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AP PHOTO



China is sweltering under the worst heatwave in decades while rainfall hit records in June. Extreme heat is also battering Japan, and volatile weather is causing trouble for other parts of the world in what scientists say has all the hallmarks of climate change, with even more warming expected this century. The northeastern provinces of Shandong, Jilin and Liaoning saw precipitation rise to the highest levels ever recorded in June, the China Meteorological Administration said in a report.

AP PHOTO



Australia Hundreds of homes have been inundated in and around Australia's largest city in a flood emergency that was causing trouble for 50,000 people, officials said yesterday. Emergency response teams made 100 rescues overnight of people trapped in cars on flooded roads or in inundated homes in the Sydney area, State Emergency Service manager Ashley Sullivan said.

AP PHOTO

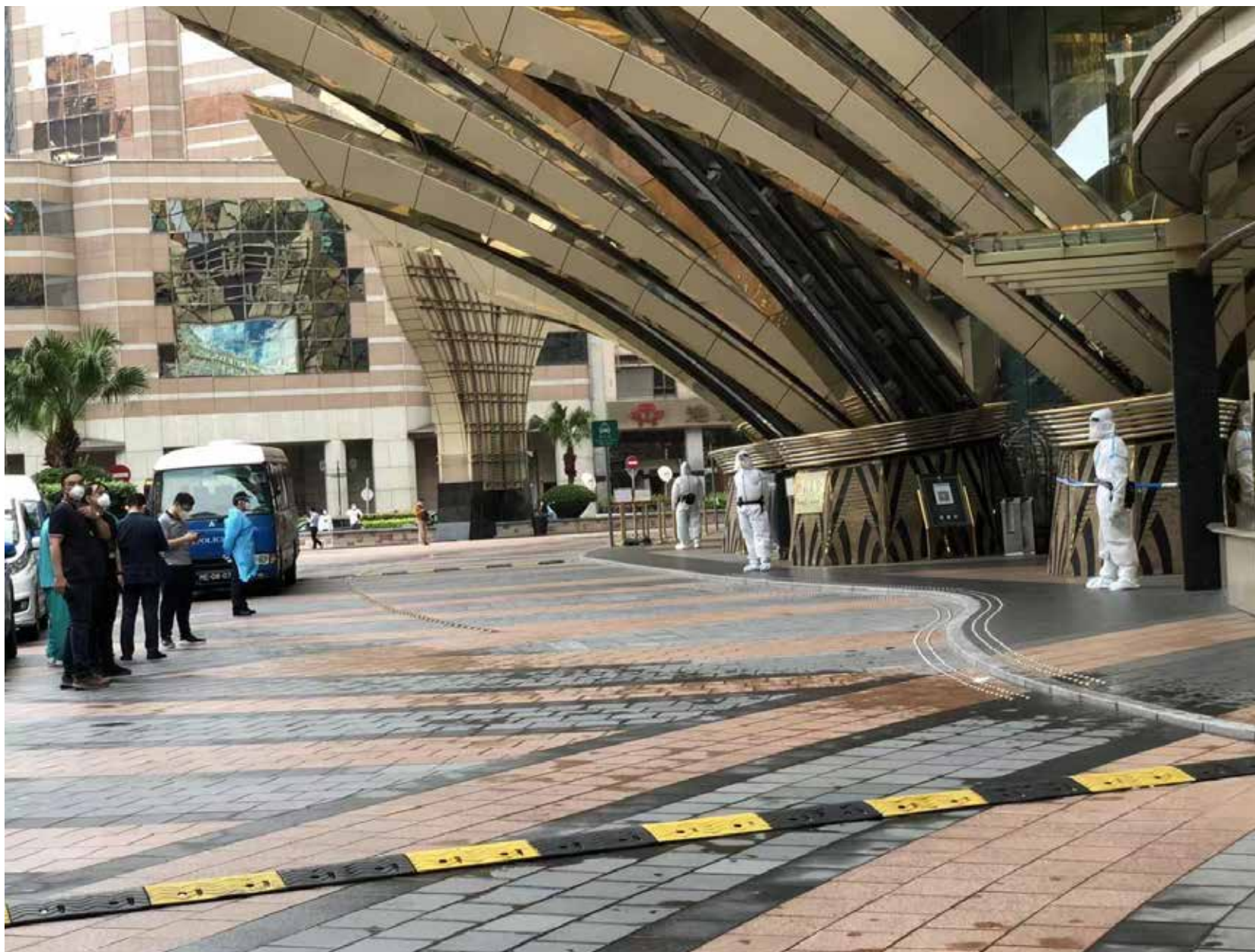


UK The latest scandal to hit British Prime Minister Boris Johnson deepened yesterday as a former top civil servant publicly said Johnson's office wasn't telling the truth about how he handled allegations of misconduct against a senior member of his government. Johnson has been under pressure to explain what he knew about previous allegations of misconduct by lawmaker Chris Pincher since last week, when Pincher resigned as deputy chief whip amid complaints that he groped two men at a private club.

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ROAD TO 1,000

Grand Lisboa cordoned off as 13 test positive; key groups required to undergo four NATS in the upcoming days as Covid-19 cases nearly hit 1,000 P3



MGM SHANGHAI AT THE BUND UNDERWAY

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GAMING LICENSE CSR PROPOSALS, ATTRACTING NON-CHINESE BETTORS KEY IN BIDDING PROCESS

P5

LYNZY VALLES

DIAOYUTAI MGM Hospitality has signed a hotel management agreement with Shanghai West Bund Development (Group) Co. Ltd., in order to bring the MGM brand to Shanghai West Bund.

As part of the agreement, MGM will provide the "full range of its signature artistic and entertainment experiences, as well as its luxury hospitality capabilities."

MGM Shanghai will feature 161 guest rooms and 58 suites, along with an Italian restaurant and a Chinese fine dining restaurant that will showcase a range of storied Diaoyutai cuisines.

The resort will also house one of the biggest spas in Shanghai, taking inspiration from its sister operation in Macau, which was famously awarded five stars by Forbes.

"We're honored that the MGM brand and our China joint venture, Diaoyutai MGM Hospitality, were selected by West Bund Group to operate this premium property in such an iconic zone," said Bill Hornbuckle, CEO and President of MGM Resorts International.

"I admire the group's vision to develop the largest art zone in Asia and ultimately to help the city transform into an internationally celebrated capital of culture and arts. We will leverage our ex-

MGM RESORTS TO LAUNCH BRAND IN SHANGHAI'S BUND



tensive experience and capabilities in entertainment management, art, exhibitions and sports to help MGM Shanghai West Bund deliver the energetic and exciting atmosphere that MGM is known for around the world," he added.

As this is Diaoyutai MGM Hospitality's first MGM city hotel to be

opened in mainland China and its second time hitting the market in one of the most cosmopolitan cities in China, the firm considers that the agreement will be pivotal in boosting its portfolio.

"We are delighted to celebrate the signing of MGM Shanghai West Bund with West Bund Group," said Fred Zhou, presi-

dent and director of Diaoyutai MGM Hospitality.

