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Indonesia Rescuers were searching yesterday for 13 passengers from a boat that sank in bad weather and high waves while traveling between Indonesian islands. The boat, carrying 77 passengers and crew, sank Monday night in waters around Tokaka Island in North Maluku province in east-central Indonesia.



Thai lawmakers began debate yesterday on the fourth and final no-confidence vote targeting Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's government before its four-year term ends next year. With general elections due in March, the government faces its last no-confidence vote after surviving three others in as many years. The debate targeting Prayuth and 10 of his Cabinet members is scheduled for four days, with the lower house to vote on Saturday. Analysts said Prayuth is expected to prevail again as his coalition government has a parliamentary majority.

Afghanistan An earthquake has shaken a remote area of eastern Afghanistan, injuring at least 31 people, a Taliban official said yesterday. The quake struck in the same region where an earthquake last month killed hundreds of people and caused widespread devastation. Earlier reports said 10 people were injured. The U.S. Geological Survey said the earthquake had a magnitude of 5.1.

Egypt At least 22 people were killed and 33 injured in a car crash yesterday near Egypt's southern province of Minya, authorities said. The crash took place in the early morning when a passenger bus hit a stopped trailer truck on a highway linking the capital of Cairo to the country's south, local authorities in Minya said in a statement. The bus was heading toward Cairo.

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RENATO MARQUES



GAMING

JULY TO RECORD THE WORST-EVER GGR, AUGUST UNPREDICTABLE

RENATO MARQUES

SEVERAL entities and experts have labelled this month as potentially the worst month on record for gross gaming revenue (GGR).

The closure of casinos for at least 12 days (between July 11 and July 22) adds to a month start which already had few patrons in casino venues due to the many border restrictions in force. Consequently, forecasts are not particularly positive for those rushing to meet the government criteria for the tendering of the new gaming licenses.

Interviewed by the Times, gaming industry expert, Ben Lee, says that the current situation indicates July 2022 will set a new record low for the industry.

Still, Lee's analysis is far more optimistic than the forecast of other entities such as the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), which said the month could only generate some 100 million patacas in GGR.

To the Times, the managing partner of IGamiX Management & Consulting said, "[GGR of] July likely to be between 200 to 300 million patacas. So yes, is it a new low compared to [the previous registered low] of 716 million patacas, in June 2020."

In July last year, the GGR was 8.44 billion patacas, making it the second-best month of the year, only surpassed by May with 10.45 billion patacas.

If this is confirmed, the forecasts for the GGR of July 2022 represent a drop of around 90% when compared month-to-month with June which, despite being the lowest recorded month of this year, gathered some 2.48 billion patacas.

Additionally, the uncertainty regarding the measures to be implemented by the government for the upcoming week, especially when taken with the new outbreaks of Covid-19 in the neighboring cities of Zhuhai and Guangzhou and the continuing border restrictions to Hong Kong, does not paint an optimistic picture for August. Lee says therefore that the August GGR is unpredictable and impossible to forecast at this moment.

"There's no way to predict August given that we can't even predict if businesses will resume next week, or when quarantine-free travel from the mainland will be allowed to resume," he said.

In the first half of this year, the GGR had already registered a

year-on-year fall of 46.4% to a total of only 26.27 billion patacas. This figure represents a drop of 21% even when compared to the GGR accumulated in the first half of the year in 2020 when casinos were closed for 15 days.

"At some point, some of the operators will run out of cash. The ones with high leverage will face the greatest pressure"

BEN LEE

MANAGING PARTNER OF IGAMIX MANAGEMENT & CONSULTING

If this trend continues, the 2022 annual GGR figures risk reaching less than half of what the government estimated at the beginning of the year when it forecasted some 130 billion patacas. The large majority of the analysts considered this estimation to be exaggerated, but both the Chief Executive (CE) and the Secretary for Economy and Finance, said it was "conservative."

CLOSED CASINO DOORS HELP TO SLOW DOWN CASH DRAIN

Lee has also noted that the current CE order that keeps all non-

essential industries and services closed, including casinos, has somehow helped to slow down the cash drain of the concessionaires by reducing the operating costs, namely the expenses of these major employers with staff.

"The closure is better for the operators as they don't have to pay their staff salaries," Lee said, noting the state of temporary lay-off or unpaid leave used by the local companies to save money, with wages of workers rendered unnecessary due to the order for the venues' closure.

According to statistics collected by IGamiX, staff costs, including wages and other benefits such as transportation and meals, account for about 30% of the operating costs in Macau.

But as Lee noted, this "temporary reduction in costs" cannot last indefinitely. "At some point, some of the operators will run out of cash. The ones with high leverage will face the greatest pressure."

On this aspect, Lee forecasts that Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) might be more favorably placed than its competition.

"Galaxy's history of low gearing/high liquidity will see them emerge out of this pandemic in better shape than the others," he told the Times.

NEW LICENSE TENDERS ADDING TO THE BURDEN

If the indefinite closure and very low performance of the casino tables were not trouble enough, the rules set by the new gaming law for the tendering of the 2023-2033 licenses add to the burden. The operators, while battling their cash drain, must comply with the rules that establish a minimum of cash, or like cash, of 5 billion patacas to be able to meet the requirements. They also must possess additional cash to cover the equivalent of the face value of all their chips in circulation, Lee highlighted.

Questioned if any of the existing six players would potentially pull out of the race because they were unable to meet the criteria, Lee said, "I doubt it. They are all in the 'pot' and walking away right now would leave them with next to nothing."

Lee also noted the new regulations show the government is well aware of the times of doubt and they are "looking to insure themselves against future downturns and uncertainty by inserting the new clause on minimum average GGR per table and gaming machines."

This rule, although not being completely new, now gives extra power to the executive to change the capping amount when they feel necessary.

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For subscription and general issues: general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

COVID-19

Gov't expects tighter measures during consolidation period

ANTHONY LAM

MOVING into a consolidation period may not bring about looser measures, but may in fact see the implementation of tighter restrictions, public health doctor Leong Iek Hou at Health Bureau (SSM) admitted yesterday.

Yesterday, a statement from the government disclosed that Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng had presided over a meeting on Covid-19 control and prevention measures. At the meeting, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Leong, who is also vice president of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre, presented to the head of the government the plans for the consolidation period, which, it was revealed, will start on July 23.

The consolidation period refers to the time during which measures will be in place to "consolidate" the outcomes gained during the de-facto lockdown period. In contrast, this week is considered by the government to be a "zero



DENNIS ROCHEL

Covid period," signaling progress towards the goal of Covid zero.

Members of the public expect measures to be loosened once the consolidation period kicks in, imagining life to return to that which was experienced before June 18.

Despite the announcement, Leong highlighted that moni-

ring and evaluation is constantly being conducted and the actual date of the consolidation period is subject to change, should the situation depart from expectations.

Justifying the deviation from public expectation that measures would be loosened, the public health doctor recapped a comment she made at a similar press

briefing last week, saying the move was necessary to secure the city from further chain infections.

When questioned if the government was confident about the commencement date of the consolidation period, Leong disclosed that the government was "making preparations in relation to different scenarios, [but] hoping that we can commence the consolidation period on Saturday as planned."

She emphasized that the commencement of the period would rely on the government's assessments of chain infections in the city. Monday saw three instances of community infections. Based on this, she hoped the city would achieve "community zero" within this week.

While elaborating on the period, the public health doctor eradicated any hope of life returning to the days before June 18.

