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THE COMBINED COST OF PARKING AND CHARGING FOR EVS IS CHEAPER IN MACAU THAN IN HONG KONG: DSPA

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AP PHOTO



Afghanistan Unexploded ordnance detonated Saturday in southern Afghanistan killing four children and injuring three others after the kids brought it inside their school, police and a doctor said. The incident in Helmand province happened when the children discovered an unexploded shell and brought it inside their religious school and started playing with it, according a statement from the provincial police chief's office.

AP PHOTO



Pakistan appealed to the international community for an "immense humanitarian response" to unprecedented flooding that has left at least 1,265 people dead. The request came even as planes carried supplies to the impoverished country across a humanitarian air bridge. International attention to Pakistan's plight has increased as the number of fatalities and homeless have risen. According to initial government estimates, the rain and flooding have caused \$10 billion in damage.

AP PHOTO



India Thousands of Indians rallied yesterday under key opposition Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi, who made a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government over soaring unemployment and rising food and fuel prices in the country. Gandhi accused Modi of pursuing policies benefitting big business groups at the expense of small and medium industries and poor farmers and workers.

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Survey shows most employees suffered a salary drop of about 20% to 30% this year

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NATIONAL SECURITY

POPULATION NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT 'ACCIDENTAL' BREACHING OF LAW: SECURITY CHIEF

RENATO MARQUES

PEOPLE need not worry about inadvertently breaching provisions of the upcoming new National Security Law because, in most situations, actions that constitute crimes are conscious and intentional, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, said yesterday, during the first open session of the public consultation over amendments to the government's proposed national security law.

Responding to public concerns that people might accidentally breach the law, Wong said, "there is no need for people to worry because, firstly, most crimes involving matters of national security are intentional crimes meaning that person will only be punished if that person has the intention to attack or challenge national security. Also, the law clearly states what conduct and acts are restricted," Wong said, taking as an example the social unrest and protests that occurred in the neighboring region of Hong Kong.

"A lot of planning was carried out on the internet even before the riots began. The spreading of news and the incitement ended with people setting a precise time and date to gather and attack the government," Wong said, noting that, at that time, many people



were prevented from standing with the government or expressing their love for the country.

"Macau absolutely cannot come to that stage," he said.

Wong noted that although the education sector has been doing well in teaching young people, "the internet is still a space of concern."

As in previous sessions for the different sectors, the first of three public sessions to hear opinions of the general population saw a majority of opinions support the bill and its amendments, with

most speakers praising the government and not posing any questions or demanding further clarification.

THE MOST PARTICIPATION SO FAR

This first public session saw the highest attendance so far of all the sessions, with 25 comments or questions from the audience.

Previous sectorial sessions had approximately 200 attendees, but an average of only 10 comments per session.

Among the comments this time were several requests for awareness-raising activities to be held before the new law commences, with a special focus on youth.

In response, the Secretary noted that awareness-raising activities are planned but are expected to occur only after the law has commenced.

Some participants expressed concerns regarding the creation of the crime of "instigation or support for sedition" as well as the introduction of measures for the

"interception of communication" and "temporary restrictions on leaving Macau."

The introduction of the "principle of the defense of jurisdiction," the penalties for crimes related to the national security law and a potential need to amend the cybersecurity law and strengthen its enforcement were also topics in discussion.

Two new public sessions to hear opinions on this proposed law will be held tomorrow (September 6) and on September 16 (Friday) at 7:30 p.m.

PUBLIC WORKS

Foundational work for former Lotus Border site budgeted at MOP400m

THE Public Works Bureau (DSOP) has disclosed that the construction cost at the former Lotus Border site is about MOP400 million for the foundational work alone.

The project is divided into three parts, namely the foundational work, the construction of basement space and the building base and the construction of buildings. Separate bids will

be held for each part, according to the bureau.

The foundational work is set to last for 307 working days.

Since it is no longer used as a border checkpoint, the original building has been torn down. The government has said the site will not be tendered for commercial use.

The construction plans for the project, currently

underway, have been announced. The 6,600-square-meter site will have a gross floor area of 103,000 square meters. The building will have 25 floors which will mainly be used for office space. The building will house commercial activities in the future as well. The site will also have three floors below ground level.

The DSOP explained that the base levels of the

building will connect the Light Rapid Transit's Taipa and Hengqin Lines. The latter line's expected completion date is September 2024, the DSOP said.

While situated next to an ecological reserve, the site and subsequent projects were subjected to environmental impact research. The research requested greener buildings at the site. **AL**



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STAFF REPORTER

LABOR

A survey conducted by a local association show that nearly 72% of employed residents reported lower income than last year.

Last week, the Macau Federation of Trade Unions published a survey of 3,462 respondents about the pandemic's impact on employment in Macau. The survey was aimed at understanding the actual impact of the coronavirus outbreak on residents since the start of the city's largest outbreak mid-June, which led to a partial lockdown.

Over 78.5% of respondents said their employers' businesses were suspended during the 12-day partial lockdown to avoid transmission of the virus.

During the lockdown, the government suspended all non-essential businesses and activities, including casino operations.

Of respondents who said their employers' businesses were suspended, 40% were on unpaid leave during the partial lockdown, while 40% received only half-pay.

According to the Macau Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the territory's overall unemployment rate stood at 4.1% from May to July this year, which was the highest level since the period September to November 2005. The

Surveyed employees report 30% income drop



unemployment rate for residents reached 5.4%, which was the highest level since such data was available in 2008.

Meanwhile, 72.69% of respondents said they have suffered

lower income so far this year and most reported a year-on-year decline of 20% to 30% in wages.

Quarantine-free travel between the mainland and the city was thought by 57.8% of respon-

dents to be the main cause of improving employment in Macau, while 34.55% of respondents considered that promoting domestic demand could boost employment.

The median earnings for the city's overall workforce in the second quarter of 2022 was MOP15,300, and MOP19,400 for residents, the latest DSEC data said, down from MOP15,500 and MOP20,000 respectively for the same period a year earlier.

Comparing the survey results with the latest employment data published by the DSEC, a representative of the Macau Federation of Trade Unions made several proposals to improve employment in Macau including optimizing the e-consumption voucher scheme and continuing to provide job-matching services for unemployed and underemployed residents.

