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**POLICE IN MACAU, HK DETAINED 22 PEOPLE OVER SUSPECTED CROSS-BORDER MONEY LAUNDERING AMOUNTING TO MOP1.1 BILLION**

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**PUBLIC PROSECUTOR INDICTS ALVIN CHAU FOR HEADING CRIMINAL GROUP**

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**FM WANG STARTS PACIFIC TOUR IN THE SOLOMONS**

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AP PHOTO



**Philippines** Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was proclaimed the next president of the Philippines by a joint session of Congress following a landslide election triumph 36 years after his dictator father was ousted in a pro-democracy uprising. The Senate and House of Representatives also declared that his separately elected vice presidential running mate, Sara Duterte, had won by a wide margin.

AP PHOTO



**Afghanistan** A series of explosions shook Afghanistan yesterday [Macau time], the Taliban said, including a blast inside a mosque in the capital of Kabul that killed at least five worshippers and three bombings of minivans in the country's north that killed nine passengers. The Islamic State group's local affiliate claimed responsibility for the minivan bombings.

AP PHOTO



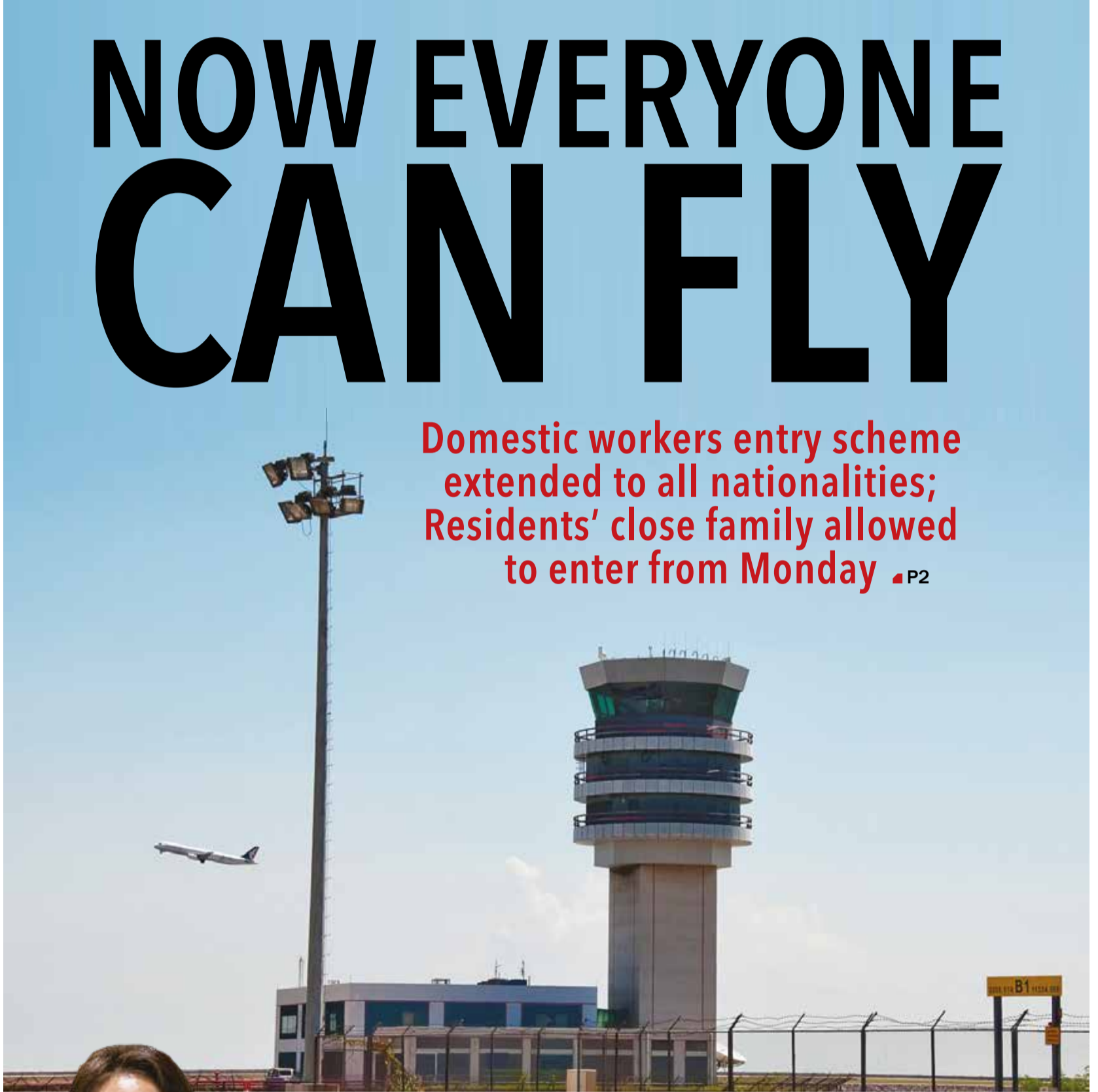
**Albania** has offered NATO a naval base in an effort to highlight the small country's value in the alliance "in these difficult times," the prime minister's office said yesterday. Prime Minister Edi Rama (pictured) said Pashaliman naval base, 180 kilometers south of the capital Tirana, could be "an added value" to the alliance and they had prepared a project on its renovation.

**German** Chancellor Olaf Scholz has reiterated his conviction that Russian President Vladimir Putin won't win the war in Ukraine. "He has already failed to achieve all his strategic goals," Scholz said yesterday in his speech at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. The chancellor said that "a capture of all of Ukraine by Russia seems further away today than it did at the beginning of the war."

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# NOW EVERYONE CAN FLY

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RENATO MARQUES

COVID-19

# RESIDENTS' CLOSE FAMILY ALLOWED TO ENTER FROM MONDAY

**NON-RESIDENT** spouses and underage children of Macau residents will be able to enter the region from Monday (May 30), the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center announced yesterday during the weekly briefing on the situation of Covid-19 in Macau.

The announcement, made by coordinator of the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention Dr. Leong Iek Hou, brings an end to the ban put in place over two years ago on the reentering of all foreign nationals that, according to several reports, has been separating families.

Leong explained that the entry is conditional on prior approval from the Health Bureau (SSM) who will evaluate the eligibility of the applicants

as well as the fulfillment of several requirements.

