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IN COOPERATION WITH THE MAINLAND, PJ ARRESTED TWO HONG KONGERS AND SEIZED MORE THAN 3,700 ILLEGAL PSYCHOTROPIC DRUGS

▲ P4

FISHERMEN ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR GOV'T SUPPORT FOLLOWING FISHING MORATORIUM

▲ P4

CHINA CUTS POWER TO FACTORIES, HOMES AS RESERVOIRS FALL IN DROUGHT

▲ P10



AP PHOTO



India The remains of an Indian army soldier have been found more than 38 years after he went missing on a glacier at the highest point along the heavily militarized contested border between India and Pakistan in Kashmir. The soldier and 17 other colleagues were occupying a ridge on Siachen Glacier, high in the Karakoram range in disputed Kashmir's Ladakh region, in May 1984 when they were hit by an avalanche. Five bodies remained missing.

AP PHOTO



South Korea's president said yesterday his government has no plans to pursue its own nuclear deterrent and called instead for more diplomacy in the face of growing North Korean nuclear weapons capabilities, even as the North test-fired two suspected cruise missiles. The launches were detected from North Korea's western coast hours before South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol used a news conference to urge Pyongyang to return to diplomacy.

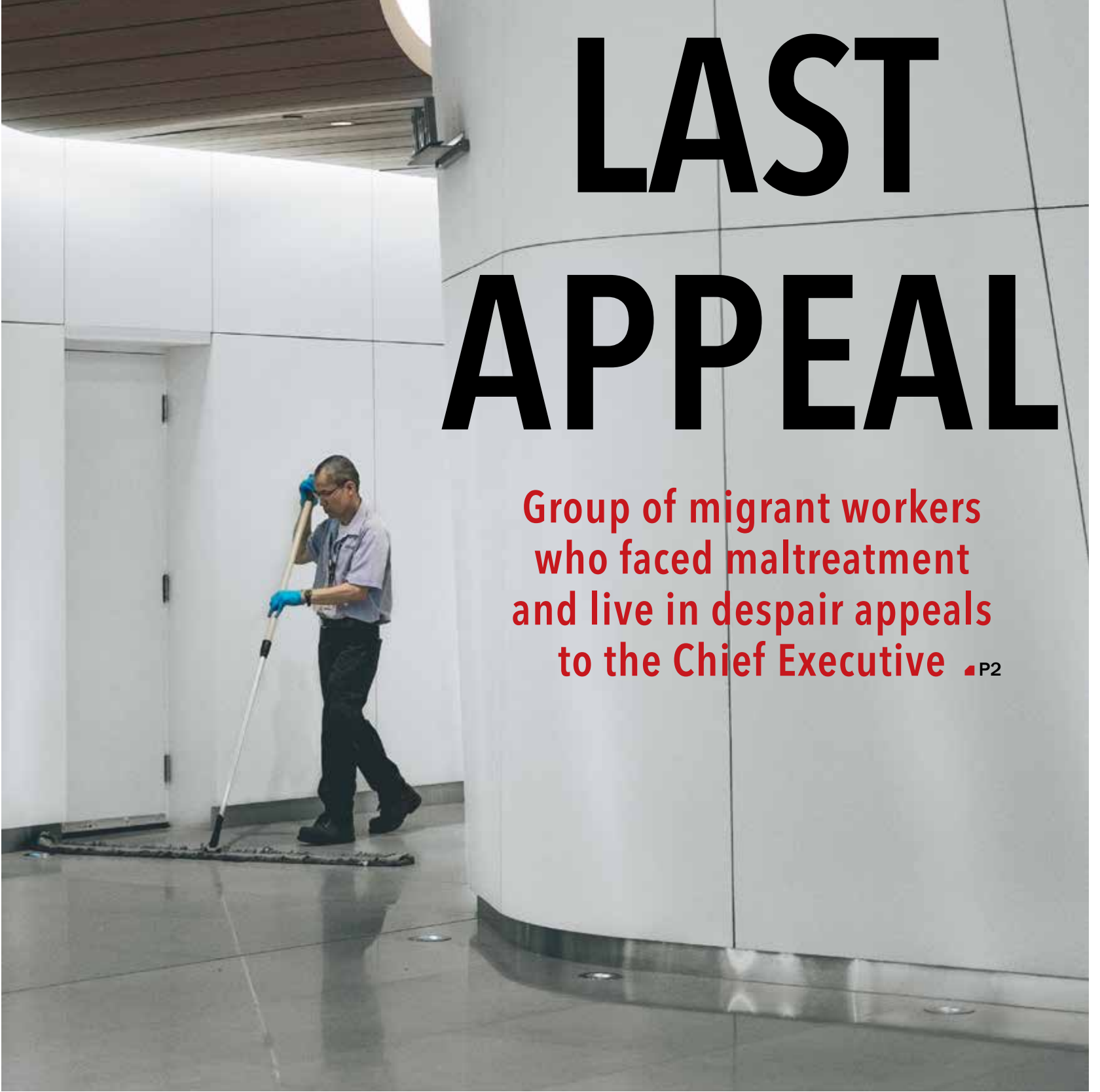
AP PHOTO



Japan A former Tokyo Olympic organizing committee board member and three people from a clothing company that was a surprise sponsor of the 2020 Games were arrested on bribery suspicions yesterday. Haruyuki Takahashi, 78 (pictured), a former executive at advertising company Dentsu, is suspected of receiving bribes from the former head of Aoki Holdings Inc. and two company employees, the prosecutors' office said.

More on backpage

VERNE HO



LAST APPEAL

Group of migrant workers who faced maltreatment and live in despair appeals to the Chief Executive ▲ P2

TRAVEL
AIR MACAU GRADUALLY RESUMES MAINLAND ROUTES

BOBO WANG



▲ P3

SANDS CHINA HONORS EMPLOYEES' PANDEMIC SUPPORT AT RALLY

Sands China expressed its appreciation to its team members at a rally yesterday at The Londoner Macao, recognising their support to the company's pandemic relief work. Among their efforts, Sands China volunteers took "more than 27,000 shifts to assist the operation of various nucleic acid test (NAT) stations in Macau," the gaming operator said in a statement. Team members at the designated quarantine hotel, Sheraton Grand Macao, have worked in closed-loop shifts, as well as those who worked at The Parisian Macao, which joined the effort in June to support the community during the outbreak of Covid-19 cases.

CULTURAL CENTER TO PRESENT MUSICAL IN SEPTEMBER

The Macao Cultural Centre presents The Walk-in Family, the latest in a string of productions commissioned and conceived to support the local performing arts scene. The new musical will premiere at the Cultural Center's Small Auditorium in two shows scheduled for September 23 and 24. The play depicts the shenanigans of a group of people who, driven by a cheerful energy, furtively moves into a big furniture store. Impelled by a set of shared illusions, pursuing a certain lifestyle and aspiring to the same middle-class dreams, the bunch grows closer, turning the public space into an unlikely home. The Walk-in Family is a local musical conceived by a group of artists.

MPU WELCOMES OVER 1,600 NEW STUDENTS

The Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) welcomed more than 1,600 new students enrolled in undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programmes for the academic year 2022/2023. In an online opening ceremony, MPU Rector Professor Im Sio Kei called on students to "uphold the spirit of patriotism and love for Macau, set goals, work hard, and broaden their horizons." Im also "encouraged students to have the whole world in view and undertake the role of pioneers of the time to make contributions to the development of Macau and the country," as cited in a statement issued by the university.

GROUP OF MIGRANT WORKERS WHO FACED MALTREATMENT APPEALS TO CE

LYNZY VALLES

A group of 18 non-resident workers has submitted a petition to the Chief Executive (CE) requesting assistance regarding the alleged abuse they have faced while being employed in a cleaning service company.

Several weeks ago, a group of around 30 workers from Tai Koo Cleaning Service Company sought assistance from the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) after the local firm failed pay their wages for the past three months.