Following the publication of the survey results, the Macau Federation of Trade Unions called on authorities to roll out another round of e-consumption vouchers of MOP8,000 for each of those residents who had already received a MOP8,000 vouchers before the latest coronavirus outbreak.

"[The scheme of e-consumption vouchers] can effectively relieve the financial pressure on households, while it can also support the operation of small-and-medium-sized enterprises to ease unemployment," the association said.

STIMULUS

SMEs association says MOP10b can only help for 'a very short period'

RENATO MARQUES

THE MOP10 billion government subsidy to people and companies can only help for a very short period of time and has no effect in the long run, Chim Weng San, vice president of the Federal General Commercial Association of Macau Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) said in an interview to TDM.

Chim considers this support very limited noting that, if the government is to implement a new relief package to help SMEs, "it should be very precise and accurate to truly help the SMEs most affected by the pandemic. I believe the service sector is more severely affected as their businesses are susceptible to constant losses and difficulties."

At the same time, some establishment owners have complained the government's propo-



sed subsidy is not enough to cover rent and salaries, a restaurant owner also interviewed by TDM said. He added that, for a fairer distribution of the subsidy, the government should consider each establishment's operational costs to the end of June and not to June 18 (date of the outbreak), since

the subsidy is calculated based on operational costs of the last two months.

In general, owners and managers of SMEs have been expressing serious concerns that, with continuing border restrictions, business losses will continue until businesses are forced to close.

Food product importers and distributors from Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries have also noted increasing logistical difficulties which, together with reduced consumption from large hotels and restaurants, has contributed to placing their businesses in a very difficult situation.

FILIPINO DIES ONBOARD IN REPATRIATION FLIGHT

A Filipino national returning home has died while onboard the latest charter flight on Friday. According to a statement issued by the Philippine Consulate General in Macau, the passenger had a prior medical condition but was declared medically fit to travel. The passenger was said to have been accompanied by their spouse during the flight back to Manila.

"According to reports, the passenger sought assistance about 30 minutes after the flight departed. The flight crew and two passengers immediately extended assistance," the Consulate stated.

Emergency health services were deployed inside the plane soon after it landed at Manila airport.

The Consulate said it will continue coordinating with the Department for Foreign Affairs and other concerned authorities in extending assistance to the family of the late national.

Due to the absence of flights, the Consulate has been organizing repatriation flights to return Filipinos back to their country.

Since the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, the Consulate has brought back some 6,370 Filipinos back home, according to its latest data. LV



DSPA: EV CHARGING AND PARKING COMBINED IS CHEAPER THAN IN HK

ANTHONY LAM

The combined cost of parking and charging for electric vehicles (EVs) is cheaper in Macau than in Hong Kong, Ip Kuong Lam, acting director of the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA), told Lei Leong Wong in a reply to the lawmaker's written enquiry.

While comparing the cost-per-kilometer between EVs and gasoline-powered vehicles, EVs are cheaper than their gasoline counterparts regardless of whether they are charged on public or private chargers.

Ip added that the tariff scheme in Macau offers drivers options of time slots and output power. Drivers are recommended to use slow chargers during off-peak hours, he suggested.

Paid charging only commenced July 28 this year. Tariffs vary between types of charger and time slots. Fast charging services are priced between MOP1.42/kWh and MOP4.4kWh, while general services are priced between MOP0.817/kWh and



MOP1.552/kWh.

Some drivers are complaining about the high prices of charging services and say it would not encourage EV use in Macau.

Another factor that discourages uptake of EVs is charging time. A local car dealer has pointed out that refilling a car's gas tank takes five to 10 minutes, but recharging an EV

normally takes at least 50 minutes even on a fast charging station.

Meanwhile, lawmaker from the Macao Federation of Trade Unions, Lam Lon Wai, on the verge of the tariff scheme being enacted, commented that the timing for the enactment was well because the city was put into confusion from June 18 to end of July. Most business activities were halted for about 10 days in July to curb the Covid-19 outbreak. Citing the situation, Lam said many were financially impacted and could face challenges in paying for electricity for their cars.

To recharge their cars, EV owners or drivers must first top up their wallet with the electricity provider Companhia de Electricidade de Macau - CEM, S.A. (CEM) to the value of at least MOP30. Otherwise, they will not be allowed to activate the charging process.

It is unclear why the eight most commonly used mobile payment platforms, let alone credit and debit cards, are not the first choice.

USED EV BATTERIES SENT OVERSEAS FOR PROCESSING

Meanwhile, in response to an earlier enquiry by the Times, the DSPA emphasized that it has due process to follow during the handling of used EV batteries. The bureau first pointed out that in common scenarios, EV manufacturers will handle batteries used in their cars.

In the rare case that certain manufacturers do not recycle their own batteries, the DSPA highlighted that its battery and gadget recycling scheme handles car batteries as well. It noted that when the batteries to be recycled reach a weight of 50 kg, at-door collection services can be provided.

Third-party service providers will pre-process collected car batteries. These batteries will then be transferred to other places for further processing pursuant to the Basel Convention.

However, various news reports have revealed that used batteries and gadgets were sent to developing countries and were merely disposed, without even a minimal hazard elimination process.

In the meantime, the DSPA has not disclosed the extent to which pollutant emissions were offset by the increasing number of EVs.



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PANDEMIC

HEALTH CHIEF PLEDGES BETTER COVID-19 CONTINGENCIES

HEALTH Bureau's director and pulmonologist Alvis Lo assured that the government's plans for handling Covid-19 would see continuous refinement.

The assurance was given in response to lawmaker Leong Hong Sai's written inquiry.

Macau saw its first Covid-19 casualties during the outbreak that started June 18 and ended August 7. Six lives were lost during the outbreak.

Lo said that the government is learning from the June 18 outbreak and is working to improve its planning for future outbreaks. Announcements will be made in due course.

Discussing the June 18 outbreak, Lo emphasized that adjustments had been made as conditions changed, hinting that plans were not always properly followed.

Examples include using hotels instead of



the Macau Dome to host those who tested positive but had no symptoms; opting for a "relative standstill"; shortening the time of each round of the citywide SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test (NAT) drive; as well as introducing NATMobile – a coach for NAT specimen collection.

