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“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

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Philippines A psychiatrist who helped fellow Cambodians recover from trauma resulting from the Khmer Rouge's genocidal rule and a Japanese ophthalmologist who led an effort to treat thousands of Vietnamese villagers were among those selected for this year's Ramon Magsaysay Awards, Asia's version of the Nobel Prize. The other winners were a Filipina pediatrician who has provided medical, legal and social help to thousands of abused children and their families, and a Frenchman who battles plastic pollution in Indonesian rivers.



AP PHOTO

Indonesia A truck transporting iron on the outskirts of Jakarta yesterday crashed at a bus stop in front of a school and killed at least 10 people, most of them elementary students. The students were waiting for a ride home after finishing classes when the truck smashed into a bus stop on the main road connecting the Bekasi area and East Jakarta.



AP PHOTO

Malaysia Former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, 97, was hospitalized yesterday after testing positive for COVID-19, his office said. "Mahathir has been admitted to the National Heart Institute for observation for a few days as advised by the medical team," it said in a statement. It didn't provide further details on his condition.

European Union Inflation in the countries using the euro currency hit another record in August, fueled by soaring energy prices mainly driven by Russia's war in Ukraine. Annual inflation in the eurozone's 19 countries rose to 9.1%, up from 8.9% in July, according to the latest figures released Wednesday by the European Union statistics agency Eurostat. Inflation is at the highest levels since record-keeping for the euro began in 1997.

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MENTAL HEALTH

SUICIDAL TENDENCIES GROW OVER PANDEMIC, YOUNG WOMEN AT HIGHER RISK

RENATO MARQUES

THE Covid-19 pandemic impacts, particularly during the periods of more severe restrictions, have not only contributed to an increase in the number of suicides as health authorities had previously announced, but also to a significant increase in the number of suicide attempts, lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng said in a spoken inquiry delivered in the closing session of the legislative year.

The lawmaker, linked to the Women's General Association of Macau, presented data showing that, during the first half of this year, a total of 123 suicide attempts were recorded. This is a figure that, when compared to the 99 recorded during the same period last year, represents an increase of approximately 24%.

According to the same lawmaker, young women are at higher risk, with 70% of all reported suicides attempted by women, and more than 40% by young women between 15 and 24 years old.



She pointed out that this could be related to the reduction of school and extracurricular activities for teenagers, which not only left them more mentally unstable and prone to negative emotions such as pessimism, loneliness, and depression, but also led to

them being more disconnected from school. Students also stopped being closely observed by school teachers and counselors, as well as being in less frequent contact with peers who could otherwise detect early signs of mental illness.

In short, Wong blamed the lack of guidance coming with the additional pressure of pandemic restrictions.

The same lawmaker also said that the women's association was contacted by many women over this period who reported facing great pressure in family budgets due to dismissal from employment, pandemic prevention and family care. She added that some new or expectant mothers have become easy targets for dismissal during the pandemic.

According to Wong, existing gender bias in the workplace increased during the pandemic and it is now difficult for women to find employment.

She also pointed out that another high-risk group for suicide is the elderly, many of whom are living alone and have little contact with new technologies. The elderly see themselves as "expired" when facing the need to use smartphones to generate the Macao Health Code as well as scan location codes, perform and upload

the results of rapid antigen tests, and other tasks that were required on daily basis.

"They felt disconnected and a burden to society," Wong said, adding that, in some cases, people could not understand the needs and difficulties of the elderly. She noted that all these factors added to their loneliness, health conditions and depressive moods.

She called on the authorities to strengthen collaboration with civil society institutions and schools, and through different means and in different social areas, create a mentally healthy environment, calling for the creation of more online and in-person psychological services in community neighborhoods.

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) encourages residents to be conscious of their psychological and emotional state as well as those of their relatives and friends. If in need, residents can call Caritas' Life Hope hotline (28525222) or IAS' counseling hotline (28261126).

SUSPECTED ILLEGAL WORKER NUMBERS AT RECORD LOW IN JUNE, JULY

Authorities detected 28 suspected illegal workers in the city during both June and July, the lowest figure reported so far this year. Normally, authorities would report an average of about 60 illegal workers in Macau per month. However, the low figure for June and July may be due to the Covid-19 outbreak that led to border closures and mandatory quarantine upon arrival in Macau. The joint operations of the Public Security Police and the Labour Affairs Bureau inspected a total of 249 locations.

IMPORTS DROP 71% IN JULY

Total imports of merchandise fell sharply by 71.3% year-on-year to MOP4.39 billion in July 2022 due to a decrease in demand for imported goods along with a substantial decline in local economic activity amid the coronavirus pandemic. Imports of beauty, cosmetic and skincare products, mobile phones and watches plunged by 97.1%, 94.5% and 82.6% respectively. Total merchandise exports amounted to MOP594 million, down by 47% year-on-year, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). From January to July this year, the total value of merchandise exports decreased by 0.4% year-on-year to MOP7.77 billion. The total value of merchandise imports dropped by 11.8% year-on-year to MOP78.39 billion.

KAI FONG

Survey finds more residents in favor of cash handouts than e-consumption

RENATO MARQUES

A recent survey conducted by the General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macao (UGAMM) found that a large majority of the residents surveyed would prefer that the upcoming new round of support measures for the whole population include a cash handout.

According to the release from the UGAMM, almost 89% of the 1,028 respondents to the survey were in favor of a cash handout forming part of the government's new round of economic relief measures, announced to comprise a total of 10 billion patacas.

Measures to support con-

sumption such as the electronic consumption (e-consumption) vouchers that have been used on several occasions since 2020 came second on the list of ordered preferences of the residents surveyed, with more than 77% saying that this would also be a preferred method.

Analyzing the survey results, a director of the UGAMM, Cheng Song Meng, said that, according to the survey, a measure that would include a combined cash handout, as well as a consumption benefit, would be the most likely to satisfy the desires of the local residents.

The survey also questioned the respondents regar-



ding their feelings about the current prices of goods and services, as well as their current incomes in comparison with the pre-pandemic period. Around 90% of the respondents said that the prices

of consumer goods and services had increased significantly, while over 50% of the same respondents indicated that their income had declined over the past almost three years.