Among requirements is the need for documented proof of a relationship between the foreign applicants and the relevant resident of Macau. These documents must be submitted to the SSM via the special page for Covid-19 prevention and control.

The documents may be submitted in PDF or Image files together with an application form.

Leong explained that the SSM will then respond to the applicant within 15 days. If the application is approved, the

applicant can print an authorization document that will be used to book the flight, quarantine hotel, and nucleic acid tests (NAT) as normally required.

The other requirements are the same as those that apply to every other person, such as the completion of a vaccination program and payment of the NAT during the quarantine period, depending on the individual's travel history.

Leong justified these measures by pointing out that the risk of infection is lower now than before, allowing the government to ease restrictions.



XINHUA

# Domestic workers entry scheme extended to all nationalities

RENATO MARQUES

**THE** pilot program for the entry of foreigners to perform domestic work will be extended to people from all nationalities starting from May 30.

Coordinator of the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention Dr. Leong Iek Hou said that the scheme, initially limited to Filipino nationals and recently extended to Indonesians, can now be used to hire domestic workers of any nationality.

The government will not impose quotas or limits on this scheme as "the number of applications we have been received is lower than what we initially expected."

So far, the authorities have received a total of 38 applications for this pilot program of which 23 were approved. As for the other 15, she said that in two cases the applications were withdrawn by the applicants, and 13 had been rejected due to failure to meet some of the eligibility criteria. All other criteria, as well as application procedures, remain unchanged.



MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

## NO PLANS TO REDUCE OR SUBSIDIZE QUARANTINES

Leong was questioned on factors that justify the limited number of applications under the domestic workers' pilot scheme, and was asked if the government is thinking of reducing the number of required days in quarantine or subsidizing quarantine for domestic workers. To all questions Leong resolutely responded that the government would not agree.

"We understand that there are several factors influencing the figures of the applications, the cost related to the quarantines is certainly one, but there are others. Maybe some workers are also not interested

in coming to Macau. We are not going to subsidize the quarantine, nor can we further reduce quarantine costs," Leong said, adding, "in relation to the number of quarantine days, the criteria that we are using is based on science, it is not an economic policy. These are the number of days necessary to ensure the safety of the population."

Asked about the policies of some cities in the mainland that have adopted the so-called 10+7 formula (10 days in a quarantine hotel + 7 days in self-health management at home), Leong said that the local government is "evaluating the results of these experiments to see if such a method is feasible for Macau."

# GOV'T ORGANIZES SPECIAL FLIGHT FOR THE RETURN OF STUDENTS FROM SHANGHAI

RENATO MARQUES

**A** representative from the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), Chan Iok Wai, yesterday announced that on June 1 a special flight will be organized for some residents stranded in Shanghai.

According to Chan, the DSEDJ has received around 200 requests from students in Shanghai who wish to return to Macau. Presently, only approximately 100 are confirmed on Air Macau's special flight.

Chan explained that authorities are informing the students of the relevant procedures. Tickets for the flight will cost RMB1,143 each.

Chan explained that this is not a chartered flight but, instead, a reopening of the normal route between Macau and Shanghai that

had been suspended due to the pandemic.

Chan also said that the DSEDJ is aware of some students that have left Shanghai via train and who are now in Guangzhou.

He said that those who chose to use the train (around 20) will be arriving today and will be transferred across the border from Zhuhai with the help of neighboring city authorities.

Quarantine hotel rooms for all these students are being organized, but authorities refuse to disclose the exact hotel and whether the students are subject to a special arrangement.

The Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center said that, upon arrival, the students will follow the standard requirements for those arrivals on similar flights.



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

ANTHONY LAM

GAMING

# Daisy Ho confident about closing syndicated loans

**D**AISY Ho, chairperson of SJM Resorts, S.A. (SJM), yesterday expressed her confidence in seeking funds for the enterprise.

Her comment was made on the sidelines of a press conference.

Recently, several agencies have conveyed their concerns over SJM's financial liquidity and that the enterprise may see difficulties in the search for extra funds. Ho was questioned on the matter.

In response, the senior executive disclosed that SJM's negotiation for syndicated loans was "nearly complete," except for some smaller details. She stressed that "our teams are working closely with banks to close the deal."

Will funds from STDM, SJM's parent company, be required to clear immediate hurdles? The parent company has announced a sum of HKD5 billion in loans ready for SJM.

Confident in closing the syndicated loans and thanking the parent company for its support, Ho said, "I hope SJM will be able to resolve the issues using our own efforts."

On the rumors that SJM Resorts have settled agreements with several "satellite casinos" in terms of operation rights, Ho revealed

ANTHONY LAM



that negotiations have progressed satisfactorily, adding that details will be disclosed in due course.

The Grand Lisboa Palace in Cotai is only partially open. It was first unveiled to the public at the

end of July last year. Currently, only a small part of the shopping mall, two out of three hotels, as well as a handful of restaurants are in operation.

The single hotel that is not

open is branded under fashion brand Versace. When questioned about when the hotel, officially named Palazzo Versace, will be opened, the senior executive disclosed that the hotel is

in fact ready.

"We hope it can be opened within this year," she expressed. "However, the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions have posed challenges. I believe we'll rely on tourist arrival numbers and the development of the pandemic to determine an actual launching date."

## WEDDING DRESS DESIGN CONTEST WITH CPTTM

The gambling concessionaire announced yesterday that it would hold a wedding gown design contest with the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM).

The contest will be themed "contemporary chinoiserie."

Both Ho and Victoria Kuan, director general of CPTTM, expect the contest to showcase various sartor techniques and designs, and consolidate Macau's position as an intercultural base, creative city and tourism destination.

Registration for the contest is now open. Registrants must be at least 18 years of age and must hold Permanent Macau Resident IDs. Prizes valued at MOP110,000 will be awarded to a shortlisted pool of contestants and winners who will be selected by a jury comprising representatives from the organizers and industry leaders across the Greater Bay Area.

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# MP INDICTS ALVIN CHAU FOR HEADING CRIMINAL GROUP

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE Public Prosecutions Office (MP) has indicted junket mogul Alvin Chau for founding and directing a "secret association," according to a report issued by the TDM Radio.

Those involved, 21 in total, are already starting to be notified.

If found guilty, those involved face a possible sentence of eight to fifteen years in prison.

