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THE JUDICIARY POLICE UNCOVERED A HKD530,000 FINANCIAL FRAUD AND ARRESTED FOUR SUSPECTS, AS ANNOUNCED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE

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MACAU FORMS TWIN TOWNS WITH CITY OF SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

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AT 75, INDIA SEEKS WAY FORWARD IN BIG BUT JOB-SCARCE ECONOMY

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AP PHOTO



North Korea In a striking speech before thousands of North Koreans, leader Kim Jong Un's sister said he suffered a fever while guiding the country to victory over the coronavirus. She blamed rival South Korea for the outbreak and vowed "deadly" retaliation. Kim Yo Jong glorified her brother's leadership during the outbreak in her speech at a national meeting where described the country's widely disputed success over the virus as an "amazing miracle" in global public health.

India New Delhi reintroduced public mask mandates yesterday as COVID-19 cases continue to rise across the country. The New Delhi government reinstated a fine of 500 rupees (\$6) for anyone caught not wearing a mask or face covering in public. 16,299 new cases were recorded in the past 24 hours nationwide, with a positivity rate of 4.58%. Nearly 2,150 infections were reported in New Delhi.

AP PHOTO



New Zealand house prices fell year-on-year for the first time in more than a decade, a report showed yesterday, as rising interest rates finally halted a dizzying boom that had only gained momentum after the coronavirus pandemic first hit. The Real Estate Institute of New Zealand reported median prices fell 1.8% in July. The decline was more pronounced in the biggest city of Auckland, where prices fell 5.6%, and in the capital, Wellington, where prices fell 5.9%.

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FAKE JOBS BUREAU



Lawmakers call on gov't to investigate 'fake job offers' on Labour Affairs Bureau database

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COVID UNRELATED

Tests show latest Zhuhai Covid case unrelated to Macau



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PLENARY

NEW TOURISM TAX LAW COMMENCES JANUARY 1

RENATO MARQUES

AMENDMENTS to laws regulating the tourism tax in Macau have been approved unanimously by the Legislative Assembly (AL) upon its final reading yesterday.

The new regulations will commence January 1, 2023 and explains to businesses who operate within integrated resorts and hotels the need to charge this special tax. The amendments also redirect the tax.

Previously, the tourism tax would be collected by businesses from final consumers before being paid to the government via the Tourism Fund. As a result of the amendments, the funds will be paid directly to the government's general central account.

The change will provide the government, and specifically the Economy and Finance Secretariat, added flexibility as to its allocation, since in the past proceeds from the tax could only be used for projects related to tourism development.

During the debate at the AL, several lawmakers expressed



concerns about the amendments, claiming that directing the funds straight to the central treasury might affect tourism development by making it more dependent on the annual allocated government budget.

The amendments comes alongside a series of other measures over previous years

by the government of Ho Iat Seng that aim to enforce stricter control over the spending of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), labelled one of the government's big spenders, particularly under the government of Chui Sai On.

Control over the spending of the MGTO started with the

2020 administrative restructure when Ho took office and that, among other measures, put the MGTO under the umbrella of the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, and not under the Secretariat of Social Affairs and Culture, as it was during the previous governments of Macau.

Addressing the topic at the AL, Lei also noted that the future tourism tax will be controlled by central finance to make future budgets, expenditures, and the financial resources of the tourism fund clearer and more transparent.

As for the establishments that will need to charge the 5% tax, Lei said that the new law will finally solve existing problems and disputes that were occurring in the past.

The tax mainly applies to services provided to tourists or people in Macau hotels and resorts, including resort restaurants and food and beverage establishments, as well as other services within or outside hotels such as spas, saunas, bars, karaoke, and similar establishments.

Several lawmakers claimed that the rules might still be confusing for some of these sectors and establishments, to which Lei responded that the government will, from now on and until January next year, launch a campaign providing clarification.

Filipino worker dies in fatal accident at Wynn Palace

STAFF REPORTER

AN industrial accident at Wynn Palace yesterday morning resulted in the death of a Filipino non-resident worker.

In a statement, the Judiciary Police reported that the worker was conducting a routine elevator inspection along with another colleague in the lobby of the hotel when the accident occurred at 7 a.m.

At the time of the accident, the victim had been situated in the pit, located on the second floor below ground, while his colleague worked on the floor above him.

Upon hearing a loud noise, the colleague halted the machine and called the non-resident worker through a walkie-talkie.

He then went to the second floor below and found that the deceased had died.

The deceased, surnamed Bautista, was 51 years old.

The PJ suspects the cause of death was the man's head being caught in a gear during the operation, which resulted in a fatal injury.

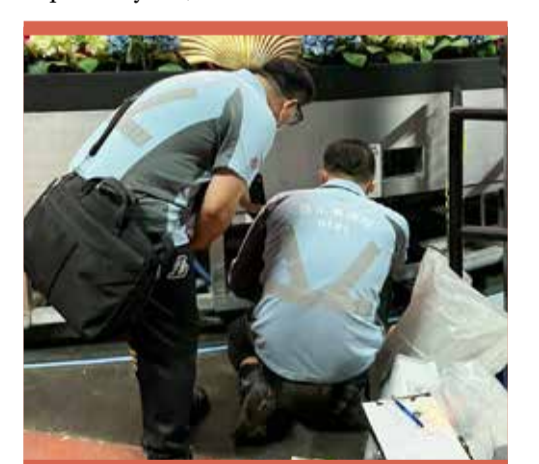
Gaming operator Wynn Macau said it is currently cooperating with the authorities while they investigate the accident.

"We can confirm that a team member was involved in a fatal accident at Wynn Palace this morning and we are currently cooperating with the authorities as they conduct their investigations," the gaming operator told the Times.

"We would like to express our heartfelt condolences to our colleague's family, and we will extend our full support to them during this very difficult time," it added.

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) has notified the employer to halt operations at the scene and has required that the employer submit an accident investigation report.

The DSAL will continue to investigate the accident and relevant responsible entities as required by law, the bureau said.



SAR FORMS TWIN TOWNS WITH DISTRICT OF SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

THE Macau SAR recently entered a twin town relationship with the Agua Grande District of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

The two sides held a virtual signing ceremony of a memorandum of understanding on town twinning, which provided for efforts to build a close and steady friendship between Macau and the Agua Grande District based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit.

At the signing ceremony Ho Iat Seng, chief executive of the Macau SAR, said that the town twinning would



help promote exchange and cooperation between the two sides in areas such

as economy, trade, tourism, fishery, culture and non-governmental exchanges.

Macau will play the role of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries (PSCs) to enhance economic and trade exchange and cooperation between China and PSCs, Ho said.

According to the town twinning memorandum, the two sides will undertake to "utilise their respective advantages, in accordance with respective laws and regulations, and based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit."

"This is to make the necessary adaptations to establish close and stable friendly relations to promote prosperity and development for both sides," the government said in a statement.