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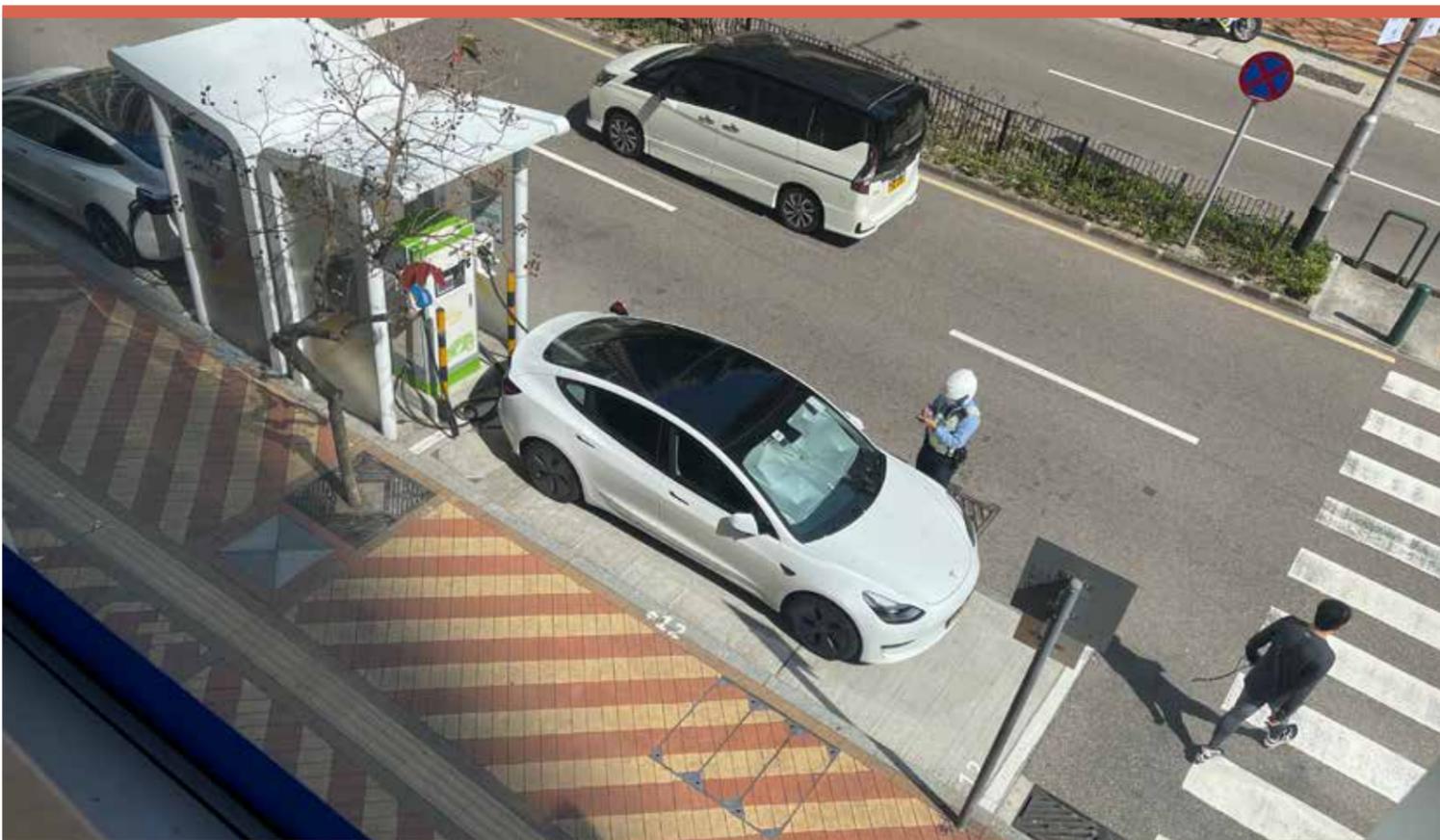
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ANTHONY LAM



Transport Bureau has no plan to right roadside EV charger wrongs

ANTHONY LAM

THE Transport Bureau (DSAT) has no plans to change laws to allow electric vehicles (EVs) to park and charge legally in roadside parking spots.

The layout of local roadside EV chargers has been the subject of public debate. EV owners and taxi drivers have complained

about the unrealistic set-up of these chargers.

Usually, roadside EV charging and parking spots in Macau come in pairs. Each pair is equipped with a single charging station placed between them. However, some EVs have the charging port near the head of the car, while some have the port near the rear of the car. This will prevent the charging of certain types of EVs

unless they are parked facing the opposite direction.

In response to an enquiry by the Times, the DSAT emphasized that parking or driving in the opposite direction to that of traffic is against the law. "[Changing the laws] will be risky to the safety of [all] road users," the DSAT said, adding that drivers may be fined by the police for doing so.

Indeed, the taxi sector has said

that some drivers who parked in the opposite direction to charge their vehicles have been fined for doing so. Traffic police officers have also been seen issuing tickets to EV drivers for being similarly parked.

The bureau was questioned as to whether it had plans to change the law to allow EVs to park and charge more conveniently. The bureau simply did not reply

to this question. It only asked EV drivers to choose appropriate spots for their vehicles, offering the various styles of charging spot layouts as justification.

The topic of fair use, if the law is changed, may concern some people, although the status quo is that when they need to park their cars, EV drivers may choose between regular parking spots and those equipped with a charger.

EVs are not prohibited from parking in regular spots, whether by the roadside or in parking lots. In contrast, normal cars are prohibited from parking in spots with chargers, at least in public parking lots.

The government has rolled out a policy to mandate that the taxi sector gradually transform to a full-EV fleet. Furthermore, the Macau Environmental Condition Report 2020 noted that the use of electric vehicles and clean energy should be further promoted.

Apparently, the various bureaus of the government have not yet come to a consensus on the practicality of EVs. In fact, some drivers have suggested charging cables be extended to eliminate the problem of mismatches between certain EVs and charging stations.

In response to the taxi sector's complaints about the charging station layout, Macau electricity supplier Companhia de Electricidade de Macau (CEM) told the Times in 2019 that "CEM has installed some EV chargers in front of the parking space and some at the back of the parking space."

Additionally, the government has not provided sufficient data on carbon emissions saved from using EVs and electricity generation as compared to driving gasoline-powered vehicles.

RENATO MARQUES

THE central government is once again issuing government RMB-denominated bonds in Macau.

This time, the issuance has a face value of RMB3 billion and will take place next week on September 7, the Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China announced.

In a statement, the local government said that the issuance of the RMB bonds aims to offer a fresh investment option for professional investors, as well as to promote the progress of the internationalization of the Chinese currency through the Macau offshore RMB market.

The same statement also noted that the initiative will support Macau in

Central gov't to issue RMB3b in bonds, aiming to internationalize RMB

its bid to establish a modern finance industry and the city's effort at adequate economic diversification.

The central government also hopes the initiative will reinforce cooperation in financial services between the mainland and Macau, as well as attract a greater number of bond issuers and international investors to participate in the development of the local bond market which will, in turn, enrich the financial products offered in Macau as a bond market.

The measure was well

received by the local government who praised the central government initiative.

The first time the central government announced the issuance of RMB bonds in Macau was July 2019, when RMB2 billion was launched, the first of-fshore issuance.

The issuance, named "lotus bonds," was not, however, the first RMB-denominated debt issued in Macau; the first such issuance was in February 2018 by the Bank of China - Macau. This issuance totaled RMB4 billion.

RENATO MARQUES



RON LAM URGES GOV'T TO PAY FOR MICRO TO MEDIUM ENTERPRISES' NAT

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKER Ron Lam has delivered a spoken inquiry calling on the government to ease the burden on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) who currently need to pay for the nucleic acid tests (NAT) of employees, according to the list of professions considered as key groups for pandemic prevention.

The lawmaker said that the two-way system enforced by health authorities in mid-August, whereby some NATs are provided by the government and others by companies, has flaws and the guidelines "did not clarify which key professional groups should have their expenses borne by the government or by the companies."

He added that he has received

many complaints from MSMEs saying that public services have conflicting advice on the issue.

As result, he noted, many small companies are being forced to bear the cost of NATs for their workers, a reality that has "greatly increased their expenses and [financial] burden."