Chau, former chairman of Suncity Group, was arrested on November 27, 2021, and is among the 11 suspects arrested on charges of illicit gambling and money laundering.

Macau police detained Chau and others after Chinese authorities issued an arrest warrant for them over accusations that they ran an illegal cross-border gambling syndicate.

Authorities have said that they had been investigating the case since July 2020. They say that the gambling syndicate has 199 shareholder representatives, over 12,000 agents that promoted its

MDT ARCHIVE



gambling operations, and more than 80,000 gamblers in its network.

Earlier this month, Chau disposed of his shares in Suncity Group and in the gaming operator Summit Ascent. As reported in the

Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Chau and his business partner Cheng Ting Kong transferred the shares and convertible bonds to the group's current executive director, Andrew Low. The combined shares in Suncity Group totaled 74.85%.

## CRIME

# 22 SUSPECTS ARRESTED OVER MOP1.1B LAUNDERING

**P**OLICE authorities in Macau and Hong Kong have detained 22 people over suspected cross-border money laundering that involves MOP1.1 billion patacas.

In a statement, the Judiciary Police (PJ) said that the syndicate had been operating since October 2020 and had instructed several members to open 181 bank accounts in Hong Kong to receive and process electronic payments.

The bank accounts had also served to receive deposits of large sums of money from several countries.

Since July 2021, several members of the group were sent to

Macau to withdraw money from ATMs using Hong Kong cards.

The PJ added that the group also purchased virtual currency through a telecommunications store that was then sold on to 'offshore' commercial platforms. The money would then be withdrawn in Macau as part of the money laundering operation.

Around MOP1.1 billion were found in suspicious deposits. The group members withdrew around MOP358 million patacas in Macau and Hong Kong.

Five men have been transferred to the Public Prosecutors Office while 17 are detained in Hong Kong. LV



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# Water Bureau: Converting local lagoons to reservoirs infeasible

ANTHONY LAM

**I**N a recent reply to a lawmaker's question, the government has confirmed that it has no plans to turn the city's southern lagoons into reservoirs.

Signed by Wong Soi Man, Director of the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA), and in response to lawmaker Becky Song, the reply stated that any work that attempts to convert the Sai Van and Nam Van Lakes into reservoirs would create "profound and lasting" impacts to the aquatic environment, the surrounding ambience, and the overall scenery of the lakes.

As a result, Wong added, the government has no plans to commence any conversion work.

Despite being named lakes, the two water conservatories are artificially created by confining original seawater with promenades and roads. Water gates were installed to exchange water.

Elaborating on the matter, Wong revealed that the conversion work would, if conducted,



involve significant clearance and deepening of the lakes. The embankments would also need to be reinforced and upgraded with waterproof technologies. The impact from such work would be long-lasting.

In a previous draft on water conservation, the government listed four areas of difficulty in expanding the two lagoons, but it insisted it would further consider

expansion of local water reserves.

Wong reiterated that the government has made plans to expand the two reservoirs in Coloane. Plans were made to expand the Ka-Ho Reservoir by 2023 and the Seac Pai Van Reservoir by 2026. This planned expansion will bring the city's total water reserves to 3.12 million cubic meters, which is sufficient for 12 days of use by the city's population.

Despite Wong's reply, a government workgroup revealed last year that studies had been conducted on expanding the two southern lagoons. After consulting with the DSAMA, the workgroup decided to expand the Ka-Ho Reservoir.

Expansion of the two southern lagoons are currently back-up projects to expand local water reserves.

## HOTEL GUESTS IN APRIL PLUNGE 29.5% Y-O-Y

The number of guests at hotels in April slid by 46.9% year-on-year to 369,000; mainland guests (244,000) declined by 59.5% while local guests (95,000) surged by 55.8%. The average occupancy rate of guest rooms in April dropped by 29.5 percentage points year-on-year to 29.5%. In the first four months of 2022, the number of guests decreased by 18.8% year-on-year to 1,744,000.

## MUSEUM DAY TO SHOWCASE CULTURAL HERITAGE SUNDAY

The Macao International Museum Day Carnival 2022 will be held at 2 p.m. this Sunday at the Lao Hon Market Park. The theme for this year's International Museum Day is "Power of Museums." The event will feature a range of activities including game booths, workshops, guided tours, and a WeChat game with lucky draws. The cultural heritage of Macau's museums will be displayed through a variety of online and offline activities. Twenty museums in the city co-organize this annual event.

## EMPLOYMENT

# Major layoffs allegedly happening at Million Dragon Hotel

**A** local hotel has reportedly started dismissing team members due to "unforeseeable business prospects," local media reports.

Letters signed by the Human Resources Department of a local hotel were distributed to hotel team members, notifying them of the corporate decision, according to several local media organizations including public broadcaster TDM.

One letter, dated May 23, related to the termination of an employment contract, and was written on the Million Dragon Hotel letterhead.

The letter provided that June 26 was the last working date; this is the same date the six gambling concessions were originally intended to end. Earlier this year, the government announced its decision to extend all concessions to the end of this year on a voluntary



application basis.

The copy of the termination letter stated that, "under the effects from external environment and factors, as well as from unforeseeable business prospects, there will be adjustments to our company's business structure."

"As a result, it is heartbreakingly decided that your employment contract will be terminated."

The letter also provided that the notice period would be slightly longer than a month from the day after the date of the letter.


Recipients of the letters were reminded to return all company property, such as employee IDs, uniform, and duty phones - prior to their departure from the company.

The letters were dis-

seminated gradually. According to a report by another media, Inside Asian Gaming, while a range of divisions were affected, the layoffs are mainly affecting VIP customer service agents.

The "Dragon Family" of hotels, namely Golden Dragon Hotel, Million Dragon Hotel and Royal Dragon Hotel, are all owned by local businessman Chan Meng Kam. **AL**

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Three F-15 warplanes of the Japanese Self-Defense Force, front, and four F-16 fighters of the U.S. Armed Forces fly over the Sea of Japan, on Wednesday

WAR GAMES

# Japan, US fly fighters after China drill, N. Korean missiles

**J**APANESE and U.S. forces have conducted a joint fighter jet flight over the Sea of Japan, Japan's military said yesterday, in an apparent response to a Russia-China joint bomber flight while U.S. President Joe Biden was in Tokyo.

The Japan-U.S. joint flight on

Wednesday involved eight warplanes based in Japan, including four U.S. F-16 fighters and four Japanese F-15s, the Joint Staff of the Japan Self-Defense Forces said.

