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CTM

IAM SEES NO SIGNIFICANT HARM IN THE COMPOSITION OF SOME COOKING OILS THAT ARE COMMONLY ON SALE IN MACAU AND HONG KONG

P4

RESIDENTS WITH TRAVEL HISTORY MUST TAKE NAT: SSM

P3

PELOSI STARTS ASIAN TOUR IN SINGAPORE, NO MENTION OF TAIWAN VISIT

P7



AP PHOTO



Myanmar The leader of the military-installed government yesterday announced the extension of its mandate to rule for another six months in preparation for an election it has said will be held next year. The army seized power on Feb. 1 last year from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. It cited alleged fraud in the November 2020 general election, which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party had won in a landslide while the military-backed party did poorly.

AP PHOTO



Myanmar A Japanese video journalist has been detained by security forces in Myanmar while covering a protest against military rule in the country's largest city, pro-democracy activists said. Toru Kubota, a Tokyo-based documentary filmmaker, was arrested on Saturday by plainclothes police after a flash protest in Yangon, according to the leader of the group Yangon Democratic Youth Strike, which organized the rally.

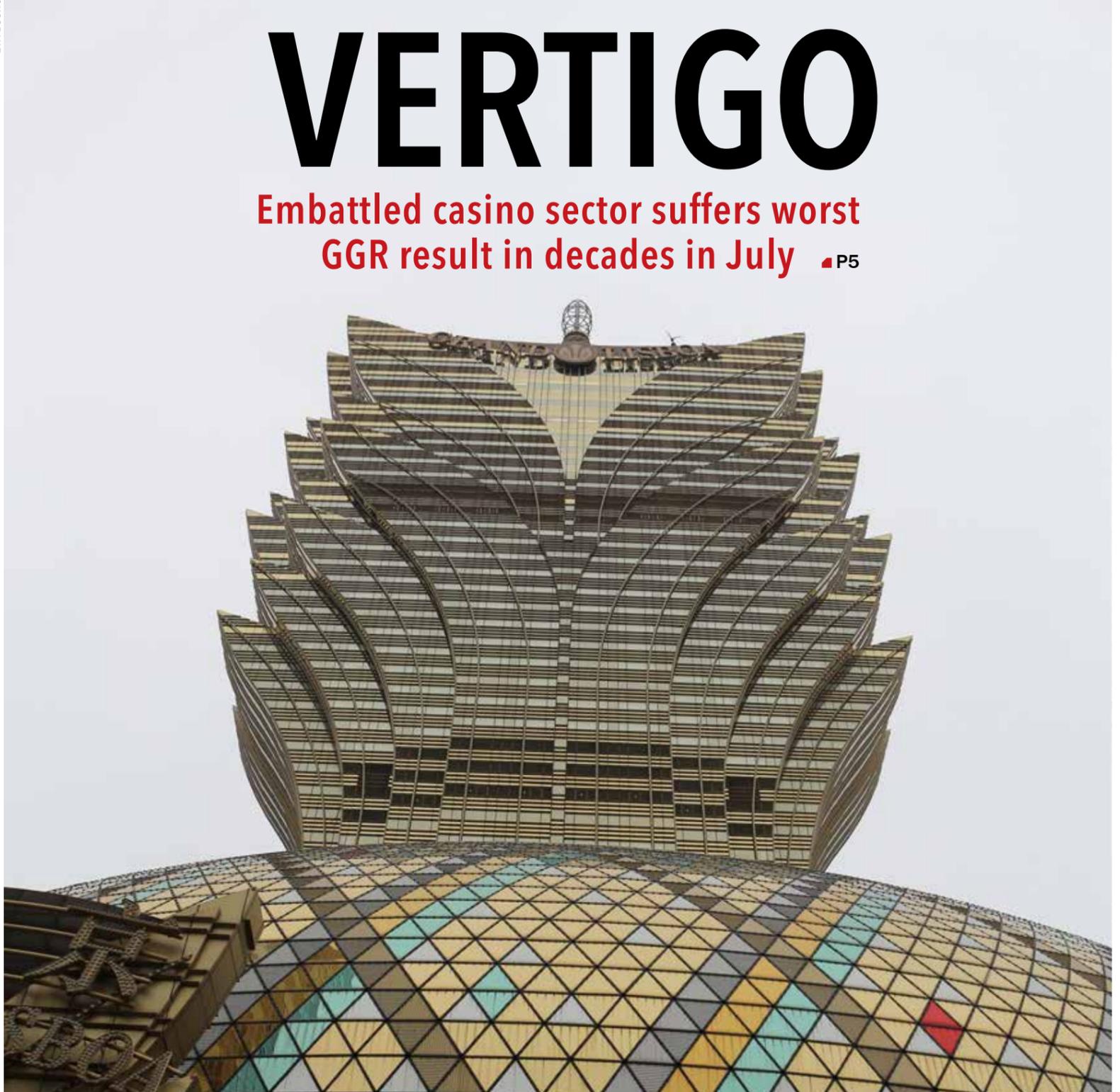
AP PHOTO



Iraqi security forces erected concrete barriers yesterday ahead of counter-protests planned by Shiite political rivals against an influential cleric whose followers have staged a parliament sit-in for a third day. Many feared that dueling protests could escalate tensions. Calls for the counter-protest came from an alliance of Iran-backed groups opposed to the open-ended sit-in inside Iraq's parliament by followers of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

More on backpage

EVA BUCHO



VERTIGO

Embattled casino sector suffers worst GGR result in decades in July P5

ZERO-COVID RESTRICTIONS EASED FROM TODAY

P3

ANTHONY LAM



MGTO CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR 3D MAPPING ENTRIES

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) will roll out "Bright up Macao 2022" in December with the hope of bringing into the limelight more local artworks and promote the development of "tourism + culture and creativity." The bureau is calling on the public to submit 3D mapping projects for the event from today until August 31. The Macao Light Festival, rebranded as "Bright up Macao 2022," features 3D mapping shows, light installations, interactive games and more this December. From the five nominated entries, the judging panel will select one artwork for a projection show on the façade of China Products Company during "Bright up Macao 2022."

TUTORING CENTERS TO REOPEN TODAY

Private supplementary education support centres and private education institutions can gradually resume operations from today. The Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) reminds the said institutions that they must strictly abide by the provisions in the guidelines, including requiring customers or service users to provide a nucleic acid test certificate or a proof of negative result within three days from the sampling date (i.e. taking a nucleic acid test on the day of receiving the service or within the past two days).

COVID-19

HEALTH CHIEF ADMITS PROBABLE REBOUND OF CASES IN FUTURE

ANTHONY LAM

HEALTH Bureau director Alvis Lo has admitted to the probability of a future outbreak, although he has not identified a precise time.

He was asked by the Times about the probability of another outbreak arriving, given experiences from around the world, including mainland China and foreign countries.

"Macao has achieved community Covid-zero for nine consecutive days. Probably we can say risks [of an outbreak] are eased for the time being," he concluded. "In the future, as we can see, an outbreak is probable."

He hinted at the inevitable existence of sources of infections to justify his estimation.

"For example, this outbreak wasn't likely caused by returnees," he said. "The more credible sources of infections would have been objects."

Despite this statement, objects as sources of infections are difficult to prove, given external precedents.

"Contaminated objects can be consumed or destroyed before consequential infections are identified," Lo said. "As a result, future outbreaks are probable."

In reply to a question about



whether past measures will return if city experiences another outbreak, the health chief said it would have to be considered on a case-by-case basis, emphasizing that a clear source and chain of infections would lower the probability of such higher-restrictive measures returning.

He did not forgo the chance to implore people to remain vigilant against future infections.

"First things first, get vaccina-

ted," he said. "Second, it is important to identify as early as possible any undiscovered infections."

His second point was to encourage the continuation of regular SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid tests (NATs). Combined with other measures, it makes what he called a supervision and alert mechanism.

"This is why high-risk groups of people are required to undergo regular and high-frequency

NATs," the health chief defended. "In addition, we also require those with respiratory symptoms to undergo NATs as soon as possible."

This, he said, will be beneficial to the entire city if put in place and followed.

As the city enters a regular Covid prevention period, more people may be required to take NATs at various intervals. He identified some professions as having a higher risk of contracting the virus.

EMPLOYMENT

Job-matching sessions to restart today

STAFF REPORTER

THE Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) is restarting various job-matching services today to assist job seekers to enter the workplace as soon as possible.

