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“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

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SATELLITE CASINOS FIND ALLEGED INCREASE IN CONCESSIONAIRES' REVENUE SHARES 'UNREASONABLE' GIVEN THE TURMOIL THE SECTOR IS FACING

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CE SUPPORTS NATIONAL SECURITY LAW ALONG WITH PRO-BEIJING SECTORS

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FLOODING DEATHS IN PAKISTAN PASS 1,000 IN 'CLIMATE CATASTROPHE'

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AP PHOTO



South Korea Firebrand lawmaker Lee Jae-myung (pictured) was elected to lead South Korea's main opposition party yesterday, months after his narrow presidential defeat to conservative opponent Yoon Suk Yeol left the liberals in disarray. Lee's dominant win in the Democratic Party chairperson's race ends a monthlong leadership void for the liberals, who still control a majority in the Parliament.

AP PHOTO



Tunisia African heads of state, representatives of international organizations and private business leaders gathered in Tunisia this weekend for the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, a triennial event launched by Japan to promote growth and security in Africa. Economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, a food crisis worsened by Russia's war in Ukraine, and climate change are among the challenges facing many African countries expected to define the two-day conference.

AP PHOTO

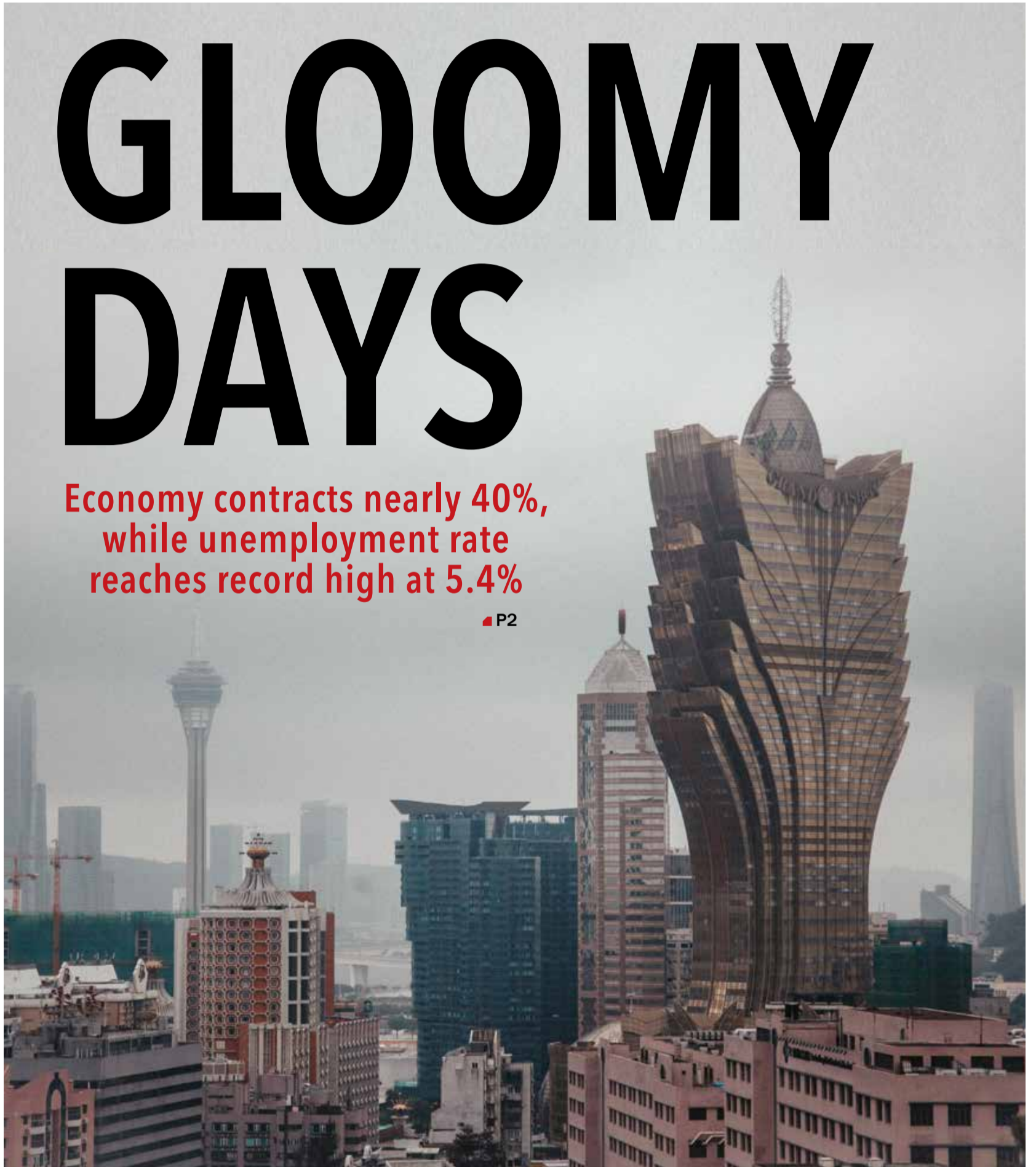


India Two high-rise apartment towers in India were leveled to the ground in a controlled demolition on Sunday after the country's top court declared them illegal for violating building norms, officials said. They became India's tallest structures to be razed to the ground. More than 1,500 families vacated their apartments in the area more than seven hours before the nearly 100-meter-tall towers crumbled inward by the impact of the implosion.

GLOOMY DAYS

Economy contracts nearly 40%, while unemployment rate reaches record high at 5.4%

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GAMING

MINIMUM CASINO TABLE INCOME SET AT MOP7 MILLION

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GDP

ECONOMY SHRINKS BY NEARLY 40% AMID PANDEMIC WOES

LYNZY VALLES

THE city's economy contracted 39.3% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2022 amid the pandemic outbreak in the neighboring regions, which affected the city's border restrictions, and along with the city's largest outbreak that started mid-June.

Visitor arrivals fell 27.5% year-on-year in the second quarter, with overnight visitors decreasing 47%, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows.

As a result, exports of services dipped 48.6% year-on-year, while exports of gaming services and other tourism services tumbled 69.6% and 41.4% respectively. Exports of goods fell 36%.

Domestic demand shrank 12.2% year-on-year owing to a decline in gross fixed capital formation. Imports of goods and services reduced 20% and 12% respectively. The implicit deflator of GDP, which measures the overall changes in prices, fell 0.9% year-on-year.

In April, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasted that the SAR's economic recovery was

MDT ARCHIVE



expected to continue, but that it would take time before the economy fully regained its losses from the pandemic outbreak.

The IMF projected 15.5% GDP growth in 2022, driven by the gradual return of foreign tourists and

the recovery of domestic demand.

However, the city's mid-June outbreak saw an almost-complete halt in tourist arrivals due to restrictions imposed by the neighboring region which required arrivals from Macau to undergo

mandatory quarantine.

