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DISCOVER
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A STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE MUST SHOWS MRNA BOOSTER PRODUCES MORE ANTIBODIES AGAINST OMICRON VARIANTS

▲ P2

30,000 PEOPLE IN TWO NEW KEY AREAS REQUIRED TO TAKE NAT

▲ P3

MYANMAR CARRIED OUT ITS FIRST EXECUTIONS IN NEARLY 50 YEARS, HANGING A FORMER LAWMAKER, THREE OTHER POLITICAL PRISONERS

▲ P6



Indonesian President Joko Widodo headed to Beijing yesterday for a rare visit by a foreign leader under China's strict COVID-19 protocols and ahead of what could be the first overseas trip by Chinese President Xi Jinping since the start of the pandemic more than two years ago. Xi, who has participated in international meetings only by video link during the pandemic, may attend a Group of 20 summit in Indonesia in mid-November.



Japan Dozens of people have evacuated two towns on Japan's main southern island of Kyushu where a volcano spewed ash and large rocks into the nighttime sky. Large rocks fell as far as 2.5 kilometers from the Sakurajima volcano Sunday night in the southern prefecture of Kagoshima. Footage on Japan's NHK public television showed orange flames flashing near the crater and dark smoke with ash billowing high above the mountaintop.



Japan The alleged assassin of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will be detained until late November for mental evaluation so prosecutors can determine whether to formally press charges and send him to trial for murder, officials said yesterday. The suspect, Tetsuya Yamagami, was arrested immediately after he allegedly shot Abe from behind when the former leader was making a campaign speech outside a busy train station in western Japan on July 8.

More on backpage

RENT WOES

SMEs on the brink as they struggle to tide over rent payments amid suspended operations ▲ P5



STRUGGLING F&B WORKERS DESPERATE FOR RESUMPTION OF DINE-IN SERVICE

▲ P4



OUTDOOR NAT SUSPENDED ON FIRST DAY DUE TO HEAT

▲ P2

RENATO MARQUES

COVID-19

GOV'T SUSPENDS OPERATION OF OUTDOOR NAT STATION DUE TO HEAT

THE health authorities have suspended the operation of the new nucleic acid test (NAT) sampling station located outdoors on its first day of operations.

According to the local coordinator of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, the first of this type of facility to be placed in a public park or garden had to shut down at midday yesterday due to extreme heat.

"We suspended the service of the NAT station located at the Iao Hon market park during the afternoon because it was very hot, but operations will resume later this evening," Leong said during the daily briefing of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

According to the same official, during the period that the station was open, a total of 1,500 people used it for the NAT of key groups and areas.

To several inquiries from the media, she also explained that these stations will be installed by the government and supervised by the Health Bureau, but operated by a third-party, like most of

the NAT stations located across the city.

Leong also clarified that the operating system of these stations will be similar to all the others located in indoor facilities, with the exception that in these booths there is no need for the printing of the sticker that identifies the tube with the collected sample.

"The only difference is that at these stations there is no need to print the sticker, the workers just scan directly the QR code of the users with their equipment and then perform the sampling. These samples will be also analyzed later in a mixed sample 10-in-1 method just like any others," Leong explained.

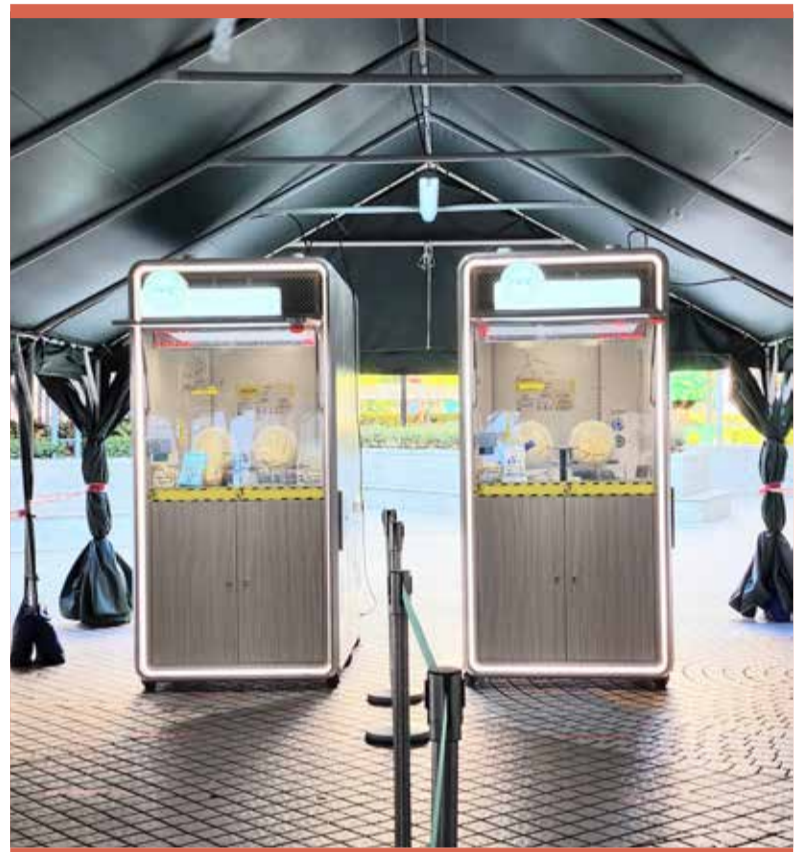
She also noted that all the stations to be established in outdoor areas, like this one that started operations yesterday, follow the same standards and guidelines of the government and that all the contracts with the operators have

the same requirements of priority to be given to the hiring of local residents to perform the sampling.

More of these stations using public spaces such as parks and gardens are expected to open soon, as the authorities claim to be currently "proposing other places that are convenient for the installation of these stations."

As she had already mentioned last Sunday, Leong noted that the idea is that these stations can replace the ones located on school premises, to allow the resumption of the schools' normal activities in the new school year.

She said that these stations will be mostly used for the continued performance of mandatory NAT for different key groups and key areas, suggesting that, in case there is a need for more rounds of city-wide mass testing for the whole population, school facilities may need once more to be put to use by the health authorities.



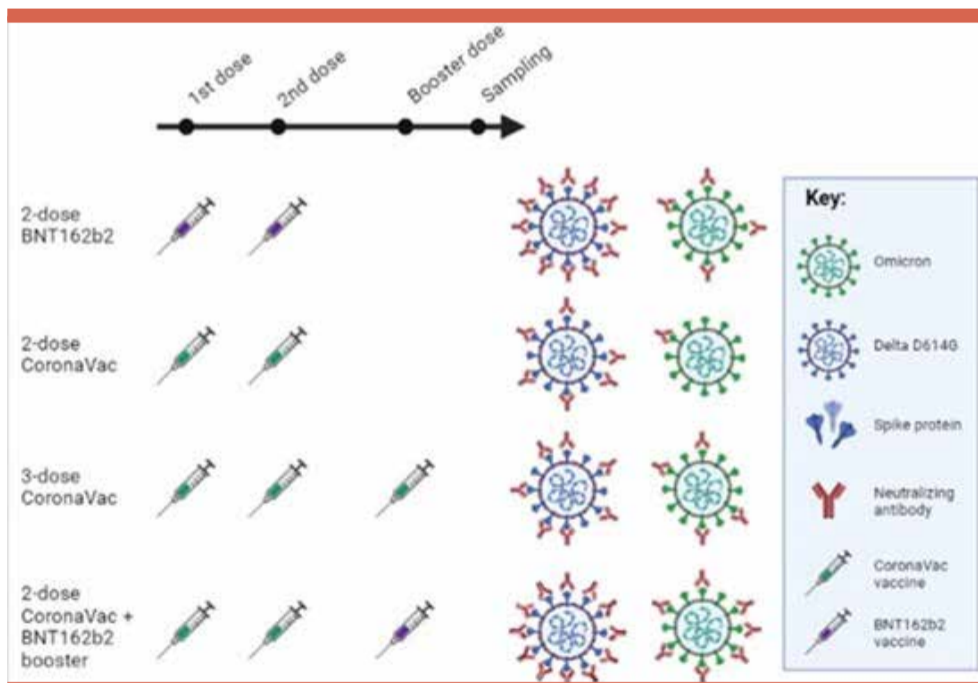
MUST study shows mRNA booster produces more antibodies against Omicron variants

LYNZY VALLES

A study from the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) has found that people taking the BioNTech mRNA vaccine as the third booster dose produces more neutralizing antibodies against Omicron variants.