The medical doctor also noted the government had compiled a set of contingencies for Covid-19 handling. He reiterated his confidence in prompt mobilization of resources, such as volunteering citizens, private medical practitioners and civil servants, during an outbreak. **AL**

MDT ARCHIVE



COURT

Alvin Chau sees first hearing with gov't seeking HKD8.3b in damages

ANTHONY LAM

THE case concerning former junket and entertainment mogul, Alvin Chau, and 20 other defendants had its first court hearing last Friday, with the government seeking nearly HKD8.3 billion in compensation.

Another way to assess the government's entitlement to compensation is the amount of tax the government should have received during Chau's alleged operations of illegal gambling, the government added.

Chau is alleged to have committed several crimes, including organized crime, the operation of illegal gambling in eligible venues, fraud of a relatively large amount, the illegal operation of gambling and aggravated money laundering.

The other 20 defendants are alleged to have committed crimes similar to either all or some of Chau's alleged crimes.

The government, as well as Wynn Resorts (Macau) S.A., SJM Resorts, S.A., MGM Grand Paradise, S.A. and Venetian Macao, S.A., have filed civil claims against the defendants. The four casino operators respectively seek MOP795 million, HKD178 million, an amount to be determined, as well as HKD300 million from all or some of the defendants.

The session did not proceed after

announcement of the allegations as the defendant Wong Pak Ling was absent. The court announced a subsequent hearing to occur at 2:45 pm, September 19. In fact, 10 other defendants were absent as well.

Members of the public were queuing hours before the hearing commenced. Chau's son, Chau Pak Hou, was in the audience. The court designated another room to host audience members who could not be hosted at the main courtroom.

Chau's son told the press his father was in fair physical condition.

The hearing was heard by a panel of three judges, with Justice Lou Ieng Ha presiding. Lou was not happy about the absence of the 11 defendants. Although one defendant's lawyer claimed the absence was due to hospitalization, the presiding judge considered the absence unreasonable and issued a fine of 8 Court Units (UC).

A UC is currently set at MOP910.

COURT STRICTLY ENFORCES COVID-19 MEASURES

Citing Covid-19 measures, the court allowed each defendant to bring only a lawyer to the courtroom. Justice Lou explained she had tried her best to satisfy everybody and strike a balance between all needs.

Some lawyers claimed they

needed to bring their assistants to the courtroom due to the large number of files and data needed for the hearings. Justice Lou refused this request, adding that lawyers were free to refuse the cases if they experienced difficulties.

The judge added that disease prevention is of the highest priority. The procedures cannot be sidelined, she said, as an outbreak may happen abruptly.

Meanwhile, due to the situation, some defense lawyers asked to sit on the prosecution side. Lou also refused this request, finding the suggestion inappropriate. She added that if anybody wanted to be seated on that side, they were free to become a prosecutor.

Justice Lou also pointed out that the numbers were not balanced between the number of defending and prosecuting lawyers. The prosecution is represented by only two lawyers.

The court also reminded the lawyers responsible for this case to try their best to maintain their "green-code" status. Lawyers without such a code would be replaced by another lawyer due to time constraints.

Anybody with a yellow health code will be refused entry to the court.

10TH MITE

Travel expo to host 842 booths

STAFF REPORTER

THE 10th Macao International Travel (Industry) Expo (MITE) will take place at The Venetian Macao from September 23 to 25, and will present seven major highlights to strengthen the tourism industry.

In a press conference Friday, the organizer, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), announced the expo will offer a "confluence of Cloud series and physical exhibitions," with the theme "Cheers for 10th MITE."

"The event will deepen integration across "tourism+" and contribute to enriching Macau's vibrant offer as a world center of tourism and leisure, steering the economy towards adequate diversification," said MGTO director Helena de Senna Fernandes.

The MITE garnered accreditation from the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI) as a "UFI Approved International Event, and the MGTO believed this was encouraging for them in reaching the "decade-long success" this year.

The event will showcase exhibitors and buyers online and in person. To date, some 471 exhibitors have registered for participation. There are 197 local exhibitors and

247 mainland exhibitors present, as well as 27 online exhibitors (including 24 international exhibitors and three mainland exhibitors). There are 286 buyers in total, including 221 present and 65 online buyers.

Meanwhile, new elements will be in the lime-light including the Lusofonia Pavilion, "Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin" Zone, the Macau Wedding Destination Pavilion and the Palace Museum as a new exhibitor.

The Macau tourism industry zone will set up not just the "Macao Street" once again, but also Cotai Strip for the first time. The expo will continue to promote local cultural and creative products. "City of Gastronomy" Culinary Demonstrations will take place and the "Gastronomy Pavilion" will welcome patrons as last year.

Cloud invitations are newly rolled out this year to call for buyers and exhibitors from different sectors and regions. For "Cloud Live Promotion," over 20 tourism entities and enterprises will present their destination's tourism resources.

The first edition of MITE was staged in 2013. MGTO has been organizing it since 2016.



MACAO WEEK IN QINGDAO POSTPONED

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) announced yesterday it has postponed the "Macao Week in Shandong-Qingdao," originally scheduled September 8 to 12.

This comes after the bureau received the latest notice from the organizer in Qingdao on the anti-epidemic work of Qingdao. The Macao Week was to be the first Macau tourism promotion in the

STRAIT TENSIONS

US OKs USD1B ARMS SALE TO TAIWAN AS TENSIONS RISE WITH CHINA

MATTHEW LEE, WASHINGTON

THE Biden administration on Friday announced a more than USD1 billion arms sale to Taiwan as U.S.-China tensions escalate over the status of the island.

The \$1.09 billion sale includes \$355 million for Harpoon air-to-sea missiles and \$85 million for Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, the State Department said.

The largest portion of the sale, however, is a \$655 million logistics support package for Taiwan's surveillance radar program, which provides air defense warnings. Early warning air defense systems have become more important as China has stepped up military drills near Taiwan, which it regards as a renegade province.

The State Department said the equipment is necessary for Taiwan to "maintain a sufficient self-defense capability." The administration notified Congress of the sale after close of business on Friday.

AP PHOTO



The administration said the deals comply with the U.S. one-China policy. It also urged Beijing "to cease its military, diplomatic, and economic pressure against Taiwan and instead engage in meaningful dialogue with Taiwan."

Laura Rosenberger, the White

House's senior director for China and Taiwan, said late Friday that as China "continues to increase pressure on Taiwan — including through heightened military air and maritime presence around Taiwan — and engages in attempts to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, we're providing Taiwan with what it needs to maintain its self-defense capabilities."

