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A UM MALE PROFESSOR HAS ALLEGEDLY SEXUALLY HARASSED FEMALE STUDENTS AT A DINNER PARTY HELD OVER THE WEEKEND

P4

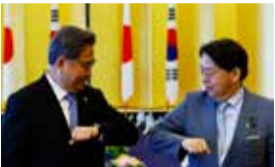
PUBLIC DOCTOR: PROLONG USE OF N95/KN95 MASKS HARMFUL TO HEALTH

P3

A NEW LUSO-CHINESE SCHOOL IN TAIPA WILL COMMENCE OPERATIONS PROVIDING KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION LEVELS

P4

AP PHOTO



South Korea and Japan foreign ministers reaffirmed Monday the importance of bilateral ties and the three-way relationship with the United States as they renewed efforts to mend relations amid the war in Ukraine and other global tensions. Park Jin, South Korea's top diplomat, and his Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi agreed to work together on the nuclear threat from North Korea and on the need to resolve a dispute over Japan's colonial-era forced mobilization of Korean laborers. [More on p7](#)

AP PHOTO



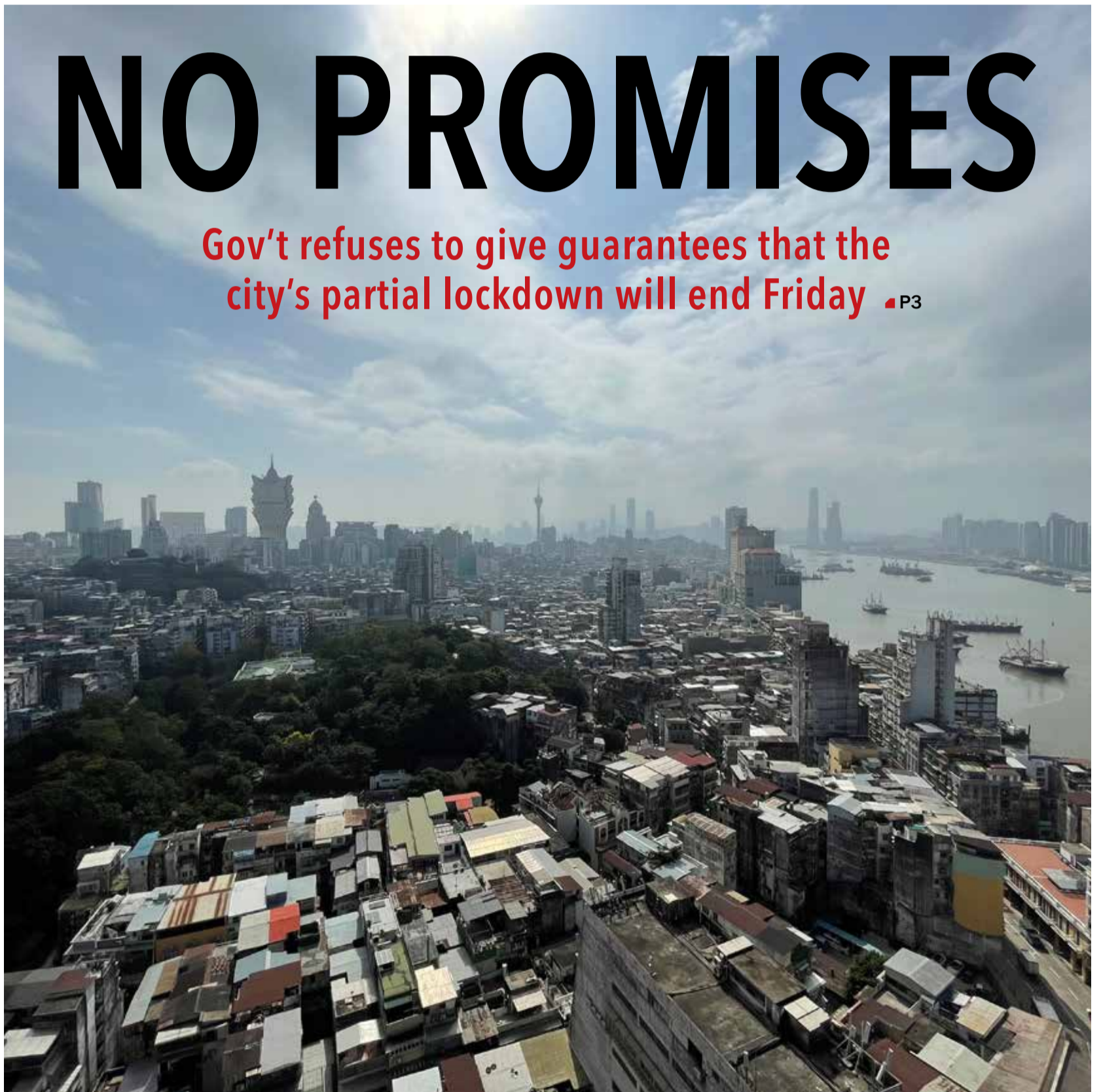
European Union foreign ministers were zooming yesterday on tightening the extensive package of sanctions on Russia and looking at ways to add a ban on gold exports in hopes that the measures might finally start to have a decisive impact on the war in Ukraine. The EU ministers also made a commitment to add another 500 millions euros in military aid to Ukraine's war chest to beef up the defense of the nation.

AP PHOTO



Hungary Anti-government demonstrators blocked one of the capital's main thoroughfares during morning rush-hour traffic yesterday, the latest in a series of protests against recent changes to the country's tax code that have carried on for nearly a week. The crowd, made up largely of food delivery couriers on bicycles and scooters, blocked traffic in both directions on one of Budapest's main bridges over the Danube River. Many demonstrators were independent entrepreneurs affected by legislative changes passed by Hungary's parliament last week, which they believe will result in major tax hikes or a loss of work.

More on backpage



NO PROMISES

Gov't refuses to give guarantees that the city's partial lockdown will end Friday P3

ANTHONY LAM

RENATO MARQUES



27 LOCALS HIRED FOR NAT SERVICES; SOCIAL MEDIA USERS UNIMPRESSED

P2

ECONOMY PROSPERITY INDEX TO REACH TROUGH THIS MONTH

P5

ONLY 27 LOCALS HIRED FOR NAT SERVICES; SOCIAL MEDIA USERS UNIMPRESSED

ANTHONY LAM

THE Labour Affairs Bureau's (DSAL) effort in matching 27 candidates with medical backgrounds to vacancies relating to SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test administration (NAT) left social media users unimpressed.

According to the front-page report by local media outlet Macao Daily News, DSAL recently posted 200 vacancies relating to the provision of NAT services and managed to link 27 local residents to relevant positions.

Under the social media post about the news, a user mocked the government by "congratulating it for its efficiency in resolving unemployment in Macau."

Other sources have alleged that the NAT service providers have been hiring mainland residents with lower qualifications and in large numbers. As such, a social media user criticized the hiring of just 27 candidates from Macau, in contrast to the several hundreds of mainland residents who were hired.

Some users criticized that with thousands of Macau residents still unemployed, the 27 candidates who hired was disproportionately low.

In a recent statement, DSAL noted that since early July, it had made constant efforts to help three NAT service provi-



ders source employees, and that two online job-matching sessions have been held.

A total of 285 vacancies were posted, with 200 of which were for NAT specimen collector positions. DSAL did not specify areas to which the other 85 vacancies relate.

Earlier, Health Bureau (SSM) recommended that eligible candidates have medical backgrounds, and ideally be sourced from the 15 types of medical staff that require registration,

including doctors, dentists, Chinese medicine practitioners, pharmacists, Chinese medicine pharmacists, vocational therapists, speech therapists, psychotherapists, nutritionists, and pharmacy technical assistants. Ideally they should hold medical degrees.

Hired candidates will enjoy a monthly salary ranging from MOP14,000 to MOP16,000 for a specimen collection assistant and from MOP25,000 for a specimen collector.

DSAL encourages interested jobseekers with relevant expertise to register on the government One Account platform.

LOCALS ALLEGEDLY SACKED AFTER A FEW DAYS' WORK

Yesterday, former lawmaker Sulu Sou posted an article on social media featuring a letter from a local netizen who reportedly worked at the citywide NAT station.

The writer criticized the messy hiring process and stated that the

overall process demonstrated an absence of medical knowledge or infection-prevention measures from organizers.

The letter stated that some workers were not assigned to shifts despite already commencing work at the stations. Without identifying the reason, the writer noted that some colleagues were assigned no further shifts after asking about their hourly pay following shifts that lasted up to 13 hours. Some were not assigned to further work after seven days on the NAT Mobile coach.