With the commencement of the "stabilization period," the DSAL has contacted the contractors of large public works projects.

Starting from today, according to the situation of various types of technical

work required by the construction progress, those registered construction workers who have applied for jobs will be allocated to job-matching schemes.

Moreover, the DSAL continue to cooperate with Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) to hold at least two matching meetings for jobs weekly.

On August 3 and 4, it will hold matching meetings for sales jobs in supermarkets at the training center for job skills in FAOM. The ses-

sions will only accept job seekers who have made an appointment, and arrive at a specific time according to a message sent by the DSAL, due to the need for pandemic prevention.

As for the "temporary subsidy plan for encouraging employers to hire local unemployed residents during the pandemic," the DSAL will dispatch staff to explain the details of the plan before the job meeting, to help employers in recruiting employees and deal with the application

procedures.

Recently, FAOM lawmaker Ella Lei has called on the government to provide temporary subsidies for the unemployed and to ensure that priority is given to the employment of local residents.

This comes after an employment survey published by the Statistic and Census Service (DSEC) shows that in the second quarter of 2022, the general employment rate was 3.7% compared to 3.5% in the first quarter.



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Stabilization period, with conditional dine-in resumption, to last for six days

ANTHONY LAM

THE city will today enter a stabilization period until August 7 due to the June 18 Covid-19 outbreak, with conditional resumption of a majority of businesses to take place, pulmonologist Alvis Lo, director of Health Bureau (SSM), announced yesterday.

Lo and public health doctor Leong Iek Hou, division head at SSM, hoped that, should the stabilization period run smoothly, the city will revert to the pre-June 18 state, with footprint recording and mask-wearing to become non-mandatory should that occur, among other settings.

As of yesterday, for the past nine days in a row, Macau has not recorded any SARS-CoV-2 positive case at the community level. This has also prompted the health agency to cease its independent announcement of figures related to the June 18 outbreak.

The conditions for dining-in, as well as for entry into several types of other venues, is the SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test (NAT) specimen collection proof or negative result obtained within three days prior to the dine-in service.

For example, if entry into the service is sought today, the proof or result must be obtained no earlier than this past Sunday.

The other types of venues that also require the proof or the result for visitation include cinemas, theaters, indoor amusement parks, video-game arcades and rooms, internet cafes, billiard and bowling rooms, sauna and massage establishments, beauty salons, gyms, health clubs, karaoke establishments, bars, night-clubs, discotheques, dance halls, and cabaret venues, as well as swim-



DAN GOLD

ming pools that are publicly accessible.

Moreover, it also includes private tuition, education and training centers, as well as indoor sporting grounds, nurseries, and elderly or rehabilitation day care centers. The scope of such social welfare facilities will otherwise be determined by the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS).

Meanwhile, mask-wearing will still be mandatory until August 7 in outdoor or public locations. Common areas in private buildings, such as lift lobbies, are also considered as public locations. All people at or above the age of three years must abide by this requirement.

In spite of the announcement, mask-wearing can be exempted under certain scenarios, such as eating, drinking, smoking, playing

musical instruments with the mouth and playing sport.

While all public sporting facilities and leisure areas will resume operations today, the Sports Bureau (ID) said in a statement that all users must follow SSM guidelines on NATs, as well as taking their body temperatures, presenting their health codes with footprint recording and wearing masks as they enter the facilities, if they want to use ID public facilities.

Similar measures will be in place at facilities managed by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) and the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) as well.

Eating, drinking and smoking on the street will have their non-criminal nature reinstated from today, but SSM recommends people maintain social distancing while doing so.

NAT LIFTED ON SOME KEY GROUPS

During the six-day stabilization period, the regular NAT will remain in place, although the government has decided to restrict the types of key group from eight to four, retaining cleaners, food deliverers, drivers of public buses or taxis, as well as indoor construction workers in the definitions. They are required to take NATs every day within these six days.

NAT frequency for working groups will be extended to every three days.

Although regular NATs still exist, some even at a daily frequency, SARS-CoV-2 rapid antigen tests (RAT) will no longer be mandatory from today. People do not need to take RATs before they go to any NAT stations, Lo said in

response to a question.

To another question, Leong emphasized that after the stabilization period, "the city will return to the state before June 18." She added that regular NAT will be lifted on certain groups of people, but NAT on key working groups, such as frozen food handlers, will remain. With that said, NAT prior to dine-in and visitation to mask-less venues will also be lifted.

However, she emphasized that lessons had been learnt after each previous outbreak. The government has made adjustments to its plans and contingencies, justifying the fact that certain measures might still be there when the stabilization period ends.

It was repeatedly discussed at yesterday's press briefing about the validity counts of the three-day working group NAT.

According to the health chief, those having their specimens collected this past Sunday, for example, should do another test on Wednesday so as to keep their NAT results valid.

Lo also expressed his confidence in local schools opening the coming school year on time, considering the relatively calm condition currently.

315 STILL UNDER CONFINEMENT SINCE JUNE 18

Yesterday, the city saw 67 more with SARS-CoV-2 discharged from confinement: 33 of them from hospitalization and 34 from quarantine. Since June 18, 1,506 people have been discharged from confinement due to infections, equating to 315 still not discharged.

This round of outbreak has had 1,821 people test positive, of which 705 developed symptoms and 1,116 were asymptomatic.

Residents with travel history must take NAT

PEOPLE with residence, or a history of travel to, a foreign country within the last month, or people who have been infected with Covid-19 in the last three months, are required to take a single sample test using nucleic acid testing starting from August 1.

The mandate comes as the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre indicates that it is more common for people with residence or travel history to a foreign

country to have a previous history of the virus, and that a certain number of people who have recovered from Covid-19 have tested "re-positive" repeatedly in nucleic acid tests for Covid-19.

Single sample tests can be conducted at the following locations: Kiang Wu Hospital Auditorium, Macau University of Science and Technology Gymnasium, Qingmao Port.

A walk-in service is available at Conde de

São Januário General Hospital.

It is reiterated that people with relevant residence/travel history or infection history in the database of the Health Bureau will be prompted in the booking system; while people who do not have a record in the system, but have relevant residence/travel history or infection history, "must take the initiative to explain their status to the NAT examiner," the center stated. LV



ANTHONY LAM

RENATO MARQUES



LOCAL AUTHORITIES SEE NO DANGER IN COOKING OIL COMPOSITION

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL authorities see no significant harm in the composition of some cooking oils that are commonly on sale in Macau and Hong Kong.

In a response to an inquiry from the Times, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) said that, "At present, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) [the international food-standards setting body established by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization] has not set standards for the maximum levels of glycidol, benzo[a]pyrene, and plasticizers in edible oils," adding, "According to risk assessment analysis, the edible oil samples randomly collected this time have a low chance of causing an adverse effect on public health when consumed normally."

Nonetheless, the IAM advises the public to maintain a balanced diet and to avoid the excessive intake of pollutants and other substances that may result from unbalanced diets.

The bureau in charge of local food safety also advised the population to "frequently change the type and brand of cooking oil to maintain food diversity."

The case surfaced after the Consumer Council of the neighboring region of Hong Kong (CCHK) announced it had found "Harmful contaminants" in 90% of an assortment of 50 different cooking oils sampled, as well as "genotoxic carcinogens in almost 60%" of the same sample.

CCHK FINDINGS CONSIDERED CONCERNING

According to the CCHK report, from a recent test of 50

samples of cooking oil, 47 samples (94%) were found to contain one or more types of harmful contaminants, amongst which 40% (20 samples) were found to have three contaminants or more.

The independent statutory authority in Hong Kong also pointed out in the same report that almost 60% (29 samples) were found to contain the genotoxic carcinogen glycidol, while in two cases, the level found exceeded the European Union's (EU) standard.

Expressing additional concerns, the CCHK also noted that two other samples tested "were found [to contain] another genotoxic carcinogen - benzo[a]pyrene - of which, one sample's detected amount exceeded also the EU standard."

Plasticizers were also found in samples, with one sample showing a plasticizer level exceeding the action level of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) and the EU's upper limit.

From the total of 50 sampled cooking oils, only three were found not to contain any contaminants.

According to the same Hong Kong consumer watchdog, 60% of the samples contained 3-MCPD, a potentially carcinogenic chemical. Lui Wing Cheong, vice chairman of the CCHK research and testing committee, said that exposure to the chemical over a prolonged period had adversely affected the kidney functions, central nervous system and male reproductive system of laboratory animals.