The study, published in Signal Transduction and Targeted Therapy (Impact Factor: 35.13), is led by Dr. Daniel Baptista-Hon, Assistant Professor at MUST's Faculty of Medicine, and Professor Ligong Lu, director of Zhuhai People's Hospital and The First Affiliated Hospital of Faculty of Medicine of MUST.

The researchers found that in people who have received two doses of the inactivated virus vaccine, those



who receive the BioNTech mRNA vaccine as a booster produce more of the neutralizing antibodies that are effective against the Omicron

BA.2 variant.

"The results of our study show that the choice of the booster shot is very important, and the data in our stu-

dy is in line with the recommendations of the Health Bureau of the Macau SAR Government that people should consider the mRNA

vaccine as their booster dose", says Dr. Baptista-Hon.

This publication is part of the ongoing Macau Antibody Protection Study (MAPS), initiated since February 2022. It is a multidisciplinary collaboration between the Faculty of Medicine and University Hospital of MUST, Zhuhai People's Hospital and First Affiliated Hospital of Faculty of Medicine of MUST, Guangzhou Medical University, and Fosun Pharmaceuticals.

MAPS is led by Chair Professor Kang Zhang and Dr. Baptista-Hon, with the overall aim of evaluating the effectiveness of vaccine protection in Macau.

MAPS is recruiting participants from the Macau population who have taken one, two or three of the currently available vaccines in

Macau or mainland China. The recruitment is currently paused to comply with the SAR's anti-pandemic measures.

Chair Professor Zhang says, "MAPS (the Macau Antibody Protection Study) is a very important study to keep track of the level of protection against Covid-19 in Macau, which can also help guide vaccination strategies.

"We are always looking for new participants so if anyone is interested, they can get in touch with us," he added.

Health authorities and medical experts have reiterated that vaccination is one of the most important ways to reduce infection and death from the virus as vaccination stimulates bodies to produce antibodies against SARS-CoV-2.

Some of these antibodies are "neutralizing" - they prevent SARS-CoV-2 from infecting cells altogether and stop people from falling ill.

Macau's total vaccination rate currently sits at 90.5%.

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Times
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

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION
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
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COVID-19

30,000 people in two new key areas, NAT required

RENATO MARQUES

HEALTH authorities established yesterday two key areas located around Area Preta district in which all people living, working, or undergoing any activities for over 30 minutes in those areas since July 22, are required to undergo a mandatory nucleic acid test (NAT).

The information was aired during yesterday's daily briefing of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center by the local coordinator of the Center for Disease Con-

trol and Prevention, Dr. Leong Iek Hou, which said the measure would affect around 30,000 people.

Leong explained that the basis for such a decision is "the number of cases found within the area," although according to the reports from the center, no community cases have been found, and the four cases reported for the 24 hours of July 24 to be related to people in red zones of confinement in medical observation hotels.

Still, the official insisted on the need for all people in these areas to undergo one extra NAT which needs to be taken

either today (July 26) or tomorrow (July 27), otherwise, the resident's health code will turn yellow.

The order includes even those groups that have been recently exempted from the citywide mass testing, such as children aged under 3 years old, seniors over 80 years old, and those with disabilities causing them severe mobility issues.

The areas include Area Preta Urban Park, as well as the areas limited by the Estrada Marginal do Hipódromo and the Avenida de Venceslau de Morais.

Leong justified the decision saying that although in the last two days there were no records

of cases in the community, "the situation is not yet ideal. It is too soon to tell if we can reach our goal [of eliminating all the transmission links]."

The same official has called once more on the population to continue to persist in the prevention and control measures, namely by undergoing Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) daily.

She said that on Sunday, the Center recorded some 27,000 people who failed to upload their RAT results to the online platforms, urging them to do so daily to avoid further complications and hassles.

Questioned on the different criteria used this time, only requested of people in these new key areas, to undergo one NAT, she said that this classification in key areas is different from the red or yellow zones as the "background is different."

"There are cases for which we can't find the source yet so we need to increase the frequency of NAT. This is to prevent another outbreak as the buildings [in these areas] have stopped being classified as confinement areas but we are still concerned that there might exist some concealed cases," Leong concluded.

GOV'T TO REVIEW REQUIREMENT FOR KN95 MASKS

DURING the same press briefing the medical director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center, Lei Wai Seng, said that the government is considering if it is still necessary to use the N95/KN95 facemasks. In response to a media inquiry, Lei said that so far, the public hospital has not recorded any cases of

people affected by heatstroke after activities outdoors, recommending that those who need to work in the sun drink more water. The same official also noted that, for the time being, and during the so-called consolidation period, KN95 masks will still be compulsory to help to prevent contagion.

Lawmaker hopes for clear criteria for business resumption

ANTHONY LAM

THE criteria for the reopening of businesses should be clarified, to give business owners and operators a clearer idea, lawmaker Leong Sun Iok has said.

After entering the "consolidation period", in addition to industries for essential services, the government has also allowed some other industries to resume limited operations under SARS-CoV-2 prevention guidelines.

In contrast, there are still some industries in the market that meet the



FLORA TANG

conditions for resumption but which have not been permitted to resume

operations. Speaking to local Chinese media Macao Daily News, Leong

expressed his hopes that the government could make detailed assess-

ments so that businesses can resume operations in an orderly manner, while complying with disease prevention, so as to minimize the impact on employers and employees.

The lawmaker revealed that requests and enquiries have recently been received concerning the resumption schedule for beauty parlors, barber shops and hair salons located in shopping malls, private tuition and education centers, restaurants, and interior decoration projects, among other industries.

Leong said that operators of these industries hoped they could resume operations while complying with health guidelines. In addition, it was pointed out that some of these industries, such as

private tuition and education centers, were always the first to be suspended and the last to resume normal operation.

Meanwhile, some operators of barber shops and hair salons located in shopping malls pointed out that malls have not been crowded lately. They are also equipped with individual air-conditioning systems with ventilation ensured. As such, these operators do not anticipate that their reopening will be risky.

In contrast, the government has allowed all local casinos to resume operations, claiming that ventilation is guaranteed. At the same time, shopping malls located within the same resort complex with a casino were not allowed to reopen fully.

3G, 4G LICENSES RENEWED UP TO 2028

3G and 4G telecom licenses of CTM, Hutchinson, China Telecom and Smartone have been renewed, according to several dispatches in the Official Gazette. The 3G service contracts were renewed from June 2023 to June 2025, while 4G licenses were renewed up to June 2028. The government finally launched the much-anticipated public tender for 5G late last month. Proposals can be submitted until 5 p.m. August 12. The government expects that, after the tender, operators will be able to launch the 5G service in Macau within the first quarter of 2023.

DEFECTIVE RAT KITS CAN BE REPLACED AT HEALTH CENTERS

In view of recent complaints about defective rapid antigen test (RAT) kits, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre has announced that from today, citizens who had been issued a defective RAT kit, can take it to their corresponding health center or station for replacement during service hours. The center reminds the public to perform a rapid antigen test (RAT) every day until 31 July and report the test result to the designated platform. If the result is positive, regardless of whether the patient is experiencing fever, respiratory symptoms or other discomfort, they should call an ambulance (Tel: 119, 120 or 2857 2222).