The writer thus questioned whether the local workers were only hired as a means of obtaining quotas for employees from the mainland.

The writer found it absurd that on the first day of training, all local trainees – numbering several dozen – were told to sign a document with a copy of their ID cards, noting that they were hired by a NAT service provider. However, the document said nothing about benefits, remuneration, working hours, and did not even have an official letterhead.

Furthermore, the writer pointed out that there were at least 400 people in each of the several NAT job-seeking social media groups. As such, there appeared to be no reason that the city could not fill 200 NAT positions with over 2,000 registered medical staff from the eligible 15 professions.

Suncity Group to be rebranded as LET Group

SUNCITY Group Holdings Limited is proposing to have its name changed to LET Group Holdings Limited, according to a Hong Kong Stock Exchange filing.

The board of directors explained that the LET stands for Leisure, Entertainment and Taste, a name that they believe would better reflect the group's strategic business plan and future tourism-business development.

"The Board believes that the new name can bring a new atmosphere to the

company's corporate image and identity, which will help the company better capture potential business opportunities and benefit the future development of the group," the board stated.

The brand Suncity has appeared to have been tarnished due to the arrest of junket mogul and former company chairman Alvin Chau.

Following his arrest in November amid the junket crackdown, Chau resigned from his executive positions at Suncity Group.

The Public Prosecutions Office (MP) has indicted Chau for founding and directing a "secret association."

The 21 involved in total are already starting to be notified.

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

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



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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNER_Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
Advertisement_advertising@macaudailytimes.com
For subscription and general issues: general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

RENATO MARQUES



COVID-19

Ending the confinement directives is the goal but there are no guarantees

RENATO MARQUES

THE health authorities still aim to enter the so-called “period of consolidation” by Friday this week, although at this stage there are no guarantees that this will happen, health authorities announced yesterday during the daily press briefing from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

In response to several media inquiries, the coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, said, “When we manage to reduce the number of new positive cases to a certain number we can then move forward to the period of consolidation and move to pass this period of zero infection, but we need to reach a certain level.” Leong added that the ability to reach this consolidation period also depends on other factors, including the risk of new infections.

“It’s not just purely the number of infections. Now [yesterday] we

have eight cases coming from two different groups (those considered close contacts and those in the community, including mass testing and key groups). This situation is different from, for instance, [the hypothetical case in which] these eight infections had come from eight different risk groups. The essential [part required to move towards lifting the confinement orders] is to calculate the level of risk represented by the new infections and ensure that this risk is low for the community. Then we can enter a period of consolidation,” Leong explained.

She suggested that if the number of cases found within the community at large drops to zero, authorities may finally be able to push forward with the consolidation period.

Nonetheless, Leong also noted that this period does not yet represent the return to normality. Instead, “in the period of consolidation, the activities that can be done will be restricted in coordination with other dynamic measures of prevention and control such as un-

dergoing nucleic acid tests (NAT), so we can gradually return to normal life.”

Health authorities also warned that this method of controlling outbreaks of Covid-19 by restricting the normal functioning of businesses and economic activities, in addition to restricting people movement, will continue to be followed in the future should another outbreak arise, with a progressive easing of restrictions “when there are no cases and a return to confinement when there are,” according to Leong.

According to figures cited by the same official, a total of 22 new positive cases were found on July 17, 14 of which were detected in people undergoing medical observation in isolation either at home (red zones of confinement) or in quarantine hotels.

Leong also added that 32 people have been released from medical observation, including 21 cases of asymptomatic infection and 11 confirmed cases who have recovered. In total, 416 people in connection with last month’s outbreak have been released from isolation and have returned to the community.

Regarding the five batches containing 10-in-1 mixed samples found during the tenth round of citywide mass testing, the health authorities found that four are new positive cases, while one is considered a relapse case, as it concerns a person who returned from abroad and had had been previously infected.

From the eleventh round of citywide mass testing that closes at 6 p.m. today, a total of 188,900 people had been tested by 3 p.m. yesterday. Of those, 30,248 samples had already returned negative results. No batches containing 10-in-1 mixed samples tested positive until this time yesterday.

N95/KN95 masks harmful to health

RENATO MARQUES



RENATO MARQUES

THE use of N95/KN95 face masks for long periods is harmful to health, the deputy director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center, Dr. Lei Wai Seng said yesterday at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center press briefing.

The N95/KN95 facemasks are the only masks currently authorized by the local health authorities: their use is mandatory whenever citizens leave their homes during the confinement period. Responding to a media inquiry, Lei said, “The use of a KN95 mask for long periods is not adequate and not healthy for anyone. This is why we advise all people that is best to avoid going out, so they do not need to use it that much.”

Lei admitted that the warning and advice of the manufacturers is real and that continued use of the N95 and KN95 has been studied enough to conclude that there are harmful effects.

“Masks with more protection against the virus, like the KN95, require some rest periods between use. Even for our physicians and frontline workers, we need to ensure that they work in shifts and

have enough time to recover. We need to ensure they have enough rest,” Lei said, remarking that while these masks are the best way to prevent transmission, the adoption of this type of personal protection equipment is “a lesser of two evils.”

“It is also very hot these days and there are also other issues related to heat stroke that need to be considered [as they can be aggravated by the mask use].”

Research done since 2020 by several countries has concluded that the prolonged use of N95/KN95, as well as surgical masks by healthcare professionals, during Covid-19 has “caused adverse effects such as headaches, rash, acne, skin breakdown, and impaired cognition in the majority of those surveyed,” academic papers published in the Journal of Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology have noted.

Older studies in China point to similar outcomes in research done since the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003-2004. These studies focused on the effects of prolonged use of the equipment during the SARS outbreak and were published in subsequent years.

PATIENTS BREACHING QUARANTINE ARE SLOWING THE RECOVERY, GOV'T SAYS

DURING the same press briefing, Leong said that several people are being required to observe longer confinement periods than expected in both red zones of confinement and quarantine hotels because they are not following basic rules. The official explained that the authorities have been continuously seeing a growing number of cases of people breaching quarantine rules and visiting other neighboring apartments during confinement. By circulating through the building and opening doors to their homes or quarantine rooms, more opportunities for cross-transmis-

sion are created. Leong urged people to strictly follow the rules at this stage as non-compliance is increasing the number of infections and causing consequently longer stays in confinement, both for those breaching the rules as well as others residing in the same building or facility. She also called on the broader population – including those not currently in confinement areas – to refrain from visiting other people at their homes and having gatherings as activities such as dinners, parties, and celebrations pose a risk to the community as a whole.

NO NEW PROSECUTIONS YESTERDAY, TALLY AT 27

INFORMATION from the Unitary Police Services (SPU) noted that until 3 p.m. yesterday, the police forces have not issued any new accusations for the prosecution of citizens breaching infectious diseases law. At the center’s press briefing, the representative of the SPU, Cheong Kin Ian, announced that while new 542 warnings have been issued by officers patrolling the city, none resulted in further prosecution. Since the law began to be enforced on July 11, the different police forces involved have filed for the prosecution of a total of

27 people. All the cases reported were related to the failure to wear or improper use of mandatory KN95 facemasks when engaging in activities in public spaces. A large majority of the cases filed were also linked to smoking on public streets. Although the topic has attracted significant criticism and media attention, no recorded instances of people being prosecuted for walking their dogs outside have been found, despite the fact that dog walking was not said to be considered essential, and is therefore illegal in the eyes of the Public Security Police Force.

AL TO HOLD ONLINE SESSION ON BUDGET AMENDMENT

The Legislative Assembly (AL) is set to hold a special plenary session online on July 21 amid the current Covid outbreak. One of the discussion points will be the budget amendment required for the recent stimulus measures announced to assist those affected by the pandemic. Over the weekend, another round of MOP10 billion financial relief measures was announced. This round of stimulus measures comes after the announcement of an initial MOP10 billion in assistance in June. The upcoming session will also include the proposed inclusion of monkeypox as a transmissible disease and the legal framework for protection of communications.

MUST TO AWARD EIGHT HONORARY DOCTORATES THIS YEAR

The Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) has announced that it will confer degrees of doctor honoris causa to eight industry leaders this year, including Nobel Laureate in economics, Andrew Michael Spence; Professor Hao Ping, Communist Party of China secretary at the Peking University; biological engineer Robert S. Langer; Professor Lou-Chuang Lee, academician at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan; computer scientist Harry Shum; Professor Wu Weishan, president of the Chinese Academy of Sculpture; writer, critic and television icon Chua Lam; and paleontologist Zhou Zhonghe. In support of the conferment, the university cited the contributions of eight individuals 'to the fields of sustainability, science and research, education, culture, arts, as well as health and medication.'