"This pivotal signing highlights our commitment to expand our portfolio and we are confident that MGM Shanghai West Bund will be the most energetic art and entertainment destination in the city," Zhou added.

Currently, the group Zhou

leads operates five hotels and three branded residences under various brands, including Diaoyutai, MGM, Bellagio by MGM, Mhub by MGM and Diaoyutai MGM Residences, in strategic locations throughout China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Sanya and Haikou.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Health authorities report one severe case, two ventilated

RENATO MARQUES

A 71-year-old patient infected with Covid-19 is now considered to be a severe case of infection, with local health authorities not discounting the possibility of his condition worsening, the deputy director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center, Dr. Lei Wai Seng, said at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center press briefing.

According to Lei, this patient has several chronic diseases on his medical record and is now being ventilated and treated for pneumonia related to his

Covid-19 infection.

"Currently at Coloane's Health Bureau (SSM) Public Health Clinical Centre there are two patients on a ventilator. They have both been diagnosed with pneumonia, so we need to consider them as severe cases although in clinical terms (one of them) could actually be treated at home, this just can't be done because he needs to be in an isolation room," Lei said, referring to a second patient in a more stable condition.

Questioned on the status of a previously reported 60-year-old patient who was also ventilated, Lei

said that, after treatment, this patient's health condition has already improved and the patient has been removed from the ventilator.

He also noted that at the same facility, there is now a three-month-old baby, who is recorded as the youngest ever infected person in Macau.

"The three-month-old baby is in a stable condition. He has no fever anymore and is eating well, being accompanied by the mother," he remarked.

Lei also refuted the information aired by a media outlet that there was a woman with a late-term



pregnancy among those in treatment, adding that there is no such case at the

moment. However, if such a case arises in the future, the SSM has contingency

plans in case there is a need for a woman to give birth in isolation.

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COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Daily NAT for cleaning, security and condo workers

RENATO MARQUES

WORKERS performing duties as part of cleaning, security, and condominium-related jobs have been called upon to perform daily nucleic acid tests (NAT) from today until Saturday (July 9), the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center announced yesterday during the daily briefing on the situation of Covid-19 in Macau.

The announcement was made by the representative of the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), Luis Gomes, who explained that the testing of these key groups was decided on after an evaluation found these workers form part of a cohort who were more exposed to infections by the virus and "represent a major risk [of] [...] transmission and contagion."

Gomes said that the intensive testing of these key groups is intended to "ensure the safety of both society and this group as well."

The same official also noted that this testing would be included in the current rounds of citywide mass testing for Covid-19, so that people do not need to repeat tests within the same day.

In the name of the government, Gomes urged the employers of these workers to allow them to perform their key group NAT during working hours and not to request them to present another NAT test as a condition to enter the workplace, noting that the daily Rapid Antigen Test (RAT), to which the whole population

RENATO MARQUES



is subject, as well as the daily NAT, is enough.

This appeal comes after several employers have started to demand even more tests than the ones requested by health authorities under the three consecutive rounds of NAT for the whole population running this week until Saturday.

Reports have surfaced that some companies are requesting that employees present a valid negative NAT uploaded to the worker's health code (paid) to be able to enter their workplace, a practice that the coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, refused to publicly condemn, while affirming that the measures taken by health authorities already include all the tests they consider necessary.

941 CASES AS OF MONDAY

The number of positive cases grew on Monday to a total of 89 cases, raising the count to a total of 941 positive cases detected as part of the local outbreak between June 18 and July 4. In addition to these, 10 positive cases were detected in people that arrived in Macau from other countries or regions, meaning a total number of positive cases in Macau of 951.

Of the 89 cases detected on July 4, the majority (66) continue to be cases detected in the community, while the other 23 were detected in areas under management and control by the authorities.

When questioned by the media, Leong said that these figures are not surprising and were expected by the authorities, adding that it is also expected that

a significant number of other cases will be found after the conclusion yesterday at 6 p.m.

of the first of a series of mass testing in the community.

Leong added that further analysis of how the outbreak is evolving will be only known at the end of the week, when the full results of the triple citywide NAT testing, as well as the intensive key group testing, are finalized.

Analyzing the figures collected, Leong mentioned that, of the 941 positive cases detected in the community, 559 are of people asymptomatic with the disease, while those with symptoms now total 382.

She also updated the figure of those under the observation of health authorities, which reached a total of 13,623 people (including the positive cases) as at 3 p.m. yesterday.

Two more clusters were also added to the list, now totaling 18, including 13 people who tested positive in connection with the Grand Lisboa Hotel and are now considered the 18th cluster.

Refusing to give more details at that time, Leong said only that these people, "who work in different areas of the hotel," are related to the 11th cluster, linked to the dim sum restaurant "San Kam Wa" in Areia Preta district.

As for the 17th cluster, which has 17 people, authorities have not yet established a link with the other clusters.

71 MIXED SAMPLES POSITIVE DURING MASS TESTING

AUTHORITIES have found 71 mixed samples (10-in-1) that have tested positive for Covid-19 in the results of the first of a triple-round of citywide mass testing.

Dr. Leong Iek Hou said that, according to the procedure previously announced by the director of the Health Bureau, Alvis Lo, the services are ascertaining which people are infected from this large group of 500.

The new method presented by Lo includes a round of RATs for all those co-habiting in the same

house as a first triage step and then, depending on the results, door-to-door NATs at their homes for those testing positive on the RAT.

Only if the NAT returns a positive result will they be taken by ambulance to the community center at the East Asian Games Dome, where the final triage and referral to treatment or quarantine is then carried out.

Of the 637,349 people who had been sampled yesterday, 575,424 had already received a negative result.

No non-essential deliveries to red zones

ONLY essential items will be delivered to properties identified as red zones, the subsistence taskforce of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center has announced.

While cordoning off such zones due to the detection of SARS-CoV-2 positive cases within them, the center is allowing deliveries of crucial materials into

these zones. However, it is limited to certain times of day.

By essential items, the center means medications, infant formula, personal hygiene materials and cleaning materials, for example. It added that quarantine periods should not usually be long. Residents will also have enough food supplies, as the subsistence taskforce will prepare sufficient

food supply.

However, the center recently announced that a growing number of people have attempted to send in non-essential or bulk materials to red zones. It highlighted that doing so will impose an additional burden on the already-busy team of disease control personnel.

For example, the center disclosed, people have recently attempted to send

in alcoholic beverages, such as beer and wine; leisure beverages, such as soft drink and Taiwanese bubble tea; perishable foods, such as fresh or frozen meat and ice cream; takeaway food items; as well as cigarettes, bulky packs of rice, barrels of water, electric appliances, flowers and exercise bikes. It emphasized that these items would not be delivered. **AL**



PSP INTERCEPT ALMOST 400 PEOPLE IN ANTI-CRIME OPERATION

The Public Security Police (PSP) Force has carried out its "Thunder 2022" operation from June 26 to July 4 in a bid to prevent all kinds of criminal activity. A total of 399 people (260 men and 139 women) and 121 vehicles were intercepted and checked as part of the operation. Three people failed to provide their vehicle documentation and one man was found to be driving without a license. Police have notified the relevant departments for follow up.