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PLENARY

Workers' lawmakers call on gov't to investigate 'fake job offers'

RENATO MARQUES

THREE lawmakers representing the Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) yesterday expressed their concerns about the continued growth of the unemployment rate among local residents, as well as the inability of the government to help those in that situation, including the long-term unemployed, become re-employed.

At the Legislative Assembly (AL) during the period before the agenda, Leong Sun Iok, Ella Lei, and Lam Lon Wai delivered three spoken inquiries addressing this matter, with Lei going even further and accusing local companies of promoting fake job offers and recruitment events when they had no intention of recruiting any workers.

"According to some candidates, some employers say they do not need to hire anyone; they are just recruiting to collaborate with the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL). Is the government aware of this? Are you following the entire process, from the job matching session to the eventual recruitment? How are you going to oversee the fictitious recruitment?" Lei demanded.

The same lawmaker also claimed that job applicants "are sending many job applications [to the job offers listed by DSAL]" but do not receive a response.

Lei also remarked that there are frequent mismatches between



the job offers presented, the qualifications demanded, and the salary offered for these positions, making it barely possible for someone to qualify.

"The government should note that in Macau, there is not only recruitment for the unqualified job posts [but also] for low-wage jobs, a fact that reflects that the rule of prioritizing the hiring of local workers is not being followed," Lei added.

"I once again urge the government to carry out a proper analysis of the job offers, organize recruitment sessions to strengthen the matching between job offer and demand, and to create mechanisms to monitor the situation of hiring local workers to prevent fictitious advertising," she said.

"Regarding large-size companies and those [in] relevant eco-

nomical sectors, [the government should enforce strict] standards and quotas for the hiring and training of local staff, as well as call for the clear presentation of proposals [by the same companies], including goals for the training of local workers so that intermediate and higher categories are occupied by residents to alleviate unemployment and promote the professional development of the population," the same lawmaker proposed.

Before her, the lawmaker Leong had already remarked that the high unemployment rate – the highest in 12 years – cannot be solved with random measures or promises of subsidies, but with concrete measures, calling on the government to pay special attention to the workers' rights regarding those who, due to work, had

to travel and those who are having their salaries cut due to the need to undergo quarantines and other restrictions outside of their control, which should be the responsibility of employers who send them abroad as part of their work duties.

Lawmaker Lam also noted what he considers the slow and late response of the government to the hiring of local workers for the citywide, key groups and area-specific nucleic acid tests, saying that the government proceeded with the immediate hiring of non-resident workers (TNR) without screening properly to see whether there were locals who could do the job, resulting in the delayed hiring of locals who could only fill part-time posts and not the full-time ones, which were already occupied by TNR.

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS DROP 15% IN JUNE

The number of traffic accidents in June fell by 14.9% year-on-year to 904, with 341 persons injured. In the first half of the year, there were 5,805 traffic accidents, which resulted in five deaths and 2,046 injuries, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows. In the first half of the year, cross-border vehicular traffic (1,896,852 trips) decreased by 11.0% year-on-year. Arriving and departing commercial flights totalled 525 trips in June, a decline of 66.8% year-on-year. For the first six months of 2022, the number of arriving and departing commercial flights dipped by 26.5% year-on-year to 5,488 trips due to Covid-19 outbreaks in the neighboring regions and in the city.

IAM LAUNCHES COMMUNITY CLEANING CAMPAIGN

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has launched a community cleaning campaign that includes key hygienic screening of low-rise buildings once under lockdown as Red Code Zones for epidemic prevention, and precautionary cleaning and disinfection of a number of building clusters with high population density and long-term unsatisfying hygienic conditions in the northern district. A total of 1.5 tons of garbage were cleared up on the day of the cleaning activity, during which concerned and engaged members of the public took part in the activity to jointly maintain public hygiene and reduce the risks of outbreaks in the community.

Approved SME loans drop 61% y-o-y

NEWLY-APPROVED small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) credit dropped 37.5% to MOP7.6 billion in the first half of 2022 compared to six months prior.

The figure is a significant plunge of 61% compared to the same period last year, according to statistics released yesterday by the Monetary Authority of Macao.

The pandemic has resulted in downturns in the city's businesses, particularly amid the city's recent wave of outbreaks, which led to a partial lockdown and closure of non-essential businesses.

A sector representati-



ve from the Industry and Commerce Federation of Macau Central and Sou-

thern District has raised the fact that two-thirds of local SMEs are consi-

dering ceasing operation because of the pressures they face.

These firms must also face the pressure of landlords refusing to reduce rents despite restricted business operations.

The value of unpaid loans of small firms as of June reached MOP690.7 million (US\$85.4 million), according a statement from the Monetary Authority of Macao.

SMEs defaulting in respect of loan repayment in the first six months of this year increased by 32% compared to the previous semester.

Meanwhile, the collateralised ratio, which indicates the proportion of credit secured by tangible assets, was 68.7%, down 2.8 percentage points from the last survey period, or down 10.2 percentage points when compa-

red with the same period of 2021.

As at end-June 2022, the outstanding balance of SME loans decreased 9.5% from end-2021, or 10.6% from a year earlier to MOP84.5 billion.

Compared to the previous survey period, outstanding SME loans in the sectors of "transport, warehouse and communications" rose 5.0% whereas those in "wholesale and retail trade" and "construction and public works" dropped 23.1% and 6.9% respectively.

The utilisation rate, defined as the proportion of outstanding credit balance to the credit granted, fell 3.7 percentage points from six months ago, or 4.5 percentage points from a year earlier, to 77.9%. **LV**

STAFF REPORTER

CRIME

PJ ARREST FOUR SCAMMERS IN HKD530,000 FRAUD CASE

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) uncovered a huge financial fraud case and arrested four suspects, as announced in a press conference.

Two mainland victims in the case have lost a total of HKD540,000. The first suspect is a 56-year-old male Hong Kong unemployed resident, while the remaining three suspects are unemployed residents from the mainland, aged between 56 and 63 years old.

The first victim met the first suspect through being introduced by friend in the mainland in August 2019. The suspect, claiming to be a Hong Kong bank manager, claimed that he could help the victim's mainland company to obtain a loan from a Hong Kong bank.

In November that same year, the suspect contacted the victim to inform them that the loan had been approved by the Hong Kong bank. The suspect said that the victim was required to go to Hong Kong to sign the loan agreement, but that progress on the transaction was on hold due to the pandemic.

The suspect claimed that the bank could approve a loan amount of MOP30 million to the victim, on the condition that the victim open a HKD2.4 million bank account in Macau for the cost of capital verification (a re-



view of the Macau bank account opened by the victim).

The suspect said that he could help the victim fundraise to open the bank account but needed the victim to give him a total of HKD600,000 in remuneration.

The victim went to Macau to open the bank account and met the second and third suspects on

March 16.

On March 18, the victim and the three suspects went to the bank. The first suspect deposited a pre-opened check of HKD730,000 into the victim's account, being the cost of the second suspect's assistance in helping the victim open a bank account, and required the victim

to pay the remuneration.