The minimum wage for local cleaners and security guards hired by property management service suppliers or those working in residential buildings is MOP6,656 per month. The daily salary is calculated on the basis of an expected maximum of eight hours work per day.

However, for several dozen of these workers employed by the company, receiving wages was always a long shot – despite having worked, sometimes without days off.

According to the DSAL, non-resident employees working in Macau are entitled to the rights and protections in the Labour Relations Law and the Law for the Employment of Non-resident Workers.

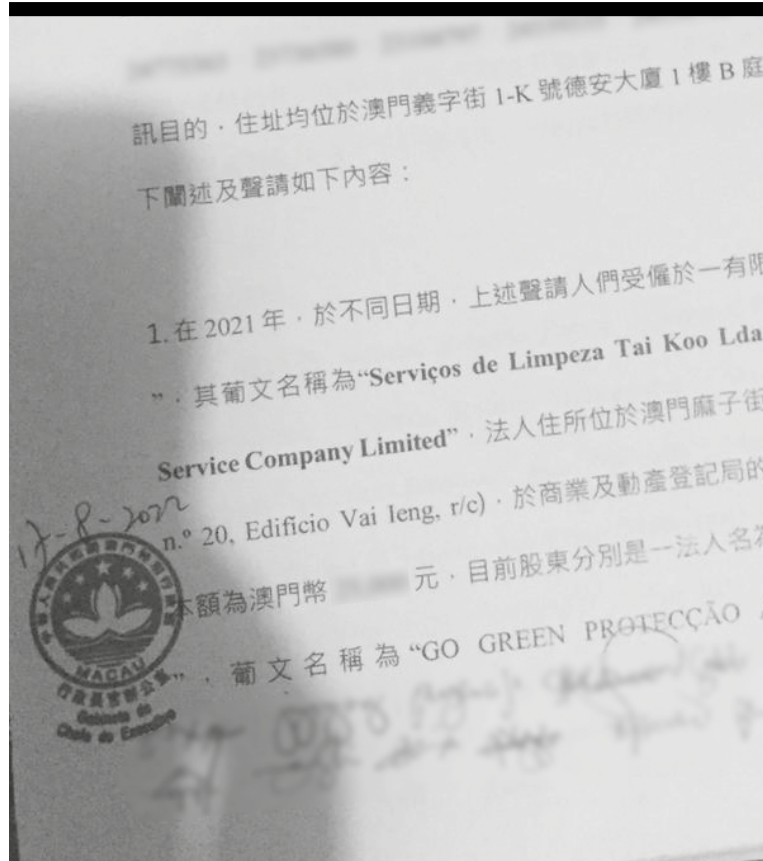
However, these workers have endured months of no wages, while living here in the city, amid the pandemic.

Yolly Behuco, one of the laid off workers who filed a report with DSAL, has shared with the Times the treatment she and her colleagues experienced.

Behuco has been employed since June 2021 to provide cleaning services to the company's different clients such as hotels, casinos and other private companies.

However, since she began working, along with the other 17 workers, they have not received duplicate copies of their employment contracts, duly signed by the employers, an act that violates the labor law.

Despite some of them ha-



Petition letter submitted to the CE yesterday

ving to work a 12-hour shift, they have only been paid 20% instead of the 50% stipulated by law, as cited in the petition letter.

Behuco was outsourced to a local hotel back in June 17 to June 31 2021, where she worked an average of 12 hours per day – yet was only paid MOP2,703 – far less than her basic salary of eight hours of work.

Labor disputes among non-resident workers have been ongoing in the city. The Times previously reported that labor disputes filed by non-resident workers have recorded a slight increase in the first quarter of this year compared to last year, despite the decreasing number of migrant workers in the city.

Through the mediation of DSAL, the company has offered to pay a month's wages to the employees. However, many of them have refused as the offer is insufficient, and it does not do justice to what they have endured.

Though they believed they

had encountered the worst, little did they know that the worst was yet to come.

"18 of us were terminated by the company after we complained to the DSAL. They have fired us without formally notifying us. Their notice was only through a text message. We didn't even know that they had cut our blue-cards and the notice on that came while we were working," said Behuco.

Aside from being unpaid for the past three months, facing uncertainty on where these filed cases would lead, these non-resident workers are facing a six-month ban

"They even gave me 18 warning letters. Never did I receive one since I worked for them" she lamented.

Currently, all of them are under a special authorization to stay visa.

None of them could leave as their employers had not

provided for an airfare – another action contrary to the city's regulations.

Aside from being unpaid for the past three months, facing uncertainty on where these filed cases would lead, these non-resident workers are facing a six-month ban, meaning they are forbidden to seek a new job for the next six months as they have "ended" their contracts abruptly.

According to the law, if the employee resigns before the expiry of the term of the contract, he/she won't be granted a new work permit within six months, unless the resignation was for a just cause.

"We were only fighting for what we deserve. How can we survive on zero wages for three months?" Behuco lamented.

"We underwent the recent partial lockdown with barely nothing, not even paying rents for the past three months," she added.

According to their petition, the company has three managers, yet only one was allowed to sign checks. It was alleged that the manager was on the mainland, therefore their salaries are being withheld.

They continued to work under the threat that if they did not do so, they would be fired.

According to the law, as cited in DSAL, if a written termination notice is not given, or is not given within 30 days, and the employer dismisses an employee, the employee shall be entitled to compensation equivalent to twice the amount of statutory compensation.

However, for these workers, such compensation is deemed to be nearly impossible given what they have already gone through.

For them, what matters now is that they get paid for the months during which they worked hard. After all, most of them also have families who rely on them back home.

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

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

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

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaodailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaodailytimes.com
ADDRESS_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
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CPU members unhappy with gov't criteria on building height

RENATO MARQUES

SEVERAL members of the Urban Planning Committee (CPU) have expressed disagreement with the criteria used by the government to evaluate the maximum height allowable for buildings that can be built in a certain land plot.

The argument started yesterday during the fourth regular meeting of 2022 of the CPU while analyzing the urban conditions plan (PCU) for a land plot located in central Macau in the corner of number 9 of the Rua de Ferreira do Amaral with numbers 2-2B of the Rua de Abreu Nunes.

According to conditions drafted by the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU), the maximum height allowed for this land plot is 20.5 meters, a ceiling that raised concerns from several members since, in the same area, there are buildings with a maximum height of as much as 47 meters.

The first to present a discordant opinion was the member Tam Chi Wai who noted precisely the height factor and expressed concerns that this type of approach from DSSCU could potentially "pose harm to the rights of the landowners."

The DSSCU explained that height is not the only factor considered when reviewing where land plots are located, adding that there are other land condi-

RENATO MARQUES



tions taken into account, such as the possibility of building a parking lot, among others.

The same DSSCU representative also noted that, according to the guidelines of the bureau, only land plots with an area larger than 350 square meters (m²) are considered for the construction of high-rise buildings and since, in this case, the land area is only 325m², the services concluded that it does not meet the

conditions needed for issuing a PCU for an M class building with a height up to 20.5m

Responding to the DSSCU, another committee member, sharing Tam's opinion, called on the government to have a little more flexibility in the guidelines, noting that 325m² is just less than 10% short than the 350m² required by the DSSCU, noting that when they encountered such "small differences"

the CPU should allow the architect and owner to try to present a project design that can fulfill the interests of both the government and the land owner, instead of creating a limitation at the start by issuing a PCU that does not give them any options.

"We have had this before. We should keep this flexibility," the same member said in an opinion backed by Tam also noting that the minimum of 350m² is

just an internal guideline from the DSSCU and is not presented in any rules or documentation as an essential requirement.

In response, the chairman of the CPU, and deputy director of DSSCU, Mak Tat Io, said that the 350m² requirement was the result of an easing of a prior requirement that demanded 400m².