"There is no probability that civil and livelihood activities will be allowed to resume in full scope and scale," the public health doctor said. "Some activities, including those of an economic na-

ture, will [continue to] see certain restrictions."

She further explained that partial resumption of activities would see high rates of contact between individuals, adding that control and prevention measures and their implementation would be tighter and more proactive.

In response to a question on whether the government will resume publicizing the movements of positive cases, the public health doctor hinted that the requirement on footprint recording would remain even if city enters the consolidation period, as she said that members of the public can compare their footprints with other people's to support footprint announcements being unnecessary.

Whether citywide SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid testing (NAT) will be suspended or terminated was also of public concern. On this, the public health doctor gave an answer that some might find disappointing, as she said that the citywide testing will be retained.

On the expected duration of the consolidation period, the public health doctor forecast it to be two-weeks long, as of yesterday, but with the probability of adjustment.

When asked for details on the consolidation period several times at yesterday's press briefing, the public health doctor reiterated that a centralized announcement would be made in due course.

COVID-19 TESTS

GOV'T DOCTOR ACKNOWLEDGES THEY ARE FOLLOWING MAINLAND NAT STANDARDS

ANTHONY LAM

MAINLAND standards governing SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test (NAT) specimen collectors should be followed to facilitate the test more easily, Dr Lei Wai Seng of the public hospital said yesterday.

The doctor, who is a medical director working at the Accident and Emergency Department of the hospital, told yesterday's regular health press briefing that the Health Bureau (SSM) follows mainland standards relating to the qualifications of specimen collectors.

"We have been operating mass NATs lately and require support from mainland China," Lei said. "That's why we need to align with mainland standards, to avoid discrepancies."

He added that he believed the standards here and in the mainland "are fairly similar."



Nonetheless, many have complained online that university degrees were required for local specimen collectors, in contrast to high school certificates for those hired from the mainland.

Other sources have alleged that those hired from mainland China did not even possess basic anti-infection skills, such as knowing to tuck the sleeves of the personal protection equipment

(PPE) into the opening of the gloves.

On the matter of hiring local specimen collectors, the doctor pledged that the health agency would constantly monitor the need for employees to implement the announced plan for regular NATs in the future, "so that third-party NAT service providers would be able to hire enough local residents to work in this area."

AMCM WARNS PUBLIC TO AVOID ILLEGAL INSURANCE

STAFF REPORTER

THE Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) has urged the public to be vigilant of product sales by unlicensed insurance companies to avoid being cheated.

The AMCM found that several institutions, online platforms and individuals that are not licensed by the authorities, purporting to offer wealth management services in Macau and China, promoted life insurance products and financial products that were advertised as equivalent to savings accounts and financial management. Terminology like "high yield" and "high dividend" were used to attract the public's attention, but this language was all in service of defrauding members of the public.

The authorities noted that the illegal sales



VLAD DEEP

may involve misleading or fraudulent activities, and because such actors are not licensed to sell insurance products, they may also violate the article 33 of Decree-Law No.38/39/M — the legal framework governing the carrying on of an insurance intermediary business, which is possibly also in violation of the regulations of mainland China.

The AMCM calls on the public to obtain insurance products and ser-

vices through insurance companies or intermediaries approved by authorities so as to avoid financial loss and the risk of being involved in illegal financial activities, or even criminal offences.

The public can visit the website of the AMCM (<https://www.amcm.gov.mo/>) and call the authorities (number: 28221180) to see the list of permitted insurance companies and intermediaries.

QUARANTINE

TOURISM BOARD HAS NO DATA ON BUDGETING FOR THIRD-PARTY INSPECTORS

ANTHONY LAM

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) had no idea how much money had been used on third-party quarantine hotel inspectors and quarantine hotels, a representative from the tourism board admitted yesterday.

Being part of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre, MGTO handles a variety of responsibilities, such as the communications between the government and hotel operators on matters related to quarantine hotels.

Lao Fong Chi, the representative from MGTO to the daily health press briefing, revealed yesterday that she did not have data on the budgeting for the two aforementioned services, or for the cost-to-date of the two services.

She attributed the ongoing operations of the services as the reason why she did not have the data available.

Last week, The Parisian hotel recorded an internal outbreak that was only disclosed by the government four days after the first



infections were detected.

On Monday, MGTO revealed that in October last year, the government commissioned the Macau University of Science and Technology Hospital (UH) as a third-party consultant to inspect and investigate pandemic prevention measures.

UH subsequently issued a statement recently which noted that the inspections commissioned last October were not supposed to cover The Parisian hotel.

MGTO then clarified early yesterday that UH was only commissioned to inspect the Parisian after the internal outbreak.

When commenting on the matter, Lao reiterated that there were only four quarantine hotels in October 2021, which is why UH has only handled four hotels since then.

The tourism official stressed that UH offered recommendations on "reinforcement measures" with regards to infection prevention and control. "For

example, they offered suggestions on what should be reinforced or improved," Lao said.

In addition, she reiterated that the Health Bureau (SSM) inspects all hotels prior to their use as quarantine facilities to ensure the facilities and amenities fits the requirement of a quarantine hotel.

"Afterwards, SSM issues guidelines and offers training to the teams at the concerned hotel," Lao further explained. "Therefore, we have commissioned a third-party entity to assist with reinforcement measures and inspections."

She emphasized that all hotels that were used as quarantine facilities after the June 18 chain infections were deemed suitable for the mission by SSM. Teams have been trained and given guidelines on health and safety concerns.

Lao emphasized that the government wanted to expand the UH contact in terms of advice on reinforcement measures, but blamed the increase in the number of quarantine hotels and guests for slowing down the process.

However, she stated that there are chat groups for communica-

tion between the government and quarantine hotels, so issues could be followed up.

The third-party inspector, meanwhile, focused on reinforcement measures. "We have commissioned the third-party to inspect the Sheraton hotel as well," Lao added.

On why the infections at The Parisian did not create a separate cluster, Leong Iek Hou, public health doctor at the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, said that the internal outbreak affected confined workers, implying a minor impact to the community.

However, an earlier report by local media Macao Daily News cited an interviewee as saying that July 12 – two days after the first Parisian internal chain infections were detected – about 500 people finished quarantine and checked out from the hotel.

An interviewee with the newspaper tested positive on July 15. Given the incubation period of the Omicron BA.5 variant is about three days, it is unclear if the virus spread from the hotel to the community.

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JUNE VISITOR ARRIVALS DECLINE TO 380,671 AMID OUTBREAK

VISITOR arrivals declined by 36.6% month-on-month to 380,671 in June, due to tightened cross-boundary measures between Zhuhai and Macau amid the local outbreak.

The figure also represented a year-on-year drop of 28.0%.

Following the discovery of Covid-19 cases on June 19, the mainland required arrivals from Macau to undergo a 14-day quarantine, which has deterred tourists from visiting the city due to quarantine requirement on return.

From that week, the city's touristic areas were barely filled with visitors, as the government also began to discourage local residents from leaving their homes.

Across the same period, the number of same-day visitors (199,881) and overnight visitors (180,790) decreased by 36.2% and 15.9% year-on-year respectively, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows.

In terms of the origin of



visitors, the number of visitors from mainland China fell by 28.7% year-on-year to 336,488, with 134,981 travelling under the Individual Visit Scheme.

Visitors from the nine cities in the Pearl River Delta in the Greater Bay Area totalled 247,905, of which 47.3% came from Zhuhai. There were also 38,895 visitors from Hong Kong and 5,148 from Taiwan.

