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AP PHOTO



**China's** Liaoning aircraft carrier group has embarked on a "realistic combat" training mission in the Western Pacific, the Chinese navy said yesterday. In a posting on its social media site, the navy said the mission is routine, adheres to all international laws and practices and is "not directed at any third parties."

AP PHOTO



**Myanmar** Ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi went on trial this week in a new corruption case against her, alleging she took \$550,000 in bribes from a construction magnate. She is charged with two counts under the country's the Anti-Corruption Act, with each count punishable by up to 15 years in prison and a fine. Suu Kyi has been detained since the army ousted her elected government in February 2021 and has not been seen or allowed to speak in public since then.

**Iraq** Thousands or people fled a northern Iraqi town amid fierce clashes between the army and a militia linked to a Kurdish separatist group, the military and local Iraqi Kurdish officials said yesterday. At least 3,000 people left Sinjar and its surrounding areas, the officials said, and headed farther north toward the semi-autonomous Kurdish region to seek asylum. They left when clashes intensified between the Iraqi army and the YBS, a militia group with ties to the Turkish insurgent Kurdistan Worker's Party, or PKK.

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# UNEMPLOYMENT WOES

**AL committee to meet with gov't with aims to resolve intensified unemployment issue, describes city's unemployment data 'lagging'**

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AP PHOTO

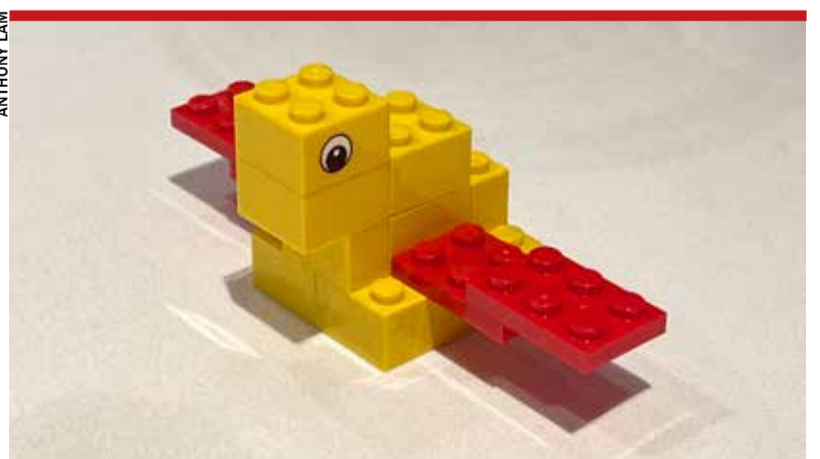
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**GAMING**

# MGM REVENUE SLUMPS IN Q1 AMID LOCKDOWNS IN CHINA

LYNZY VALLES

**M**GM China continues to face headwinds in the short term, with public health policies impacting customers' ability to enter Macau, according to MGM Resorts' CEO and president Bill Hornbuckle.

Macau has been suffering a downturn in gaming revenues following Covid-19 outbreaks in neighboring regions, causing the gambling enclave to impose stricter border entry rules such as reducing the validity period for nucleic acid tests (NATs).

Last month, Macau's gaming revenues fell to a new low of MOP2.68 billion, following a sharp drop in March as the city suffered from a tourist drought amid the Chinese lockdowns.

However, MGM China's 13% market share is higher than the company has "seen historically, and our properties are well-positioned to capture premium mass business as volumes begin to return," Hornbuckle remarked on an earnings call with analysts.

For the first quarter of 2022, MGM China recorded total revenue of approximately HKD2.1 billion, down from the HKD2.3 billion recorded for the same period last year.

The gaming operator saw demand pick up during the Chinese New Year as visits to Ma-



cau increased 26% year-on-year during the six-day holiday period.

MGM also saw growth in rated mass player count and table volume across both properties while hotel occupancy reached 93% for MGM Macau and 72% for MGM Cotai during the Chinese New Year.

In the first quarter, the gaming operator had an adjusted EBITDA of approximately HKD46 million, a 45.8% drop from the HKD84 million in last year's first quarter.

The first quarter also included a charge of USD18 million rela-

ted to litigation reserves.

Despite this, the gaming operator said it is confident in its

product offerings, and that once demand returns it is "very well-positioned to grow, particularly

in our premium mass and mass segments."

MGM Macau recorded revenue of HKD1.2 billion (compared to HKD1.3 billion in Q1, 2021) and an adjusted EBTIDA of HKD153 million (down from HKD170 million in Q1, 2021).

According to a statement it issued yesterday, "it is by far the best performing mass gaming property on the peninsula, boasting the highest mass table win since May 2021. Hotel occupancy was at 73% for the period."

MGM Cotai, meanwhile, recorded revenue of HKD914 million (compared to HKD981 million in Q1, 2021) and a negative adjusted EBITDA of HKD108 million (down from negative HKD86 million in Q1, 2021). Hotel occupancy was 39% for the period.

In a statement, Kenneth Feng, President, Strategic and Chief Financial Officer of MGM China, said: "We will continue to work with the government on re-rendering as Macau is an important part of our future. [...] We strive for ongoing improvements [to] our gaming floors, product offering and services."

## MGM RESORTS OFFERS TO ACQUIRE LEOVEGAS

**MGM** Resorts International has announced the commencement of a recommended public tender offer for 100% of the shares of LeoVegas, with a total tender value of approximately USD607 million. The acquisition will be financed with existing cash and is expected to be accretive to MGM Resorts earnings and cash flow per share, according to a statement.

"Our vision is to be the world's premier gaming entertainment company, and this strategic opportunity with LeoVegas will allow us to continue to grow our reach throughout the world," said MGM Resorts' CEO and President Bill Hornbuckle. "We have achieved remarkable success with BetMGM in the U.S., and with the acquisition of LeoVegas in Europe we will expand our online

gaming presence globally. We believe that this offer creates a compelling opportunity that allows the combined teams of MGM Resorts and LeoVegas to accelerate our global digital gaming growth and fully realize the potential of our omnichannel strategy." The acceptance period of the offer is expected to commence in or around June 2022 and expire in or around August 2022.

# New version of gaming bill still pending

ANTHONY LAM

**L**AWMAKER Chan Chak Mo confirmed yesterday that the government had not yet delivered the updated version of the casino bill to his committee.

Chan, president of the parliament's Second Standing Committee, was promised last week by the Secretary for Economy and Finance that he would strive to deliver the updated version of the gaming law amendment bill.

Chan said last week that his committee wanted to

consider the Casino Gaming Operation and Business System, colloquially referred to as the junket bill, alongside the updated gambling bill, considering their close connection.

Despite the delay, the committee continued to study the junket bill.

In yesterday's meeting, Chan said that extra sessions may be needed to study the junket bill because of its relatively large size.

The committee discussed proposed provisions concerning junket colla-

borators. They should be at least 21 years old, have "appropriate qualifications" and sign contracts with junket operators.

However, they will be working as freelancers or "slashers," meaning that they will need to declare tax and pay their own social security instalments, among other responsibilities. Junket operators will not have an employer's obligation to them.

The junket bill also proposes that intermediaries, partners and management companies are not allowed

to make deposits. Violation of this prohibition will constitute criminal offences punishable by two to five years in prison.

At the meeting, some committee members were concerned by the definition of deposits and expressed a hope that the government would define them clearly, as many gamblers leave their winnings with casinos for future games, according to Chan.

Regarding whether collaborators must be Macau residents, the government

has changed its position and proposed in the junket bill that non-resident workers should be allowed. Previously, when the same committee studied the gaming bill, it agreed with the government's position at the time of allowing only local residents to work as collaborators.

Back then, Chan even made a guess about the government's intention — which might be to make it easier for it to manage, if not control, the industry.