MSC LAUNCHES ONLINE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS

The online education platform of the Macao Science Center (MSC) will promote online education programs from the middle of June to the middle of July. Oscar Leong, the controller of the MSC's Education and Exhibits Department, said that the platform will provide various types of education programs to students and teachers, enabling students to participate in live streaming, react with the staff of the MSC and hand-make scientific tools. Leong adding that it plans to operate the program until July 17 and prepare future programs depending on the development of the pandemic.

MUR DEFENDS NOT REPORTING INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT AS SAVING MEDICAL RESOURCES

ANTHONY LAM

MACAU Urban Renewal Limited's (MUR) failure to report an industrial accident at its construction site in Areia Preta arose from the hope of "not exerting extra burden on the medical sector," local media have reported.

According to a report by local media outlet All About Macau, in response to the media outlet's enquiry, MUR justified its decision by saying that it did not call an ambulance after the accident because it wanted to save medical resources.

The injured workers were sent to the hospital by the construction workers. They did not need hospitalization and were discharged after treatment.

In its response, MUR admitted that "the communications differed from public expectations," adding that it would "consolidate the experiences learnt from this accident and continuously ensure construction qualities and backend transparency while [re-



maining] in compliance with the adjustment scheme."

"The adjustment scheme" consists of changing the mode of support and reinforcing the structures of similar nets in the future, in addition to a thorough inspection of all parts of the construction site, among other items.

In the reply, MUR also explained how the accident took place. It was reported late last month

that on June 25, the construction site for the midway residences saw a huge net of reinforcement steel partially sink. According to MUR, the accident caused minor injuries to six workers.

The development is led by MUR, which is fully funded by the government, and is to be built to accommodate residents whose homes are to be redeveloped as part of the urban renewal scheme.

However, the news was only unearthed by public broadcaster TDM in Portuguese four days after the accident, on June 29.

Further, the MUR only issued a statement to explain the matter "in response to media enquiries" – as emphasized in the statement – the next day: June 30.

On his social media page, former lawmaker Sulu Sou criticized the "slow motion" of the MUR.

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GAMING LICENSE

CSR proposals, attracting non-Chinese bettors key in bidding process

ANTHONY LAM

IN a recent set of executive regulations, the government has updated the stipulations regarding the bidding process for casino licenses in Macau.

The set of executive regulations was promulgated yesterday, but was enacted July 2, a day after its codification.

The set of regulations is officially referred to as the Amendments to the Executive Regulations Regulating the Public Tender for the Attribution of Concessions for the Operation of Games of Chance in Casinos, the Concession Contract and the Requirements of Suitability and Financial Capacity of Competitors and Concessionaires.

Yesterday also saw the issuance of a statement from the Executive Council (ExCo) on the discussion of the set of regulations.

Normally, the ExCo discussion should happen prior to the promulgation of executive regulations. The reason behind this delay may be the fact that public services were limited in the past two weeks.

During previous discussion of the gaming law amendments in the parliament, the government first introduced the idea of offering monetary rewards to future casino operators if the latter managed to attract non-Chinese visitors to gamble in their casinos.

This proposal, which is now

ANTHONY LAM



law, has been included in this updated set of regulations. The plan to attract non-Chinese gamblers will add points to their grading in the bidding process.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) was also a heated topic of debate during the parliamentary discussion. Some lawmakers asked the government to clarify details in this respect in the then-bill. In response, the government promised that it would do so in the form of executive regulations.

Pursuant to this set of regula-

tions, the government will require bidders to submit proposals on future work in the aspect of CSR if they will be awarded a license. Therefore, it can be understood that the government is relying on bidders for suggestions.

In addition to the aforementioned issue, bidders will also need to produce documents that prove experience in casino operations and present plans for future investments in Macau – gambling and non-gambling.

Bidders will also need to present plans on casino manage-

ment, as well as surveillance and the prevention of illicit activities in casinos.

This set of executive regulations complements the amended gaming law in the area of financial capabilities of bidders. It set out rules that both government and bidders are to follow in terms of financial capability inspections and disclosures.

Upon winning the bid, licensees-designate must prove that they have at least MOP5 billion in capital and deposited in local credit institutions.

This set of regulations has nullified the stipulations on management companies, which are now part of the gaming law.

The original expiry date of local casino licenses was June 26 this year. The government has made a decision to allow all licenses to be extended to the end of this year at a cost of MOP47 million per license to reflect the returns they would make during the extension period. However, Covid-19 control measures have seen the city come to a virtual standstill.

GAMING

Negative EBITDA expected for casino operators facing mayhem

LYNZY VALLES

THE current Covid-19 outbreak against which the city is waging war is set to lead to a negative EBITDA for casino operators in the second quarter.

In April, Macau saw a steep plunge in gross gaming revenue (GGR) – considered the city's worst since September 2020 and garnering MOP2.68 billion.

A slight uptick was recorded in May as revenue grew nearly 25% month-on-month to MOP3.34 billion. However, last month's revenue faced a downturn as the city is in the grips of a Covid-19 resurgence: income fell to MOP2.47 billion,

LEE THOMAS



the lowest in 20 months.

According to a note from JP Morgan Securities (Asia Pacific) Ltd, total GGR in the second quarter was

MOP8.5 million, which is a "meager 12% of the pre-Covid level."

Analysts DS Kim and Livy Lyu noted that, "at this

level, none of the operators would be able to generate positive EBITDA [...] not even Galaxy [Entertainment Group]," as cited in a

report issued by GGRAsia.

Previously, analysts have noted that Macau's GGR may hit "near-zero levels" for at least a few weeks until the situation is under control.

With this scenario likely, the brokerage firm expects that SJM and Sands China will only have enough liquidity to survive until March next year, it said in a previous note.

Only Galaxy was expected to have enough cash for the next five years, according to the analysts, while other operators will have at most two years of liquidity.

Meanwhile, Deutsche Bank Securities Inc has updated its third-quarter

predictions for Macau casino revenue and forecasts that third quarter GGR will be down 31% year-on-year from USD2.34 billion to USD1.62 billion.

Credit Suisse recently reported that it may take years for the city's GGR to return to pre-pandemic levels, noting that revenues will return to 80% of 2019 levels by 2024.

The investment bank slashed EBITDA forecasts for concessionaires by 19% to 53% and target prices by 15% to 60%.

It has also lowered its target price for Macau concessionaires between 10% and 59% to take into account the weaker demand.

ALLEGED CHINESE POLICE DATABASE HACK LEAKS DATA OF ONE BILLION

ZEN SOO,
HONG KONG

HACKERS claim to have obtained a trove of data on one billion Chinese from a Shanghai police database in a leak that, if confirmed, could be one of the largest data breaches in history.