However, the victim did not have enough money and paid HKD530,000 only.

The suspect then told the victim that the other cost of capital verification would be deposited into the bank account that same day, and met the victim that afternoon to continue with the

loan formalities.

Afterwards, the victim was unable to contact the three suspects and was informed by the bank staff that the check of HKD730,000 was in Hong Kong currency. As such, the money would be deposited into the bank account next day.

The victim realized they had been cheated and reported the scam to the PJ.

During the inspection, it was found that the check of HKD730,000 could not be cashed.

The three suspects entered Macau on August 7 and were intercepted at a hotel by the PJ.

Investigations revealed that the three suspects intended to use the same method to deceive a second victim.

The second victim had not completed payment to the suspects because the fraudulent arrangements were detected by the PJ. Earlier, however, the second victim had paid RMB7,800 to the suspects through an online transfer for the cost of the loan.

The PJ said the four suspects are part of a fraudulent group that commits crimes by purporting to help with financing loans, and all suspects have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office and charged with the offences of fraud, falsification of documents of significant value and employment and criminal syndication, among others.

AD

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ANTHONY LAM

COVID-19

RIBONUCLEIC acid (RNA) tests have ruled out a connection to Macau in the latest Covid-19 positives detected by Zhuhai with footprints in the city, Valerie Wong, acting division head for health promotion at Health Bureau (SSM), confirmed yesterday.

According to Wong, the RNA sequence of the virus detected in Zhuhai aligns with that of the BA.5.2 variant, which is not the variant detected in Macau during the June 18 outbreak.

Meanwhile, it was also announced yesterday that the wife of the latest Covid-19 case with connections to Macau had also tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. However, Wong insisted that the positive cases would not pose a high risk to the city.

Although not working at the same place, the wife had engaged in similar activities as her husband, Wong disclosed. The wife, Wong added, works at a cosmetics shop near Border Gate.

Prior to testing positive, the husband had repeatedly visited a cosmetics shop at City Plaza, which is a shopping mall near Border Gate. The health agency has so far not disclosed whether it was the same cosmetics shop where his wife worked.

However, the SSM was questioned as to why it had not publicized the wife's Macau movements, in contrast to the disclosures regarding the husband's movements. Wong first said that the couple had similar movements in Macau, despite not working in the same place. She then added that the SSM had put all close contacts who had interactions with either the husband or the wife in confinement. The wife herself was also under confinement when her infection was detected in Zhuhai.

Further to that, Wong said, two rounds of key area SARS-CoV-2

XINHUA



nucleic acid tests (NATs) had been conducted after the city was notified by Zhuhai about the husband's positive test result. The two key areas were in Taipa and in the vicinity of the Border Gate checkpoint. Both rounds returned no positive results, Wong recapped.

With that said, she insisted that the couple's infections would not pose a great risk to the city.

The civil servant was also asked whether SSM would reconsider the placement of, or permission for, outdoor NAT stations by "realistically considering the conditions of Macau". In the past typhoon period, these stations were suspended from service after Typhoon Signal No 3 was hoisted, forcing people into indoor

facilities. Concerns were raised that crowds forming in indoor test stations risked an outbreak.

To this, Wong recapped that city has a total of 33 indoor test stations, which are "widely assessable." They can cater to the needs of up to 200,000 test-takers per day. She added that outdoor stations highlight flexibility because they are supplementary to indoor stations.

"Outdoor stations will operate depending on weather conditions. Test quotas at indoor stations will be responsively altered," Wong explained, adding that the number of test-takers from key groups and key areas do not exceed 100,000 per day. "We have sufficient quotas."

She also disclosed that the SSM had contingency plans to provisionally set up stations at schools and sports venues when necessary.

SANITIZATION PROCEDURE

Speaking on another matter involving returnees and entrants, it was first disclosed on social media platform that some of their luggage was found damaged. Links were drawn to the sanitization procedure at the Macau International Airport. The press was even invited to the airport to witness a sanitization session. It is alleged that local entities spray bleach onto luggage as a means of sanitization.

The matter was raised at the

regular health press briefing yesterday, in addition to complaints from alleged victims that no help had been given to them even though they had filed complaints.

Lau Fong Chi, department head for communications and external affairs at the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), admitted that she had no information related to the complaints and suggested that her bureau was not the relevant authority capable of giving an answer.

"Perhaps the concerned parties should contact the Civil Aviation Authority, the airport administration company or the relevant airlines for an answer," Lau suggested.

CROSS-BORDER TRAFFIC

The Qingmao Border Checkpoint has been seen packed with people both inside and outside, with alleged conditions of human stacking, in the past few evenings. When questioned on the matter, Lei Tak Fai, division head at the Public Security Police Force (PSP), insisted that the police force has deployed extra officers to maintain order both in and out of the border building. It has also used various channels to encourage people to use other border checkpoints or cross the border during other times.

It was also alleged that some people were planning to use the Border Gate checkpoint at daytime and the Qingmao checkpoint at nighttime to evade certain restrictions. When commenting on the matter, Lei said the police would not avoid prosecuting wrongdoers if any were suspected of obstructing orders at border checkpoints.

The SSM also announced that, from next week onwards, the regular press briefing would only be held on Thursdays, unless otherwise announced or as changes to situations require.

Lawmaker receives complaints about lengthened nursery suspensions

ANTHONY LAM

LAWMAKER Ron Lam said he has sent a letter to the government as complaints were received concerning extended suspensions of service by certain daycare facilities.

According to the lawmaker, some parents have complained to him about last-minute notifications being received on August 7 from nurseries from which services had been purchased, informing them that friendly measures were suspended from August 8.

"Friendly measures" is a term used by the government to refer to services by daycare facilities, usually nurseries, outside of usual nursery hours.

On August 8, the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), the entity responsible for subsidized nurseries and elderly homes, issued a press statement that services at subsidized nurseries, elderly daycare centers and talent promotion centers for the physically impaired would be suspended from the next day.

Lam found it confusing

as the city had resumed its regular Covid-19 prevention state under which all social facilities should resume normal operations. He added that even though new positive cases had been detected in Zhuhai with footprints in Macau, the city did not face a great risk due to the fact that mass tests had been conducted with zero positive cases uncovered.

He criticized the extended suspensions ordered by the IAS by calling them unscientific, pointing out that the city had resumed

operations for dine-in and sports facilities.

Moreover, he pointed out that with regular SARS-CoV-2 tests ongoing in the city for certain groups of people as well as people returning to work, test-takers need daycare services so that they can resume a partially normal life.

He noted that a one-cut suspension to such services was conservative. Families should have the right to decide whether they would use such services. Such families also disclosed to the lawmaker their anxiety



regarding future suspensions of services when the city detects small numbers of scattered cases. At these times, it will be difficult for them to make arrangements

and care for needy family members.

As such, the lawmaker called on the IAS to make scientific assessments in handling such services.