Analysed by checkpoint, the number of visitor arrivals by land dropped by 19.8% year-on-year to

360,601 in June. Among them, 75.6% arrived through the checkpoint of Border Gate (272,754) and 15.0% came via the Hengqin port (53,948). Meanwhile, visitor arrivals by sea and air totalled 15,524 and 4,546 respectively.

In the first half of 2022, the number of visitor arrivals went down by 11.8% year-on-year to 3,465,107. Overnight visitors (1,284,281) fell by 37.6% year-on-year, while same-day visitors (2,180,826) rose by 16.7%. LV

Two-thirds of SMEs on the verge of bankruptcy: Sector rep

STAFF REPORTER

PRESIDENT of the Industry and Commerce Federation of Macau Central and Southern District, Lei Cheok Kuan, suggested that the government distribute MOP15,000 to residents across three months in a bid to help sustain local businesses.

According to the official, the first two MOP15,000 can be given in cash, while the remaining stimulus could be handed out in a form of e-vouchers as a way to support the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) due to near-bankruptcy of these firms.

"In fact, most SMEs are now facing closure, and those who have not closed are afraid of being asked to repay their debts immediately after closure. For small-sized enterprises, they are basically unable to repay their debts, so they only maintain their business and wait for the promotion of the government's assistance measures so far," Lei told Chinese media outlet Exmoo.

Lei explained that SMEs are now "strongly hoping" that the MOP10 billion government assistance measure, announced last weekend, will be launched as soon as possible, so that they can stay in business for at least a while.



The Legislative Assembly is set to meet virtually tomorrow to discuss the budget amendment to accommodate the recently announced stimulus.

Lei pointed out that except for supermarkets, most restaurants have basically no capacity to support their businesses any longer.

"The implementation process of the financial measures proposed by the government is too slow. The issuance of assistance measures has already been ongoing for a long time, but it has not been officially launched yet," Lei criticized.

He expressed understanding that some residents are dissatisfied with the assistance measure because they do not meet the conditions announced by the authorities. However, two-thirds of local SMEs are already considering ceasing operation because of the pressure they face, meaning the government must act swiftly.

The government pledged over the weekend an extra MOP10 billion for financial relief measures for the public and to support other pandemic-related expenses in light of the current community Covid-19

outbreak, bringing the total value of financial relief measures to be put forward by the government to MOP20 billion.

Back in June, the government announced a MOP10 billion financial support measure, including one-off subsidies for employees, self-employed individuals and businesses; an exemption for tourism tax; and a fuel subsidy for the taxi sector.

At present, the total excess reserves which the government is using on pandemic prevention work is as high as MOP 35.1 billion.

SUSPENSION OF POSTAL SERVICES FROM HK TO MACAU

Hongkong Post advised of the suspension of all postal services from Hong Kong to Macau from July 18 due to the pandemic, through a notice issued by Hongkong Post. Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 in Macau, delivery of all types of mail (including items which have been already posted) will be suspended until further notice. Hongkong Post noted that residents can visit the mail service website of Hong Kong Post to find out the latest service updates for overseas destinations.

GUANGDONG, MACAU PRODUCT FAIR POSTPONED

The 2022 Guangdong & Macao Branded Products Fair (2022GMBPF) is postponed due to the current outbreak, according to the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM). The event was originally scheduled for July 29 to 31, held in both offline and online formats. The new fair dates will be announced later. Priority for participation will be given to enterprises with "Made in Macau" products.

WORKER IN MRU PROJECT DIES AFTER BEING HIT BY TRUCK

A cement sand mortar worker was hit by a cement mixer truck and pronounced dead after being brought by emergency services to the hospital on July 18. The accident occurred near Lot 1 of the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) project construction site in Hengqin, led by Sociedade de Desenvolvimento do Novo Bairro de Macau (Hengqin, Zhuhai), Limitada. The company, a project company of Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MRU), has demanded the contractor Zhejiang Provincial Yijian Construction Group Company Limited to conduct an appropriate investigation into the accident, according to a statement.

Ron Lam interrogates gov't on financial subsidies

ANTHONY LAM

AS the budget amendment was introduced in the parliament, lawmaker Ron Lam issued a written enquiry for more information on the proposed financial subsidies.

The executive branch earlier submitted the budget amendment to the parliament to be read and voted on. This is the second time this year's Annual Budget has required amendment.

In this amendment, the government is requesting MOP35.16 billion from the city's fiscal reserves to support certain proposed subsidies.

The lawmaker regards the details on the two rounds of subsidies proposed by the government as crucially important, however this information appears to be absent. These relate to a subsidy scheme targeting employers and employees,



and another scheme that would include the non-working population.

"The information is completely absent from the draft law," the lawmaker wrote, adding that the proposed subsidy schemes

have stirred heated debate recently.

For example, he noted that some residents have wondered why the government chose to set an income ceiling as part of the eligibility criteria. Noting that

the ceiling has been raised after a month of the scheme's initial announcement, Lam asked how the ceiling was determined.

"Will the government consider merging the employee subsidy and the general Covid-19 subsidy?" the lawmaker asked.

"All walks of life are severely impacted by this round of outbreak. [By merging them,] it can be assured that all those who meet the requirements of the Central Provident Fund to remain in Macau will receive financial subsidies, while also simplifying procedures and easing social discontent," he added.

In addition, Lam demanded that the government provide further clarification on the areas to which the MOP167.8 billion had been applied. The government merely informed parliament that it was used to combat Covid-19.

Furthermore, Lam noted

that in the past two and a half years, the government has issued several rounds of financial subsidies, on top of the regular issuance of the Wealth Partaking Scheme (more commonly known as the cash handout).

Given the plunge in casino revenue levels, the government has dipped into its reserves on multiple occasions to facilitate the extra subsidies. Therefore, Lam also wanted to know how much money remained in the reserves following these rounds of subsidies.

As of the end of April this year, the city has a basic reserve of MOP145 billion and excess reserves of MOP486.4 billion.

The lawmaker also asked about extending mortgage repayment periods and special subsidies for shopkeepers whose businesses have been suspended by government directives.

CHINA THREATENS 'STRONG MEASURES' IF PELOSI VISITS TAIWAN

CHINA will take "resolute and strong measures" should the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi proceed with reported plans to visit Taiwan, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said yesterday.

Pelosi, who is second in line to the presidency, is due to visit the self-governing island China claims as its own territory in August, according to a report in the Financial Times.

She was originally scheduled to visit in April but had to postpone after she tested positive for COVID-19.

Pelosi would be the highest ranking American lawmaker to visit the close U.S. ally since her predecessor as speaker, Newt Gingrich, traveled there 25 years ago.

China has vowed to annex Taiwan by force if necessary, and has advertised that threat by flying warplanes near Taiwanese airspace and holding military exercises based on invasion scenarios. It says those actions are aimed at deterring advocates of the island's formal independence and foreign allies - principally the U.S. - from coming to its aid, more than 70 years after the sides



U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of Calif., speaks at her weekly press conference, July 14, 2022, on Capitol Hill in Washington

split amid civil war.

A visit by Pelosi would "severely undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, gravely impact the foundation of China-U.S. relations and send a seriously wrong signal to Taiwan independence forces," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijiang said at a daily briefing.

"If the U.S. were to insist on going down the wrong path, China will take resolute and strong measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity," Zhao said.

China in recent days has also ratcheted up its rhetoric over U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, demanding the cancellation of a deal worth

approximately \$108 million that would boost its armed forces' chances of survival against its much bigger foe. China has the world's largest standing military, with an increasingly sophisticated navy and a huge inventory of missiles pointed across the 180 kilometer-wide Taiwan Strait.