The outbreak has also led to a partial lockdown including the shutdown of casinos – the second shutdown in two years – to curb the coronavirus, leading to record low revenues in July.

Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau figures show the city's gross gaming revenue for the second quarter has plunged to HKD8.2 billion, down 67% year-on-year and down 52% quarter-on-quarter.

This comes as Macau adheres to Beijing's zero-Covid policy, which strives to drive down the number of Covid-19 cases by means of lockdowns, border closures and travel bans.

CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE

Household final consumption expenditure in the domestic market and abroad dropped 6.3% and 4.1% year-on-year respectively, as consumer sentiment was further dampened by the economic downturn and local economic activity was affected by the new confirmed cases of coronavirus infection in the territory in late June. Overall private consumption fell 6.6% year-on-year. Government consumption expenditure shrank 6.5% year-on-year, attributable to a reduction of 15.7% in net purchases of goods and services by the SAR government.

Gross fixed capital formation decreased 29.4% year-on-year, while construction investment dropped 41.4% and equipment investment grew 17.5%. Public construction investment dropped 24.3%, ascribable to a fall in investment in public housing construction.

LABOR IN TURMOIL

Unemployment rate reaches record high at 5.4%

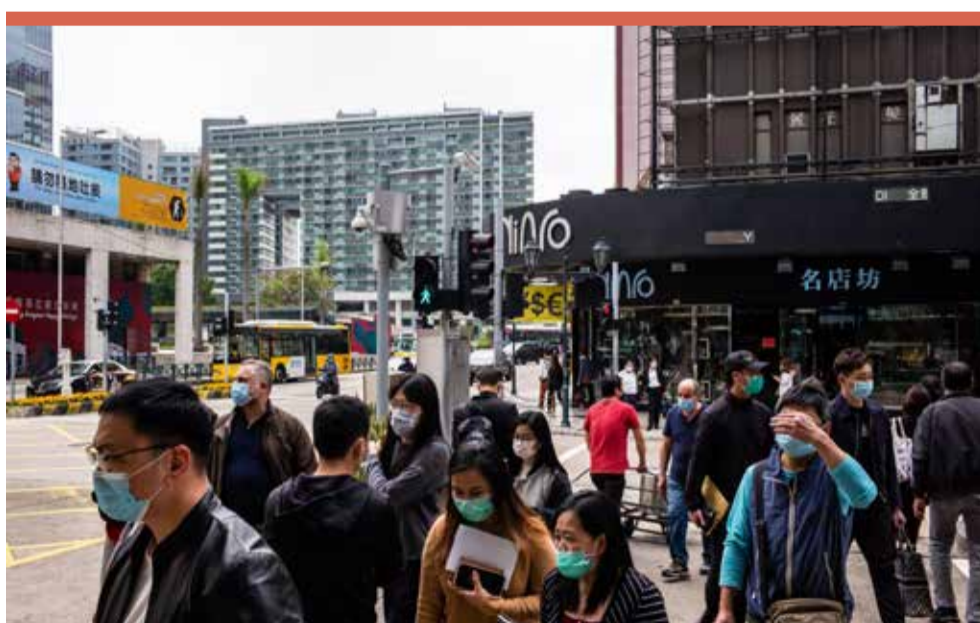
LYNZY VALLES

THE unemployment rate of local residents for May-July 2022 rose to 5.4%, a record high since 2008, according to the available data disclosed by the government.

Information from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicated the general unemployment rate rose 0.4 percentage points from the previous period (April-June 2022) to 4.1%, owing to the suspension of most industrial and commercial activities during the partial lockdown amid the latest pandemic outbreak.

The underemployment rate increased by 9.3 per-

MDT ARCHIVE



centage points to 13.4%.

The labor force living in Macau totaled 377,000 and

the labor force participation rate was 68.2%. Total employment was 361,300

and the number of employed residents totaled 274,000, down 2,900 and

1,500 respectively from the previous period.

Last month, lawmakers called on the government to enact additional and more effective measures to promote the employment and reemployment of local workers affected by the Covid-19 crisis.

The government has already announced two rounds of a MOP10 billion subsidy plan targeting SMEs and residents who are in need amid the current economic situation caused by the recent pandemic outbreak.

However, the unemployment toll has continued to rise since the beginning of the year.

From January to March,

the unemployment rate of local residents was 4.5%, the highest for 14 years.

The number of the unemployed increased by 1,700 from the previous period to 15,600. Most of those currently unemployed and searching for a new job were previously engaged in gaming and junket activities and in the construction sector.

Meanwhile, with fresh graduates entering the labor market, the proportion of new labor market entrants seeking their first job increased 1.7 percentage points to 8.7% of the total unemployed.

The number of the underemployed surged by 34,900 from the previous period to 50,600, with the majority working in gaming and junket activities, hotels, restaurants and similar activities and retail trade.

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NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

Public consultation sectorial sessions show full support

RENATO MARQUES

BEGINNING last Friday and extending over the weekend, a series of sectorial sessions about proposed amendments to the Law on Safeguarding National Security were hosted by the government. The sessions heard only a few opinions and found all in favor of the amendments.

Last Friday's session was dedicated to listening to the opinions and suggestions from local delegates of the National People's Congress, members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Macau, and representatives of the political and legal sector.

Among the almost 200 participants who attended the event, only 11 participants expressed their views, and all agreed with and supported the amendment to the law.

The participants' unanimous opinion was that now is the right time to amend the law as both internal and external security circumstances are changing and risks are increasing. Participants expressed their full support and belief that the amendment will effectively enhance national security, maintain public order, and facilitate Macau's fulfillment of its constitutional duties.

At the session that took place at the China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Commercial and Trade Service Platform Complex, the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng,

also said the amendment has a significant role and importance this year regarding the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government's policy, adding that the amendment "is closely related to the long-term stability of the nation, and the sustainable prosperity and stability of Macau."

During his closing remarks, Ho proposed four aspirations for all sectors regarding the amendment. These include, firstly, understanding of the significance of the amendment; secondly, being aware of challenges related to amending the law; thirdly, building on the function of leadership; and finally, fighting against all disturbances and interferences.

Elaborating on the four aspirations, the CE explained that "as national security and Macau's safety are facing new challenges and changes, Macau must be proactive in tackling all kinds of risks."

Without identifying the risks or explaining the changes that justify the amendment, the government leader added, "Macau must have a strong and more practical law on safeguarding national security, to support and coordinate safeguarding national security affairs according to the law, to prevent and suppress interference by external forces,

and to more effectively safeguard national sovereignty, safety and development interests."

As for the second aspiration, the CE said the amendment not only responds to the developing national security situation, but is also forward-looking given developing trends and the need to target actual national security issues. He added also that Macau must uphold its bottom-line thinking and conduct comprehensive risk assessments and accurate judgments regarding this amendment.