In a post on the online hacking forum Breach Forums last week, someone using the handle "ChinaDan" offered to sell nearly 24 terabytes (24 TB) of data including what they claimed was information on 1 billion people and "several billion case records" for 10 Bitcoin, worth about \$200,000.

The data purportedly includes information from the Shanghai National Police database including names, addresses, national identification numbers and mobile phone numbers as well as case details.

A sample of data seen by The Associated Press listed names, birthdates, ages and mobile numbers. One person was listed as having been born in "2020," with their age listed as "1," suggesting that information on minors was included in the data obtained in the breach.

The Associated Press could not immediately verify the authenticity of the data samples. Shanghai police did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The data leak initially sparked discussion on Chinese social media platforms such as Weibo, but censors have since moved to block



AP PHOTO

keyword searches for "Shanghai data leak."

One person said they were skeptical until they managed to verify some of the personal data leaked online by attempting to search for people on Alipay using their personal information.

"Everyone, please be careful in case there are more phone scams in the future!" they said in a Weibo post.

Another person commented on Weibo that the leak means everyone is "running naked" —

slang used to refer to a lack of privacy — and it's "horrifying."

Experts said the breach, if confirmed, would be the biggest in history.

Kendra Schaefer, a partner for technology at policy research firm Trivium China, said in a tweet that it's "hard to parse truth from the rumor mill, but can confirm file exists."

Such data leaks are fairly common, according to Michael Gazeley, managing director at Hong Kong-based security firm Ne-

twork Box.

"There are approximately 12 billion compromised accounts posted on the Dark Web right now. That's more than the total number of people in the world," he said, adding that a majority of data leaks often come from the U.S.

Chester Wisniewski, principal research scientist at cybersecurity firm Sophos, said. "When you're talking about a billion people's information and it's static information, it's not about where they

traveled, who they communicated with or what they were doing, then it becomes very much less interesting," Wisniewski said.

Still, once hackers get data and put it online it's impossible to fully remove.

"The information, once it's unleashed, is forever out there," Wisniewski said. "So if someone believes their information was part of this attack, they have to assume it's forever available to anyone and they should be taking precautions to protect themselves."

A major cryptocurrency exchange said it had stepped up verification procedures to guard against fraud attempts such as using personal information from the reported hack to take over people's accounts.

Zhao Changpeng, CEO of Binance, a cryptocurrency exchange, said in a tweet Monday that its threat intelligence had detected the sale of "one billion resident records."

"This has impact on hacker detection/prevention measures, mobile numbers used for account take overs, etc." Zhao wrote in his tweets, before saying that Binance had already stepped up verification measures.

In 2020, a major cyberattack believed to be by Russian hackers compromised several U.S. federal agencies such as the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, telecommunications firms and defense contractors.

Last year, over 533 million Facebook users had their data published in a hacking forum after hackers scraped its data due to a vulnerability that has since been patched. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

John Lee stresses balance in easing quarantine

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

HONG Kong's new leader John Lee said yesterday at his first news conference since taking office that he will work on easing restrictions for travelers while balancing the risks of a coronavirus outbreak overwhelming the health care system.

Hong Kong and mainland China are among the few places in the world that still quarantine arrivals to reduce the spread of the virus two and a half years in the pandemic. Most travelers coming to Hong Kong are required to serve a seven-day mandatory quarantine at designated hotels.

Lee, a former security official who was the only



AP PHOTO

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee speaks during a news conference in Hong Kong, yesterday

candidate in the election for Hong Kong's chief executive, took office Friday, succeeding Carrie Lam.

Speaking at his first news conference ahead of an Executive Council meeting yesterday, Lee said

Hong Kong is an "international city" and that he was "conscious" of the need for Hong Kong to remain open

and convenient to travelers.

"But it is also important that we address the risks at the same time so that we will maintain good balance," he said. Lee said the city's health minister was evaluating data to determine how the quarantine duration could be adjusted and would formulate options for Lee to consider.

COVID-19 cases have been rising in Hong Kong, with more than 1,000 daily since mid-June, compared to just over a hundred daily in early May. The city reported 1,841 new infections on Monday.

Lee also said Hong Kong had a "constitutional duty" to enact a new security law, in addition to the national security law passed in 2020.

Enacting Article 23 of the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution, has long been controversial. When the government first attempted to draft such laws in 2003, protesters took to the streets in a massive demonstration that prompted the government to shelve its plans.

Lee said Hong Kong's situation and levels of security risks will be assessed before the legislation is enacted. "We're very confident that we will be able to do it well," he said.

Lee also pledged to work on housing issues in Hong Kong — the most expensive property market in the world — stating that he will try and "fix short-term issues as quickly as possible" and will look at how to turn available land into "spade-ready sites" to increase the speed and efficiency of housing production. **MDT/AP**

SRI LANKA

PM says talks with IMF difficult due to bankruptcy

KRISHAN FRANCIS, COLOMBO

SRI Lanka's negotiations with the International Monetary Fund on a bailout are more complex and difficult than before because it is a bankrupt nation, the country's prime minister said yesterday.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told lawmakers that recent discussions with a visiting IMF mission were fruitful but not as straightforward as in the past.

The South Asian island nation is in its worst economic crisis in memory. Its people are suffering acute shortages of essentials, food, fuel, cooking gas and medicines, obliged to wait in long lines to buy limited supplies. The government has shut schools and asked employees other than those in essential services to work from home.

"Our country has held talks with the IMF on many occasions before. But this time the situation is different from all those previous occasions. In the past, we have held discussions as a developing country," Wickremesinghe said.

"But now the situation is different. We are now participating in the negotiations as a bankrupt



Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe

country. Therefore, we have to face a more difficult and complicated situation," he said in explaining a roadmap for an economic recovery.

Wickremesinghe said earlier that a preliminary agreement on a bailout has been submitted to the IMF's board of directors for approval. "But due to the state of

bankruptcy our country is in, we have to submit a plan on our debt sustainability to them separately. Only when they are satisfied with that plan can we reach an agree-

ment at the staff level. This is not a straight-forward process," he said.

He said Sri Lanka's financial legal advisors are working on a debt sustainability report to be submitted in August.

Discussions are underway with India, Japan and China to form an aid consortium once a staff-level agreement with the IMF is reached, Wickremesinghe said.

Sri Lanka suspended repayment on foreign debts worth about \$7 billion that were due this year because its foreign exchange levels fell to record lows. The country's total foreign debt is \$51 billion, \$28 billion of which must be repaid by 2027, an average repayment of about \$5 billion a year.

Frustrated people have been holding street protests for months and often scuffle among themselves and with police at fuel stations.

Wickremesinghe said the Central Bank is forecasting an economic contraction of 4% to 5% this year. The IMF estimates Sri Lanka's economy will shrink 6% to 7%.