Mak explained that even if the DSSCU lowers this requirement, the experience that officials have in dealing with these cases is that the conditions for a high-rise building are impossible to meet for such a small plot, as conditions are much higher for this type of building.

For the CPU chairman to issue a PCU that allows a 47m building on such a plot is to "create an unrealistic expectation and give an unrealistic illusion to the owner" that will waste a lot of time and money before it is finally discovered that is not possible to meet the criteria.

Not satisfied with the response from the government, member Choi Wan Sun then proposed that in these cases the DSSCU issue two or more PCUs with different conditions according to the case of the low-rise or high-rise building so the owner and the architect could evaluate the options and decide which one better suits their purpose.

Mak said that the services will evaluate such a proposal but noted that the DSSCU "always use [on the issuing of PCUs] conditions that are more appropriate to each situation."

Another committee member also proposed that the public be informed of the land area required, as they may then consider acquiring or negotiating with the owners of adjoining land plot before requesting a PCU.

THE city's flag carrier, Air Macau, has said it plans gradually to resume more flights between Macau and the mainland based on market conditions.

This comes as the city is returning to its pre-Covid outbreak status, dropping strict restrictions previously imposed as the city battled its largest outbreak in mid-June.

Several mainland cities such as Zhuhai have implemented a measure that includes a seven-day centralized isolation at hotels and three-day health monitoring at home for all people entering Zhuhai from Macau.

The move has discouraged travelers from entering Macau.

Meanwhile, Air Macau said it plans to keep its roundtrip flights connecting Macau to Beijing as well as Hangzhou, Zhejiang province limited to once daily.

TRAVEL

Air Macau gradually resumes major routes

Amid the recent pandemic, Air Macau only operated flights connecting the city with Beijing, Chengdu and Nanning.

This month, the carrier will also operate four round-trip flights a week between Macau and Nanjing, Jiangsu province and between Macau and Chengdu, Sichuan province.

During the weekend, Air Macau started round-trip flights once a week between Macau and Shanghai as well as Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

According to the flag carrier, such a gradual increase of flights, as well as the resumption of major routes, would boost "exchanges, per-

sonnel communications and cargo flows between Macau and the Chinese mainland cities and create favorable conditions for mutually beneficial cooperation," as cited in a report issued by China Daily.

With the resumption of quarantine-free travel with Zhuhai, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has rolled out online and offline promotions to attract tourists to Macau.

The MGTO is also cooperating with e-commerce and online travel platforms to launch tour packages with themes including food, festivals, hotel discounts, world heritage attractions and museums. LV

BOBO WANG



FISHERMEN ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR GOV'T SUPPORT FOLLOWING FISHING MORATORIUM

STAFF REPORTER

A fishermen's association is calling on the government for support following the fishing moratorium that ended yesterday.

The annual summer fishing ban began May 1 in China's major seas in the north, east, and south to conserve the marine fishery.

The fishing ban covers the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the waters north of 12 degrees north latitude in the South China Sea.

Despite the end of the ban, most fishing boats in Macau are still docked without any arrangements to leave.

While in Zhuhai, over 1,200 fishing boats were allowed to leave and work.

This has caused local fishermen to be disappointed with the authority.

"Due to the pandemic, the Zhuhai authority had prevented local fishing boats leaving for the



mainland for repair work, and this had a big impact on the local fishing sector," said a representative of Macau Fishermen's Mutual Help Association to local media Exmoo.

"The situation (fishing boats docked in the port) may not change soon. It depends on the trends of the pandemic and mea-

sures imposed by the Macau government," she added.

"Fishing boats are also subject to the pandemic prevention measures of the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau, resulting in the fact that the goods of local fishing boats can't be sold to Hong Kong fishermen," the representative explained.

Since the Zhuhai authority has blocked people who travel to Zhuhai from Hong Kong, local fishing boats can't work and their income has been affected. "But the Zhuhai authority has granted RMB13,800 to fishermen who are affected by the restriction," the representative added.

In Macau, the government

launched a training course for fishermen during the fishing moratorium. Fishermen who completed the course were able to get an allowance of MOP10,000,

"The enrollment conditions of the course are too strict, because it required that applicants have no other jobs, including no part-time jobs, for them to be eligible to apply for the training course," she said.

Furthermore, according to the representative, most fishermen expressed support for the new anchorage rules for Inner Harbour that was published yesterday yet hoped that authorities can adjust some measures.

One of the rules prohibits the use of fire to cook meals and the fishermen's association considered this rule unreasonable.

There is also a requirement that some activities are only allowed when the boat is in the control area, and the association considered that this is inconvenient for fishermen.



CRIME

Two Hong Kongers arrested in drug trafficking case

STAFF REPORTER

WHILE working with mainland police, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has detected a drug trafficking case, involving two Hong Kong residents who were arrested after more than 3,700 illegal psychotropic drugs were seized.

The two suspects involved are Hoi, a 54-year-old unemployed Hong Kong man and Chui, a 53-year-old Hong Kong man, who has claimed he is a construction worker.

The two suspects were living in the mainland,

the PJ said in a press conference yesterday.

According to the investigation, the authority in Zhuhai informed the PJ that its police had found two suspicious packages transiting via Central America and the mainland to Macau, and that a large number of psychotropic substances had been found in the packages.

The two packages were received by the suspect, Hoi.

After receiving notification from the authority in Zhuhai, the PJ contac-

ted the Macau Customs Service and mainland police and jointly arrested the two men.

The PJ reported that the two packages were transferred from the mainland to Macau on June 18 and transported to the collection store, where PJ officers waited for the suspect to collect the packages.

The PJ found the receiver of the package, Hoi, had received another package that he did not pick up.

The PJ therefore monitored the three packages.

Due to the pandemic, there was a delay transferring the three packages to Macau.

On August 16 the suspect, Hoi, went to a collection store in Fai Chi Kei to collect the three packages and met another suspect, Chui.

The PJ intercepted the two suspects immediately when they met, and found the three packages in their possession.

The first two packages contained 2,217 pills of various colors. The third package contained 1,516 pills wrapped in tin foil, and these drugs were hidden in a package of masks and chocolates.

3,733 drugs need to be assessed by the PJ.

During the investigation, Hoi admitted he was entrusted by others to take charge of the collection work in Macau. He claimed that he could receive RMB200 to 300 as payment for each transaction. He admitted that he knew transfer of the drugs is prohibited.

The second suspect, Chui, did not admit to committing the crime.

The PJ said that the two men were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office under the offence of illegal trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

CRIME

TOURIST LOST NEARLY RMB30,000 IN PHONE SCAM

STAFF REPORTER

A mainland tourist allegedly lost RMB30,000 to a fraudster pretending to be a health authority employee in the neighboring region, according to the Judiciary Police (PJ).

During the inspection, the victim told the local police he received a phone call claiming to be from a health official on the mainland last Saturday. The suspect told the victim that, according to the phone number of the victim, it showed he has been to the lockdown area, and that his health code will turn to red.

He denied what the culprit said, then the suspect told

the victim that their personal information would be stolen.

The suspect then transferred the phone call to another male suspect, who claimed to be a representative of police on the mainland and talked with the victim via video call.

After, the victim believed what the suspect said and provided personal information, including his credit card number.

After giving the personal information to the suspect, the victim received a notice of nearly RMB30,000 debit from the bank.

The victim realized it was a fraud and called the police.

No one has been arrested in this case so far.



PROPERTY

Real estate transactions down in Q2, pre-sales fall 20%

RENATO MARQUES

REAL estate transactions fell over the second quarter of 2022 (Q2), official statistical information from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows.

According to the official release, only 1,232 building units and parking spaces were traded in the period April to June this year with the figure of residential units dropping by 12.4% when compared with the first quarter of this year, while parking spaces dropped less (9%).

Drops were also noted in the price of the residential units traded, with the total value dropping by 13.0% to MOP4.85 billion (-13% quarter-on-quarter).