Even if the levels found were said not to exceed the EU safety standards, Lui expressed concerns about this presence.

AUTHORITIES LINKED AND MONITORING

The IAM also said that it will continue to pay attention to the actions taken by CAC and the international community on the regulation of various pollutants and plasticizers and adopt corresponding measures.

The bureau in charge of local food safety advised the population to 'frequently change the type and brand of cooking oil to maintain food diversity'

The local food safety authority said it is conducting routine food surveillance, seasonal food surveillance, targeted food surveillance, or a food incident monitoring system to monitor the safety of the food sold on the market in Macau.

"When food safety risks are found in food, measures such as issuing food warnings to relevant importers, retailers, etc. and publishing press releases to notify the public and the industries will be adopted to prevent the spread of risks and maintain food safety in Macau," IAM said in the same written reply to the Times.

When contacted by the Times, the local Consumer Council (CC) informed in a written response that, "In the event that

food or goods [...] being sold in Macau are suspected of possibly harming the health and safety of consumers, the CC will promptly notify the competent services for follow-up."

Therefore, regarding the edible oil test report released by the Hong Kong Consumer Council, "the CC immediately implemented the reporting mechanism by forwarding the respective report to the Food Safety Department of the IAM," the bureau stated.

The CC added that, in compliance with its duties, it "carries out testing, research and studies on the quality and safety of food and products, as well as exchange information on food safety with consumer organizations in the neighboring regions through the cooperation agreements established, providing guidance and advice to consumers."

So far, no government departments have issued any warning to the population on the case reported in Hong Kong in mid-July. None of the departments' replies provided a concrete response about whether the products considered to be more harmful were ever imported into Macau or are currently on sale in local food establishments.

TIMES INVESTIGATION DID NOT FIND THE GOODS ON SALE

Having carried out an investigation into the topic, and following the indications of the CCHK for the products that were considered to have more problems, the Times researched a dozen local food stores and su-

permarkets but did not identify any of these products on sale.

On one occasion, a salesperson from a store located at Senado Square was said to have had one of the products on sale previously (that is, SuperFood-Lab coconut cooking oil) but it is now out of stock. She said she was unaware whether the product had been removed from the shelves following any guidance from food safety authorities.

According to Hong Kong authorities, the products and brands that presented more harmful contaminants were Carrington Farms' coconut and avocado cooking oil blend, SuperFoodLab coconut cooking oil, and Yu Pin King pure peanut oil. Prolife Organic's wild organic cold-pressed camellia seed oil (unrefined) was also among those found to contain both 3-MCPD and glycidol chemicals.

In a report from Hong Kong's South China Morning Post, importers and agents from the mentioned companies/goods have said that the products are compliant with the rules and regulations of the countries of origin as well as with HK requirements, adding that the nutritional content of the products tested was also consistent with the label information.

In a statement to the same media source, CCHK chief executive Gilly Wong also noted that consuming regular amounts of these oils would not impact a person's health "too much," while adding that it was best for one's health to consume less of those products containing chemicals such as glycidol and benzo[a]pyrene.

"For glycidol and benzo[a]pyrene, there are no recommended tolerant levels. But the less you absorb, the better it is for your health," Wong said, adding that, according to several studies and research conducted by animal testing, these chemicals can cause cancer.

GAMING

Embattled casino sector suffers worst GGR in decades in July

LYNZY VALLES

THE casino sector has suffered its worst month as gaming revenues tumbled 95% year-on-year in July due to the largest flare-up in Covid-19 cases the city has ever recorded from mid-June.

Data from the the Gaming Inspection & Coordination Bureau shows that gross gaming revenue (GGR) amounted to MOP398 million, the lowest since the 1990's, according to a TDM report.

Analysts had predicted that Macau was poised for a 99% plunge in revenues, as Macau's new wave of Covid-19 cases dealt a fresh blow to the crippled gaming sector.

July casino revenues suffered an 83.9% fall when comparing month-on-month.

"You are stuck in this zero-Covid situation where it's unclear when the government's actually going to do anything about it," said Sanford C. Bernstein analyst Vitaly Umansky.

The analyst considered that

LADYNELLE ADOLFO



border restrictions are constraining the city's potential for recovery.

The gaming sector has long been suffering from a slump in revenues, as casinos burn millions of dollars of cash each day.

The industry has suffered a re-

venue slump, recording its worst losses in 18 months in April, when GGR was only MOP2.68 billion as Macau endured stricter border restrictions whenever fresh outbreaks arose in neighboring regions.

Meanwhile, the crackdown on

junkets, which bring high-rollers to the city's casino floors, are expected to hammer further the already depressed sector, as well as the fact that the clock is ticking, with their gaming licenses to expire in December 31.

To obtain a new license, casi-

nos are set to undergo processes of tough scrutiny with the new gaming law – which gives power to the Chief Executive to terminate a concession if it is considered a threat to national security or to the security of Macau.

"The reality is, right now, there's nobody in Macau," Umansky said.

In early July, casinos closed for the first time in two years to curb the spread of infection, and gaming operators saw their stocks plunge by up to 8%.

Following the closure announcement, leading the stock market falls was Sands China, at an 8% decrease, while shares in Melco International, Wynn Macau, SJM, and Galaxy MGM China, dropped between 6% and 7%.

The public tender process for the issuing of the new licenses to operate casinos in Macau officially started last week and will continue until September 14.

The president of the new Commission for Gaming Licenses Tender and Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong, said that Macau is to enter a whole new era for the local gaming industry, with different goals and purposes to those held in the previous 2001 tender.

One of the requirements is the expansion of the gaming sector into foreign markets, which is set to "bring a new era" to the city's gaming sector.

AD

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How can Businesses Adapt to the New Normal?

FMCC Webinar
Thursday, 4 August 2022

Speaker - Mr. Thurston Lou
Chief Technical Officer
Water China, Suez Asia Pacific

Speaker - Mr. Vincent Mossfield
Regional Director
Liability Risk Practice, Asia, WTW

Moderator - Ms. Ada Lo
FMCC Board Member
Managing Director, XD Channel Consultant

Introduction:
The pandemic forced us to many changes in daily life and work environment. Some companies adapted quickly, by providing flexible work models and utilizing new technology, and created a "new normal" at work. Join us and hear from Mr. Thurston Lou about practical remote work tools, and Mr. Vincent Mossfield about safety and cyber operational risks to consider in the evolving and lasting hybrid working world.

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CHINESE COMPANY EYES SOLOMON ISLANDS DEEP-WATER PORT

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

A Chinese state-owned company is negotiating to buy a forestry plantation with a deep-water port and World War II airstrip in Solomon Islands amid persistent concerns that China wants to establish a naval foothold in the South Pacific country.

A delegation from China Forestry Group Corp. visited the plantation that covers most of Kolombangara Island in 2019, asking questions about the length of the wharf and depth of the water while showing little interest in the trees, Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported yesterday.

The board of Kolombangara Forest Products Ltd., the takeover target known as KFPL which is owned by Taiwanese and Australian shareholders, wrote to the newly elected Australian government in May warning of the "risks/strategic threats" posed to Australia by such a sale, the ABC reported.

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade wrote back to the board last week saying it was "not intervening," the ABC said.



AP PHOTO

Foreign Minister Penny Wong's office told The Associated Press that Australia was continuing to engage with KFPL on the potential sale.

Australia's High Commissioner in Honiara Lachlan Strahan "has been engaging regularly with the

management of KFPL and will continue to do so," Wong's office said in a statement.

"We value our position as Solomon Islands' first security and development partner of choice, and we are committed to working together to face our shared challenges," the statement added.

KFPL Chairman Matthew English said in a statement he "cannot comment on any commercial matters in relation to KFPL."

A KFPL official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to

make public comment, said the board wanted the Australian government to make an offer or facilitate an offer from an Australian company.

U.S. and its allies' concerns over China's growing influence in the South Pacific intensified this year when China and the Solomon Islands signed a bilateral security pact that has stoked fears of a Chinese military presence less than 2,000 kilometers off Australia's northeast coast.

Australia already has a security treaty with the Solomon Islands and Australian police have been maintaining peace in the capital Honiara since rioting late last year.

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare insists that China will never be allowed to establish a military base in his country.

His office did not respond to a request for comment yesterday.

Solomon Islands lawmaker Silas Tausinga, whose electorate is near Kolombangara, said China had a strong ambition to house military assets in the Solomon Islands.