Sri Lanka's economy has been gutted by the pandemic, which compounded longstanding problems of economic mismanagement. Its GDP fell to \$76.2 billion in 2021, down from \$94.4 billion in 2018 and won't recover to the level it was at in 2018 until 2026, Wickremesinghe said. He said one government target was to achieve minus 1% growth by the end of next year. **MDT/AP**

Rebel land mine wounds seven soldiers in central Philippines

A land mine set by suspected communist guerrillas wounded seven soldiers in the central Philippines yesterday, in one of the insurgents' first known attacks since President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. took office last week.

Army troops were checking reports from villagers of anti-personnel mines laid by rebels from the New People's Army, the Communist Party of the Philippines' armed wing, along a village trail in Mapanas town in Northern Samar province when an explosion wounded the seven soldiers, regional army commander Maj. Gen. Edgardo de Leon said.

Two of the wounded soldiers were in critical condition, he said, adding that no villagers were injured.

"Some of the soldiers were tossed away because the rebels have been using really powerful land mi-



Members of the New People's Army communist rebels with face painted to conceal their identities

nes," de Leon said.

The government will file criminal complaints against rebel leaders for the attack and the use of internationally banned types of land mines, de Leon told reporters.

The soldiers were not able to open fire at the rebels, who fled after the attack and were being hunted

by government forces, he said.

On Friday, a day after Marcos Jr. was sworn in after winning a landslide victory in a May 9 election, government troops assaulted eight communist rebels, killing one, in a brief gunbattle in central Negros Oriental province, the army said.

Marcos Jr. must deal with decades-long communist and Muslim insurgencies, along with longstanding territorial disputes with China and other claimants in the South China Sea.

During the campaign, he said he would pursue peace talks with communist insurgents and expressed support for a government task

force established under his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, to fight the insurgency by bringing infrastructure, housing and livelihood projects to the poverty-stricken countryside.

The task force has drawn criticism for linking several left-wing activists and government critics to the communist insurgency, in what Duterte's opponents said was baseless "red-tagging" aimed at muzzling legitimate dissent.

Despite battle setbacks, infighting and factionalism, the communist insurgency has continued to rage, mostly in rural areas, for more than half a century in one of Asia's longest-running rebellions. It currently has an estimated 2,700 armed fighters.

The Communist Party of the Philippines said in a statement issued when Marcos Jr. assumed the presidency that the New Peo-

ple's Army had foiled Duterte's goal of crushing the rebellion within his six-year term. It said rebel offensives would continue under Marcos Jr., citing human rights violations and plunder that occurred under his father, the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The elder Marcos's counterinsurgency program was known for killings, torture and disappearances of suspected rebels, left-wing activists and their supporters. He was overthrown in an army-backed 1986 "People Power" pro-democracy uprising that drove him and his family into U.S. exile.

After Marcos died in Hawaii in 1989, his widow and children returned to the Philippines, where they achieved a stunning political comeback by whitewashing the family image on social media, critics say. **MDT/AP**

US

July 4 parade shooting leaves six dead, 30 hurt; man detained

MICHAEL TARM,
KATHLEEN FOODY
& BROGER SCHNEIDER,
HIGHLAND PARK, ILL.

A shooter fired on an Independence Day parade from a rooftop in suburban Chicago, spraying the crowd with gunshots initially mistaken for fireworks before hundreds of panicked revelers of all ages fled in terror. At least six people were killed and at least 30 wounded.

An hourslong manhunt during which residents hunkered down in businesses or received police escorts to their homes ended with a traffic stop and brief chase Monday evening, when authorities detained a man they described as a person of interest. They identified no motive for the attack in Highland Park, an affluent community of about 30,000 on Chicago's north shore.

The July 4 shooting was just the latest to shatter the rituals of American life. Schools, churches, grocery stores and now community parades have all become killing grounds in recent months. This time, the bloodshed came as the nation tried to find cause to celebrate its founding and the bonds that still hold it together.

"It definitely hits a lot harder when it's not only your hometown but it's also right in front of you," resident Ron Tuazon said as he and a friend returned to the parade route Monday evening to retrieve chairs, blankets and a child's bike that he and his family abandoned when the shooting began.

"It's commonplace now," Tuazon said. "We don't blink anymore. Until laws change, it's going to be more of the same."

The shooting occurred at a spot on the parade route where many residents had staked out prime viewing points early in the day for the annual celebration.

Among them was the family of Nicolas Toledo, who was in his late 70s and visiting from Mexico when he was shot. He died at the scene, his granddaughter, Xochil Toledo, told the Chicago Sun-Times. Also killed was Jacki Sundheim, a lifelong congregant and "beloved"



staff member at nearby North Shore Congregation Israel, which announced her death on its website.

Dozens of fired bullets sent hundreds of parade-goers — some visibly bloodied — fleeing. They left a trail of abandoned items that showed everyday life suddenly, violently disrupted: a box of chocolate cookies spilled onto the grass; a child's Chicago Cubs cap; baby strollers, some bearing American flags, and children's bikes.

"There's no safe place," said Highland Park resident Barbara Harte, 73, who had stayed away from the parade fearing a mass shooting, but later ventured from her home.

Highland Park Police Chief Lou Jogmen said a police officer pulled over Robert E. Crimo III about 5 miles north of the shooting scene, several hours after police released the man's photo and an image of his silver Honda Fit, and warned the public that he was likely armed and dangerous. Authorities initially said he was 22, but an FBI bulletin and Crimo's social media said he was 21.

Police declined to immediately identify Crimo as a suspect but said identifying him as a person of interest, sharing his name and other information publicly was a serious step.

Lake County Major Crime Task Force spokesman Christopher Covelli said at a news conference "several of the

deceased victims" died at the scene and one was taken to a hospital and died there.

Police have not released details about the victims, but Toledo's granddaughter told the Sun-Times that Toledo had spent most of his life in Morelos, Mexico. Xochil Toledo said she remembers looking over at her grandfather as a band passed them playing music.

"He was so happy," she said. "Happy to be living in the moment."

Xochil Toledo said her father tried to shield her grandfather and was shot in the arm; her boyfriend also was shot in the back and taken by someone to nearby hospital because they weren't sure there would be enough ambulances for all the victims.

Roberto Velasco, Mexico's director for North American affairs, said on Twitter that two Mexicans were also wounded.

Sundheim had spent decades on the staff at North Shore Congregation Israel, early on teaching at the congregation's preschool and later serving as Events and B'nei Mitzvah Coordinator, "all of this with tireless dedication," the congregation said in its statement announcing her death.

"Jacki's work, kindness and warmth touched us all," the statement said.

Lake County Coroner Jennifer Banek said the five people killed at the parade were adults, but didn't have information on the sixth victim.

NorthShore University Health Center received 26 patients after the attack. All but one had gunshot wounds, said Dr. Brigham Temple, medical director of emergency preparedness. Their ages ranged from 8 to 85, and Temple estimated that four or five were children.

"It is devastating that a celebration of America was ripped apart by our uniquely American plague," Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker said at a news conference.

"While we celebrate the Fourth of July just once a year, mass shootings have become a weekly — yes, weekly — American tradition."