SEXUAL HARASSMENT CLAIMS FROM STUDENTS AGAINST UM PROFESSOR

STAFF REPORTER

A male professor at the University of Macau (UM) has allegedly sexually harassed female students at a dinner party held over the weekend, according to the UM student newspaper Orange Post.

The professor reportedly invited several students to have dinner at the staff dormitory last Saturday during the partial lockdown.

A female student alleged that the professor got drunk at the party, which lasted until late at night, and made obscene jokes and initiated inappropriate physical contact with female students multiple times during the party.

The inappropriate physical contact included hugging, touching and forcibly grabbing a student with the intention of touching her breasts.

After the incident, several female students who attended the party expressed that they felt sickened and distressed, according to the report.

According to the message of certain UM student WeChat chat groups, the member of academic staff is allegedly a mainland professor in the UM History Department of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

On Sunday night, UM stated "regarding an incident in which an individual on campus alle-

RENATO MARQUES



gely engaged in misconduct, the person involved has reported the incident to the police. The university is not in a position to comment on the matter at this moment."

However, commenting on the alleged party during the partial lockdown, the UM pledged that it has "zero tolerance for any illegal behavior."

In a statement to the press, it added, "the university will not tolerate any violation of the epidemic prevention policy and guidelines by personnel on campus, and has already filed a report with the police regarding

the incident in which a gathering of individuals took place on campus during the 'relatively static' management period."

"The university emphasizes that all personnel on campus must do their part and behave in accordance with the government's epidemic prevention policy and guidelines."

The representative of the Public Security Police, Ma Chio Hong, said that they have received the report from UM and the students involved, and will conduct further investigations of the incident. "If any violation is identified, it will be followed up

in accordance with the law and sent to the relevant departments to follow up," he added.

In December 2021, a Facebook post from a former UM student was circulated online regarding a current PhD student's alleged behavior, which including harassment, manipulation, and sexual abuse, among other acts.

The former student has written an open letter addressed to the university in the hopes that it would respond to the situation and create a better environment for UM students, ensuring student safety and gender equity.

EDUCATION

New Luso-Chinese School to open in Taipa

STAFF REPORTER

A new Luso-Chinese School in Taipa will commence operations in September this year according to an Official Gazette dispatch published yesterday.

The executive dispatch No. 33/2022 stipulates that the school is to provide education at the kindergarten and primary school education levels under the terms of the relevant legislation.

The same dispatch also informed of the closure of three other Luso-Chinese schools including one in Ilha Verde, the Luso-Chinese Kindergarten "Girasol," and the Luso-Chinese School in Coloane.



Meanwhile, the local government also published Administrative Regulation No. 29/2022 on the "Organization, management and functions of official non-higher education schools,"

which is aimed at reorganizing and reconstructing norms for the organization, management and operation of public schools at all levels to meet modern educational standards.

The regulation will take effect on September 1.

The main content of the Administrative Regulation includes establishing a consultative school board to provide advice on the deve-

lopment planning and teaching objectives of public schools, formulating the powers and composition of school principals and vice-principals, and adding middle-level personnel responsible for the day-to-day administration of school education.

Among these personnel are positions for a director of academic affairs, director of counseling and discipline, and director of administration, to ensure the smooth operation of public schools and improve the quality of teaching.

Furthermore, from the 2022/2023 academic year, the number of "through-train" public schools will be increased to five, including two original public

schools – Escola Oficial Zheng Guanying and Escola Oficial de Seac Pai Van – and new additions – Escola Secundária Luso-Chinesa de Luís Gonzaga Gomes, Escola Luso-Chinesa Técnico-Profissional, Escola Oficial da Flora – covering middle, primary and pre-primary education.

A through-train education is a progressive educational journey from early years education to senior graduation, provided by the same school.

In addition, two schools – Escola Primária Oficial Luso-Chinesa "Sir Robert Ho Tung" and Escola Luso-Chinesa da Taipa – will remain providers of primary and pre-primary education.

The Education and Youth Development Bureau stated that the integration of public schools will not affect places at current public schools or teaching staff positions.

Economic group expects Prosperity Index to reach trough this month

ANTHONY LAM

AS the city faces economic challenges amid the present Covid-19 outbreak, its Prosperity Index will likely see its lowest point in July, the Macau Economic Association expects.

As for the June and July indices, the association estimates these to be 1.8 and 1.7 points respectively, signaling fierce challenges in the months in terms of economic performance and recovery progress.

Nonetheless, the association expects July will see the bottom of the downward trend and the index for August to pick up energy for recovery, catching 1.8 points in August and 1.9 in September.

The association announced the May index as 1.9 points.

Factors that cause the falling trend or projection include global inflation, monetary policy restrictions and fluctuating Covid-19 conditions.

These factors have exerted pressure on tourist arrivals, gross gaming revenue (GGR) and stock prices of casino operators.

AP PHOTO



M2 money supply has fallen year-over-year in the past seven months, reaching only MOP674.5 billion.

The outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 that started mid-June is impacting the city remarkably, the asso-

ciation added. This is the first time the city has entered lockdown since the Covid-19 pandemic began. Even in the early stages of the outbreak in Macau, the government did not order the entire business sector to suspend operations.

In contrast, many countries in the world have lifted entry bans and coronavirus testing requirements.

The association suggested the government make further improvements to its financial

subsidies so as to cover as many residents and business operators as possible, given the "deadliness" of this outbreak to the economy. It cited the high transmissibility of the BA.5 strain of the Omicron variant to support the comment.

It added that the subsidy schemes should be implemented as soon as possible to improve resilience and performance of the city's economy, which will eventually hasten economic recovery.

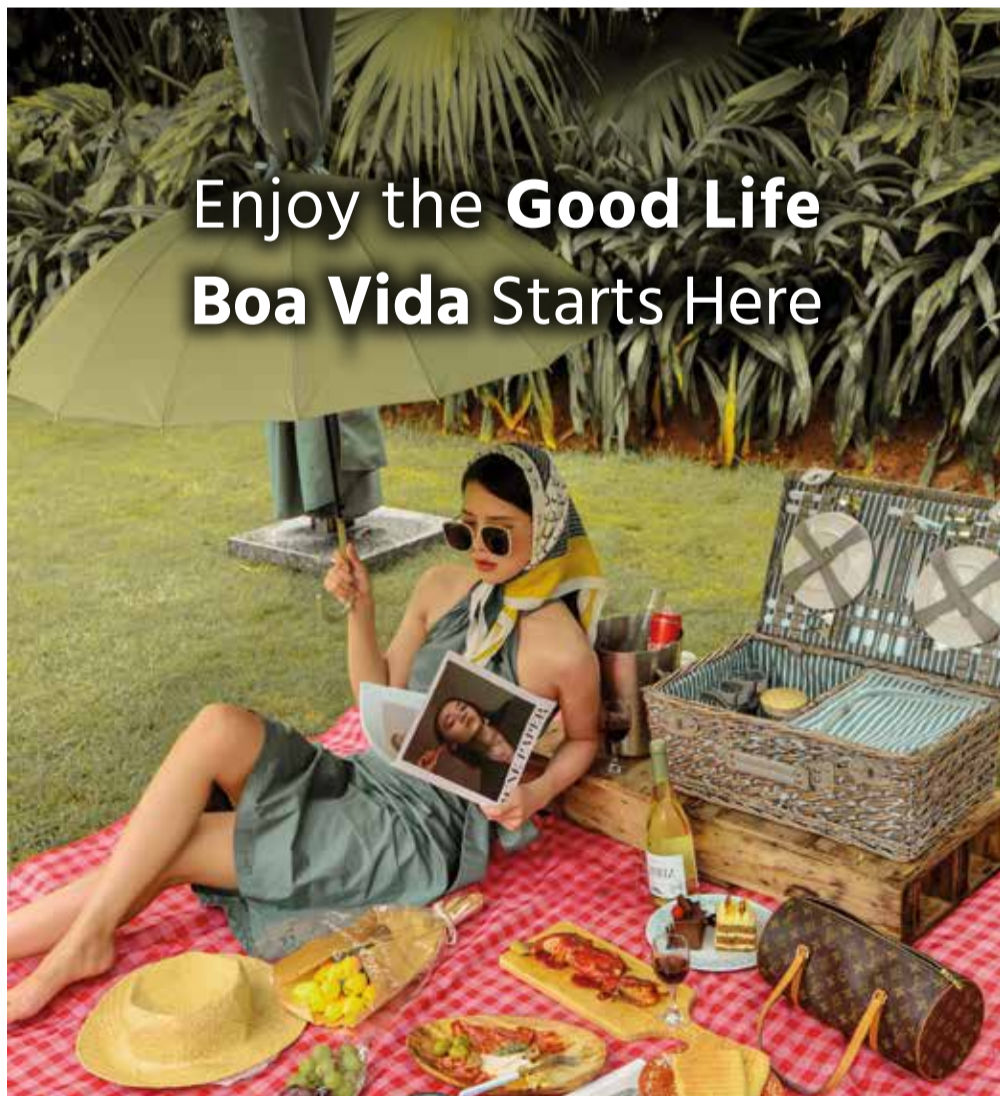
Over the weekend, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong announced an updated version of the subsidy scheme first announced June 19. The new version will have larger coverage, the senior official said.