“Safeguarding national security is not only the constitutional responsibility of the SAR but also the statutory responsibility of all people of China, including the people of Macau

HO IAT SENG
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The CE also remarked, "Safeguarding national security is not only the constitutional responsibility of the SAR but also the statutory responsibility of all people of China, including the people of Macau. Therefore, Macau also needs to harness the concern, the active participation, and the facilitation of people in all sectors and

all walks of life, in the hope that all participants can fully make use of their roles in society." Ho added that such responsibilities are particularly important to all those in leadership roles within institutions, social groups and other organizations.

The CE called on all social leaders to "take part in rational discussions [...] to explain matters correctly and to publicize information in a way that is understandable and acceptable to the public," saying that if this is done, it would "facilitate critical deliberations, correct interpretations, and finally achieve social consensus."

Last but not least, the CE anticipated that, during the public consultation period, "people with ulterior motives would make a big fuss regarding the SAR government's amendment proposal, or even agitate to impede or undermine progress of the amendment through radical actions." He called on all people to "reject all hostile attacks and untrue information about the amendment, and to have a clear-cut stance on guiding the process and eliminating all potential interference in the amendment to the law."

The CE was responding to opinions from those who participated in the session and who, rather than addressing the proposal, preferred

to voice concerns about potential smear campaigns being prepared by some sections of society to influence the public in general.

To such remarks, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, said the new law aims to improve national security while safeguarding human rights, while listening to all opinions on the amendments proposed.

One of the most active voices in further extending the scope of the law was the Prosecutor coordinator of the Public Prosecutions Office, Lai U Hou, who called for stricter rules regarding evidence collection by the authorities, stating that public prosecutors may encounter many difficulties in collecting evidence "as suspects may hand the evidence to their lawyers or the media," Lai said.

In response, Wong said, "We must not discriminate or question the rights of suspects and lawyers."

MORE UNANIMITY FROM THE ECONOMICS AND FINANCE SECTOR

As with the first session on the previous day (dedicated to the political and legal sector), few opinions were voiced during Saturday's session (dedicated to the representatives of the economics and finance sector) and all were unanimously in favor of the proposal.

Of the around 200 participants, including representatives from the professional association of the sector, only 10 expressed opinions or comments.

These participants said the revision of the law will contribute to the stability and the orderly functioning of society, which are prerequisites for the economic development of all industrial and commercial activities.

Among comments in favor of the amendment proposal were those noting the introduction of criminal penalties for acts against the security of the State with the use of non-violent illicit means.

Many participants who expressed opinions were satisfied that the amendment could prevent other risks in the fields of economics and cybersecurity.

Yesterday, a third session took place, dedicated to the social and cultural sector. This will be followed by two more sessions dedicated to the transport and public works sector (September 9) and administration and justice sector (September 14).

In the meantime, another three public sessions will take place on September 3, 6, and 16. These will be open to participation from the general public. The first session will be held at 3 p.m., while the other two will take place at 7:30 p.m.

To participate in these sessions, the members of the public must register through the webpage (<https://eservices.pj.gov.mo/RLDSE/pt/zxhbm.html>), or by phone at 8800 6323.

SME PAVILION APPLICATIONS NEARLY DOUBLES

The exhibitor applications for the Macao SME Pavilion at the 27th Macao International Trade and Investment Fair (MIF), have been completed. The number of booths at the Pavilion has increased from 80 to 160 compared to the previous edition. Two hundred and ninety-two enterprises applied to exhibit at the pavilion, marking an oversubscription of nearly two times the previous number of enterprises. According to the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), the 27th MIF features an increased number of booths for SMEs, reduced exhibitor participation fees, training workshops, and will further uncover enterprises' needs before the event to provide accurate and efficient business matching services.

CHEOC VAN POOL REOPENS

After emergency repair work and cleaning, the Cheoc Van swimming pool and the Cheoc-Van Nautical Centre of the Sports Bureau – which had been affected by a typhoon – reopened on Saturday. Earlier this month, the swimming pool had been temporarily closed due to its low-lying coastal location, resulting in a pool drain becoming blocked and not functioning properly. Online booking services have also resumed for pre-purchasing tickets two days in advance as well as on-the-spot tickets for Cheoc Van Swimming Pool.

UM RECRUITS 57 ACADEMICS FOR NEW SCHOOL YEAR

The University of Macau (UM) has newly recruited 57 scholars for the 2022/2023 academic year, the university announced in a statement. UM pledged that it will "redouble its efforts to recruit high-caliber scholars in order to develop a faculty team with international academic influence." The university welcomed over 3,900 new students in the new academic year, which the UM notes is a record number of applications for undergraduate programs at UM, up by around 20% from the previous year.

GAMING

MINIMUM CASINO TABLE INCOME SET AT MOP7 MILLION, TABLES CAPPED AT 6,000

LYNZY VALLES

THE maximum number of gaming tables for all casinos in the city is capped at 6,000, while gaming machines have a maximum of 12,000 from 2023, according to an executive order of Chief Executive published in the Official Gazette on Friday.

The figure is similar to current numbers according to data from the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) showing that there were 6,006 gaming tables and 12,042 gaming machines in the city as of end-June.

The number of gaming tables and machines in Macau as of June had already seen a plunge from before the pandemic, as there were around 6,739 and 17,009 respectively in 2019.

The downturn comes as the city saw closures of satellite casinos due to the pandemic and the gaming law amendments.

The new directive comes as the gaming sector is set for a new start with the biggest overhaul of gaming law, as current concessionaires expire December 31, after being extended in June following a payment of some MOP47 million



by each operator.

All six gaming operators are eyeing a concession bid with the September 14 deadline fast approaching.

Also on Friday, another dispatch was signed by the CE that notes the minimum annual gaming revenue generated by each gaming table should be MOP7 million.

The minimum cap for the annual gaming revenue generated by each gaming machine is set at MOP300,000.

The directive will be effective from the beginning of 2023.

The new gaming law approved in late June has warned concessionaires they will face new limits related to the number of gaming machines and tables they may operate.

The amended law empowers the CE to determine these numbers, with these limits based on the evaluation the government makes on the economy and the gaming sector to determine the

gross gaming revenue per machine or table.

The minimum gaming revenue will be based on the forecast and evaluation of the Secretariat for Economy and Finance.

According to the law, if the concessionaires fail to meet the minimum revenue requirements, a "special premium" will have to be paid to the government that makes up the difference between the actual and minimum account.

GAMING

Satellite casinos find alleged increase in concessionaires' revenue shares 'unreasonable'

STAFF REPORTER

A gaming operator is reportedly planning to increase its revenue shares by 5%, according to media reports, amid the public tender for a new gaming license which closes September 14.

This means the current 45% profit share will rise to 50%, a challenging figure given the turmoil the gaming sector is facing.

According to Allin Media, some satellite casino operators received a new cooperation plan from SJM Holdings Ltd and hope to increase their share to 50%.

Satellite casinos reportedly need to sign the document before September 14.

According to data from the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau



Landmark Casino, operating under SJM license

(DICJ), 19 satellite casinos are operating under the SJM license.