Since January, there have been 15 shootings where four or more people have been killed, including the Highland Park shooting, according to The Associated Press/USA TODAY/Northeastern University mass killing database.

The shooter opened fire around 10:15 a.m., when the parade was about three-quarters through, authorities said.

Highland Park Police Commander Chris O'Neill, the incident commander on scene, said the gunman apparently used a "high-powered rifle" to fire from a spot atop a commercial building where he was "very difficult to see." He said the rifle was recovered at the scene. Police also found a ladder attached to the building. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1997 MARS BUGGY STARTS EXPLORING RED PLANET



Nasa scientists have freed a robot from the space probe Mars Pathfinder, allowing it to begin its exploration of the Red Planet at last.

The rover, known as Sojourner, has been stuck on Pathfinder since its successful landing on Mars two days ago.

It is the first time a man-made craft has travelled over the surface of another planet.

Pathfinder quickly sent back the evidence: an image of the Martian surface showing the tracks made by Sojourner's six studded titanium wheels.

The problem began when a partially-deflated airbag blocked Sojourner's way out of Pathfinder. Then the computers on board the probe and the rover failed to talk to each other.

Finally, at 0646 BST (0546 GMT) there was a breakthrough.

Flight director Chris Salvo announced to the waiting team at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California: "Six wheels on the ground."

There was an ecstatic cheer from the 70-strong team. But they will now have to wait another day for the first high-resolution pictures because an hour after the vehicle moved off the ramp, the sun went down and the rover was left parked until the next Martian morning.

The Sojourner is a tiny robot, about the size of a bread-bin and weighing just 22 lbs (10 kg). It travels on six wheels, each of which can move independently to cope with the uneven Martian terrain.

Most of the power is provided by solar cells on the roof, and there is also a battery power pack for backup.

It is controlled remotely from California, millions of miles away.

The Pathfinder probe had a near-perfect landing on 4 July - America's Independence Day - in the Ares Vallis, an ancient channel on Mars that may once have held water.

The first reading sent back was of the temperature - a freezing minus 93 degrees C.

The probe has also sent back some astounding pictures of the barren, rock-strewn surface.

It showed massive dust storms in the pink Martian sky, one raging just 600 miles (950 km) south of the landing site.

The mission is being followed avidly by millions on the internet through the official Mars Pathfinder website.

There is particular interest in what it may find following the controversial announcement by Nasa last August that it had found evidence of life in a Martian meteorite.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Although Sojourner was designed to operate for just one week, in fact it kept exploring Mars for nearly three months.

It covered more than 50,000 square yards (42,000 square metres) of territory around Pathfinder's landing site and sent back 550 images of the Martian surface. Pathfinder itself also took thousands of pictures.

They revealed new information about geological features on Mars and provided compelling evidence that the planet once contained liquid water and was warm and wet, like the Earth.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Don't push your mate if you want to keep this union going. You may have a problem with coworkers if you try to tell them what to do. Snap out of it.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Sudden good fortune will help you cover your debts. Don't shy away from potential mates they want to introduce you to. It may not be the best day to confront employers or to present your ideas.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Get together with people who stimulate you mentally. Curb the impulse to make lavish purchases and maybe spend some time with good friends. You may want to look into warm vacation spots.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Delve a little deeper if you really want to know the score. Get proper medical attention and confront your situation decisively. You will be too quick to point your finger at your mate.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Talk to superiors about problems that you feel are getting out of hand. Unexpected events may be upsetting. You may find that you are a little lucky today.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

This is a great day for a trip. You can't lock your partner up and if you keep restricting their freedom you may be left out in the cold.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You like to stay busy and now is your chance to do just that. Get back to basics and reevaluate what is important in life. You can make money if you are careful not to let it trickle through your fingers.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You will be up and down emotionally. Hassles with your boss are sure to erupt if you speak your mind. Having your own business is a good idea.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Disharmony in your relationship may cause minor ailments. Property purchases should be on your mind. You are best to work behind the scenes on projects that require detail or precision.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Don't let others know about your private affairs. You may find that depression is causing you to feel lonely and insecure. You may find it difficult to communicate with someone at work.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Take a second look; difficulties with appliances, water, or electricity in your home may be evident. Consider making residential changes; either moves or renovations could payoff.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You may have problems with skin, bones, or teeth if you haven't been taking proper care of yourself. Don't let siblings put pressure on you. Your stability will aid you in getting support from your fellow workers.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

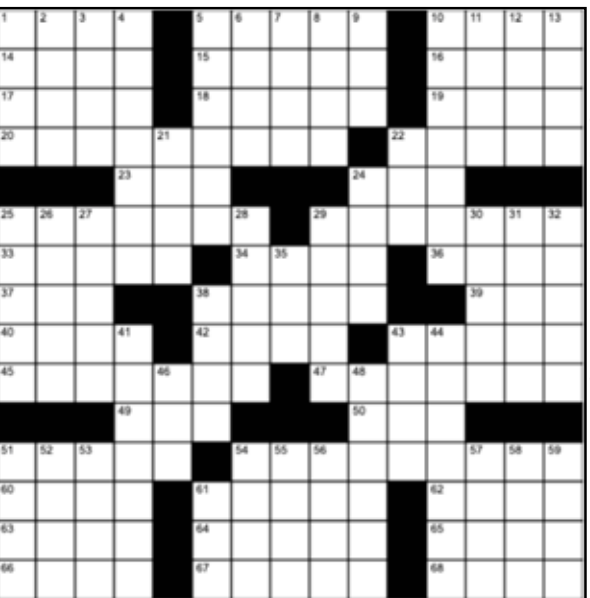
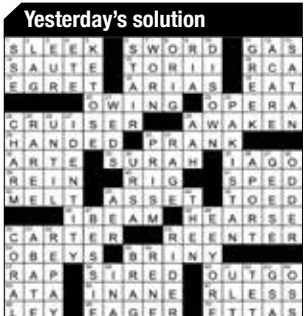
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	23	29	rain
Changchun	23	30	thunderstorms
Chengdu	24	38	fine
Chongqing	28	39	fine
Fuzhou	26	33	rain
Guangzhou	26	30	rain
Guiyang	21	31	cloudy
Haikou	26	34	cloudy
Hangzhou	25	35	rain
Harbin	21	30	thunderstorms
Hefei	24	31	thunderstorms
Nanjing	27	33	cloudy
Shanghai	29	38	cloudy
Taipei	25	30	rain
Wuhan	25	32	rain
Hong Kong	27	29	thunderstorms

WORLD			
Moscow	21	29	overcast
Frankfurt	14	23	overcast
Paris	16	27	overcast
London	16	26	overcast
New York	22	32	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- "Goldberg Variations" composer; 5- Diamond flaw?; 10- Give notice; 14- Pale; 15- Dictation taker; 16- Gen. Robert ____; 17- Put down; 18- Belief; 19- Duration; 20- Becomes larger; 22- Braid; 23- Colony member; 24- "Michael Collins" actor; 25- Defame; 29- Edible seed parts; 33- Markers; 34- The last Mrs. Chaplin; 36- Faucet problem; 37- Implement used when rowing a boat; 38- Like some stadiums; 39- Cabinet dept.; 40- Second hand, took advantage of; 42- Being, to Brutus; 43- Turkish title of old; 45- Shining; 47- Satisfaction; 49- Bond, for one; 50- Gal of song; 51- Proverb; 54- Fellow student; 60- Bridges of Hollywood; 61- ____ voice; 62- Zeno's home; 63- Literary collections; 64- One in a cab, say; 65- Capone's nemesis; 66- Top; 67- Atlas feature; 68- Mal de ____.