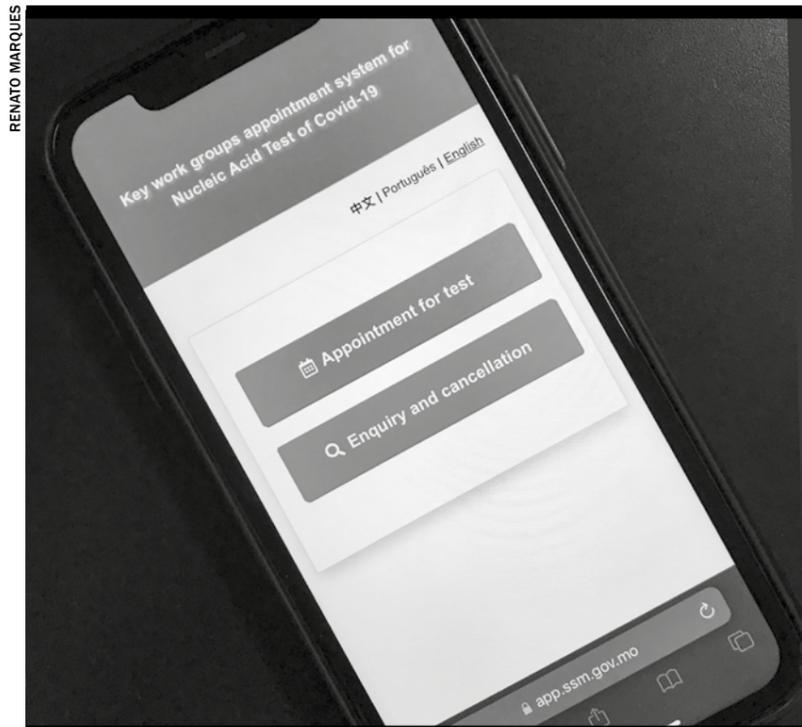
According to a later explanation, the government said that the difference between the two systems is related to the degree of risk, with the government covering the cost of NATs for workers in key high-risk groups, while the costs of workers with lower risk is borne by companies. This explanation does not convince the lawmaker, who says that such measures do not comply with the National Health Commission guidelines from which, local health author-

ities say, the measures came.

According to Lam, the government should pay for tests it makes mandatory, and individuals should only have to pay for voluntary tests, for example, for the purpose of border crossing.

The same lawmaker noted that, according to information from the health authorities, 188,000 people are currently included in the professional key groups, a figure that represents over 50% of the entire employed population.

Lam fears that if the government does not cover these expenses, the burden on MSMEs will become too great, creating more problems like those already reported where companies are asking the workers to pay for their own NATs to be able to attend work.



RENATO MARQUES

CRIME

Nearly MOP90,000 losses in scam

STAFF REPORTER

TWO victims are reported to have lost a total of MOP88,880 to scams in August this year, according to the Judiciary Police (PJ).

The first victim, Chu, is a 46-year-old local male resident; the second victim, Wu, a 29-year-old female mainland resident.

The suspect, Ieong, is a 30-year-old unemployed male resident.

The first victim met a female suspect through her friend on April. The suspect claimed that she could help the victim with a license for people who came to Macau from the mainland, with a cost of around MOP80,000.

The victim subsequently believed the woman and transferred MOP68,000 to a local bank account.

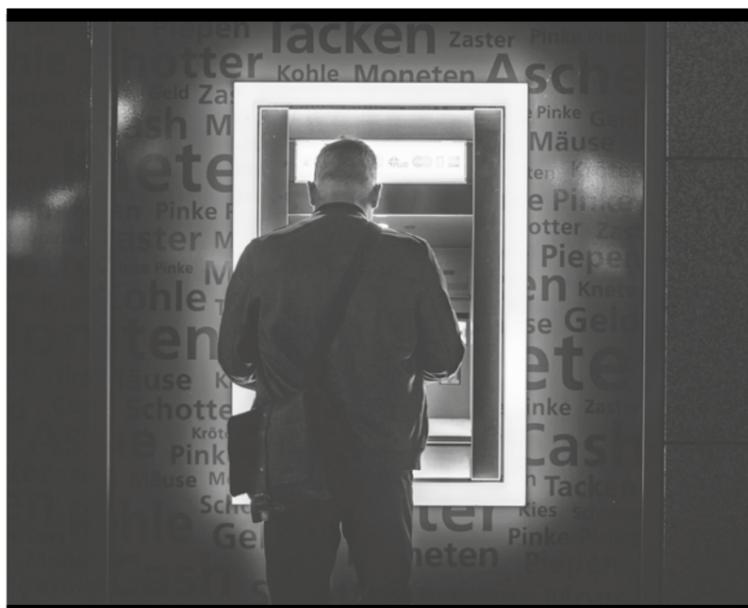
However, the female suspect did not complete the relevant license, and told the victim that her case would be handled by another male suspect, Ieong.

The victim asked the suspect to withdraw money from the account, but the suspect rejected her request.

The victim then failed to contact the suspect and reported to matter to the PJ.

Upon inquiries by the investigation department, the PJ found that the two suspects had been involved in another scam case.

In this case, the second victim reported to the PJ that she had lost a total of MOP20,880 in May



this year.

According to the PJ, the victim claimed that by purchasing food vouchers, she could be rewarded.

Following her purchases, the victim did not receive any reward and failed to contact the suspect.

Upon inspection, the female suspect, Fang, was arrested on August 20 due to involvement in another scam case.

The PJ arrested the male suspect at Qingmao Port when he came to Macau on August 26.

The male suspect claimed to the PJ that he did not have the ability to deal with a license, and that the money which was scammed from the two victims had been spent.

The PJ referred the male suspect to the Public Prosecutions Office.

STUDENT CHARGED WITH TRAFFIC VIOLATION

A 24-year-old male student was found driving in the period of his prohibition from driving last week at Taipa, according to the Public Security Police (PSP)'s vehicle checking operation.

After investigating the male's identity card and vehicle license, the male was found to have been charged for evading his responsibility in May, resulting in a prohibition from driving for four months.

The PSP said that the male admitted this crime, and in addition, had stopped his vehicle at a yellow line, so the case has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office with the charge of aggravated violation of order and violation of Traffic Law.

NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

PJ: INTELLIGENCE INTERCEPTION CAN AVOID NATIONAL SECURITY RISKS

STAFF REPORTER

AMID the ongoing public consultation on the national security law, a resident has asked in yesterday's TDM Macau Forum why the interception of intelligence communications measures would become law while an existing legal mechanism of communications interception and protection is already in effect.

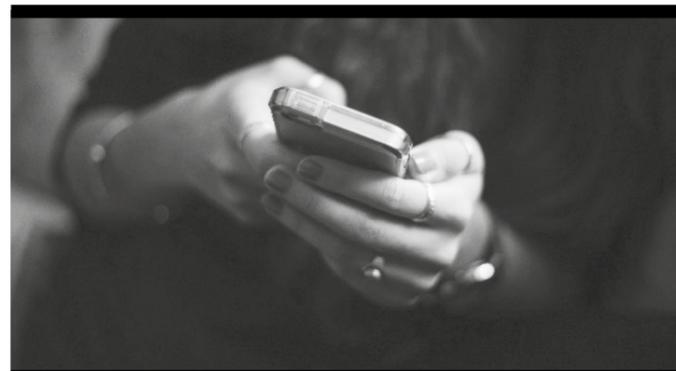
"Introduction of the interception of intelligence communications can stop the scourge immediately and before a serious crime happens, to minimize its damage," responded one of the guests, Sit Chong Meng, director of the Judiciary Police.

"After a crime that threatens national security, the damage is irreparable for a country," he added.

The legal regime of com-

munication interception and protection aims to collect evidence during investigation; the interception of intelligence communications measures is to anticipate and prevent threats to national security, Sit explained. These threats are insidious and the relevant measures are preventive intelligence collection used in most countries.

Another resident had questions about anti-espionage work in Macau. Sit expressed hope that residents are not alarmed, and said that the Judiciary Police had amended the relevant law and established a department to investigate cases of national security to support intelligence analysis, case studies and backup. The relevant officers have received professional training in areas such as anti-intelligence, anti-espionage and anti-interception.