Back in May, the gaming operator's shares rose to as much as 9.7%, after the government reversed its decision on the gaming law amendment that all casinos would mandatorily be in venues owned by the concessionaires.

Meanwhile, insiders from satellite casino operators told Macau Daily News that the plan is "unreasonable." Since the pandemic, all the satellite casinos have been in the red, and many casinos are repaying bank debt. According to these sources, if the gaming concessionaires raise their gaming revenue

share, the satellite casinos will find it difficult to survive given the pandemic and economic slowdown and may be required to cease operations.

Therefore, some suggested that the government clarify whether satellite casinos will have the right to change the cooperating gaming concessionaires

after submitting a bid for the new gaming license, as cited in the report.

Gaming industry insiders, according to the report, hopes the government will allow satellite casinos to change their cooperating gaming concessionaires during the three-year transition period to avoid business closure, which would result in some casino employees losing their jobs.

Such employees would find it challenging to find other jobs because most are middle-aged workers.

They also indicated that many satellite casino operators felt disappointed and have already decided to leave, as they can only continue to operate satellite casinos as a management company after the three-year grace period under the new legislation.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

THE VENETIAN MACAO TURNS 15



PRIORITIZING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

PART 5: CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER – SANDS CHINA STANDS TOGETHER WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

For 15 years now, *The Venetian Macao* has been reaching ever-higher levels of excellence as a member of the Macau community. In this five-part series, Sands China gives us a closer look at what this leader in integrated resorts has been doing in the areas of **talent development, economic diversification, tourism, local procurement, and corporate social responsibility.**

AS Macau's first integrated tourism and leisure operator – rooted in Macau for nearly 20 years now – Sands China strives to give back through socially responsible actions.

Despite the pandemic, we've

remained committed to supporting the healthy development of society through our continued efforts in areas including community development, environmental sustainability and responsible gaming – guided by the Sands Cares corporate citizenship program.

SANDS CARES AMBASSADORS

Since 2005, Sands China team members have been volunteering in Macau during their off-duty hours. Sands China formalized these efforts in August 2009 by founding the Sands Cares Ambassador program. It has allowed Sands China to respond to the community's needs through financial support, community service, material donations and

Volunteers: 3,300+
Community Events: 550+
Service Hours: 175,000+
Community Partners: 520

charity work, meanwhile while giving team members steady opportunities to serve others and help create a harmonious society.

SANDS ECO360

Environmental sustainability is one of the cornerstones of Sands China's operations. The Sands ECO360 global sustainability strategy strives to minimize our carbon footprint and the subsequent impact of business operations on the environment, thus improving energy saving and sustainab-

le operations. In June, Sands China Ltd. signed a memorandum of understanding with the Macau Fair & Trade Association (MFTA) to promote mutual cooperation for Green MICE and in joint commitment to promote and strengthen the sustainable development of Macau's MICE industry.

RESPONSIBLE GAMING

Sands China became the first gaming operator in Macau to launch a self-exclusion program in 2004, and was a pioneer in including responsible gaming training in its company-wide team member orientation program.

We established our comprehensive responsible gaming program in 2007, and have held nearly 120 responsible gaming training sessions and 430 sessions for new team members over the years, totaling more than 130,000 training hours to date.

SANDS CHINA FULLY SUPPORTS MACAU GOVERNMENT'S COVID-19 CONTROL MEASURES

In support of the city's multiple rounds of mass testing of Macau residents and key groups June 19-August 2, Sands China volunteers assisted at se-

veral NAT stations, working a total of 24,000 shifts and more than 110,000 accumulated hours.

Sands China took the lead to offer Cotai Expo as a NAT station and has provided volunteer support throughout. Sands China volunteers have been providing relevant support such as maintaining order, registration, materials distribution and enquiry handling. They have also been on hand to help the elderly, the disabled, and people who need assistance at other NAT stations as well.

Furthermore, 6,000 rooms at Sheraton Grand Macao and The Parisian Macao have been utilized as medical observation hotels.

We greatly appreciate the selfless efforts of the all the medical professionals, frontline workers and volunteers in Macau's testing drives, and we hope the pandemic will soon end and life will resume as normal.

In celebrating 15 years of The Venetian Macao, we look forward to continuing our tradition of providing excellence in all areas, from community support to entertainment, accommodation, shopping and more.



Paul Pun

"Sands China is very hands-on in how raising funds for NGOs. They encourage their to volunteer, understand the needs of disadvantaged groups, and help society build an atmosphere of mutual support. Sands China's volunteer team has long become a current of warmth in the Macau community."

Secretary-general of Caritas Macau



Jennifer Chau

"We have cooperated with Sands China since our first year. They provide jobs for recovering mental health patients, helping them develop their abilities and participate in society. Sands China, by giving back to society, has effectively reduced discrimination against persons with disabilities in the Macau community and created an inclusive society."

Director of the Fuhong Society of Macau



Hetzer Siu

"Sands China has been cooperating with MSO for over 15 years with regular donations, and its volunteers support various activities, like our Healthy Athletes Program – embodying the mission of inclusiveness with the disabled. We have built a deep friendship and I am grateful to Sands China for always building relationships with and caring for the community."

National Director of Macau Special Olympics



Lee Kwok Hoo

"Sands China had the vision to incorporate international experience into local training. Sands China has invited professors from the United States to conduct responsible gaming training, and brought well-established responsible gaming training courses developed in the United States to its employees."

Service Director of the Sheng Kung Hui Macau Social Services Coordination Office



Leong Sun Lok

"Sands China is very forward-looking in promoting responsible gaming, and they actively support local organizations. Since our establishment, we've cooperated with Sands China in training, promotion, and various activities promoting the sustainable development of Macau's gaming industry."

Chairman of Gaming Industry Employees Home

18,620 TOURISTS

VISITOR ARRIVALS REACH HIGHEST AUGUST DAILY TALLY

STAFF REPORTER

VISITOR arrivals reached 18,620 on August 27, the highest daily number since the lifting of quarantine restriction in early August, according to the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

From August 20 to 26, the MGTO reported 103,162 visitors, with a daily average of 14,737, an increase by 18% compared to the daily average for the period August 13 to 19 (12,485 visitors).

Visitor arrivals in July drastically dropped by 98.8% year-on-year to 9,759 due to the city's partial lockdown in response to its largest outbreak since mid-June.

The figure also represented a plunge of 97.4% month-on-month as the outbreak, the origins of which are unknown, brought the entire tourism sector to a halt.

As people entering



Zhuhai from Macau were subject to centralized medical observation in July, some visitors extended their stays in the city, causing the average length of stay of overnight visitors to surge by 22.0 days to 25.4 days.

Meanwhile, the MGTO held an "Experience Macao, Unlimited" Caravan Roadshow Series across the Greater Bay Area in Zhuhai, from August 28 to 29.

An MGTO representative said the roadshow will in-

roduce people to "Macau's unique glamour in 'tourism +', with travel tips and special offers, encouraging them to choose Macau as a travel destination."