Dropping even further was the volume of pre-sales of residential units that decreased by 20% quarter-on-quarter



while the value of these sales fell 30.8%.

Still, the average price per square meter remained steady with the overall average price of residential units (MOP94,800) dropping by 1.3% quarter-on-quarter.

Taipa was the location where the prices per square meter were lower (MOP93,387), followed by the Peninsula (MOP93,791) and Coloane (MOP107,042).

While the average price dropped by 2.1% and 8.6%, respectively for the last two, those in Taipa registered a small increase of 0.9%.

For commercial and industrial units, the average price per square meter of usable area of office units fell 11.5% quarter-on-quarter to MOP79,798, while the price of industrial units decreased 8.7% to MOP46,025.

At the end of June, there

were 7,620 residential units in the design stage and 2,146 under construction in the private sector.

Residential units under inspection totaled 100, with 85 units in the Peninsula and 15 units in Coloane. During the quarter, 39 residential units were issued construction permits, and six residential units were issued with a license of use; all of them studio flats located in the Peninsula.

GAMING

DAVID CHOW EXITS MACAU LEGEND

GAMING tycoon Davin Chow Kam Fai has resigned from the board of Macau Legend Development Ltd, a firm he co-founded in 2006.

According to a filing, Macau Legend said that former lawmaker Chow had retired as a co-chairman of the board and a non-executive director.

"He has also ceased to be a member of both the remuneration committee and the nomination committee of the board," the statement added.

Li Chu Kwan, chairman and executive director of the firm remarked, "he wishes to focus on his other commitments and did not offer himself for re-election at the AGM upon retirement by rotation in accordance with the articles of as-

sociation of the company."

Chow's wife, Melinda Chan, remains chief executive of Macau Legend.

The appointment of Chan in March came a month after junket mogul Levo Chan, a major shareholder and co-chairman of Macau Legend, was arrested on suspicion of operating illegal online gambling and side-betting activities.

Earlier this year, Chow blasted the government's diversification strategy and the proposed changes to the current gaming sector regulations.

"The gaming industry in Macau is important. [...] Concentrate on the old industries and make them grow. It is the only way to survive in the next five years," he previously said in an interview. LV



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Military personnel stand next to Harpoon A-84, anti-ship missiles and AIM-120 and AIM-9 air-to-air missiles prepared for a weapon loading drills in front of a F16V fighter jet at the Hualien Airbase yesterday

STRAIT CRISIS

TAIWAN, CHINA HOLD OPPOSING MILITARY DRILLS AMID TENSIONS

JOHNSON LAI, HUALIEN

TAIWAN is staging military exercises to show its ability to resist Chinese pressure to accept Beijing's political control over the self-governing island, following new rounds of threatening drills from China.

The exercises yesterday off the southeastern county of Hualien follow days of Chinese missile fi-

rings and incursions into Taiwan's sea and airspace by ships and planes from the People's Liberation Army, the military wing of China's ruling Communist Party.

"We strongly condemn Communist China's continuous military provocations around Taiwan's sea and air that undermine regional peace," Taiwan government's spokesperson Sun Li-fang told reporters at Hualien Air Force Base.

"Communist China's military operations just provide us with the opportunity for combat-readiness training," Sun said.

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Joanne Ou said China was using recent visits by U.S. Congress members including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi as a pretext for escalating its attempts to intimidate Taiwan into accepting what it calls its terms for "pea-

ceful reunification."

"China launched military provocations on these grounds. This is absurd and a barbaric act, which also undermines regional stability and interferes with shipping and commercial activities in the Indo-Pacific region," Ou said.

China sees the island as a breakaway province to be annexed by force if necessary, and considers visits to Taiwan by foreign

officials as recognizing its sovereignty.

Alongside its military threats, China imposed visa bans and other sanctions Tuesday on Taiwanese political figures. China exercises no effective legal authority over Taiwan and it's unclear what effect the sanctions would have.

China has refused all contact with Taiwan's government since shortly after the 2016 election of Tsai Ing-wen of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party. Tsai was overwhelmingly reelected in 2020.

The DPP also controls the legislature, while the vast majority of Taiwanese favor maintaining the status quo of de facto independence along with strong economic and social connections between the sides.

China accuses Washington of encouraging the island's independence through the sale of weapons and engagement between U.S. politicians and the island's government. The U.S. says it does not support independence and has no formal diplomatic ties with the island, but it is legally bound to ensure Taiwan can defend itself against threats from China, including a blockade.

Aside from putting its military on alert, Taiwan has largely played down the threat from the Chinese exercises and life has continued as normal among a population of 23 million that has lived under the shadow of belligerent rhetoric and saber rattling from China for more than seven decades. **MDT/AP**

China and US spar over climate on Twitter

KEN MORITSUGU,
BEIJING

THE world's two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases are sparring on Twitter over climate policy, with China asking if the U.S. can deliver on the landmark climate legislation signed into law by President Joe Biden this week.

After Congress passed the bill last Friday, U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns took to Twitter on Sunday to say the U.S. was acting on climate change with its largest investment ever — and that China should follow.

On Tuesday night, China's Foreign Ministry responded with its own tweet: "Good to hear. But what matters is: Can the U.S. deliver?"

The exchange, part of a longer back and forth on Twitter on the issue, is emblematic of a broader wor-



Wind turbines along the coast of Pingtan, Fujian province

ry: U.S.-China cooperation is widely considered vital to the success of global efforts to limit rising temperatures. With the breakdown in relations over Taiwan and other issues, some question whether the two sides can cooperate.

China announced a suspension of talks with the

U.S. on climate and several other issues earlier this month as part of its response to a visit to Taiwan by a senior American lawmaker, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Climate has been one of the few areas of cooperation between the feuding countries. U.S. officials cri-

ticized China's move, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken saying it "doesn't punish the United States — it punishes the world."

Asked to respond, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian called on the U.S. last week to "deliver on its historical responsibilities and

due obligations on climate change and stop looking around for excuses for its inaction."

The ministry later tweeted some of his answer, and Burns responded four days later with his tweet on the U.S. climate bill. Using the acronym for the People's Republic of China, he ended with: "The PRC should follow+reconsider its suspension of climate cooperation with the U.S."

China elaborated on its "Can the U.S. deliver?" message with a second tweet that suggested U.S. actions, including lifting sanctions it imposed last year on solar industry exports from China's Xinjiang region because of allegations of forced labor.

The back and forth highlights a perception divide between the long-standing superpower that wants to lead and the rising power that no lon-

ger wants to feel bound to follow anyone else's direction.

U.S. climate envoy John Kerry has been pushing China to set more ambitious climate goals. China's response has been that its goals are realistic, given its development needs as a middle-income country, while the U.S. sets ambitious goals that it fails to achieve.

China's ruling Communist Party generally sets conservative targets at a national level, because it doesn't want its performance to fall short. Those targets are sometimes exceeded, though, in the eager pursuit of those goals by local officials.

"China should be able to do better than its national targets indicate," said Cory Combs, a senior analyst with the Trivium China consultancy. "But of course, those local plans are all subject to failure and delays, so it's impossible to tell quite what they'll add up to." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



A worker tries to cover the burnt down gas station in Pattani province, yesterday

THAILAND

Restive south hit by wave of arson and bombings

SUMETH PANPETCH,
HAT YAI

A wave of arson and bombing attacks overnight hit Thailand's southernmost provinces, which for almost two decades have been the scene of an active Muslim separatist insurgency, officials said yesterday.

At least 17 attacks occurred Tuesday night in Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala provinces, mostly at convenience stores and gas stations, military spokesperson Pramote Promin said. Three civilians were reported injured. There have been no claims of responsibility.

More than 7,300 people have been killed since the insurgency began in 2004 in the three provinces, the only ones with Muslim majorities in Buddhist-dominated Thailand. Attacks have also taken place in neighboring Songkhla province.

