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SECRETARY LEI CALLED ON BUSINESS LEADERS TO LAUNCH STRATEGIC TOURISM PRODUCTS AND PROMOTIONS FOR MAY GOLDEN WEEK

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UN TAKES STEP TO PUT VETO USERS UNDER GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT

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AP PHOTO



Ukraine The U.S. pressed its allies to move “heaven and earth” to keep Kyiv well-supplied with weapons as Russian forces rained fire on eastern and southern Ukraine amid growing new fears the war could spill over the country’s borders. For the second day in a row, explosions rocked the separatist region of Trans-Dniester in neighboring Moldova, knocking out two powerful radio antennas close to the Ukrainian border. No one claimed responsibility for the attacks, but Ukraine all but blamed Russia.

AP PHOTO



Myanmar A court in military-ruled Myanmar convicted the country’s former leader Aung San Suu Kyi of corruption and sentenced her to five years in prison yesterday in the first of several corruption cases against her. Suu Kyi, who was ousted by an army takeover last year, had denied the allegation that she had accepted gold and hundreds of thousands of dollars given her as a bribe by a top political colleague. Her supporters and independent legal experts consider her prosecution an unjust move to discredit Suu Kyi and legitimize the military rule.

AP PHOTO



Nepal banned imports of cars, alcohol, tobacco and other luxury items and shortened its work week to help conserve its dwindling supply of foreign exchange. A notice published in the government gazette said only emergency vehicles can be imported. No imports of any type of alcohol or tobacco products, large-engine motorcycles and mobile phones costing over \$600 dollars will be allowed.

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SURVEY

85% OF FORMER WORKERS IN JUNKET SECTOR STILL UNEMPLOYED

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TROPICAL CYCLONE TO FORM THIS WEEKEND

According to a blog post by the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO), citing European and American weather authorities, a tropical cyclone will form over the coming weekend above the central to southern South China Sea. Nevertheless, the intensity and trajectory of the storm system is still unclear. The system was not yet visible on the graphs prepared by the Japanese authority. Meanwhile, this weekend will also see the arrival of a northeastern monsoon in Macau. With its arrival, the weather will become slightly cooler. The local weather authority forecasts possible rainfall on the first three days of next week.

DAVIS FONG EXPECTS 2022 GGR TO BE SIMILAR TO 2021

Gaming analyst Davis Fong expects that gaming revenue in 2022 will be similar to last year's figure of MOP86.86 billion. The director of the Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming at the University of Macau told the press yesterday on the sidelines of an event that, as shown by recent statistics, whenever there is an outbreak in Macau or neighboring areas, it takes two and a half to three months on average to recover. Fong also hinted that as the source of tourists and the external environment vary, the city should adapt its business strategy to expand the source of tourists.

GOV'T WILL NOT DELIVER SUPPLIES IF THERE IS A MASS COVID-19 OUTBREAK

ANTHONY LAM

The government will not organize the central delivery of supplies for affected residents in the event of a mass outbreak of Covid-19 in Macau, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong U, disclosed yesterday.

The disease has triggered several rounds of lockdowns in many parts of the world. In Macau, as in several countries where there were local infections, the government would cordon off the affected blocks or residential buildings.

Supplies, such as food, were centrally organized and distributed to the affected residents.

Yesterday was the first time in which a senior government official revealed that no centralized supplies delivery would be arranged should the city see a massive outbreak of the disease.

If there is a mass outbreak in the city, the senior official

ANTHONY LAM



forecasted, the government would not be able to deliver supplies to quarantined residents from door to door.

Instead, the affected residents would be allowed to visit the supermarket regularly to purchase groceries. Only one person from each household would be allowed on each visit to the supermarket.

Ao Ieong also forecasted that, "considering the city's vaccination rate," it is unlikely that there would be a mass outbreak originating from a

supermarket or a similar setting.

The senior official also hinted that Beijing would likely offer help if the city were to run out of registered medical staff during a projected mass outbreak. Earlier, officials at the Health Bureau (SSM) have implied this as well.

The period for the collection of samples for mass SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid tests (NATs) will also be shortened from the period allocated on the occasions of similar pre-

vious mass NAT testing. When questioned if this would pose greater risks, the senior official said that an additional number of venues would be assigned, lowering the number of people at each sample collection point.

Rapid antigen test will be introduced to support NATs. The government is almost ready in facilitating the uploading of antigen results to the Macao Health Code. Pet dormitories will be prepared as well.

GOV'T CONSIDERING EASING ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FROM SELECTED COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

The Macau SAR government is currently studying the possible easing of entry requirements for travelers from countries with close ties to Macau.

Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong U said that the measure is part of easing the city's border restrictions, which has been in place since March 2020, barring foreign arrivals.

However, such a move will only be possible if Macau maintains a stable pandemic situation.

The official noted that the target group is family members of foreign residents, or students and professionals. She added that Portugal is one of the countries which the go-

ANTHONY LAM



vernment hopes to examine as soon as possible, noting that Portugal is the country which the review will chiefly focus upon.

To be a focus of the study the country "must have a close relationship with Macau."

"For example, many fa-

milies from the countries [might have relatives] in Macau or vice versa. Some students from that country [might be] studying [in Macau] or vice versa. These types of countries will be on the preliminary list to serve as a reference", said Ao Ieong. LV

SECRETARY LEI URGES BUSINESS LEADERS TO LAUNCH PROMO IN MAY GOLDEN WEEK

LYNZY VALLES

Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong has called on business leaders to lead the sector in preparing for the May 1 Golden Week in launching strategic tourism products and promotions.

Speaking during an event hosted by the Macau Chinese Chamber of Commerce, he recalled that the economic situation in the first quarter of this year deteriorated markedly with the SAR taking measures to attract tourists to stimulate economic recovery.

From Sunday, the government is expecting the number of visitors coming into Macau to exceed 25,000 on individual days

of the May Golden Week holiday.

This comes as Guangdong eases the validity period for nucleic acid tests to 72 hours, which could further encourage visitors to travel to Macau.

Meanwhile, Lei also admitted that the liquidity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has been significantly reduced.

However, he pledged that in the second half of the year, the SAR government will "spare no effort to continue to expand the source of tourists and do a good job in related work, because the source of tourists will solve the current economic difficulties."

During his speech, Lei also reiterated that the

government is working towards launching the next round of consumption vouchers, as well as measures to subsidize water and electricity bills for households and businesses.

Meanwhile, president of the chamber Chui Sai Cheong has said that the consumption vouchers would bolster the domestic demand market and stabilize the market, which would boost economic confidence.

He also mentioned that the SAR government and Beijing's Ministry of Culture and Tourism are negotiating the resumption of the endorsement of tour groups which has long been postponed due to the pandemic.

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RENATO MARQUES

URBAN PLANNING

MULTIPURPOSE LAND PLOTS TRIGGER DEBATE IN CPU

THE possibility of the approval of Urban Conditions Plans (PCU) for several land plots where the land use has not been clearly stated, has sparked debate during yesterday's plenary meeting of the Urban Planning Committee (CPU).

During the discussion of the conditions for several plots, some of the members noted that there was more than one purpose allowed for the same land plot. In some cases, the land could be used for as many as four purposes.