DOWN: 1- ____ Ha'i; 2- Slippery ____ eel; 3- In vogue; 4- Water faucet; 5- Fancy home; 6- Hwys.; 7- Actress Russo; 8- Change for a five; 9- Balderdash; 10- Marsh; 11- Inter ____; 12- Do followers; 13- Nair rival; 21- Winds up; 22- A pop; 24- Went through, as the paper; 25- Purge; 26- Potala Palace site; 27- Ventilated; 28- Fowl pole; 29- Leg joints; 30- Clear the boards; 31- Luminous; 32- Atomize; 35- Mantric syllables; 38- Just say no; 41- Revulsion; 43- School orgs.; 44- Illness; 46- Big galoot; 48- Catalog; 51- Simple rhyme scheme; 52- Sand hill by the sea; 53- Small batteries; 54- Quarter, e.g.; 55- Old Fords; 56- To ____ (perfectly); 57- "Hard ____" (sailor's yell); 58- Dry run; 59- Facilitate; 61- Hindu honorific;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
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ADD RENT TO THE RISING COSTS BEDEVILING SMALL BUSINESSES

MAE ANDERSON, NEW YORK

THE rent has come due for America's small businesses and at a very inopportune time.

Landlords were lenient about rent payments during the first two years of the pandemic. Now, many are asking for back rent, and some are raising the current rent as well.

Meanwhile, most of the government aid programs that helped small businesses get through the pandemic have ended while inflation has sharply pushed up the cost of supplies, shipping, and labor.

Martin Garcia, owner of gift and décor store Gramercy Gift Gallery in San Antonio, Texas, survived the first part of the pandemic in part by paying his landlord whatever rent he could each month. Then in August 2021, after the federal moratorium on evictions ended, his landlord asked for the full amount of back rent that he owed.

"I needed \$10,000 in 15 days," Garcia said. He took whatever loans he could find – often at high interest rates – and barely met the deadline.

A strong holiday season helped

AP PHOTO



Martin Garcia, owner of gift and décor store Gramercy Gift Gallery

him pay back his loans, but so far this year sales have slipped, and he used credit card financing to pay his June rent. Garcia thinks some of his customers are cutting back on non-essentials to afford to pay the higher prices for gasoline and other must-have items.

Thirty-three percent of all U.S. small businesses could not pay

their May rent in full and on time, up from 28% in April, according to a survey from Alignable, a small business referral network. And 52% said rent has increased over the past six months.

"Many small businesses are still frankly recovering from whatever the last phase of COVID was," said Chuck Casto, head of corporate

communications at Alignable. "Plus, they're dealing with a years' worth of increasing inflation on top of that. It's made it difficult for small businesses to really make a go of it."

Ris Lacoste owns a namesake restaurant, Ris, in Washington, D.C., and is staying afloat using aid she got from the Restaurant

Relief Fund to pay her rent. But the money must be spent by March of 2023.

"What I have to do to stay alive after that, every single penny that I can save has to go into reserve," Lacoste said.

To cut corners she's refinishing tables to cut down on linen costs, not printing color copies of menus, and working with 22 staffers instead of the 50 she once had.

Before the pandemic, the 7,000-square-foot restaurant was often full, but it isn't "back to full occupancy at all," Ris said. At the same time, inflation is compounding the cost of doing business.

"Payroll is up labor is up, the cost of goods is up, utilities are going up," Lacoste said. "I'm wearing 20 hats instead of 10, and working six days a week, 12 hours a day."

But rent isn't something she can control, and that adds to the stress.

"You're working for the landlord, how long do you want to do that, how long will you survive?" she said. "It's not sustainable."

Data from the commercial real estate financing and advisory firm Marcus & Millichap shows rent rose 4.6% in the first quarter of 2022 compared with the year-ago quarter as the vacancy rate dropped to 6.5%, the lowest since before 2015. **MDT/AP**

AD



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



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Zelenskyy praises IOC for supporting bans on Russian sport

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has thanked the IOC for supporting a ban on Russian teams and athletes competing in most Olympics sports, ahead of a court hearing Tuesday to challenge the ruling in international soccer.

Zelenskyy met in Kyiv on Sunday with International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach and praised "his unwavering position" on sports sanctions against Russia and its ally Belarus, according to a readout of the visit provided by his presidential office.

"While Russia is trying to destroy the Ukrainian people and conquer other European countries, its representatives have no place in the world's sports community," Zelenskyy said.

The IOC advised sports leaders on Feb. 28 to act and soccer bodies FIFA and UEFA made a joint ruling later that day. It is the subject of an appeal Tuesday by the Russian soccer federation at the Court of Arbitration for Sport

AP PHOTO



in the Olympic home city of Lausanne, Switzerland.

Russian teams have been removed from more than 15 soccer competitions including qualifying games for the men's and women's World Cups, and the wo-

men's European Championship finals tournament which starts Wednesday in England.

Bach has consistently said sports sanctions on Russia, including as an events host, are to protect the integrity of competitions

and the security of athletes rather than to punish on the basis of nationality.

Zelenskyy's office detailed the toll on Ukrainian sport during the Russian invasion now in a fifth month.

A total of 89 athletes and coaches have died "as a result of hostilities," 13 more have been captured by the Russians, and "more than a hundred thousand Ukrainian athletes do not have the opportunity of training," Zelenskyy said.

The IOC said it has now tripled its fund for Ukrainian sport to \$7.5 million since the war started.

Bach has consistently said sports sanctions on Russia are to protect the integrity of competitions

Bach told Zelenskyy he hoped for "a strong, successful, proud Ukrainian national Olympic team" to compete at the 2024 Summer Games in Paris and the 2026 Winter Games in Milan-Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

"We want to support you to make your Olympic dreams come true," the IOC said its leader told Ukrainian athletes Sunday when visiting their training center. **MDT/AP**

AD

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

NATO FULLY IN GRIP OF WASHINGTON

Given the revamped Security Concept that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization leaders adopted at their summit in Madrid, Spain, last week, it is clear that the world's largest military bloc is willing to let the United States lead it by the nose.

In its blueprint laying out the alliance's top priorities and goals for the next decade, Russia is identified as the "most significant and direct threat" to NATO's security. With this justification, NATO is fanning the flames of the hostilities between Russia and Ukraine, with the aim of debilitating Russia by keeping it bogged down in the quagmire of bloodshed for as long as possible.

