silent, but raising the issue of Ukraine. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

BAHRAIN CONFIRMS FIRM'S TALKS TO BUY AC MILAN FOR \$1.1B

BAHRAIN'S government announced that a private equity firm based in the country is in "exclusive talks" to buy seven-time European champion AC Milan and become the Italian league's first Middle East investor.

Three days after news of the dealings emerged, Bahrain's embassy to Britain confirmed in a tweet yesterday [Macau time] that Investcorp is in discussions to buy the Serie A leader for \$1.1 billion.

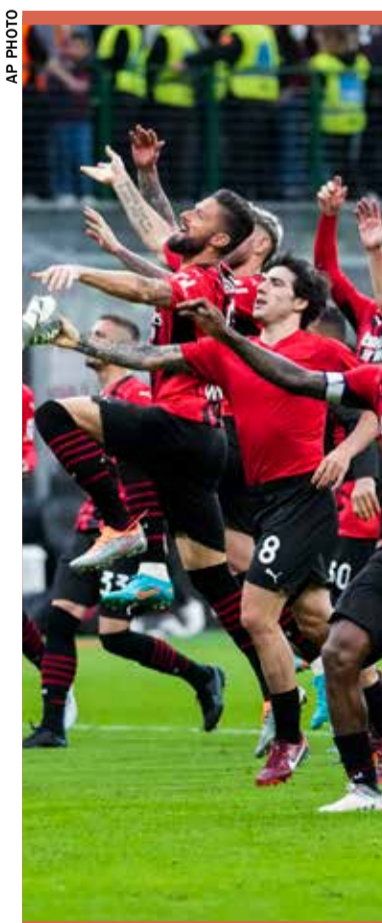
The U.S.-based hedge firm Elliott Management has owned Milan since 2018 after the former Chinese owner failed to repay part of a loan. Former Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi controlled Milan for more than 30 years before selling to the Chinese group in 2017.

Neither Elliott nor Milan has discussed the talks with Investcorp, and club director Paolo Maldini said little when asked about it on Friday.

"It's normal that there could be a sale in the future of Milan," Maldini said then. "I don't know when that will be."

Investcorp, which was founded in Bahrain in 1982, delisted from the Bahrain stock exchange last year after almost four decades as it continues its global expansion of investments.

The embassy tweet said Investcorp "manages over \$42 billion in assets across the globe." **MDT/AP**



OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

WASHINGTON'S
NEW ATTEMPT
TO PIT ASEAN
AGAINST CHINA

United States President Joe Biden will host a special summit for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations leaders on May 12 and 13 in Washington, according to a statement by White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki.

The purpose of the summit is to “demonstrate the United States’ enduring commitment to ASEAN ... and commemorate 45 years of US-ASEAN relations”, according to a statement issued by the White House. Considering the meeting was convened in late October 2021, this one certainly will be special in some ways.

It will surely provide some clues as to whether and how the US will adjust its global strategic deployment in light of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and its geopolitical impacts on major country relationships. In particular, how it will approach the Asia-Pacific, or what it perceives to be the Indo-Pacific, in the future.

Despite the hostilities in Ukraine, as has been the case for other summits and meetings organized by the US, many believe China will be a “likely focus” of the summit.

When it comes to what the US perceives to be “the region’s most pressing challenges”, for instance, it is very unlikely that China will not be to the fore in the corresponding discussions.

Although ASEAN countries may be more concerned about such immediate concerns as internal unity in the aftermath of the political change in Myanmar as well as domestic and regional economic hardships and giving impetus to economic recovery, there simply is no way to distract Washington from its obsession with the South China Sea as the venue for its “competition” with China. Even as countries in the region have generally found peace between and among themselves and are now working toward a common code of conduct for the waters of the South China Sea.

Based on what Washington has been saying and doing, it is almost impossible to imagine that it will not take advantage of the summit to nurture the seeds of distrust that it has been trying to cultivate between ASEAN and China. After all, in the typical Washington narrative, Beijing is the single largest threat to its vision of a “free and open, secure, connected, and resilient” Indo-Pacific.

Correspondingly, Beijing has read US diplomatic maneuvers in the region as aimed at creating an Asia-Pacific version of NATO, with the intention of damaging the regional cooperation framework centered on ASEAN.

Washington climbs from one step of ambition to another, playing a geopolitical game in the guise of promoting regional cooperation. Professing it wants to protect others from injury, it acts to injure others.

ASEAN members should treat with caution the stirring rhetoric and brave promises meant to align them to Washington’s purpose.