Muslim residents have

long charged they are treated like second-class citizens in Thailand, and separatist movements have been periodically active for decades. Heavy-handed crackdowns have fueled the discontent.

The attacks are the most high-profile ones since early April, when the Thai government and BRN — Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani, believed to be the biggest of several insurgent groups— agreed to halt violence during the Muslim holy period of Ramadan. In other violence since then, two Thai army ordnance experts on duty were killed by a bomb later that month.

Pramote said the attackers Tuesday night “dressed up as women, using motorcycles and in many cases using petrol bombs, throwing them into the target sites.”

“It is clear that the insurgents remain committed to using violence on people, damaging con-

fidence in the economy, creating uncertainty and undermining the government system,” he said.

Police Capt. Sarayuth Kotchawong said he received a report shortly before midnight that a suspect had entered a convenience store at a gas station in Yala's Yaha district, placed a black bag inside and warned employees to leave if they “do not want die.” The workers left before the bag exploded 10 minutes later.

The various southern insurgent groups have not issued a consensus demand. They are a shadowy mix of veteran separatists and often loosely led groups of violent young militants. Their goals range from greater autonomy to independence, with little indication they are related to jihadist movements in other Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

Peace talks have been ongoing for several years under the auspices of the

Malaysian government between Thai officials and Mara Patani, an umbrella body representing several insurgent groups. In January 2020, Thai officials held their first formal meeting in years with BRN representatives.

Although BRN is considered the most influential of the separatist groups, local members operate with some autonomy. They generally stage hit-and-run attacks, such as drive-by shootings and ambushes with roadside bombs. They are also known for occasional coordinated attacks when seeking to make a political point with a show of strength.

There has been occasional large-scale bloodletting. In November 2019, gunmen killed 15 village defense volunteers and wounded five security personnel in what was believed to be the deadliest attack on government forces since the separatist rebellion began.

MDT/AP

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

Celebrate the Full Moon with Loved Ones and Macau

UNDER the stunning scenery of a full moon, nothing symbolizes mid-autumn festival more than sharing mooncakes with family and loved ones. Share the well-loved tradition of gifting with MGM's mooncake giftboxes this year. In collaboration with Lok Hei, an acclaimed local artist, MGM embraces its hometown Macau and tells the story of this cultural city through brushes and strokes, featuring several graphic illustrations of Macau's iconic historical sites to fully express the warmest festive greetings with a sense of home.



To celebrate the reunion, we offer three options of the mooncake gift box that are meticulously crafted with premium ingredients to satisfy your taste buds. The timeless classic goes with the *White Lotus Seed Paste Mooncake with Double Yolk Gift Box*, in which you can fully savor the authentic flavors of this traditional delight in a box of four full-size mooncakes. Another set sure to tantalize your palate is the *Mini Custard Mooncake Gift Box* which includes six mini mooncakes with silky and rich egg custard centers. For those who crave a creative blend of flavors, the *Assorted Mini Mooncake Gift Box* makes a perfect choice, which is a box of six mini mooncakes featuring innovative flavors, such as the crowd's favorites *Lava Durian* and *Lava Ginger and White Lotus Seed Paste*.

Let's go moon-gazing and enjoy the festival with our nearest and dearest, while savoring the must-have festive delights. Get your vouchers and send your love and warmest blessings to friends and family with a mooncake giftbox that is quintessentially dedicated to Macau. For more details, please call (853) 8802 3888 or visit mgm.mo



Illegal minors search for gold in the Ireng River on the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous reserve in Roraima state, Brazil, near the border with Guyana (2021)

BRAZIL

Little talk of rainforest protection in the Brazilian Amazon

FABIANO MAISONNAVE,
RIO DE JANEIRO

IN the Brazilian Amazon these days, it's nearly impossible to run for office talking up the environment.

More common is a scene like this: A candidate for Congress parades a helicopter — the symbol of illegal gold mining — painted with the Brazilian flag, through the streets of the Amazon city of Boa Vista. He defends a gold rush that has devastated Indigenous territories and contaminated rivers. In a neighboring state an Indigenous candidate stops wearing green clothing in public out of fear of violence.

Like all Brazilians, residents of the vast Amazon region will elect governors and lawmakers in October's general elections. But as the campaign takes the streets, few candidates or voters are talking about current record-breaking deforestation rates or other environmental problems.

Instead, many politicians vie for who has a bolder promise to relax legal restrictions on gold mining, expand deforestation for agribusiness or pave highways through the forest. The few who run on an environmental platform struggle to compete and face public hostility.

Amid widespread poverty and lack of economic opportunities besides those that are environmentally damaging, Amazon voters

have increasingly favored politicians who frame legal protection of the world's largest tropical rainforest as a barrier to development.

A survey carried out by the website ((o)eco news found that most lawmakers from Brazil's nine Amazon states voted in favor of five major bills that soften environmental laws, from opening Indigenous territories to mining, to legalizing land-robbing. In three of the votes, representatives from the Amazon region voted more heavily in favor than those from other parts of Brazil.

Today, just 1 of the 118 lawmakers in Congress representing the Amazon was elected on a socio-environmental platform. Joenia Wapichana, only the second Indigenous leader elected to the national parliament in Brazil's history, is from Roraima state, where Indigenous people make up 11% of the population, the highest in the country.

In her bid for reelection, one of her opponents is a gold prospector and businessman named Rodrigo Martins de Mello who has used a helicopter as the trademark of his campaign. Aircraft is the only way to transport prospectors and equipment to remote Indigenous reserves, such as that belonging to the Yanomami people, where most illegal gold mining occurs in Roraima.

"It is mining that brings money to Boa Vista's commerce," Mello said through

a microphone from the back of a pickup truck. Behind him, a much larger truck rolled forward, transporting the helicopter emblazoned with the Brazilian flag, now a symbol of support for far-right President Jair Bolsonaro.

In a phone interview with The Associated Press, Mello, who is campaigning under the name Rodrigo Cataratas, (Rodrigo Waterfall in English), promised to defend the rights of prospectors, who he estimated number 40,000.

The tendency to discount the value of the forest is stronger in regions where migrants of European ancestry arrived in the 1960s and '70s. To attract people to the Amazon, the military government at that time built roads, turned a blind eye to a chaotic gold rush and gave away vast swaths of pristine rainforest where isolated Indigenous tribes lived. Disease and forced displacement brought some groups to the brink of extermination.

That is the case in Rondonia, where most cities were founded beginning in the 1970s by such migrants from southern Brazil. Today it is one of the most deforested Amazon states and a large beef producer, with soybean agriculture on the uptick.

Last year, Rondonia's State Assembly voted unanimously 17 to 0 to reduce a protected area by 2,200 square kilometers, an area larger than greater London, to allow in illegal cattle ran-

chers and open rainforest to agribusiness. Governor Marcos Rocha, a staunch ally of Bolsonaro, signed the law. It was later ruled unconstitutional by a state court.

According to Ricardo Gilson, a geographer at the Federal University of Rondonia, large swaths of the so-called arc of deforestation, which encompasses dozens of cities, share that cultural history.

"It is a frontier society, which transforms the natural landscape into an extractive economy: mining, cattle, crops, hydro energy. It is not a society that regards the standing forest as something positive," he told the AP.

To stand out in such a culture, Military Police Corporal Cáiro Teixeira da Silva, who is running for Congress for the first time, sells himself as more radical than his competitors. With a Brazilian flag printed on his shirt, he recently appeared in a campaign video brandishing a rifle and promising to arm illegal prospectors against police raids.

"I will fight for the miner to have a T4 rifle to secure his dredge, his gold," he shouted, patting the gun.

The historically small and dwindling support for the environment explains why two of the Amazon's top rainforest defenders have opted to leave the region entirely and run for Congress in Sao Paulo state, thousands of miles away. They are Indigenous leader Sônia Guajajara, who Time Magazine crowned one of the world's most influential people, and former minister Marina Silva, who was elected senator twice from the Amazon's state of Acre.