INFLATION RATE AT 1.32%

The Composite CPI for June 2022 (103.86) increased by 1.32% year-on-year, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The increment was attributed to higher wages of domestic helpers, higher charges for eating out, as well as rising prices of gasoline and liquefied petroleum gas. The rise was partially offset by lower rentals for dwellings, reduced charges for telecommunication services and falling prices of pork.

F&B REVENUES DOWN 22%

Information from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicated that receipts of the interviewed restaurants & similar establishments dropped by 22.2% year-on-year in May 2022, with Chinese Restaurants and Western Restaurants recording respective decreases of 30.6% and 28.6%. As regards the business expectations for June, 78% of the interviewed restaurants and similar establishments expected their receipts to decrease month-on-month; the corresponding shares for Chinese Restaurants, Local Style Cafes, Congee & Noodle Shops and Western Restaurants stood at 83%, 81% and 78% respectively. Only 9% of the interviewed establishments predicted that their receipts would increase month-on-month in June.

GROUP CALLS FOR DETAILS OF GENERAL SUBSIDY SCHEME

ANTHONY LAM

A deputy of a local group has called on the government to release details on the proposed general subsidy scheme, with the budget already passed by the parliament.

Ho Hoi Leng, deputy executive director of the Co-building Good Homes Association (Kong Kin Ho Ka Un Association), told local Chinese media Macao Daily News about her recommendation.

July 21, the Amendment Bill of the Annual Budget was passed by the parliament to enable the facilitation of two proposed financial subsidy schemes. The details of one of the two schemes were announced June 19, whereas no details on the other scheme have yet been announced.

Secretary Lei reiterated that the Bill would provide subsidies for the general population, meaning that those outside the working population would also be included. However, so far, he has not released any such details, even when he was grilled by lawmakers who were pressing him for details.

Given the current situation, Ho asked the government to gather comments and suggestions from the community to clarify the details of the second scheme.

Justifying this call, Ho emphasized that the current round of



viral infections has heavily impacted all walks of life. Operators of small and medium enterprises are facing tighter cash flows, while their employees are running short of saved income because they have not been able to go to work.

In addition, she said the public has been waiting impatiently for the schemes.

Ho also recommended the implementation of a provisional Covid-19 relief fund to help people on a case-by-case basis. Her suggestion was that the fund cou-

ld support people who are not included in the first scheme but impacted by the standstill.

Moreover, she reminded the government to use public funds wisely so that when the situation calms down the economy will be able to be reinvigorated.

As for the scheme that came with details, the government has expressed its hopes to start distributing the money in early August.

An extra MOP10 billion will be withdrawn from the city's fiscal reserves for use in another round of financial subsidies, Secretary

Lei announced on July 15.

Last month, not long after this outbreak was first detected, Lei announced a series of financial subsidies worth MOP10 billion.

The subsidy round announced in June focused mainly on entrepreneurs and the working population. Recently, Lei announced that the coverage of these new subsidies will be expanded. The income floor has been scrapped and the ceiling raised to MOP600,000, counted over a two-year period, for those subsidies issued to employees

Struggling catering workers desperate for early resumption of dine-in service

ANTHONY LAM

It is hoped that dine-in services will be able to resume soon since catering workers have recently been faced with intensifying survival pressures, head of the Catering Industry Workers Association of Macau (Associação de Operários "Iam Sek Ip Kong Vui" de Macau) said.

The city is currently under consolidation period restrictions with certain businesses allowed to resume with limited capacity. Although restaurants have been operating, only takeaway services have been available.

In the first week or so of this wave of SARS-CoV-2 infections, which started June 18, the government encouraged local



dining establishments to suspend dine-in services, arguing that people not wearing masks in confined spaces would pose risks to city's battle against the coronavirus.

As the situation developed, the government issued an Executive Order to officially ban all dine-

-in services, leaving only takeaway available. Those caterers who had not started using food delivery apps signed up for this service so as to continue their businesses. Other caterers, meanwhile, re-deployed their dine-in service teams to delivering takeaway orders.

Under these circumstances, So Wai Leong, executive director of the Association, emphasized that the dine-in ban had had a significant impact on Chinese restaurants and small eateries. The ban has left a large proportion of their staff unemployed, underem-

ployed or forced to take unpaid leave.

In combination with the relatively low salaries across the industry, workers are feeling confused about their livelihood and the future. So disclosed that the association had received several requests for assistance due to the situation.

So suggested the government allow limited resumption of dine-in services, so as to ease the burden on the shoulders of industry workers.

Speaking about the upcoming financial subsidies, So hopes that the money will come soon. Moreover, he hopes the government will be able to determine an economic revival plan so as to resuscitate the economy.

SMEs negotiating rent with landlords amid pandemic crisis

STAFF REPORTER

SEVERAL small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have to face the pressure of landlords not decreasing their rent while operations of their business are restricted, according to a real estate developer.

After careful calculations, some stores can only choose to close their business.

Although currently, restaurants are allowed to operate by only providing takeaway services, they must still calculate profit or loss after deducting rent and operating costs.

"These cases are special examples in such a subdued economic environment," Bridge Real Estate operations manager Angel Loi said, as cited in an Exmoo report.

Loi considered that most landlords will be considerate of tenant's situations as the economic viability of tenants is limited during the pandemic. The landlords will generally agree to reduce the rent after discussions with the tenants to tide over the difficulties.

FLORA TANG



However Loi said that most landlords will not reduce their rent, but some can accept negotiation of the rent. "But there are store owners who decide to change the size of the store from big to small," she added.

Meanwhile, Loi said that the rent of residential buildings has been reduced. Taking one example where the monthly rent was over MOP 20,000 before the pandemic, now the rent has been reduced to MOP 13,000, a drop of

nearly half the previous rent.

"The income of the store can only rely on the takeaway platform and this is only half of that before the pandemic, which makes it very hard to operate," a beverage shop manager, surna-

med Ma, said.

Ma estimated that her store will have to close within two months, but she also will discuss the reduction of the store's rent with the landlord. She said that, frankly, a domino effect will most likely occur for the SMEs with the continued pandemic, with an expected wave of closures over this period.

Meanwhile, a sector representative said that although several stores that are allowed to resume operations have reopened after the partial lockdown, their customers are not plenty.

"The most prosperous area (Ruins of St. Paul) in the past is now gradually declining," the president of the Industry and Commerce Federation of Macau Central and Southern District, Lei Cheok Kuan said.

Previously, Lei suggested that the government distribute MOP15,000 to residents across three months in a bid to help sustain local businesses.

According to him, two-thirds of local SMEs are already considering ceasing operation because of the pressure they face, meaning the government must act swiftly.

Thus, the suggested that 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 SMEs due to near-bankruptcy of these firms.