The acrimony and strident rhetoric between the U.S. and China over Taiwan have increased sharply since House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited the island last month. Since Pelosi's trip to Taipei

there have been at least two other congressional visits and several by governors of U.S. states, all of which China has condemned.

On Thursday, Taiwan's military said it shot down a drone hovering over one of its island outposts just off the Chinese coast in an incident that underscored the heightened tensions. A day earlier, Taiwan said it had warned off drones hovering over three of the islands it occupies off the coast of the Chinese port city of Xiamen.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary. The sides split after a civil war in 1949 and have no official relations, with China cutting off even informal contacts following the election of Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen in 2016.

Tsai's administration has pushed for a strengthening of anti-drone defenses as part of a 12.9% increase in its Defense Ministry's annual budget next year. That would boost defense spending by an additional 47.5 billion New Taiwan dollars (\$1.6 billion), for a total of 415.1 billion NTD (\$13.8 billion).

The U.S. described Chinese drills last month as a severe overreaction and responded by sailing two guided missile cruisers through the Taiwan Strait, which China has declared to be its sovereign waters. **MDT/AP**

HINNAMNOR

China, Japan ground ferries, flights as typhoon approaches

CITIES in eastern China suspended ferry services and classes and flights were canceled in Japan yesterday as Typhoon Hinnamnor, the strongest global storm this year, blew its way past Taiwan and the Korea with fierce winds and heavy rains.

Shanghai grounded ferry services and deployed more than 50,000 police officers to aid with rescues and guide traffic away from danger areas. The eastern business hub of Wenzhou ordered all classes suspended on Monday.

Hinnamnor is forecasted to move gradually northward into the East China Sea with maximum sustained winds of 175 kilometers per hour, according to the Hong Kong Observatory.

Evacuations and flight cancellations have been ordered in Japan's southern Okinawa Island.

AP PHOTO



Pedestrians hold a tree to protect themselves from strong winds as Typhoon Hinnamnor hits in Naha, Okinawa prefecture, Japan, yesterday

The typhoon is also expected to bring intense rainfall to the Korean Peninsula, bringing the possibility of flooding.

China's National Meteorological Center issued a yellow typhoon warning at 10 a.m. yesterday, and warned of heavy rains in northeastern Zhejiang, Shanghai and Taiwan.

Ships were told to return to port to take shelter from the wind, and the center also urged people

against large gatherings both indoors and outdoors.

In Japan, the typhoon lashed Okinawa and nearby islands with heavy rain and fierce winds, threatening flooding and grounding more than 100 flights connecting the islands and parts of the main southern island of Kyushu.

Footage on Japan's NHK national television showed trees violently

shaken by the storm, with fierce rainfall hitting the pavement. A greenhouse for mangoes on Ishigaki Island was knocked down. On the main Okinawa island, two elderly people fell down and were slightly injured, according to media reports.

Officials said the slow-moving typhoon could add to rainfall and risks of flooding in the southern region where dense rain clouds have been stuck.

In Taiwan, over 600 residents in New Taipei, Taoyuan and Hsinchu counties were evacuated to shelters on Saturday amid the heavy rain and strong winds, according to the island's Central News Agency.

The typhoon caused a landslide in Miaoli county and blew over some 100 roadside trees. About 40 flights and more than 100 ferry services across Taiwan were also canceled Saturday. **MDT/AP**

INDIA LAUNCHES NEW AIRCRAFT CARRIER AS CHINA CONCERNS GROW

INDIA commissioned its first home-built aircraft carrier Friday as it seeks to counter regional rival China's much larger and growing fleet, and expand its own indigenous shipbuilding capabilities.

The INS Vikrant, whose name is a Sanskrit word for "powerful" or "courageous," is India's second operational aircraft carrier, joining the Soviet-era INS Vikramaditya that it purchased from Russia in 2004 to defend the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal.

The new 262-meter carrier, designed by the Indian navy and built at the Cochin shipyard in southern India, was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as part of the

country's commemoration of 75 years of independence from British rule.

More than just adding to the country's naval capabilities, Modi stressed the importance of India now being only one of a handful of nations with an indigenous carrier program.

"It's a historic day and landmark achievement," Modi said. "It's an example of the government's thrust to make India's defense sector self-reliant."

The carrier is the largest warship to be built in the country, and can carry a crew of around 1,600 and operate a fleet of 30 aircraft, including fighter jets and helicopters, the navy said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



AP PHOTO



Sri Lanka's former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, wearing mask, is greeted upon his arrival at Bandaranaike International airport in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Saturday

With no immunity, Sri Lanka's Rajapaksa faces legal troubles

KRISHAN FRANCIS
& KRUTIKA PATHI, COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's ousted President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who returned home after seven weeks in exile following protests over economic hardships, could face legal action over forced disappearances of activists now that he has been stripped of constitutional immunity, a lawyer said Saturday.

Rajapaksa flew to Colombo around midnight Friday from Thailand and was escorted under military guard to his new home in the capital.

He has no pending court cases because he was protected by constitutional immunity as president. A corruption case against him during his time as a top defense official was withdrawn soon after he was elected in 2019.

However, Rajapaksa will be served a summons next week to appear at the Supreme Court, where his immunity from testifying on the forced disappearance of two young political activists is challenged, said lawyer Nuwan Bopage, who represents the victims' families. He said Rajapaksa fled the country when he was about to be served a summons in July.

The disappearances took place 12 years ago soon after the end of the country's long civil war when Rajapaksa was a powerful official at the Defense Ministry under the presidency of his older brother.

At the time, Rajapaksa was accused of overseeing abduction squads that whisked away rebel suspects, critical journalists and activists, many of them never to be seen again. He has previously denied any wrongdoing.

Rajapaksa escaped from his official residence when tens of thousands of people, angry over economic hardships when the country slipped into bankruptcy and faced unprecedented shortages of basic supplies, stormed the building on July 9. Days later, he, his wife and two bodyguards flew about a military plane to the Maldives. A day later he went to Singapore, and later Thailand.

Sri Lanka has run out of dollars for imports of key supplies, causing an acute shortage of essentials like food items, fuel and critical medicine.

The foreign currency shortage has led the country to default on its foreign loans. Sri Lanka's total foreign debt exceeds \$ 51 billion of which \$ 28 billion must be repaid by 2027.