FAOM lawmaker calls for better monitoring of cultural heritage

ANTHONY LAM



ANTHONY LAM

LAWMAKER Ella Lei has asked the government to completely review the implementation of the Cultural Heritage Protection Law to enhance relevant policymaking.

She pointed out that, in the years after the promulgation of the law in 2013, damage to cultural heritage or historic sites has sometimes occurred. Some such sites have been found lacking in proper maintenance, the lawmaker added.

For these reasons, Lei demanded in her latest enquiry a disclosure from the government of whether it has ever fully reviewed the execution of the law and related regulations. A full review, she said, will help the government make better policies in the future.

Additionally, the lawmaker also asked the government to disclose whether it has a long-term mechanism to conserve cultural heritage and historic sites.

Under the law, the owner or

occupier of these sites is responsible for maintaining locations and ensuring they are in a safe condition. However, Lei pointed out, the owner or occupier may not be able to afford to fix damage caused by unforeseen events.

Many such sites are located in low-lying areas or on hillsides, which increases the risk of damage by weather and other natural events.

On June 9, a 400-year-old city wall on the Guia Hill at the back of the quarters of the Macau Security Forces was damaged. The government said it would tear down a 10-meter section of that wall that was an immediate danger to the public.

FM GETS RIGHTS TO SHOWCASE ANTIQUE PAINTINGS

The Macao Foundation (FM) has announced that it has obtained rights to showcase online several antique paintings currently in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Among the works is a colored rolled painting depicting the landscape of Macau that measures 318 cm by 30 cm. The work

was believed to have been completed during the early reign of Emperor Qianlong in the Qing Dynasty.

FM emphasized that the painting is the largest known of its kind. It is owned by the National University of Singapore Museum. A team at the Macau University of Science and Technology Library has rendered high-resolution imaging of the work, the FM added.

Another painting was originally held by the Italian Gentiloni family and is now owned by the Hong Kong Maritime Museum. The painting depicts the 18-century trade port scenery in Southern China, which included Macau.

The 170 cm by 80 cm painting captures the village of Macau from 1760, showcasing the then fortress, city walls, churches, residences and agricultural activities.

The Hong Kong museum has also authorized the FM to showcase online a painting that highlights the explosion of the D. Maria II cruiser near Taipa in 1850. Several other paintings depict the rivers in the Pearl River Delta in 1841 and the scene of Macau and Taipa in 1868 and are also shown by the FM under authorization from the Hong Kong museum.

The antique works are now exhibited digitally at www.macaumemory.mo.

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The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the world's Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views. But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.



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TAIWAN FORCES FIRE AT DRONES FLYING OVER ISLAND NEAR CHINA

TAIWAN'S military fired warning shots at drones from China flying over its outposts just off the Chinese coastline, underscoring heightened tensions and the self-ruled island's resolve to respond to new provocations.

Taiwan's forces said in a statement that troops took the action on Tuesday after drones were found hovering over the Kinmen island group. Dadan, one of the islands where a drone was spotted, lies roughly 15 kilometers off the Chinese coast.

The statement yesterday referred to the unmanned aerial vehicles as being of "civilian use," but gave no other details. It said the drones returned to the nearby Chinese city of Xiamen after the shots were fired. Taiwan previously fired only flares as warnings.

The incident comes amid heightened tensions after China fired missiles into the sea and sent planes and ships across the dividing line in the Taiwan Strait earlier this month. It followed angry rhetoric from Beijing over a trip to Taiwan by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the highest-ranking U.S. dignitary to visit the island in 25 years.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory and its recent actions have been viewed as a rehearsal of a possible blockade or invasion. China's drills brought strong condemnation from Taiwan's chief ally, the U.S., along with fellow regional democracies such as Australia and Japan. Some of



China's missiles early in August fell into nearby Japan's exclusive economic zone.

Taiwan maintains control over a range of islands in the Kinmen and Matsu groups in the Taiwan Strait, a relic of the effort by Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists to maintain a foothold on the mainland after being driven out by Mao Zedong's Communists amid civil war in 1949.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said

China's actions failed to intimidate the island's 23 million people, saying they had only hardened support for the armed forces and the status quo of de-facto independence.

Officials said anti-drone defenses were being strengthened, part of a 12.9% increase in the Defense Ministry's annual budget next year. The government is planning to spend an additional 47.5 billion New Taiwan dollars

(\$1.6 billion), for a total of 415.1 billion NTD (\$13.8 billion) for the year.

The U.S. is also reportedly preparing to approve a \$1.1 billion defense package for Taiwan that would include anti-ship and air-to-air missiles to be used to repel potential Chinese invasion attempt.

Following the Chinese drills, the U.S. sailed two warships through the Taiwan Strait, which

China has sought to designate as its sovereign waters. Foreign delegations from the U.S., Japan and European nations have continued to arrive to lend Taipei diplomatic and economic support.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey is currently visiting Taiwan to discuss production of semiconductors, the critical chips that are used in everyday electronics and have become a battleground in the technology competition between the U.S. and China.

Ducey is seeking to woo suppliers for the new \$12 billion Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp. (TSMC) plant being built in his state.

Reacting to Ducey's visit, China yesterday reaffirmed its opposition to any official contacts between the U.S. and Taiwan. That was a further reminder of the Communist Party's refusal to acknowledge the separation of powers within the U.S. government and the right of American local officials to operate independently of the administration.

"We urge the relevant parties in the U.S. to ... stop any forms of official contacts with Taiwan, and refrain from sending wrong signals to the Taiwan independence forces," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a daily briefing.

"China will take strong measures to resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity," Zhao said.

Taiwan produces more than half the global supply of high-end processor chips. China's firing of missiles during its exercises disrupted shipping and air traffic, and highlighted the possibility that chip exports might be interrupted. **MDT/AP**

ECONOMY

Buffett's company trims its stake in Chinese EV maker BYD

WARREN Buffett's company has trimmed its stake in Chinese electric car and battery maker BYD for the first time since it bought the shares in 2008, an investment that has soared in value.

Berkshire Hathaway said in a regulatory filing Tuesday with the Hong Kong stock exchange that it had sold 1.33 million of its BYD shares for roughly \$47 million (\$368.8 million Hong Kong dollars).

Berkshire paid \$232 million for the 225 million BYD shares it bought in 2008. By the end of last year, the value of those shares had ballooned to nearly \$7.7 billion. The success of the BYD investment is one example of why so many in-



vestors follow Buffett's moves closely because he has a remarkably successful track record over the decades.

BYD said in an earnings

report this week that sales of its vehicles continued to climb in the first half of this year and help it increase market share, even as auto

sales slowed in its home market of China. BYD said its revenue jumped nearly 66% in the first half of this year thanks to the rapid

growth in its electric vehicle sales, and its net income more than tripled to \$520 million (3.6 billion yuan).

Berkshire said it owned about 7.7% of BYD before the latest stock sales, and that figure won't change much after the sales. Berkshire said its holdings of the Hong Kong-issued shares of BYD dipped slightly from 20.49% to 19.92%.

In the past, Buffett and Berkshire Vice Chairman Charlie Munger have heaped praise on BYD Chairman and founder Wang Chanfu and said they were investing in him even more than in BYD's technology. Munger has said that Wang managed to accomplish several feats that seemed impossible at the time, inclu-

ding taking one-third of the lithium battery market away from Japanese manufacturers by 2010.