CHINA'S OPENING-UP 'BIG TAILWIND' FOR FOREIGN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS: EXEC

CHINA has made substantial progress in opening up its financial markets over the past decade, creating an abundance of opportunities for foreign corporations and institutions, said a Beijing-based finance executive.

"China's bond market opening-up, together with simplified access for foreign bond issuers, has been a big tailwind for foreign institutions to expand their business," Samuel Fischer, head of China onshore Debt Capital Markets for Deutsche Bank, told Xinhua in an interview.

Over the past years, China has scrapped foreign ownership caps for securities, fund management, futures and life insurance firms, allowing multinationals to have a larger and stronger presence. Cross-border stock and bond connect schemes have also been launched to offer overseas in-

vestors easier access to the country's rapidly growing markets.

With China's capital market opening up and closer connectivity with global markets, the bank has discovered new opportunities around the globe, developing a business that "goes round the clock," the executive said.

When discussing the bond market, Fischer highlighted the role of Bond Connect in the development of China's bond market. "It has become the primary channel for overseas investors interested in the Chinese mainland interbank bond market," he said.

Fischer also noted that China decided in May to grant foreign investors access to the exchange bond market, saying the move is set to further facilitate foreign investments in the country and unify the cross-border management of funds. XINHUA

TERRORISM

CHINA BLOCKS UN SANCTIONS ON PAKISTANI EXTREMIST LEADER

EDITH M. LEDERER,
UNITED NATIONS

CHINA yesterday blocked the imposition of U.N. sanctions sought by the United States and India against the deputy chief of Jaish-e-Mohammad, a Pakistan-based extremist group designated by the United Nations as a terrorist organization.

Abdul Rauf Azhar has been under U.S. sanctions since December 2010 for acting for or on behalf of the group, known as JEM. India says Azhar was involved in the planning and execution of numerous terror attacks, including the 1999 hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft, the 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament and the 2016 attack on the Indian air force base in Pathankot.

In June, China put a hold on adding Abdul Rehman Makki, deputy chief of another Pakistani group proscribed by the U.N.,



Lashkar-e-Taiba, to the U.N. blacklist. Makki has been under U.S. sanctions since November 2010, and India says he has been involved in raising funds, recruiting and radicalizing young people to resort to violence, and planning attacks, including in Mumbai in 2008.

According to Pakistan's counter-terrorism agency, the government has

outlawed more than 65 militant groups, including Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba.

"We placed a hold because we need more time to study the case," said the spokesperson at China's U.N. Mission, who was not authorized to speak publicly.

He said the U.N. Security Council committee monitoring sanctions

allows "holds" on people proposed for sanctions, "and there have been quite a number of similar holds by committee members on listing requests."

A spokesperson for the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, who was also not authorized to speak publicly, said the United States "respects other countries' need to verify" that people proposed for sanctions meet their threshold for evidence required to justify being put on the U.N. sanctions blacklist.

"We strongly believe in the importance of the committee, which is to prevent and hold ISIS, al-Qaeda and their affiliates accountable for their illicit activities," the U.S. spokesperson said. "Further, the United States values cooperation with our Security Council partners to effectively use this tool in an apolitical way to stop terrorists from exploiting the global order to do their misdeeds." MDT/AP

AD

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INDEPENDENCE DAY

At 75, India seeks way forward in big but job-scarce economy

KRUTIKA PATHI, NEW DELHI

AS India's economy grew, the hum of factories turned the sleepy, dusty village of Manesar into a booming industrial hub, cranking out everything from cars and sinks to smartphones and tablets. But jobs have run scarce over the years, prompting more and more workers to line up along the road for work, desperate to earn money.

Every day, Sugna, a young woman in her early 20s who goes by her first name, comes with her husband and two children to the city's labor chowk — a bazaar at the junction of four roads where hundreds of workers gather daily at daybreak to plead for work. It's been days since she or her husband got work and she has only five rupees (six cents) in hand.

Scenes like this are an everyday reality for millions of Indians, the most visible signs of economic distress in a country where raging unemployment is worsening insecurity and inequality between the rich and poor. It's perhaps Prime Minister Narendra Modi's biggest challenge as the country marks 75 years of independence from British rule on Monday.

"We get work only once or twice a week," said Sugna, who says she earned barely 2,000 rupees (\$25) in the past five months. "What should I do with a life like this? If I live like this, how will my children live any better?"

Entire families leave their homes in India's vast rural hinterlands to camp at such bazaars,

found in nearly every city. Out of the many gathered in Manesar recently, only a lucky few got work for the day — digging roads, laying bricks and sweeping up trash for meager pay — about 80% of Indian workers toil in informal jobs including many who are self-employed.

India's phenomenal transformation from an impoverished nation in 1947 into an emerging global power whose \$3 trillion economy is Asia's third largest has turned it into a major exporter of things like software and vaccines. Millions have escaped poverty into a growing, aspirational middle class as its high-skilled sectors have soared.

"It's extraordinary — a poor country like India wasn't expected to succeed in such sectors," said Nimish Adhia, an economics professor at Manhattanville College.

This year, the economy is forecast to expand at a 7.4% annual pace, according to the International Monetary Fund, making it one of the world's fastest growing.

But even as India's economy swells, so has joblessness. The unemployment rate remains at 7% to 8% in recent months. Only 40% of working age Indians are employed, down from 46% five years ago, the Center for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) says.

"If you look at a poor person in 1947 and a poor person now, they are far more privileged today. However if you look at it between the haves and the have nots, that chasm has grown," said Gayathri

Vasudevan, chairperson of LabourNet, a social enterprise.

"While India continues to grow well, that growth is not generating enough jobs - crucially, it is not creating enough good quality jobs," said Mahesh Vyas, chief executive at CMIE. Only 20% of jobs in India are in the formal sector, with regular wages and security, while most others are precarious and low-quality with few to no benefits.

That's partly because agriculture remains the mainstay, with about 40% of workers engaged in farming.

As workers lost jobs in cities during the pandemic, many flocked back to farms, pushing up the numbers. "This didn't necessarily improve productivity - but you're employed as a farmer. It's disguised unemployment," Vyas said.

With independence from Britain in 1947, the country's leaders faced a formidable task: GDP was a mere 3% of the world's total, literacy rates stood at 14% and the average life expectancy was 32 years, said Adhia.

By the most recent measures, literacy stands at 74% and life expectancy at 70 years. Dramatic progress came with historic reforms in the 1990s that swept away decades of socialist control over the economy and spurred remarkable growth.

The past few decades inspired comparisons to China as foreign investment poured in, exports thrived and new industries - like information technology - were

born. But India, a latecomer to offshoring by Western multinationals, is struggling to create mass employment through manufacturing. And it faces new challenges in plotting a way forward.

Financing has tended to flow into profitable, capital intensive sectors like petrol, metal and chemicals. Industries employing large numbers of workers, like textiles and leather work, have faltered. This trend continued through the pandemic: despite Modi's 2014 'Make in India' pitch to turn the country into another factory floor for the world, manufacturing now employs around 30 million. In 2017, it employed 50 million, according to CMIE data.