"The Chinese People's Libera-

tion Army [...] will resolutely thwart any form of interference by external forces and separatist plots of "Taiwan independence," the Defense Ministry said in a statement posted on its website yesterday.

While Washington maintains a policy of "strategic ambiguity" over whether it would defend Taiwan in a conflict with China, U.S. law requires it must ensure the island has the means to defend itself and consider threats to its security as matters of "grave concern."

Washington maintains only unofficial relations with Taiwan in deference to Beijing, but is the island's strongest political ally and source of defensive arms.

Zhao gave no details about what potential actions China might take in response to Pelosi's visit, but Beijing has generally used military flights and war games to indicate its discontent. Chinese pilots have also been accused of aggressive action toward surveillance aircraft from the U.S. and its allies operating in international airspace off the Chinese coast, while using lasers and other methods to harass foreign warships in the South China Sea.

China's most serious threat against Taiwan came in 1995-96, when it held military exercises and lobbed missiles into waters north and south of the island in response to a visit to the U.S. by then-President Lee Teng-hui. **MDT/AP**

Authorities in south China apologize over Covid-19 break-ins

AUTHORITIES in southern China have apologized for breaking into the homes of people who had been taken to a quarantine hotel in the latest example of heavy-handed virus-prevention measures that have sparked a rare public backlash.

State media said that 84 homes in an apartment complex in Guangzhou city's Liwan district had been opened in an effort to find any "close contacts" hiding inside and to disinfect the premises.

The doors were later sealed and new locks installed, the Global Times newspaper reported.

The Liwan district government apologized Monday for such "oversimplified and violent" behavior, the paper said. An investigation has been launched and "relevant people" will be severely punished, it said.

China's leadership has maintained its hard-line "zero-COVID" policy despite the mounting economic costs and disruption to the lives of citizens, who



continue to be subjected to routine testing and quarantines, even while the rest of the world has opened up to living with the disease.

Numerous cases of police and health workers breaking into homes around China in the name of anti-COVID-19 measures have been documented on social media. In some, doors have been broken down and residents threatened with punishment, even when they tested negative for the virus.

Authorities have demanded keys to lock in residents of apartment buildings where cases have been detected, steel barriers erected to prevent them leaving their compounds and iron bars welded over doors.

China's Communist leaders exert stringent control over the government, police and levers of social control. Most citizens are allegedly inured to a lack of privacy and restrictions on free speech and the right to

assembly.

However, the strict anti-COVID-19 measures have tested that tolerance, particularly in Shanghai, where an often chaotic lockdown spurred protests online and in person among those unable to access food, health care and basic necessities.

Authorities in Beijing have taken a gentler approach, concerned with prompting unrest in the capital ahead of a key party

congress later this year at which president and party leader Xi Jinping is expected to receive a third five-year term amid radically slower economic growth and high unemployment among college graduates and migrant workers. A requirement that only vaccinated people could enter public spaces was swiftly canceled last week after city residents denounced it as having been announced without warning and unfair to those who have not had their shots.

"Zero-COVID" has been justified as necessary to avoid a wider outbreak among a population that has had relatively little exposure to the virus and less natural immunity. Although China's vaccination rate hovers at around 90%, it is considerably lower among the elderly, while questions have been raised about the efficacy of China's domestically produced vaccines.

Although China's Fosun Pharma reached an agreement to distribute, and eventually manufacture,

the mRNA vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech, it still has not been cleared for use in mainland China, despite being authorized for use by separate authorities in Hong Kong and Macau.

Studies have consistently shown that inoculation with mRNA vaccines offers the best protection against hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Chinese vaccines made with older technology proved fairly effective against the original strain of the virus, but much less so against more recent variants.

Now health experts say the delay in approving mRNA vaccines could lead to avoidable coronavirus deaths and deeper economic losses.

China's national borders remain largely closed and although domestic tourism has picked up, travel around the country remains subject to an array of regulations, with quarantine restrictions constantly in flux. **MDT/AP**

POLITICS

Sri Lanka prime minister, two rivals in presidential race

KRISHAN FRANCIS, COLOMBO

SRI Lanka's prime minister and acting president, Ranil Wickremesinghe, will face two rivals in a parliamentary vote today on who will succeed the ousted leader who fled the country last week amid huge protests triggered by its economic collapse.

Wickremesinghe, a six-time prime minister, is a seasoned politician with wide experience in diplomatic and international affairs and has been leading crucial talks on an economic bailout package with the International Monetary Fund.

He is backed by members of the fragmented ruling coalition, but is unpopular among voters who view him as a holdover from the previous government that led the country into economic catastrophe. The 73-year-old Wickremesinghe was appointed prime minister by deposed President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in May to help restore Sri Lanka's international credibility.

The leading challenger, former government minister Dullas Alahapperuma, was nominated Tuesday by a breakaway faction of the ruling coalition after opposition leader Sajith Prema-



dasa withdrew and said he would support him.

"For the greater good of my country that I love and the people I cherish I hereby withdraw my candidacy for the position of president," Premadasa said in a Twitter post.

Marxist party leader Anura Dissanayake, 53, was also expected to contest today's parliamentary vote. He also ran for president in 2019.

Rajapaksa fled the country after protesters outraged by the crisis stormed his official resi-

dence and occupied other key public buildings. He later submitted his resignation via an email to the speaker of Parliament.

Opponents of Wickremesinghe's candidacy fear he represents an extension of the Rajapaksa rule and a potential comeback for the beleaguered political family.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed a petition against Wickremesinghe's status as a lawmaker, clearing the path for him to run for president.

He succeeded Rajapaksa's

younger brother, Mahinda Rajapaksa, as prime minister after he stepped down in response to massive public pressure.

Wickremesinghe also took on the role of finance minister, becoming the public face of the country's economic woes. He has delivered weekly addresses in Parliament, raised taxes and pledged to overhaul a government that increasingly has concentrated power under the presidency. Ultimately, observers say, he has lacked the political heft and public support to get the job done.

Alahapperuma, 63, is viewed as a populist, with good public relations and communications skills. Even though he is a former government spokesman and has served in various posts including minister of information and mass media, minister of sports and minister of power under previous governments he previously was not considered for top leadership posts.

A son of school administrators, he studied political science at the University of Iowa but did not earn a degree. He is married to a popular singer, Pradeepa Dharmadasa.

Students and political activists said they planned protests Tuesday. Some intimidating posts circulating on social media warned lawmakers against returning to their constituencies if they vote for Wickremesinghe.

After the protesters briefly took over public buildings last week in startlingly dramatic scenes, Parliament was heavily guarded Tuesday by hundreds of soldiers, its entry points barricaded. Staff at Parliament and reporters were thoroughly searched before they were allowed to enter while navy boats patrolled the lake surrounding the building.

Sri Lanka's economy has collapsed, its foreign exchange reserves depleted, and it has suspended repayment of foreign loans. Its population is struggling with shortages of essentials including medicine, fuel and food while the government negotiates a bailout package with the IMF. It is preparing a loan restructuring plan as a prelude to talks. **MDT/AP**

East Timor hopes to join ASEAN when Indonesia chairs in 2023

ACHMAD IBRAHIM & NINIEK KARMINI BOGOR

EAST Timor's President Jose Ramos-Horta in a meeting with his Indonesian counterpart yesterday said he hoped Asia's youngest country could join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations next year.