"Absolutely, Australia should be worried about it," Tausinga told ABC.

China's influence has been rapidly growing in the Solomon Islands since 2019, when Honiara switched its allegiance from Taiwan to Beijing. **MDT/AP**

US seeks to expand ties with New Zealand amid China's growing ambitions

THE commander of the United States military in the Pacific said yesterday he wants to expand and strengthen its ties with New Zealand.

The visit to Wellington by Adm. John Aquilino, head of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, comes as the U.S. is looking to increase its presence in the region amid deep concerns over China's growing ambitions in the Pacific.

They include most recently the Solomon Islands, where the U.S. and several Pacific nations expressed deep concern about a security pact the Solomon Islands signed with China in April, which many fear could result in a military buildup in the region.

Aquilino was greeted with a traditional Mori welcome ceremony and laid a wreath at the Pukeahu National War Memorial Park. He spoke briefly to media ahead of meetings with top New Zealand defense force and government officials.



AP PHOTO

Admiral John Aquilino, commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

"Our partnership runs very deep," Aquilino said. "We are doing many things together to continue to ensure peace and prosperity for both of our nations and for all the nations in the region."

Aquilino said he wanted to identify new areas where the U.S. could work with New Zealand. He said the leadership of Australia and New Zealand in the Pacific was "critically important."

"The one thing you will never hear out of me is big or small. This is a partnership," Aquilino said. "All nations deliver those things that they can deliver."

He said the U.S. understood the security implications of climate change in Pacific island nations, including for food security and water security, and the importance for island nations to be able to fish in exclusive zones.

"The United States has been a Pacific nation our entire life. We will continue to operate in the Pacific no matter what else you might hear," Aquilino said.

Air Marshal Kevin Short, chief of New Zealand's defense force, said the relationship with the U.S. had been strong for decades, and it regularly interacts with U.S. forces so they can both operate better in the region. **MDT/AP**

NO REPORTED DAMAGE IN PHILIPPINES FROM CHINESE ROCKET DEBRIS

THERE was no reported damage in a western Philippine region where debris from a rocket that boosted part of China's new space station reportedly fell, a Filipino official said yesterday.

Philippine Space Agency official Marc Talampas said authorities have been advised to be on the lookout for the rocket debris, which may have splashed down into seawaters off Palawan province.

"We are monitoring the situation and have also issued an advisory to the public to be vigilant, avoid contact with any suspected floating debris and to report to local authorities immediately," Talampas told The Associated Press.

The China Manned Space Agency reported Sunday that most of the final stage of the Long March-5B rocket burned up after entering the atmosphere. It said the booster would be allowed to fall unguided.

The Chinese agency announced

gave no details of whether remaining debris fell on land or sea but said the "landing area" was at 119 degrees east longitude and 9.1 degrees north latitude. That is in waters southeast of Palawan's capital city of Puerto Princesa.

The Philippine Space Agency did not receive any notifications from its Chinese counterpart about the rocket debris.

China has faced criticism for allowing rocket stages to fall to Earth uncontrolled twice before. NASA accused Beijing last year of "failing to meet responsible standards regarding their space debris" after parts of a Chinese rocket landed in the Indian Ocean.

The country's first space station, Tiangong-1, crashed into the Pacific Ocean in 2016 after Beijing confirmed it lost control. An 18-ton rocket fell uncontrolled in May 2020.

MDT/AP

Pelosi meets Singapore leaders at start of Asia tour

EILEEN NG & ZEN SOO,
KUALA LUMPUR

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi held talks with officials in Singapore yesterday at the start of her Asian tour, as questions swirled over a possible stop in Taiwan that has fueled tension with Beijing.

Pelosi met with Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, President Halimah Yacob and other Cabinet members, the Foreign Ministry said.

Lee welcomed a U.S. commitment to strong engagement with the region, and the two sides discussed ways to deepen U.S. economic engagement through initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, the ministry said in a statement.

Lee and Pelosi also discussed the war in Ukraine, tensions surrounding Taiwan and mainland China, and climate change, it said. Lee "highlighted the importance of stable U.S.-China relations for regional peace and security," it added, in an apparent allusion to reports that Pelosi may visit Taiwan.

In a statement over the weekend, Pelosi said she will visit Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan to discuss trade, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, security and "democratic governance."

She didn't confirm news reports that she might visit Taiwan, which is claimed by Beijing as its own



U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (left) and Singapore President Halimah Yacob shake hands at the Istana Presidential Palace in Singapore yesterday

territory. Chinese President Xi Jinping warned against meddling in Beijing's dealings with the island in a phone call last week with U.S. President Joe Biden.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian reiterated the earlier warnings yesterday, saying "there will be serious consequences if she insists on making the visit."

He did not spell out any specific consequences. "We are fully prepared for any eventuality," he said. "The People's Liberation Army will never sit by idly. China will take strong and resolute measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Pelosi attended a cocktail reception later yesterday with the

American Chamber of Commerce in Singapore. There is no media access to her visit, which has been kept under tight wraps.

She is scheduled to be in Malaysia today. A Parliament official, who was not authorized to speak to the media and declined to be identified by name, said Pelosi will call on Malaysian lower house speaker Azhar Azizan Harun. No further details were immediately available.

On Thursday, Pelosi is to meet with South Korean National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin Pyo in Seoul for talks on security in the Indo-Pacific region, economic cooperation and the climate crisis, Kim's office said in a statement.

It declined to provide further

details about her itinerary, including when she is arriving in South Korea and how long she'll stay.

Pelosi's schedule for Wednesday remains unclear and there were no details on when she will head to Japan.

Beijing sees official American contact with Taiwan as encouragement to make the island's decades-old de facto independence permanent, a step U.S. leaders say they don't support. Pelosi, head of one of three branches of the U.S. government, would be the highest-ranking elected American official to visit Taiwan since then-Speaker Newt Gingrich in 1997.

The Biden administration has tried to assure Beijing there was no reason to "come to blows" and that

if such a visit occurred, it would signal no change in U.S. policy.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 after the communists won a civil war on the mainland. Both sides say they are one country but disagree over which government is entitled to national leadership. They have no official relations but are linked by billions of dollars of trade and investment.

The United States switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979, but maintains informal relations with the island. Washington is obligated by federal law to see that Taiwan has the means to defend itself.

Washington's "One China policy" says it takes no position on the status of the two sides but wants their dispute resolved peacefully. Beijing promotes an alternative "One China principle" that says they are one country and the Communist Party is its leader.

A visit to Taiwan would be a career capstone for Pelosi, who increasingly uses her position in Congress as a U.S. emissary on the global stage. She has long challenged China on human rights and wanted to visit Taiwan earlier this year.

Pelosi's delegation includes U.S. Reps. Gregory Meeks, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Mark Takano, chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs; Suzan DelBene, vice chair of the House Ways and Means Committee; Raja Krishnamoorthi, a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and chair of the Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform; and Andy Kim, a member of the House Armed Services and Foreign Affairs Committees. **MDT/AP**

A new bill was introduced in the Australian Parliament yesterday seeking to lift a 25-year ban on doctor-assisted dying in two territories.

Australia's sparsely populated Northern Territory in 1995 became the first place in the world to legalize voluntary euthanasia. But the landmark law was overturned by the Australian Parliament two years later after four terminally ill people had been legally helped to die, leaving the Northern Territory one of last parts of Australia where doctor-assisted deaths remain banned.

"For too long Australians living in the territories have been treated as second-class citizens," government lawmaker Luke Gosling, who represents a Northern Territory electorate, told Parliament.

AUSTRALIA

Parliament considers lifting euthanasia ban

He and fellow legislator Alicia Payne introduced a bill to the House of Representatives that would allow the legislatures of the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory to legalize assisted dying.

The two territories do not have the same legal rights as the six states, that have each legislated euthanasia laws in recent years.

The Australian Parliament does not have the same constitutional power to overturn state laws as it does territory laws. The two territories account for fewer than 1 million of Australia's population of 26 million people.

Payne, who represents

an electorate in the Australian Capital Territory, which comprises Canberra and two villages, described her bill as urgent. She described mercy killing of the terminally ill as an "incredibly important debate that we are not allowed to have simply because of where we live."

Conservative government lawmaker Kevin Andrews introduced the bill in 1997 that banned the territories from making assisted dying laws. A conservative government was again in power in 2018 when a bill failed to overturn the ban. That bill fell two votes short in the Senate. Previous attempts also failed in the Senate in 2008 and 2010.