The joint flight was meant to confirm the combined capabilities of the two militaries and fur-

ther strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance, it said in a statement.

The flight occurred hours after North Korea fired three missiles, including an intercontinental ballistic missile, toward the sea between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, amid concerns about another nuclear test by the North.

The missiles fell in waters outside of Japan's exclusive economic zone.

Chinese and Russian strategic bombers conducted joint flights near Japan on Tuesday, Japan's Defense Ministry said. Biden was meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and their counterparts from India and Australia for the Quad, an Indo-Pacific security and economic coalition meant as a counterweight to China's growing influence in the region.

Chinese H-6 bombers joined Russian TU-95s over the Sea of Japan and flew to areas over the East China Sea, but did not violate Japanese airspace, Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said. Separately, a Russian IL-20 reconnaissance plane was spotted flying off the northern Japanese coast.

The Chinese-Russian joint flight represented an "increased level of provocation" and a threat to the Quad, Kishi said.

China said the flights were over the the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea and the western Pacific. Defense Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian said it was a "routine joint strategic air patrol" that has been carried out four times since 2019.

"This operation is not aimed at a third party and has nothing to do with the current international and regional situation," he said in a video statement posted Wednesday on the Defense Ministry website. **MDT/AP**



Foreign Minister Wang Yi, center, is

DIPLOMACY

# Wang Yi's tour in the

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

**C**HINA'S Foreign Minister Wang Yi and a 20-strong delegation arrived in the Solomon Islands yesterday at the start of an eight-nation tour that comes amid growing concerns about Beijing's military and financial ambitions in the South Pacific region.

China says the trip builds on a long history of friendly relations between Beijing and the island nations.

But Australia scrambled to counter the move by sending its own Foreign Minister Penny Wong to Fiji to shore up support in the Pacific. Wong had been on the job just five days following an Australian election and had just arrived back Wednesday night from a meeting in Tokyo.

In Fiji, Wong said it was up to each island nation to decide what partnerships they formed and what agreements they signed, but urged them to consider the benefits of sticking with Australia.

"Australia will be a partner that doesn't come with strings attached nor imposing unsustainable financial burdens," Wong said. "We are a partner that won't erode Pacific priorities or Pacific institutions."

Meanwhile, the Media Association of Solomon Islands called on

DIPLOMACY

# US AIMS TO LEVERAGE RUSSIA-UKRAINE BLOC AGAINST BEIJING

**U**.S. officials say the Biden administration is aiming to lead the international bloc opposed to Russia's invasion of Ukraine into a broader coalition to counter what it sees as a more serious, long-term threat to global order from China.

The officials said Secretary of State Antony Blinken will lay out a three-pillar approach to competing with Beijing in a race to define the 21st century's economic and military balance in speech today [Macau time] outlining the administration's China policy.

While the U.S. sees Russia as the most acute and immediate threat to international stability, the officials said the administration believes China poses a greater danger and is marshaling its resources,

friends and allies to push back on increasing Chinese assertiveness around the world.

The officials acknowledged that the U.S. has limited ability to directly influence China's intentions and ambitions. They said the administration would focus instead on shaping the strategic environment around China.

The officials spoke to reporters on the condition of anonymity to preview Blinken's speech, to be delivered at George Washington University. The speech follows President Joe Biden's just-concluded visits to South Korea and Japan, where China loomed large in discussions.

Biden raised eyebrows during that trip when he said that the United States would act militarily to



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken

help Taiwan defend itself in the event of an invasion by China, which regards the island as a renegade province.

The administration scrambled to insist that Biden was not changing American policy and the officials said Blinken will restate that the U.S. has not changed its position. Blinken will say that Washington still holds to its "One China" policy,

which recognizes Beijing but allows for unofficial links with and arms sales to Taipei.

The officials said Blinken will make the case that the global response to Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine serves as a template for dealing with China's efforts to mold a new and unpredictable world order to replace the rules and institutions that have

AP PHOTO

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escorted from his plane on his arrival in Honiara, Solomon Islands, early yesterday

# starts Pacific e Solomons

its members to boycott a news conference in the capital, Honiara, held by Wang and his counterpart from the Solomon Islands, Jeremiah Manele, following a meeting between the pair.

That's because only selected media were invited to the event, and the schedule allowed for just a single question to be asked of Wang by China's state-owned broadcaster CCTV.

"Its a tough call to make regarding the media boycott for the press event on Thursday," wrote association president Georgina Kekea on Twitter. "Our protest is for our govt to see our disappointment. They have failed us & they failed to protect #democracy."

According to an official Chinese summary of the meeting, Wang told his counterpart that China would firmly support the Solomon Islands in its efforts to maintain national security and territorial integrity, while Manele described the visit as historic and a "milestone in the relations" between the two countries.

China signed a security pact with the Solomon Islands last month in a move that sent shock waves around the world.

That pact has raised fears that China could send troops to the island nation or even establish a military base there, not far from Australia. The Solomon Islands and China say there are no plans for a base.

In another move by China, a draft

document obtained by The Associated Press shows that Wang is hoping to strike a deal with 10 small Pacific nations during his visit. The sweeping agreement covers everything from security to fisheries and is seen by at least one Pacific leader as an attempt by Beijing to wrest control of the region.

Wang is hoping the countries will endorse the pre-written agreement as part of a joint communique after a May 30 meeting in Fiji with the other foreign ministers.

During his 10-day visit, Wang is also planning to make stops in Kiribati, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and East Timor.

Earlier, Australia's new Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he'd sent Wong to Fiji because Australia needed to "step up" its efforts in the Pacific.

"We need to respond to this because this is China seeking to increase its influence in the region of the world where Australia has been the security partner of choice since the Second World War," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corp.

But Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said that in recent years, exchanges and cooperation between Beijing and the island nations had been expanding in a development that was welcomed by the Pacific countries.

MDT/AP

## SANDS CHINA NEWS

We Commit: Sands China growing by leaps and bounds in both footprint and commitment

Operating in the industry for nearly two decades, Sands China Ltd. has grown by leaps and bounds. Starting with the launch and opening of Sands Macao in 2004, the company linked itself to the Macau community, for both good and challenging times. Since then, Sands China has upheld an unwavering belief in committing its best to team members, guests, and community, recognizing this belief as one of the company's most important values.