The activities include outdoor interactive zones, a graffiti wall, an interactive exhibition gallery, a game booth, a parent-and-child workshop, a 3D mapping show and other highlights. The six gaming operators have also set up promotional booths at the roadshow.

Previously, the Macao Tourist Guides Union (MTGU) president Lei Man Hou said that many tourist guides have changed careers to part-time food delivery or other essential jobs, noting that the lack of employees in the sector is "serious."

According to Lei, there were around 1,000 tourist guides before the pandemic, of which over 70% were aged 40 years or above.

GBA

MACAU, HENGQIN AGREE TO DEVELOP TOURISM BUSINESSES HAND IN HAND

A"joint discussion and construction" mechanism will be established to promote Hengqin and Macao tourism industries and realize resource complementarity and mutual assistance in tourist attraction, the Hengqin government announced in a statement.

The Hotel & Tourism Association of Macao and Hengqin Tourism Association signed a framework agreement last week to strategically cooperate in tourism businesses. They met at the Macao-Hengqin Tourism Business Cooperation Conference at Sumlodol Hengqin Camping Town and explored development prospects of the culture, tourism, convention and exhibition industries in the two regions.

Meanwhile, both par-

ties will strengthen cooperation in tourism, use publicity activities to promote tourism destinations in the other region, jointly create tourism brands, and develop tourism products as well as domestic and foreign tourist markets.

Under the Overall Development Plan for Construction of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, efforts will be made to develop comprehensive tourism industries like leisure and vacation, conferences and exhibitions, sports events and sightseeing as well as "big health" industry covering healthcare and rehabilitation. Development of tourism resources on surrounding islands will also be enhanced to promote independent yacht travel in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau. **MDT**

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PRESIDENT Xi Jinping has recently replied to a letter from the families of the survivors of the "Lisbon Maru."

In the letter, Xi encouraged them to continue to actively commit to the China-Britain friendship and looked forward to more British friends making contributions to bilateral relations.

In October 1942, "Lisbon Maru," a cargo vessel, requisitioned by the Japanese army to carry more than 1,800 British prisoners of war (POWs) from Hong Kong to Japan, was hit by the US army off the Zhoushan Islands, China's Zhejiang province.

A total of 843 POWs died, while 384 were rescued by local fishermen. The British officers and soldiers and the British government were deeply grateful for their help.

Referring to the moving story of the heroic rescue back in 1942, Xi pointed out that it bears important witness to China and Britain fighting side by side as allies during World

Xi replies to letter from families of 'Lisbon Maru' survivors

War II against fascist aggression and has left tales of the profound friendship between the people of the two countries.

Xi noted that he is very familiar with this piece of history, and told the story during his visit to Britain in 2015.

The Chinese president stressed that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level between China and Britain, adding that over the past half a century, bilateral ties have been able to keep moving forward thanks to the hard work of numerous friendly people from both countries.

Xi also expressed the hope that the families of the survivors will continue to stay com-

mitted to the China-Britain friendship, and that more British people will make positive contributions to the development of China-Britain relations.

During his visit to Britain in 2015, President Xi took as an example the rescue of POWs on "Lisbon Maru" to stress that the friendship forged between the Chinese and British people during the war will never fade and has become a valuable asset in bilateral relations.

The daughter of Dennis Morley, a survivor of the "Lisbon Maru," wrote a letter to Xi recently. She recalled China's rescue with gratitude, expressing solid support for an everlasting friendship between the British and Chinese people. XINHUA



US sails warships through Taiwan Strait in first since Pelosi

THE U.S. Navy sailed two warships through the Taiwan Strait yesterday, in the first such transit publicized since U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan earlier in August, at a time when tensions have kept the waterway particularly busy.

The USS Antietam and USS Chancellorsville are conducting a routine transit, the U.S. 7th Fleet said. The cruisers "transited through a corridor in the Strait that is beyond the territorial sea of any coastal State," the statement said.

China conducted many military exercises in the strait as it sought to punish Taiwan after Pelosi visited the self-ruled island against Beijing's threats.

China has sent many warships sailing in the Taiwan Strait and waters surrounding

Taiwan since Pelosi's visit, as well as sending warplanes and firing long-range missiles. It views the island as part of its national territory and opposes any visits by foreign governments as recognizing Taiwan as its own state.

China said it tracked the movement of the ships. "Troops of the (Eastern) Theater Command are on high alert and ready to foil any provocation at any time," said senior Col. Shi Yi, spokesperson for the People Liberation Army's Eastern Theater Command.

The U.S. regularly sends its ships through the Taiwan Strait as part of what it calls freedom of navigation maneuvers.

The 100 mile-wide strait divides Taiwan from China. MDT/AP

CHINA PACT

US COAST GUARD CUTTER IS DENIED PORT CALL IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

A U.S. coast guard cutter conducting patrols as part of an international mission to prevent illegal fishing was recently unable to get clearance for a scheduled port call in Solomon Islands, an incident that comes amid growing concerns of Chinese influence on the Pacific nation.

The cutter Oliver Henry was taking part in Operation Island Chief monitoring fishing activities in the Pacific, over the weekend, when it sought to make a scheduled stop at Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, to refuel and re-provision, the Coast Guard office in Honolulu said.

There was no response from the Solomon Islands' government for diplomatic clearance for the vessel to stop there, however, so the Oliver Henry diverted to Papua New Guinea, the Coast Guard said.

When the stop in Solomon Islands had been scheduled wasn't disclosed, but the Coast Guard said the Oliver Henry had arrived in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, on

Tuesday "following a patrol in parts of the Coral Sea and the Solomon Islands."

Britain's Royal Navy did not comment directly on reports that the HMS Spey, also taking part in Operation Island Chief, was also denied a port call in Solomon Islands.

"Ships' programs are under constant review, and it is routine practice for them to change," the Royal Navy said in an emailed statement.

"For reasons of operational security we do not discuss details. The Royal Navy looks forward to visiting the Solomon Islands at a later date."

During Operation Island Chief, the U.S., Australia, Britain and New Zealand provided support through aerial and surface surveillance for Pacific island nations participating in the operation, including Solomon Islands.

China has been assertively trying to expand its presence and influence in the Pacific, and Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare alarmed some neighbors, the U.S. and

others after he signed a new security pact with China.

The pact has raised fears of a Chinese naval base being established within 2,000 kilometers of Australia's northeast coast. A Chinese military presence in the Solomon Islands would put it not only on the doorstep of Australia and New Zealand but also in close proximity to Guam, the U.S. territory that hosts major military bases.

Both the Solomon Islands and China have denied their pact will lead to a Chinese military foothold in the South Pacific.

Sogavare also raised eyebrows earlier in August when he skipped a memorial service marking the anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal, a key battle in World War II in which American and other allied forces wrested control of the islands from Imperial Japan.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, whose father was wounded during the Guadalcanal campaign and who attended the memorial,

said Sogavare "missed an important opportunity" by failing to attend.