As factory and private sector employment shrink, young job-seekers increasingly are targeting government jobs, coveted for their security, prestige and benefits.

Some, like 21-year-old Sahil Rajput, view such work as a way out of poverty. Rajput has been fervently preparing for a job in the army, working in a low-paid data-entry job to afford private coaching to become a soldier and support his unemployed parents.

But in June, the government overhauled military recruitment to cut costs and modernize, changing long-term postings into four-year contracts after which only 25% of recruits will be retained. That move triggered weeks of protests, with young people setting vehicles on fire.

Rajput knows he might not be able to get a permanent army job. "But I have no other options," he

said. "How can I dream of a future when my present is in tatters?"

The government is banking on technology, a rare bright spot, to create new jobs and opportunities. Two decades ago, India became an outsourcing powerhouse as companies and call centers boomed. An explosion of start-ups and digital innovation aims to recreate that success - "India is now home to 75,000 startups in the 75th year of independence and this is only the beginning," Minister of Commerce, Piyush Goyal, tweeted recently. More than 740,000 jobs have been created via start-ups, a 110% jump over the last six years, his ministry said.

There's still a long way to go, in educating and training a labor force qualified for such work. Another worry is the steady retreat of working women in India — from a high of nearly 27% in 2005 to just over 20% in 2021, according to World Bank data.

Meanwhile, the stopgap of farming appears increasingly precarious as climate change brings extreme temperatures, scorching crops.

Sajan Arora, a 28-year-old farmer in India's breadbasket state of Punjab, can no longer depend on ancestral farmland his family has relied on to survive. He, his wife and seven-month old daughter, plan to join family in Britain and find work there after selling some land.

"Agriculture has no way forward," said Arora, saying he will do whatever work he can get, driving a taxi, working in a store or on a construction site.

He's sad to leave his parents and childhood home behind, but believes the uncertainty of change offers "better prospects" than his current reality.

"If everything was right and well, why would we go? If we want a better life, we will have to leave," he said. **MDT/AP**

USA

Trump's bond with GOP deepens after primary wins, FBI search

STEVE PEOPLES, NEW YORK

DONALD Trump's pick for governor in the swing state of Wisconsin easily defeated a favorite of the Republican establishment.

In Connecticut, the state that launched the Bush family and its brand of compassionate conservatism, a fiery Senate contender who promoted Trump's election lies upset the state GOP's endorsed candidate. Meanwhile in Washington, Republicans ranging from Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell to conspiracy theorist Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene defended Trump against an unprecedented FBI search.

And that was just this week.

The rapid developments crystalized the former president's singular status atop a party he has spent the past seven years breaking down and rebuilding in his image. Facing mounting legal vulnerabilities and considering another presidential run, he needs support from the party to maintain his political career. But, whether they like it or not, many in the party also need Trump, whose endorsement has proven crucial for those seeking to advance to the November ballot.

"For a pretty good stretch, it felt like the Trump movement was losing more ground than it was gaining," said Georgia Republican Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan, who is urging his party to move past Trump. But now, he said, Trump is benefiting from "an incredibly swift tail wind."

The Republican response to the FBI's search of Trump's Florida estate this week was an especially stark example of how the party is keeping Trump nearby. Some of the Republicans considering challenges to Trump in a 2024 presidential primary, such as Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, were among those defending him. Even long-established Trump critics like Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan questioned the search, pressing for details about its circumstances.

But even before the FBI showed up at Mar-a-Lago, Trump was gaining momentum in his post-presidential effort to shape the GOP. In all, nearly 180 Trump-endorsed candidates up and down the

AP PHOTO



ballot have won their primaries since May while fewer than 20 have lost.

Only two of the 10 House Republicans who supported Trump's impeachment after the Jan. 6 insurrection are expected back in Congress next year. Rep. Jaime Herrera-Beutler, R-Wash., who conceded defeat after her Tuesday primary, was the latest to fall. Leading Trump antagonist Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., is at risk of joining her next week.

The Trump victories include a clean sweep of statewide primary elections in Arizona last week — including an election denier in the race for the state's chief elections official. Trump's allies also prevailed Tuesday across Wisconsin and Connecticut, a state long known for its moderate Republican leanings.

In Wisconsin's Republican primary for governor, wealthy Trump-backed businessman Tim Michels defeated former Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, an establishment favorite. And in Connecticut, Leora Levy, who promoted Trump's lie that the 2020 election was stolen, surged to an unexpected victory over a more moderate rival after earning Trump's official endorsement.

On Monday, just hours after the FBI search, Trump hosted a tele-town hall rally on her behalf. Levy thanked Trump in her acceptance speech, while railing against the FBI's search.

"All of us can tell him how upset and offended and disgusted we were at what happened to him," she said. "That is un-American. That is

what they do in Cuba, in China, in dictatorships. And that will stop."

Despite his recent dominance, Trump — and the Republicans close to him — face political and legal threats that could undermine their momentum as the GOP fights for control of Congress and statehouses across the nation this fall.

While Trump's picks have notched notable victories in primaries this summer, they may struggle in the fall. That's especially true in several governor's races in Democratic-leaning states such as Connecticut and Maryland, where GOP candidates must track to the center to win a general election.

Meanwhile, several Republicans with White House ambitions are moving forward with a busy travel schedule that will take them to politically important states where they can back candidates on the ballot this year and build relationships heading into 2024.

DeSantis plans to boost high-profile Republican contenders across Arizona, New Mexico, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Former Vice President Mike Pence, another potential 2024 presidential contender, is scheduled to appear next week in New Hampshire.

On the legal front, the FBI search was part of an investigation into whether the former president took classified records from the White House to his Florida residence. While Republicans have rallied behind Trump, very few facts about the case have been re-

leased publicly. Trump's attorneys have so far declined to release details from the search warrant.

Prosecutors in Washington and Georgia are also investigating Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election he falsely claimed was stolen. The Jan. 6 congressional commission has exposed damning details about Trump's behavior from Republican witnesses in recent hearings, which have prompted new concerns, at least privately, among the GOP establishment and donor class.

And yesterday [Macau time], Trump invoked his Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination as he testified under oath in the New York attorney general's long-running civil investigation into his business dealings.

Trump's legal entanglements represent a distraction at best for Republican candidates who'd rather focus on President Joe Biden's leadership, sky-high inflation and immigration troubles to help court moderate voters and independents in the general election.

"Today, every Republican in every state in this country should be talking about how bad Joe Biden is, how bad inflation is, how difficult it is to run a business and run a household," said Duncan, the Georgia lieutenant governor. "But instead, we're talking about some investigation, we're talking about Donald Trump pleading the Fifth, we're talking about Donald Trump endorsing some conspiracy theorist." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1964: GREAT TRAIN ROBBER ESCAPES FROM JAIL



A massive manhunt is underway across Britain after one of the so-called Great Train Robbers escaped from Winson Green Prison in Birmingham.