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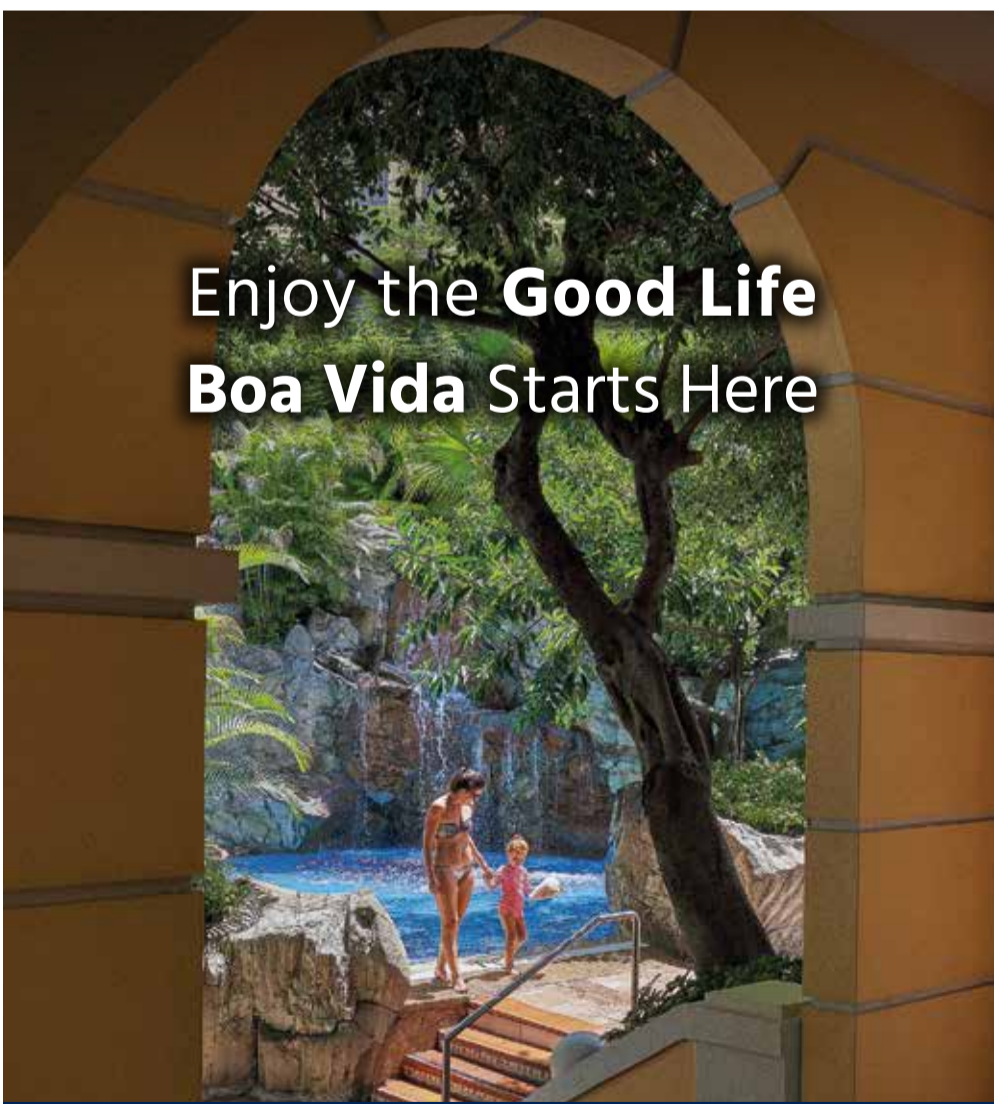
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TAIWAN HOLDS DRILLS AMID PELOSI VISIT CONCERN, CHINA TENSION

TAIWAN'S capital staged air raid drills yesterday and its military mobilized for routine defense exercises, coinciding with concerns over a forceful Chinese response to a possible visit to the island by U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi.

While there was no direct link between China's renewed threats and Taiwan's defensive moves, they underscore the possibility of a renewed crisis in the Taiwan Strait, considered a potential hot-spot for conflict that could envelop the entire region.

Air raid sirens were sounded in the capital Taipei and the military was holding its annual multi-day Han Kuang drills, including joint air and sea exercises and the mobilization of tanks and troops.

In Taipei, police directed people to shelters when a siren went off shortly after lunchtime. Streets emptied and shops closed.

"In recent years, Chinese military planes have frequently harassed Taiwan, and the war between Russia and Ukraine broke out in February this year," Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je told reporters, referencing concerns that a similar conflict could break out in East Asia. "All these things make us understand the importance of being vigilant in times of peace and we need to be prepared if there is war."

Pelosi has not confirmed when, or even if, she will visit, but President Joe Biden last week told reporters that U.S. military officials believed such a trip was "not a good idea." Administration officials are believed to be critical of a possible trip, both for the problematic timing and the lack of coordination with the White House.

China's ruling Communist Par-

AP PHOTO



ty considers self-ruling Taiwan its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary, and regularly advertises that threat by staging military exercises and flying warplanes into Taiwan's air defense identification zone or across the center line of the 180-kilometer-wide Taiwan Strait.

Beijing says those actions are aimed at deterring advocates of the island's formal independence and foreign allies — principally the U.S. — from interfering, more than 70 years after the sides split amid civil war. Surveys routinely show that Taiwan's 23 million people reject China's assertions that the island is a Chinese province that has strayed and must

be brought under Beijing's control.

Pelosi, has been a sharp critic of Beijing, is second in line to the White House. She is viewed as a Biden proxy by China, which demands members of Congress follow the commitments made by previous administrations.

Taiwan is among the few issues that enjoys broad bipartisan support among lawmakers and within the administration, with Biden stating earlier this year that the U.S. would defend Taiwan if it came under attack.

U.S. law requires Washington provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself and treat all threats to the island as matters of "gra-

ve concern," but remains ambiguous on whether it would commit forces in response to an attack from China.

Though the sides lack formal diplomatic ties, the U.S. is Taiwan's chief provider of outside defense assistance and political support, in a reflection of its desire to limit China's growing influence and maintain a robust American presence in the Western Pacific.

During a visit to Indonesia on Sunday, U.S. Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the Chinese military has become significantly more aggressive and dangerous over the past five years.

Milley's Chinese counterpart, Gen. Li Zuocheng, told him in a call earlier this month that Beijing had "no room for compromise" on issues such as Taiwan.

On Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said Beijing had repeatedly expressed its "solemn position" over a potential visit by Pelosi, who would be the highest-ranking U.S. elected official to visit Taiwan since 1997.

"We are fully prepared," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing. "If the U.S. is bent on going its own way, China will take firm and strong measures to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

China has not said what specific actions it would take, although speculation has centered on a new round of threatening military exercises or even an attempt to prevent Pelosi's plane from landing by declaring a no-fly zone over Taiwan.

"If the U.S. is determined to make (a visit) happen, they know China will take unprecedented tough measures and the U.S. must make military preparations," said Shi Yinhong, an international relations expert at Beijing's Renmin University.

"Expect huffing and puffing, maybe some fire-breathing, military posturing, and perhaps economic punishment of Taiwan," said Michael Mazza, a defense and China expert at the American Enterprise Institute.

In 1995 and 1996, China held exercises and launched missiles into waters north and south of the island in response to a U.S. visit by the island's then-leader Lee Teng-hui.

The U.S. responded by dispatching two aircraft carrier battle groups to the area, a move that helped spur China's massive military upgrading in the years since that has radically changed the balance of power in Asia. **MDT/AP**

China adds science laboratory to its orbiting space station

CHINA added a laboratory to its permanent orbiting space station yesterday as it moves toward completing the structure in coming months.

The Wentian laboratory was launched from the Wenchang space base on the tropical island province of Hainan on Sunday with a large crowd of amateur photographers and space enthusiasts watching.

After 13 hours of flight, it successfully docked with the Tianhe living area of the Tiangong space station at 3:13 a.m. Monday (1913 GMT), according to

the China Manned Space Agency.

Photos distributed by Xinhua News Agency later showed the three astronauts inside the expanded space station.

The 23-ton Wentian laboratory is designed for science and biology experiments and is heavier than any other single-module spacecraft currently in space, according to the state-owned Global Times.

Three astronauts who started their six-month mission aboard the space station last month oversaw the Wentian's arrival and docking.

A second laboratory segment, the Mengtian, is due to be launched in October and will complete the space station.

A Long March 5B-Y3 rocket, China's most powerful, carried the laboratory module in the third such launch since the Chinese space station entered its construction phase. It was preceded by the Tianzhou-class cargo spacecraft and the Shenzhou-14 crewed spacecraft.

China's space program is run by the ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, and has largely

proceeded with the Tiangong program without other nations' assistance. The U.S. excluded China from the International Space Station because of its military ties.

China launched its first astronaut into orbit in 2003, making it only the third country to do so on its own after the former Soviet Union and the U.S. Its space program has landed robot rovers on the moon and placed one on Mars last year. China has also returned lunar samples and officials have discussed a possible crewed mission to the moon. **MDT/AP**



AP FILE PHOTO



Phyto Zeya Thaw arrives at the Myanmar parliament in Naypyitaw, Myanmar, on Aug. 19, 2015.