Buffett even took the rare step of visiting a BYD factory in China in 2010 to demonstrate his support for the company. He didn't immediately respond Tuesday to questions about the BYD stock sale.

Besides investments, Buffett's Omaha, Nebraska-based conglomerate also owns more than 90 companies outright including Geico insurance, BNSF railroad, several major utilities and an eclectic assortment of retail and manufacturing companies such as Dairy Queen, Helzberg Diamonds and Precision Castparts. **MDT/AP**

JAPAN

Seeking arms buildup, ministry makes opaque budget request

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

JAPAN'S Defense Ministry made a budget request for the coming year yesterday without specifying the costs of missiles for preemptive strikes and dozens of other weapons as well as its development plans, as the government aims to drastically raise Japan's military capability.

The ministry said it can disclose details only after the government in December adopts a new national security strategy and defense guidelines. They are being revised to fundamentally strengthen Japan's military over the next five years.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida promised the military reinforcement to President Joe Biden during his visit to Japan in May as the two countries strengthen their security alliance amid China's increasing activity in the region. Japan has been also expanding its military cooperation with friendly nations in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe.

Only a partial sum of 5.6 trillion yen (\$40.4 billion) was disclosed for 2023, but the ministry's budget plan could rise to around 6.5 trillion yen (\$47 billion), up 20% from this year,



A Japanese Ground-Self Defense Force (JGDDF) Type 90 tank fires its gun while advancing towards a target during an annual exercise at the Minami Eniwa Camp, in 2021

Japanese media said.

The final budget bill, expected in late December, will still have to be approved by parliament before the new fiscal year begins in April.

Japan caps annual defense spending at around 1% of its GDP, but Kishida's governing party proposes doubling it in coming years, citing NATO's standard of 2% of GDP.

That means Japan's annual defense spending would rise to

about 10 trillion yen (\$72 billion), becoming the world's third-largest after the United States and China.

Ministry officials said aggression like Russia's invasion of Ukraine could occur in the Indo-Pacific region, as Beijing strengthens its military cooperation with Moscow and escalates tension over Taiwan.

China fired five ballistic missiles into waters near Okinawa

during Beijing's major military drills near self-ruled Taiwan in early August, while North Korea's missile and nuclear development continue provoking the international community, defense officials said.

While the public's support for a stronger military has grown amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine, critics say the opaque request that doesn't set a ceiling is a bad precedent.

They also question if the increase is realistic and say that the government's plan lacks clarity over how it can fund the spending in a country with an aging and shrinking population.

The defense ministry's request focuses on seven key areas, including missile strike and defense systems, unmanned vehicles, space and cybersecurity defense.

Japan is upgrading missiles and considering using them for preemptive strikes — a move critics say would fundamentally change Japan's defense policy and breach the postwar pacifist constitution that limits use of force to self-defense.

The ministry requested an undisclosed amount to improve and mass produce an upgraded Type 12 surface-to-ship guided missile to extend its range for use in

“standoff” strikes on enemy targets from destroyers and fighter jets.

It plans to buy two kinds of foreign-developed standoff missiles to be launched from warplanes — a 500-kilometer-range Joint Strike Missile from Norway for F-35A fighters, and Lockheed Martin's Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile with a range of about 900 kilometers, for upgraded F-15s.

The ministry also requested an undisclosed amount for development and mass production of a “high-speed gliding vehicle” to defend remote islands, including Okinawa and outer islands near Taiwan.

Japan has shifted its defense from the northeast to southwestern Japan as U.S.-China tension escalates over Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own territory.

The ministry is seeking money also to develop and construct an offshore landing facility with a connecting jetty on remote islands without adequate ports for warships. It also aims to step up research and development of unmanned aircraft for reconnaissance and enemy strikes to make up for a smaller number of service members.

It also needs funding for a new destroyer with Aegis-radar missile defense system with an expanded capability to shoot down gliding vehicles that could fly five times the speed of sound.

Takahide Kiuchi, a Nomura Research Institute executive economist, said doubling defense spending would require 2% consumption tax hike and a significant cut of social welfare benefits. **MDT/AP**

SOLOMON ISLANDS

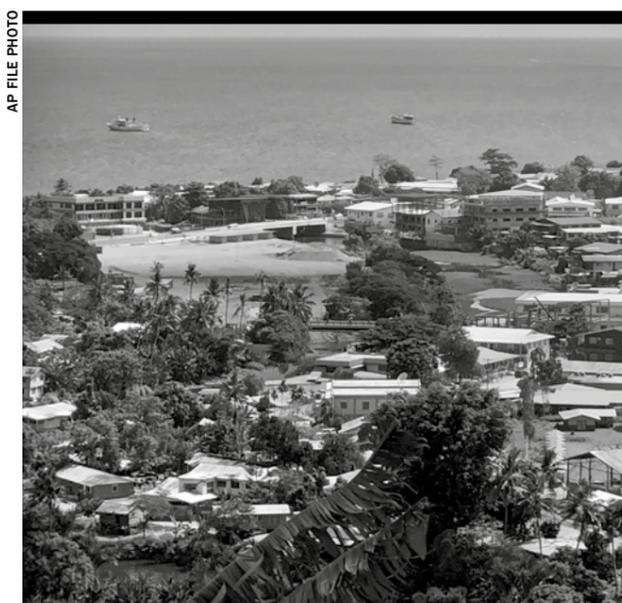
Government asks navies not to send ships pending review

THE Solomon Islands yesterday asked countries to not send naval vessels to the South Pacific nation until approval processes are overhauled, amid concerns over a new security pact between the Solomons and China.

The government made the request after the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Oliver Henry and the British navy patrol boat HMS Spey canceled planned port calls last week due to bureaucratic delays.

Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare said the Oliver Henry crew had failed to provide required information in time for his office to approve the visit. The Oliver Henry refueled at Papua New Guinea instead.

The HMS Spey withdrew its application to visit, Soga-



Ships are docked offshore in Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands

vare said.

“The delay in these approvals demonstrate the need for the govern-

ment to review and refine its approval requirements and procedures for visiting military vessels to Solomon

Islands,” Sogavare said in a statement.

“To this end, we have requested our partners to give us time to review and put in place our new processes before sending further requests for military vessels to enter the country.”

He said the new process would universally apply to all visiting military vessels.

The American and British ships had been taking part in Operation Island Chief, which monitors fishing in the region.

The Coast Guard said the Oliver Henry diverted to the Papua New Guinea capital Port Moresby after the Solomons' government failed to respond to a request for diplomatic clearance to land in the country.

Britain's Royal Navy did not comment directly on

reports that the HMS Spey was denied a port call in the Solomons.

Australian police have been maintaining peace in the Solomons under a bilateral security treaty since rioting in the capital Honiara late last year.

The Australian center-left Labor Party, which was elected to government in May, described the Sino-Solomons security pact as Australia's worst foreign policy failure in the Pacific since World War II.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese declined to say whether intelligence officials had warned him not to send warships.

“I don't discuss the briefings that I receive on national security,” Albanese told reporters.

“Australia is very enga-

ged with our Pacific neighbors and indeed Prime Minister Sogavare is going to visit Australia and I will welcome his visit,” Albanese added. The date of the visit has yet to be announced.

Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles said whether military vessels were allowed to visit the Solomons was a question for the Solomons' government.

“I'm confident that if we put in the work as a nation, we will be the partner of choice for Solomon Islands and we are putting in that work,” Marles said.

Asked if he had sought clarification from the Solomons, Marles said there were “ongoing conversations” with Honiara.