Global finance leaders are putting the growing crisis over food insecurity and skyrocketing food prices at center stage as members of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank meet in Washington and grapple with the brutal effects of Russia’s war against Ukraine.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen was convening a meeting with leaders from the IMF, World Bank, Group of Seven and Group of 20 global organizations to “call on international financial institutions to accelerate and deepen their response” to countries affected by food issues exacerbated by Russia’s aggression, the

Treasury Department said.

Russia and Ukraine produce 14% of the world’s wheat supply, according to the United Nations, and the loss of commodities due to the war has resulted in soaring food prices and uncertainty about the future of food security globally, especially in impoverished countries.

The U.N.’s Food and Agriculture Organization Food Price Index has made its biggest jump since its inception in 1990, reflecting an all-time high in the cost of vegetable oils, cereals and meat, according to the organization.

AP PHOTO



UK'S BORIS JOHNSON FACES
WRATH OF LAWMAKERS
OVER PARTYGATE

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

PRIME Minister Boris Johnson is facing British lawmakers today [Macau time] for the first time since he was fined by police for attending a birthday party in his office that broke coronavirus lockdown rules.

As the House of Commons returns from an 11-day Easter break, Johnson is expected to apologize for what he insists was a minor slip-up — but rebuff opposition calls to resign for flouting the restrictions that he imposed on the country during the pandemic.

Johnson and his allies argue that it would be wrong to change leaders while Britain faces crises including the war in Ukraine and a cost-of-living squeeze driven by surging energy and goods prices.

Johnson and his Conservative government have faced growing outrage since allegations surfaced late last year that he and his staff held office parties in 2020 and 2021 when millions in the country were barred from meeting with friends and family — or even attending funerals for their loved ones.

Johnson paid a 50-pound (\$66) fine last

week for attending his own surprise birthday party in Downing Street in June 2020. The penalty made Johnson the first British prime minister ever found to have broken the law while in office.

The fine followed a police investigation and a civil service probe into the “partygate” scandal. Johnson tried to bat away questions, first by saying there were no parties and then by insisting that he believed no rules were broken.

Opposition politicians accused Johnson of misleading Parliament, usually a resigning offense.

Cabinet Minister Brandon Lewis insisted Johnson wasn’t a liar and had always stated “what he believes to be the truth.” “What he said to Parliament he believed to be true at the time,” Lewis said.

Johnson’s grip on power had appeared to be on a knife-edge earlier this year because of the scandal and the departure of several top aides. Allies feared “partygate” could become a tipping point for a leader who has weathered a series of other storms over his expenses and his moral judgment. Some Conser-

vative lawmakers were openly calling for a no-confidence vote in their leader.

But Johnson has hung on, partly because Russia’s invasion of Ukraine distracted public and political attention.

Johnson’s international image, battered by Britain’s messy exit from the European Union under his leadership, has been revived by his firm military, political and moral support for Ukraine. Johnson traveled to Kyiv earlier this month to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Johnson could still face more fines. London’s Metropolitan Police force is investigating a dozen event, including “bring your own booze” office parties and “wine time Fridays,” organized by Johnson’s staff. So far at least 50 tickets have been handed out, including those to Johnson, his wife Carrie and Treasury chief Rishi Sunak.

If Johnson is sanctioned again, calls for a no-confidence vote could grow among Conservatives. For now, Conservative lawmaker Geoffrey Clifton-Brown said his colleagues were “withholding their judgment and waiting to see what happens.” MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Pakistan A court sentenced six people to death and nine others to life in prison after convicting them for their roles in last year’s vigilante killing of a Sri Lankan factory manager accused by workers of committing blasphemy, a defense lawyer said. The six men sentenced to death were convicted of murder in a case that outraged many Pakistanis.

AP PHOTO



Sri Lanka’s prime minister said yesterday the constitution will be changed to clip presidential powers and empower Parliament as protesters continued to call on the president and his powerful family to quit over the country’s economic crisis. PM Mahinda Rajapaksa told Parliament that the power transfer will be one of the quick steps that can be taken to politically stabilize the country and help talks with the International Monetary Fund for an economic recovery plan.

AP PHOTO



USA Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen (pictured) plans to meet with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal during this week’s big meetings of global economic leaders in Washington — but she’ll be trying to avoid most contact with Russian officials who plan to attend some portions of the event virtually. The Russian invasion of Ukraine — and how world powers should manage the spillover effects on economies, including food insecurity — will take center stage at the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

USA The Biden administration says it is barring anti-satellite missile testing by the United States, a move that White House officials say is meant to underscore its hopes of establishing new norms for military action in space. Vice President Kamala Harris, in a speech at Vandenberg Space Force Base to highlight the administration’s move, criticized the Russian action as “reckless” and “irresponsible.”