Myanmar executes ex-lawmaker, three other political prisoners

DAVID RISING, BANGKOK

MYANMAR'S government confirmed yesterday it had carried out its first executions in nearly 50 years, hanging a former lawmaker, a democracy activist and two other political prisoners who had been accused of a targeted killing after the country's military takeover last year.

The executions, first announced in the state-run Mirror Daily newspaper, were carried out despite worldwide pleas for clemency for the four men, including from United Nations experts and Cambodia, which holds the rotating chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The four were executed "in accordance with legal procedures" for directing and organizing "violent and inhuman accomplice acts of terrorist killings," the newspaper reported. It did not say when they were hanged.

The military government later issued a brief statement about the executions, while the prison where the men had been held and the prison department

refused comment.

Aung Myo Min, human rights minister for the National Unity Government, a shadow civilian administration established outside Myanmar after the military seized power in February 2021, rejected the allegations the men were involved in violence.

"Punishing them with death is a way to rule the public through fear," he told The Associated Press.

Among those executed was Phyto Zeya Thaw, a former lawmaker from ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party. Also known as Maung Kyaw, he was convicted in January by a closed military court of offenses involving possession of explosives, bombings and financing terrorism.

His wife, Thazin Nyunt Aung, told the AP the world needs to hold the military accountable for the executions. "They have to pay," she said.

The U.S. Embassy in Myanmar said it mourned the loss of the four men and offered condolences to their families while decrying the decision to execute them.

"We condemn the military

regime's execution of pro-democracy leaders and elected officials for exercising their fundamental freedoms," the embassy said.

In China, a longtime ally of Myanmar's military, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian refused to comment on the executions, saying Beijing "always upholds the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs."

Phyto Zeya Thaw, 41, was arrested last November based on information from people detained for shooting security personnel, state media said at the time. He was also accused of being a key figure in a network that carried out what the military described as terrorist attacks in Yangon, the country's biggest city.

Phyto Zeya Thaw had been a hip-hop musician before becoming a member of the Generation Wave political movement formed in 2007. He was jailed in 2008 under a previous military government after being accused of illegal association and possession of foreign currency.

Also executed was Kyaw Min Yu, a 53-year-old democracy activist better known as Ko

Jimmy, for violating the counterterrorism law. He was one of the leaders of the 88 Generation Students Group, veterans of a failed 1988 popular uprising against military rule.

He already had spent more than a dozen years behind bars for political activism before his arrest in Yangon last October. He had been put on a wanted list for social media postings that allegedly incited unrest, and state media said he was accused of terrorist acts including mine attacks and of heading a group called Moon Light Operation to carry out urban guerrilla attacks.

The other two, Hla Myo Aung and Aung Thura Zaw, were convicted of torturing and killing a woman in March 2021 who they allegedly believed was a military informer.

Elaine Pearson, acting Asia director of Human Rights Watch, said the legal proceedings against the four had been "grossly unjust and politically motivated military trials."

"The junta's barbarity and callous disregard for human life aims to chill the anti-coup protest movement," she said following the announcement of

the executions.

Thomas Andrews, an independent U.N.-appointed expert on human rights who had condemned the decision to go ahead with the executions when they were announced in June, called for a strong international response.

"I am outraged and devastated at the news of the junta's execution of Myanmar patriots and champions of human rights and decency," he said in a statement. "These individuals were tried, convicted and sentenced by a military tribunal without the right of appeal and reportedly without legal counsel, in violation of international human rights law."

Myanmar's Foreign Ministry had rejected the wave of criticism that followed its announcement in June, declaring that its judicial system is fair and that Phyto Zeya Thaw and Kyaw Min Yu were "proven to be masterminds of orchestrating full-scale terrorist attacks against innocent civilians to instill fear and disrupt peace and stability."

"They killed at least 50 people," military spokesperson Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun said at a televised news conference last month. He said the decision to hang the prisoners conformed with the rule of law and the purpose was to prevent similar incidents in the future.

The military's seizure of power from Suu Kyi's elected government triggered peaceful protests that soon escalated to armed resistance and then to widespread fighting that some U.N. experts characterize as a civil war.

Some resistance groups have engaged in assassinations, drive-by shootings and bombings in urban areas. Mainstream opposition organizations generally disavow such activities, while supporting armed resistance in rural areas that are more often subject to brutal military attacks.

The last judicial execution to be carried out in Myanmar is generally believed to have been of another political offender, student leader Salai Tin Maung Oo, in 1976 under a previous military government led by dictator Ne Win.

In 2014, the sentences of prisoners on death row were commuted to life imprisonment, but several dozen convicts received death sentences between then and last year's takeover.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a non-governmental organization that tracks killing and arrests, said Friday that 2,114 civilians have been killed by security forces since the military takeover. It said 115 other people had been sentenced to death. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Pope set for historic apology for school abuses in Canada

PETER SMITH, EDMONTON

THOUSANDS of Indigenous people converged yesterday on the small Alberta prairie community of Maskwacis to hear a long-awaited apology from Pope Francis for generations of abuse and cultural suppression at Catholic residential schools across Canada.

Francis was scheduled to arrive in mid-morning at the site of the former Ermineskin Indian Residential School, now largely torn down. He planned to pause at the sites of the former school and nearby cemetery before speaking in a large open area to school survivors, their relatives and other supporters.

Francis arrived Sunday in Edmonton, where he was greeted by representatives of Canada's three main Indigenous groups — First Nations, Metis and Inuit — along with political and church dignitaries. At the welcome ceremony, Francis kissed the hand of a survivor of the residential school, Elder Alma Desjarlais of the Frog Lake First Nations, a gesture of humility and deference that has used in the past when meeting with Holocaust survivors.

The pope spent the rest of Sunday resting at a seminary in Edmonton, the capital of Alberta.

The Canadian government has admitted that physical and sexual abuse were rampant in the governmen-

t-funded Christian schools that operated from the 19th century to the 1970s. Some 150,000 Indigenous children were taken from their families and forced to attend in an effort to isolate them from the influence of their homes, Native languages and cultures and assimilate them into Canada's Christian society.

Francis' six-day trip — which will also include other sites in Alberta, Quebec City and Iqaluit, Nunavut, in the far north — follows meetings he held in the spring at the Vatican with delegations from the First Nations, Metis and Inuit. Those meetings culminated with a historic April 1 apology for the "deplorable" abuses committed by some Catholic missionaries in residential schools.

Thousands of children died from disease, fire and other causes. The discoveries of hundreds of potential burial sites at former schools in the past year has drawn international attention to the legacy of the schools in Canada and their counterparts in the United States.

Francis is now following through on a commitment to make that apology on Canadian soil.

Maskwacis, about an hour south of Edmonton, is the hub of four Cree nations.

Event organizers said they would do everything possible to make sure survivors can attend the event. Many will

travel from park-and-ride lots, and organizers acknowledge that many survivors are elderly and will require accessible vehicles, diabetic-friendly snacks and other amenities.

Catholics operated a majority of the Canadian schools, while various Protestant denominations operated others in cooperation with the government.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who last year voiced an apology for the "incredibly harmful government policy" in organizing the residential school system, will also attend the Maskwacis event along with other government officials.

In Maskwacis, the former school where Francis is visiting has been replaced with a school system operated by the four local Cree nations. The curriculum affirms the Indigenous culture that was once

Some 150,000 Indigenous children were taken from their families

suppressed.

Chief Greg Desjarlais of the Frog Lake First Nation in northern Alberta, a school survivor, said after the pope's arrival Sunday that there are "mixed emotions across this country" over his visit.

"I think today of the young people that didn't make it home and are buried around

residential schools," he told a news conference after the airport welcome ceremony. But he expressed optimism that the visit can begin to bring reconciliation.