In a joint news conference with Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Ramos-Horta said that his government has fulfilled all requirements to be the newest member of the bloc, and his country expected Widodo would maximize his role as the chair of ASEAN next year to accelerate the acceptance of East Timor as the 11th member of the regional grouping.

"I'm very grateful that Indonesia remains very committed to Timor Leste's membership in ASEAN," Ramos-Horta said after meeting with Widodo, using his country's official name. "We hope to join ASEAN during Indonesia's presidency to be highly symbolic."

Widodo could be seen nodding his head in agreement while Ramos-Horta expressed his hope, but he did not make any comment about East Timor's request to join ASEAN during the conference.

Ramos-Horta, former independence fighter and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, was sworn in as president of East Timor on May 20 as the country marked its 20th anniversary of inde-

pendence from Indonesia, which invaded the former Portuguese colony in 1975.

He made his first bilateral visit to Indonesia — Southeast Asia's largest economy and a traditional first stop for new East Timorese leaders. He was hosted by Widodo at an official ceremony Tuesday in the presidential palace in Bogor.

The two leaders on Tuesday agreed to increase trade and transportation cooperation, and Widodo pledged to strengthen his administration role to participate in development in East Timor, including in infrastructure, banking, telecommunications as well as non-oil and gas sector.

During his weeklong visit in Indonesia, Ramos-

Horta is scheduled to meet with ASEAN Secretary General Lim Jock Hoi to discuss regional issues and his country's request for ASEAN membership. He also plans to meet Indonesia's former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and give public lectures at three universities.

East Timor officially applied for full membership of ASEAN in 2011, but ASEAN has yet to respond due to the nation's small economy and relatively high poverty levels. Members like much wealthier Singapore feared East Timor would be a burden and slowed its bid to realize the ASEAN Economic Community.

The U.N. estimates nearly half of East Timor's



East Timorese President Jose Ramos Horta, left, accompanied by Indonesian President Joko Widodo at the Presidential Palace in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, yesterday

population lives below the extreme poverty line of \$1.90 a day, and for every 1,000 babies born in the country, 42 die before their 5th birthday because of malnutrition.

The former Portuguese colony was occupied by Indonesia for a quarter-century and gained independence after a U.N.-sponsored referendum in

1999. Indonesia's military responded with scorched-earth attacks that devastated the East Timorese half of the island of Timor.

The transition to a democracy has been rocky, with leaders battling massive poverty, unemployment and corruption. Its economy is reliant on dwindling offshore oil revenues. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

Putin in Tehran for talks with leaders of Iran, Turkey

NASSER KARIMI & VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, TEHRAN

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin arrived yesterday in Iran for a visit intended to deepen ties with regional heavyweights as part of Moscow's challenge to the United States and Europe amid its grinding campaign in Ukraine.

In only his second trip abroad since Russian tanks rolled into its neighbor in February, Putin is scheduled to hold talks with Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan about the pressing issues facing the region, including the conflict in Syria and a U.N.-backed proposal to resume exports of Ukrainian grain to ease the global food crisis.

As the West heaps sanctions on Russia and the costly campaign drags on, Putin is seeking to bolster ties with Tehran, a fellow target of severe U.S. sanctions and a potential military and trade partner. In recent weeks, Russian officials visited an airfield in central Iran at least twice to review Tehran's weapons-capable drones for possible use in Ukraine, the White House has alleged.

Iran rolled out a long red carpet for Putin at Tehran's Mehrabad airport, where Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji greeted him warmly before he was whisked into his presidential convoy to the city.

But perhaps most crucially, the Tehran trip offers Putin a chance for a high-stakes meeting with Erdogan, who has sought to help broker talks on a peaceful settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as help negotiations to unblock Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea.

Turkey, a NATO member, has found itself opposite Russia in bloody conflicts in Azerbaijan, Libya and Syria. It has even sold lethal drones that Ukrainian forces have used to attack Russian troops. But Turkey hasn't imposed sanctions on the Kremlin, making it a sorely needed partner for Moscow. Grappling with runaway



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, left, and his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi listen to their countries' national anthem during the welcoming ceremony at the Saadabad palace, in Tehran, Iran, yesterday

inflation and a rapidly depreciating currency, Turkey also relies on the Russian market.

The gathering has symbolic meaning for Putin's domestic audience as well, showing off Russia's international clout even as it grows increasingly isolated and plunges deeper into confrontation with the West. It comes just days after U.S. President Joe Biden's visited Israel and Saudi Arabia — Tehran's primary rivals.

From Jerusalem and Jeddah, Biden urged Israel and Arab countries to push back on Russian, Chinese and Iranian influence that has expanded with the perception of America's retreat from the region.

It was a tough sell. Israel maintains good relations with Putin, a necessity given Russian presence in Syria, Israel's northeastern neighbor and frequent target of its airstrikes. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have declined to pump more oil beyond a plan approved by their energy alliance with Moscow.

But all the countries — despite their long-standing rivalries — could agree on drawing closer to counter Iran, which has rapidly advanced its nuclear program since former U.S. President Donald Trump abandoned Tehran's atomic accord with world powers and reimposed crushing sanctions. Talks to restore the deal have hit a deadlock.

Backed into a corner by the West and its regional rivals, the Iranian government is ramping up uranium enrichment, cracking down on dissent and grabbing headlines with optimistic, hard-line stances intended to keep the Iranian currency, the rial, from crashing. Without sanctions relief in sight, Iran's tactical partnership with Russia has become one of survival, even as Moscow appears to be undercutting Tehran in the black market oil trade.

"Iran is (the) center of dynamic diplomacy," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian wrote on Twitter, adding the meetings will "develop economic cooperation, focus on security of the region ... and ensure food security."

Fadahosseini Maleki, a member of the Iranian parliament's influential committee on national security and foreign policy, described Russia as Iran's "most strategic partner" on Monday. His comments belied decades of animosity stemming from Russia's occupation of Iran during World War II — and its refusal to leave afterward.

In his fifth visit to Tehran, Putin will meet Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, with whom he has a "trusting dialogue," Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov said. He will also hold talks with President Raisi on issues including Tehran's nuclear deal,

of which Russia is a key signatory. The leaders met in Moscow in January and again last month in Turkmenistan.

The focus of the talks among the three presidents will be the decade-old conflict in Syria, where Iran and Russia have backed President Bashar Assad's government, while Turkey has supported armed opposition factions. Russia intervened in the conflict in 2015, pooling efforts with Iranian forces and using its air power to shore up Assad's fledgling military.

Ushakov said the parties will discuss efforts to encourage a political settlement, while Erdogan is expected to take up Turkey's threats of a new military offensive in northern Syria to drive away U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters from its borders. The operation is part of Turkey's plan to create a safe zone along its border with Syria that would encourage the voluntary return of Syrian refugees.

In a meeting with Erdogan, Khamenei delivered a stern warning against the planned Turkish incursion.

"Any sort of military attack in northern Syria will definitely harm Turkey, Syria and the entire region, and will benefit terrorists," Iran's top leader said, stressing the need to "bring the issue to an end through talks."

Iran and Turkey signed a raft of preliminary agreements covering investment,

this day in history

1990 IRA BOMBS STOCK EXCHANGE



An IRA bomb has blown a 10-foot hole in the London Stock Exchange. Nobody was injured in the blast, although police say there would have been fatalities if they had not evacuated the area before the explosion at 0849 BST.

It was the first time the IRA had given any warning of an attack in England since the 1983 Harrods bombing.

Police and other organisations received eight warning calls in an 18 minute period - from 0800 BST - from a man with an Irish accent using a new IRA coded message.