U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn met with Sogavare in the Solomon Islands on Wednesday but it was not clear whether she raised the issue of the Coast Guard's refused port call.

The Tennessee Republican said in a statement on her website that her visit to the Solomon Islands as well as Fiji and Papua New Guinea "was an important step in showcasing America's commitment to the region and expanding our strategic relationships."

The Coast Guard, in the statement from Honolulu, said it respects the sovereignty of its foreign partners and looks forward to future engagement with Solomon Islands.

Coast Guard Lt. Kristin Kam told the Stars and Stripes newspaper that the U.S. State Department had been in touch with the Solomon Islands government following the refusal of the port call and that they "expect all future clearances will be provided to U.S. ships." MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



The guided-missile cruiser USS Chancellorsville (CG 62) transits the Philippine Sea (2016)

AP PHOTO



PAKISTAN

Flooding deaths pass 1,000 in 'climate catastrophe'

ZARAR KHAN, ISLAMABAD

DEATHS from widespread flooding in Pakistan topped 1,000 since mid-June, officials said yesterday, as the country's climate minister called the deadly monsoon season "a serious climate catastrophe."

Flash flooding from the heavy rains has washed away villages and crops as soldiers and rescue workers evacuated stranded residents to the safety of relief camps and provided food to thousands of displaced Pakistanis.

Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority reported the death toll since the monsoon season began earlier than normal this year — in mid-June — reached 1,033 people after new fatalities were reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and southern Sindh provinces.

Sherry Rehman, a Pakistani senator and the country's top climate official, said in a video posted on Twitter that Pakistan is experiencing a "serious climate catastrophe, one of the hardest in the decade."

"We are at the moment at

the ground zero of the front line of extreme weather events, in an unrelenting cascade of heatwaves, forest fires, flash floods, multiple glacial lake outbursts, flood events and now the monster monsoon of the decade is wreaking non-stop havoc throughout the country," she said. The on-camera statement was retweeted by the country's ambassador to the European Union.

Flooding from the Swat River overnight affected northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where tens of thousands of people — especially in the Charsadda and Nowshera districts — have been evacuated from their homes to relief camps set up in government buildings. Many have also taken shelter on roadsides, said Kamran Bangash, a spokesperson for the provincial government.

Bangash said some 180,000 people have been evacuated from Charsadda and 150,000 from Nowshera district villages.

Khaista Rehman, 55, no relation to the climate minister, took shelter with his wife and three children on the side of the Islamabad-Peshawar

highway after his home in Charsadda was submerged overnight.

"Thank God we are safe now on this road quite high from the flooded area," he said. "Our crops are gone and our home is destroyed but I am grateful to Allah that we are alive and I will restart life with my sons."

The unprecedented monsoon season has affected all four of the country's provinces. Nearly 300,000 homes have been destroyed, numerous roads rendered impassable and electricity outages have been widespread, affecting millions of people.

Pope Francis on Sunday said he wanted to assure his "closeness to the populations of Pakistan struck by flooding of disastrous proportions." Speaking during a pilgrimage to the Italian town of L'Aquila, which was hit by a deadly earthquake in 2009, Francis said he was praying "for the many victims, for the injured and the evacuated, and so that international solidarity will be prompt and generous."

Rehman told Turkish news outlet TRT World that by the time the rains recede, "we

could well have one fourth or one third of Pakistan under water."

"This is something that is a global crisis and of course we will need better planning and sustainable development on the ground. ... We'll need to have climate resilient crops as well as structures," she said.

In May, Rehman told BBC Newshour that both the country's north and south were witnessing extreme weather events because of rising temperatures. "So in north actually just now we are ... experiencing what is known as glacial lake outburst floods which we have many of because Pakistan is home to the highest number of glaciers outside the polar region."

The government has deployed soldiers to help civilian authorities in rescue and relief operations across the country. Military chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa visited flood-affected areas of southern Sindh province to expedite relief work there.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani army said in a statement it airlifted a 22 tourists trapped in a valley in the country's north to safety. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1974 ROCK FANS CLASH WITH POLICE AT FESTIVAL



At least 220 people have been arrested following disturbances at a rock festival in Windsor Great Park in Berkshire.

Organisers of the Windsor Free Festival, which started last Saturday, have accused police officers of heavy-handedness.

More than 600 officers moved in at 0800 on Thursday and began to clear the site where more than 2,000 festival-goers had camped overnight.

Many campers left voluntarily or offered only offered passive resistance but some fighting broke out.

220 were arrested and more than 50 people - including 22 police officers - were injured.

About 400 people marched through Windsor town centre in protest at the police action.

Several festival-goers claimed the police had acted brutally.

Michael Bennett, 17, from Worthing said he had been subjected to an unprovoked attack and as a result had a badly bruised neck.

David Stafford, 22, from Haywards Heath in Sussex said the police were arresting people at random.

"I don't know why the police got so violent. People were being thrown into police vans for no reason," he said.

The chief constable of Thames Valley Police, David Holdsworth, said his officers had moved in because the festival organisers had not got permission to camp on Windsor Great Park.

Mr Holdsworth said any complaints about police behaviour would be investigated.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The festival in 1974 was the third to be held at Windsor Great Park following similar events in 1972 and 1973.

The free event had caused controversy from the outset, partly due to its location close to Windsor Castle.

Following the trouble in 1974 the government provided an alternative site - a disused airbase near Swindon in Berkshire - for festival in 1975. Some festival organisers were not happy with the new location which they regarded as an attempt to hide them away.

The festival did not enjoy the same kind of longevity as others founded around the same time, such as Glastonbury and Reading. It was held for the last time at Watchfield airbase in Berkshire in 1976.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Invite friends over rather than spending money on lavish entertainment. Your need to be in a leadership position will help you surpass any rivals you might encounter.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 You will get bored quickly, so make sure that you have scheduled enough activity to hold your interest. Deception may cause disputes you can do without.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 If you are in the midst of a financial deal, this is your lucky day. Avoid conflicts with in-laws or other family members. Opportunities to get together with friends will be enlightening.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Start sending out those resumes. You are best to sit back and think it through, rather than add to the ranting and raving. You will have some problems with children.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 You're likely to encounter new partners if you take short trips. You need a change and you need to earn more cash. Older family members may try to put unreasonable demands on you.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Call someone you haven't seen in a long time. If you've been really busy, try to schedule some time to spend with loved ones. Try to be considerate in your personal obligations.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 You will be able to catch up on overdue paper work. Be prepared to jump quickly if you wish to stay in the forefront of your industry today. Secret affairs will only lead to deception.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 You'll regret every word for some time to come. Someone you work with may be withholding valuable information. Don't think the worst if you hear something negative about your partner.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 This will not be the best day to try to push your ideas or concerns. Get motivated and follow up on some self-improvement resolutions.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 A new image can be the result if you change your look. Take care that arrangements to spend quality time together are made in advance. Be careful not to overexert yourself.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Your ability to dazzle others with your unique and innovative ideas will attract attention. Don't let your emotions take over. Your moneymaking opportunities will flourish.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Someone you least expect could be trying to make you look bad. Your ability to stand out in a crowd will bring you the recognition you desire. Resist secret affairs.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