"I do know when two people have apologized we feel better," he said. "But our people have been through a lot. ... Our people have been traumatized. Some of them didn't make it home. Now I hope the world will see why our people are so hurt."

On Monday afternoon, Francis is scheduled to visit Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples, a Catholic parish in Edmonton oriented toward Indigenous people and culture. The church, whose sanctuary was dedicated last week after being restored from a fire, incorporates Indigenous language and customs in liturgy.

"I never in my life thought I would see a pope here at Sacred Heart Church," said Fernie Marty, who holds the title of church elder. "And now we get that opportunity."

When Francis visits, the church will display the clothing, bread and other supplies it regularly provides to the needy, including many of Edmonton's estimated urban Indigenous population of 75,000.

The visit will be an "encounter" that will help "for people to know what we are, who we are," said its pastor, the Rev. Jesu Susai. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1956 EGYPT SEIZES SUEZ CANAL



Egypt's president, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, has announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company to provide funding for the construction of the Aswan High Dam.

The British Government and French stockholders who own shares in the Suez Canal Company have reacted with shock to the news.

In a two-and-a-half hour speech delivered to a mass gathering in Alexandria, President Nasser said the Nationalisation Law had already been published in the official gazette.

He said all company assets in Egypt had been frozen and stockholders would be paid the price of their shares according to today's closing prices on the Paris Stock Exchange.

Twelve Egyptians have been appointed members of a special board which will manage the newly-nationalised company.

The Suez Canal is a key waterway for world trade and an important source of revenue for Britain.

The Suez Canal Company, which manages the waterway, is legally Egyptian but, in 1869 was granted a 99 years' concession.

It was not due to revert to the Egyptian Government until November 16, 1968.

President Nasser, who took control of Egypt following a Coup d'Etat four years ago, has been implementing a nationalisation programme in the country, and was vehement in his criticism of the West.

He said 120,000 Egyptians had died building the canal but Egypt was receiving just a tiny proportion of the company's £35m annual earnings.

President Nasser's decision to nationalise the Suez Canal company comes following Britain and America's withdrawal of financial assistance towards the Aswan Dam.

It is understood the USSR agreed last month to provide an unconditional loan towards the project.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

As well as nationalising the Suez Canal Company, Nasser also blockaded the Straits of Tiran - Israel's only outlet to the Red Sea.

Britain and France joined forces with Israel, although this alliance was denied for years afterwards.

On 29 October, 1956, Israeli troops invaded Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

Two days later, British and French military forces attacked and invaded Egypt's canal zone after President Nasser had refused their offer of creating a buffer zone between Israel and Egypt. The Soviet Union threatened to intervene on Egypt's behalf.

President Eisenhower of the United States and the UN, fearing the USSR would use the crisis as a way of gaining power in the Middle East, pressured Britain, France and Israel into agreeing to a cease-fire and eventual withdrawal from Egypt in November 1956.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Don't let relatives get the better of you. Check your project over carefully if you were not the only one contributing to the end result. Your dramatic approach to life has probably gotten to your mate.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
 You will meet new romantic partners if you get involved in seminars or travel. Your lover may not understand your needs so you must figure out a way to communicate them.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
 You can accomplish a lot if you work out of your home today. You can meet potential new mates, but make sure that they aren't already committed to someone else. Make sure that you make reservations early.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Don't cause a scene, but when you get home let your partner know how you feel and why. Older family members may try to put unreasonable demands on you. Look into ways to make your home more comfortable.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 You will be able to dazzle others with your charm. You haven't been totally honest with yourself and it's time to review your motives. You will not be able to trust someone you work with.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Overindulgence will mean poor health. Changes will not be easy for the youngsters involved. Business partnerships should turn out to be quite lucrative.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 You will feel so much better about yourself if you can control your addictions. Hard work will bring rewards. Your competitive nature will enable you to win any contest you enter.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 You are best to tuck your money away where no one will be able to touch it, including yourself. Educational courses will be stimulating and successful. Spend time with your lover today.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Rather than making a scene, communicate quietly about the way you feel. Be careful signing important contracts today. You can utilize your versatile mind and dazzle others with your speed and accuracy.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 You need a day to rest and relax with the ones you love. Your involvement with groups will raise your self esteem. Make arrangements to spend quality time together.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Visit friends or relatives who have been confirmed. Try not to take everything so seriously. Love can be yours if you get out and about.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Don't prejudge. You may get drawn into a personal situation that will not be to your liking. Luck is with you, regardless of the financial venture. Don't be afraid to pursue unfamiliar grounds.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	25	33	rain
Changchun	19	29	cloudy
Chengdu	24	34	cloudy
Chongqing	26	37	cloudy
Fuzhou	28	40	cloudy
Guangzhou	27	38	fine
Guiyang	21	31	cloudy
Haikou	26	35	cloudy
Hangzhou	26	37	fine
Harbin	20	28	cloudy
Hefei	24	33	rain
Nanjing	25	36	cloudy
Shanghai	27	34	overcast
Taipei	26	32	cloudy
Wuhan	27	36	fine
Hong Kong	29	34	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	17	27	rain
Frankfurt	16	34	rain
Paris	16	27	overcast
London	15	24	overcast
New York	23	32	showers

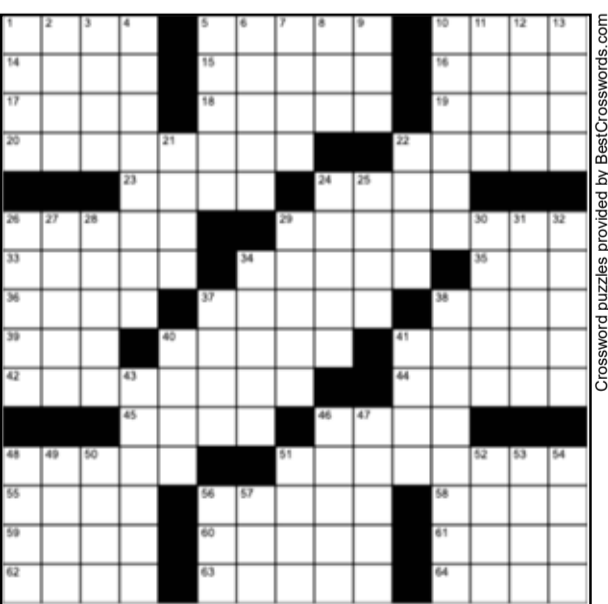
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Supermodel Sastré; 5- Goo-covered; 10- Boris Godunov, for one; 14- Lepidopteran insect; 15- River in Zambia; 16- Engrossed; 17- Baseball family name; 18- Mosque officials; 19- Double curve; 20- Scorn; 22- Bridge declaration; 23- Outstanding; 24- Web address starter; 26- Pixyish; 29- Besides; 33- Ages; 34- Ulan ___; 35- Shoebox letters; 36- Puppeteer Tony; 37- Exposed; 38- Della's creator; 39- High school subj.; 40- Art supporter; 41- Wound up; 42- Soft-shell clams; 44- Dens; 45- Suburb of Cairo; 46- Dutch cheese, wrapped in red wax; 48- End early; 51- Pertaining to the management of public wealth; 55- Expensive seating area; 56- Viscounts' superiors; 58- Broccoli ___ (leafy vegetable); 59- Minute opening; 60- Aquarium buildup; 61- Geraint's lady; 62- Timetable, for short; 63- Tumults; 64- Ricky's portrayer;