The matter raised eyebrows with members declaring that the committee should assess the conditions of each land plot taking into consideration a specific purpose only.

After a heated exchange of ideas on the matter among several members, the deputy director of the DSSCU, Mak Tat Io, intervened to clarify the matter.

"We need to take into account the fact that Macau has historically had land plots with mixed purposes and we need to continue this as we are aiming to create a diverse area with a mix of residential, commercial, and other purposes," Mak said. He explained that the Urban Master Plan has defined eight zones based on the main purpose of the land but does not limit given plots of land to one purpose only, allowing secondary and tertiary usages as long as in compliance with the law.

"According to the [urban] master plan a land plot can have, besides its main purpose, a secondary purpose. This is valid as long



as at least 51% of the [total usage area] is used for the main purpose, allowing that the remaining 49% be used for other purposes as long as they are allowed by the law," Mak reaffirmed, noting that only the main purpose needs to be defined when approving the development.

"This is what we call integration of the land purposes, as according to what the experts in this field say, we must adopt a flexible approach and cannot simply approve one land plot to have a single use. We all know that most residential buildings also have commercial shops

within the premises as well as schools and other services: this happens everywhere," he concluded.

The discussion of a land plot located between the Travessa do Colégio and the Rua de Penha in Macau initially generated the debate.

The land, which was formerly known as "Mato do Bom Jesus," was acquired by the Order of Discalced Carmelites around 1948 to build a convent which was demolished in the 1970s after only a little over 20 years of use.

After that, the land plot was used for many years as a sports facility that paid support to educational institutions operating under the Roman Catholic Diocese of Macau.

At issue was the fact that the PCU stated several possible uses for the plot including housing, commercial, tourist, and entertainment.

Committee member Chan Chui I was the first to criticize what she considered a high number of potential uses for the land, expressing particular concern for the last of the three, asking whether the land could be used for gaming venues.

In response, a representative from the DSSCU said that the multiple classifications are allowed according to the Master Plan as well as the Administrative Regulations which support it.

As for the potential use of the purpose of "tourist and entertainment" for a casino or a gaming venue, the same official said, "If it allows or forbids use for gaming, this depends on the evaluation from the service that has this responsibility to judge. We only define the general purposes of the land."

One thing is certain, the electric power sub-station that is built on the land would not be affected by any of the developments on the plot of land, the director of DSSCU, Lai Weng Leong guaranteed.

Gov't plans to build a commercial tower at former Cotai border post

RENATO MARQUES

THE government is planning to build a commercial tower to be located on part of the land plot once used by the former Lotus Flower Border post in Cotai.

The plan was unveiled yesterday in the presentation of the project and discussion of the Urban Conditions Plan (PCU) for the plot during the plenary meeting of the Urban Planning Committee (CPU).

On the line is an 8,204 square-meter plot which includes part of the old border control post as well as the former Bus stop and roads area. According to the government, these will give



way to an up to 125 meters tall tower solely dedicated to commercial purposes.

The project, which drew only one submission during the period of public consul-

tation, is located in an area next to the Cotai Ecological Zones. This is why the

government must do an environmental impact assessment as well as call for advice from the Transport Bureau, Municipal Affairs Bureau, Environmental Protection Bureau and Fire Services Bureau.

During the discussion, Committee member Sio Chi Veng expressed hopes that the government will include more commercial elements in the development.

"I hope the government can introduce more commercial elements such as retail stores to this building because, in the future, this border [Lotus] will likely be the main crossing point between Macau and the mainland. Those who cross the border can have an extra place for shopping," he said.

Sio also called on the government to include more public infrastructure and services nearby to support the new building.

In her turn, Committee member Chan Chiu I questioned the possibility of the government adopting a "green" decoration for the building as a way to minimize the visual impact, considering the bird colonies living in the Cotai wetland areas.

In response to these questions and suggestions, a representative from the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) said that the call for submissions and for an environmental impact assessment study already indicate a concern for the ecological protection of the area and the creation of a healthier eco-system.

Regarding the purpose of the building, the same official advanced that it can be used for all commercial uses including retail as well as office spaces, "aiming to cope with the development of this area of the border post."

Wynn Boosts Local Employment with New Opportunities for Macao's Job Seekers

THE COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on Macao's economy and employment market and has caused a subsequent surge in unemployment recently. In line with the SAR government's policy focusing on pandemic prevention and economic recovery, Wynn is cooperating with the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) to implement a range of measures, including ongoing job-matching sessions for Macao residents, to bolster local employment and offer a variety of job opportunities to help stabilize the employment situation.

300 NEW RECRUITS IN THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS

In the first four months of this year alone, a total of 18 job-matching sessions have already been held and over 1,200 interviews conducted, covering a diverse range of roles including hotel operations, catering, security, and cleaning. So far, the matching sessions have successfully secured employment for more than 300 local employees.

LOCAL EMPLOYEES ACCOUNT FOR 76% OF TOTAL WORKFORCE

In addition to on-the-spot interviews that Wynn arranged for job seekers, the company also provided participants who successfully secured employment by changing their career path with a two-week "Wynn Immersion Program," which assisted the new recruits to quickly and seamlessly integrate into their new role and fully realize their strengths.

At present, 76% of Wynn team members are Macao residents. The company will continue to follow the principle of prioritizing employment for locals alongside its commitment to provide employees with opportunities for upward mobility and horizontal development.



Wynn cooperates with the DSAL to organize ongoing job-matching events, offering local residents a variety of job opportunities.



Wynn arranges on-the-spot interviews for job seekers at the job-matching sessions.

CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM NURTURES LOCAL TALENTS

In support of the "Career Experience" internship scheme for fresh university graduates initiated by the DSAL, Wynn introduced its own "Wynn Career Experience Program" for new graduates in 2020 and 2021, providing a three-month profes-

sional training course for a total of 80 interns across the departments of hotel operations, food and beverage, retail, facilities, and information technology, among others. Wynn also gave guaranteed offers of employment to all interns who completed the course. Nearly 70% of whom entered full-time employment with Wynn, thereby adding renewed

momentum to the hotel and tourism industry.

Wynn will continue supporting DSAL's internship scheme by running the "Wynn Career Experience Program" again this year to provide more young people with world-class learning and advancement programs in different fields and support the development of local talent.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM OFFERS STUDENTS AUTHENTIC WORK EXPERIENCES

In order to actively cultivate local talent and enable fresh graduates to gain valuable work experience, Wynn organizes an annual "Wynn Internship Program" that provides students from local higher institutions with valuable workplace experience over a six-month period. The program offers students the opportunity to work in a friendly and supportive environment so that they may benefit from mentoring and on-the-job training to further develop their professional skills.

All students who participated in the second batch of the "2021 Wynn Internship Program" successfully graduated in December last year. 60 students were awarded with a certificate of completion, six of whom were also awarded scholarships in recognition of their outstanding performance to encourage them to continue their studies.

INTERVIEW SKILLS WORKSHOP TO BETTER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

To better equip young local talent with the necessary skills to succeed in job interviews, Wynn fully supported and participated in the "Job Interview Skills Workshop" organized by the DSAL early this year. Furthermore, Wynn was also invited to be the first company to deliver a collaborative job interview skills workshop to prospective local job seekers.