He also announced an extra round of subsidy that will also include the non-working population, such as the elderly and children.

Lei expects the subsidy will be available from early August.

The association expressed its support for the "dynamic Covid zero" target, adding that it would allow social interactions, economic activities and mainland border-crossings to resume as early as possible. This, in its opinion, will help with the city's "healthy, safe, stable and persistent" development. It also pointed out that the earlier the outbreak is controlled, the smaller its impact on society.

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CINEMA

'RAGING FIRE' WINS BEST FILM AT HONG KONG FILM AWARDS

ACTION-PACKED police thriller "Raging Fire" won best film and three other awards at the Hong Kong Film Awards Sunday, beating out a crowd favorite film about late Cantopop singer Anita Mui.

The 40th Hong Kong Film Awards took place Sunday, after it was postponed thrice from April following the city's biggest COVID-19 outbreak. It was also the first time that the awards were held in-person since 2019.

"Raging Fire" sees action star Donnie Yen play an incorruptible policeman who ends up going head-to-head with a former mentee played by Nicholas Tse, who wants revenge after Yen's character put him in prison.

The movie is a swansong by director Benny Chan, who died of cancer in August 2020 while the movie was still in post-production.

Chan posthumously won the Best Director Award on Sunday. "Raging Fire" also won for Best Editing as well as Best Action Choreography.

The film that took home the most awards for the night was "Anita," a biographical drama film



Hong Kong actress Louise Wong, celebrates after winning the Best New Performer Award for the movie "Anita" at the Hong Kong Film Awards, Sunday

about Mui.

"Anita," which was the highest-grossing Hong Kong film in 2021, bagged a total of five awards for Best Costume and Design, Best Visual Effects as well as Best Sound Design.

The film topped the box office in Hong Kong upon release,

eventually grossing \$18.5 million in total box office sales. It topped the Hong Kong box office upon debut, grossing some 61 million Hong Kong dollars (\$7.8 million) in about seven weeks.

"Anita" also earned more than 10 million yuan (\$1.48 million) on its opening day at the Chinese

box office.

Louise Wong, who played Mui in the film, won Best New Performer.

"Honestly, it wasn't a day (or) overnight that I could play the role Anita," said Wong. "I'm grateful for the team's support and encouragement."

"They helped me gradually understand Anita and the role," she said. "I'm very grateful that I could experience her life."

Malaysian actor Fish Liew, who played Mui's sister Ann Mui, won Best Supporting Actress.

Another big winner at Sunday's awards was crime thriller film "Limbo" which is based on the novel Wisdom Tooth by Chinese author Lei Mi. The film follows two policemen in their efforts to hunt down a serial killer.

The film won Best Screenplay, Best Art Direction and Best Cinematography.

Cya Liu, who played a drug addict who becomes a target for the serial killer, won Best Actress for her portrayal of the role.

"I'm grateful for the chance to perform in this movie and for director Soi Cheang's trust and recognition," said Liu.

"With his encouragement, I could completely engage in playing the role and act. Today is the first time in my life ... that I feel the recognition as an actress."

Meanwhile, 85-year-old Patrick Tse took home the award for best actor for his performance in the film "Time," which centers on the city's neglected elderly population. He was given a standing ovation while receiving his award.

Comedian and actor Michael Hui was also presented a Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to the comedy genre in Hong Kong's film industry. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

CHINA TO WORK WITH NEW PHILIPPINE GOV'T TO UPGRADE INFRASTRUCTURE: SPOKESPERSON

CHINA is ready to work with the new government of the Philippines to advance project construction and build more benchmark projects for infrastructure cooperation, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

The cooperation is expected to help the Philippines upgrade its infrastructure, Wang Wenbin, the spokesperson, said in response to reports that Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos had instructed the Department of Transportation to negotiate with China as soon as possible on loan agreements for three railway projects, including the Subic-Clark railway project.

China welcomes President Marcos' instructions, Wang said, adding that infrastructure cooperation had been a highlight of the two countries' cooperation over the past six years.

The two sides have cooperated to build bridges and



dams, and a series of projects, including the three railways, have been advancing in an orderly manner, he said.

Wang added that China always takes the Philippines as a priority in its neighborhood diplomacy. The inauguration of the new government of the Philippines marks a new starting point for the bilateral ties.

Not long ago, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited the Philippines and had in-depth communication with the new Philippine government. The two sides identified cooperation in the four key areas of agriculture, infrastructure, energy, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges. **XINHUA**

GOV'T URGES US TO REVOKE ARMS SALES PLAN TO TAIWAN

CHINA firmly opposes U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and urges the United States to revoke the arms sales plan, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said yesterday.

It was reported that the U.S. State Department approved a sale of up to 108 million U.S. dollars worth of military technical support to the "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States."

In response, Wang said the U.S. arms sales to China's Taiwan region seriously violate the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiques, particularly the Aug. 17 Communique, gravely undermine China's sovereignty

and security interests, and severely harm China-U.S. relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

"China firmly opposes and strongly condemns this, and has lodged solemn representations with the U.S. side," he said.

China urges the U.S. side to abide by the one-China principle and the China-U.S. joint communiques, revoke the arms sales plan to Taiwan, and stop arms sales to and military ties with Taiwan, Wang said.

"China will continue to take resolute and strong measures to firmly defend its sovereignty and security interests," he added. **XINHUA**



Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin

DIPLOMACY

Japan, South Korea foreign ministers meet to mend ties

YURI KAGEYAMA
& HYUNG-JIN KIM, TOKYO

THE foreign ministers of South Korea and Japan held talks in Tokyo yesterday in what both sides said was a renewed effort to improve bilateral relations.

The countries' ties have been strained mostly over historical issues, such as Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsula and Tokyo's mobilization of Korean laborers and sex slaves leading up to and during World War II.

At the heart of the dispute are South Korean court rulings in 2018, which ordered two Japanese companies, Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, to compensate forced Korean laborers. The Japanese companies have refused to comply with the rulings, and the former laborers and their supporters responded by pushing for the forced sale of corporate assets of Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi.

Since taking office in March, South Korea's new conservative government led by President



South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin, left, and Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi bump elbows before their talks in Tokyo, yesterday

Yoon Suk Yeol has been pushing to improve ties with Japan and bolster a trilateral security cooperation with Washington and Tokyo to better deal with North Korean nuclear threats.

"While looking at (history) squarely, we want to establish

future-oriented cooperative relations with Japan that meet our shared interest and values," Park Jin, South Korea's top diplomat, told reporters last week.

Yesterday, Park bumped elbows with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi at the

official guest house, as they conversed softly together in English. Both have attended schools in the U.S., and Park has also studied in Japan.

The visit, the first by a South Korean foreign minister since November 2019, comes after the

assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, considered an influential figure in shaping Japan's foreign policy.

The talks and the working dinner were closed to reporters.

Park and Hayashi had also met ahead of the South Korea presidential inauguration in Seoul in May, as well as in Bali, Indonesia, for the Group of 20 meeting earlier this month.

The South Korean Foreign Ministry in July launched consultations with lawyers and activists representing the Korean forced laborers and other experts to collect opinions on how to resolve the dispute. It's unclear if efforts will lead to a breakthrough.

Besides painful history, the two nations also share a long-running territorial dispute over islands that are controlled by Seoul but also claimed by Japan. Tokyo calls them Takeshima and South Korea calls them Dokdo.