Based in Macau with a strong team of more than 26,000 dedicated staff members, the company has always instilled in its employees a strong sense of organizational commitment.

And without a doubt, the integrated resort developer has always believed in investing in Macau and its community – having pledged and invested over USD15 billion over the past nearly 20 years as it brought Venice, Paris, and then London to Macau.

### Quick Stats

- 91% local management
- 89% local procurement spend
- Macao's largest retail and MICE
- 6 entertainment venues hosting 4.6 million attendees
- 3,300 team member volunteers

### Professionalism and national education

- Greater Bay Area visits
- Professional literacy training
- Professional lectures
- Professional exchange

### Tertiary education

- 15 consecutive scholarship and fellowship donations
  - MOP 12.4 million since 2006
  - Benefitting 1,500 students

### Sports development

- Boxing, golf, tennis, basketball, and other competitions and clinics
- MOP 8 million title sponsorship of Macao's first-ever 2021 Sands China Macao International 10K
- Title sponsor of Sands China Macao GT Cup for 2021 Macau Grand Prix
- Continuous support of Tourism+ initiative

### Bolstering economic recovery

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  - 1060+ booths in total
  - Free 3-day business platform for local SMEs and Sands retailers amid pandemic
  - Fun weekend destination and summer hotspot for local residents and tourists

### Property Openings

- 2004 May - Sands Macao
- 2007 Aug - The Venetian Macao
- 2008 Aug - Four Seasons Hotel Macao
- 2012 Apr - Sands Cotai Central
- 2016 Sep - The Parisian Macao
- 2020 Oct - Grand Suites at Four Seasons
- 2021 Feb - The Londoner Macao – Phase 1



UK

# Gov't touts financial aid as it aims to banish 'partygate'

JILL LAWLESS  
& SYLVIA HUI, LONDON

**T**HE British government unveiled a multibillion-pound package yesterday to ease a severe cost-of-living squeeze, announcing the plan a day after Prime Minister Boris Johnson vowed to "move on" from a months-long scandal over parties in government buildings during COVID-19 lockdowns.

Treasury chief Rishi Sunak said the government would introduce a temporary windfall tax on the profits of oil and gas firms. The tax is expected to raise around 5 billion pounds (\$6.3 billion) over the next year and fund cash payments to help millions of people cope with sharply rising energy bills, Sunak said.

He said some 8 million of the country's lowest-income households will receive a one-off government payment of 650 pounds (\$818).

Johnson had opposed a windfall tax, and his Conservative government previously said that imposing one would deter investment in the U.K.'s energy sector. But the government is under heavy pressure to act as skyrocketing energy and food bills cause financial hardship for British



Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak

households.

Sunak said the temporary levy would feature an "investment allowance" to motivate companies to reinvest their profits.

U.K. inflation hit 9% in April, the highest level in 40 years, and millions of customers saw their annual energy bills jump by 54% the same month — amounting to an extra 700 pounds (\$863) a year on average for each household.

Britain's energy regulator said this week that domestic energy bills could shoot up by another 800 pounds a year in the fall, as Russia's war in Ukraine and rebounding demand after the pandemic push oil and natural gas prices higher.

Johnson's government is trying to turn a page after an investigator's report on

what has become known as the "partygate" scandal slammed a culture of rule-breaking inside the prime minister's No. 10 Downing St. office.

In the report published Wednesday, civil service investigator Sue Gray described alcohol-fueled bashes held by Downing Street staff members in 2020 and 2021, when pandemic restrictions prevented U.K. residents from socializing and visiting sick or dying relatives.

Gray said the "senior leadership team" must bear responsibility for "failures of leadership and judgment."

The prime minister said he was "humbled" and took "full responsibility" -- but insisted it was now time to "move on" and focus on

Britain's battered economy and the war in Ukraine.

Johnson still faces an inquiry by a House of Commons standards committee over whether he lied to Parliament when he insisted no rules had been broken in Downing Street. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament are expected to resign.

The scandal leaves Conservative Party lawmakers in a quandary: try to topple their leader amid a war and financial crisis, or stick with a prime minister whose perceived willingness to flout rules he applies to others has caused public outrage.

Under party rules, a no-confidence vote can be triggered if 15% of party lawmakers — currently 54 — write letters calling for one.

If Johnson lost such a vote, he would be replaced as Conservative leader and prime minister. It's unclear how many letters have been submitted so far, but the number is growing.

Two more Tory legislators, John Baron and David Simmonds, called Thursday for Johnson to resign.

Baron said Johnson's previous claim "that there was no rule-breaking is simply not credible," and therefore he had misled Parliament. **MDT/AP**

in Ukraine, as countering efforts to end fossil fuel use.

"What we are seeing at the moment is an acceleration of the ecological transformation," he said.

Environmental groups have warned that countries such as Germany risk undermining their green goals by scrambling to secure new sources of natural gas — including from the United States — to make up for the shortfall in supplies from Russia.

The meeting in Berlin will also seek to reach agreements on boosting financial aid for poor countries to cope with climate change, additional funds for biodiversity, protecting oceans and reducing plastic pollution. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history



### 1994 DISSIDENT WRITER SOLZHENITSYN RETURNS



Alexander Solzhenitsyn has flown back to his native Russia after 20 years of exile in the United States.

His plane touched down in the far eastern port of Magadan from Anchorage, Alaska, and he was greeted by 2,000 people, given flowers and the traditional welcome gift of bread and salt.

The 75-year-old Nobel prize winner paid tribute to the millions of victims of Soviet repression.

"Today, in the heat of political change," he said, "those millions of victims are too lightly forgotten, both by those who were touched by that annihilation and even more so by those who were responsible for it."

He arrived with his wife Natalya, aged 54, and the youngest of his three sons, Stephan, aged 20, along with a group of reporters documenting his historic journey.

He plans to travel right across Russia by train stopping off to meet ordinary people and catch up on 20 years of absence.

He should arrive in Moscow in about two months' time, where a house is being built for him and his wife on the outskirts of the capital. The couple already own a flat in the city centre.

They have kept their house in Vermont for their sons who are American citizens.

Imprisoned by Stalin for a total of ten years for political dissent, Solzhenitsyn was stripped of his citizenship and expelled from the Soviet Union in 1974 for attacking the regime.

In 1990 Mikhail Gorbachev restored his citizenship and the following year dropped treason charges against him.