Although this proposal allows non-locals to work as junket collaborators, relevant labor laws and regulations should be complied with, Chan added.

The bill proposes that joint and several liability can be excluded if it is proved that the concessionaires concerned have fulfilled their supervisory obligations with due diligence, including the establishment of a monitoring mechanism and measures to prevent wrongdoing.

The committee is concerned that there is no mechanism in the junket bill to exclude the joint and several liability of intermediaries and management companies.

Additionally, the Chief Executive's approval is needed when a licensed casino operator wants to hire a management company.

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# AL committee: Data on unemployment rate 'lagging'

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE government will be invited to meet with members of a parliamentary committee on resolving the intensifying unemployment issue in the city.

Since the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were first felt in Macau, leading to rising border restrictions and making global travel difficult, a chronic economic downturn has gripped the city. Furloughs and dismissals have left many local residents unemployed or underemployed.

It is undeniable that the current situation has left some locals unable to pay their monthly bills and other necessary costs. Some have picked up motorbikes to work in the food delivery industry.



Committee president Zheng Anting admitted that the current data on the unemployment rate is lagging, and does not sufficiently reflect the overall situation of society. Some unemployed people have not registered with the government, while others work on a part-time basis but do not earn enough

to cover family expenses. Zheng announced that the committee therefore hopes to hold a meeting with the government to discuss specific measures the government can take to help residents find employment. The unemployment rate of local residents has risen by 0.2% to 4.5%,

and about 13,000 people are unemployed, according to the latest statistics released by the government. The figures cover January to March this year.

The underemployment rate dropped by 0.1%, indicating that some previously underemployed workers might have eventually lost their jobs. The closure of nearly all junket operators in Macau has also released a significant number of workers into the employment market.

In addition, as fresh graduates are about to enter the workplace and satellite casinos are closing one after another, pressures on the local employment market will likely intensify.

Unemployment affects residents' emotional and psychological wellbeing, as well as their family's economic situation.

## NEWBORNS ELIGIBLE FOR CONSUMPTION STIMULUS

The parents of newborn babies who were born in Macau can sign up for their consumption stimulus quotas when they have their Macau ID registrations processed. Their parents will not need to make separate trips, as all registrations can be completed at the Identification Services Bureau (DSI). The DSI reminds parents that the registration period for the consumption stimulus is from May 10, 2022 to January 13, 2023. The issuance period for the consumption card will end on January 17, 2023. The DSI emphasized that ID applications filed on or before January 10, 2023 will be eligible for the consumption stimulus.

## 'SOCIAL INCLUSION AND HARMONY SUBSIDY' TO BE ISSUED IN MAY

From this month, the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) will issue the first round of the Social Inclusion and Harmony Subsidy to 4,611 eligible families, doling out a total of MOP19.42 million. Eligible families include those with single parents, as well as members with disabilities or chronic diseases. These families will receive sums ranging from MOP2,650 to MOP10,100, depending on the number of people in the families, from May 5 or 16 onwards. Those receiving funds directly from the IAS will do so from the former date, while those receiving funds through associations will do so from the latter. The second round will be released in October.

## COVID-19

# Gov't to reward elderly with coupons for jobs

**D**ESPITE previous refusals to issue financial rewards for vaccination, the government announced yesterday that it will give coupons to seniors who receive vaccinations from this month.

The initiative is marketed as promoting the traditional Chinese virtue of respecting and caring for the elderly, especially in terms of health.

The initiative is led by the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), the Health Bureau



(SSM) and the Macao Foundation (FM), which provides financial backing.

All Macau residents who are aged 65 years or higher at the end of this

year will be rewarded with a pack of coupons valued at MOP250 if they receive two doses of a Covid-19 vaccination on or before June 30 this year.

Those for whom vaccination is not suitable can receive the coupons, but they will need to obtain a certificate from the SSM beforehand.

The distribution period will run from 10 a.m. on May 12 until 6 p.m. on June 30. Eligible senior residents can approach any of the 55 distribution points across the city for their reward.

Eligible seniors who have received or will take their full course of vacci-

nations outside of Macau will need to visit any of Mong Ha Sports Pavilion, the Macau University of Science and Technology Hospital, Kiang Wu Hospital or the Workers' Clinics to register their job history before being able to get their coupons.

Those receiving their second shot at any of the aforementioned vaccination points do not need to register and can collect their coupons at the designated counters on site. **AL**

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE local Health Code has been recently optimized to include the display of rapid antigen test results, as well as a new platform for the submission of rapid antigen test results, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center announced.

To make room for these new items, health authorities have removed some graphics previously displayed, such as the "immunization shield," a representation of vaccination status shown via a colored frame surrounding the QR code.

According to the center, the graphics provided

## COVID-19

# HEALTH CODE DROPS 'SHIELD' TO FREE UP SPACE FOR RAPID ANTIGEN TEST RESULTS

repeated information and were taking up unnecessary screen space needed for other functionality.

Citizens can now upload the results of rapid antigen tests via the link to the declaration platform (<https://app.ssm.gov.mo/generalrat>) located at the bottom of the Health Code homepage, with options for "positive," "negative" or "uncertain" test results.

If the test result is negative, the rapid antigen test text will be displayed in blue and the QR code

on the Health Code will be displayed in green. If the test is positive, the text will be displayed in red and the QR code will also turn red.

If the test result is "uncertain," this means that the result was inconclusive and no information will be displayed.

The rapid antigen test area will also show test results from the previous three days. If multiple test results have been submitted, it will only display the most recent result.



## YOUTH GROUP AIMS TO STRESS LESS

Demands on mental health have been growing in the past years, intensified by the Covid-19 pandemic. Hou Kong Junior Chamber recently organized a seminar to launch a series of events focusing on mental support. The group's president, Adelina Carvalhosa, said that anxiety and other emotional challenges have already caused impacts on physical health. Boris Tam, chairperson of the events' organizing committee, said that events will be held in a hybrid mode from May to July – both online and offline – to familiarize audiences with skills to become aware of their stress levels and look at how to reduce them.

# USING LEGO TO TRAIN ADULTS

ANTHONY LAM

**I**MAGINE senior executives of a gambling concessionaire joining and transforming Lego bricks into various forms and structures: they might actually be doing so for a reason other than amusement.

In fact, they may be doing this under the supervision of a certified instructor, with the aim of discovering and exploring their strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, according to Brian Tang, licensed trainer of Lego Serious Play Methods and play-based learning specialist.

Tang spent a lunch last week with human resources professionals and other interested parties discussing his strategies and experiences training senior executives of enterprises of various sizes.

The lunch session was hosted by the France Macao Chamber of Commerce (FMCC) and The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Macao (CanCham Macao).

During his seminar, Tang highlighted that one training workshop he had previously given revolved around the Johari Window. With four quadrants, the Window categorizes a person's character traits or qualities into open, blind, hidden and unknown, signifying their natures.



Characteristics that a person knows they possess but does not want to disclose to others fall into the "hidden" quadrant.

Tang's workshop aimed at moving the boundaries of each quadrant to achieve different goals, such as better communication between teams and team members.

Through this workshop – and his many other workshops – Tang used Lego bricks to prompt self-examination and inspiration

among participants, so as to nurture changes in behavior.

After the seminar, a member of the audience asked whether Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), an index used to evaluate the impact of an activity on achieving positive results in an organization, were used.

KPIs are used to evaluate business results in a quantified manner. Different enterprises or entities have different KPIs.

"However, this training

workshop that I did was not subject to KPI rating," Tang pointed out. "My objective was to connect one participant with another, as well as open up their team's Johari Window."

"[However], during the third session, which concerned achieving specific goals, KPI evaluation was introduced," added Tang.