The International Monetary Fund on Thursday agreed to provide Sri Lanka \$ 2.9 billion over four years, subject to management approval that will come only if the island nation's creditors give assurances on debt restructuring.

Economic difficulties led to monthslong street protests, which eventually led to the collapse of the once-powerful Rajapaksa family that had controlled the affairs of the country for the most part of the last two decades. Before Rajapaksa resigned after fleeing, his older brother stepped down as prime minister and three other close family members quit their Cabinet positions.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who took over from Rajapaksa, has since cracked down on protests and dismantled their main camp opposite the president's office.

Some protesters said they were not opposed to his return as long as he faces justice.

"Whether he is president or not, he is a citizen of Sri Lanka and he has the right to live in this country," said Wijaya Nanda Chandradeva, a retired government employee who had voted for Rajapaksa and then participated in protests to oust him. He said Rajapaksa should be given necessary protection if there is a threat to his safety.

"I reject him because we elected him and he proved himself to be unsuitable," said Chandradeva.

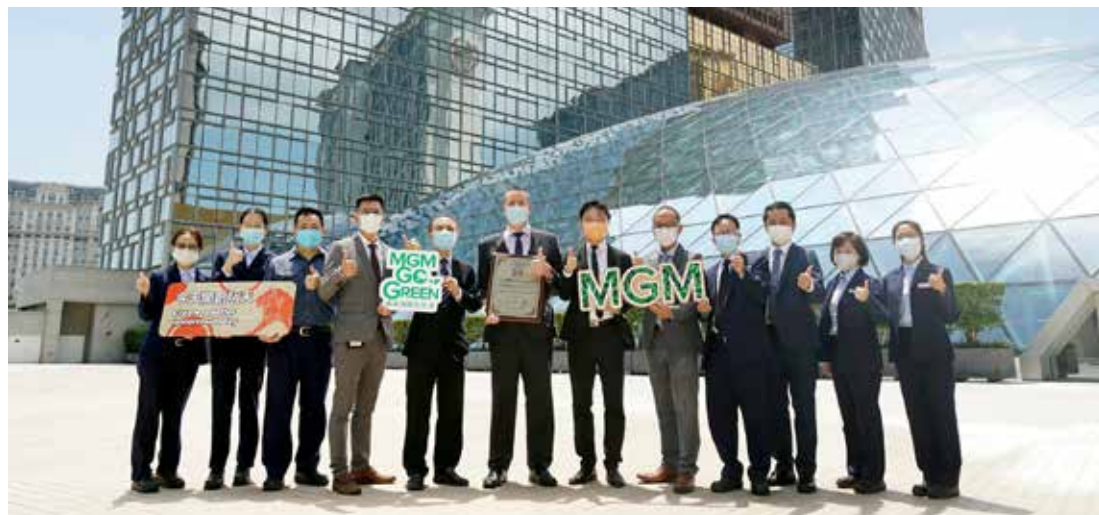
Bhavani Fonseka of the Center for Policy Alternatives, an independent think tank, said although Rajapaksa is not going to be seen favorably, "the anger we saw in July has diminished. But there are still many questions about his role in the economic crisis and the call for accountability is still there." **MDT/AP**

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MGM Launches Go Green Summer 2022



To celebrate World Environment Day and related events held by Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA), MGM rolls out the **MGM Go Green Summer 2022** — a five-month campaign with entertaining activities designed to raise green awareness among team members and the community. The Campaign aims to promote a low-carbon life to better safeguard the environment, as well as joining hands with the public to build a more beautiful and sustainable future.



The lead-off event was "**Lights Off an Hour**" when the Company turned off non-essential lights for an hour to support energy conservation and carbon-emission reduction. It was followed by a "**Visit to Coloane Wastewater Treatment Plant**", where more than 20 team members acquired knowledge of sewage treatment technology and environmental protection on-site. From July to August, MGM also organizes "**Casual Wear Summer**" — during which team members can enjoy wearing casual clothing every Friday, not just to feel breezy but also to save energy under an air-conditioning temperature of 25°C.

In the coming two months, a series of diversified green promotional activities will be launched in phases, including the "Resource Sharing Corner", an activity that encourages items sharing and exchange among team members; and the fifth "Green Monday" Competition, a competition that promotes the habit of conserving food.

In addition, MGM COTAI earned Gold Award, the highest level of honor, at the 2021 Macao Green Hotel Award. The accolade is a testament to MGM's remarkable achievements in low-carbon operations. Organized by DSPA, in collaboration with the Macao Government Tourism Office, the award intended to encourage the local hotel industry to exert more green endeavors to contribute to the environment. To further promote public awareness of environmental protection and waste reduction, MGM donated all the plastic bag fees collected by the Company since 2019 (MOP 4,766) to Fuhong Society of Macau, also as an approach to support the association's community work.

To fully support the Nation's dual carbon goals, MGM has strived to be a leading green enterprise in the Greater Bay Area (GBA). The Company has mapped out far-reaching environmental goals and actions, including becoming Macau's first integrated resort to fully convert to natural gas by 2022, full adoption of electric shuttle buses by 2023, 13% standardized energy saving compared with 2019 by 2025, 100% food waste conversion rate by 2030, etc.



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Attack raises doubts about Argentine VP's security protocols

DÉBORA REY,
BUENOS AIRES

EVERY day for the past two weeks, the routine was the same: Argentina's powerful Vice President Cristina Fernández was met by a crowd of feverish supporters who wanted to touch their leader. And every day she obliged and approached them.

But on Thursday the routine pressing of the flesh took a sinister turn when a man in the sea of supporters pointed a handgun inches from the vice president's face and pulled the trigger with a distinct click.

The loaded .38-caliber semiautomatic weapon evidently jammed, and the suspect was arrested. Now the apparent assassination attempt is raising questions about whether the most influential woman in Argentine politics for the past two decades should change her relationship with the many loyal followers who constantly seek a handshake or autograph.

"Cristina was cornered," said Silvana Venegas, a 43-year-old woman who witnessed the event. "She was easy prey, very easy."

For a few minutes afterward, Fernández continued signing autographs and waving. Her security detail seized the gunman but did not remove her from the area.

Argentina media have reported that Fernández told the investigating judge she was unaware a gun had been pointed at her until she got inside her apartment. She also confirmed speculation that when she appeared to duck, she was actually crouching to pick up a book that had fallen to the ground.

Jorge Vidal, a public security expert who used to work for the Buenos Aires city government, said the security response to the incident was "far from being a professional performance."