DOWN 1- Apple variety; 2- ___ contendere; 3- Harrow rival; 4- Closing; 5- Scrimp; 6- Lanterns; 7- ___ first you don't...; 8- Silent; 9- Affirmative answer; 10- Excessively; 11- It's a long story; 12- Galoots; 13- Hwys.; 21- Seemingly forever; 22- Anatomical passage; 24- The Hilton, e.g.; 25- Stepped; 26- Lets up; 27- Inclined; 28- Beat into shape; 29- Female horses; 30- "Otello" composer; 31- Conger catcher; 32- Orchestra section; 34- Iraqi port; 37- Folk singer Joan; 38- Captivated; 40- Let out; 41- Gusto; 43- Consented; 46- Dazzling display; 47- Prescribed amounts; 48- Mountain range in central Europe; 49- Printed volume; 50- Barbarous person; 51- Therefore; 52- Long luxuriant hair; 53- Nile wader; 54- Basic monetary unit of Ghana; 56- Musical gift; 57- The Greatest;

Yesterday's solution

CR	TE	BE	AST	SE	YS
SH	IV	TR	ATO	AR	EA
TE	TE	ARR	AS	AL	AN
H	A	I	N	A	B
S	I	S	I	A	R
S	C	H	O	L	A
E	L	O	S	A	R
C	O	N	S	U	L
C	O	N	S	U	L
T	A	D	A	S	A
G	R	A	T	E	S
C	R	I	P	P	E
L	A	O	S	T	A
E	R	N	S	A	Z
O	A	S	T	E	R
O	A	S	T	E	R



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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- BAI YUEN GRD. | 3 BEDS HKD 12,800,000
- MANHATTAN | 3 BEDS HKD 12,980,000
- 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
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AP PHOTO



US FEDS SUING POULTRY PRODUCERS OVER UNFAIR WORKER PRACTICES

MICHAEL BALSAMO,
WASHINGTON

THE Justice Department is expected to file a lawsuit against some of the largest poultry producers in the U.S. along with a proposed settlement seeking to end what it claims have been longstanding deceptive and abusive practices for workers.

The suit is being filed in federal court in Maryland naming Cargill, Sanderson Farms and Wayne Farms, along with a data consulting company known as Weber,

Meng, Sahl and Co., according to three people familiar with the matter. The people could not publicly discuss the specific details of the suit before the filing was made public and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity.

In its lawsuit, the Justice Department alleges the companies have been engaged in a multiyear conspiracy to exchange information about the wages and benefits of workers at poultry processing plants in order to drive down employee competition in the marke-

tplace, the people said.

The government contends the data consulting firm helped to share the information about the workers' compensation with the companies and their executives, the people said. By carrying out the scheme, officials allege the companies were able to compete less intensely for workers and reduce the amount of money and benefits they had to offer their employees, suppressing competition for poultry processing workers across the board, the people said.

The defendants and unnamed co-conspirators in the lawsuit account for hiring about 90% of all chicken processing jobs in the nation, one of the people said.

The suit is the latest example of the Justice Department's antitrust enforcement targeting companies the government believes engage in anticompetitive behavior to stifle workers or harm consumers. It also comes as the department continues a broader investigation into labor abuses in the poultry industry.

The suit is being filed with a

proposed consent decree — a settlement that would require the companies to pay \$84.8 million in restitution for workers who were harmed by the unlawful information sharing network, the people said.

The settlement would also put in place a federal monitor selected by the Justice Department who would ensure compliance for the next decade. The consent decree also would permit Justice Department lawyers and investigators to inspect the poultry processors' facilities and interview their employees to ensure they are complying with the terms, the people said.

The suit comes as Cargill and Continental Grain — of which Wayne Farms is a subsidiary — formed a joint venture to acquire Sanderson Farms, paying \$203 per share in cash for a company that last year processed more than 4.8 billion pounds of meat.

The companies plan to combine Sanderson Farms with Wayne Farms to form a new, privately held poultry business. Operations will include poultry processing plants and prepared foods plants across Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Texas.

Wayne Farms has more than 9,000 employees. It makes products under brand names including Wayne Farms fresh and prepared chicken, Platinum Harvest premium fresh chicken, Chef's Craft gourmet chicken, Naked Truth premium chicken and Ladybirdy premium chicken.

Laurel, Mississippi-based Sanderson Farms has 17,000 employees and 12 plants. It processes 13.6 million chickens per week.

The proposed consent decree would also resolve allegations that Sanderson Farms and Wayne Farms treated chicken farmers unfairly by using a system that reduced their pay for low performance. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

MGM's Emerald Villa wins top prize at International Property Awards

The Emerald Villa of MGM Cotai has won the 5-star accolade, the highest level of award, in the category of Best Hotel Interior Macau - Asia Pacific 2022 at the International Property Awards.

The International Property Awards bring the number of international interior design prizes recognizing the Emerald Villa to three in total in just one year since its launch.

In 2021, the Emerald Villa was named the Winner at the SBID International Design Awards 2021 in the Hotel Bedroom & Suites Design category, as well as the Platinum Winner at the 2021 MUSE

Design Awards in the Interior Design (Hotels & Resorts) category.

Kenneth Feng, President, Chief Strategic & Financial Officer of MGM, said, "This award further strengthens MGM's credibility to offer its guests a world-class luxurious accommodation portfolio with masterly craftsmanship as well as its capability to lure clientele from all over the world."

"While the design of the Emerald Villa is totally customer-centric, a lot of green concepts have been incorporated which led us to this prestigious global recogni-

tion," he added.

Designed by Westar Architects International Limited, the Emerald Villa is the latest addition to MGM's luxurious accommodation portfolio. Each of its 28 villas is filled with art pieces and cultural elements, immersing its guests in an experience where modern aesthetics meets traditional Chinese heritage.

Established in 1993, the IPA has been one of the world's premier annual awards for the global property industry. Its judging panel comprises international leading experts across all sectors of the property industry.



WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Nigerian Amusan gets world record on wild night in hurdles

EDDIE PELLIS, EUGENE

FIRST she set the record. Then she won the medal. Even if the order was awkward, Sunday night at world championships was beautiful for Nigerian hurdler Tobi Amusan.

She won the 100-meter hurdles title about 90 minutes after she opened the final session of the championships by breaking the world record in her semifinal heat with a time of 12.12 seconds.

"When I watched the record, I was like 'Whoa, who did that?'" Amusan said of her reaction upon seeing her time pop up on the scoreboard.

It was a strange sequence of events for the 25-year-old, who finished fourth at the Tokyo Games last year and fourth at the last world championships in 2019, and now has a place in history as a champion, record-holder and main character in a most unusual night.

The mark surpassed the six-



Tobi Amusan, of Nigeria, celebrates winning the women's 100-meter hurdles final at the World Athletics Championships on Sunday

-year-old record held by American Keni Harrison by .08.

"Unbelievable," said Switzerland's Noemi Zbaren, who watched the record while she was waiting for her own semifinal. "I

had goosebumps when I saw it in the call room."

Back on the track for the final, Amusan won the gold medal in an even faster time — 12.06 seconds, but the wind was too strong, so

that didn't go down as yet another record.

For the earlier race, she received a \$100,000 bonus for setting the mark at worlds.

It's rare, but not unheard of, for

a track athlete to set a record before the biggest race. Florence Griffith-Joyner ran her still-standing record 10.49 in the 100 meters in a prelim at the 1988 Olympic trials.

"I believe in my abilities but I was not expecting a world record at these championships," Amusan said. "The goal is always just to execute well and get the win."

Amusan went to college at Texas El-Paso. A person familiar with her career told The Associated Press she had been training partners with another Nigerian UTEP alum, Blessing Okagbare.

Okagbare is currently serving an 11-year ban for multiple doping violations, stemming from a federal investigation into an El Paso doctor who is accused of distributing human-growth hormone and other banned substances.

The person providing the information to the AP spoke on condition of anonymity because Amusan is not connected to that case.

After her history-making night, there was nothing but appreciation for the new record holder and new world champion.