Officers evacuated neighbouring buildings and kept them clear until after midday, as they dealt with a series of hoax calls.

They also cordoned off the area round Threadneedle Street and Broad Street for several hours and traffic was severely disrupted.

Disruption to business was minimal because most trading is done by computer and telephone and the central information system was in another building.

Chairman of the Stock Exchange Andrew Hugh Smith said: "If the purpose of this callous act was to bring the City to a halt, they have failed singularly; our systems and services have functioned perfectly, and trading has continued as normal."

The traded options floor was the main area affected. Up to 300 people - sporting their colourful corporate blazers - were evacuated onto the street.

Business there remained closed for the rest of the day, although the worst damage was done to the visitors' gallery.

Investigators say the bomb - containing five to 10lbs of high explosives - had been planted in the men's toilets behind the gallery.

Visitors normally have to book in advance and the area had not opened this morning, suggesting the bomb had been left overnight.

Scotland Yard says today's target shows the IRA has switched to "soft" civilian targets - as opposed to "hard" political or military ones - and has asked the public to be extra vigilant.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

This was the culmination of a summer of IRA attacks on British targets. Several bombs had been defused but soldiers were killed in attacks in Staffordshire and north-west London and more than 20 people were injured in a blast at the Carlton Club, London - popular with Conservative MPs. Anti-terrorist officers discovered two empty flats in London with traces of Semtex explosive in October 1990. They believed these may have housed a Home Counties-based IRA unit behind the bombing campaigns in the south east.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Try to visit friends or relatives you don't get to see often. Make changes that will enhance your appearance and entice potential partners. Educational pursuits should help you develop your hobbies.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You need to refrain from being the generous one in the group. Try to control your irritability if you're experiencing emotional problems with your partner. You can win points if you present your ideas today.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You can persuade even the toughest opponents to think your way. Focus your efforts on details, and keep to yourself in order to finish your work. Expect your workload to be heavy.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Try not to be too harsh with your mate. Alienation may be the result of a misunderstanding. You will find that uncertain individuals will want to draw you into joint ventures.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Don't allow your personal problems to interfere with your professionalism. It will be important that you have your priorities straight. Don't hold yourself back because you think you're too old.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You can make money if you're willing to push your ideas on those in a position to support your efforts. Personal problems may be hanging over your head but don't confront the situation.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You need some excitement in your life, and meeting new people in exotic destinations will certainly satisfy your desires. The locks, stove, gas, or electric wires may not be secure.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Your bankbook will suffer and your restrictions will put a damper on your relationship. Your outgoing charm and obvious talent will be admired. Your creative ability will surface.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You will be drawn to individuals who can provide you with both intellectual conversation and physical passion. Do not invest in joint ventures. You need to control your temper and deal with the situation rationally.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You may want to take a serious look at your goals and objectives. Your self esteem will come back if you take part in organizational functions that allow you to be in the lime light.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You can't lock your partner up and if you keep restricting their freedom you may be left out in the cold. If you haven't already, don't be afraid to start your own small business on the side.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

If you're single, get out there and you'll meet someone new. You can make money if you're willing to push your ideas on those in a position to support your efforts.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

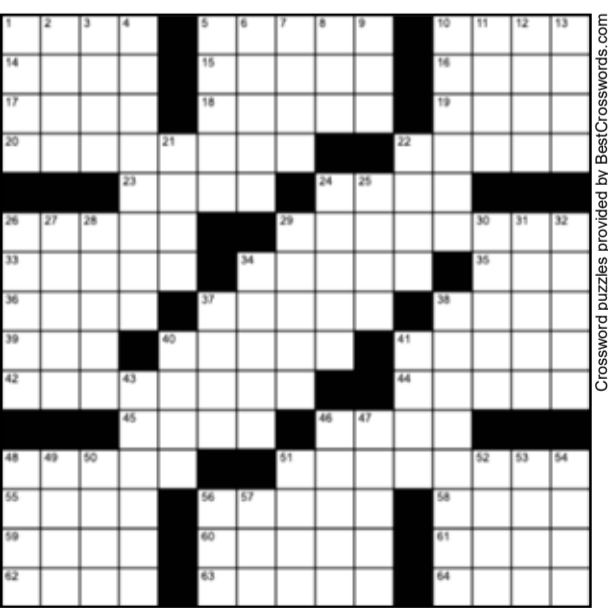
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	33	cloudy
Changchun	19	28	thunderstorms
Chengdu	20	33	overcast
Chongqing	24	31	overcast
Fuzhou	27	38	cloudy
Guangzhou	27	35	cloudy
Guiyang	20	25	rain
Haikou	27	33	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	26	37	fine
Harbin	19	29	thunderstorms
Hefei	24	31	rain
Nanjing	27	34	cloudy
Shanghai	27	37	rain
Taipei	26	32	cloudy
Wuhan	26	31	rain
Hong Kong	29	33	showers
WORLD			
Moscow	13	20	rain
Frankfurt	18	37	overcast
Paris	17	26	thunderstorms
London	17	22	rain
New York	26	35	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Overflow; 5- "Otello" composer; 10- Wise men; 14- Pro follower; 15- Words of resignation; 16- A party to; 17- The jig ___; 18- Crescents; 19- Start to type?; 20- Impetus; 22- Fuel transport; 23- Woeful word; 24- Still life subject; 26- Quench; 29- Cracks; 33- Titter; 34- Island greeting; 35- Half and half?; 36- Doozy; 37- Quick and nimble; 38- London gallery; 39- Inlet; 40- Concert venue; 41- Saunter; 42- Lasting; 44- Newsboy's cry; 45- Heating fuel; 46- Painter of limp watches; 48- Tries; 51- Uncompromising; 55- Affectedly dainty; 56- Habituate; 58- All over again; 59- Old Italian money; 60- Mediterranean island; 61- Unclothed; 62- Put a lid ___; 63- Collect; 64- General ___ chicken;

DOWN 1- Speaker of Cooperstown; 2- Bridge seat; 3- Sewing case; 4- Cartographer; 5- Country residence; 6- Horse play?; 7- Flows; 8- Fizzle out; 9- T.G.I.F. part; 10- Surroundings; 11- Blue dye source; 12- Departed; 13- Are you ___ out?; 21- Peter Fonda title role; 22- Greek peak; 24- Orchestra string; 25- Tennis great Arthur; 26- Put away; 27- Russian revolutionary leader; 28- In the future; 29- Throw with force; 30- Way to cook; 31- Register as a participant; 32- Later, dude!; 34- Representative; 37- La Scala solo; 38- Poisonous; 40- NASA launch vehicle; 41- Blend; 43- Cheerful; 46- Pub game; 47- Zones; 48- WWII battle site; 49- One of a matching pair; 50- Ethereal; Prefix; 51- Hawaiian native dance; 52- Responsibility; 53- Start from scratch; 54- Flock members; 56- "___ Believer" (Monkees hit); 57- Where some vets served;



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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- 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

FOR SALE

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- NOVA TAIPA | 4 BEDS HKD12,880,000
- 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



AVIATION FACES HURDLES TO HIT GOALS FOR CUTTING EMISSIONS

DAVID KOENIG & KELVIN CHAN, FARNBOROUGH

AIRPLANES are a minor contributor to global greenhouse-gas emissions, but their share is sure to grow as more people travel in coming years — and that has the aviation industry facing the prospect of tighter environmental regulations and higher costs.

The industry has embraced a goal of reaching net-zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050. Experts who track the issue are skeptical.