For Mario Mantovani, a senior advisor to the Environmental Parliamentary Front, running an environment-based campaign in Amazon states has become harder this year, because lawmakers who support Bolsonaro have had access to generous federal funds they can dole out as they choose.

"They have put so much money into the region that it is hard to even set up a strategy against them. It is a game played with marked cards. You would be an isolated voice there, you wouldn't be able to do anything," Mantovani told the AP in a phone interview.

In such a hostile environment, it makes sense to run for office in Sao Paulo, where there are more people who care about the Amazon, he said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1969 WOODSTOCK MUSIC FESTIVAL ENDS



Thousands of young people are heading home after three days and nights of sex, drugs and rock and roll at the Woodstock music festival.

An estimated 400,000 youngsters turned up to hear big-name bands play in a field near the village of Bethel, New York state in what has become the largest rock concert of the decade.

About 186,000 tickets were sold so promoters anticipated that around 200,000 would turn up. But on Friday night, the flimsy fences and ticket barriers had come down and organisers announced the concert was free prompting thousands more to head for the concert.

Traffic jams eight miles long blocked off the area near White Lake, near Bethel, some 50 miles from the town of Woodstock.

Local police estimated a million people were on the road yesterday trying to get to Woodstock. They were overwhelmed by the numbers but were impressed by a good level of behaviour.

The festival's chief medical officer, Dr William Abruzzi told Rolling Stone magazine: "These people are really beautiful. There has been no violence whatsoever which is really remarkable for a crowd of this size."

Those who made it to the makeshift venue were treated to performances by Janis Joplin, The Who, Grateful Dead, Canned Heat, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Jimi Hendrix, Joan Baez and Ravi Shankar.

Rainstorms failed to dampen the spirits of the revellers, many high on marijuana, some dancing naked in the now muddy fields.

The main organiser, 49-year-old dairy farmer Max Yasgur, who provided \$50,000 and 600 acres of his land, addressed the crowds on the last day of the event.

"You have proven something to the world... that half a million kids can get together for fun and music and have nothing but fun and music."

There were however two deaths - a teenager was killed by a tractor as he lay in his sleeping bag and another died from a drugs overdose.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Woodstock, a holiday centre and artists' colony, had held an arts and music fair since 1906 but the 1969 Woodstock festival made the town world famous. The final cost to the four sponsors - John Roberts, Joel Rosenman, Artie Kornfeld and Michael Lang - was \$2.4m.

A film of the concert was released the following year and Woodstock became synonymous with flower power, the hippie culture and anti-Vietnam war protests that dominated the 1970s.

The "Woodstock generation" look back on the event with nostalgia and an anniversary Woodstock festival was held in 1994.

But the second - highly commercialised - anniversary concert in July 1999 ended in riots, fires and at least eight allegations of rape.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Be sure that the person you're drawn to is not already involved. Your generous nature could be taken advantage of. Don't let domestic problems interfere with your objectives.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Someone you live with may feel totally neglected. Try to be understanding. New emotional connections can be made through business contacts.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Your stubbornness coupled with your mate's jealousy don't make for a favorable time. Involvement in groups will be favorable and lead to valuable information.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Don't be too quick to let friends and relatives know what you're up to. Heed the advice given by family or old reliable friends. Don't be afraid to talk to close friends or relatives.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You won't be admired at home if you haven't been taking care of your share of the work. Talk to an older family member you have helped in the past.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Romantic encounters will develop through group activity. Do not expect too much from others. Money problems will be difficult to deal with if you have a partner.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Your colorful conversation may attract new mates. Be considerate and avoid being overly opinionated, or arguments will ensue. You may be experiencing emotional turmoil in regard to your mate.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Talk to someone you trust if you need advice about broaching the subject. Look before you leap. Your suggestions for fund raising events will be well received.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Don't spend too much in order to impress others. Deceit with coworkers is apparent. Fitness or weight loss programs will help your self esteem.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
New relationships could evolve through group activities. You need to fulfill your needs and present your talents. Lack of funds may add stress to your already uncertain situation.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Extravagance will be a problem. Don't let children hold you back from doing things you enjoy. You can make new connections if you play your cards right.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You should consider getting your whole family involved in a project at home. Don't make financial contributions in order to impress others.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

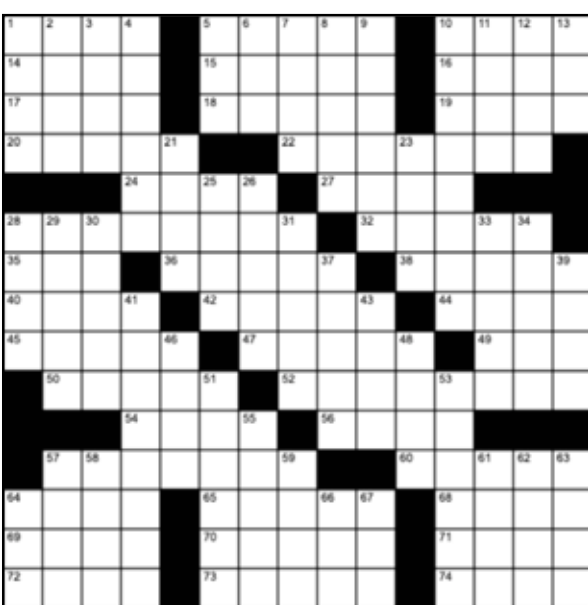
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	27	rain
Changchun	18	29	cloudy
Chengdu	27	37	overcast
Chongqing	33	43	fine
Fuzhou	28	37	fine
Guangzhou	26	33	thunderstorms
Guiyang	22	32	cloudy
Haikou	24	30	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	27	38	fine
Harbin	18	29	thunderstorms
Hefei	26	38	cloudy
Nanjing	27	37	cloudy
Shanghai	28	37	rain
Taipei	26	31	overcast
Wuhan	29	39	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	31	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	18	30	overcast
Frankfurt	18	24	rain
Paris	16	27	overcast
London	18	26	overcast
New York	21	30	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Ferrara family; 5- Red Bordeaux; 10- Volcano shape; 14- Go sour; 15- Fragrance; 16- Gallic girlfriend; 17- Modernists; 18- Sea eagles; 19- Ailing; 20- Nahuatl speaker; 22- Shake; 24- Roster; 27- Bartlett's abbr.; 28- Acts; 32- Garden figure; 35- ___-de-France; 36- "Hyperion" poet; 38- Racetracks; 40- Timber wolf; 42- Coach Rockne; 44- Med school subj.; 45- Sporting blades; 47- Burning; 49- Basque separatist organisation; 50- Prufrock's creator; 52- Terrify; 54- Pasternak heroine; 56- Nintendo rival; 57- Papyrus; 60- To talk, usually in a pompous manner; 64- Socialite Maxwell; 65- Sacred song; 68- Muffin ingredient; 69- Took to court; 70- Cave; 71- Assortment; 72- Sign over; 73- Sherpa's home; 74- Drum sound;

DOWN 1- Gas burner or Sicilian volcano; 2- Egyptian canal; 3- Horse's gait; 4- Place in bondage; 5- Fannie ___; 6- Make a faux pas; 7- Lady of Spain; 8- Last letter of the Greek alphabet; 9- Sausage skin; 10- Italian adventurer; 11- Fail to include; 12- Pleasing; 13- A mouse; 21- Prepare food; 23- Up ___ good; 25- Journey; 26- Maytag brand; 28- Heap; 29- Run away with a lover; 30- Insurgent; 31- Cram; 33- French Impressionist; 34- Delight; 37- Agitates; 39- Ollie's partner; 41- An amorous glance; 43- Cleveland's lake; 46- Fly; 48- Breakfast brand; 51- 33rd president of the U.S.; 53- Place of shelter; 55- In agreement; 57- Sky color; 58- Pre-owned; 59- URL starter; 61- Woody's son; 62- Follow; 63- Hydroxyl compound; 64- Computer key; 66- Mound stat; 67- ___ Aviv;



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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- 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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ENERGY

CHINA CUTS POWER TO FACTORIES, HOMES AS RESERVOIRS FALL

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

FACTORIES in China's southwest have shut down and a city imposed rolling blackouts after reservoirs to generate hydropower ran low in a worsening drought, adding to economic strains at a time when President Xi Jinping is trying to extend his hold on power.