President Joe Biden's administration has tried to bring the two Asian democracies to work closer together on security and regional issues amid the war in Ukraine and tensions including threats from North Korea and saber-rattling from China.

North Korea this year stepped up missile and artillery tests in what is seen as an attempt to pressure Washington and Seoul to relax international sanctions against Pyongyang. **MDT/AP**

THAILAND

Researchers say pro-democracy activists hit by spyware

ELAINE KURTENBACH &
ZEN SOO, BANGKOK

CYBERSECURITY researchers reported details yesterday of cases where Thai activists involved in the country's pro-democracy protests had their cell phones or other devices infected and attacked with government-sponsored spyware.

Investigators of the internet watchdog groups Citizen Lab, Thailand's Internet Law Reform Dialogue, or iLaw, and Digital Reach said at least 30 individuals — including activists, scholars and people working with civil society groups — were targeted by an unnamed government entity or entities for surveillance with Pegasus, a spyware produced by the Israeli-based cybersecurity company NSO Group.

The reports from the two groups named many of those targeted, confirming



Pro-democracy activists flash a three-fingered symbol of resistance during a rally in Bangkok, Thailand, on March 24, 2021

earlier reports of the surveillance, which John Scott-Railton of Citizen Lab said shows that governments are exploiting their ability to buy technologies designed to fight crime and terrorism to spy on critics and other private citizens.

"Citizen Lab believes there is a fundamental

challenge for civil society," John Scott-Railton of Citizen Lab said in an online presentation at a briefing in Bangkok.

The attacks on the individuals' devices spanned from Oct. 2020 to Nov. 2021, a timing "highly relevant to specific Thai political events" since they took

place over the period of time when pro-democracy protests erupted across the country.

But Scott-Railton said Citizen Lab, which exposes digital espionage campaigns and insecure software, believed there was still an active Pegasus operator in Thailand.

Those whose devices were attacked were either involved in the protests in 2020-2021, or were publicly critical of the Thai monarchy. Lawyers who defended the activists also were under such digital surveillance, the researchers said.

The Pegasus spyware is known for "zero-click exploits," which means it can be installed remotely onto a target's phone without the target having to click any links or download software.

The spyware can obtain any data on the devices, including contact lists and group chats, making it highly effective against political groups and movements, Scott-Railton said.

NSO Group's products, including the Pegasus software, are typically licensed only to government intelligence and law enforcement agencies to investigate terrorism and serious crime, according to the company's website. Citizen Lab and

other cyber security researchers have tracked the spyware to 45 countries.

In a separate report Monday, the human rights group Amnesty International reiterated its call for a global moratorium on the sale of spyware.

"The unlawful targeted surveillance of human rights defenders and civil society is a tool of repression. It is time to clamp down on this industry that continues to operate in the shadows," Amnesty Tech's deputy director Danna Ingleton said in a statement.

The company has rejected accusations that its snooping software helped lead to the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, perhaps the highest-profile case so far.

It maintains that its sales undergo a rigorous ethical vetting process and that Pegasus spyware is sold to governments only for security purposes. **MDT/AP**

WILDFIRES

Europe broils in heat wave that fuels fires in France, Spain

ROBERT EDME
& JOHN LEICESTER,
LA TESTE-DE-BUCH

A heat wave broiling Europe spilled northward yesterday to Britain, where authorities warned of possible record temperatures, and fueled ferocious wildfires in France, which scrambled water-bombing planes and hundreds of firefighters to battle flames spreading through tinder-dry forests.

In Spain, two people were killed in blazes that the country's prime minister linked to global warming, saying: "Climate change kills."

In both France and Spain, fierce heat fueled the fires — part of a wall of high temperatures moving across Europe, touching even places like Britain, where officials have issued the first-ever extreme heat warning. The country's weather service forecast that the record high of 38.7 degrees Celsius, set in 2019, could be shattered.

"Forty-one isn't off the cards," said Met Office CEO Penelope Endersby. "We've even got some 43s in the model, but we're hoping it won't be as high as that."

French forecasters also warned of possible record temperatures as swirling hot winds complicated firefighting efforts in the country's southwest.

Authorities there started evacuating more towns, moving out another 3,500 people at risk of finding themselves in the path of the raging flames that have already seared 140 square kilometers of pine forests and other vegetation. That will take the number who have been forced out of their homes in the Gironde region to around 20,000 since the wildfires began July 12.

The regional fire service chief, Marc Vermeulen, described the burning forests as "a powder keg" and said tree trunks were shattering as flames consumed them, sending burning embers into the air and further spreading the blazes.

"The fire is literally exploding," he said. "We're facing extreme and exceptional



Wildfire near Landiras, southwestern France, Sunday



A firefighting plane drops retardant on a forest fire in the Castellgali area of Catalonia, Spain, Sunday

circumstances."

Three additional planes were sent to join six others already fighting the fires, scooping up seawater into their tanks and making repeated runs through dense clouds of smoke, the Interior Ministry said Sunday night.

More than 200 reinforcements headed to join the 1,500-strong force of firefighters battling night and day to contain the blazes in the Gironde, where flames neared prized vineyards and the Arcachon maritime basin famed for its oysters and beaches.

Spain, meanwhile, reported a second fatality in two days as it battled its own blazes. The body of a 69-year-old sheep farmer was found yesterday in the same hilly area where a 62-year-old firefighter died a day earlier when he was trapped by flames in the

northwestern Zamora province.

More than 30 forest fires around Spain have forced the evacuation of thousands of people and blackened 220 square kilometers of forest and scrub.

Heat waves and drought tied to climate change have made wildfires harder to fight. Scientists say climate change will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

"Climate change kills," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said yesterday during a visit to the Extremadura region, where firefighters tackled three major blazes. "It kills people, it kills our ecosystems and biodiversity."

Teresa Ribera, Spain's minister for ecological transition, described her country as "literally under fire" as she attended talks on clima-

te change in Berlin.

She warned of "terrifying prospects still for the days to come" — after more than 10 days of temperatures over 40 C, cooling only moderately at night.

According to Spain's Carlos III Institute, which records daily temperature-related fatalities, 237 deaths were attributed to high temperatures from July 10 to 14. That was compared to 25 heat-related deaths the previous week.

The heat wave in Spain is forecast to ease on Tuesday, but the respite will be brief as temperatures rise again on Wednesday, especially in the dry western Extremadura region.

In Portugal, much cooler weather yesterday helped fire crews make progress against blazes. More than 600 firefighters attended four major fires in northern Portugal. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1983 FLESH-EATING DINOSAUR RESURRECTED



A huge new dinosaur skeleton has been unveiled to the media at the Natural History Museum in London.

Plumber and amateur fossil hunter Bill Walker, 55, found a foot-long claw belonging to the flesh-eating beast at a clay pit in Surrey in January.

When he found the rock containing the talon he tapped it and the whole thing cracked.

Palaeontologists reconstructed it and dated the remains at 125 million years old, describing them as the find of the century.

The scientists had to wait for the clay to dry out before they completed a two-week excavation in May when they filled three vans with bones.

Group leader and head of the Dinosaur Department at the Natural History Museum Dr Alan Charig explained: "It is a totally new species of dinosaur. Even more important, this is the first record of any meat-eating dinosaur being found in rock this age anywhere in the world."

He told a press conference at the museum the creature would have been about 15 feet tall - the same as a double-decker bus. It would have weighed half as much as an elephant, at about two tons, and could have run up to 20 miles an hour - faster than Sebastian Coe.

Nicknamed Claws, the dinosaur would have been slightly smaller than the Tyrannosaurus Rex - with teeth like steak knives - and was probably a sub-species of the Megalosaurus.

Mr Charig said the quarry where Mr Walker made the find was a well-known source of fossils and he had excavated an iguanodon skeleton there only last year.

But the experts are keeping the precise location of the site - known to be near Gatwick Airport - secret to keep away souvenir hunters.

The South Kensington museum hopes to have part of the skeleton on display for the public by the end of the year.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The first dinosaur species to be identified and named was Iguanodon, discovered in 1822 by the English geologist Gideon Mantell.

Two years later the Rev William Buckland, professor of geology at Oxford University, became the first person to describe a dinosaur in a scientific journal.

Sir Richard Owen, a Victorian anatomist, was the first to coin the term dinosaur in 1842.

Scientists are still investigating why non-avian dinosaurs became extinct.