He stressed that he mostly uses his Lego certified skills to conduct team building and to facilitate team communications. Nonetheless, the skills can also be applied to form business strategies and conduct business coaching, for example.

"There are other scenarios in which KPI can be induced to evaluate effects," Tang said.

Another audience member followed up by asking whether further intervention is needed, and asked whether any participant experienced internal complications.

Tang admitted that in the course of the workshop the facilitator or the participants may be able to see problems that were previously obscure to the person. Therefore, if professional intervention is necessary, it is actually encouraged.

Having accumulated experience in the field, Tang is confident that workshops can be tailor-made.

In fact, the workshop that he used as an example at the lunch seminar was tailor-made for the client.

He recalled that the Lego Serious Play methodology was invented at the headquarters of the Lego Group in Denmark. Two professors in business studies did so in the 1990s to guide the Lego Group out of a severe financial trough.

The trough swept the toy brick manufacturer when computers became more personal and accessible. Meanwhile, parents were convinced that their children should learn computer skills, according to Tang.

Commissioned to rescue the nearly bankrupt corporation, the two academics managed to "upgrade" the use of the toy bricks and make it applicable in business scenarios.

"By business I mean all trades: whether it's construction, gaming or law. As long as there is a team, there is a possibility of team issues arising," Tang explained. "The methodology is indeed universal now."

He added that a Google search will easily demonstrate that Lego Serious Play is practiced in all parts of the world.

A quick workshop was offered to the lunch-goers, who were told to make ducks with the Lego bricks under certain restrictions and instructions.

## CRIME

# Taxi driver and overstayer detained for abetting illegal border crossing

RENATO MARQUES

**A** 53-year-old local man working as a taxi driver and another man from the mainland overstaying his visa in Macau have been detained by the Judiciary Police (PJ), a spokesperson announced yesterday during a special press conference from the force.

The two were caught in connection with the case of a third person who crossed the border illegally, a 35-year-old man from the mainland who has been awaiting trial in Macau for several crimes.

According to the PJ, the main suspect was involved in crimes committed some time ago related to aggravated theft and participation in a criminal organization. He had been conditionally released from prison while awaiting trial, with requirements to remain in Macau and pre-



sent regularly to authorities.

The man had called on the two suspects now in custody for help in illegally crossing the border into the mainland.

The investigation in Macau was prompted by the man's capture on the mainland after he illegally

crossed the border by climbing a wall at the University of Macau campus, entering the mainland through Hengqin.

Reviewing surveillance footage, the PJ confirmed that the man had visited the location twice, carried by the same taxi driver each time. The first time,

on April 29, they were seemingly surveying the location and then returned on the evening of May 1 to help the man cross the border.

They used a telescopic metal ladder which was put in position by the overstayer. After the man arrived at the scene by taxi, he crossed the wall, and then the same man took the ladder away, storing it at the runaway suspect's home in Macau.

On May 2, both the taxi driver and the overstayer were detained in Macau and brought in for questioning.

They are both being charged with aiding illegal immigration, an offense that is currently considered an aggravated crime due to the pandemic.

The overstaying suspect caught in Macau is also being charged over illegally remaining in Macau.

# DAILY WAGE OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS DOWN IN Q1

**T**HE average daily wage of construction workers decreased by 1.5% quarter-to-quarter to MOP787 in the first quarter of 2022.

The average daily wages of local workers (MOP968) and non-resident workers (MOP716) went down by 1.9% and 0.3% respectively, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

In terms of main occupations, the average daily wages of welders (MOP823), concrete formwork carpenters (MOP762) and structural iron erectors (MOP778) fell by 8.9%, 6.9% and 6.6% respectively quarter-to-quarter, while the wages of painters (MOP858), air-conditioning mechanics (MOP902) and water/gas pipe installers (MOP830) rose by 6.8%, 3.8% and 2.7% respectively.

Discounting the effect of inflation, the real wage index of construction workers (95.8) in the first quarter of 2022 dropped by 3.2% quarter-to-quarter, with that of local construction workers (97.7) decreasing by 0.4%.

Earlier this year, the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) said that the lack of professional skills or willingness to learn new skills and techniques explained the low employability rate of local construction workers last year.

In job-matching sessions, 78% of the workers whom the bureau was unsuccessful in finding employment for did not get an interview "mainly because they did not pass the techniques test or dropped out of the skill tests [before completing them]." LV

# First batch of 460 households get keys to gov't housing

RENATO MARQUES

**S**TARTING yesterday, a total of 460 households waiting for access to an economic rental housing unit from the government will get the keys to their new homes by the end of this month, the Housing Bureau (IH) announced in a statement.

This is the first batch of residents to be granted housing units under the new permanent tender system that lists candidates by priority of access through a points system.

From May 3, these candidates are being called in to sign their rental contracts and receive keys to housing units available under the government's first level of the public housing system.

According to the IH, since the implementation of the permanent application system for social housing on August 20, 2020 until April 29 this year, the bureau has completed the assessment of qualification, classification, and admission



of 2,400 households. 900 of these households, after re-examination of their applications, were found to meet the requirements.

As the allocation procedures for units are completed, applicants will be notified to sign their lease agreements and move in to their new houses.

The IH also reminded the public that allocation of social housing units is carried out fairly via a computerized drawing system.

The bureau also noted that only

five applications had been excluded for not meeting the requirements, and about 30 others were withdrawn by the applicants after contact with the IH.

Of the approximately 1,500 remaining households applying for social housing, around 260 have already been provisionally admitted and they are currently undergoing a re-examination of their applications to ensure that they still meet the legal requirements before being granted a unit.



## LIST OF CHILDREN ADMITTED TO SUBSIDIZED NURSERIES PUBLISHED

**T**HE list of children enrolling for the first time in subsidized childcare in Macau has been published, the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) announced.

Parents can access information on the dedicated website ([www.childcare.ias.gov.mo](http://www.childcare.ias.gov.mo)).

According to the IAS, most nurseries will organize the full enrollment of listed children between May 10 and 12.

The nurseries will also communicate with parents about how to accept placements, withdraw, or apply to a different nursery.

The IAS reminds the public that each child can only be enrolled in one subsidized nursery or daycare center, calling on parents who wish to change their placement to complete formalities for withdrawal before registering at a new institution.

Final information will be published and the procedures completed from June. Information will also be provided on vacancies still available at non-subsidized nurseries which accept applications throughout the year. **RM**

AD



## HOLIDAY RENTAL HOUSES

Lugar das Letras Casa de Gouvães

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COVID-19

# BEIJING PREPS HOSPITAL SPACES, THOUGH NEW CASES LOW



**BEIJING** is preparing new hospital facilities to deal with a spike in COVID-19 cases, even though the numbers of new cases remain low.

State media reported yesterday a 1,000-bed hospital at Xiaotangshan in the northeastern suburbs built for the 2003 SARS outbreak has been refurbished in case it's needed.

Unofficial reports online say thousands of beds have been prepared in a centralized quarantine center near the airport, but state media has not confirmed those preparations in what could be an attempt to avoid stoking public fears.

New cases in Beijing have remained steady, with another 62 recorded on Monday, 11 of them showing no symptoms, up just slightly from about 50 per day over the weekend. Beijing has reported about 450 cases in the

two-week-old outbreak.

China has stuck to its strict "zero-COVID" approach that restricts travel, mass tests entire cities and sets up sprawling temporary facilities to try to isolate every infected person. Lockdowns start with buildings and neighborhoods but become citywide if the virus is spreading widely.

That has come as many other countries relax pandemic restrictions. Experts have questioned the usefulness of China's hardline policy, saying vaccines and new treatments for COVID-19 make them redundant.

Beijing has ordered restaurants and gyms closed for the May Day national holiday that runs through Wednesday, while major tourist sites in the city, including the Forbidden City and the Beijing Zoo, will close their indoor exhibition halls starting

yesterday.