Since then, Victoria became the first state to legalize assisted dying in June 2019, and New South Wales in May this year became the last state to pass its own euthanasia laws.

The center-left Labor Party federal government, that was elected in May, has announced it will allow its lawmakers to vote on the bill according to their consciences rather than adopt a party line.

The opposition conservative Liberal Party has also allowed conscience votes on previous euthanasia bills.

The Catholic Church is lobbying federal lawmakers to vote against the bill. **MDT/AP**



Labor member, Luke Gosling introduces the Restoring Territory Rights Bill in the House of Representatives at Parliament House in Canberra

Ukraine war hangs over UN meeting on nukes treaty's legacy

JENNIFER PELTZ,
UNITED NATIONS

THERE was already plenty of trouble to talk about when a major U.N. meeting on the landmark Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty was originally supposed to happen in 2020.

Now the pandemic-postponed conference finally starts today [Macau time] as Russia's war in Ukraine has reanimated fears of nuclear confrontation and cranked up the urgency of trying to reinforce the 50-year-old treaty.

"It is a very, very difficult moment," said Beatrice Fihn, the executive director of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Russia's invasion, accompanied by ominous references to its nuclear arsenal, "is so significant for the treaty and really going to put a lot of pressure on this," she said. "How governments react to the situation is going to shape future nuclear policy."

The four-week meeting aims to generate a consensus on next steps, but expectations are low for a substantial — if any — agreement.

Still, Swiss President Ignazio Cassis, prime ministers Fumio Kishida of Japan and Frank Bainimarama of Fiji, and more than a dozen nations' foreign ministers are among attendees expected from at least 116 countries, according to a U.N. official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly before the conference.

In force since 1970, the Nonproliferation Treaty has the widest adherence of any arms control agreement. Some 191 countries have joined.

Nations without nuclear weapons promised not to acquire them, while nuclear-armed Britain, China, France, Russia (then the Soviet Union) and the United States agreed to negotiate toward eliminating their arsenals someday. All endorsed everyone's right to develop peaceful nuclear energy.

India and Pakistan, which didn't sign, went on to get the bomb. So did North Korea, which ratified the pact but later announced it was



Beatrice Fihn, of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN

withdrawing. Non-signatory Israel is believed to have a nuclear arsenal but neither confirms nor denies it.

Nonetheless, the Nonproliferation Treaty has been credited with limiting the number of nuclear newcomers (U.S. President John F. Kennedy once foresaw as many as 20 nuclear-armed nations by 1975) and serving as a framework for international cooperation on disarmament.

The total number of nuclear weapons worldwide has shrunk by more than 75% from a mid-1980s peak, largely due to the end of the Cold War between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union. But experts estimate roughly 13,000 warheads remain worldwide, the vast majority in the U.S. and Russia.

Meetings to assess how the treaty is working are supposed to happen every five years, but the 2020 conference was repeatedly delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Challenges have only grown in the meantime.

When launching the Ukraine war in February, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that any attempt to interfere would lead to "consequences you have never seen" and emphasized that his country is "one of the most potent nuclear powers." Days later, Putin ordered Russia's nuclear forces to be put on higher alert, a move that U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called "bone-chilling."

"The prospect of nuclear conflict, once unthinkable, is

now back within the realm of possibility," he said.

The events in Ukraine create a tricky choice for the upcoming conference, said Patricia Lewis, a former U.N. disarmament research official who is now at the international affairs think tank Chatham House in London.

"On the one hand, in order to support the treaty and what it stands for, governments will have to address Russia's behavior and threats," she said. "On the other hand, to do so risks dividing the treaty members."

Another uncomfortable dynamic: The war has heightened some countries' apprehensions about not having nuclear weapons, especially since Ukraine once housed but gave up a trove of Soviet nukes.

Conference participants can stress other security strategies or emphasize the costs and dangers of acquiring nuclear weapons, but "it's important not to be too preachy," said Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution think tank in Washington.

"The idea that we can just look other countries in the face and say, 'You're better off without the bomb' — that's a bit of a hard argument to carry right now categorically," said O'Hanlon, a senior fellow specializing in defense and security.

Ukraine is hardly the only hot topic.

North Korea appears to have been preparing recently for its first nuclear weapons test since 2017. Talks about reviving the deal meant to

keep Iran from developing nukes are in limbo.

The U.S. and Russia have only one remaining treaty curtailing their nuclear weapons and have been developing new technologies. Britain last year raised a self-imposed cap on its stockpile. China says it's modernizing — or, the U.S. claims, expanding — the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal.

Daryl Kimball, who heads the nonprofit Arms Control Association in Washington, can't recall another time when the Nonproliferation Treaty has come up for review with "so many difficulties in so many different areas, and where we have seen such severe tensions between the major players."

U.S. Ambassador Adam Scheinman, the presidential special representative for nuclear nonproliferation, said Washington hopes for a "balanced" outcome that "sets realistic goals and advances our national and international security interests."

"You can have no doubt that Russia's actions will affect the climate at the conference and prospects for an agreed outcome document. Other difficult issues may complicate this, as well. But I'm prepared to be somewhat optimistic," he said in a telephone briefing.

The Associated Press sent inquiries to Russia's U.N. mission about Moscow's goals for the conference. There was no immediate response.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said his country wants to work toward improving global nuclear governance and upholding the international order and will "firmly safeguard the legitimate security and development interests and rights of China and the developing world."

If the world can't speak with one voice, disarmament advocates say a strong statement from a large group of countries could send a meaningful message.

In recent years, frustration with the Nonproliferation Treaty catalyzed another pact that outright prohibits nuclear weapons. Ratified by over 60 countries, it took effect last year, though without any nuclear-armed nations on board. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1984 EURO COURT CONDEMNS PHONE-TAPPING



A Surrey businessman who accused the police of illegally tapping his phone is celebrating after a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights.

James Malone, a former antiques dealer from Dorking in Surrey, claims that while he was on trial for handling stolen goods in 1977, the police intercepted his telephone calls and his post.

In 1979, Mr Malone, who was acquitted on all charges, unsuccessfully tried to sue the Metropolitan Police in the High Court but the court said it had no jurisdiction in the matter.

Following a six-year campaign, Mr Malone's case was finally referred to the European Courts in May last year and a panel of 18 judges ruled today that the UK government was in breach of the European Convention.

Mr Malone was delighted by the decision although he is not convinced the practice will stop.

He said: "I am very pleased but I think that all that will happen is that the police or the government will not be caught with their trousers down again."

"Any safe-guard they bring in will just be to ensure that no-one will catch them doing it."

The British government has been told by the European Court to change its 'obscure' regulations.

Ministers had argued that post and telephone interceptions were justified in the interests of crime prevention and it was not necessary to incorporate regulations into the law.

Up to now, police have been allowed to carry out up to 400 phone-taps and 100 mail interceptions a year with authorisation from the home secretary.

There are also fears that the introduction of new electronic telephone exchanges will make the practice of phone-tapping even easier.

Campaigners have now called for new legislation which would require a judge to authorise all phone-taps.

The Home Office confirmed tonight the regulations will be revised and legislation will be introduced to take into account the European Court's judgement.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In 1985 the government introduced the Interception of Communications Act which allowed the police and security services to tap phone lines or intercept paper mail, after obtaining a warrant from the Home Secretary (or the First Minister in Scotland), the Foreign Secretary, or the Northern Ireland Secretary. But the boom in electronic communications made the situation extremely complex because the law failed to take into account methods of communication such as email, texting and pager messages. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIP) Act, which came into force in July 2000, aimed to stop criminals using the internet by giving police the power to intercept computer traffic. But the law was criticised by civil liberties campaigners who said the 'ordinary' user's privacy was under threat. The debate continues.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 You can help sort out problems that friends are facing. Lay your cards on the table regarding your personal direction. Stomach problems could prevail if you haven't been watching your diet.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
 You might want to spend some time by yourself in order to decide exactly how you feel. You will be emotional about money matters. Look into career choices and courses being offered.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
 Things may not be as harmonious as you would like with colleagues or employers today. Disappointments are likely if your mate embarrasses you in front of friends.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Minor health problems could result through exhaustion. You will be highly entertaining when in contact with your lover. New methods and innovative technology will make your job far easier than you anticipated.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 An older member of your family may have left you with a pressing situation. Your accomplishments could exceed your expectations if you mix a little business with pleasure.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 You will find it easy to learn and excel. Try to be precise in your communications. Get busy putting your place in order. This is a good day to check out your investments.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Be discreet and don't reveal any personal information. Deception may cause disputes you can do without. After all, they may have valuable information to pass on.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Pleasure trips will bring you into contact with new and interesting people. You need to spend less time daydreaming and more time accomplishing. You're in the mood to spend time with your lover.