The workshop not only provided personalized coaching, but also offered a range of professional interview techniques for the job-hunting process from a recruiter's perspective, including CV writing, pre-interview preparation, effective communications skills, and acceptance of employment. Through this workshop, Wynn enabled participants to gain practical experience, master the interview skills and keys to success to prepare for future job interviews and thereby increase their chances of being hired.



The "Wynn Career Experience Program" provides professional training and guaranteed offers of employment to fresh graduates.



Student interns benefit from mentoring and on-the-job training to further develop their professional skills.



Wynn collaborates with the DSAL to deliver the "Job Interview Skills Workshop" for local job seekers.

FOOTPRINT REGISTRATION TO EXPAND COVERAGE

The Health Bureau (SSM) has announced that it would expand the coverage of the footprint registration function: a function reliant on the Macao Health Code app developed by the SSM. Currently, people are "encouraged" – the SSM has restated its position – to scan the footprint registration QR code as they enter venues with the code posted. In the next phase, the code will be posted in venues such as driving academies, job agencies, lawmakers' offices, takeaway food shops and public venues of associations. Users have been fearing privacy breaches, while SSM has reiterated that no data will be uploaded to any government server.

GOV'T FURTHER CROWDS COLOANE WITH TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

The Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSEDT) has decided to add to tourist attractions at Coloane with the introduction of Augmented Reality (AR) tourist experiences. People are invited to scan QR codes posted at various locations to interact with the AR elements. Twenty businesses will join together to offer discounts, coupons, gifts and lucky draw prizes to customers. Besides this, the DSEDT will be placing human-height statues of the famous Rooster of Barcelos on a small square in the Coloane Village. In fact, residents have not hesitated to visit Coloane during weekends and public holidays, bringing heavy traffic to the village.

CONSUMER COUNCIL TO WAIVE FEES FOR CERTAIN MEDIATION, ARBITRATION SERVICES

The Consumer Council of Macao has announced that its Macao Consumer Dispute Mediation and Arbitration Center will waive the charge for complainants seeking mediation or arbitration services in consumer disputes where the compensation requested is below MOP100,000. For cases exceeding the amount, the charge will range from 1% to 5% of the total compensation requested. All complaints will incur prepayments prior to the launch of investigations, mediations or arbitrations. The charge levied by the Center should be equally shared between the two parties in a complaint. If a procedure is suspended in the interim, the charge will be calculated proportionately.

EMPLOYMENT SURVEY

85% OF FORMER WORKERS IN JUNKET SECTOR STILL UNEMPLOYED

LYNZY VALLES

ABOUT 85% of employees dismissed from junket operators, due to the turmoil engulfing the sector, are still unemployed, with most being unable to make ends meet.

According to a survey conducted by the Integrated Service Centre of the Macau Gaming Industry Employees Home, 45% of the respondents who were still out of work had already sold or had considered selling their assets.

In early January, a total of 766 complaints had been filed regarding the subsidiaries of junket operator Suncity, businesses which have ceased trading amid the arrest of junket mogul Alvin Chau. In addition to the subsidiaries, the bureau received 21 complaints from employees of "companies related to Suncity."

January data shows that number of gambling promoter licenses in the city has decreased nearly 50%, with 46 junket licensees for the current year: far fewer than the approved 85 license gaming promoters.

According to the survey, respondents are generally unsatisfied with the employment support they have received, and 85% expect to receive employment referral support.



MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

The study also shows that only 15% of the respondents expect a monthly income of more than MOP20,000, which is significantly less than the original income from their previous jobs; while over 80% expect monthly wages ranging from MOP12,001 to MOP 20,000.

This implies that these former workers already have lowered their expectations. However, according to the group, they may have to lower it down further.

Over half of the 309 respondents are former employees of Suncity, while 18.1% of the respondents were formerly em-

ployed by Tak Chun and 12.3% from the Guangdong Group.

Recent government data shows that a total of 373,600 people were employed across the city's economy, of whom 281,000 were residents. These figures represent a drop of 5,400 and 3,500, respectively, when compared with the period between November 2021 and January 2022.

The drop in the number of people who are underemployed – which fell by about 1,500 people (to 11,100) – was mostly attributed to those engaged in the sector Gaming & Junket Activities.

Furthermore, gaming insiders expect no recovery in the gaming sector for at least six months, with its financial situation set to worsen.

The industry is currently eyeing the May 1 Golden Week Holiday as a potential catalyst for gaming tourism recovery.

The respondents, who have been jobless for up to four months, believed that there are not enough job opportunities due to the effect of the pandemic on the economy. Their lack of vocational skills also hinder them from landing on a good job opportunity, according to the survey.



ART

Water Poon's exhibition at Sands Gallery raises funds

SANDS China is presenting a new exhibition by artist and photographer Water Poon – the second exhibition from the artist in Macau in the

pandemic era.

This time, however, proceeds from the exhibition will go to charity.

Hosted at The Four Seasons, which has just

recently hosted an East Meets West exhibition, Poon's "101 Bowls – An Art Exhibition Featuring Water Poon's Art & Romy Cheung's Fashion"

showcases over 40 bowls, some themed on the 24 Chinese solar terms.

The artist explains that the idea of "101" represents reunification after the achievement of consummation, returning to the starting point, and not forgetting the original intention, which is the communication of love and goodwill through the medium of the bowls.

The exhibition also features folk art costumes designed by his wife, Romy Cheung, which is aimed at incorporating modern design into traditional materials to demonstrate the power of the "rising cultural tide of China."

With a theme of "Full of Content, Full of Love," the exhibition was created as a labor of love by the couple.

As a charity tour, the exhibition has toured in Guangzhou, Shanghai and Dongguan, with donations made to respective NGOs for youth education along the way. For

the Macau exhibition, 10 of Poon's bowls are being donated in a charity sale, with all proceeds going to Rainbow Road. Rainbow Road is a project to help rural teenagers, especially those in ethnic regions of China, enhance their artistic abilities and promote the transmission of the cultural and artistic heritage of ethnic minorities.

At the opening ceremony, Poon took the occasion to present a MOP 100,000 check to Lok Hei, representative of the Rainbow Road Project and president of Macau Artist Society, in the presence of five of the philanthropists who purchased the bowls.

"By bringing exhibitions like this to Sands Gallery, we hope to contribute to Macau's positioning as a multicultural exchange and cooperation base between Chinese and Western culture," Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China, remarked. LV

COVID-19

Shanghai seeks 'societal zero Covid' with rounds of testing

SHANGHAI city authorities said yesterday they will start rounds of COVID-19 testing over the next few days to determine which neighborhoods can safely be allowed a limited amount of freedom of movement, as residents in Beijing watch carefully on word for whether the capital city will lock down.

Yesterday, China reported 14,222 new cases, the vast majority of which were asymptomatic. The country is battling its largest outbreak since the pandemic was first reported in Wuhan in late December 2019.