Until the COVID-19 pandemic caused travel to slump, airlines were on a steady course of burning more fuel, year after year. Today's aircraft engines are the most efficient ever, but improvements in reducing fuel burn are agonizingly slow — about 1% a year on average.

At Monday's opening of a huge aviation industry show near London, discussion about climate change replaced much of the usual buzz over big airplane orders.

The weather was fitting. The Farnborough International Airshow opened as U.K. authorities issued the first extreme heat warning in England's history. Two nearby airports closed their runways, one reporting that heat caused the surface to buckle.

As airlines confront climate

change, the stakes could hardly be higher.

Jim Harris, who leads the aerospace practice at consultant Bain & Co., says that with airlines recovering from the jolt of the pandemic, hitting net-zero by 2050 is now the industry's biggest challenge.

"There is no obvious solution, there is no one technology, there is no one set of actions that are going to get the industry there," Harris says. "The amount of change required, and the timeline, are big issues."

Aviation releases only one-sixth the amount of carbon dioxide produced by cars and trucks, according to World Resources Institute, a nonprofit research group based in Washington. However, aviation is used by far fewer people per day.

Jet fuel use by the four biggest U.S. airlines — American, United, Delta and Southwest — rose 15% in the five years leading up to 2019, the last year before air travel dropped, even as they updated their fleets with more efficient planes.

Airbus and Boeing, the world's two biggest aircraft makers, both addressed sustainability during Monday's opening day at Farnborough, although they approached the issue in different ways.

Europe's Airbus and seven air-

line groups announced a venture in West Texas to explore removing carbon dioxide from the air and injecting it deep underground, while Boeing officials said sustainable aviation fuel, or SAF, will be the best tool — but not the only one — to reduce emissions.

Last September, airline leaders and President Joe Biden touted an agreement to cut aircraft emissions 20% by 2030 by producing 3 billion gallons of SAF by then and replacing all conventional jet fuel by 2050. Climate experts praised the idea but said the voluntary targets are overly optimistic. Current SAF production is around 5 million gallons per year.

As airlines confront climate change, the stakes could hardly be higher

Sustainable fuel is biofuel made from cooking oil, animal fats, municipal waste or other feedstocks. Its chief advantage is that it can be blended with conventional fuel to power jet engines. It has been used many times on test flights and even regular flights with passengers on board.

Among SAF's drawbacks are the high cost — about three times more than conventional jet fuel. As airlines seek to buy and use

more of it, the price will rise further. Advocates are lobbying for tax breaks and other incentives to boost production.

Policymakers see SAF as a bridge fuel — a way to reduce emissions until more dramatic breakthroughs, such as electric- or hydrogen-powered planes, are ready. Those technologies might not be widely available for airline-size planes for two or three decades.

Several companies are designing and starting to build electric-powered planes, but most are small aircraft that take off and land vertically, like helicopters, and they are about the same size — with room for only a few passengers.

Electric-powered planes big enough to carry around 200 passengers — a medium-size jet by airline standards — would require much bigger batteries for longer flights. The batteries would weigh about 40 times more than jet fuel to produce the same amount of power, making electric airliners impractical without huge leaps in battery technology.

Hydrogen, on the other hand, "is a very light fuel," says Dan Rutherford, who leads the study of decarbonizing cars and planes for an environmental group, the International Council on Clean Transportation. "But you need a lot of volume to store it, and the

fuel tanks themselves are heavy."

Despite that, Rutherford remains "cautiously optimistic" about hydrogen. His group believes that by 2035, there could be hydrogen-powered planes capable of flying about 2,100 miles. Others, however, see obstacles including the need for massive and expensive new infrastructure at airports to store hydrogen that has been chilled into liquid form.

Airlines face the risk of increasingly tough emissions regulations.

The U.N. aviation organization reached an agreement — voluntary until 2026, then mandatory — in which airlines can offset their emissions by investing in projects to reduce greenhouse gases in other ways. However, some major countries didn't sign it, and environmentalists say the scheme won't reduce emissions.

Even some in the airline industry, such as United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby, have mocked carbon offsets, which companies can get for things like paying to plant trees.

The European Union has its own plan to slash emissions 55% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 while bringing aviation under the goals of the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change. It is trying to finalize an emissions-trading system and impose higher taxes on fossil fuels including jet fuel. The rules would apply only to flights within Europe.

"The taxation policies that are already in place, particularly in Europe, are going to drive the cost of operations for airlines way up," says Harris, the Bain consultant. "Ultimately, fares rise whether it be paying more for sustainable aviation fuel or it's taxes on fossil fuels."

Airlines also face the risk of flight shaming — that more consumers could decide to travel by train or electric vehicle instead of by plane if those produce lower emissions. That does not seem to be inhibiting many travelers this summer, however, as pent-up travel demand has led to full planes.

Whether changes in fuel and planes can cut emissions fast enough to hit the industry 2050 target — and whether airlines act on their own or under pressure from regulators — remains to be seen. But it won't be easy.

"We're not on a path to deliver those goals," Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian says. "We need the energy producers to invest in sustainable product for us, (which) is going to require government to come in."

Rutherford, the transportation expert, notes that net zero "is a really challenging target."

"If we aren't clearly on a trajectory of down emissions and massive uptake of clean fuels by 2030 and 2035, we are not going to hit net zero in 2050," he says.

MDT/AP

WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

No new record but third gold for Rojas in triple jump

LUIS RUIZ, EUGENE

THE best triple jumper on the planet is now a three-time world champion. And even though there was no new record to go with her victory, Yulimar Rojas was grateful that at least she had fans on hand to watch her perform.

The Venezuelan star captured her third straight title Monday, winning the final with a jump of 15.47 meters. That was 27 centimeters away from her world record but still good enough to romp to a 58-centimeter victory over Shanieka Ricketts of Jamaica.

"I wanted a longer jump," Rojas said. "But I am happy to return to this beautiful stadium, to see the crowd. I have had great feelings."

The 26-year-old faced uncertainty in the run-up to worlds. After missing a meet last month in Madrid due to an injury to her

AP PHOTO



Gold medalist Yulimar Rojas, of Venezuela, celebrates during a medal ceremony for triple jump women at the World Athletics Championships, Monday

left leg, she hadn't been seen or heard from.

She let her jumping do the

talking at Hayward Stadium, a track and field hotbed where fans clapped in rhythm before

all six of her jumps.

"I come from a short preparation," she said. "I overcame

time, injury, whatever stood in the way of achieving this, and I think this is a reward for perseverance, will and belief that this was possible."

The jumper born in a humble home in the small town of Pozuelos facing the Caribbean added this world title to those from worlds in 2017 and 2019.

She surpassed the two golds won by Colombian Caterine Ibargüen, her predecessor on the world throne of the triple jump.

Rojas took command of the contest on her second jump, the winning 15.47, and didn't fall behind again.

After that, the goal was trying to better her record of 15.74 set in Belgrade in March at indoor world championships. That jump beat her previous record of 15.67, set in a nearly empty stadium in Tokyo at the Olympics last summer.

As the crowd revved up for her last jump, Rojas took off. When she landed, it was clear the record was out of the picture, but she let out a yelp heard across the stadium. Despite not breaking the mark, the night was over. The win was hers.