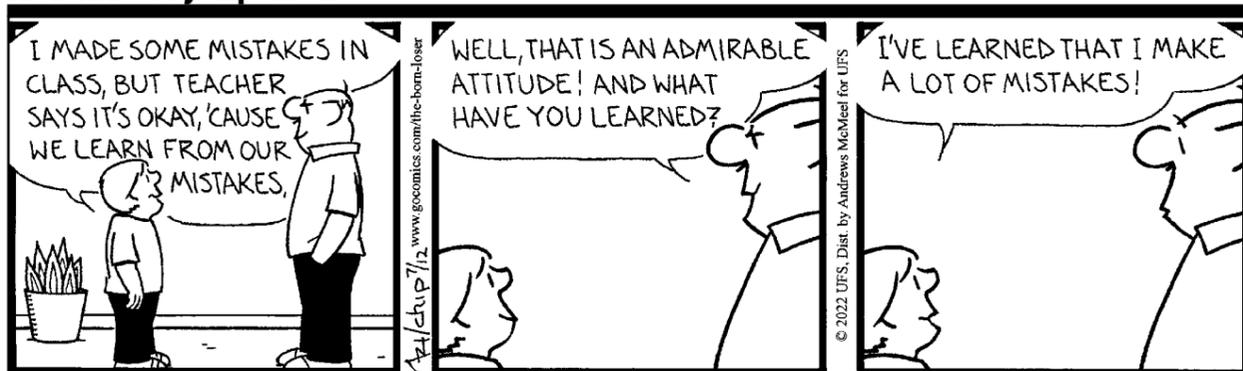
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Avoid any over indulgences. Make creative changes to your living quarters. Secret affairs could cause upset. If they're too demanding, reconsider this union.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 A romantic infatuation from your past may surface if you frequent places that you both used to go. You will be able to contribute a great deal to organizations that you join.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Get busy on projects that improve your own image; you'll have the discipline to succeed. You'll stay out of trouble if you pick projects that will benefit the whole family.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Invite people home to discuss your plans for group fundraising events and outings. Be careful how you deal with colleagues. You may be in an extremely passionate mood today.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

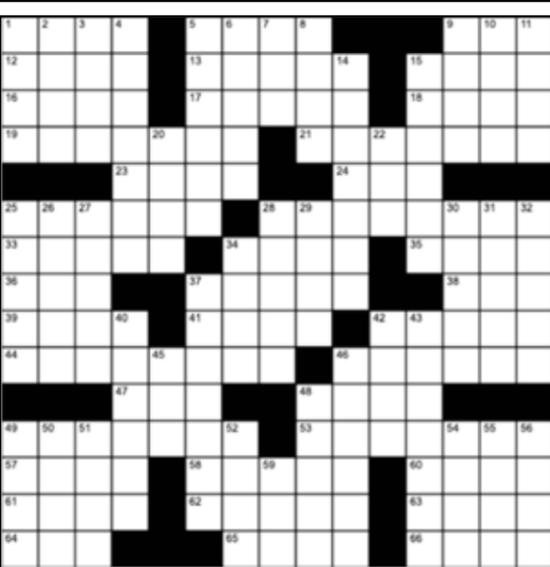
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	32	cloudy
Changchun	20	30	cloudy
Chengdu	22	28	showers
Chongqing	26	32	rain
Fuzhou	26	40	fine
Guangzhou	26	36	fine
Guiyang	21	28	cloudy
Haikou	26	33	cloudy
Hangzhou	27	37	thunderstorms
Harbin	20	30	cloudy
Hefei	24	33	thunderstorms
Nanjing	25	33	thunderstorms
Shanghai	27	35	overcast
Taipei	26	33	fine
Wuhan	28	35	fine
Hong Kong	29	33	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	16	27	overcast
Frankfurt	18	30	overcast
Paris	16	27	rain
London	15	22	showers
New York	25	34	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Biblical verb; 5- Queens stadium; 9- Cooking container; 12- Pearl Mosque city; 13- Enthusiastic; 15- Actress Rowlands; 16- Long time; 17- Love deeply; 18- Winder for holding flexible material; 19- Sincere; 21- Like sea life; 23- Soft shoes; 24- Designer Claiborne; 25- Merciful; 28- Clear-cut; 33- Unfolds; 34- Muffin ingredient; 35- Cut-price retail event; 36- Fam. member; 37- Farm layers; 38- Cry out loud; 39- Dagger of yore; 41- Pledge; 42- Crackerjack; 44- Toothless; 46- Steeples; 47- Soak flax; 48- Hwys.; 49- Satanic; 53- Membrane in the ear canal; 57- Buck follower; 58- Sub system; 60- River in central Switzerland; 61- Sentry's shout; 62- Swarm; 63- ___ the finish; 64- Acid; 65- Simon ___; 66- Egypt's river;

DOWN 1- Dutch name of The Hague; 2- "The Morning Watch" author; 3- 1982 Disney film; 4- Sacred langur; 5- Medium setting?; 6- Where the Styx flows; 7- Narcissist's problem; 8- Prefix with -drome; 9- Hammer head; 10- That's ___ haven't heard; 11- Baby powder; 14- Lean back; 15- Eats grass; 20- Electrically charged particles; 22- Frozen Wasser; 25- Stallion, e.g.; 26- Overtun; 27- Scuffle; 28- El Greco's birthplace; 29- Corned beef concoction; 30- Coherent light beam; 31- Run away with a lover; 32- Sums owing; 34- Rhythm; 37- Lecherous; 40- Implant deeply; 42- Impersonator; 43- Scorn; 45- X; 46- Gazes fixedly; 48- Not hesitant; 49- Writer Roald; 50- Important times; 51- Shape; 52- Whispers sweet nothings; 54- Wife of a rajah; 55- Orsk's river; 56- Allot; 59- Heston's org.;



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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- MANHATTAN | 3 BEDS HKD 17,500
- CHUN LEONG | 1 BEDS HKD 8,200
- BUCKINGHAM | 2 BEDS HKD 13,900
- HELLENE G. | 3 BEDS HKD 12,500
- NAM LONG | 1 BED HKD 8,500
- COLOANE V. | 1 BED HKD 9,300
- COLOANE V. | 2 BEDS HKD 10,500
- COLOANE V. | 2 BEDS HKD 10,000

FOR SALE

- JADE GARDEN | 4 BEDS HKD 15,380,000
- NOVA TAIPA | 4 BEDS HKD 12,880,000
- 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
- NOVA PARK | 2 BEDS HKD 10,800,000

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MARITIME TRADE

FIRST SHIP CARRYING UKRAINIAN GRAIN LEAVES THE PORT OF ODESA

SUZAN FRASER, ANKARA

THE first ship carrying Ukrainian grain set off from the port of Odesa yesterday under a deal brokered by the United Nations and Turkey that is expected to release large stores of Ukrainian crops to foreign markets and ease a growing hunger crisis.

The Sierra Leone-flagged cargo ship Razoni left Odesa for Lebanon, Turkey's defense ministry said. A statement from the United Nations said the Razoni was carrying over 26,000 tons of corn.

Data from the Razoni's Automatic Identification System, a safety tracker for ships at sea, showed the vessel slowly coming out from its berth at Odesa port Monday morning alongside a tug boat.

Ukraine's Minister of Infrastructure Oleksandr Kubrakov tweeted a video of the long cargo ship sounding its horn as its headed out to sea.

"The first grain ship since Russian aggression has left port," Kubrakov said on Twitter. "Thanks to the support of all our partner countries and the U.N. we were

AP PHOTO



The bulk carrier Razoni starts its way from the port in Odesa, Ukraine, yesterday

able to full implement the Agreement signed in Istanbul. It's important for us to be one of the guarantors of food security."

The ship is expected to reach Istanbul on Tuesday, where it will be inspected, before being allowed to proceed, the ministry said.

The corn will then head to Lebanon, a tiny Mideast nation in the grips of what the World Bank

has described as one of the world's worst financial crises in more than 150 years. A 2020 explosion at its main port in Beirut shattered its capital city and destroyed grain silos there, a part of which collapsed following a weeklong fire just Sunday.