The Russia Solzhenitsyn is about to see may well have restored freedom of speech but it is plagued with economic problems, rising unemployment and organised crime.

In his comments over the past few weeks the writer has indicated he will play a moral and social role and not get involved with politics - but he has already criticised President Boris Yeltsin for allowing the country to become polluted by Western ways.

His return has received a mixed press in Russia. Nezavisimaya Gazeta called him "shamelessly outdated, with no understanding of Russia or the West". The newspaper Izvestia was more charitable - "Whatever Solzhenitsyn's political views," wrote Konstantin Kedrov, "he is bigger than politics."

Courtesy BBC News

GERMANY

# G-7 nations can lead the way on ending coal use

**G**ERMANY'S energy and climate minister said yesterday that the Group of Seven wealthy nations can lead the way on ending the use of coal, a heavily polluting fossil fuel that's responsible for a large chunk of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Senior officials from the G-7 countries are holding a three-day meeting in Berlin during which they will seek to agree on common targets for the shift from fossil fuels

to renewable energy that scientists say is urgently needed to curb climate change.

"The G-7 (...) can perhaps take on a certain pioneering role to push forward ending the use of coal for electricity and in decarbonizing the transport system," German Energy and Climate Minister Robert Habeck said.

Habeck said the issue could be carried forward to the G-7 leaders summit in Elmau, Germany, next

month and then to the meeting of the Group of 20 leading and emerging economies later this year. Getting G-20 countries to sign on to the ambitious targets set by some of the most advanced economies will be key, as countries such as China, India and Indonesia remain heavily reliant on coal.

Habeck said it would be wrong to view the efforts countries are making to tackle the current energy crisis, stoked by Russia's war

## IN CONTEXT

Alexander Solzhenitsyn arrived in Moscow on 23 July after a two-month odyssey across Russia by train. He was met by about 1,000 people - a mix of admirers and protesters.

He expressed his shock at what he had seen on his journey, and attacked the leaders of the new Russia for betraying its people.

In December 1998, the author refused to accept a state award from President Boris Yeltsin to mark his 80th birthday. Mr Solzhenitsyn said he could not accept the Order of St Andrew from a leader who had reduced Russia to a state of ruin.

He developed a more cordial relationship with President Vladimir Putin. In September 2000, the two men spent three hours together discussing Russia's destiny. He died in August 2008, at the age of 89.

Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, whose reforms led to the end of communism in the country, said Solzhenitsyn played a key role in undermining Stalin's totalitarian regime.

His works "changed the consciousness of millions of people", Mr Gorbachev said.





MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

DRIVE IN

# ACTING CHEMISTRY BOOSTS (VERY) DARK 'COUNT OF THREE'

JOCELYN NOVECK, MDT/AP

ON the *Count of Three* is marketed as a “darkly comic” movie. Well, there’s dark comedy and there’s darker comedy, and then there’s comedy like this — so dark that you wonder if the two words can realistically co-exist in one sentence.

So it’s not clear in which genre to place this edgily confident if bumpy and unsettling directorial debut from talented comedian Jerrod Carmichael, a buddy movie that begins with said buddies pointing loaded guns at each other with the intention of firing at the same time (hence the disturbing title.)

Clearly things won’t be going perfectly to plan, because then there’d be no more movie left. But, just a warning: The sense you might get right then and there of “I’m really not sure I can watch this” will likely stay with you for the full 86 minutes, even as you acknowledge the considerable acting chemistry generated by Carmichael, directing himself,



Jerrod Carmichael (left) and Christopher Abbott in a scene from “On the Count of Three”

and Christopher Abbott.

So, back to that scene. It comes a few hours into the bleak winter’s day covered by the film. Without divulging too much, Val (Carmichael) and Kevin (Abbott) are longtime friends, but very different trajectories have brought them to this dreary parking lot. Val is working at a landscaping supply store and his best prospects seem to be a promotion to floor manager. He begins

this work day by taking all his allotted smoking breaks, not a good sign.

Val decides to go visit Kevin, and suddenly they’re inadvertently presented with an opportunity to break Kevin out of the institution he’s in. Thus begins a day in which they both seek to right the wrongs committed against them, and perhaps some they’ve committed themselves.

The script by Ari Katcher

and Ryan Welch makes a game effort throughout to toggle between humor and pathos, levity and despair, with occasional hits and some misses, too. (It’s quite a tall order, even without the broader references to issues like police racism and gun control.) What’s consistent is an unnerving unpredictability — we really don’t know how this day will resolve itself — and the authenticity of the lead actors, who make us care even as we struggle to accept some of the plot elements. Without these sharply calibrated performances, the film would flounder.

Each man is given unresolved conflicts, some more compelling than others. Val, in a relatively restrained performance by Carmichael — who, through his comedy, certainly has experience taking humor to bleak places — has serious issues with his estranged father (J.B. Smoove of “Curb Your Enthusiasm.”) He also has to face up to his inability to be a responsible partner to a trusting girlfriend, Natasha

(“Carmichael Show” colleague Tiffany Haddish, underused in a small role).

As for Kevin, played more broadly by Abbott, he has deep anger at a man, now serving his country in the military, who bullied him in younger days. Worse, there’s the creepy doctor who molested him in his youth. (Henry Winkler plays the unfortunate medical professional).

Not surprisingly, Carmichael proves a director who is nothing if not confident and comfortable with the UNcomfortable. He keeps the action moving — at a few moments, the film even feels like an action pic. A climactic scene has an apocalyptic feel and harks back visually to one of the most famous buddy films of American cinema, though the buddies were named Thelma and Louise.

But it’s the acting that keeps the film afloat. Carmichael is a multifaceted talent, and one wonders what he’ll do next — especially if next time his name is on the script, as well.

**“On the Count of Three,” a United Artists Releasing release, has been rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America “for violence, suicide, pervasive language and some sexual references.” Running time: 86 minutes. ★★★★★**

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## The Art of Giving

Lurdes de Sousa\*



### PHILANTHROPY AND THE 'TECH FOR GOOD'

**D**IGITAL fundraising is reshaping philanthropy in what may be described as a blockchain revolution. It's a peaceful revolution but, like every revolution, it has its supporters and sceptics.