The U.S. Navy hospital ship USNS Mercy is currently in Honiara. **MDT/AP**

RUSSIA

Gorbachev mourned as rare world leader but some still bitter

KIRSTEN GRIESHABER & PATRICK QUINN, BERLIN

THE passing of Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union and for many the man who restored democracy to then-communist-ruled European nations, was mourned yesterday as the loss of a rare leader who changed the world and for a time gave hope for peace among the superpowers.

But the man who died at age 91 on Tuesday (yesterday, Macau time) was also reviled by many countrymen who blamed him for the 1991 implosion of the Soviet Union and its diminution as a superpower. The Russian nation that emerged from its Soviet past shrank in size as 15 new nations were created.

The loss of pride and power also eventually led to the rise of Vladimir Putin, who has tried for the past quarter-century to restore Russia to its former glory and beyond.

"After decades of brutal political repression, he embraced democratic reforms. He believed in glasnost and perestroika – openness and restructuring – not as mere slogans, but as the path forward for the people of the Soviet Union after so many years of isolation and deprivation," President Joe Biden said.

He added that "these were the acts of a rare leader – one with the imagination to see that a different future was possible and the courage to risk his entire career to achieve it. The result was a safer world and greater freedom for millions of people."

Gorbachev won the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize for his role in ending the Cold War but although widely feted abroad, he was a pariah at home.

Putin acknowledged that Gorbachev had "a deep impact on the course of world history."

"He led the country during difficult and dramatic changes, amid large-scale foreign policy, economic and social challenges," Putin said in a short telegram sending his condolences to Gorbachev's family.

Gorbachev "realized that reforms were necessary and tried to offer his solutions to the acute problems," Putin said.



Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev with U.S. President Ronald Reagan (right) at the White House where the superpowers begin their three-day summit talks in Washington, D.C., Dec. 8, 1987

Reactions from Russian officials and lawmakers were overall mixed. They applauded Gorbachev for his part in ending the Cold War but censured him for the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Oleg Morozov, a member of the main Kremlin party, United Russia, said Gorbachev should have "repented" for mistakes that went against Russia's interests.

"He was a willing or an unwilling co-author of the unfair world order that our soldiers are now fighting on the battlefield," Morozov said, in a reference to the current war in Ukraine.

World leaders paid tribute to a man some described as a great and brave leader.

Outgoing British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that "in a time of Putin's aggression in Ukraine, his tireless commitment to opening up Soviet society remains an example to us all."

French President Emmanuel Macron described Gorbachev as "a man of peace whose choices opened up a path of liberty for Russians. His commitment to peace in Europe changed our shared history."

German leaders praised Gorbachev for paving the way for their country's reunification.

"We will not forget that perestroika made it possible to try to establish democracy in Russia and that democracy and freedom became possible in Europe, that Germany could be united and the Iron Curtain disappeared," Chancellor Olaf Scholz told reporters.

However, Scholz also pointed out that Gorbachev died at a time when many of his achievements have been destroyed.

"We know that he died at a time when not only democracy in Russia has failed — there is no other way to describe the current situation there — but also Russia and Russian President Putin are drawing new trenches in Europe and have started a horrible war against a neighboring country, Ukraine," he said.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, who was part of the Spanish government when the Iron Curtain fell, remembered Gorbachev as a man who "sent a wind of freedom through Russian society. He tried to change the communist system from inside, which became impossible."

Others in Europe challenged positive recollections of Gorbachev.

Gabrielius Landsbergis, the son of Vytautas Landsbergis who led Lithuania's independence movement in the early 1990s, tweeted that "Lithuanians will not glorify Gorbachev."

Memories are still fresh in the Baltic country of Jan. 13, 1991, when hundreds of Lithuanians headed to the television tower in Vilnius to oppose Soviet troops deployed to crush the country's bid to restore its independence. In the clashes that followed, 14 civilians were killed and over 140 were injured. Moscow recognized Lithuania's independence in August that year.

"We will never forget the

simple fact that his army murdered civilians to prolong his regime's occupation of our country. His soldiers fired on our unarmed protesters and crushed them under his tanks. That is how we will remember him," Landsbergis wrote.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called Gorbachev "a one-of-a kind statesman who changed the course of history" and "did more than any other individual to bring about the peaceful end of the Cold War."

"The world has lost a towering global leader, committed multilateralist, and tireless advocate for peace," the U.N. chief said in a statement.

Gorbachev's contemporaries pointed to the end of the Cold War as one of his achievements.

"Mikhail Gorbachev played a critical role in the peaceful end to the Cold War. At home, he was a figure of historical importance, but not in the way he intended," said Robert M. Gates, who headed the CIA from 1991 to 1993 and later became U.S. defense secretary.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog called Gorbachev "one of the 20th century's most extraordinary figures. He was a brave and visionary leader, who shaped our world in ways previously thought unimaginable."

In Asia, he was remembered as a leader with the courage to bring change.

China's government recognized Gorbachev's role in healing relations between Moscow and Beijing. Gorbachev had been an inspiration to reformist thinkers in China during the late 1980s, and his visit to Beijing in 1989 marked a watershed in relations between the sides.

"Mr. Gorbachev made positive contributions to the normalization of relations between China and the Soviet Union. We mourn his passing and extend our sympathies to his family," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said.

However, China's Communist Party leaders also regard Gorbachev's liberal approach as a fatal display of weakness and his moves toward peaceful coexistence with the West as a form of surrender. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1939 GERMANY INVADES POLAND

German forces have invaded Poland and its planes have bombed Polish cities, including the capital, Warsaw.

The attack comes without any warning or declaration of war.

Britain and France have mobilised their forces and are preparing to wage war on Germany for the second time this century.

Just before dawn today, German tanks, infantry and cavalry penetrated Polish territory on several fronts with five armies, a total of 1.5 million troops.

Soon afterwards German planes bombarded the cities. They have been making swift progress in penetrating Polish defences which are heavily outnumbered in artillery, infantry and air power.

The cities of Katowice, Krakow, Tczew and Tunel were attacked with incendiary bombs. Air raids on Warsaw began at 0900 local time.

Communications to Katowice have been broken but earlier reports said German planes were coming over in squadrons of 50, every half-hour, and there have been many casualties.

The German Army struck from Slovakia, East Prussia and from Pomerania into the Polish Corridor and the port Danzig, which has declared itself part of the Reich.

[...] The Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, held a meeting with King George today in Downing Street.

Later this evening Mr Chamberlain told a packed House of Commons that British and French Ambassadors in Berlin had given German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop an ultimatum.

He was to tell Berlin that unless the Nazis withdraw, Britain and France would fulfil its promise of support to Poland.

Von Ribbentrop said he would refer the message to Adolf Hitler.

US President Roosevelt of the United States has sent an appeal to the governments of Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Poland urging them to announce publicly their determination not to launch air attacks on civilians.

In reply the British and French governments say they intend to confine their bombing to military objectives, so long as their opponents do the same.



Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Britain and France were forced to declare war after Germany ignored their separate ultimatums, delivered on 3 September 1939, demanding the withdrawal of German troops from Poland.

In the mid-1930s, Britain's response to the acceleration of Germany's rearmament and the threat of war was to appease rather than confront Hitler and his generals.

By late 1938, Hitler was making speeches that furiously proclaimed Germany's right to annex the Sudetenland, a Czechoslovak territory with a significant German population.

Chamberlain flew to Germany to calm the situation, eventually signing the Munich Agreement with Hitler, giving control of the Sudetenland to Nazi Germany.