While security teams must do as they are told by those they guard, he said, "politicians must understand that not all the hands that are stretched out to touch or greet them are to caress or shake."

No politician awakens



Argentine Vice President Cristina Fernandez

more passion in Argentina than Fernández, 69, who is revered by some for her left-leaning social welfare policies and reviled by others as corrupt and power-hungry, and she has long derived political strength from her closeness to the crowds that venerate her.

Supporters compare her to Eva Perón, the wife of Juan Domingo Perón, a military officer elected president in 1946. As First Lady, Perón espoused women's rights and was known as a benefactor of the poor. After her early death in 1952, she became enshrined in Argentina's national mythology.

Outpourings of devotion to Fernández have intensified recently after a prosecutor sought to send her to prison for 12 years over corruption allegations involving public works while she was president from 2007 to 2015.

Fernández and her backers say the case is an act of political revenge, and the front of her apartment building in the downtown Buenos Aires neighborhood of Recoleta has become a sanctuary for hundreds of followers outraged by the accusations against her.

As she left and returned each day, she clasped the hands of men and women who shouted "Cristina, I love you!" She also signed dozens of copies of her political autobiography, titled "Sinceramente," or Spanish for "sincerely."

A young man who was in the crowd Thursday night

said he was right in front of Fernández when the handgun emerged.

"I tell Cristina that I loved her, and she caresses me. I see an arm sticking out [...] with a gun," the man, who was identified only as Javier for security reasons, told reporters Friday after giving his account to the investigating judge.

The only previous incident occurred last Saturday, when tension developed between Fernández followers and police who sought to remove them due to neighbors' complaints.

The vice president complained about the treatment of her supporters and accused Buenos Aires Mayor Horacio Rodríguez Larreta of keeping her under siege, and security around the building was soon relaxed.

"We noticed that there were fewer police officers. I saw two from the federal (police). It was full of people," Venegas said.

Javier, the young witness, declared in court that he and other supporters detained the suspect, not the police.

"I grab him, and also others," he said.

The vice president has not spoken publicly since the incident. Some friends and political allies have been able to see her.

"Cristina is shocked, shocked," said Sen. Oscar Parrilli, who is close to the vice president. "She is fine, luckily, because she has her spirit and her temper intact."

The attempted shooting shook Argentina, a country that has a history of political violence but has not seen a similar attack since democracy was restored in 1983 after years of dictatorship.

President Alberto Fernández, who is not related to the vice president, has said that the weapon was loaded with five bullets and that for "a reason not yet technically confirmed, it was not fired."

The suspect has been identified as Fernando André Sabag Montiel, a 35-year-old street vendor from Brazil who has lived in Argentina since 1998 and has no prior criminal record. He was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder. Authorities have shed no light on a possible motive and are investigating whether the gunman acted alone or as part of a larger plot.

The day after the incident, Fernández' supporters demonstrated throughout the country under the slogan "Everybody with Cristina."

Buenos Aires' central Plaza de Mayo filled with people of all ages brandishing handwritten signs with messages such as "Always with Cristina, the people do not forget" and "Cristina is of the people and no one touches her."

At her home, meanwhile, dozens of federal agents stood guard.

Fernández emerged and approached a group of supporters to greet them, then got into a car to go to an unknown destination. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1997 MOTHER TERESA DIES



Mother Teresa, the Nobel Peace Prize winner who devoted her life to helping the sick and the poor, has died at the age of 87.

She died of a heart attack at the headquarters of the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta shortly before 1700 BST.

The nun from Skopje, Macedonia, had been battling ill health for some years, and in March stepped down as head of the order of nuns she founded.

She was revered by many around the world as a living saint for her work with the dispossessed.

The Pope often praised her work and a Vatican spokesman told reporters he was "deeply hurt" by the news of her death.

"The Pope believes she is a woman who has left her mark on the history of this century," he said.

The head of the Catholic church in England and Wales, Cardinal Hume, said she was an "enormously significant figure - everyone knows who Mother Teresa is".

Born Agnes Bojaxhiu in Skopje, then part of the Ottoman Empire later Macedonia, she took the name Sister Teresa in Ireland, where she began her training as a nun with the Loreto Sisters.

She founded her order in 1948 and went out to work in the slums of Calcutta.

She was sometimes accused by Hindus in her adopted country of trying to convert the poor to Catholicism by "stealth" and criticised by liberals who disliked her conservative stance on abortion and contraception.

But her biographer and friend Navin Chana said she would be remembered as someone who "gave the word compassion a new dimension".

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Tens of thousands of people lined the route of Mother Teresa's funeral procession in Calcutta a week later. Her successor as head of the Missionaries of Charity was Sister Nirmala. In 1997 the order which Mother Teresa had run for almost half a century was 4,000-strong and established in 130 countries. It cared for 7,000 children and treated about four million sick people each year.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You will meet a person who may turn out to be more than just a friend. Keep your mind on your work and stay away from situations that could ruin your reputation. Losses are evident.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Do not push your opinions or try to reform your emotional partner today. You will be highly sensitive to comments made by your lover. Be careful while traveling.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Disappointments regarding partners will be subject to the way you react to their personal comments. You have been going through a period of change that no doubt caused problems with your loved ones.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Outdoor sports events should entice you. Don't allow personal problems to conflict with professional duties. Personal alterations will be in your best interest.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You've been a little down and you need a lift. They didn't fully understand what was expected. You must make sure that all your personal documents are in order.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Your ability to dazzle others with your unique and innovative ideas will attract attention. Empty promises and a lack of cash may put a damper on your plans.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You'll be tempted to spend today. You have to take hold of your life and make some crucial decisions. Sudden changes regarding friendships are likely to occur if you have tried to change others.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Try not to take everything so seriously. Go out with close friends who understand your situation and your needs. Keep a lookout for any individuals eager to confront you with unsavory situations.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You will be overly generous with children today. You can make personal changes that will enhance your reputation and give you greater self confidence. An older loved one may be having problems.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Go out with friends. Your partner may be somewhat irritable today. You could be tempted to overspend on unnecessary items.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Be cautious when dealing with coworkers. Chances are they are jealous. Look into ways that you can make extra cash. You will have additional discipline that will aid you in your objectives.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You need time to put your house in order and sort out what you are going to do about your personal direction. Minor health problems could result through exhaustion.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	20	28	fine
Changchun	13	22	rain
Chengdu	19	30	cloudy
Chongqing	22	33	cloudy
Fuzhou	27	37	cloudy
Guangzhou	24	35	fine
Guiyang	16	28	fine
Haikou	26	34	fine
Hangzhou	22	28	rain
Harbin	14	24	showers
Hefei	19	30	fine
Nanjing	21	29	cloudy
Shanghai	24	27	rain
Taipei	27	31	cloudy
Wuhan	21	34	fine
Hong Kong	27	31	overcast