Shanghai's vice head of its health committee, Zhao Dandan, announced yesterday that the city would begin another round of testing for city residents over the next few days to determine which districts were lower risk. Areas that have been declared to have achieved "societal zero COVID" could see some measure of limited freedom.

The phrase, used by Chinese health authorities, refers to when



new positive cases are only discovered in people who are already under surveillance, such as in centralized quarantine or those considered to be close contacts. At this point, they are considered to have broken off chains of transmission at the community level.

Shanghai's total lockdown has been in place for near a month, taking a toll on residents who have been confined to their ho-

mes. While a small, lucky portion of people have been allowed to leave their homes in the past week, the vast majority of people remain confined.

The flow of industrial goods has also been disrupted by the suspension of access to Shanghai, home of the world's busiest port, and other industrial cities including Changchun and Jilin in northeast China.

Officials reported 48 deaths yesterday, bringing the total to at least 238 in the city.

Meanwhile, the capital city Beijing is in the middle of mass testing millions of residents after cases were discovered over the weekend. The city reported 34 new cases yesterday, 3 of which were asymptomatic.

In the last couple of days, nervous Beijing residents had started stockpiling food and supplies, following Shanghai's troubles where residents struggled to get a continuous and reliable supply of food while under lockdown.

Beijing city officials were quick to promise that they were ensuring grocery stores would be well-stocked. They said they were monitoring the Xinfadi wholesale market, where the city gets the vast majority of its supply from, at a press conference Tuesday night.

Demand has soared, with city residents sharing online lists of what to stock. Farms on the outskirts of Beijing told the official Beijing Daily News that April and May are typically when demand

peaks. Compared to the same period last year, the number of orders rose 20%, owing to the demand generated by the epidemic, according to one major farm the paper interviewed.

Another farm said it was even more. "Starting from yesterday, the number of orders we've received have clearly increased, roughly double the amount at this time last year," supply chain manager Zhang Xinming told Beijing Daily News.

It is unclear whether the entire city will be forced under lockdown. For now, officials have locked down only specific areas where positive cases were found. Yesterday, Beijing's Tongzhou district suspended classes for all its schools from kindergarten through high school.

Given that China for now remains committed to its "zero-COVID" approach, "I do think we will continue to see the use of these lockdowns across the country," said Karen Grepin, a public health expert at the University of Hong Kong. "If anything, the omicron variant has made it more challenging to control the virus and thus more stringent measures are needed if the goal is to continue to strive for local elimination."

The "zero-COVID" strategy has worked well against previous versions of the virus, ensuring that for most of the past two years, people in China were able to live a mostly virus-free life. MDT/AP

CHINA SAYS US HYPED SAILING OF NAVY WARSHIP IN TAIWAN STRAIT

CHINA protested yesterday against the sailing of a U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer through the Taiwan Strait the previous day, accusing the American side of hyping the maneuver.

The Navy's Japan-based 7th Fleet said late Tuesday that the passing of the USS Sampson through the 160-kilometer-wide waterway between Taiwan and China "demonstrates the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Senior Colonel Shi Yi, a Chinese military spokesperson, said the U.S. had "publicly hyped" the move.

"The frequent provocations of the U.S. have sent the wrong signals to 'Taiwan independence' forces and deliberately undermined peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," Shi said in a statement. "We firmly oppose it."



The U.S. Navy's Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Sampson (DDG 102) conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit, Tuesday

China claims Taiwan as part of its territory and says the self-governing island must come under its rule. It regularly denounces U.S. support for Taiwan, including sales of military equipment to boost its defense and visits by American lawmakers and other government officials.

Ma Xiaoguang, a

spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said China opposes any kind of military ties between Taiwan and the U.S.

"The Taiwan issue concerns China's core interests," he said at a biweekly news conference. "We will by no means allow — and strongly oppose — any interference by exterior forces." MDT/AP

AUSTRALIAN MINISTER ACCUSES BEIJING OF ELECTION INTERFERENCE

A senior Australian minister suggested that China had deliberately announced its security pact with the Solomon Islands during an election campaign to undermine her government's chances of reelection.

Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews' accusation is consistent with her conservative Liberal Party's argument that Beijing wants the center-left Labor Party to win the May 21 election because Labor lawmakers were less likely to stand up to Chinese economic coercion.

Labor has described the government's inability to prevent the deal announced by the Chinese and Solomons governments last week as Australia's biggest foreign policy failure in the Pacific since World War II.

Andrews — who is responsible for the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, the nation's main

domestic spy agency, and has access to classified secrets from other intelligence agencies — said Australians should be "taking notice of and paying some attention to" the timing of the Solomons' announcements.

"Beijing is clearly very aware that we're in a federal election campaign here at the moment. Why now? Why, right in the middle of a federal election campaign is all this coming to light?" Andrews told Brisbane Radio 4BC.

John Blaxland, Australian National University's Professor of International Security and Intelligence Studies, questioned whether Andrews was drawing on classified intelligence briefings in her comments on the Solomons.

"It certainly is plausible that they timed it this way. They would've been mindful of what's happening in the elections,"



Australia's Minister for Home Affairs Karen Andrews

Blaxland said.

"I'd be very surprised if China wanted to go public on siding with one side or the other because that's basically a poison chalice you're handing to that side of politics," Blaxland added.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry attacked Defense Minister Peter Dutton's warning this week that Australians must prepare for war because of the threat from China and global insecurity spurred by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"Certain Australian politicians often seek selfish political gains by making wild remarks to smear China and clamor for war," Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said this week. MDT/AP

DIPLOMACY

UN takes step to put veto users under global spotlight

EDITH M. LEDERER,
UNITED NATIONS

THE U.N. General Assembly took a first step yesterday [Macau time] to put the five permanent members of the Security Council under the spotlight whenever they use their veto power, a move highlighted by Russia's veto threat paralyzing any action by the U.N.'s most powerful body on the Ukraine war.

A resolution adopted by consensus in the 193-member assembly amid a burst of applause does not eliminate or limit the veto power of the Security Council's permanent members — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France.

But for the first time, the General Assembly will be required "to hold a debate on the situation" that sparks a veto in the Security Council within 10 working days. Precedence will be given on the list of speakers to the permanent member who casts a veto.

The assembly isn't required to take or consider any action under the resolution, but the discussion could put veto-wielders on the spot and let a raft of other countries be heard.

Liechtenstein's U.N. ambassador, Christian Wenaweser, who spearheaded the resolution, which had been in the works for two years, has said it aims "to promote the voice of all of us who are not veto-holders, and who are not on the Security Council, on matters of international peace and security because they affect all of us."

In presenting the resolution to the assembly, Wenaweser alluded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24 and the Security Council's failure to take action: "There has never been a stronger need for effective multilateralism than today, and there has never been a stronger need for innovation in order to secure the central role and voice of the United Nations."

Amnesty International's secretary general, Agnes Callamard, called the resolution "a first step towards increasing the cost of using

AP PHOTO



the veto -- and it could not have come soon enough."

The resolution had about 80 co-sponsors, including the United States and the United Kingdom. But it also had detractors even though they didn't break consensus, including Russia and close ally Belarus as well as current elected council members Gabon and India and other U.N. member nations.