With the invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Britain was no longer acquiescent and Chamberlain warned that any further attacks would meet resistance. It took the defeat of Poland six months later to induce the British and French governments to declare war.

EDMUNDS COMPARES

2023 NISSAN LEAF VS. 2023 CHEVY BOLT EV

MICHAEL CANTU,
MDT/EDMUNDS

SHOPPER interest in electric vehicles, or EVs, is rising. According to data from the Pew Research Center in 2021, 40% of non-EV owners are very or somewhat likely to purchase an EV as their next vehicle. But many of the latest models are also pricey; a Rivian R1T pickup, for example, starts at more than \$70,000 and can easily cost more than \$90,000.

Thankfully, there are lower-priced EVs on the market, and two compelling picks are the Nissan Leaf and Chevrolet Bolt EV.

The Nissan Leaf is the pioneering EV for people wanting a low-price zero-emission ride. The 2023 model starts at \$28,895 including destination fees, and the Leaf Plus model with a longer driving range has a starting price tag of \$36,895.

Chevy has an eye toward value too. The Bolt EV used to cost more than \$30,000, but for the 2023 model year, Chevrolet dropped the starting price to \$26,595. Even a more well-equipped the Bolt EV 2LT model tops out at around \$31,000.

Which one is the better buy? Edmunds car experts compared both EVs to find out.

POWER, DRIVING RANGE AND CHARGING

Budget EVs used to be known for short driving ranges and little power, but that's not completely the case with these rivals. The short-range Leaf S produces 147 horsepower and has an EPA-estimated driving range of 149 miles. Those numbers are unremarkable, but the longer-range SV Plus model packs a more competitive 214-horsepower electric motor



Nissan Leaf



Chevrolet Bolt EV

and a driving range of 212 miles. Edmunds also ran the Leaf Plus through its real-world range testing and managed to make it 237 miles on a full charge.

The Bolt EV only has one model to choose from, and it boasts 200 horsepower and an EPA-estimated range of 259 miles. It also went farther in Edmunds' real-world testing: 278 miles.

Both EVs can be charged at home or at a public DC-fast charging station. Charging times are similar at home, but when equipped with the larger battery, the Leaf will charge quicker at a fast-charging station. However, the Leaf has an CHAdeMO-style charge port, which may not be supported at all fast-charging stations.

Winner: Bolt EV

TECHNOLOGY AND FEATURES

These budget-friendly EVs come surprisingly well equipped with tech and other features. Both Leaf models have a sizable 8-inch

touchscreen and support Apple CarPlay and Android Auto smartphone integration. The base Leaf S comes standard with several advanced driver aids and the SV Plus model adds the ProPilot Assist system, which combines adaptive cruise control and lane centering for easier highway driving. Leather seats or an upgraded audio system aren't offered.

The Bolt EV packs a larger 10.2-inch touchscreen with crisper-looking graphics. The Bolt EV's base 1LT trim comes with fewer driver aids, but the top 2LT trim costs about the same as the base Leaf S and adds more driver aids plus leather seats. It can also be optioned with adaptive cruise control and a Bose audio system for not much more.

Winner: Bolt EV

DRIVING AND COMFORT

Both EVs are zippy around town and boast similar 0-60 mph acceleration. One-pedal

driving, which allows you to slow the vehicle down by lifting off the accelerator pedal, can be done in either EV. It can make driving easier and increase range.

In terms of comfort, the Leaf has more supportive front seats than the Bolt, and it offers a smoother ride. The Bolt EV's ride is still pretty comfortable, but unlike the Leaf, rough patches of road and potholes can create a choppy and busy ride. Without loud gasoline engines, you might think road and wind noise is prevalent, but both EVs do a great job keeping outside noise to a minimum.

Winner: Leaf

PASSENGER AND CARGO SPACE

The Leaf and Bolt EV are plenty practical thanks to their hatchback body styles. The biggest difference is cargo space. Behind the rear seats, the Leaf's 23.6 cubic feet of cargo room

beats the Bolt EV's 16.6 cubic feet. Passenger room is similar. Head and shoulder room are almost identical in both the front and rear seats, but the Bolt EV offers more front and rear seat legroom. Ultimately, the superior pick here depends on what you need more of.

Winner: tie

EDMUNDS SAYS:

With a starting price lower than the base short-range Leaf S and significantly less than the SV Plus model, the Bolt EV wins this comparison. Potential Bolt buyers may want to wait until 2023 when it will once again be eligible for an EV tax credit up to \$7,500 thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act. This makes the Bolt an even more affordable option. But it's not just about the price; the Bolt EV also wins out with its longer driving range and superior infotainment system.

CORPORATE BITS

Sands Resorts Macao invites Zhuhai residents to 'Experience Macao, Unlimited'



Sands Resorts Macao participated in the 'Experience Macao, Unlimited' Caravan Roadshow Series across the Greater Bay Area, hosted by the SAR government

to attract more tourists to Macao and propel economic recovery. On August 28 and 29, the first stop was unveiled at Aoyuan Plaza.

During the roadshow, Sands Resorts Macao highlighted "diverse gourmet, accommodation, shopping and entertainment options and presented exclusive offers only available during the roadshows," the group said in a statement.

This year also marks the 15th anniversary of The Venetian Macao. To commemorate this milestone, Sands Resorts Macao is rolling out a series of promotions with the theme of 'Celebrate Glamour and Opulence this Autumn, Join Us for Festive Offers of The Venetian Macao Anniversary,' including hotel packages, dining, shopping and entertainment offers.

Imperial Court at MGM Macau presents flavors of abalone



This September, Imperial Court at MGM Macau will welcome the fall season with an exquisite abalone menu, presenting a line-up of crafted delicacies featuring the crown of seafood.

Homan Tsui, Chef de Cuisine

of Imperial Court, pays homage to Lingnan culinary culture and craftsmanship in re-creating nostalgic dishes with a fine contemporary twist.

A contrasting pairing, the wok-fried dish with crispy Chinese dough stick and

crunchy water chestnut, was one of the beloved Guangdong culinary skills that was very popular a few decades ago. Drawing on this traditional technique, Chef Tsui elevates the crux of Lingnan dishes by incorporating sliced South African abalone, and stuffs the Chinese dough stick with minced cuttlefish paste to revamp a classic into an umami bomb with a twist.

The time-limited 'Delicate Flavors of Abalone' menu features a total of eight themed dishes, including baked puff pastry filled with abalone and morel mushrooms, as well as the hearty double-boiled Korean abalone soup with tofu and matsutake mushrooms.

FOOTBALL

Wesley Fofana joins Chelsea from Leicester for \$87M

WESLEY Fofana became one of the most expensive defenders in soccer history after securing a move to Chelsea from Premier League rival Leicester for a reported fee of 75 million pounds (\$87 million) yesterday.

The signing of the 21-year-old French center back took Chelsea's spending in this transfer window to about \$270 million, with the vast majority of that on defenders. Left back Marc Cucurella (\$65 million) and center back Kalidou Koulibaly (\$38 million) have already moved to Stamford Bridge.

England international Harry Maguire, who also left Leicester to join Manchester United in 2019 for 80 million pounds, is the only defender to have cost more than Fofana. Virgil van Dijk com-



Leicester City's Wesley Fofana (right)

pleted a move to Liverpool in January 2018 for a similar fee as Fofana's.

A ball-playing center back who is an excellent reader of the game, Fofana has signed a seven-year deal with Chelsea.

"Wesley is a hugely promising defender who has already proven his quality in the Premier League at a you-

ng age," said Chelsea chairman Todd Boehly, who has spent big in his first transfer window since fronting the purchase of the club from Roman Abramovich.