Companies in Sichuan province including makers of solar panels, cement and urea closed or reduced production after they were ordered to ration power for up to five days, according to news reports yesterday. That came after reservoir levels fell and power demand for air conditioning surged in scorching temperatures.

"Leave power for the people," said an order from the provincial government dated Tuesday.

In Sichuan, which has 94 million people, water levels at hydropower reservoirs are down by as much as half this month, according to the Sichuan Provincial Department of Economics and Information Technology.

The power company in Da-



zhou, a city in Sichuan with 3.4 million people, imposed 2 1/2-hour power cuts this week and expanded that Wednesday to three hours, according to the Shanghai news outlet The Paper. The newspaper Securities Times said office buildings in Chengdu, the provincial capital, were told to shut off air conditioning.

The shutdowns add to challenges for the ruling Communist Party as Xi, the country's most powerful leader in decades, prepares to try to break with tradition and award himself a third five-year term as leader at a meeting in October or November.

Growth in factory output and retail sales weakened in July, set-

ting back China's economic recovery after Shanghai and other industrial centers were shut down starting in late March to fight virus outbreaks.

The economy grew by just 2.5% over a year earlier in the first half of 2022, less than half the official annual goal of 5.5%.

Areas across central and northern China ordered emergency measures to ensure drinking water supplies after summer rain was as little as half normal levels. The official Xinhua News Agency said firetrucks carried water to two dry villages near Chongqing in the southwest.

Hundreds of thousands of hectares (acres) of crops across central and northern China wilted due to lack of water and high temperatures, according to the government. Some areas reported the summer growing season a failure.

The weather agency has warned temperatures in some areas could spike to 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).

A subsidiary of Guoguang Co., Ltd. that makes pesticide and

fertilizer closed from Monday through at least Saturday, according to a company announcement through the Shenzhen Stock Exchange.

Makers of solar power equipment in Sichuan including Tongwei Solar Co. Ltd. and GCL-Poly Energy Holdings Ltd. said they received notices to ration power.

Tongwei said the "power cut and production shutdown have not had much impact," the business news outlet East Money reported.

China faced similar strains last year when Guangdong province in the southeast, one of the world's most important manufacturing centers, ordered factories to shut down after hydropower reservoirs ran low due to sparse rain.

The government has allocated 280 million yuan (\$41 million) for drought relief in Hebei and Shanxi provinces and the Inner Mongolia region in the north and Liaoning province in the northeast, according to Xinhua.

"Some small- and medium-size rivers are so dry that they have stopped flowing," the report said.

Meanwhile, authorities warned some parts of the country face possible flooding from heavy rains forecast in areas from the northwest across Inner Mongolia to the northeast. **MDT/AP**

AD

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FOOTBALL

Dubai sees air travel surge, expects FIFA World Cup boost

ISABEL DEBRE, DUBAI

DUBAI International Airport saw a surge in passengers over the first half of 2022 as pandemic restrictions eased and the upcoming FIFA World Cup in Qatar will further boost traffic to the city-state's second airfield, its chief executive said yesterday.

Paul Griffiths, who oversees the world's busiest airport for international travel, told The Associated Press that the airport handled 160% more traffic over the past six months compared to the same period last year, part of an air travel rebound around the world.

The nearly 28 million people who traveled through the airport over the past six months represent some 70% of the airport's pre-pandemic levels, even as Dubai's key source market of China remains closed due to severe pandemic restrictions. Griffiths said he expects the airport's traffic to return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of next year.

"It's a very, very welcome surge of traffic," Griffiths said.

The first World Cup in the Middle East, he added, will send foreign soccer fans flocking to Al Maktoum International Airport at Dubai World Central, or DWC.



From there, they'll travel daily to Qatar, a tiny neighbor that faces a hotel squeeze.

"We've actually seen a huge amount of demand at DWC for slot filings for airlines wanting to operate a shuttle service," he said. "I think the city has a lot to offer and a lot to gain from the World Cup."

Among the airlines buying extra slots to shuttle soccer fans to the tournament from DWC are Qatar Airways, low-cost carrier

FlyDubai and budget airline Wizz Air Abu Dhabi, he said.

Ambitions plans to turn the airfield in Dubai's southern desert into a mega-aviation hub, first unveiled by Dubai before the 2008 global financial crisis, have sputtered in recent years. Long-haul carrier Emirates, based in Dubai, parked many of its double-decker Airbus A380s there during the pandemic as commercial flights halted.

A key East-West transit point,

Dubai's air traffic is closely watched as a barometer of the city-state's non-oil economy. Emirates remains the linchpin of the wider empire known as "Dubai Inc.," an interlocking series of government-owned businesses.

During the first half of 2022, Dubai International Airport dealt with nearly 56% more flights than the same period in 2021, when contagious coronavirus variants clobbered the industry.

Now, in a sign of the health of

the industry, Emirates said yesterday that it would pour billions of dollars into retrofitting much of its Airbus A380 and Boeing 777 fleet. At the height of the pandemic, the airline received a \$4 billion government bailout.

The widespread lifting of virus restrictions has triggered a rapid increase in air travel demand, filling Dubai's hub and causing mayhem at airports around the world.

While Dubai has not seen the chaotic crowds overwhelming European hubs in recent weeks, Griffiths said the global disruptions have affected its main airport.

"It's obviously affected growth because some of the caps on capacity that they've applied to airports like Heathrow have had an impact on our numbers," he said.

Last month Emirates lashed out at Heathrow, refusing its request to cap departing passengers and cut flights to the London hub. Emirates later agreed to temporarily limit sales on its flights.

Since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine sent Russia's richest businessmen scrambling to save their assets from what became a widening dragnet, Dubai has welcomed an influx of Russians to its beach-front villas and luxury hotels. The city remains one of the few remaining flight corridors out of Moscow.

Griffiths declined to comment on Russians carrying cash out of the country to Dubai, which has become the talk of the town in recent months.

But he said the flow of Russian visitors would not stop anytime soon, adding: "It's still a major source of traffic for us." **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

Musk tweet joking about buying Manchester United causes stir

ELON Musk caused a stir by tweeting that he was buying the English soccer team Manchester United — whose current owners are opposed by many fans — then saying several hours later that it was a joke.

It comes as the billionaire Tesla CEO faces a legal battle in the U.S. after backing out of a deal to buy Twitter for \$44 billion. He is a prolific user of the platform, often musing about social issues or joking with his 103 million followers and occasionally getting into trouble with U.S. regulators.

Yesterday, Musk sent a tweet about his political affiliations and then added in a second tweet: "Also, I'm



buying Manchester United ur welcome."

That came as shocking news in the Manchester United world — albeit

welcome to many — after nearly a decade of sub-par performances.

Asked by a follower whether he was serious,

Musk later tweeted, "No, this is a long-running joke on Twitter. I'm not buying any sports teams."

It wasn't Musk's first joke

about buying a popular franchise. In April, he tweeted, "Next I'm buying Coca-Cola to put the cocaine back in." He noted in the thread about Manchester United that the Coca-Cola tweet had also been in jest.

Musk previously ran afoul of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission for tweets claiming that he had the funding to take Tesla private in 2018, leading the electric vehicle maker's stock price to jump. That led to a securities fraud settlement requiring his tweets be approved by a Tesla attorney before being published.

He's now facing more legal woes over the deal to buy Twitter that he negotiated in April. Musk sold roughly \$8.5 billion worth of Tesla shares to help fund the purchase and lined up a diverse group of other investors to back him.