The reform of the Security Council, which is charged under the U.N. Charter with ensuring international peace and security, has been debated for more than 40 years, and was front and center in comments by countries before and after the resolution's adoption.

There is widespread support for revamping the council to reflect current global realities rather than the international power structure after World War II in 1945 when the United Nations was created. But rivalries between countries and regions have blocked all attempts to reach agreement on the size, composition and powers of an expanded council.

The veto power of the five permanent members is one component on the reform agenda.

More than 200 different Security Council proposals have been vetoed, some by multiple countries, according

to U.N. records. The subjects have ranged from the Korean War and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to climate change, reporting on weapons stockpiles, and governance of a part of the Indian Ocean nation Comoros.

The former Soviet Union and its successor Russia have cast the most vetoes by far, followed by the United States. Far fewer have been cast by Britain, China and France.

U.S. deputy ambassador Richard Mills said after the vote that the United States is "extraordinarily troubled by Russia's pattern of abusing its veto right over the past decade," citing resolutions it vetoed ranging from referring Syria to the International Criminal Court, protesting Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula and demanding Russia immediately halt its invasion of Ukraine.

British Ambassador Barbara Woodward, whose country has not used its veto since 1989, called the resolution "a step in pursuit of upholding international peace and security," adding: "We prefer to win votes rather than use our veto to block council action."

France didn't co-sponsor the resolution and its deputy ambassador, Nathalie Broadhurst, said it does not believe the General Assembly can become the judge

of the Security Council.

She said that is why France and Mexico have been promoting an initiative on the veto for several years. It would require the five permanent council members to voluntarily and collectively suspend the use of the veto in the event of mass atrocities. Saying the proposal is supported by 105 countries, she urged "all states, in particular the other four permanent members, to join it."

Russia's deputy ambassador, Gennady Kuzmin, called the veto "a cornerstone of the U.N. architecture" and warned that "without it the Security Council would become a rubber-stamping body, rubber-stamping questionable decisions imposed by the nominal majority whose implementation would be hardly possible."

Chinese counselor Jiang Hua said the resolution's automatic triggering of a General Assembly meeting on the vetoed resolution "in practice is likely to cause procedural confusion and inconsistency."

India and Brazil, which have sought permanent seats on the Security Council for many years and are currently serving two-year terms on the body, both complained that the resolution doesn't address the real issue of reforming the council. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1986 SOVIETS ADMIT NUCLEAR ACCIDENT



The Soviet Union has acknowledged there has been an accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine.

The report, from the official news agency, Tass, said there had been casualties but gave no details of numbers. It said aid was being sent to the injured.

The report said that one of the reactors had been damaged in the accident, but gave no further details beyond saying that measures were being taken to "eliminate the consequences of the accident". It also claimed the accident was the first at a Soviet power station.

The report was the first confirmation of a major nuclear catastrophe since monitoring stations in Sweden, Finland and Norway began reporting sudden high discharges of radioactivity in the atmosphere two days ago.

The accident is believed to be the most serious in the history of nuclear power, worse even than that at the Three-Mile Island power station in the United States in 1979, when there was some release of radioactivity but nobody was injured.

The Chernobyl nuclear power plant, just north of Kiev, consists of four nuclear reactors, known as light-water cooled, graphite-moderated reactors - a type hardly used outside the Soviet Union.

Nuclear experts say the levels of radioactivity recorded indicate that the nuclear core of the damaged reactor may have melted down.

The number of casualties, both immediately and in the future, from radiation sickness, is expected to be high, although the exact number may never be known. It is not believed, however, that there is any risk to the health of anyone outside the Soviet Union.

The discharge of radioactivity was so great that by the time the fallout reached Sweden, 1,000 miles away, it was still powerful enough to register twice the natural level of radioactivity in the atmosphere.

The sudden jump in radioactivity levels was enough to prompt a full-scale alert in Sweden, which initially believed the accident had happened at its own nuclear power station, on the Baltic coast. The evacuation of 600 workers had been ordered before experts realised that the source of the radioactivity must have been within the Soviet Union.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Chernobyl remains the world's worst civil nuclear disaster. It emerged that design flaws had led to a power surge, causing massive explosions which blew the top off the reactor. Estimates of the numbers affected vary tremendously. A report in 2005 by the Chernobyl Forum, set up by a number of bodies including the World Health Organisation, the UN and governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, concluded that fewer than 50 people, most of them workers at the plant, died as a result of exposure to radiation. Most of them died immediately after the disaster, but some survived until as late as 2004. The forum estimates up to 9,000 people could eventually die from radiation exposure - although Greenpeace claims the figure could be much higher, up to 93,000. The contamination spread across neighbouring Belarus, and into Europe. In north Wales, sheep on some 350 farms still have to be tested for radiation before their meat can be eaten. A concrete sarcophagus was hastily built to cover the damaged reactor, but it is weakening over time. It is due to be replaced in 2007. Chernobyl continued to produce electricity for another 14 years, until international pressure forced its closure in 2000. An official exclusion zone around the plant remains in place, extending for 30 kilometres (18 miles). It is one of the most radioactive spots on Earth.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
The stamina you possess will be apparent in your approach to your hobbies and creative projects. Catch up on your reading and correspondence.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You should try to elaborate on an idea you have regarding a product or service for the home. You can mesmerize anyone you meet with your cultured attitude and outlook.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Don't let those close to you get under your skin. Changes regarding your career direction will payoff handsomely. Emotional deception will cause friction on the home front.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You will enjoy the interaction with youngsters and take great pride in the projects you've completed. Do some research if you want to find information that you can apply against the opposition you face.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Work quietly on your own. Channel your efforts into achieving your goals. Travel and creative hobbies will be your best outlet. Monitor your budget carefully to avoid unnecessary stress.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Find out all the facts before you jump to conclusions. Plan a trip to the country or take a drive to the beach. You can make headway if you share your intentions with someone you care about.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Be prepared to make compensations and adjustments. Come to your own conclusions rather than taking the word of someone else. Sudden changes regarding your domestic scene are probable.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Take time to deal with the concerns of children. Think twice before you volunteer information. You should be looking at ways to spoil yourself.