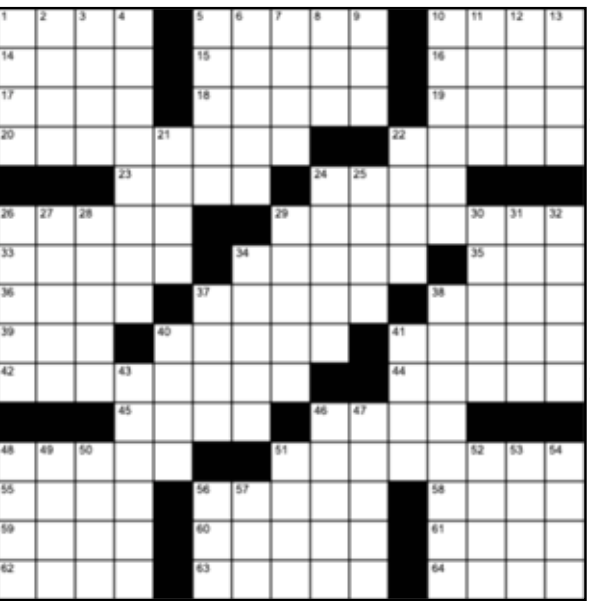
WORLD

Moscow	6	12	rain
Frankfurt	17	30	overcast
Paris	16	29	overcast
London	16	24	sloudy
New York	21	27	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- School orgs.; 5- Early evening; 10- Bedouin; 14- Cesspool; 15- Skirt; 16- ___ avail; 17- Portico; 18- Deputised group; 19- Wife of a rajah; 20- Highway; 22- Bicycle part; 23- Dies ___; 24- Ladies of Spain; Abbr.; 26- Aquarium buildup; 29- Closing; 33- Rush; 34- Rustle, as silk; 35- Future fish; 36- Oklahoma city; 37- To the left, at sea; 38- Construction locale; 39- Era; 40- Inactive; 41- North African capital; 42- Beaten; 44- Babble; 45- Not much; 46- One-liner, e.g.; 48- Put down; 51- Housewife; 55- He played Ricky; 56- Circa; 58- Electrically charged particles; 59- Go out with; 60- Juvenescence; 61- Appraise, charge per unit; 62- The closest one to us is the sun; 63- Keep an ___ the ground; 64- Chieftain, usually in Africa;

DOWN 1- Attention-getting sound; 2- Ballerina's skirt; 3- Cupid; 4- Iberian peninsula inhabitant; 5- Brown pigment; 6- Bring to mind; 7- Still life subject; 8- Begley and Wynn; 9- Wedding page word; 10- Still; 11- Highway; 12- Editor Wintour; 13- Seethe; 21- One hunted; 22- Course; 24- Tee, e.g.; 25- Corrosion; 26- In the future; 27- Sudden forward thrust; 28- Good ___; 29- Pen's inferior, they say; 30- One of Chekhov's "Three Sisters"; 31- Tag line?; 32- Honkers; 34- Swiftiness; 37- Organization to promote theater; 38- Foolproof; 40- Must've been something ___; 41- Toll rds.; 43- Simpler; 46- Short journey; 47- Money spent; 48- Says further; 49- Defeat; 50- Hammett hound; 51- It may be happy; 52- Travel far and wide; 53- Opposed to; 54- Manipulator; 56- Affirmative vote; 57- Fur scarf;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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PJ (Picket) 28 557 775

PSP 28 573 333

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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

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TENNIS

Serena's gone, Open must go on: Kvitova, Pegula set rematch

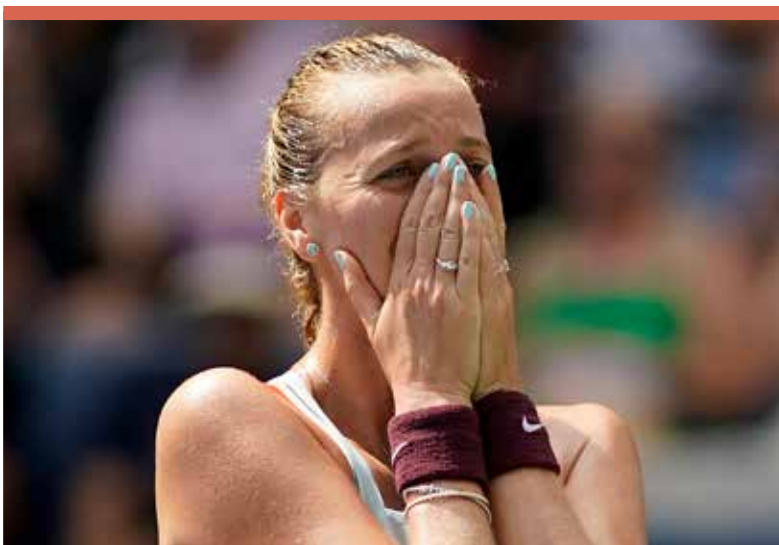
HOWARD FENDRICH,
NEW YORK

MUCH like for so many other folks, Serena Williams' last match at the U.S. Open was must-see TV for players still in the tournament, so Jessica Pegula and Petra Kvitova tuned in from their hotel rooms the night before their victories led off Saturday's schedule and set up a fourth-round showdown.

"Of course I watched Serena. I'm like everyone else," said Pegula, a 28-year-old American who is seeded No. 8 at Flushing Meadows and beat qualifier Yuan Yue 6-2, 6-7 (6), 6-0. "You feel kind of sad that's how it ends. But, I don't know, like I got a little, like, sentimental, too, watching her, how emotional she was getting."

Kvitova, a two-time Wimbledon champion from the Czech Republic, credited Williams' last stand — the owner of 23 Grand Slam titles fended off five match

AP PHOTO



Petra Kvitova, of the Czech Republic, reacts after defeating Garbine Muguruza, of Spain, during the third round of the U.S. Open tennis championships, Saturday

points before bowing out in three sets against Ajla Tomljanovic on Friday night in what is expected to be her final contest — with offering inspiration.