As the Razoni moved toward the open water of the Black Sea, it changed its destination from Istanbul to Tripoli, Lebanon.

The Turkish ministry statement said other ships would also depart Ukraine's ports through the safe corridors in line with deals signed in Istanbul on July 22, but did not provide further details.

Russia and Ukraine signed separate agreements with Turkey and the U.N. clearing the way for Ukraine — one of the world's key breadbaskets — to export 22

million tons of grain and other agricultural goods that have been stuck in Black Sea ports because of Russia's invasion.

The deals also allow Russia to exports grain and fertilizers.

Ukraine's infrastructure ministry said that 16 more ships, all blocked since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, were waiting their turn in the ports of Odesa.

Kubrakov said the shipments would also help Ukraine's war-shattered economy.

"Unlocking ports will provide at least \$1 billion in foreign exchange revenue to the economy and an opportunity for the agricultural sector to plan for next year," Kubrakov said.

The United Nations welcomed the development, saying in a statement that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres hopes it will be just the first of many commercial ships carry Ukrainian grain abroad and "bring much-needed stability and relief to global food security especially in the most fragile humanitarian contexts."

The resumption of the grain shipments came as fighting raged elsewhere in Ukraine.

Ukraine's presidential office said that at least three civilians were killed and another 16 wounded by Russian shelling in the Donetsk region over the past 24 hours. **MDT/AP**

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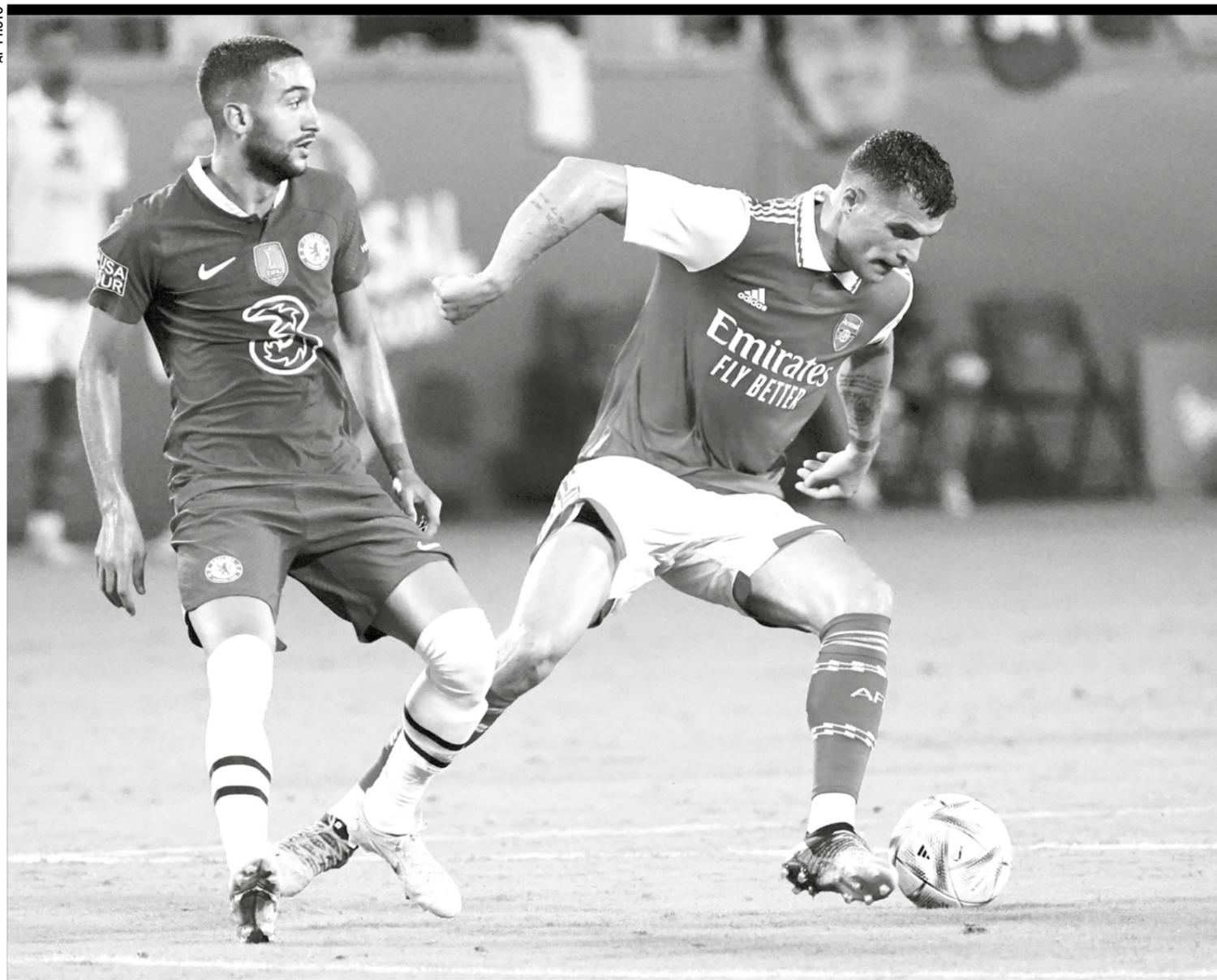
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FOOTBALL

Four challengers look to break Man City-Liverpool stranglehold

MAYBE the Premier League's "Big Six" should actually be renamed the "Big Two."

Manchester City and Liverpool have finished as England's top two teams in three of the last four years, the exception coming in the 2020-21 season when an injury crisis in defense saw Liverpool only seal a top-four spot on the final day.

It has created the highest-quality rivalry ever seen in English soccer, given the points totals the teams push each other to achieve every season.

The question now is who, if anyone, can break this City-Liverpool stranglehold in the Premier League?

The answer will likely be found among Chelsea, Tottenham, Arsenal and Manchester United, the other four teams making up the six English clubs who tried to become part of the now-defunct European Super League breakaway.

In their own ways, they have

all been busy during the offseason: Chelsea has new ownership, United has another new manager, and Tottenham and Arsenal have been among the most active movers in the transfer market.

Here's a look at the prospects of the four title outsiders this season:

CHELSEA

Chelsea became a major force in English soccer in Roman Abramovich's reign starting in 2003. Can that be maintained now that the Russian oligarch has been forced out?

The post-Abramovich era has gotten off to a busy start under Chelsea's new American ownership, which has a quirky feature — the guy who fronts the club leadership, Todd Boehly, installed himself not only as chairman but as interim sporting director in control of offseason transfer dealings.

There were fears his lack of soccer knowledge might undermine him but a couple of early player arrivals looked promising.

England forward Raheem Sterling came from Manchester City in one of the league's standout transfers of the offseason and Senegal defender Kalidou Koulibaly joined from Napoli to fill the void at center back left by the departures of Antonio Rudiger and Andreas Christensen.

Further strengthening of the squad has proved difficult, however, and manager Thomas Tuchel said after a 4-0 loss to Arsenal in a July 24 friendly that he "cannot guarantee we will be ready" for the start of the season, adding there were still some players in the squad "trying to leave us."

Chelsea still looks a couple of center backs short and there are question marks about whether there are enough goals in the likely front line of Sterling, Kai Havertz and Mason Mount.

TOTTENHAM

They've got one of the best managers in the world and, after something of an offseason spending spree, a deep and versatile squad. Maybe Antonio Conte's

Tottenham could be the team to push into title contention?

With the front three of Harry Kane, Son Heung-min and Dejan Kulusevski linking up to great effect, Tottenham had almost as strong a finish to last season as City and Liverpool, winning 11 of its last 16 games. That included a victory at City — completing the home-and-away double over the eventual champions — and a draw at Anfield that ultimately cost Liverpool the title.

Conte, who took over in November and has quickly stamped his own style on the team with a 3-4-3 formation, demanded that he was backed in the transfer market. And he was.

Brazil forward Richarlison has arrived from Everton to provide options across the front three, Yves Bissouma has joined from Brighton to offer much-needed strength in depth in central midfield, and Djed Spence is a highly rated wing back who might have been the best player in the second-division Championship last season.

ARSENAL

Arsenal's lack of squad depth was highlighted in the way the team faltered at the end of last season, dropping out of the Champions League qualifying positions and getting replaced in them by north London rival Tottenham.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta was eager to rectify that this offseason and he has turned to the club he left to come to London. Manchester City, where Arteta was assistant coach under Pep Guardiola from 2016-19, has sold both Gabriel Jesus and Oleksandr Zinchenko to Arsenal.