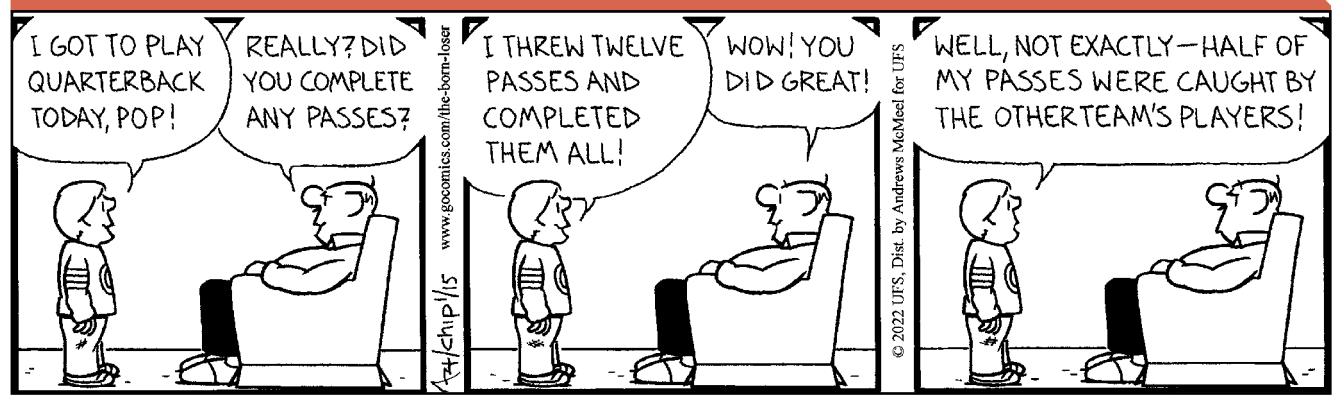
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You will find that social activities will be enjoyable and will promote new connections. Romance will come through involvement with fundraising organizations. You will be in the mood for entertainment.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You can make personal changes that will enhance your appearance and bring about greater social activity. If you act with anger you may blow the relationship.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Pleasure trips should be on your agenda. You may have difficulties at an emotional level with mates. Avoid getting too close to coworkers or employers. Don't beat around the bush.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Romance will be on your mind, and chances for ideal connections are in the works. Helping children may be rewarding and challenging. Deception in your home is evident.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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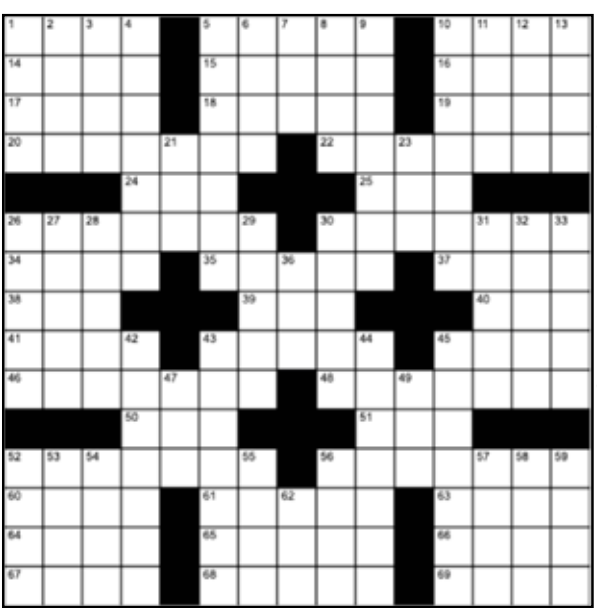
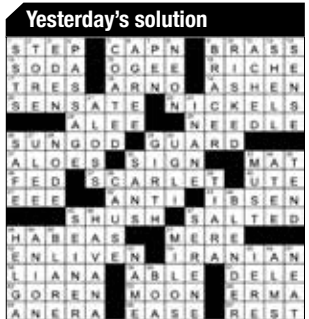
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	12	18	cloudy
Changchun	3	14	cloudy
Chengdu	20	27	rain
Chongqing	20	30	cloudy
Fuzhou	20	26	rain
Guangzhou	24	30	thunderstorms
Guiyang	16	26	cloudy
Haikou	26	35	cloudy
Hangzhou	15	20	overcast
Harbin	3	15	fine
Hefei	16	24	cloudy
Nanjing	17	22	cloudy
Shanghai	15	20	fine
Taipei	23	27	rain
Wuhan	18	25	cloudy
Hong Kong	23	27	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	1	9	overcast
Frankfurt	6	20	overcast
Paris	11	22	overcast
London	6	16	overcast
New York	4	14	clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Indigo source; 5- Small change; 10- New Ager John; 14- Indonesian resort island; 15- Ease up; 16- Ceremonial act; 17- Uniform; 18- Warble; 19- Like the Sahara; 20- Abhors; 22- Bondage; 24- Uris hero; 25- Cheer for Manoiete; 26- Hobby; 30- Majestic; 34- Network of nerves; 35- Perform or portray; 37- Boot attachment; 38- That, in Tijuana; 39- 19th letter of the Greek alphabet; 40- Simile center; 41- Body of an organism; 43- Like spinach; 45- Black cuckoos; 46- Splash; 48- Kiln; 50- Ocean; 51- Trail the pack; 52- Partway through period; 56- Provide a substitute for; 60- Optic layer; 61- Like Fran Drescher's voice; 63- Nest eggs, briefly; 64- People in general; 65- Sister of Thalia; 66- Sleeps briefly; 67- Spring from the slammer; 68- Put a new price on; 69- High level of satisfaction;

DOWN 1- In the sack; 2- Church center; 3- Belinda Carlisle's "Should ___ You In?"; 4- Striped; 5- Between sunrise and sunset; 6- Native Nigerians; 7- Deranged; 8- French summers; 9- Betrayal; 10- Makes journeys; 11- Land of shamrocks; 12- Be up and about; 13- Delilah portrayer; 21- Hindu honorific; 23- Liturgical vestment; 26- Squeeze; 27- Man of morals; 28- Mouthlike opening; 29- Go into; 30- Scrape with one's foot; 31- Bucky Beaver's toothpaste; 32- Melody; 33- Clear the boards; 36- Battery size; 42- On the line; 43- Apprentice; 44- Christmas item; 45- Fishing; 47- Peg used on the first in golf; 49- Blame; 52- Handle clumsily; 53- Actor Novello; 54- Remove from text; 55- Female horse; 56- Pro follower; 57- Shrinking sea; 58- Headland; 59- Being, to Brutus; 62- Posed;



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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ENERGY

EUROPEAN NATIONS ACCUSE RUSSIA OF NATURAL GAS 'BLACKMAIL'

VANESSA GERA, WARSAW

POLISH and Bulgarian leaders accused Moscow of using natural gas to blackmail their countries after Russia's state-controlled energy company said it would stop supplying the two European nations yesterday.

The gas cutoff came after Russian President Vladimir Putin said last month that "unfriendly" countries would need to start paying for gas in rubles, Russia's currency, which Bulgaria and Poland refused to do.

Russian energy giant Gazprom said in a statement that it hadn't received any payments from Poland and Bulgaria since April 1 and was suspending their deliveries starting today [Macau time].

If the countries siphon off gas intended for other European customers, deliveries to Europe will be reduced by that amount, the company said.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told Poland's parliament that he thinks the suspension was revenge for new sanctions against Russia that Warsaw imposed over the war in Ukraine.

Morawiecki vowed that Poland would not be cowed by the cutoff. He said the country was safe from an energy crisis thanks to years of efforts to secure gas from other countries.

Lawmakers stood and applauded when he said that Russia's "gas blackmail" would have no effect on Poland.

The new sanctions, announced Tuesday, targeted 50 Russian oligarchs and companies, including Gazprom. Hours later, Poland said it had received notice



A gas compressor station of the Yamal-Europe pipeline near Nesvizh, some 130 km southwest of Minsk, Belarus

that Gazprom was cutting off its gas supplies for failing to adhere to the demand to pay in Russian rubles.

Poland's gas company, PGNiG, said the gas supplies from the Yamal pipeline stopped early Yesterday as Gazprom had warned they would.