The deal fell apart last

month after Musk said Twitter refused to provide him enough information about the number of fake accounts on the platform. Twitter could have tried to make him pay a \$1 billion breakup fee that he agreed to but instead is suing to force him to complete the purchase. The case is set to go to trial in Delaware in October.

Musk, with his seemingly unlimited potential to buy the best soccer players in the world, would have been a welcome prospect for many Man United fans who want to see the club back at the top of the game.

Man United was arguably the biggest team in world soccer under manager Alex Ferguson, winning 13 Premier League titles and two Champions League trophies. But since Ferguson's retirement in 2013, the team has struggled to win trophies. **MDT/AP**

OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

POLICIES RESTORATIVE TONIC FOR POPULATION GROWTH

The central authorities on Tuesday introduced a raft of policies, the most comprehensive at the national level, to encourage couples to have more children. The measures include the provision of better maternal care and child-care services, improved maternity and parental leave policies, as well as preferential policies on housing and taxation, according to policy guidelines released by the National Health Commission in collaboration with 16 other government departments.

Some local governments have previously introduced measures such as tax deductions, longer maternity leave, and enhanced medical insurance for the same purpose. But the latest guidelines issued by the central government are more comprehensive in terms of the areas covered and how effectively they can be implemented to achieve the desired results. For example, the concept of fostering "fertility-friendly workplaces" has been put forward for the first time. All this reflects the central government's strong resolve to promote the "balanced long-term development of the population".

Which is not surprising given the serious population challenges the country is facing. China's fertility rate of 1.16 in 2021, a record low, was well below the notional 2.1 needed to maintain a stable population. Demographers expect China's new births will fall to a record low this year, dropping below 10 million from last year's 10.6 million babies — a figure that was already 11.5 percent lower than in 2020.

Compounding the challenge of the population decline, which is expected to start as early as 2025, is the fast aging of the population. People aged 60 or above already account for 18.7 percent of China's total population. This poses a great challenge to the country's future economic development, as it will reduce the supply of labor, increase the care burden on families and exert increasing pressure on public services in the years to come.

To reverse the trend, China has already eased its family-planning policy in recent years, allowing all couples to have two children in 2016 and relaxing it even further in 2021 to allow all couples to have three children should they wish to do so.

The experiences of industrialized countries indicate that people tend to have fewer children as they get wealthier. The uncertainties stemming from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been ongoing for nearly three years, have also made many couples hesitant to have more children.

To encourage couples to have more children, policymakers must make sure that more people can feel a sense of gain from the people-oriented policies as they try to achieve an improved population structure and invigorate the economy.

UK INFLATION REACHES 10.1% ON SOARING FOOD, ENERGY COSTS

Britain's inflation rate rose to a new 40-year high of 10.1% in July, a faster pace than in the U.S. and Europe as climbing food prices in the United Kingdom tightened a cost-of-living squeeze fueled by the soaring cost of energy.

The double-digit surge in consumer prices over a year earlier was higher than analysts' central forecast of 9.8% and a jump from the annual rate of 9.4% in June, the Office for National Statistics said yesterday.

The increase was largely due to rising prices for food and staples, including toilet paper and toothbrushes, it said.

Most economists believe worse is to come.

The Bank of England says soaring natural gas prices are likely to drive consumer price inflation to 13.3% in October. It says that will push Britain into a recession that is expected to last through 2023.

Those pressures persuaded the bank to boost its key interest rate by half a percentage point this month, the biggest of six consecutive increases since December.

The rate now stands at 1.75%, the highest since the depths of the global financial crisis in late 2008.

THE BUZZ

ARTICLE ON 'FAT' ARAB WOMEN SPARKS UPROAR OVER BODY-SHAMING

ISABEL DEBRE & MAGGIE HYDE, DUBAI

To Enas Taleb, the headline felt like a spiteful punch line.

"Why women are fatter than men in the Arab world," it read in bold, above a photograph of the Iraqi actress waving onstage at an arts festival.

The Economist article ran through possible explanations of the obesity gap of 10 percentage points between men and women in the Middle East, then cited Iraqis who see Taleb's curves as the ideal of beauty.

"Fat," a word now considered taboo in much of Western media, was repeated six times.

The article triggered torrid criticism on social media. Twitter users blasted it as misogynistic. Local rights groups issued denunciations. Some writers were appalled by what they described as demeaning stereotypes about Arab women.

Taleb, 42, said she's suing the London-based magazine for defamation.

While analysts acknowledge an epidemic of obesity in the Arab world and its connection to poverty and gender discrimination, Taleb's case and the ensuing uproar have thrown a light on the issue of body-shaming that is deeply rooted yet rarely discussed in the region.

"If there's a student who goes to school and hears mean comments and students bullying her for being fat, how would she feel?" Taleb told The Associated Press from Baghdad. "This article is an insult not only to me but a violation of the rights of all Iraqi and Arab women."

The Economist did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Fat-shaming is offensive enough in the United States that when two sports commentators called some female athletes overweight on air earlier



Enas Taleb posing for a picture

this year, they were swiftly fired.

In the Middle East, the report argued, the desirability of fleshy women may help explain why the region has experienced an explosion of obesity.

But the angry backlash over the article — and Taleb's horror that her photo was used to illustrate growing waistlines of Arab women — contradicts the oft-repeated belief that being heavy is widely seen as sign of affluence and fertility in the region.

The globalization of Western beauty ideals through branding, TV and social media has long given rise to unrealistic body standards that skew women's expectations of themselves and others in the Arab world, research shows.

In a forthcoming study on Egypt, Joan Costa-Font at the London School of Economics said he found that although some older women in rural areas still view rounder women as affluent, "it's not true in Egypt that being overweight is a sign of beauty. ... Western standards are more relevant."

Demand for cosmetic surgery has boomed in

Lebanon. Some 75% of female Emirati students reported dissatisfaction with their bodies, and 25% are prone to eating disorders, according to a 2010 study at Dubai's Zayed University.

And yet, many say, fat-shaming remains widespread and acceptable in the region, compared to the U.S. and Europe, where self-esteem movements have gained momentum and galvanized public discussions around inclusivity.

"Our politicians in Lebanon keep making these horrible, sexist comments about women's bodies. If they come under fire that doesn't necessarily lead to rising awareness," said Joumana Haddad, a Lebanese author and human rights activist.

Haddad noted that new forays into female empowerment have provoked "reactionary discourse and anger" from Lebanon's patriarchal society. Even cavalier public comments about weight can be deeply painful to young women who struggle with insecurity and a pathological will to alter their bodies in pursuit of beauty, she added. **MDT/AP**

Israel and Turkey will restore full diplomatic relations and dispatch ambassadors for the first time in years, the latest step in months of reconciliation between the two countries, the Israeli prime minister's office said yesterday. The two countries, once friendly, had a more than decade long falling out, but earlier this year Israel and Turkey began a process of rapprochement.



Germany's chancellor (pictured, right) said that he was "disgusted by the outrageous remarks" made by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (left) in Berlin, accusing Israel of committing "50 Holocausts" against Palestinians over the years. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's statement on Twitter came a day after Abbas refused to condemn a deadly attack by Palestinian militants on Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Instead, Abbas countered by saying he could point to "50 Holocausts" by Israel.



USA Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, Donald Trump's fiercest Republican adversary in Congress, soundly lost a GOP primary, falling to a rival backed by the former president in a rout that reinforced his grip on the party's base. The third-term congresswoman and her allies entered downbeat about her prospects, aware that Trump's backing gave Harriet Hageman considerable lift in the state where he won by the largest margin during the 2020 campaign.

Zimbabwe A measles outbreak has killed 157 children, most of whom were unvaccinated due to their family's religious beliefs, officials said. The measles outbreak was first reported in the eastern Manicaland province in early April and has since spread to all parts of the country. At least 2,056 cases have been reported and virtually all of the deaths have been children who were not vaccinated.