The main schools of thought are that they died out gradually because of climate change or that they were wiped out after a dramatic meteorite clash.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Make sure you concentrate if operating machinery or vehicles. Try to get others to stand behind your good judgment. Things are looking up.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Your fun loving approach will be admired and appreciated by others. You may divulge private information without realizing it today. Acceptance is the key.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

If you act with anger you may blow the relationship. You can discuss your findings behind closed doors with your boss. It will do you some good.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Romantic opportunities will flourish through travel or communication. You will be able to get your own way if you use your intellectual charm and know how. Let your leadership ability take over.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Secret enemies will be eager to spread rumors about you. Opportunities will come through long term investments. Try to think things through.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Talk to your emotional partner about your intentions. You will inspire confidence in others. Be sure to take care of the needs of youngsters.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

If you take on too much of a financial burden you may make yourself ill. You've been in a rut and you need to do something that will help you break the pattern you've fallen into.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You will be subject to pushy individuals if you get involved in uncertain organizations. Difficulties with your mate may lead to estrangement. If possible, rely on coworkers to back your objectives.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Do not get upset over trivial matters. You will find good buys and you will lift your spirits. Set a limit, or you'll wind up on a tight budget.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Put your energy into home renovations. You will find travel and lectures most stimulating. Drastic financial losses may be likely if you lend money.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You are best to work behind the scenes on projects that require detail or precision. Voice your opinions and contribute to the debate. You will be quite excitable today.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Stick to travel or do things in conjunction with groups. Older members of your family may try to take advantage of you. Take a close look at documents before signing on the dotted line.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	22	35	cloudy
Changchun	19	26	thunderstorms
Chengdu	21	25	showers
Chongqing	26	31	rain
Fuzhou	28	38	cloudy
Guangzhou	28	35	thunderstorms
Guiyang	21	25	rain
Haikou	27	36	cloudy
Hangzhou	26	33	thunderstorms
Harbin	18	28	thunderstorms
Hefei	25	33	overcast
Nanjing	24	33	cloudy
Shanghai	27	33	rain
Taipei	26	32	cloudy
Wuhan	27	33	rain
Hong Kong	29	32	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	13	22	overcast
Frankfurt	20	38	clear
Paris	21	41	clear
London	19	39	overcast
New York	25	34	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Jerks; 6- Flummoxed; 11- Apt. divisions; 14- Pungent bulb; 15- Hermit; 16- Bran source; 17- Gettysburg general; 18- Graven images; 19- From ___ Z; 20- As a result; 22- Swiss mathematician; 24- Bygone Chrysler; 28- Domain; 30- Sound investment?; 31- Loud; 32- In the future; 33- Secondary occupations; 37- 1980's movie starring Bo Derek and Dudley Moore; 38- European ermine; 39- Washington bill; 40- Somnambulate; 43- Chew the scenery; 45- Ornamental coronet; 46- Brought about; 47- Disheveled; 50- Counterfeit; 51- Racket; 52- Apparatus for weaving; 53- Singer Garfunkel; 54- Short letters; 57- Grammarian's concern; 62- Mus. slow-up; 63- Woody inhabitants of forests; 64- Put away papers; 65- Spring month; 66- Corpulent; 67- Gal's guy;

DOWN 1- ___ Kippur; 2- Hydrocarbon suffix; 3- Actress Long; 4- Sent down for the count; 5- Scoffed; 6- Straighten; 7- List heading; 8- ___-Cone; 9- Sushi choice; 10- Collection of weaponry; 11- Author Dahl; 12- San ___, California; 13- Tempest; 21- Outback hopper; 23- Wrinkly fruit; 24- Atty.-to-be exams; 25- Lucy's landlady; 26- Designer Geoffrey; 27- First name in Notre Dame football; 28- Fuji rival; 29- "Johnny Mnemonic" actor; 31- Orchestra string; 33- Maze word; 34- Snare; 35- Go into; 36- Like a fleabag; 38- Exchange; 41- French summers; 42- Sweet pepper; 43- Cold weather head protector; 44- Drinking cup; 46- Bird word; 47- Render weaponless; 48- Water wheel; 49- Young purrer; 50- "Damn Yankees" choreographer; 52- Dreg; 55- Heavenly body; 56- Peg used on the first in golf; 58- Sprechen ___ Deutsch?; 59- Entirely; 60- Set; 61- Writer LeShan;

Yesterday's solution

Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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FOR RENT

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- MANHATTAN | 3 BEDS HKD17,500
- ONE CENTRAL | 2 BEDS HKD16,500
- BUCKINGHAM | 2 BEDS HKD13,900
- HELLENE G. | 3 BEDS HKD12,500
- NAM LONG | 2 BEDS HKD11,500
- COLOANE V. | 1 BED HKD 9,300
- TAIPA STUDIO | 1 BED HKD 6,800
- COLOANE V. | 2 BEDS HKD10,500

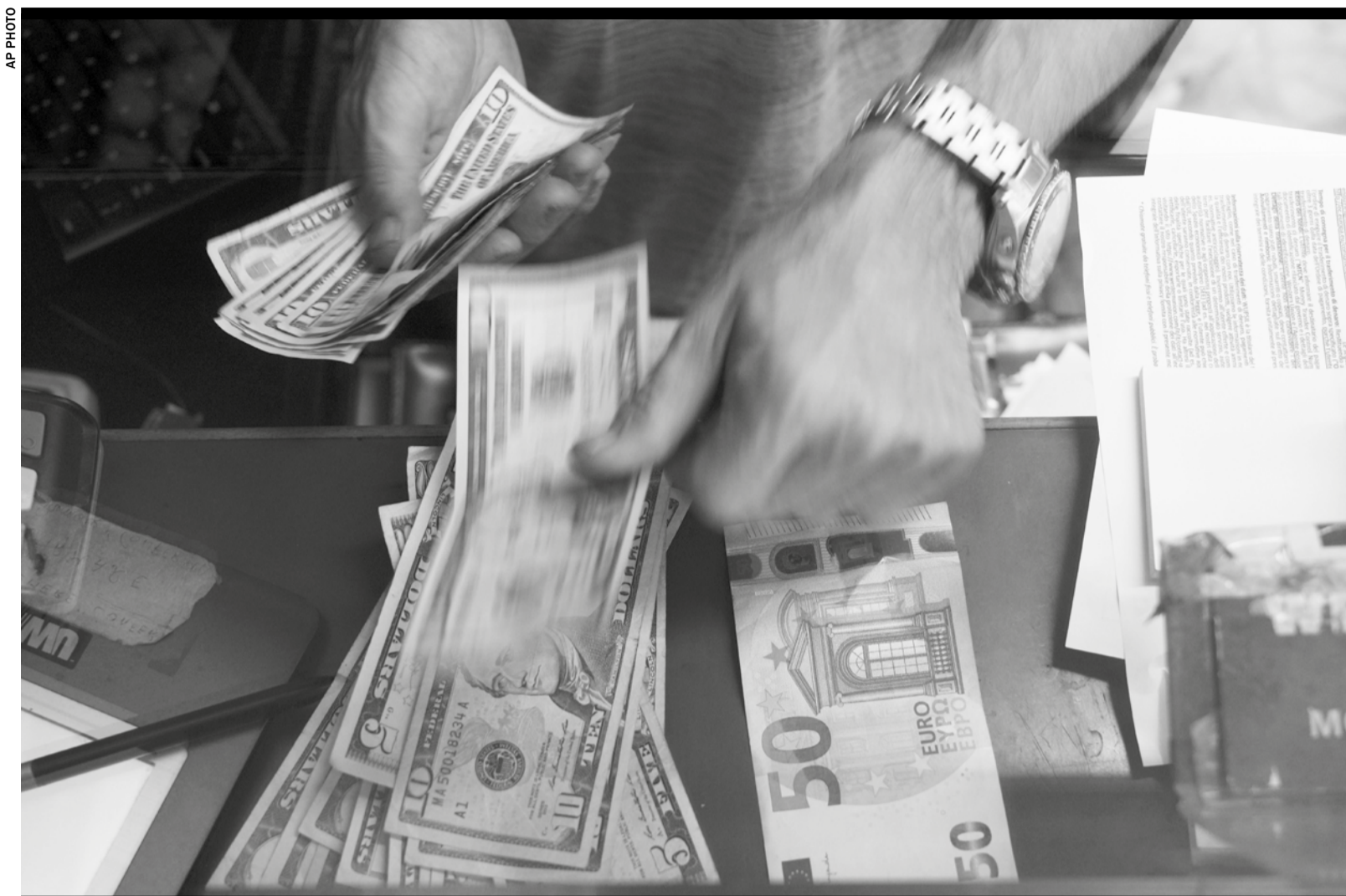
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- BAI YUEN GRD. | 3 BEDS HKD12,800,000
- MANHATTAN | 3 BEDS HKD12,980,000
- HELLENE G. | 4 BEDS HKD 9,588,000
- NAM LONG | 1 BED HKD 3,780,000
- HELLENE G. | 2 BEDS HKD 9,900,000
- TAIPA STUDIO | 1 BED HKD 3,980,000
- NOVA PARK | 2 BEDS HKD10,800,000

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AP PHOTO

ECONOMICS OF WAR: PAIN FOR EUROPE NOW, LATER FOR RUSSIA

ACROSS Europe, signs of distress are multiplying as Russia's war in Ukraine drags on. Food banks in Italy are feeding more people. German officials are turning down the air conditioning as they prepare plans to ration natural gas and restart coal plants.