Another three rounds of testing have been ordered for most of the city's 21 million people, following a similar requirement last week. A negative test result obtained within the previous 48 hours is required to gain entry to most public spaces.

Authorities in Shanghai are slowly beginning to ease lockdown restrictions that have confined most of the city's 26 million people to their apartments, housing compounds or immediate neighborhoods for close to a month.

Shanghai recorded another 5,669 cases on Monday, all but 274 of them asymptomatic, along with an additional 20 deaths.

Shanghai's surprisingly low death toll amid an outbreak of more than 400,000 cases has sparked questions into how such deaths are tallied.

The severe lockdown conditions have led to massive disruptions from food shortages to a wider, though likely temporary impact on the national economy.

China's largest city recorded a daily peak of 27,605 new cases nearly three weeks ago on April 13. **MDT/AP**

MARKETS

# Asian shares mixed in light 'Golden Week' trading

ELAINE KURTENBACH

**ASIAN** shares are mixed in light "Golden Week" trading with markets in China, Japan and some other countries closed for holidays.

Investors are watching to see what the U.S. Federal Reserve does as it accelerates efforts to curb inflation. The central bank is expected to raise short-term interest rates by double the usual amount when it releases its latest statement yesterday. It has already raised its key overnight rate once, for the first time since 2018, and Wall Street is expecting several big hikes in coming months.

That will make it more costly to borrow — for a car, a home, a credit card purchase and may weaken the economy. It also would draw investments out of stocks into other assets as their yields rise. Ultra-low interest rates helped drive stocks to unprecedented highs during the pandemic and now that process is being reversed.



Central banks in many other countries are also raising rates to try to bring price increases under control.

The Reserve Bank of Australia was due to decide on a rate hike Tuesday. New Zealand has begun raising rates, as have some other central

banks in the region apart from Japan and China, where economic recoveries have been slowed by efforts to tame recent outbreaks of coronavirus.

"For the session ahead, traders will be working on positioning ahead of the FOMC (Fed) and watching the RBA Meeting, where much firmer-than-expected

[...] consumer price index data in Australia may have pitched the scales towards a rate hike," Anderson Alves of ActivTrades said in a commentary.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged 0.1% lower to 7,338.00.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 0.3% to 21,028.01 and the KOSPI in South Korea rose 0.5% to 2,699.93.

On Monday, a late-afternoon turnaround led by technology stocks left major indexes moderately higher on Wall Street, averting more losses following a brutal April when widespread tech sell-offs dragged down major benchmarks.

The S&P 500 rose 0.6% to 4,155.38, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.3% to 33,061.50. The Nasdaq climbed 1.6% to 12,536.02.

Smaller company stocks also reversed course after spending much of the day in the red. The Russell 2000 index rose 1% to 1,882.91.

Bond prices fell, pushing yields higher. The yield on the 10-year Treasury was at 2.98% after rising to 3.00% on Monday. It hadn't been above 3% since Dec. 3, 2018, according to Tradeweb. **MDT/AP**

CHANGSHA

# TWO MORE SURVIVORS FOUND THREE DAYS AFTER BUILDING COLLAPSE

**RESCUERS** have found two more survivors in the rubble of a building in central China that collapsed more than three days ago, state media reported yesterday.

The official Xinhua News Agency said a man and a woman were pulled out on Monday afternoon and early Tuesday morning.

The woman, whose rescue came after being buried for 88 hours, alerted workers using life detection equipment to her presence by knocking on objects. Xinhua said she was conscious, had normal vital signs and was able to communicate with her rescuers.

The collapse of the six-story building took place at 12:24 p.m. Friday in Changsha, the Hunan provincial capital south of Beijing.

Police have arrested nine people, including the build-

ing owner, on suspicion of ignoring building codes or committing other violations. Also held were three people in charge of design and construction and five others who allegedly gave a false safety assessment for a guest house on the building's fourth to sixth floors.

The building also held a residence, a cafe and shops.

Following an increase in the number of collapses of self-built buildings in recent years, Chinese President Xi Jinping said Saturday that it was necessary to check such structures for any hidden dangers and fix them to prevent major accidents, Xinhua said.

Poor adherence to safety standards, including the illegal addition of extra floors and failure to use reinforcing iron bars, is often blamed for such disasters. **MDT/AGENCIES**



AUSTRALIA

# Sydney man gets 12 years for murdering gay American in 1988

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

**A**N Australian man was sentenced to 12 years and seven months in prison yesterday for the 1988 murder of an American who fell off a Sydney cliff that was known as a gay meeting place.

The death of mathematician Scott Johnson was initially called a suicide, but his family pressed for further investigation. A coroner in 2017 found a number of assaults, some fatal, where the victims had been targeted because they were thought to be gay.

Scott White, 51, pleaded guilty in January and could have been sentenced to up to life in prison.

Justice Helen Wilson said she did not find beyond reasonable doubt that the murder was a gay hate crime, an aggravating factor that would have led to a longer sentence. She also said she applied more lenient sentencing patterns in place in New South Wales state in the late 1980s.

He must serve at least eight years and three months in prison before he can be considered for parole.

White was 18 and homeless when he met 27-year-old Los Angeles-born Johnson at a bar in su-



Steve Johnson (right) with his sisters, Terry (left) and Rebecca and his wife Rosemarie (second right) arrive at the Supreme Court in Sydney, Monday

burban Manly in December 1988 and went with him to a nearby cliff top at North Head.

White's former wife Helen White told police in 2019 that her then-husband had bragged about beating gay men and had said the only good gay man was a dead gay man.

She told the court on Monday that her husband had told her Johnson had run off the cliff. Scott White told police that he was

himself gay and frightened that his homophobic brother would find out.

Wilson said it was not possible to draw any conclusions beyond a reasonable doubt about what had happened at the clifftop.

"The offender hit Dr. Johnson, causing him to stumble backwards and leave the cliff edge," Wilson said.

"In those seconds when he must have realized what was ha-

ppening to him, Dr. Johnson must have been terrified, aware that he would strike the rocks below and conscious of his fate," Wilson added. "It was a terrible death."

Wilson did not accept the defense lawyers' argument that Helen White had been motivated to report him to police by a reward.

Under cross-examination on Monday, Helen White denied she had been aware of a 1 million Australian dollar (\$704,000) reward for information on Johnson's murder when she went to police in 2019. She said she only became aware of a reward when the victim's brother, Steve Johnson, doubled the sum in 2020.

Outside court, Boston resident Steve Johnson thanked prosecutors and the judicial system for ensuring White was sent to prison.

"We didn't get compensation for Scott this week but what Scott got was dignity," the older sibling told reporters.

White had a record of violent crime before and after the murder but had not committed any offense since 2008.

"It should be understood that the court is not sentencing a violent and reckless young man for a targeted attack on a gay man,"

Wilson said.

"Because of the lapse of time, the offender is no longer the same angry young man who raised his fists to another on the edge of a cliff. Neither is the court imposing a sentence for a crime motivated by hatred for a particular sector of society. The evidence is too slender to support that," Wilson added.

She said a sentence for the same crime today would be "much higher."

White's lawyers have appealed his conviction and hope he will be acquitted of the murder charge in a jury trial.

A coroner ruled in 2017 that Johnson "fell from the clifftop as a result of actual or threatened violence by unidentified persons who attacked him because they perceived him to be homosexual."

The coroner also found that gangs of men roamed various Sydney locations in search of gay men to assault, resulting in the deaths of some victims. Some men were also robbed.

A coroner had ruled in 1989 that Johnson had taken his own life, while a second coroner in 2012 could not explain how he died.

Johnson studied at universities in California and at Cambridge in Britain before moving to Australia in 1986 to live with his Australian partner Michael Noone.