"I know what Tobi has gone through over the years. She's been fourth twice," said Jamaica's Danielle Williams. "I know it's not an easy position. She's been close to throwing (in) the towel. To see her come out here and do this right now, it's amazing." **MDT/AP**

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山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °
馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °
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伍福賢 Domingos Ng
楊詩婷 Si Teng leong

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OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



'STATE CAPITALISM', THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE CPC IN CHINA (I)

The economic system in China has been described as one of "state capitalism," i.e. a market economy predicated on competition among state-owned enterprises. However, the system is a mixed one, with state-owned enterprises (SOEs) (central, provincial, and municipal) and a thriving private sector. Four decades ago, the private sector was incipient and SOEs practically dominated the entire Chinese economy.

Starting in 2003, the State Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) implemented the "zhuada fangxiao" (grasping the large and letting the small go) policy and focused on restructuring SOEs, structured as modern, larger and more efficient corporations, and focused on strategic sectors in which government supervision is paramount. The state has pulled out of many sectors, having reduced the number of SOEs through privatizations, asset sell-offs, as well as mergers and acquisitions.

The central SOEs are huge companies, usually conglomerates. As such, they appear high on some indicators such as the Fortune Global 500 list, in which – in 2021 – there were 135 Chinese companies, 73% of which are SOEs.

After the opening and reform policy launched in 1979 by Deng Xiaoping, China's GDP grew at about 10% per year, and the importance of the private sector increased significantly. Over the last 15 years, the expression "guo jin min tui" (state-owned enterprises] advance, the private sectors retreat) has been used to describe the recent economic trend in China. But the numbers do not reflect this.

A 2019 World Economic Forum working paper claimed that China's private sector is "the main driver of China's economic growth," "contributing to 60% of China's GDP, accounting for 70% of innovation, 80% of urban employment, and 90% of new jobs." Moreover, "it also accounts for 70% of investment and 90% of exports," as well as 50% of the market value of the largest listed companies.

However, private sector wealth accumulation in China has always had a "Chinese characteristic" – namely, that private companies can grow and thrive, but they cannot undermine the political leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in the country. It was a step from there to creating party cells in many private companies – whether those enterprises are owned by locals or foreigners.

According to a private sector survey conducted in 2018 by the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, 48% of enterprises have a party cell, and there are fewer CPC cells in regions with higher economic activity and in commerce (wholesale and retail). In large private companies, the reach was nearly all-encompassing – more than 92% of the 500 largest private companies in China had party cells. The percentage has certainly increased, not least because since 2018, the existence of a CPC cell is mandatory for companies listed on stock markets.

As far as is known, these party cells [still] do not interfere with the management of private companies. Since 2020, the Chinese leadership has urged the private sector to align its business activity with the party's objectives. It is still unclear what consequences this policy stance may have on China's economic and social plans in the foreseeable future.

[linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira)

SLOVAKIA MAY CONSIDER GIVING UKRAINE RUSSIAN-BUILT WARPLANES

THE BUZZ

Slovakia may consider donating its fleet of Soviet-era MiG warplanes to Ukraine, the Slovak defense minister said yesterday.

Standing alongside his British counterpart Ben Wallace, Slovak Defense Minister Jaroslav Nad said "we can discuss the future" of his country's 11 MiG-29 fighter jets after they're grounded "most probably" by the end of August.

Slovakia has already negotiated with NATO allies the Czech Republic and Poland to monitor Slovak air space from the beginning of September.

"No decision has been made yet, no discussions are taking place as of now and we're ready to discuss that later on," said Nad.

Wallace said Britain isn't now considering giving Ukraine warplanes, but would offer Slovakia fighter jets to help guard its airspace.

Since the start of the invasion on Feb. 24, Ukraine has urged Western allies to provide it with warplanes to challenge Russia's air superiority.

However, the U.S. and its allies have been reluctant to give Ukraine the fighter jets it asks for, fearing it would provoke an escalatory response from Moscow.

PHILIPPINES

FACING HEADWINDS AND HISTORY, MARCOS MAKES POLICY SPEECH

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

PHILIPPINE President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. delivered his first State of the Nation address yesterday with momentum from his landslide election victory, but he's hamstrung by history as an ousted dictator's son and daunting economic headwinds.

More than 20,000 policemen, anti-riot contingents and troops were deployed in Metropolitan Manila, where a gun ban has been imposed, to secure the late-afternoon ceremony before a joint session of Congress at the House of Representatives.

About 5,000 flag-waving protesters were allowed to march until noon along a key road away from Congress. They issued a range of demands, from government aid and fuel subsidy amid soaring cost of living to justice for human rights victims under Marcos Jr.'s father, a late dictator who was ousted in a 1986 pro-democracy "People Power" uprising.

They asked Marcos Jr. to outline a clear roadmap out of the economic hardships wrought by two years of coronavirus pandemic lockdowns and the global fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Marcos Jr. must realize that he is not in the middle of an electoral campaign anymore, where he could get away with refusing to attend debates and lean on empty soundbites and shallow slogans," the left-wing Akbayan group said. "The people demand clarity of vision and purposiveness of action."

Executive Secretary Vic Rodriguez said last week that Marcos Jr. would unveil his strategy for economic recovery amid continuing coronavirus threats and dealing with rising inflation.

The president would lay down plans to brace the country for a looming food



AP PHOTO

crisis — which prompted him to decide to temporarily serve as agriculture secretary — and the safe resumption of in-person school classes starting next month, Rodriguez said.

Marcos Jr. received more than 31 million votes of the more than 55 million votes cast in the May 9 election — a stunning political comeback and a massive victory that will provide him political capital as he faces tremendous challenges as well as doubts arising from his father's reputation. It was the first majority presidential victory in the Philippines in decades.

His allies also strongly dominated both chambers of Congress in the elections, with his cousin, Rep. Martin Romualdez, being elected House speaker and another close ally, Juan Miguel Zubiri, as Senate president on Monday.

With the tremendous domestic issues that he faces coupled with the historical baggage that is hounding him, Marcos Jr. is one of the most challenged leaders in the country's recent history. His huge electoral mandate could be eroded if people don't feel any significant relief from their hardships under his rule, University of the Philippi-

nes professor Jean Franco said.

"I'm not so sure how long the rest of the 31 million will latch on to Marcos Jr., especially if the economic crisis continues," Franco said, adding the new president did not have the tough and populist image that kept the ratings of his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, high.

Marcos Jr.'s father was toppled by a largely peaceful "People Power" revolt in 1986 and died in 1989 while in exile in Hawaii without admitting any wrongdoing, including accusations that he, his family and associates amassed an estimated \$5 billion to \$10 billion while in office.

A Hawaii court later found the elder Marcos liable for human rights violations and awarded \$2 billion to more than 9,000 Filipinos who filed a lawsuit against him for torture, incarceration, extrajudicial killings and disappearances.

But Marcos Jr., a former governor, congressman and senator, has refused to acknowledge the massive human rights abuses and corruption that marked his father's strongman rule. MDT/AP



AP PHOTO

UK Next year's Eurovision Song Contest will be staged in Britain, organizers announced yesterday, after concluding it is too risky to hold the much-beloved pop extravaganza in the designated host country, Ukraine. The U.K. said the 2023 event would be a celebration of Ukrainian culture and creativity. Ukraine won the right to host the glitzy pan-continental music competition when its entry, the folk-rap ensemble Kalush Orchestra, won this year's contest in May. Britain's Sam Ryder came in second.



AP PHOTO

Italian vessels have recovered five bodies and rescued 674 people packed on a fishing boat adrift in the Mediterranean off the Libyan coast, the Italian Coast Guard said Sunday, while European charities reported saving more than 500 more. Some of the survivors had to be plucked from the sea in the Italian operation Saturday that was carried out 120 miles off the coast of Calabria by a Navy mercantile ship, three Coast Guard patrol boats and a financial police boat.



AP PHOTO

Zimbabwe has launched gold coins to be sold to the public in a bid to tame runaway inflation that has further eroded the country's unstable currency. The unprecedented move was announced yesterday by the country's central bank, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, to boost confidence in the local currency. Trust in Zimbabwe's currency is low after people saw their savings wiped out by hyperinflation in 2008 which reached 5 billion%, according to the IMF.