Some intellectuals, concerned about the power of "tech for good," are alerting and even calling for a new social contract. Cassie Robinson writes, "The values that underpin civil society — values of kindness, care, community, solidarity, collectivism are needed at the heart of how technology is considered and developed." If this is a legitimate cause for concern, undeniably blockchain is a promising revolutionary technology for charities.

The popularity of cryptocurrency is on the rise, particularly among the philanthropic millennial generation. Data indicates that, currently, 13 percent of investors hold cryptocurrency in their portfolios. Among the rest, 20 percent say they may consider investing in cryptocurrency in the next year. Millennials are also a charitably inclined generation. Nearly nine in ten Millennials say charitable giving is an important part of their lives.

Why will crypto-charity be so important in the decades to come?

For those who give, transactions can be made at a higher speed with lower cost while eliminating the need for trusted intermediaries. Because every transaction executed on blockchain is recorded in near real-time and is available to everyone, transactions performed on blockchain can reach recipients faster and at a lower cost than if performed via other transaction methods.

For beneficiaries there is a triple benefit: more money, faster, and with increased security. First, the recipients of the donation receive more money than they would have otherwise because expensive transfer mechanisms are bypassed. This allows donors to send more money directly to the recipients. It also prevents fraudulent intermediaries from pocketing part of the money that was meant for the recipient. Crypto-charity allows charities to operate more effectively and efficiently, and therefore channels the maximum amount possible directly to the recipient.

Today, the major actors of the non-profit sector, including the United Nations Family of Organizations, accept donations in cryptocurrency. This is because crypto-donations as a digital asset receives, holds, and disburses cryptocurrency at its most valuable. Each charitable organization has its own strategies. For example, in October 2019, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched the CryptoFund. In its first year, according to Forbes, CryptoFund generated revenue of \$6.7 billion by accepting Bitcoin and Ethereum donations and is credited with making twelve investments in eight different countries benefiting the lives of vulnerable children.

Be part of the revolution.

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Macau Daily Times is the official media partner of the Associação Internacional de Filantropia (Macau).



Chef Manato Ueno



### TASTE OF EDESIA

# Edomae nigiri omakase experience

IRENE SAM, MDT

**T**HE savoir-faire from the inimitable Edomae nigiri omakase experience has emerged as a novel paradigm of dining with **SUSHIDAN** at **MGM Macau's Rossio** under the leadership of **Chef Manato Ueno**. It is an evolution of renowned sushi restaurant Hakkoku in Tokyo by **Chef Hiroyuki Sato**, Chef Manato greets diners with traditions of Edomae nigiri omakase experience — a substantial aspect of quintessence Japanese dining culture — fused with playful twists of his own that captures modern-day whims and palettes.

Showcasing the art of perfecting balance among traditions, taste and visual appetite through honed craftsmanship, chef makes sure every single piece of nigiri served is precisely made with utmost attention to detail and great respect to traditions. Chef Manato prepares two

different mixtures of Shari, sushi rice. They are seasoned by his own vinegar blends, which compose by several white and red vinegar, with young-aged and long-aged blends to form the mellow aftertaste. Every grain of the shari is coated with a ruby shine that balances the umami, fattiness, sourness, and saltiness.

Chef Manato joins hands with Japanese Rice Master to curate special blend for its rice grain. The blend are formulated by different types of grains sourced from various Japanese prefectures according to their species, maturity and season of harvest, to harmonise moisture, texture and chewiness for the shari.

No variety of wasabi is as revered as the reddish-purple stemmed Mazuma Wasabi, where it can only be grown in the "Grand Cru" region, Shizuoka in Japan, where extremely particular perennial temperature and water are supplied. **SUSHIDAN** sources the highest graded Mazuma

Wasabi which offers unique fragrance, creaminess, mild spiciness, and a delicate, sweet aftertaste.

All of these works put into perfecting the Shari is to bring forth the freshness from the finest catch of each season — though Chef Manato physically locates in Macau, he still adheres his decade-old practice of contacting his Japanese fish suppliers from Tokyo's Toyosu Fish Market every early morning to reserve the top-quality catch. One highlight would be the Tuna Tosaki, the flavourful part of meat located at tuna's neck, and there is only one percent of neck meat from a fish of tuna. This makes the cut even more rare than the sought-after Otoro, tuna belly. With the chef's experienced fish handling techniques, fish-aging, curing, to name a few, Chef Manato strives to impress his guests by thoughtfully eliciting the peak flavour of every kind of fish served in **SUSHIDAN's** omakase dinner.

OPINION

China Daily  
Editorial, China Daily

**GENUINE BENEFITS OF COOPERATION MEAN CHINA A RELIABLE PARTNER**

The time when Western powers could imperiously demarcate their spheres of influence in the Asia-Pacific and beyond is long gone. They can no longer regard the Pacific island nations as their suzerains.

So those Western politicians and media outlets voicing concerns about Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi's "unprecedented" back-to-back visits to eight countries in the Asia-Pacific over 10 days are simply juicing sour grapes.

Rather than wringing their hands in anguish and disingenuously questioning the purpose, scope and transparency of Wang's visits, these Western politicians should ask themselves why it has taken so long for them to heed these countries' calls for assistance.

Since China built diplomatic relations with South Pacific island countries, their cooperation has developed into a model of South-South collaboration. There is a clear consensus that they should take full advantage of their mutually beneficial complementarity.

It is only because China has struck an agreement to help the Solomon Islands bolster its domestic security that the developed countries view the Pacific island countries as more than just supply depots in the great expanse of the ocean. Washington has even gone so far as to express its exaggerated anxiety that the agreement would allow China to have a "de facto" permanent military presence in the region.

Washington's scare-mongering about the agreement is a symptom of its own insecurities rather than a reflection of the reality of the deal.

China treats all countries equally, big or small, and opposes any coercion and bullying of the smaller countries. In stressing that when meeting with Solomon Islands acting Governor General Patteson Oti on Thursday, Wang was also assuring the other countries on his itinerary that Beijing will not offer them token carrots for doing its bidding while brandishing a stick to persuade them to do so, as Washington does.

While the US is bringing its suspicions and divisive Cold War mindset to the region, China seeks to cultivate unity and trust. That Wang began his trip immediately after US President Joe Biden wrapped up his Asia tour, shows that China will not sit idle while the US and its allies are leaving no stones unturned to transform the Asia-Pacific into a theater for their geopolitical games.