Charlie Wilson, 32, was apparently freed by a gang of three men who broke into the jail in the early hours of the morning.

They are believed to have stolen a ladder from a nearby builders' yard to break into the grounds of a mental hospital next to the prison, and then used a rope ladder to scale the 20ft (6.1 metre) high prison wall.

They coshed one of the two patrolling warders on duty and tied him up before opening Wilson's cell door and freeing him.

It is still not known how they got hold of the keys to Wilson's cell. Winson Green is a maximum security prison, and only one member of staff holds the keys to open cells at night.

At a news conference, the secretary of the Prison Officers' Association, F. Castell, said security arrangements at the prison should be enough to meet all normal requirements.

"But," he said, "today's happenings are abnormal. It seems likely that somehow or other a master key has been obtained which allowed these people to effect a simple entry to the prison after scaling the wall."

"This is so abnormal that you just cannot cater for it."

The Home Secretary, Henry Brooke, was on an official trip to the Channel Islands, but returned to London immediately.

He said he was "seriously concerned" by the escape, and ordered an inquiry to begin straight away.

Wilson is described as one of the masterminds behind the robbery last year. In the biggest heist of its kind, over £2.5m was stolen from a Royal Mail train.

Most of the money has never been recovered, and Wilson is believed to be the robber who knows where the missing money stolen in the raid is hidden.

He is reported to have told the police who arrested him two weeks after the robbery: "I don't see how you can make it stick without the poppy [money], and you won't find that."

He served just four months of his 30-year jail sentence before his escape.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Charlie Wilson went on the run for four years, and was finally re-captured in Canada and returned to jail in the UK, where he served out the rest of his sentence.

He moved to the Costa del Sol in Spain, and is alleged to have become involved in drugs dealing.

He was shot dead by a hitman on 23 April 1990 as he relaxed by his swimming pool.

A second train robber, Ronnie Biggs, escaped from jail in the following year, and fled to Brazil to evade capture.

He gave himself up voluntarily in May 2001, after 36 years of freedom, due to poor health.

The police arrested and jailed 13 of the 15 members of the gang who carried out the Great Train Robbery.

The lost money has never been recovered.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
A passionate party for two might be just the remedy. Try to spend some time on your own. You will be prone to carelessness that could result in accidents.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Try to mix business with pleasure while traveling. You can convince others to follow suit. Rest and relaxation may be required; minor health problems will prevail if you don't watch your diet.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Competitive games will be your forte. You will reap the rewards for your kind actions. You should make sure that your personal papers are in order.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Take time to look at any outdated papers or possible investments. Don't make excuses. Don't hold back. You will reap the rewards for your kind actions.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Try not to hurt your partner's feelings. Money can be made if you are willing to take a chance. You will have to make changes in order to eliminate the tension.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Don't let your jealousy be the reason for a decaying relationship. Disharmony in your relationship may cause minor ailments. Your intellectual charm will entice new love interests.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Romantic opportunities are evident if you get involved in large groups or organizations. You might get behind if you spend too much time debating senseless issues.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You need time to rejuvenate. Do not expect too much from others. You can mesmerize anyone you meet with your cultured attitude and outlook.

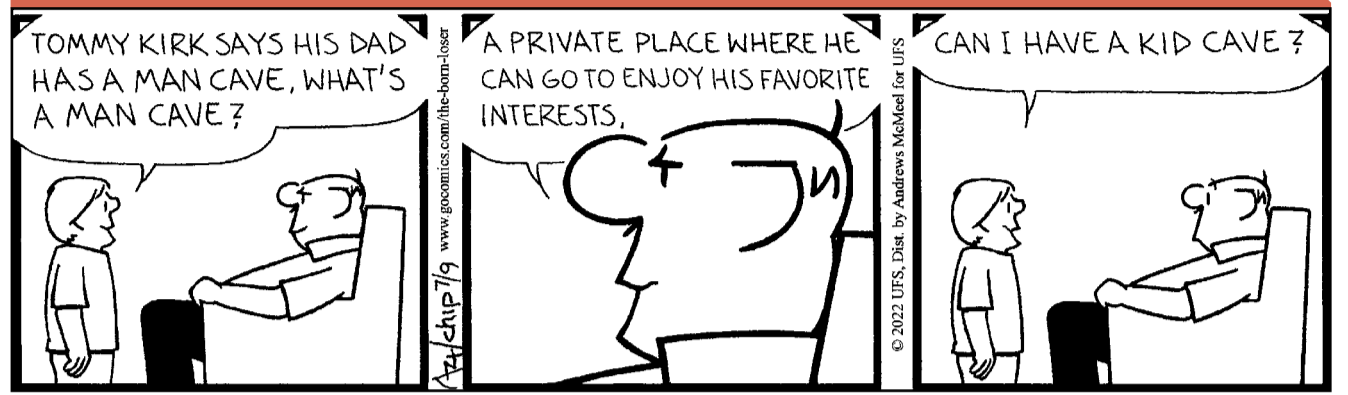
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Move forward if you want to turn your life around. Stop telling others about your problems. This day was meant for love. Make creative changes to your residence.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
If you join intellectual or cultural groups, you should meet individuals who stimulate you. Job changes are in order. Go for interviews or send out resumes.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You can make financial deals, but it may be best if you're not using your own cash. Offer consolation, but don't give them any direction. You might find that coworkers will support your endeavors.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You can make or break your personal relationship today. Don't put your professional reputation on the line. Your lack of responsibility and attention has been a key issue in your relationship.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

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- Cougar; 5- Corner key; 8- Spelunking site; 12- Long poem, such as those attributed to Homer; 13- Writer Sinclair; 15- WWII turning point; 16- Univ. recruiting group; 17- Norman Vincent ____; 18- Singer Adams; 19- Between teeth; 22- Neither Rep. nor Dem.; 23- Seed of a legume; 24- Soviet news service; 26- Revolve; 29- An archer; 31- Laugh syllable; 32- Satan; 34- Clear-headed; 36- "____ She Lovely?"; 38- Ventured; 40- Open wide; 41- Remains; 43- Brightest star in Cygnus; 45- Proscribe; 46- Current unit; 48- Labyrinthine; 50- Architect Saarinen; 51- Appomattox figure; 52- 252 wine gallons; 54- "Great" Australian landmark; 61- Hammett hound; 63- Less outgoing; 64- "Give that ____ cigar!"; 65- Enlarge, as a hole; 66- Eye drops; 67- Fighting; 68- Christiania, today; 69- Malt beverage; 70- Put aboard;