Bulgaria said Tuesday that it also was informed by Gazprom that the country's gas supplies would end at the same time.

Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov called Gazprom's suspension of gas deliveries to his country "a gross violation of their con-

tract" and "blackmail."

"We will not succumb to such a racket," he added.

Russia's move raised wider concerns that other countries could be targeted next as Western countries increase their support for Ukraine amid a war now in its third month.

European Union officials were holding emergency talks. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the announcement by Gazprom "is yet another attempt by Russia to use gas as an instrument of blackmail."

The Greek government was to hold its own emergency meeting in Athens. Greece's next scheduled payment to Gazprom is due on May 25, and the government must decide whether it will comply with the demand to complete the transaction in rubles.

Greece is ramping up its liquefied natural gas storage capacity, and has contingency plans to switch several industry sectors from gas to diesel as an emergency energy source. It has also reversed a program to reduce domestic coal production over the next two years.

Europe is not without leverage in the dispute; at current prices, it pays Russia some \$400 million a day for gas, money Putin would lose with a complete cutoff.

Russia can in theory sell its oil elsewhere, such as to India and China, because oil primarily moves by ship. But the gas pipeline network that carries gas from the huge deposits in northwestern Siberia's Yamal Peninsula does not connect with pipelines that run to China. And Russia only has limited facilities to export super chilled liquefied gas by ship.

Russian gas made up some 45% of Poland's overall gas usage until the cutoff. But Poland is far more reliant on coal to heat homes and fuel industry, with gas making up around 7% of the country's overall energy mix.

Russian supplies to Poland already were expected to end later this year anyway. Poland has worked for many years to secure supplies from other countries.

Several years ago, the country opened its first terminal for liquefied natural gas, or LNG, in Swinoujscie, on the Baltic Sea coast. A pipeline from Norway is due to start operating this year.

In Bulgaria, the main consumers of gas are district heating companies, and only about 120,000 households rely on gas.

Bulgaria's energy minister said his country can meet the needs of users for at least one month.

"Alternative supplies are available, and Bulgaria hopes that alternative routes and supplies will also be secured at the EU level," Energy Minister Alexander Nikolov said.

Fatih Birol, the head of the Paris-based International Energy Agency, described Russia's move as a "weaponization of energy supplies."

He said Russia's decision "makes it clearer than ever that Europe needs to move quickly to reduce its reliance on Russian energy." **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

The Parisian Macao's Brasserie to feature 'GourMay' menu



The Parisian Macao's Brasserie will celebrate the 13th French 'GourMay' Food & Wine Festival with a four-course menu to be offered from today until May 31.

In this authentic French bis-

tro, bon vivants in town can embark on a 'Rhômanic Bistronomy' journey, with wine pairings from Côtes du Rhône.

French 'GourMay' is an annual festival in Hong Kong and Macau dedicated to gastro-

nomy à la française. Celebrating the theme of 'Rhômanic Bistronomy' this year, the festival will lay the art of haute cuisine open on the plate and make gastronomic philosophies accessible to everyone. As a combination of bistro dishes cooked with seasonal produce and haute cuisine methods, the "philosophy of bistronomy engages the people we love in a friendly environment," the company announced in a statement.

The special four-course menu has been curated by French Executive Chef Daniel Brolese. The meal starts with an amuse-bouche of prime beef tartare with traditional condiments.

MGM earns five-star awards from Forbes Travel Guide



MGM has received seven of Forbes Travel Guide's Five-Star Awards for 2022.

On top of attaining Forbes Travel Guide's Five-Star recognitions for MGM Macau and the spa concept Tria at both

MGM Macau and MGM Cotai for the seventh and third consecutive years respectively, this year the company has garnered four new Five-Star Awards between both properties: the Emerald Tower,

the Skylofts and Sichuanese restaurant Five Foot Road at MGM Cotai and Cantonese restaurant Imperial Court at MGM Macau.

Hubert Wang, president & COO of MGM said, "The hospitality industry has been undergoing unprecedented times in the past two years, and we believe the best way to respond to the situation is to make ourselves stronger. In MGM, we keep on pushing boundaries in the pursuit of service excellence, and our endeavors have paid off with four more Forbes Travel Guide's Five-Star Awards, outperforming ourselves with more than double our achievements in 2021."

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

FOOTBALL

Real Madrid happy to be alive ahead of second leg vs. Man City

TALES AZZONI, MADRID

MAN CITY 4, REAL MADRID 3

REAL Madrid was holding on to the positives after coming close to being routed by Manchester City but staying alive in the Champions League semifinals.

Madrid lost 4-3 in the first leg in England yesterday [Macau time], but it was one of those defeats that allowed for some celebration.

Pep Guardiola's City had plenty of chances to put the series away but instead Madrid found a way to fight back and it goes into next week's second leg at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium only a goal down.

"You are never happy when you lose, but we have 90 minutes ahead of us to make the difference at the Bernabéu," said Madrid forward Vinícius Júnior, who scored one of the goals for the Spanish powerhouse.

Karim Benzema scored the



others as Madrid trailed by two goals three times at Etihad Stadium.

"The next game will be different," Vinícius said. "I'm really happy with the team's attitude. We were 2-0 down against an ex-

tremely good team and we come away with our heads held high and ready to put in a good performance in the return leg."

Madrid just won't go away this season, having already rallied in the Champions League against

Paris Saint-Germain in the last 16 and against defending champion Chelsea in the quarterfinals.

Madrid knows it will have to do better than it did Tuesday, though, to reach its first Champions League final since winning its last title in 2018.

"We have to stay calm and improve our performance if we want to advance," Vinícius said. "We have to improve pretty much in all areas and start the game better so we don't concede early goals that make it difficult for us to recover."

Madrid was losing 2-0 by the 11th minute on Tuesday, and coach Carlo Ancelotti said the team will have to defend better next week.

"We started the game very poorly. We were too soft," he said. "It'll be really important to improve defensively in the return leg. I have a very experienced team that keeps its cool when things get tough. These players have been in many games like this and

never give in. They always keep their heads up."

Ancelotti said he doesn't expect another back-and-forth match like the first leg, when both teams had significant chances.

"It'll be a different match," he said. "City has the advantage and you have to take that into account. I hope that our fans demand a better performance from us so we can reach the final. Our fans have to be ready because we are going to fight to make it another magical night."

Madrid is hoping for a third straight Champions League comeback at the Bernabéu to remain in contention for a record-extending 14th European title.

Against PSG, it needed a second-half hat trick by Benzema after losing the first leg 1-0 and conceding a goal early in the return match. Then, it was down 3-0 at home in the second leg against Chelsea when it scored twice to recover, including in extra time, to advance on a 5-4 aggregate score. The decisive goal was scored by Benzema, who is having his best season and now is the Champions League's leading scorer with 14 goals.

"Miracle after miracle," said the front-page headline of the Marca sports daily yesterday. "Madrid stays alive in Manchester and it will all come down to the Bernabéu." MDT/AP

AD

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

DYNAMIC CLEARING MOST COST-REDUCING APPROACH

Beijing announced 22 new novel coronavirus infections on Tuesday, raising the total number to 92 since the virus was detected in the capital on Friday.