A giant utility is asking for a taxpayer bailout, and more may be coming. Dairies wonder how they will pasteurize milk. The euro has sagged to a 20-year low against the dollar, and recession predictions are on the rise.

Those pressure points are signs of how the conflict — and the Kremlin gradually choking off natural gas that keeps industry humming — provoked an energy crisis in Europe and raised the likelihood of a plunge back into recession just as the economy was rebounding from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, high energy costs fueled by the war are benefiting Russia, a major oil and natural gas exporter whose agile central bank and years of experience living with sanctions have stabilized the ruble and inflation despite economic isolation.

In the long run, however, economists say Russia, while avoiding complete collapse, will pay a heavy price for the war: deepening economic stagnation through lost investment and lower incomes for its people.

Europe's most pressing

challenge is shorter term: battle record inflation of 8.6% and get through the winter without crippling energy shortages. The continent relies on Russian natural gas, and higher energy prices are flowing through to factories, food costs and fuel tanks.

Uncertainty weighs on energy-intensive industries like steel and agriculture, which could face natural gas rationing to protect homes if the crisis worsens.

Molkerei Berchtesgadener Land, a large dairy cooperative in the German town of Piding outside Munich, has stockpiled 200,000 liters (44,000 gallons) of fuel oil so it can keep producing power and steam for pasteurizing milk and keeping it cold if electricity or natural gas to its turbine generator is cut off.

It's a critical safeguard for 1,800 member farmers whose 50,000 cows produce a million liters of milk a day. Dairy cows have to be milked daily, and a shutdown would leave that ocean of milk with nowhere to go.

"If the dairy doesn't function, then the farmers can't either," managing director Bernhard Pointner said. "Then the farmers would have to discard their milk."

In one hour, the dairy uses the equivalent of a year's worth of electricity for a home to keep up to 20,000 pallets of milk cold.

The dairy also has stockpiled packaging and other supplies to guard against suppliers being hit

by an energy shortage: "We have a lot stored ... but that will only last a few weeks."

The economic woes also appear at the dinner table. Consumer groups estimate a typical Italian family is spending 681 euros (dollars) more this year to feed themselves.

"We're really concerned about the situation and the continuous increase in the number of families we're supporting," said Dario Boggio Marzet, president of the Food Bank of Lombardy, which groups dozens of charities that run soup kitchens and provide staples to the needy. Their monthly costs are up 5,000 euros this year.

Jessica Lobli, a single mother of two from the Paris suburb of Gennevilliers, pays close attention to surging grocery prices. She's reduced her consumption of milk and yogurt and renounced Nutella or branded cookies.

"The situation will worsen, but we need to eat in order to survive," said Lobli, who earns between 1,300 and 2,000 euros per month working in a school kitchen.

Her monthly food budget of 150 to 200 euros dropped to 100 euros in June. She said her family doesn't eat as much in summer, but she's concerned about September, when she will have to buy school supplies for her 15-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son, further whittling her

budget.

French President Emmanuel Macron says the government aims to conserve energy by switching off public lights at night and taking other steps. Similarly, German officials are begging people and businesses to save energy and ordering lower heat and air-conditioning settings in public buildings.

It follows Russia cutting off or reducing natural gas to a dozen European countries. A major gas pipeline also shut down for scheduled maintenance last week, and there are fears that flows through Nord Stream 1 between Russia and Germany will not restart.

Germany's biggest importer of Russian gas, Uniper, has asked for government help after it was squeezed between skyrocketing gas prices and what it was allowed to charge customers.

Carsten Brzeski, chief eurozone economist at ING bank, foresees a recession at the end of the year as high prices sap purchasing power. Europe's longer-term economic growth will depend on whether governments tackle the massive investments needed for the transition to an economy based on renewable energy.

"Without investment, without structural change, the only thing left is to hope that everything will work as before — but it won't," Brzeski said.

While Europe is suffering,

Russia has stabilized its ruble exchange rate, stock market and inflation through extensive government intervention. Russian oil is finding more buyers in Asia, albeit at discounted prices, as Western customers back off.

After being hit with sanctions over the 2014 seizure of Ukraine's Crimea region, the Kremlin built a fortress economy by keeping debt low and pushing companies to source parts and food within Russia.

Though foreign-owned businesses like IKEA have shuttered and Russia has defaulted on its foreign debt for the first time in over a century, there's no sense of imminent crisis in downtown Moscow. Well-heeled young people still go to restaurants, even if Uniqlo, Victoria's Secret and Zara stores are closed in the seven-story Evropeisky mall.

The successor to McDonald's, Vkusno-i Tochka, is serving more or less identical food, while the former Krispy Kreme in the mall has rebranded but sells basically the same offerings.

In less well-off provinces, Sofya Suvorova, who lives in Nizhny Novgorod, 440 kilometers (273 miles) from Moscow, has felt the squeeze on the family budget.

"We practically do not order takeaway food anymore," she said while shopping at a supermarket. "It used to be very convenient when you have small children. We go to cafes less often. We had to reduce some entertainment, like concerts and theaters; we try to keep this for children, but adults had to cut it."

Economists say the ruble's exchange rate — stronger against the dollar than before the war — and declining inflation present a misleading picture.

Rules preventing money from leaving the country and forcing exporters to exchange most of their foreign earnings from oil and gas into rubles have rigged the exchange rate.

And the inflation rate "has partially lost its meaning," Janis Kluge, an expert on the Russian economy at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, wrote in a recent analysis. That's because it does not account for disappearing Western goods, and lower inflation probably reflects sagging demand.

Some 2.8 million Russians were employed by foreign or mixed ownership firms in 2020, according to political scientist Ilya Matveev. If suppliers are taken into account, as many as 5 million jobs, or 12% of the workforce, depend on foreign investment.

Foreign companies may find Russian owners, and protectionism and a glut of government jobs will prevent mass unemployment.

But the economy will be far less productive, Kluge said, "leading to a significant decline in average real incomes." **MDT/AP**

WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sky's the limit for Venezuelan Yulimar Rojas at track worlds

AP PHOTO



Yulimar Rojas, of Venezuela, competes during qualifying for the women's triple jump at the World Athletics Championships, last week

LUIS RUIZ, EUGENE

IN a country where the economy collapsed years ago, Yulimar Rojas was born in a house with a broken roof. From a hole in that roof, the future Venezuelan triple jumper could see the sky, and perhaps since then, she became used to seeking new heights.

As a kid, she changed her life by having the audacity to send a message to a Cuban high-jump legend Iván Pedroso seeking help. Now, she is a star herself, known for dances that go viral on social media, as a judge in beauty pageants and for being a voice of the LGBTQ community.

She also has been busy of late smashing the triple jump world record, and she is looking to break it again at world championships come Monday's final, where her biggest rivals figure to be herself and the measuring tape.

"I've already said it before, I don't like to set limits for myself as an athlete," the 26-year-old

said in an interview earlier this summer. "I have a very high ceiling, which is what my mind and heart want."

Born in the small town of Pozuelos, facing the Caribbean, Rojas once wanted to play volleyball but after discovering the triple jump shifted focus.

She wrote to Pedroso on Facebook, asking for guidance. Pedroso, the long jump champion with four outdoor and five indoor world titles and an Olympic gold medal to his name, agreed immediately. By that time, he was a resident of Spain, which opened the door for Rojas to polish her talents in that country, away from the political and economic trouble that plague Venezuela.

Rojas has never expressed her position on Venezuelan politics. Instead, she has used her platform to speak out in favor of the rights of the LGBTQ community.

"I feel identified with this whole issue," she said. "I have had a very nice relationship with a person who is very important to me.