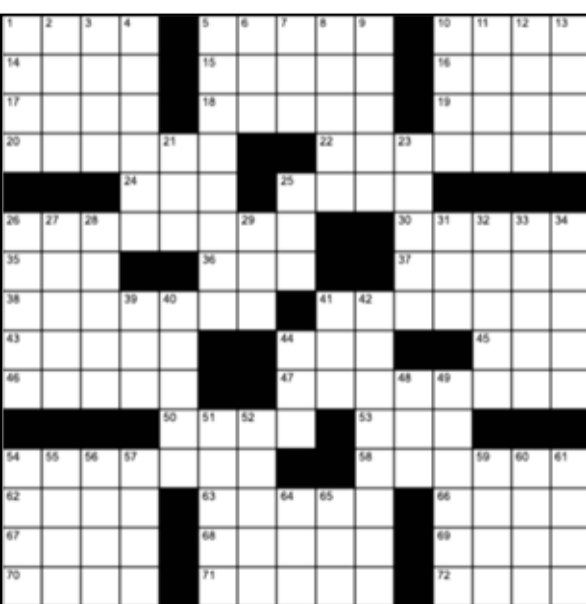
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	16	27	cloudy
Changchun	27	35	cloudy
Chengdu	20	24	overcast
Chongqing	31	37	cloudy
Fuzhou	27	37	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	35	thunderstorms
Guiyang	21	31	cloudy
Haikou	26	33	cloudy
Hangzhou	24	35	cloudy
Harbin	15	21	rain
Hefei	23	30	rain
Nanjing	23	32	thunderstorms
Shanghai	25	33	overcast
Taipei	26	31	fine
Wuhan	24	30	rain
Hong Kong	28	31	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	17	27	cloudy
Frankfurt	14	27	overcast
Paris	16	29	overcast
London	13	23	overcast
New York	23	30	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Fifth Avenue store; 5- Goad; 10- Long luxuriant hair; 14- In vogue; 15- Sierra ___; 16- Mary Kay competitor; 17- From the U.S.; 18- Cordillera of South America; 19- Lucie's father; 20- Overhaul; 22- Spoken; 24- Bentley of "American Beauty"; 25- Church recess; 26- It may help move aircraft; 30- Gentle water sound; 35- Blood letters; 36- Composer Rorem; 37- Point in question; 38- Thick soup; 41- Infers; 43- Mindlessly stupid; 44- Actress Thompson; 45- Takes too much; 46- Reposes; 47- Type of ballot; 50- Auricular; 53- Sister of Zsa Zsa; 54- Captain; 58- One who belongs to a group; 62- Roll call response; 63- Impertinence; 66- Pierce portrayer; 67- Organs used for sight; 68- ___ a million; 69- Overflow; 70- No. 2; 71- Bowling alley button; 72- Vandals;

DOWN 1- Skin marking, often due to injury; 2- Words of woe; 3- Capital of the Ukraine; 4- Illegible handwriting; 5- Passing; 6- ___-X; 7- Deity; 8- Get the better of; 9- Bird homes; 10- Created; 11- Declare; 12- Centrepiece of the human face; 13- Geraint's beloved; 21- Cry of a cat; 23- Halfhearted; 25- Append; 26- Rhino relative; 27- Dry as ___; 28- Little bits; 29- Born, in France; 31- Baton Rouge sch.; 32- Horse race venue in England; 33- Jacket material; 34- "Siddhartha" author; 39- Explosive stuff; 40- Author of fables; 41- Ball belle; 42- Convenience; 44- Fond du ___ Wis.; 48- 12/24 or 12/31; 49- Super Bowl III MVP; 51- Choir member; 52- Peace goddess; 54- Queens stadium; 55- Lock openers; 56- Angers; 57- Annoyance; 59- ___ cheese; 60- Garden site; 61- Super Bowl XXXIV champs; 64- Hi-___ monitor; 65- Contend;



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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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
NAM LONG 1 BED	HKD 3,780,000
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RUGBY

Series leader South Africa fails to reach LA Sevens quarters

SOUTH Africa's defense of the rugby sevens world series title was in jeopardy after it failed to reach the quarterfinals of the series-ending Los Angeles Sevens this weekend.

A month after winning their first Commonwealth Games gold medal, the South Africans lost to the United States and New Zealand in their pool in Carson.

South Africa has led the nine-leg series since winning the first four tournaments, but hasn't finished better than fifth since January. It came to Los Angeles at risk of being beaten to the series title by Australia, Argentina or Fiji, and all three rivals advanced to the quarters.

Australia swept its pool, including a come-from-behind 19-14 win over Argentina. To win its first world series, Australia has to



reach the final, or finish at least third as long as Argentina doesn't succeed.

Argentina also seeks a maiden world series triumph, and can achieve it by winning Los Angeles and Australia not reaching the final.

Fiji also cleaned up its pool including Wales, France and Ireland, and could win the series if it wins Los Angeles and Australia finishes no higher than fourth.

In the quarterfinals on Sunday, Australia faces

Kenya, Fiji meets the host United States, Argentina has unbeaten Samoa, and New Zealand plays Ireland.

Series leader South Africa stumbled in Los Angeles' opening match, when the U.S. blasted out to 21-0 and won 21-7.

New Zealand used the same formula, going up 17-0 by halftime. South Africa hit back with two late converted tries to trail 17-14 and had possession after the fulltime hooter, but knocked on in New Zealand territory.

South Africa coach Neil Powell was disappointed by his team's defense, but said they would be ready for the Rugby World Cup Sevens in Cape Town in two weeks.

"They will definitely be ready come the World Cup," Powell said. "This will be even more motivation for us than being successful this weekend." MDT/AP

FOOTBALL

DYBALA HELPS ROMA TO 1-1 DRAW ON HIS RETURN TO JUVENTUS

ROMA forward Paulo Dybala returned to Juventus and helped in the equalizer though his new team lost its perfect start to Serie A this weekend and it could have been much worse for José Mourinho's side.

Dušan Vlahovi scored after just 76 seconds and Juventus appeared to be in firm control until Tammy Abraham's 69th-minute leveller.

"After the first half I was embarrassed for my guys, I told them in the dressing room that I was

embarrassed to be their coach, I was praying in the first 30 minutes that the first half would end with us only one goal down," Mourinho said.

The 1-1 draw marked Roma's first dropped points after opening the season with two wins. Napoli, which plays at Fiorentina on Sunday, is the only team left in Serie A with a perfect record.