They lived in Canberra where Johnson studied at the Australian National University which posthumously awarded him a Ph.D. He was staying a Noone's parents' Sydney home when he died.

MDT/AP

INDIA

# Muslims mark Eid al-Fitr amid community violence

AIJAZ HUSSAIN,  
SRINAGAR

**M**USLIMS across India marked Eid al-Fitr yesterday by offering prayers outside mosques, even as the celebrations this year came in the backdrop of a series of recent attacks against the community during the month of Ramadan.

"We will not have the same kind of festivity" this time, said Mohammad Habeeb ur Rehman, a civil engineer in India's financial capital, Mumbai. "This is the most painful Eid with worst memories for Indian Muslims," he added.

Anti-Muslim sentiment and attacks have surged across the country in the last month, including stone throwing between Hindu and Muslim groups during religious processions and



subsequent demolitions of a number of properties mostly belonging to Muslims by authorities.

The community, which makes up 14% of India's 1.4 billion population, is reeling from vilification by hard-line Hindu nationalists who have long espoused an

anti-Muslim stance. Some leaders of India's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party have tacitly supported the violence, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi has so far been silent about it.

Eid al-Fitr is typically marked with communal

prayers, celebratory gatherings around festive meals and new clothes, but celebrations in India for the past two years have been marred by COVID-19 restrictions.

In Indian-controlled Kashmir, the Muslim festival has been subdued for the past three years because of an unprecedented military lockdown after India stripped the region's semi-autonomy in 2019, followed by the pandemic. The region also saw a rise in violence during Ramadan, with at least 20 militants, two civilians and five police and soldiers killed.

"As we prepare to celebrate Eid, a strong sense of collective loss jars at us," said Bashir Ahmed, a businessman in Srinagar.

Kashmir is the Muslim-majority disputed region where a violent insurgen-

cy against Indian rule and New Delhi's brutal crackdown has raged for over three decades. Tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict.

Meanwhile in the capital, New Delhi, hundreds assembled in the Jama Masjid, one of India's largest mosques, while offering Eid prayers there for the first time in over two years due to pandemic restrictions. Families came together early on Tuesday morning while many people shared hugs and wishes.

Mohammed Hamid, a software engineer, said he was grateful to be offering prayers at the mosque again.

"It's a good feeling because there was a lockdown for the past two years. With the grace of God, we are able to offer Eid prayers here with the children and we are

thankful," Hamid said.

The mood was cheerful in neighboring Bangladesh as millions traveled from the cities to towns and villages over the weekend to celebrate Eid. Huge crowds were seen in capital Dhaka's main Kamalapur Railway Station and bus terminals.

Like in India, Eid celebrations in Bangladesh for the last two years have been muted due to the pandemic. But this year, the government hasn't imposed restrictions, instead advising people to follow basic health protocols.

Khaleda Akter, a garment worker in Dhaka, said she was going to be traveling to her village and was excited to celebrate with her parents.

"I am very glad that this year we can travel without any trouble," she said.

MDT/AP

PUTIN'S WAR

# Aid workers prep stretchers, toys for Mariupol evacuees

CARA ANNA & YESICA FISCH, ZAPORIZHZHIA

**A**ID workers prepared hot food, wheelchairs and toys yesterday for civilians slowly making their way to relative safety from the pulverized remnants of a steel plant in the city of Mariupol, besieged for months by Russian forces.

The plant is the last holdout of Ukrainian resistance in a city that is otherwise controlled by Moscow's forces and key to their campaign in Ukraine's east. A senior U.S. official warned that Russia is planning to annex much of the country's east later this month.

At a reception center, stretchers and wheelchairs were lined up, tiny children's shoes dangled from a shopping cart and a pile of toys waited for the first convoy of civilians whose evacuation is being overseen by the United Nations and Red Cross.

Their arrival would represent a rare glimmer of good news in the nearly 10-week war sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine that has killed thousands, forced millions to flee the country, laid waste to towns and cities, and shifted the post-Cold War balance of power in eastern Europe.

More than 100 people — including elderly women and mothers with small children — left Mariupol's rubble-strewn Azovstal steelworks over the weekend and set out in buses and ambulances.

At least some were apparently taken to a village controlled by Russia-backed separatists. The Russian military said some chose to stay in separatist areas. In the past, Ukraine has accused Moscow's troops of taking civilians against their will to Russia or Russian-controlled areas — something the Kremlin has denied.

Others left for the Ukrainian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia, some 140 miles (230 kilometers) northwest of Mariupol. It was not clear why the evacuees' journey was taking so long, but the convoy likely had to pass through heavily contested areas and many checkpoints.

Mariupol has come to symbolize the human misery inflicted by the war. A Russian siege has trapped civilians with little access to food, water and electricity, as Moscow's forces pounded the city to rubble. The plant — where about 1,000 civilians



AP PHOTO

sought shelter along with some 2,000 fighters who have refused to surrender — has particularly transfixed the outside world.

Mariupol Deputy Mayor Sergei Orlov told the BBC that high-level negotiations were underway among Ukraine, Russia and international organizations on evacuating more people. But Russia resumed its bombardment of the sprawling plant by air, tank and ship after the partial evacuation, Ukraine's Azov Battalion, whose fighters are holed up in the mill, said Monday on the Telegram messaging app.

After failing to take Kyiv in the early weeks of the war, Russia withdrew some of its forces and switched its focus to Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of the Donbas. Mariupol lies in the region, and its capture would deprive Ukraine of a vital port, allow Russia to establish a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014, and free up troops for fighting elsewhere in the Donbas.

Michael Carpenter, U.S. ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said Monday that the U.S. believes the Kremlin plans to annex much of eastern Ukraine and recognize the southern city of Kherson as an independent republic. Neither move would be recognized by the United States or its allies, he said.

Russia is planning to hold sham referendums in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the Donbas that would "try to add a veneer of democratic or electoral legitimacy" and attach the entities to Russia, Carpenter said. He also said there were signs that Russia would engineer an independence vote in Kherson.

Mayors and local legislators there have been abducted, internet and cellphone service has been severed and a Russian school curriculum will soon be imposed, Carpenter said. Ukraine's government says Russia has introduced its ruble as currency there.

Getting a full picture of the unfolding battle in the east has been difficult because airstrikes and artillery barrages have made it extremely dangerous for reporters to move around. Both Ukraine and the Moscow-backed rebels fighting in the east have introduced tight restrictions on reporting.

But so far, Russia's troops and their allied separatist forces appear to have made only minor gains, taking several small towns as they try to advance in relatively small groups against staunch Ukrainian resistance.

In its daily Twitter statement on the war, the British military said it believes the Russian military is now "significantly weaker" after suffering losses in its war on Ukraine.

"Recovery from this will be exacerbated by sanctions," the ministry said. "Failures both in strategic planning and operational execution have left it unable to translate numerical strength into decisive advantage."

Ukraine's resistance has been significantly bolstered by Western arms and other aid, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was expected to announce hundreds of millions of pounds in new military support to Kyiv in a speech to Ukraine's parliament today [Macau time].

In the remote address, he is expected to echo the words of Britain's World War II Prime Minister Winston Churchill by

calling Ukraine's defiant response to the Russian invasion the country's "finest hour."

On Monday, Ukraine said Russia struck a strategic road and rail bridge west of Odesa, a major Black Sea port. The bridge was heavily damaged in previous Russian strikes, and its destruction would cut a supply route for weapons and other cargo from neighboring Romania.

A satellite image captured by Planet Labs PBC and analyzed by The Associated Press showed the bridge still standing as of noon Monday.

Another image, taken Monday, showed nearly 50 Russian military helicopters at Sary Oskol, a Russian base close to the Ukrainian border and some 175 kilometers (110 miles) northeast of the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv.