"We are delighted we were able to bring one of Europe's most exciting talents to Chelsea and further strengthen that area of our squad, both for this season

and many more to come."

Fofana, who has never played for France's senior national team, joined Leicester from Saint-Etienne in 2020 and made 52 appearances, 37 of them in the Premier League.

He was dropped for recent Leicester games as he looked to force a move to Chelsea and wound up training with the under-23s.

"The two last days have been really big days for me and I'm very happy," Fofana said. "I trained this morning with the team and it's a dream for me. I'm very excited to start playing games for the fans and the club.

"I'm here to win trophies — the Champions League, Premier League, FA Cup, Carabao Cup, everything. I came here to win and the club is built to win trophies so I'm here to continue that." **MDT/AP**

CRICKET

HONG KONG FIELDS FIRST AGAINST INDIA IN ASIA CUP

UNDERDOG Hong Kong won the toss and elected to field against mighty India in the Asia Cup yesterday.

Hong Kong qualified for the Asia Cup after winning all three of its games in Oman including against favorite United Arab Emirates.

"In Oman, we were good chasers, so we wanted to do that," Hong Kong skipper Nizakat Khan said at the toss. "Last time, we had a good game against India and we want to do the same."

Nizakat was referring to the Asia Cup game between the two countries when India won a hard-fought group game by 26 runs at the same Dubai International Stadium four years ago. However, that tournament was played on ODI format.

India defeated arch-rival Pakistan in its opening Group A game and victory on Wednesday will lift it to the top of the group, going into the Super 4 stage.

All-rounder Hardik Pandya, who played a pivotal role in India's win over Pakistan, was rested and wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant was included in the playing XI.

Afghanistan has already made it to the Super 4 stage from Group B, defeating both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

JAPAN SHOULD NOT POLITICIZE ITS AID TO AFRICA

That Japan has pledged to invest \$30 billion over three years in Africa should be good news for the development of the continent. But that is true only if it is used for that purpose.

On the sidelines of the Japan-Africa summit in Tunisia, when Japan unveiled the investment, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi told the media on Friday that Africa's sustainable and steady growth "must not be impaired by unfair and opaque lending". And those remarks were widely seen as a criticism of Beijing's alleged "debt-trap" policy, in which "debt is used as leverage to gain concessions from borrowing nations", as the Japanese Times commented.

China, as a major development partner of Africa, welcomes Japan's move, which was announced at the eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development on Saturday, but at the same time hopes that such aid will not be politicized.

If Japan politicizes its aid as a means to counter China's influence in Africa, its investment will not function to the benefit of Africa as it should. Africa needs aid from the international community as it bears the brunt of all international crises such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and the spillover effects from the Ukraine crisis.

If Japan, like some others, harbors the intention of competing with China in Africa, its politicians are being narrow-minded and viewing China's cooperation with African countries from the wrong perspective. China has long maintained that its Belt and Road Initiative is open to all countries, as it is meant to promote connectivity among developing countries to facilitate their development for global common prosperity.

There is no reason for Japan and other developed countries to look at China's rise and what it has done to help developing countries through the prism of geopolitics, thinking that China is expanding its sphere of influence in order to change the postwar order. China has reiterated that its aid to African countries has no political strings attached, and it is meant to promote mutually beneficial cooperation between China and its African partners, and common development of developing countries.

As far as the accusations that it is laying "debt traps" are concerned, the fact that China has repeatedly waived the repayment of interest-free loans and other loans to African countries when such loans are due speaks volumes about China meaning what it says about its cooperation with developing countries.

If Japan and other Western countries, instead of entrenching themselves against China, can have sincere talks with the world's second-largest economy with the aim of making concerted efforts to address the common challenges humanity faces, such as the food crisis, climate change and other issues, it would be a great boon for global development and peace.

For Japan, its aid to Africa, if not used to counter China or for other ulterior motives, such as shopping for support for its bid to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, will be welcomed and appreciated.

Chinese manufacturing contracted in August amid weak export and consumer demand, a survey showed yesterday, adding to downward pressure on the struggling economy.

A monthly index improved to 49.4 from July's 49 on a 100-point scale but still was below the 50-point mark that shows activity contracting, according to the national statistics agency and an industry group.

The ruling Communist Party is trying to shore up economic growth that sank to 2.5% in the first six months of 2022, less than half the official annual growth target of 5.5%.

The data "show a further loss in economic momentum," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a report. "The economy will struggle to make much headway during the coming months."

Chinese consumer demand has been dampened by a plunge in real estate activity after Beijing tightened controls on the industry's use of debt and by repeated shutdowns of factories, shops and neighborhoods to fight coronavirus outbreaks.

Indicators of export orders, overall orders and employment also improved from July but still were in contraction territory.



AP PHOTO

SPAIN'S 'TOMATINA' BATTLE RETURNS AFTER PANDEMIC HIATUS

ALICIA LEÓN, BUNOL

PEOPLE from around the world pasted each other with tomatoes as Spain's famous "Tomatina" street tomato fight took place once again yesterday following a two-year suspension because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Workers on trucks unloaded 130 tons of over-ripe tomatoes along the main street of the eastern town of Bunol for participants to throw, leaving the area drenched in red pulp.

Up to 20,000 people were to take part in the festival, paying 12 euros (\$12) a ticket for the privilege. The town's streets are hosed down and the revelers showered off within minutes of the hour-long noon battle ending.

The event, held on the last Wednesday of August, was inspired by a food fight between local children in 1945 in the town, located in a tomato-producing region.

Media attention in the 1980s turned it into a national and international event, drawing participants from every corner of the world.

Local officials said they expected fewer foreign visitors this year mainly because of continuing fears over COVID-19 in Asian countries.

Participants don swim-



AP PHOTOS

ming goggles to protect their eyes while their clothes, typically T-shirts and shorts, are left covered in pulp.

Besides being the first battle since before the pandemic started in 2020

in Spain, this year's celebration had the added incentive of being the event's 75th anniversary and 20 years since the festival was declared by Spain as an international tourism attraction. MDT/AP



France Tourism came back with a vengeance to France this summer, sending revenues over pre-pandemic levels, according to government estimates released this week. Crowds packed Paris landmarks and Riviera beaches, notably thanks to an influx of Americans benefiting from the weak euro, but also British and other European visitors reveling in the end of pandemic restrictions. Tourism accounts for 8% of the French economy and 2 million jobs.

Cyprus yesterday lifted the obligatory use of face masks in all indoor areas after the island nation's top health official said epidemiological data amid the coronavirus pandemic have "significantly improved." Health Minister Michalis Hadjipantela told reporters after a Cabinet meeting that the mask rule still applies to hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, pharmacies and public transport.

USA Young people are following the news but aren't too happy with what they're seeing. Broadly speaking, that's the conclusion of a study released yesterday showing 79% of young Americans say they get news daily. The survey of young people ages 16 to 40 — the older of which are known as millennials and the younger Generation Z — was conducted by Media Insight Project. The report pokes holes in the idea that young people aren't interested in news, a perception largely driven by statistics showing older audiences for television news and newspapers.



Gabon Africa's nations must develop strategies to address climate change which poses an existential threat to the continent's megacities, Gabon's President Ali Bongo Adimba said at the third Africa Climate Week conference. African officials and experts should sharpen the positions they will present at the 27th annual United Nations climate conference to be held in Egypt in November, said Bongo. The third African climate meeting is bringing together more than 1,000 officials and stakeholders in Libreville.

AP PHOTO