There will be a time when the relationship between people of the same sex will be more respected here in my country."

When it comes to triple jump, an injury seems to be the only thing that could stand between Rojas, who first set the world record at the Tokyo Games last summer, and a third straight world championship.

On June 18, she missed what was going to be her last competition before worlds. A slight strain in her left leg sidelined her during a meet in Spain. But in qualifying Saturday, she stood far ahead of the field, making the final with a leap of 48 feet, 3 inches, which was 6 inches ahead of the next-best finisher.

In Tokyo last year, Rojas jumped 51 feet, 5 inches to crush by 17 centimeters a 26-year-old record held by Ukrainian Inessa Kravets. Rojas became the first woman to win Olympic gold for Venezuela. A beautiful night, except that the COVID-19 pandemic prevented fans from being in the stands to witness it.

Earlier this year, she improved her record by 3 inches. Her next goal would be 52 feet, 6 inches, or an even 16 meters. She considers it possible.

"I was born to jump that distance," she said. "This is what motivates me the most. Nothing is impossible, that's my motto." MDT/AP

AD

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山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °
馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °
趙魯 Zhao Lu °*
馬保安 João Nogueira Marques

大律師 ASSOCIATES:
高文軒 Adelino Correia °
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楊詩婷 Si Teng leong

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A: Av. da Praia Grande 759, 3-5 Floors Macau SAR, China
地址:澳門南灣大馬路759號3-5樓
Tel: (853) 2837 2642 / 2837 2623
Office hours:
Mon-Thu: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:30
Fri: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:00
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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

ARMS SALES TO TAIWAN ONLY SERVE TO SUSTAIN SECESSIONISTS' DELUSIONS

The US State Department has approved the potential sale of military technological assistance worth \$108 million to Taiwan.

It will be the fifth arms deal with the island since the Joe Biden administration took office in January 2021.

At this rate, the number of times it will sell arms to the Chinese island will exceed that of the previous administration, which sold arms to Taiwan 11 times over four years.

Neither the stern protests from Beijing nor its sanctions on related US companies and individuals have dissuaded Washington from selling arms to the island, which not only shakes the foundation of Sino-US relations but also threatens regional stability.

The Taiwan administration requested the latest assistance, which will contribute to the sustainment of tanks, small arms, combat weapon systems and logistical support items, the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement.

Compared with the aggressive weapons the Trump administration sold to Taiwan, the arms the Biden administration has approved focus more on low-cost and mobile weapons that are conducive to turning the island into a "porcupine".

This is a big change in direction from the previous more than 100 arms sales to the island over the past 43 years. It signals that the secessionists on the island accept the fact that the island cannot compete with the Chinese mainland in either the pace of military advancement or scale.

The latest deal also reflects that lessons have been drawn from the Ukraine conflict in which advanced small movable individual weapons are proving to be more cost-effective in combat with a much stronger force.

Given how the Biden administration has orchestrated the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, and that the United States has started prompting chipmakers on the island to share their data with it and relocate their production and research elsewhere, this should be a worrying change to residents on the island.

Although the mainland will exhaust every peaceful means to realize national reunification, it will never give up doing it by force at whatever costs if necessary.

The Taiwan people must guard against being duped by the US' scheme of letting the Chinese fight Chinese, and prevent the puppet secessionists from hijacking their future as a sacrifice on the altar to their vainglorious ambition and US hegemony.

It is an irony that Taiwan as a watchdog for the US on the forefront of the First Island Chain still needs to pay for its own bones.

MALAYSIA SEIZES AFRICAN TUSKS, PANGOLIN SCALES WORTH USD18M

Malaysian authorities said yesterday they seized a container of African elephant tusks, pangolin scales and other animal skulls and bones estimated to be worth 80 million ringgit (\$18 million).

The Customs Department said in a statement it discovered the contraband hidden behind sawn timber following checks on July 10 on a ship coming from Africa. This included 6,000 kilograms of elephant tusks, 100 kilograms of

pangolin scales, 25 kilograms of rhino horns and 300 kilograms of animal skulls, bones and horns, it said.

Investigations are ongoing on the importer and shipping agent, the department said without providing further details. It was unclear if the container was meant to be shipped to other parts of Asia. Ivory tusks, rhino horns and pangolin scales are believed to have medicinal properties and are in high demand in the region.



THE BUZZ



AP PHOTO

Trade union representatives and activists shout slogans during a protest against Sri Lanka's acting president Ranil Wickremesinghe in Colombo, Sri Lanka, yesterday

SRI LANKA

ACTING PRESIDENT DECLARES EMERGENCY AMID PROTESTS

BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI, COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's acting president yesterday declared a state of emergency giving him broad authority amid growing protests demanding his resignation two days before the country's lawmakers are set to elect a new president.

Ranil Wickremesinghe became acting president on Friday after his predecessor, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, fled abroad and resigned after monthslong mass protests over the country's economic collapse.

Wickremesinghe's move to impose a state of emergency comes as protests demanding his resignation have continued in most parts of the country, with some burning his effigy.

Wickremesinghe said in a statement that negotiations for a bailout package with the International Monetary Fund were nearing conclusion while discussions for assistance with foreign countries were also progressing. There has been no comment from IMF to Wickremesinghe's assessment of the bailout talks.

He said that relief was being provided to people and steps taken to resolve shortages of fuel and cooking gas.

However, he said "elements within society" were

trying to disrupt peace. He did not specify, but said that disruptions won't be allowed to hinder the country's progress.

Wickremesinghe said that peaceful protesters who had legitimate concerns would be engaged with by the government and solutions found for them. He also urged political parties to put aside their differences and form "an all-party government which would allow the country to recover from the economic crisis."

There was no immediate response from political parties to his latest comments, but they have been working on a unity government.

Lawmakers who met on Saturday began the process of electing a new leader to serve the rest of the term abandoned by Rajapaksa. Nominations for the election of the new president will be heard on Tuesday, and if there is more than one candidate, the lawmakers will vote on Wednesday.

The emergency decree issued by Wickremesinghe invokes sections of the Public Security Ordinance that allow him to make regulations in the interests of public security and order. He can authorize detentions, take possession of any property and search any premises. He can also change or suspend any law.

Sri Lanka has run short

of money to pay for imports of basic necessities such as food, fertilizer, medicine and fuel for its 22 million people. Its rapid economic decline has been all the more shocking because prior to the crisis, the economy had been expanding with a growing, comfortable middle class.

Sri Lanka is seeking help from the IMF and other creditors, but top officials say its finances are so poor that even obtaining a bailout has proven difficult.

The economic hardships led to political upheaval and widespread protests demanding the government led by Rajapaksa step down. Although many ministers resigned in April, Rajapaksa had remained in power until last week, when he flew first to the Maldives then to Singapore.

The main protests have occurred in the capital, Colombo, where large crowds occupied the front of the president's office for more than 100 days.

The protesters accuse Rajapaksa and his powerful political family of siphoning money from government coffers and hastening the country's collapse by mismanaging the economy. The family has denied the corruption allegations, but Rajapaksa acknowledged that some of his policies contributed to the meltdown. **MDT/AP**

German government said yesterday that a turbine at the center of uncertainty about future gas deliveries through a major pipeline from Russia to Europe was only supposed to be installed in September, underlining its insistence that there should be no technical obstacle to the gas flow. Russia's Gazprom reduced gas deliveries through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to Germany by 60% last month. The state-owned gas company cited alleged technical problems involving equipment that partner Siemens Energy sent to Canada for overhaul and couldn't be returned because of sanctions imposed over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



French President Emmanuel Macron is hosting the leader of the United Arab Emirates to ensure energy supplies from the oil-rich Gulf country as Europe prepares for the possibility of a total cutoff of Russian natural gas in retaliation for sanctions over the war in Ukraine. Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan is in Paris on the first state visit to France since he was appointed president of the Western-allied nation of seven sheikhdoms in May.



Britain's first-ever extreme heat warning is in effect for large parts of England as hot, dry weather that has scorched mainland Europe for the past week moves north, disrupting travel, health care and schools. The "red" alert will last through to tomorrow when temperatures may reach 40 C for the first time, posing a risk of serious illness and even death among healthy people, according to the U.K. Met Office, the country's weather service.

Spain Four people were shot and another was injured by a knife at a nightclub in southern Spain, police said yesterday. Two of those shot were in serious condition, police said in a statement. They are an Irish man and a woman. The person who was stabbed is thought to have fired the shots and is under arrest. He is in serious condition with injuries to his chest and head, police said.