To this end, various NATO members are supplying weapons to Ukraine, including heavy howitzers and advanced rocket systems.

The alliance is also fast-tracking its expansion to isolate Russia on the continent. The Associated Press reported that the 30 NATO member states were set to sign off on the accession protocols for Sweden and Finland on Tuesday, sending their membership bids to the alliance capitals for legislative approval.

Rather than looking at the bigger picture of Europe's peace and stability, and making efforts to promote an end to the Ukraine crisis, the other transatlantic leaders seem to have swallowed Washington's narrative of fear, hook, line and sinker. Gripped with a form of mass hysteria, they have done a swift about-face on the stance they adopted until the buildup of the crisis. Now they are eagerly endorsing Washington's efforts to exacerbate the rest of Europe's estrangement with Russia and the proxy war it is waging against it in Ukraine.

The US is probably the only beneficiary of what is unfolding in that country. Ukrainian civilians are the immediate victims, but people around the world, particularly the poorest, are also suffering from the spillover effects of the armed conflict. The US is profiting in many ways, but its biggest gain is the new-found transatlantic unity that has consolidated its grip on NATO.

Hence, it can be anticipated that with the implementation of its new Strategic Concept, NATO will trigger more geopolitical confrontation rather than acting responsibly to abate it.

NATO claims that its focus is on the core task of strengthening joint deterrence and collective defense. But it is clear from what has unfolded in Europe that with Washington pulling its strings, its role is now offensive and its core task is to create crises that serve to consolidate the US' global primacy.

The costs of this blinkered vision are evident and growing in Ukraine, where both sides are suffering heavy losses and the civilian death toll continues to rise. With Ukraine now reportedly shelling Russian territory, the hostilities are in danger of intensifying further rather than abating.

While that might be pleasing to Washington, it should be worrying to those countries which have a more civil view of international relations.

DRONE SEARCH RESUMES ON ITALIAN GLACIER AFTER AVALANCHE

China's coastal regions are in urgent need of enhancing shore-line protection and adaptation capacity to cope with the rising sea levels, according to a report released by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

In the coming 30 years, the country's coastal sea levels are estimated to rise by 68 mm to 170 mm, said the annual report recording the sea-level changes in China, which was released by the ministry's department of oceanic monitoring and early warning. Last year's coastal sea levels, reaching an all-time high since

1980, surpassed the average levels recorded in previous years by 84 mm, the report said.

In the past 40 years, China's coastal sea levels rose at a pace of 3.4 mm per year, faster than the global average, the report said, adding that higher sea levels could worsen consequences of ocean disasters.

Last year, most cases of storm surges and floods in coastal cities occurred between July and October, the yearly period of high sea level, the report said.

AP PHOTO



Finland's Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto (left), Sweden's Foreign Minister Ann Linde (right) and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

NATO NATIONS SIGN ACCESSION PROTOCOLS FOR SWEDEN, FINLAND

RAF CASERT, BRUSSELS

THE 30 NATO allies signed off on the accession protocols for Sweden and Finland yesterday, sending the membership bids of the two nations to the alliance capitals for legislative approvals — and possible political trouble in Turkey.

The move further increases Russia's strategic isolation in the wake of its invasion of neighboring Ukraine in February and military struggles there since.

"This is truly a historic moment for Finland, for Sweden and for NATO," the head of the alliance, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, said.

The 30 ambassadors and permanent representatives formally approved decisions made at a NATO summit in Madrid last week, when the leaders of member nations invited Russia's neighbor Finland and Scandinavian partner Sweden to join the military club.

Securing parliamentary approval for the new members in Turkey, however, could still pose a problem even though Sweden, Finland and Turkey reached a memorandum of understanding at the Madrid summit.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned that Ankara could block the process if the two countries failed to grant Turkey's de-

mands for the extradition of people it views as terror suspects. The people wanted in Turkey have links to outlawed Kurdish groups or the network of an exiled cleric accused of a failed 2016 coup in Turkey.

He said Turkey's Parliament could refuse to ratify the deal. It is a potent threat since NATO accession must be formally approved by all 30 member states, which gives each a blocking right.

Stoltenberg said he expected no change of heart. "There were security concerns that needed to be addressed. And we did what we always do at NATO. We found common ground," he said.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has given the process added urgency. It will ensconce the two nations in the Western military alliance and give NATO more clout, especially in the face of Moscow's military threat.

"We will be even stronger and our people will be even safer as we face the biggest security crisis in decades," Stoltenberg said.

At a news conference, the foreign ministers of Sweden and Finland were asked whether the memorandum specified people who would have to be extradited to Turkey. Both ministers said no such list was part of the agreement.

"We will honor the memorandum fully. There is, of course, no lists or anything

like that in the memorandum, but what we will do is to have better cooperation when it comes to terrorists," Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde said.

Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto was equally adamant.

"Everything that was agreed in Madrid is stated in the document. There are no hidden documents behind that or any agreements behind that," Haavisto said.

Every alliance nation has different legislative challenges and procedures to deal with, and it could take several more months for the two Nordic nations to take their place as official NATO members.

Germany's parliament is set to ratify the membership bids Friday, according to the Free Democrats, a partner party in the country's coalition government. Other parliaments might only get to the approval process after long summer breaks.

"I look forward to a swift ratification process," Haavisto said.

In the meantime, the protocols approved Tuesday bring both nations deeper into NATO's fold already. As close partners, they already attended some meetings that involved issues that immediately affected them. As official invitees, they can attend all meetings of the ambassadors even if they do not yet have any voting rights. **MDT/AP**

French authorities

yesterday repatriated 51 women and children from the former Islamic State-controlled areas in Syria, according to a statement from the national antiterrorist prosecutor's office. It's the single largest return of women and children to France from camps in northeastern Syria since the territorial defeat of the Islamic State group in March 2019. France saw more of its citizens leave to join IS than any other country in Europe.

Canadian government said it has signed a \$20 billion (US\$15.55 billion) agreement to compensate First Nations children and families harmed by chronic underfunding of child welfare. The Assembly of First Nations and plaintiffs in two class action lawsuits agreed to the deal. Indigenous Services Canada, a government agency, said the settlement is the largest in Canadian history.



Portuguese authorities on Monday set in motion a summer contingency plan at the country's airports, promising unprecedented staffing levels at passport control amid chaotic scenes in Lisbon and other airports across Europe. The contingency plan includes an additional 176 police - trained at immigration procedures - assigned to passport control and another 55 Border Service inspectors. Most will be sent to Lisbon airport.

AP PHOTO



Spain Dozens of animal rights activists dressed as dinosaurs were chased by fellow activists through the streets of the Spanish city of Pamplona yesterday to protest alleged animal cruelty in the world famous San Fermin Running of the Bulls festival. In the protest, the dinosaurs were supposed to represent bulls and the mob behind the San Fermin revelers. The activists carried placards reading, "Bullfighting is Prehistoric." They said the point was to show runs could be lighthearted and held without any cruelty to animals.