"It's been a nice day," she said. "I am not going to tell you that it has been one of my best days because it has not been that way. But I have left good numbers." **MDT/AP**

AD



HOLIDAY RENTAL HOUSES

Lugar das Letras Casa de Gouvães

The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the worlds 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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FOOTBALL

BASKETBALL

DAILY TRAININGS

OPINION

World Views

Suzanne McLeod Binghamton University,
State University of New York/The Conversation

6 WAYS TO KEEP KIDS' SCHOOL SKILLS SHARP OVER THE SUMMER

Over the summer, students typically lose the equivalent of about a month's worth of learning, mostly in the areas of math facts and spelling. Research has also found that summer learning loss is more severe among students with disabilities, English language learners and students living in poverty.

But researchers' understanding of summer loss is continually evolving. For instance, one study found that the students who experienced the biggest losses were the ones who had shown the biggest gains just before the test at the end of the school year. This raises questions about whether their gains were true gains or just the result of special preparation for the test.

Some parents take advantage of school-based programs that can help students keep up their academic skills during the summer. But there are still ways that parents and other caregivers can stave off summer loss that do not involve school.

Here are six:

1. Model what you want to see: First and foremost, never forget that you are a role model. Children will do what they see the adults around them do. Summer is the perfect time for you to reduce screen time and increase time reading, writing, taking walks, playing games or having conversations.

2. Visit the library: Children love independence. One of the best ways to allow children to demonstrate independence is to have them browse the shelves of the local library and select books that they can read independently or for you to read aloud to them. Participate in story hours if your local library offers the activity. Establish a habit of visiting the library on a weekly basis or at least several times a month. These library visits will strengthen a child's reading skills.

3. Play games during trips: When traveling by car, bus or train, there are games – both word and number – that you can engage in with your children. For instance, you can play "I Spy with My Little Eye," estimate the number of fast-food restaurants you'll pass or even look for all the words that begin with a certain letter. These activities not only keep children engaged but also incrementally sharpen their skills in a wide range of academic areas such as literacy, numeracy and communication.

4. Encourage your children to keep a summer journal: To get them started, suggest one journal entry of "10 Things I Want to Do Before Summer is Over." The list can include activities like watching the sunrise, going an entire day without wearing shoes or seeing how far they can spit a watermelon seed. To make the journal more interesting, encourage children to fill it with both writing and drawing.

5. Visit landmarks: Plan visits to acquaint you and your children with local landmarks. Document the visit with a journal entry, drawings or photographs and some research on the history of the site. The excursions can become even more meaningful if you have children do a little research into the landmarks you visit.

6. Plan weekly family picnics: Vary the meals to include breakfast, lunch, dinner or even dessert. Let your children plan the menu and cook with you, as well as select the site for the picnics. Research has found that involving children in the preparation of meals by doing things such as making grocery lists can help improve their reading, writing and math skills.

[Abridged]

A gas explosion after a partial building collapse in the northern Chinese port city of Tianjin yesterday morning left three people missing and 11 injured.

The event remains under investigation, but it appears to point to the deterioration of infrastructure following more than three decades of breakneck economic growth.

Three floors of the six-story building collapsed. The official Xinhua News Agency reported the subsequent explosion occurred around 7:15 a.m.

China is replacing decades-old infrastructure, with natural gas

lines used for cooking, heat and power generation a particular concern.

A 2013 blast in the northeastern port of Qingdao killed 62 people when underground pipelines ripped open following a leak.

Smaller incidents have followed since, including explosions at a hotel in the northeastern city of Shenyang and a residential community in the central city of Shiyang that left a combined 28 people dead.

Building codes are also loosely enforced in rural areas and suburbs, with additional levels added to homes and businesses that lack the structural integrity to support them.



The complaint and affidavit in support of an arrest warrant against Sherry Xue Li and Lianbo "Mike" Wang is photographed, Monday

US

PAIR CHARGED WITH MAKING STRAW DONATIONS TO TRUMP COMMITTEES

JENNIFER PELTZ,
NEW YORK

TWO Chinese American businesspeople were charged Monday with funneling foreigners' money into political donations that bought entry to an exclusive dinner with then-President Donald Trump so the duo could impress and swindle Chinese investors.

In a complex financial scheme with political tentacles, prosecutors say, Sherry Xue Li and Lianbo "Mike" Wang raised \$27 million for a grandiose development plan that never got close to approval, then siphoned off millions of dollars for personal expenses.

To project the sway to keep their promises — which often included visas to live in the U.S. — they used investor money and foreign nationals' cash to make big-dollar donations and be seen with Trump and other prominent politicians, prosecutors said in court documents.

"Together we can build a better, stronger and healthier community and 'Make America Great Again!'" read one of their business' press releases trumpeting that Li and Wang had attended a pre-inaugural reception featuring various figures in the incoming Trump administration.

Prosecutors didn't allege any criminal wrongdoing

by the political action committees that accepted donations from Li and Wang.

Li, 50, and Wang, 45, were being held without bail after their first appearance in a Brooklyn federal court, though their lawyers can argue for bail later on. The two are facing various federal conspiracy charges.

They weren't asked to enter a plea, but Wang volunteered, through a Mandarin interpreter, "I did not do this thing."

Li's lawyer, Nora Hirozawa, declined to comment. A message seeking comment was left for Wang's attorney, James Roth.

The naturalized U.S. citizens are business partners who share a Long Island home with some of Li's relatives, including her 15-year-old son.

Li has been promoting plans for a development near New York's Catskill Mountains for nearly a decade; Wang worked with her as general manager. Initially envisioned as a cultural theme park called "China City of America," it morphed into a proposal for a for-profit college campus after local officials told Li that zoning wouldn't allow the "Chinese Disneyland" she first planned.

The "Thompson Education Center" has never materialized, either. Local officials denied the neces-

sary sewer service in 2015 and then told Li flat-out in 2017 that the project wasn't approved, according to prosecutors' court papers.

But she and Wang continued to tell investors the project was a go, sometimes sending them photos of a construction site. That site was actually a house she was having built somewhere else, prosecutors said.

Many backers had been lured with promises of investor visas, which ultimately were denied because of immigration officials' doubts about the viability of the "Education Center" project, according to court papers.

To bolster those promises, Wang and Li sought to create an image of influence with prominent U.S. politicians.

In some cases, the image was literal.

Li and Wang solicited money from foreigners to give over \$600,000 of donations — converted into Wang's and Li's names — to attend and bring guests to a June 2017 fundraising dinner with the then-president, prosecutors said. A photo from the event shows Li with Trump and then-first lady Melania Trump.

It is against the law for foreign nationals to contribute to American political campaigns, and prosecutors say Li and Wang knew it. **MDT/AP**



European Union

yesterday started the long enlargement process that aims to lead to the membership of Albania and North Macedonia in the bloc. Any expansion beyond the 27 EU member states is likely to be years off, and both nations were already considered potential candidates 19 years ago. Despite the stalling, the Western Balkan nations have persevered in their ambition to become part of the world's most important trade bloc.



Russian President

Vladimir Putin's visit to Iran starting yesterday is intended to deepen ties with regional heavyweights as part of Moscow's challenge to the United States and Europe amid its grinding campaign in Ukraine. In only his second trip abroad since Russian tanks rolled into its neighbor in February, Putin is scheduled to hold talks with Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan about the pressing issues facing the region, including the conflict in Syria and a U.N.-backed proposal to resume exports of Ukrainian grain to ease the global food crisis. **More on p8**



Vatican

has centralized and overhauled its investment strategy after a botched deal lost tens of millions of euros, imposing a policy that prohibits investments in products such as pornography and weapons and prioritizes prudent investing in industries that promote the common good. The new policy announced yesterday by the Secretariat for the Economy bans speculative investments, short selling and investing in highly leveraged or complex financial products or in countries vulnerable to money laundering and terrorist financing.