Wang's visits will serve to normalize foreign ministers' meetings between China and these countries, paving the way to further consolidate their mutual trust and strengthen their cooperation in a more predictable way.

China has been welcomed in the region because it provides these less-developed nations with tangible support and assistance to advance their development and improve their people's well-being. That is a responsibility the developed countries should also shoulder rather than trying to coerce the countries into joining their anti-China club.

**PORTUGAL'S GOVERNMENT APPROVES SALE OF CHELSEA BY CITIZEN ABRAMOVICH**

THE BUZZ

The Portuguese government has given its authorization for the sale of Chelsea by Roman Abramovich, who as a Portuguese passport holder needed its approval.

The decision by Portugal was announced yesterday, a day after the British government approved the sale of Chelsea by the sanctioned Russian oligarch to a consortium fronted by a part-owner of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Portugal's rubber stamp was also needed for the deal worth 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.1 billion) — the highest price ever for a sports team — to go through.

"The ministry of foreign affairs and the ministry of finance, gave the green light to the request received from Roman Abra-

movich for a humanitarian waiver, allowing the English club to be transacted," Lisbon said in a statement.

The government in Lisbon said its backing of the sale hinged on "the guarantee given by the British authorities that the proceeds from the sale will be used for humanitarian purposes, not directly or indirectly benefiting the owner of the club, which is on the European Union sanctions list."

It added that its position received the backing of the European Commission.

Abramovich gained Portuguese citizenship in 2021 thanks to a law that offered to naturalize the descendants of Sephardic Jews who were forced to leave the Iberian Peninsula centuries before.

**ATTORNEY PAYING EX-CASINO MOGUL STEVE WYNN DEFAMATION CLAIM**



Steve Wynn vs attorney Lisa Bloom

KEN RITTER, LAS VEGAS

**F**ORMER Las Vegas casino mogul Steve Wynn has accepted an undisclosed financial settlement to end his federal defamation lawsuit against a well-known attorney who represented a dancer who she said accused Wynn of sexual harassment and retaliation.

Los Angeles attorney Lisa Bloom retracted and withdrew claims she made in a news release in March 2018 announcing she represented a woman making claims of inappropriate behavior against Wynn, according to a statement included in a settlement document provided this week to The Associated Press by Wynn's lawyers.

The amount of the settlement was blacked out in the document, which was signed by Wynn and Bloom and submitted to U.S. District Judge James Mahan in Las Vegas. The judge approved the agreement and dismissed the case Monday.

Bloom's 2018 news release said she was representing a dancer who accused Wynn of leering at female performers who were instructed to "strip down to bras and panties" when he attended and watched "physically revealing" segments of rehearsals for "Showstoppers" at the Wynn Las Vegas resort.

The settlement statement said Bloom wanted "to correct the record and state that there has been no evidence obtained that Steve Wynn made inappropriate instruc-

tions to dancers, nor that he knew about any inappropriate instructions."

Bloom and attorneys who represented her in the federal case in Nevada did not immediately respond to telephone and email messages seeking comment. Bloom is the daughter of nationally known women's rights and discrimination attorney Gloria Allred.

Wynn, 80, offered a statement saying he was "pleased" with the agreement and declaring the matter "fully settled, including with a retraction."

Wynn attorney Todd Bice in Las Vegas told AP the settlement amount would remain confidential. He declined additional comment.

Wynn had sought a jury trial and damages of at least \$75,000 less than two months after the Wall Street Journal reported that he had harassed or assaulted several women.

Wynn has consistently denied sexual misconduct allegations.

He resigned as chairman and CEO of his namesake company, Wynn Resorts, in February 2018, and sold his company shares. He now lives in Florida.

Wynn's lawsuit against Bloom was filed in April 2018. Mahan denied Bloom's bid to have the case dismissed and she appealed. But the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco referred it back to Mahan in March 2021.

A reasonable jury could find Bloom "acted with ac-

tual malice in publishing the release," a three-judge appellate panel said.

Allegations of wrongdoing against Wynn have spawned other lawsuits and sanctions. The Nevada Supreme Court ruled last month that state casino regulators could still impose a \$500,000 fine and discipline Wynn over allegations of workplace sexual misconduct.

Wynn's lawyers argue he no longer has casino industry ties and the state Gaming Commission lacks authority to punish him.

The commission separately fined Wynn Resorts \$20 million in 2019 for failing to investigate claims of sexual misconduct made against Wynn before he resigned.

Regulators in Massachusetts fined the company \$35 million more and the company's top executive \$500,000 for failing to disclose sexual misconduct allegations against Wynn when it applied for a license for a Boston-area casino.

Wynn Resorts in November 2019 accepted \$20 million in damages from Wynn and \$21 million more from insurance carriers to settle shareholder lawsuits accusing company directors of failing to disclose misconduct allegations.

Steve Wynn also has a pending defamation lawsuit against The Associated Press and an AP reporter based on a story about accounts made to Las Vegas police from two women who alleged sexual misconduct by Wynn. **MDT/AP**

**Bulgarian** Prime Minister Kiril Petkov says that not enough strategic steps have been taken in recent years to prevent Europe's growing dependence on Russian gas and to counter hybrid attacks. Speaking in Davos yesterday, Petkov said that the war in Ukraine "caused many crises to us because we had allowed ourselves to be dependent on Russia." Petkov said that after Russia's annexation of Crimea, Europe criticized Moscow but did nothing to reduce its dependence on it.



**USA** Law enforcement authorities faced questions and criticism yesterday over how much time elapsed before they stormed an Uvalde elementary school classroom and put a stop to the rampage by a gunman who killed 19 children and two teachers. Investigators were also unable to say with any certainty whether an armed school district security officer outside Robb Elementary exchanged fire with the attacker, 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, when he first arrived on Tuesday.



**USA** Washington Gov. Jay Inslee was quick to react to this week's carnage at a Texas elementary school, sending a tweet listing the gun control measures the Democratic-controlled state has taken. He finished with: "Your turn Congress." But gun control measures are likely going nowhere in Congress, and they also have become increasingly scarce in most states.



**Space** Boeing's crew taxi returned to Earth from the International Space Station yesterday [Macau time], completing a repeat test flight before NASA astronauts climb aboard. It was a quick trip back: The Starliner capsule parachuted into the New Mexico desert just four hours after leaving the orbiting lab, with airbags attached to cushion the landing. Only a mannequin was buckled in.