Highlighting the toll of the war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Monday that at least 220 Ukrainian children have been killed by the Russian army since the war began, and 1,570 educational institutions have been destroyed or damaged. He also noted that some people trying to escape the fighting are afraid they'll be taken to Russia or Russian-controlled areas.

More than 1 million people, including nearly 200,000 children, have been taken from Ukraine to Russia, Russia's Defense Ministry said Monday, according to state-owned news agency TASS. Defense Ministry official Mikhail Mizintsev said that number included 11,550 people in the previous 24 hours, "without the participation of the Ukrainian authorities."

Zelenskyy said that the U.N. assured him people fleeing Mariupol would be allowed to go to areas his government controls.

Separate from the official evacuations, some Mariupol residents left on their own, often in damaged private cars.

As sunset approached Monday, Mariupol resident Yaroslav Dmytryshyn rattled up to a reception center in Zaporizhzhia in a car with a back seat full of youngsters and two signs taped to the back window: "Children" and "Little ones."

"I can't believe we survived," he said, looking worn but in good spirits after two days on the road.

"There is no Mariupol whatsoever," he said. "Someone needs to rebuild it, and it will take millions of tons of gold." **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1982 ARGENTINES DESTROY HMS SHEFFIELD



The British ship HMS Sheffield has been hit by an Argentine missile fired from a fighter bomber.

It is not clear how many of the 268 crew have perished.

The sinking has shocked the British nation and foiled any possible diplomatic solution to the current dispute over the Falkland Islands between Britain and Argentina.

The ship caught fire when a French-made Exocet missile penetrated deep into HMS Sheffield's control room. The blaze caused a poisonous smoke and most of the crew abandoned ship.

A major rescue operation has been launched in the South Atlantic as relatives thousands of miles back in the UK wait for news of their loved ones.

The 4,100-ton destroyer was struck as it carried out a scouting mission off the Falkland Islands, although its exact position is a secret.

Announcing the news on television, the spokesman for the Ministry of Defence Secretary, Ian McDonald, said the ship was "in the course of its duty within the total exclusion zone around the Falkland Isles".

Two missiles were fired by a Super-Exocet fighter bomber. One missed but the other scored a direct hit and ignited a fire.

The Exocet missile is designed to skim the sea to avoid radar detection. It has its own radar that guides it to its intended target.

The attack follows yesterday's sinking of the Argentine cruiser General Belgrano. An Argentine diplomat in the United States said the destruction of HMS Sheffield was "justified after the massacre that the English have done shelling our men and our ships".

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Twenty men died and a further 24 were injured in the sinking of the HMS Sheffield, the first British warship to be lost in 37 years.

It was the first of four Royal Navy ships sunk during the Falklands War. The others were the frigates Ardent and Antelope and the destroyer Coventry.

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel Sir Galahad and the British Merchant Navy ship Atlantic Conveyor were also lost.

After a bloody land battle, Argentine forces surrendered to the British and peace was declared on 20 June.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Try making some changes to your appearance and your attitude that will reinforce just that. They will jump at the chance to do something without you if it sounds like more fun.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Changes in your home will be positive. A female colleague may cause problems for you. Don't let your emotional partner upset you today. Communication will be your strong point.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
A lot can be accomplished if you organize your time. Children will keep you busy. Romance may be likely if you travel. You will need to spend extra time sorting through your work.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
You should sign up for creative courses. If it can make you extra cash, it will be even better. Concentrate on your work. Personal alterations will be in your best interest.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
You don't need to pay out in order to have fun. Get ready to discover love, passion, and the desire to enjoy all that life has to offer. You need to keep everyone on your domestic scene too busy to complain.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Secret affairs may be tempting, but keep in mind that they will damage your reputation if you decide to indulge. There might be one who is quite willing to take the credit for your work.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
You will be encouraged to get involved in a moneymaking venture. Difficulties with children will surface if you try to break a promise you made. Compromise may be necessary.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
You may have some difficulties with someone you live with. Be prepared to take advantage of your good fortune. You may find yourself in the midst of a pretty good deal.

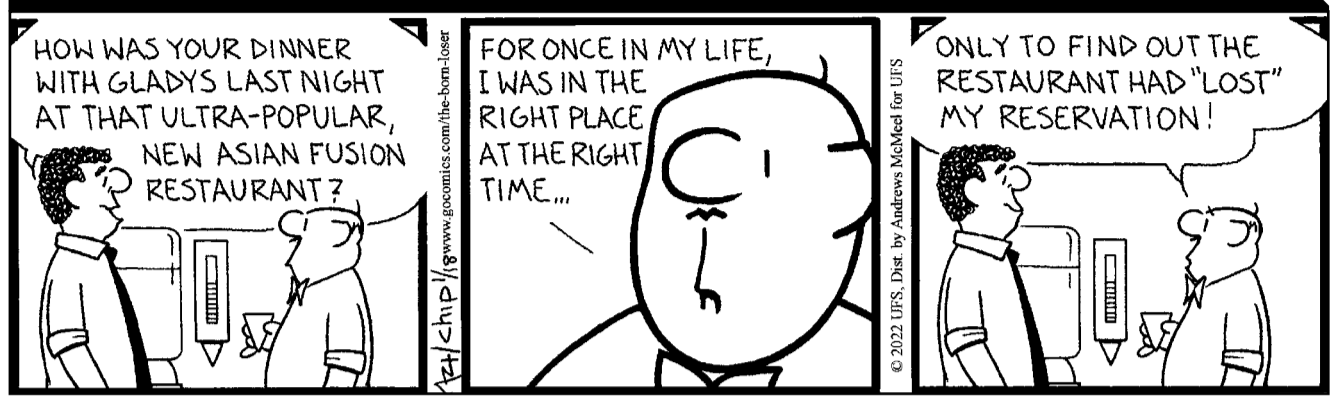
**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Deception in your home is evident. Don't beat around the bush. Residential moves will also be advantageous for all concerned. Older relatives may be a burden.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
You can make financial gains through investments and dealing with other people's money. You can elaborate on your creative ideas and get involved in groups that relate to the arts.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
You can pick up some overtime today. Don't be too shy to promote your own interests. Hassles with your boss are sure to erupt if you speak your mind, but you shouldn't be afraid to do so.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Pleasure trips will be a form of healing for your emotional state of mind. You might find that delays will cause setbacks and upset. Caustic language may cause you to want to get out of the house.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

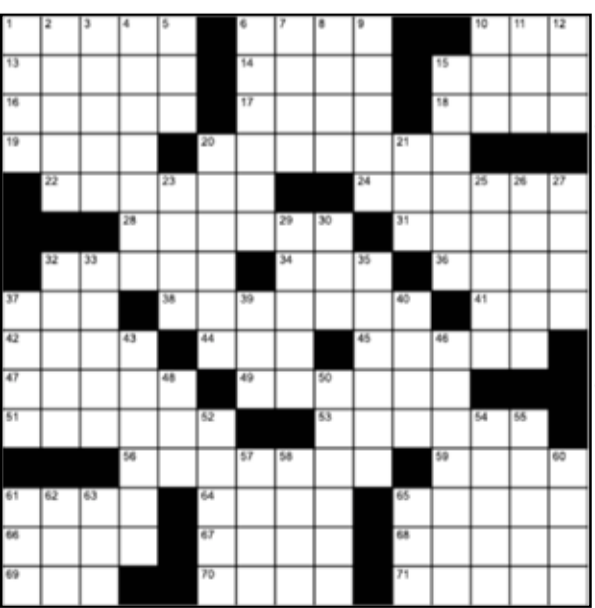
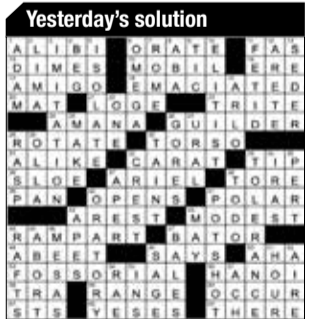
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	16	33	fine
Changchun	14	27	cloudy
Chengdu	13	27	cloudy
Chongqing	14	29	fine
Fuzhou	17	22	overcast
Guangzhou	15	28	fine
Guiyang	10	23	fine
Haikou	19	25	cloudy
Hangzhou	14	25	cloudy
Harbin	8	25	cloudy
Hefei	12	29	fine
Nanjing	14	27	fine
Shanghai	16	25	fine
Taipei	20	25	rain
Wuhan	13	29	fine
Hong Kong	21	24	overcast
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	1	9	overcast
Frankfurt	9	20	rain
Paris	9	20	overcast
London	8	18	showers
New York	13	18	showers