Crucially, both are versatile players, with Jesus able to operate on the wing or at center forward and Zinchenko a midfielder who mostly played at left back at City.

With Fabio Vieira, a young attacking midfielder, joining from Porto for potentially 40 million euros (\$42 million) and 19-year-old Brazilian striker Marquinhos also arriving, Arsenal has spent about \$150 million this offseason and has an even younger squad being nurtured by Arteta.

For that reason, a title bid looks highly unlikely but qualifying for the Champions League will be the target. And preseason results have been encouraging, with Jesus settling in quickly — scoring in a 4-0 win over Chelsea and a hat trick in a 6-0 victory over Sevilla.

MANCHESTER UNITED

A new manager in Erik ten Hag. An unsettled star in Cristiano Ronaldo. A bunch of new players with past or present links to the Dutch league in Lisandro Martinez, Christian Eriksen and Tyrell Malacia.

Who knows what to expect from United this season?

For sure, the fans will demand a finish higher than the sixth place of last season but that is not a certainty considering the competition in the league and the spending of United's rivals.

What happens to Ronaldo is the key. If he stays, will the 37-year-old striker bow to the demands of Ten Hag, or the other way around? He played 45 minutes in a 1-1 draw against Rayo Vallecano on Sunday, but questions remain. If he goes, does a likely front three of Marcus Rashford, Anthony Martial and Jadon Sancho have enough goals and staying power in a season that also includes an often-grueling Europa League campaign?

Eriksen will provide more creativity in midfield but United is still short of a top-class holding midfielder. There are also question marks about how quickly Martinez, a small, ball-playing center back who Ten Hag worked with at Ajax, fits in to English soccer. **MDT/AP**

OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



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

China's openness and reform policy was initiated in 1979, but only in the late 1990s did it begin to privatize and significantly reduce its state-owned enterprises (SOE) sector. In the mid-2000s, China's state capitalism focused mainly on the management of large SOEs and their contribution to economic growth, the state's revenue, and its strategic and economic interests both domestic and abroad. This limited role of SOEs has allowed room for private companies to grow, a phenomenon captured in the Chinese expression, "the private sector moves forward, the state moves back".

Indeed, private companies have grown and thrived. This growth has led to the creation of large conglomerates with a global reach – such as Tencent or Alibaba – and, for the first time, Chinese companies have become industry leaders in IT, payment processing, and the digital economy. But this accumulation of economic power has raised many eyebrows in the Communist Party of China (CPC), which historical materialism has deep roots in – if the economic infrastructure is dominated by large private corporations, sooner or later these corporations will determine the political superstructure... Nevertheless, the private sector has been allowed to develop, albeit with restrictions imposed on the basis of a need for greater social justice – dubbed "common prosperity".

Some of the largest private groups that have formed in China in the last two decades have had easy access to credit, made available by state-owned banks. They used this credit not only for domestic growth, but also to internationalize in a wide array of sectors. In recent years, greed in several of these groups has led them to take bigger risks than in the past, defaulting on bank loan payments, which has led to state intervention in some of the country's largest conglomerates, such as the insurance company Anbang and the HNA group. The large private groups, until then seen as accelerated growth generators by virtue of significant investments, creators of significant employment, providers of best management practices, and benefiting from the scale of the gargantuan Chinese market, lost their aura of respectability and began to be seen as potential risks to the banking and financial systems' stability and as entities that drained significant funds to invest abroad (in non-strategic sectors for the Chinese state) that otherwise could have been used in the development of the national economy.

Large private groups were no longer considered trustworthy and the CPC leadership began to create mechanisms to ensure closer alignment with the national interest as defined by the State-Party. One such move saw an increase in the number of party cells in private companies, especially in large corporations. How this will pan out remains to be seen.

The drive to co-mandate private enterprises probably exists in the party's Organization Department. But China's extraordinary growth – particularly in advanced technology sectors – has been increasingly driven by the private sector, and the leadership of the Chinese State-Party is well aware of this.

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A Maryland auction house has sold a wristwatch that once belonged to Adolf Hitler for \$1.1 million.

Alexander Historical Auctions in Chesapeake City had estimated the value between \$2 and \$4 million, describing the watch as a "World War II relic of historic proportions."

Newsoutlets report that Jewish leaders and others objected to the

sale this week, saying it had little to no historical value.

The auction house's president, Bill Panagopoulos, defended the auction and said the buyer is a European Jew.

The watch features the initials AH and a swastika. The auction house said a French soldier who was in the first unit to close in on Hitler in May 1945 at his Berchtesgaden retreat seized it as spoils of war.

ALIBABA STRIVING TO MAINTAIN US LISTING AMID DELISTING FEARS

AP PHOTO



ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

CHINESE e-commerce firm Alibaba said yesterday that it wants to keep its shares listed in both New York and Hong Kong, days after U.S. regulators included it in a list of companies that may be delisted for not complying with auditing requirements.

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission has said foreign companies face having their shares delisted if they don't give American regulators access to their financial statements and auditing process as required of other companies around the world.

The addition of Alibaba to the list is the latest blow as it suffers the fallout from Beijing's regulatory crackdown on the technology industry.

Alibaba's inclusion among the companies potentially facing delisting follows its announcement last week that it wants to pursue a primary listing in Hong Kong, where it now has a secondary listing. That move would enable Alibaba to tap a wider base of investors, including those in mainland China. "Alibaba will continue

to monitor market developments, comply with applicable laws and regulations and strive to maintain its listing status on both the NYSE and the Hong Kong Stock Exchange," the company said in an announcement filed to the Hong Kong stock exchange yesterday.

The move by the SEC to include Alibaba for possible delisting could be in retaliation for its plans to seek the primary listing in Hong Kong

The company said that the fiscal year that ended March 31, 2022 was its first "non-inspection" year under regulations that say a company that goes three years without complying with audit requirements will be forced to delist.

Alibaba's Hong Kong stock price plunged 3.76% in Hong Kong yesterday, closing at 89.60 Hong Kong dollars.

The move by the SEC to include Alibaba for possible delisting could be in retaliation for its plans to seek the primary listing in Hong Kong, said Francis Lun, an investment manager and a veteran market commentator.

Alibaba is one of the most heavily-traded Chinese companies in the U.S.

"If you look at the stock price, investors are very pessimistic (about Alibaba)," Lun said. Alibaba's New York-listed stock is down over 55% over the last 12 months.

Alibaba was fined a record \$2.8 billion for anti-monopoly violations, and regulators scrutinized its financial affiliate Ant Financial closely after Ant was ordered to halt its initial public listing days before it was due to go public. The company has also seen slowing growth amid COVID-19 uncertainties and a general slowdown in the Chinese economy.

The primary listing in Hong Kong is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Alibaba first went public in New York in September 2014 in what was then the world's biggest initial public offering at \$25 billion. It completed a secondary listing in Hong Kong in November 2019.

Other Chinese firms seeking a primary listing in Hong Kong include cloud computing service provider Kingsoft Cloud Holdings and video sharing site Bilibili Inc. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Ukrainian forces are scaling up attacks to reclaim territory in the Russian-occupied south. The Ukrainians have used American-supplied rocket launchers to strike bridges and military infrastructure in the south, forcing Russia to divert its forces from the Donbas in the east to counter the new threat. With the war in Ukraine now in its sixth month, the coming weeks may prove decisive.

AP PHOTO



USA Crews battling the largest wildfire so far this year in California braced for thunderstorms and hot, windy conditions that created the potential for additional fire growth yesterday as they sought to protect remote communities. The McKinney Fire was burning out of control in Northern California's Klamath National Forest, with expected thunderstorms a big concern Sunday just south of the Oregon state line, said U.S. Forest Service spokesperson Adrienne Freeman.

AP PHOTO



USA Nichelle Nichols, who broke barriers for Black women in Hollywood as communications officer Lt. Uhura on the original "Star Trek" television series, has died at the age of 89. Her son Kyle Johnson said Nichols died Saturday in Silver City, New Mexico.

AP PHOTO



Football Just when it seemed England might again be weighed down by expectations and history, Chloe Kelly made the breakthrough. Kelly's goal in the second half of extra time — the first time she had ever scored in a competitive international game — propelled England to its first major women's soccer title this weekend, beating Germany 2-1.