DOWN 1- Actress Gilpin; 2- On top of; 3- Baseball glove; 4- Take; 5- Blunted blade; 6- Ollie's partner; 7- Young male horse; 8- Alphabet trio; 9- Capital of Ethiopia; 10- Futile; 11- Watched warily; 13- Modernised; 14- Swell; 20- Went through, as the paper; 21- Rules; 25- Kind of alert; 26- Dreadlocks wearer; 27- Decorative; 28- Skirt; 29- Mix smoothly; 30- Sherpa's home; 31- Part of HRH; 33- Spleen; 35- Stimp's pal; 37- Class; 39- Traders; 42- Novi Sad native; 44- Ale, e.g.; 47- Way to cook; 49- Pertaining to the skin; 52- Poi source; 53- Employ; 55- Ostrichlike bird; 56- Unit of currency in Iran and Yemen; 57- Able was ____; 58- I could ____ horse!; 59- Geraint's beloved; 60- Kismet; 62- Latin 101 word;



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- 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
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- Telephone - Report 1000
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- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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- 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

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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
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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

JOCELYN NOVECK, MDT/AP

DRIVE IN

'EASTER SUNDAY' IS A LOVING ODE TO FILIPINO CULTURE

A boisterous extended clan gathers for a family holiday, launching the requisite arguments, hurt feelings, grudges, inside jokes, laughter, love, reconciliation and lots of eating, plus maybe a car chase.

So far, so familiar.

What's different about "Easter Sunday," a joyful if overly broad family dramedy starring comedian Jo Koy, is that this extended clan is a Filipino American family and the cast is almost all Filipino, with a few familiar actors finally getting cast as Filipino characters. And that in itself is a welcome achievement, especially for Koy, whose life is clearly echoed here and who anchors the enterprise with a winning charm. The writing could surely be sharper and the ending is more than a little sappy. But this is an undeniable step forward for representation on the big screen.

Koy clearly channels much of his own story in this, his feature film debut, drawing from his hugely popular standup comedy (Jay Chandrasekhar directs from a script by Kate Angelo and Ken Cheng.). He plays Joe Valencia, a Los Angeles comedian seeking his big acting break in Hollywood — just as he's navigating family issues on multiple fronts, all coming to a head on, well, Easter Sunday.

AP PHOTO



Jo Koy (center) in "Easter Sunday"

We meet Joe, a divorced dad, on a day of competing obligations. His son, Junior (a sweetly goofy Brandon Wardell) needs his presence at a school meeting to discuss mediocre grades. His own demanding mom, Susan (Lydia Gaston, blending imperious, demanding, loving and needy) is constantly calling, making sure he's on track for Easter celebrations. And he's auditioning for a

sitcom — something that'll take him beyond that beer commercial where he's famous for the line, "Let's get this party started, baby!"

Joe (unsurprisingly) misses the school meeting but makes the audition, only to be told that they love him but want a "half-Filipino accent" — even though it's an accent he doesn't have. "This show just wants a funny-sound-

ing Filipino," he complains to his agent, who tells him to just suck it up and do the accent. (The agent is played, winkingly, by director Chandrasekhar as a guy who's always suspiciously driving through tunnels and losing his cell signal.)

Easter Sunday comes, and Joe heads up the California coast to Daly City and the Filipino American neighborhood where his

mom and her sister, Teresa (Tia Carrere, who has said this is her first Filipino role in a 40-year career), are each planning holiday meals. They're feuding, too, over something or other. It doesn't help that the two women happen to wear the exact same exact dress to church (yes, that old joke.) Much funnier is their fierce competition over the balikbayan boxes filled with gifts to be sent to family back home.

As the holiday festivities proceed apace and Joe tries to keep his sitcom prospects alive, several subplots come into play. One involves Joe's lovable but less-than-sensible cousin Eugene (Eugene Cordero) and his ill-conceived entrepreneurial efforts, which land him and Joe into potentially deadly conflict with gun-toting bully Dev Deluxe (Asif Ali) and bring them together, improbably, with Filipino American star Lou Diamond Phillips, playing himself.

And yet, one can't help leaving with a smile. Food, family, a big karaoke scene ... and a spotlight on an immigrant community underrepresented in Hollywood. There are worse ways to spend 96 minutes.

"Easter Sunday," a Universal Studios release, has been rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "some strong language, and suggestive references." Running time: 96 minutes. ★★☆☆

AD

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TASTE OF EDESIA

Catch the tail end of season with fun

IRENE SAM, MDT

DUE to the covid situation, many of us still cannot travel much even though it's the heart of summer. Nevertheless, it's time to catch the tail end of this season with some thrilling family-friendly activities so that those of you who have kids and loved ones in Macau are still able to enjoy some quality time during vacation.

For good food, fun activities for both adult and kids, **Studio City** is the place to be this season. Holidays are the best time for exercise with the indoor basketball and badminton court at the incredible arena in **Studio City Event Center**. Studio City is also going to mark the debut of **Super Fun Zone** on International Youth Day designated by the United Nations in supporting to this year's theme as "Intergenerational Solidarity: Creating a World for All Ages". A brand-new family-friendly experience is launching to deliver a full day of fun as one can explore a playground like no other in Macau. The four-level Super Fun Zone covers 29,600 square feet of pure excitement in a fun indoor

complex designed for adventurous explorers. Featuring a wide range of experiences in five themed zones – Under the Sea, Mountain, Forest, Space Station and Outer Space. There will be something for everyone to explore from classic fun to thrilling challenges.

Studio City Water Park has also resumed operation to cool down the temperature, featuring a variety of exhilarating and family-friendly water rides and attractions, including a towering 20-meter slide complex, a giant bucket that tips out 1.8 tons of water every few minutes, a kid-friendly area boasting a fountain and slides as well as a 450-meter river adventure that takes guests on an action-packed joyride.

Lastly, while there are thrills from entertainment, one may also enjoy a relaxing moment at Zensa Spa, Beauty Salon, Fitness Centers and Outdoor Pool. Restaurants including Joyride Diner and Rossi Pizza have reopened, whereas the Michelin-starred Pearl Dragon will open for 7 days a week starting August 12th with a wide range of selections for an amazing dining experience.



Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu



THE DIAMOND HILL 1500M TURF

2022-08-14|Sun|17:55

Star of Venus has not run his best races lately and he has not been consistent in his last few runs since his last win in 1200M turf, albeit not in the money but not far off from the first four. In his recent morning work his trainer has him doing a lot of schooling in putting him into the right condition; **Star of Venus** also building up his muscle as well as his shiny coat as seen in his works. This is a good sign for this Per Incanto offspring, a good indication that his trainer is ready to let him to run a big race, hopefully this Sunday would bring fruitful result for his connection as well as for his supporters. W.H. Lao will ride him and he drawn a good gate to run this race, let's hope that he can obliged.



Race 4 Horse No. 7 Star of Venus Win & Place bets for the day.

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

RESPONSIBLE DIPLOMACY OF ROK WILL EARN RESPECT AND PROMOTE REGIONAL STABILITY

Marking the first high-level contact between China and the Republic of Korea since the Yoon Suk-yeol administration took office, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi's meeting with his ROK counterpart Park Jin on Tuesday in Qingdao, Shandong province, underscores the two neighbors' strong political will to strengthen communication and deepen understanding on issues of mutual concern.