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Marriage acquisition; 6- \_\_\_ Nostra; 10- Nile reptile; 13- "Lovergirl" singer \_\_\_ Marie; 14- By and by; 15- On \_\_\_ with; 16- Golden Horde member; 17- Bridle strap; 18- Fibrous; 19- Like some history; 20- Any part of the face; 22- Fashions; 24- Tin plate; 28- Midday nap; 31- Snare; 32- Dense element; 34- Free (of); 36- Ed and Mel of baseball; 37- JFK watchdog; 38- Christens anew; 41- Greek goddess of the dawn; 42- Table scraps; 44- Music style performed by Dr Dre and Eminem; 45- Stub; 47- Bed down; 49- Spots; 51- Musical composition; 53- Parentless child; 56- Excavating machine; 59- Slaughter of baseball; 61- Assistant; 64- Bound; 65- Aggregate of qualities that make good character; 66- Of course!; 67- River to the Caspian; 68- Caterpillar rival; 69- Fond du \_\_\_; Wis.; 70- Hollow cylinder; 71- Milk snake;

DOWN 1- What's \_\_\_ you?; 2- Approaches; 3- Sic on; 4- Shrink; 5- Armed conflict; 6- Fondle; 7- Draft classification; 8- And \_\_\_ goes; 9- Invalidate; 10- Mil. address; 11- Sucker; 12- Ask invasive questions; 15- Playground retort; 20- Trial balloon; 21- Operated; 23- Make-up artist?; 25- Emblem; 26- Bar, legally; 27- Capone's nemesis; 29- Snare; 30- Direct a gun; 32- Danny's daughter; 33- Taken in; 35- Long for; 37- Moat; 39- Not for a Scot; 40- Dance move; 43- Navy builder; 46- Conducted; 48- Sch. group; 50- Breed of dog; 52- Malfunction; 54- On \_\_\_-to-know basis; 55- \_\_\_ Dame; 57- Soprano Te Kanawa; 58- Jalopy; 60- Prophet; 61- Afflict; 62- This \_\_\_ stickup!; 63- Last mo.; 65- Oklahoma city;



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

# Thought-provoking art exhibition at Sands Gallery



SANDS CHINA recently unveiled the second exhibition of its new Sands Gallery at the Grand Suites at Four Seasons, with 101 Bowls – An Art Exhibition Featuring Water Poon's Art & Romy Cheung's Fashion.

With a theme of "Full of Content, Full of Love," the exhibition was created as a labour of love by renowned Chinese artist Water Poon and his wife, fashion designer Romy Cheung. It showcases over 40 bowls painted by Poon, alongside one-of-a-kind folk-art costumes designed by Cheung, some of which feature traditional Nantong blue calico from Jiangsu province, incorporating modern design into traditional materials to demonstrate the power of guochao, or the rising China cultural tide.

Inspired by the mantle and alms bowl of a Buddhist monk, the bowls and clothing on display showcase the truth, goodness and beauty of nature. In particular, some of the ceramic bowls were crafted with Poon painting them with elements related to the 24 Chinese solar terms and the idea of positivity in life.

The exhibition is part of the company's ongoing commitment to the diversification of art and culture, providing a platform for promoting extensive exchange and cooperation among local and international art talent. 101 Bowls – An Art Exhibition Featuring Water Poon's Art & Romy Cheung's Fashion at Sands Gallery is open to the public 11 a.m.-7 p.m. daily April 28-May 29, 2022.



## FOOTBALL

# FIFA blockchain deal is first new US WCup sponsor since 2011

GRAHAM DUNBAR,  
GENEVA

**F**IFA got a first new American sponsor of the men's World Cup in 11 years yesterday, signing a deal for this year's tournament in Qatar with blockchain technology provider Algorand.

The deal is also a "technical partnership" to help FIFA develop a digital assets strategy, soccer's world body said. It could help FIFA market soccer-related non-fungible tokens (NFTs).

The value of the World Cup sponsorship, at a third-tier regional level covering North American and European rights, was not disclosed. FIFA has set a target of earning \$7 billion total revenue in its four-year commercial cycle that



ends in Qatar.

The deal was announced in Los Angeles where FIFA president Gianni Infantino attended a business conference.

FIFA operations are turning toward North America ahead of the expanded 2026 World Cup being hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. It should be a commercial boon with 48

teams competing instead of 32, playing a total of 80 games instead of 64.

Still, Algorand is the first new U.S.-based sponsor for FIFA's marquee World Cup since 2011. Johnson & Johnson signed just for the 2014 edition in Brazil, which was a key market.

The past decade saw FIFA implicated in a U.S. federal investigation of

corruption in international soccer and struggle to add American brands to join long-term partners Coca-Cola, Visa, McDonald's and Budweiser.

Until recent months, FIFA signed nearly all of its sponsors for the 2018 and 2022 tournaments with firms from the host countries -- Russia and Qatar, respectively -- and China.

FIFA has now targeted the tech sector and in March announced a 2022 tournament deal with a cryptocurrency platform, Singapore-based crypto.com.

Algorand founder Silvio Micali said in a FIFA statement his company could help "transform the way we all experience the world's game."

The deal also covers the 2023 Women's World Cup being hosted by Australia and New Zealand. **MDT/AP**

## BOXING

# STEVENSON OUTPOINTS VALDEZ IN DOMINATING WIN, TAKES WBC BELT

**W**BO champion Shukur Stevenson handed Oscar Valdez the first loss of his career last weekend in a junior lightweight championship bout.

What some thought could be a fight of the year candidate turned into a one-sided boxing clinic.

Stevenson (18-0, 9 KOs) won by unanimous decision and took Valdez's WBC belt with the victory.

Stevenson displayed faster hands, exquisite footwork, and overall better boxing skills than Valdez. Stevenson outpunched his opponent 189-110 and landed 53% of his power punches.

Judge Tim Cheatham had the fight scored 117-110, while Dave Moretti and David Sutherland had it 118-109.

"This victory means everything," said Stevenson, who is looking to win every belt at 130 pounds and unify the division.

Stevenson looked every bit a superstar when he took advantage of Valdez's huge gamble in the sixth round. Valdez misfired an overhand left that left him in a vulnerable position. Stevenson countered quickly by dropping Valdez with a quick left shot to the temple and seized control of the bout.

Valdez (30-1) wasn't the same after that round, and seemingly lost the poise he started with. Stevenson, conversely, was in control the rest of the way, much to the dismay of the heavily pro-Valdez crowd inside a jam-packed MGM Grand Garden with an announced gathering of 10,102. **MDT/AP**

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**

Jinith De Silva, China Daily\*



**PANDEMIC FIGHT BOOST SRI LANKA-CHINA TIES**

The friendship between the island country of Sri Lanka and China has been nurtured through the maritime Silk Road for centuries. Today, the two countries have close relations in economic and cultural fields.