It was an emotional return for Dybala, who cried at his final home match for Juventus in May. MDT/AP




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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**AUDIT AGREEMENT
 MEANINGFUL ACCORD
 THAT CAN HELP AVOID
 LOSE-LOSE SCENARIO**

That the Chinese and United States regulatory authorities finally reached an agreement that allows US regulators to inspect US-listed Chinese company audits is indeed an all-win outcome that illustrates both the need for and possibility of reciprocity-based collaboration even in the current severe climate of bilateral ties.

When news came that the US Public Company Accounting Oversight Board and the China Securities Regulatory Commission had finally broken their years-long deadlock on Friday, sighs of relief were heard from all stakeholding parties.

While easing the delisting pressure on the hundreds of Chinese companies listed on US exchanges, it also mitigates fears that Chinese companies may permanently lose access to the world's deepest capital markets and that the two countries are headed toward de facto financial decoupling.

The CSRC hailed the agreement as an important step that would benefit investors, companies and both countries. Lynn Martin, president of the New York Stock Exchange, called it "an important development for the global economy and our US capital markets".

Yet, just as many have observed, this is only the first step toward truly breaking the longstanding regulatory deadlock, which has been unduly politicized, even stretched into a national security subject. Whether the pact reached on Friday, the details of which have not been published, will work as anticipated rests not only on how well the US regulators' first inspections in Hong Kong proceed, but also on whether constructive engagement can continue over time.

PCAOB inspectors are expected to travel to Hong Kong in mid-September to conduct initial inspections, after which the US regulatory authority will determine whether its inspectors have been granted the "full access" promised and make their judgment on Chinese compliance. The Friday deal is being viewed as partial because plenty of technical details may get in the way of the implementation.

How the inspections proceed will to a great extent determine the fate of more than 200 Chinese companies listed in US capital markets, some of which are key industry leaders in China whose financial health has significant impacts on the national economy.

Since the two countries' regulators were able to navigate the complexities of the political situation to arrive at the agreement, there is every reason to hope that they will be able to arrive at a truly win-win scenario. And that would be good news indeed.

After all, it would prove it is possible to find a balance between the two countries' respective national security concerns.

**AT 90, THE VENICE FILM FESTIVAL
 LOOKS BETTER THAN EVER**

Cinema's biggest stars just seem to shine a bit brighter at the Venice International Film Festival, which begins this week in the Northern Italian city.

Think of Lady Gaga, a woman who has never shied away from a grand entrance, somehow topping even herself delicately perched over the edge of a moving water taxi and vamping for the cameras like a classic screen siren. Or Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck evoking old Hollywood glamour to make their official debut as a couple just last year.

Whether you're a celebrity gliding down the red carpet in front of hundreds of flashing cameras or an onlooker an ocean away daydreaming about Timothée Chalamet's crystal-studded Haider Ackermann suit, or that electric moment between non-couple Jessica Chastain and Oscar Isaac, it is the kind of occasion that ignites the imagination. And that's all before you even step inside the theater.

More on macaudailytimes.com

**THE
 BUZZ**



AP PHOTO



**FRANCIS PRAISES
 HUMILITY OF 13-CENTURY
 PONTIFF WHO RESIGNED**

**ANDREA ROSA & FRANCES
 D'EMILIO, L'AQUILA**

Making a pilgrimage in an Italian mountain town, Pope Francis yesterday hailed the humility of a 13th-century pontiff who resigned to live a hermit's life, and praised him for using his brief papacy to highlight the value of mercy and forgiveness.

Francis made a four-hour visit to L'Aquila in the central Apennine mountains, which was struck by an earthquake in 2009, destroying killing 305 people and destroying much of the town. It is still being rebuilt.

The pontiff came to give a boost to a late summer tradition begun by Pope Celestine V 728 years ago to encourage the faithful to seek forgiveness for sins.

L'Aquila's Collemaggio Basilica contains the remains of Celestine, who resigned in 1294 after only several months in the papacy. As pontiff, Celestine initiated the August practice in which faithful could pass through the basilica's Holy Door. After meeting certain religious requirements, they can receive a plenary indulgence, which removes punishment for sin. Aides brought Francis in

a wheelchair to the basilica's austere, brown wooden door. After Francis, who has a painful knee problem, was helped to stand, he used a sturdy olive tree branch to rap three times on the door, which then opened. With a ramp put in place, Francis limped into the basilica, then prayed silently before the remains of Celestine, whose face is covered with a silver mask.

Celestine was ridiculed by Dante in the "Divine Comedy" for abdicating his papal role.

"The humble appear to the eyes of men as weak and losers, but in reality they are the true winners because they are the only ones who trust completely in the Lord and know His will," Francis said.

"Humility doesn't consist in devaluing oneself but rather in that healthy realism that makes us recognize our potential and also our misery," Francis said. He hailed the "courageous" Celestine V because "no logic of power was able to imprison or manage him."

Celestine reminded all that mercy and forgiveness help people to pass from

"anguish and guilt to freedom and joy," Francis said.

While the helicopter that flew him from the Vatican to L'Aquila earlier yesterday kept circling above the town, with the pilot trying to find a break in cloud over so it could land, Francis said he was inspired to ponder the value of mercy.

"At a certain point, there was a break in the clouds, and the pilot zoomed through," Francis said, encouraging people, when their lives are clouded by troubles, to take advantage of a "break" when the possibility of mercy presents itself.

Before Francis, the last pope to visit L'Aquila was his predecessor, Benedict XVI, who came to comfort quake survivors in 2009 and paid tribute to Celestine.

Francis greeted townspeople outside the town's Duomo, or cathedral, which is still being repaired from quake damage, and visited with relatives of some of the victims.

Francis noted that inmates from area prisons were among well-wishers outside the cathedral. "In you, I salute a sign of hope, because in prisons there are so many, too many victims," Francis said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Ukraine Russian rocket and artillery strikes hit areas across the Dnieper River from Europe's largest nuclear power plant, Ukrainian officials said yesterday, as fears persisted that fighting in the vicinity could damage the plant and cause a radiation leak. Russian forces took control of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant soon after the war began and hold adjacent territory along the left bank of the wide river.

Russia late blocked agreement on the final document of a four-week review of the U.N. treaty considered the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament which criticized its military takeover of Europe's largest nuclear plant soon after Russian troops invaded Ukraine, an act that has raised fears of a nuclear disaster. Igor Vishnevsky told the delayed final meeting of the conference reviewing the 50-year-old Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that "unfortunately there is no consensus on this document."

AP PHOTO



European Union's foreign policy chief announced yesterday [Macau time] that Serbia and Kosovo have agreed on how to resolve a dispute over their identity documents, settling one of the problems that have sparked the latest tensions between the former Balkan war foes. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, which Belgrade does not recognize.

AP PHOTO



UK A car driven by Princess Diana in the 1980s sold for 650,000 pounds (\$764,000) at auction this weekend, just days before the 25th anniversary of her death. Silverstone Auctions said there was "fierce bidding" for the black Ford Escort RS Turbo before the sale closed. The U.K. buyer, whose name was not disclosed, paid a 12.5% buyer's premium on top of the selling price, according to the classic car auction house.