The two diplomats discussed a variety of issues of bilateral and multilateral significance, including bilateral economic cooperation, the ROK's participation in the United States-initiated chip alliance which intends to exclude China from the global semiconductor supply chain, the issues concerning the ROK's deployment of the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system and the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula.

Understandably, the ROK, as a US ally, is facing increasing pressure from the US to participate in its initiatives to contain China.

As Seoul is slated to attend a preliminary meeting to lay down the ground rules for joining the Chip 4 alliance with Washington next month, Park shouldered a mission to explain the ROK's position on the sensitive issue and convince Beijing that it does not want to hurt bilateral economic cooperation.

In fact, Yoon's remarks on Monday that his government is looking into the Chip 4 issue in the light of national interest also casts light on how the ROK should deal with this thorny issue: It should not let the US lead it by the nose as the US chip alliance will create an all-lose scenario, dealing a heavy blow to international supply chains and threatening the current robust and strong momentum in bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

Similar logic applies to the THAAD-related issues as the US only wants to drive a wedge between the ROK and China and disrupt efforts that aim to build peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, neither of which serves the ROK's national interests.

Handling such sensitive issues needs prudence as neither Seoul nor Beijing wants any misstep and misjudgment to take a toll on their productive cooperation.

By sending its top diplomat to China to facilitate timely exchange of views and show the importance it attaches to ties with its close neighbor, the new ROK administration has certainly earned some credit. It is also noteworthy that thanks to the ROK's efforts, US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi failed to stir up the Taiwan question again during her visit to Seoul last week.

All these indicate the Yoon government is taking a pragmatic stance on China-related issues which is key to keeping the right trajectory of bilateral ties and contributing to regional peace and development.

A very high portion of Indonesians have antibodies to deal with the COVID-19 transmission, according to a serological survey conducted by the country's health ministry and the Faculty of Public Health of the University of Indonesia.

The survey found that 98.5% of the Indonesian population had antibodies as of July, compared to around 88% the survey found in December 2021.

"People get these antibodies through vaccination, infection, or both," said Iwan Ariawan, one of the researchers, in a virtual

press conference yesterday.

The situation is in line with an increase in vaccination coverage, including the administering of booster doses since Jan. 12.

The discipline of health protocols remains important, Ariawan added, as a high percentage of the population having antibodies does not guarantee that people will not be infected with COVID-19 but only reduces the severity and mortality.

The survey was conducted on more than 17,000 respondents in 100 districts in Indonesia by questionnaires and blood tests.

AP PHOTO



A herd of elephants make their way through the Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe

AFRICAN WILDLIFE PARKS FACE CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE THREATS

WANJOHI KABUKURU,
 MOMBASA

AFRICA'S national parks, home to thousands of wildlife species such as lions, elephants and buffaloes, are increasingly threatened by below-average rainfall and new infrastructure projects, stressing habitats and the species that rely on them.

A prolonged drought in much of the continent's east, exacerbated by climate change, and large-scale developments, including oil drilling and livestock grazing, are hampering conservation efforts in protected areas, several environmental experts say.

The at-risk parks stretch all the way from Kenya in the east — home to Tsavo and Nairobi national parks — south to the Mkomazi and Serengeti parks in Tanzania, the Quirimbas and Gorongosa parks in Mozambique and the famous Kruger National Park in South Africa, and west to the Kahuzi Biega, Salonga and Virunga reserves in Congo.

The parks not only protect flora and fauna but also act as natural carbon sinks — storing carbon dioxide emitted into the air and reducing the effects of global warming.

An estimated 38% of Africa's biodiversity areas are under severe threat from climate change and infras-

tructure development, said Ken Mwathe of BirdLife International.

"Key biodiversity areas over the years, especially in Africa, have been regarded by investors as idle and ready for development," said Mwathe. "Governments allocate land in these areas for infrastructural development."

He added that the "powerlines and other energy infrastructure cause collisions with birds, due to low visibility. The numbers killed this way are not few."

In their quest to bolster living standards and achieve sustainable development goals, such as access to clean water and food, boosting jobs and economic growth and improving the quality of education, African governments have set their sights on large building projects, many of them funded by foreign investments, especially by China.

The proposed East African Oil Pipeline, for example, which the Ugandan government says can help lift millions out of poverty, runs through Uganda's Kidepo valley, Murchison Falls and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, threatening species and drawing criticism from climate campaigners.

The growth of urban populations and the building that goes with it, like new roads, electricity grids, gas pipes, ports and railways, have also added to the pres-

sure on parks, conservationists said.

But they add that replacing wildlife with infrastructure is the wrong approach for economic growth.

"We have to have a future where wildlife is not separated from people," said Sam Shaba, the program manager at the Honeyguide Foundation in Tanzania, an environmental non-profit organization.

When "people start to see that living with wildlife provides the answer to sustainable development ... that's the game-changer," said Shaba.

Most of Africa's wildlife parks were created in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by colonial regimes that fenced off the areas and ordered local people to stay out. But now conservationists are finding that a more inclusive approach to running the parks and seeking the expertise of Indigenous communities that live around the parks can help protect them, said Ademola Ajagbe, Africa regional managing director of The Nature Conservancy.

"The inhabitants of these areas are forcefully evicted or prevented from living there such as the Maasai (in Tanzania and Kenya), Twa and Mbutis (in central Africa) who for generations have lived with wildlife," said Simon Counsell, an advisor with Survival International. **MDT/AP**

Climate Landfills are releasing a significant amount of planet-warming methane into the atmosphere from the decomposition of waste, a study suggests. Scientists used satellite data from four major cities worldwide — Delhi and Mumbai in India, Lahore in Pakistan and Buenos Aires in Argentina — and found that city-level emissions in 2018 and 2019 were 1.4 to 2.6 times higher than earlier estimates.

AP PHOTO



France More than 1,000 firefighters were struggling yesterday to contain a major wildfire which has burned a large area of pine forest in southwestern France, in a region that was already ravaged by flames last month. Authorities said more than 68 square kilometers have burned since Tuesday in the Gironde region and neighboring Landes as France, like other European countries, swelters through a hot and dry summer.

AP PHOTO



Hungary Inflatable swimming pools are the new must-have item around Budapest as residents of Hungary's sprawling capital struggle to stay cool amid one of the most oppressively hot summers in the country's history. The pools have been popping up everywhere — in shared, open spaces outside apartment buildings, on small balconies, but also in the backyards of suburban houses where surrounding greenery can't mitigate the heat.

AP PHOTO



Vatican Pope Francis has met with a fourth group of transgender people who found shelter at a Rome church, the Vatican newspaper reported yesterday. L'Osservatore Romano said the encounter took place Wednesday on the sidelines of Francis' weekly general audience. The newspaper quoted Sister Genevieve Jeanningros and the Rev. Andrea Conocchia as saying the pope's welcome brought their guests hope.