China-Sri Lanka ties gathered momentum after Sri Lanka achieved independence in 1948 and the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. Sri Lanka was one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic — in 1950.

By initiating diplomatic relations with China in 1956, former Sri Lankan prime minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike laid the foundation for cooperation in several fields. Since then China has been among the first countries to come to Sri Lanka's help during disasters and other emergencies. In December 2004, when the Indian Ocean tsunami devastated Sri Lanka, China helped in its reconstruction. It did the same after the end of a nearly three-decade-old separatist movement on the island by offering soft loans and making huge investments.

Sri Lanka values such friendship, and the Sri Lankan people including politicians across the political divide expressed solidarity with China when the novel coronavirus broke out in the country in 2020.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese people have been working hard to fight against domestic outbreaks with solidarity. China also supplied medical equipment and medicines, including COVID-19 vaccines, to countries around the world, in order to strengthen public health security worldwide.

China first sent medical experts and equipment to Sri Lanka in July 2020. It also accepted Sri Lanka's request to grant a concessionary loan of \$500 million, to be paid in 10 years, to help Colombo fight the pandemic. As for the Chinese government and enterprises, they donated abundant aid including testing kits, face masks, KN95 masks, personal protective equipment (PPE), safety goggles and medical gloves to Sri Lanka.

And on my request as president of Sri Lanka-China Society, 19 NGOs in China donated 400,600 face masks, 1,600 face shields, 2,400 safety goggles and 400 PPE to Sri Lanka. The Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries in Beijing and its branches in other parts of the country and the Amity Foundation in Nanjing were particularly generous with their donations. The estimated value of those donations was about 32 million Sri Lankan rupees (1.2 million yuan). Some Chinese organizations sent us more than they had committed, with some of them doubling the promised amount.

Besides, the Amity Foundation in Nanjing offered 455 scholarships of 800 yuan each to Sri Lankan schoolchildren from rural areas. The Chinese government and people have always helped Sri Lanka to emerge from crises. We appreciate the help from our Chinese friends.

Many of the consignments sent by Chinese organizations carried the Chinese and Sri Lankan flags as well inspirational messages of support and solidarity in Chinese, Sinhala, Tamil and English. Chinese telecommunications equipment maker Huawei's consignment carried a Buddhist saying, "health is the ultimate wealth", which resonated in Sri Lanka, where 70 percent of the population is Buddhist.

The donations from the Chinese people will contribute to the health and well-being of the Sri Lankan people and strengthen the historical friendship between the two countries. And the two countries will continue to work together to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

\*President of Sri Lanka China Society

**AUSTRALIAN CENTRAL BANK HIKES RATE FOR FIRST TIME IN 11 YEARS**

THE BUZZ

Australia's central bank yesterday lifted its benchmark interest rate for the first time in more than 11 years. The cash rate rose from 0.1% to 0.35% in a move potentially damaging to a government that will seek reelection on May 21.

A rise was widely expected after official data released last week showed that Australia's inflation rose to 5.1% in the year through March. It is the highest annual rate since 2001, when a newly introduced 10% federal consumption tax created a temporary spike.

Inflation in the latest March quarter was sharply higher than

the 3.5% three months earlier. The March result was driven by a surge in fuel and housing costs as well as food shortages created by recent Australian floods.

The Reserve Bank of Australia adjusts interest rates to keep inflation within a 2%-3% target band. The bank's Governor Philip Lowe said inflation had increased more than had been expected but remained lower than in most advanced economies.

"The economy has proven to be resilient and inflation has picked up more quickly, and to a higher level, than was expected," Lowe said.



Cambodian-American lawyer Theary Seng dressed in a pageant costume that reads "Lady Justice"

**CAMBODIAN DISSIDENT DRESSES UP AS 'LADY JUSTICE' FOR TRIAL**

SOPHENG CHEANG, PHNOM PENH

**A**N outspoken critic of Cambodia's government dressed up as "Lady Justice," complete with scale and blindfold, to bring attention to her case as lawyers in her trial for treason presented their final arguments yesterday.

Theary Seng, a Cambodian American lawyer, is charged with conspiracy to commit treason and incitement to commit a felony, which together carry a maximum jail sentence of 12 years. The charges arose from a failed attempt by leading opposition figure Sam Rainsy to return to Cambodia in November 2019, after a period of self-exile. Cambodian authorities, who opposed his return, alleged Theary Seng was involved in organizing the trip, which she denies.

Four other defendants being tried on the same charges are former members and activists of the dissolved opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party, of which Sam Rainsy was co-founder. Theary Seng denies belonging to the party.

"I am not afraid of prison. I am ready. I am prepared to go to prison if this dictatorial, autocratic regime continues with its injustice against justice itself. So I am not afraid of

prison," Theary Seng told journalists outside the Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

Cambodia's Supreme Court in 2017 ordered the Cambodia National Rescue Party to be dissolved for allegedly plotting to seize power, but it is widely believed the action was taken to help ensure that Prime Minister Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party would win the 2018 general election. His ruling party made a clean sweep of the National Assembly seats.

Opponents of Hun Sen, who has been in power for 37 years, criticize him for acting in an autocratic manner and keeping the opposition on a tight leash. He has said he intends to stay in office until 2028 and has endorsed one of his sons to be his successor.

To publicize her case, Theary Seng dressed as Lady Justice, a symbol of law who is traditionally depicted as a Roman goddess bearing a sword and a balancing scale and wearing a blindfold and flowers in her hair. On previous trial days, she had dressed up in a prison-style orange outfit with ankle shackles and as a classical Cambodian Apsara dancer, telling reporters she was expressing her belief that the trial was "political theater."

She did not attend yesterday's court hearing when a security guard refused to let her in unless she removed the flowers from her hair and left the sword and scale outside the courtroom. She stayed outside with supporters and reporters and let her lawyer represent her.

"I am 'Lady Justice.' This autocratic regime is putting justice itself on trial. This autocratic regime uses the court as its weapon," said Theary Seng, who graduated from University of Michigan Law School in the United States. "It is unjust when the law is not based on justice. My weapon is truth. Truth is eternal. ... Truth is freedom."

Her lawyer, Choung Chou Ngy, said the court is expected to deliver its verdict on June 14.

In a related case in March, the court convicted 21 people of treason and related charges for their non-violent political opposition to Cambodia's government. Seven exiled leaders of the disbanded Cambodia National Rescue Party received 10-year prison terms in absentia, including Sam Rainsy, who has been in exile since 2016. Another 13 defendants were ordinary party supporters whom the court ordered to serve more than three years. **MDT/AP**



**Slovakia, Hungary** said yesterday that they will not support sanctions against Russian energy that the European Union is preparing over the war in Ukraine, saying they are too reliant on those supplies and there are no immediate alternatives. EU commissioners are debating new proposals for sanctions, which could include a phased-in embargo on Russian oil. The 27 member countries are likely to start discussing them today, but it could be several days before the measures take effect and it's not clear if oil would be among them or Slovakia and Hungary would receive exemptions.



**Germany's** conservative opposition leader Friedrich Merz (pictured) traveled to Kyiv yesterday for meetings with Ukrainian officials, as Chancellor Olaf Scholz made clear that he wouldn't be visiting Ukraine any time soon. Scholz has traded barbs with Ukrainian officials in recent weeks because of Kyiv's refusal to invite Germany's head of state, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, whom Ukraine accuses of cozying up to Russia during his time as foreign minister.



**Germany, India** signed a series of bilateral agreements this week focused on sustainable development that will see the South Asian nation receive 10 billion euros in aid by 2030 to boost the use of clean energy. The accords were signed during a visit to Berlin by India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. Germany Chancellor Olaf Scholz is seeking to elicit India's support for the tough stance taken by Europe and the United States toward Russia over the war in Ukraine.