The authorities have acted quickly in a bid to curb the transmission of the virus, organizing large-scale nucleic acid testing on Monday in the districts where infections have been detected, and expanding the testing to all but five outer districts on Tuesday. Two more rounds of testing are to be carried out in the coming days.

With the authorities acting swiftly and decisively, much of the initial public anxiety at the news of the virus' arrival has eased and the mood in the capital is more sanguine. This has been reinforced by supermarket shelves being swiftly replenished after Sunday's stockpiling-clearing, and the reassurance that people will be able to receive non-COVID-19 medical treatment should they need it.

Most residents now seem confident that with the targeted measures aimed at early finding, early reporting, early confirming and early quarantining, they will not have to suffer the same travails as residents in Shanghai, which has now entered the fourth week of an arduous city-wide lockdown.

Although temporary control zones have been introduced in districts in Beijing where infections have been found, so far a large-scale lockdown has not been imposed and there are hopes that with the rapid response one will not be necessary.

A big picture of the epidemic situation in the capital is to be drawn from the results of the three rounds of testing that are being carried out in 11 of the municipality's 16 districts. If more cases with clear transmission chains are detected outside the currently sealed-off areas, more epidemiological investigations will be carried out to see whether restrictions need to be applied to wider areas.

Meanwhile, in Shanghai, which has spent almost two months struggling to control the latest wave of the virus, the goal of zero community transmission is hopefully now within sight.

The number of infections, severe cases, and deaths in Shanghai might not be that high compared with those in other countries — the latest wave of the virus has claimed 190 lives in the city — but that's the result of the nation providing assistance to avoid the exhaustion of the local medical resources. Had China loosened its dynamic clearing approach to the virus and opted to co-exist with it, the numbers would have been beyond everyone's acceptance.

The facts show that the dynamic clearing strategy maximizes the effects of the scientific approach to controlling the virus, while minimizing the costs, both human and economic. The country will not lie flat. It will continue to endure the short-term pains of battling the virus in order to safeguard people's lives, health and livelihoods to the best of its ability.

MAJOR JAPAN RAILWAY NOW POWERED ONLY BY RENEWABLE ENERGY

THE BUZZ

Tokyo's Shibuya is famed for its Scramble Crossing, where crowds of people crisscross the intersection in a scene symbolizing urban Japan's congestion and anonymity. It may have added another boasting right.

Tokyu Railways' trains running through Shibuya and other stations were switched to power generated only by solar and other renewable sources starting April 1.

That means the carbon dioxide emissions of Tokyu's sprawling network of seven train lines and one tram service now stand at zero, with green energy being used at all its stations, including for

vending machines for drinks, security camera screens and lighting.

Tokyu, which employs 3,855 people and connects Tokyo with nearby Yokohama, is the first railroad operator in Japan to have achieved that goal. It says the carbon dioxide reduction is equivalent to the annual average emissions of 56,000 Japanese households.

Nicholas Little, director of railway education at Michigan State University's Center for Railway Research and Education, commends Tokyu for promoting renewable energy but stressed the importance of boosting the bottom-line amount of that renewable energy.



SINGAPORE EXECUTES MALAYSIAN DESPITE PLEAS HE WAS DISABLED

ZEN SOO & EILEEN NG, SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE yesterday executed a Malaysian man convicted of drug smuggling after a court dismissed a last-minute challenge from his mother and international pleas to spare him on grounds he was mentally disabled.

Nagaenthran K. Dharmalingam, 34, had been on death row for over a decade after he was found guilty of trafficking about 43 grams of heroin into Singapore. The city-state's government has said its use of the death penalty for drug crimes is made clear at the borders.

Nagaenthran's family and social activists confirmed the execution yesterday.

"On this score may I declare that Malaysia is far more humane," his sister, Sarmila Dharmalingam, said. "Zero to Singapore on this."

Nagaenthran's supporters and lawyers said he had an IQ of 69 and was intellectually disabled, and that the execution of a mentally ill person was prohibited under international human rights law.

Singapore courts cited psychiatrists' testimony that he was not mentally disabled and had understood his actions at the time of his crime.

"Nagaenthran Dharmalingam's name will go down in history as the victim of a tragic miscarriage of justice," said Maya Foa, director of nongovernmental organization Reprieve.

"Hanging an intellectually disabled, mentally unwell man because he was coerced into carrying less than three tablespoons of diamorphine is unjustifiable and a flagrant violation of international laws that Singapore has chosen to sign up to," she said.

Nagaenthran and his mother filed a motion Monday arguing that it was unconstitutional to proceed with his death sentence and that he may not have been given a fair trial because the chief justice who presided over his appeals had been the attorney general when Nagaenthran was convicted in 2010, which the filing alleged could be a conflict of interest.

The court dismissed the motion, describing it as "frivolous."

His family said Nagaenthran's body will be brought to their hometown in Malaysia's northern state of Perak for a funeral.

Singapore had halted executions for two years because of the COVID-19 pandemic before resuming them with the execution of a drug trafficker in March.

Anyone found with over 15 grams of heroin faces the death sentence in Singapore, although it can be reduced to life in prison. Attempts to reduce Nagaenthran's sentence or obtain a presidential pardon failed.

Malaysia's leader, European Union representatives and global figures such as British business magnate Richard Branson called for Nagaenthran's life to be spared and used the case to advocate for ending capital punishment.

Human rights group Amnesty International said in a statement that Nagaenthran's hanging "highlights the deep flaws of the death penalty in Singapore and the horror of its continued use."

"The execution of Nagaenthran is a disgraceful act by the Singapore government — ruthlessly carried out despite extensive protests in Singapore and Malaysia and an outcry across the world," said Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific regional director Erwin van der Borgh.

According to activists, another Malaysian, Datchinamurthy Kataiah, is scheduled to be executed in Singapore on Friday. He was convicted of smuggling 45 grams of heroin from Malaysia. Singapore doesn't formally announce its hangings. MDT/AP

India Eleven people died from an accidental electric shock when their truck, decorated as a temple chariot, touched an overhead power transmission wire during a Hindu festival procession in Tamil Nadu, southern India, police said. The New Delhi Television channel said the truck, crowded with devotees, also caught fire by the electric spark. Another three people suffered burn injuries and were.



USA Republicans hoping to emerge from crowded primaries this year stacked up on operatives with ties to former President Donald Trump, as White House counselor Kellyanne Conway (pictured) betting those connections would give them a leg up on landing critical endorsements that would help them win. But as Trump wades into some of the most competitive primaries, the strategy is proving a bust.



USA Delta Air Lines, which is facing another attempt to unionize its flight attendants, will begin paying cabin crews during boarding, a first for a major U.S. airline. Across the airline industry in the United States, hourly pay for flight attendants starts when all the passengers are seated and the plane's doors close. Delta said the change will start June 2 on all flights.



Cape Canaveral SpaceX launched four astronauts to the International Space Station for NASA on Wednesday, less than two days after completing a flight chartered by millionaires. It's the first NASA crew comprised equally of men and women, including the first Black woman making a long-term spaceflight, Jessica Watkins.