"It was very special. She didn't want to leave the court, for sure. That was the same case with me today, actually. I didn't want to go

out of this tournament, so I was just there hanging (in), somehow," said Kvitova, who erased deficit after deficit, including a pair of match points, to edge Garbiñe Muguruza 5-7, 6-3, 7-6 (12-10).

"That's what Serena showed last night," said Kvitova, who dropped her racket and covered her

face with her hands when what she called a "nightmare" of a tie-breaker was over. "It was nice to see her yesterday, fighting until the end."

Yes, Williams is gone, leaving the year's last major tournament — and, in some ways, the sport as a whole — without its biggest star and storyline. Still, the show must go on.

So there was Kvitova, undaunted as ever, despite dropping the first set, despite trailing 5-2 in the third, despite being a point from defeat twice at 6-5.

Here's how close this one was: Kvitova won 109 total points, Muguruza 108.

"Left everything on the court today," said No. 9 Muguruza, a two-time Slam winner whose departure means the bracket is without six of the top 10 women entering the fourth round.

No. 1 Iga Swiatek advanced by beating Lauren Davis 6-3, 6-4, and No. 6 Aryna Sabalenka defeated Clara Burel 6-0, 6-2.

During the night session in Ashe, 22-time major champ Rafael Nadal improved his career mark against Richard Gasquet to 18-0 with a 6-0, 6-1, 7-5 victory. Nadal won the opening nine games and was on his way to improving to 22-0 in Grand Slam matches in 2022.

Nadal did not have stitches or a bandage on his nose, two days after accidentally cutting it with his racket during his previous victory.

"A little bit bigger than usual, but it's OK," he said with a smile. "The nose is still there."

Nadal's win was followed by Australian Open runner-up Danielle Collins' 6-4, 7-6 (11-9) win over Alizé Cornet.

On Monday, Nadal will take on No. 22 Frances Tiafoe, the first American man since Mardy Fish in 2010-12 to get to the U.S. Open's fourth round in three consecutive years. Tiafoe eliminated No. 14 Diego Schwartzman 7-6 (7), 6-4, 6-4.

It was going to be tough for any of the day's matches to live up to the sort of attention Williams drew, or the atmosphere she helped create, during her three-match run in Ashe.

"I just can't believe the 'era of Serena' on the tennis court is over," Pegula said. "I mean, it's just hard to picture tennis without her." **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

SIGN OF REBOUNDED MILITARISM

The defense budget request made by Japan's Defense Ministry on Wednesday is the largest ever. If approved, it will continue the country's soaring military spending over the past decade.

The proposed sum of 5.6 trillion yen (\$40 billion) for the fiscal year of 2023, which ends in March 2024, will surpass the 5.4 trillion yen in planned spending for the current fiscal year. Japan's defense budget for this year has already set a record for the 10th consecutive year.

Yet, both foreign and Japanese media reports show the proposed budget could rise to 6 trillion yen, or even to 6.5 trillion yen, up 20 percent from this year as Wednesday's proposal does not include the costs of missiles for preemptive strikes that it recently proposed, as well as dozens of other weapons.

Japan used to cap its annual defense spending at around 1 percent of its GDP. But with the country pushing to comprehensively remilitarize, the calls for its military spending to be on a par with that required of NATO members have become increasingly loud, not only in Japan, but also in Washington, which is encouraging Japan to be in the vanguard of NATO's expansion into the Asia-Pacific.

The military spending of NATO members is supposed to be 2 percent of their GDP, which if Japan was to follow suit would make its military budget the third-largest in the world. Needless to say, Tokyo needs an excuse to justify its constant military spending hikes to the public, and China fits the bill for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

In recent years, politicians in Tokyo have been increasingly citing China as the main reason behind its military spending hikes. This year, apart from hyping up the China threat theory as usual, the conflict in Ukraine has given a fillip to the scaremongering.

Japan's growing military spending points to the rebound of Japanese militarism and the intention of right-wing Japanese politicians to make Japan's militarily stronger again, which in the eyes of many people in Asia, is tantamount to reviving the ghost of Japan's military past.

This is especially worrisome as Japan has never sincerely reflected upon its actions during the World War II era, including its war crimes. Instead, it has relentlessly sought to deny and distort history in recent years, including denying the country's wartime atrocities and making modifications to its history textbooks.

Tokyo has also chosen to draw closer to the US alliance, enthusiastically rushing to the forefront in the US' strategic containment against China and making waves over China's core interests and mutual concerns. At home, Japan's ultra-right politicians have seized every opportunity to push their country to steadily break the limit of its "pacifist" Constitution.

Hence, Japan's latest move to boost its defense budget is not only irresponsible but dangerous as it will reduce its neighbors' sense of security, heat up the arms race that is brewing in the region, casting a shadow over regional peace and stability.

BARACK OBAMA WINS EMMY FOR NARRATING NATIONAL PARKS SERIES

Barack Obama is halfway to an EGOT.

The former president won an Emmy Award on Saturday to go with his two Grammys.

Obama won the best narrator Emmy for his work on the Netflix documentary series, "Our Great National Parks."

The five-part show, which features national parks from around the globe, is produced by Barack and Michelle Obama's production company, "Higher Ground."

He was the biggest name in a category full of famous nominees for the award handed out at Saturday night's Creative Arts Emmys, including Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, David Attenborough and Lupita Nyong'o.

Barack Obama is the second president to have an Emmy. Dwight D. Eisenhower was given a special Emmy Award in 1956.

Barack Obama previously won Grammy Awards for his audiobook reading of two of his memoirs, "The Audacity of Hope" and "A Promised Land." Michelle Obama won her own Grammy for reading her audiobook in 2020.

EGOT refers to a special category of entertainers who have won an Emmy, a Grammy, an Oscar and a Tony. To date, 17 people have done it.

THE
BUZZ

GORBACHEV BURIED IN MOSCOW IN FUNERAL SNUBBED BY PUTIN

JIM HEINTZ & VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, MOSCOW

RUSSIANS who came for a last look at former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on Saturday mourned both the man and his policies that gave them hope. President Vladimir Putin claimed to be too busy to attend.

Gorbachev, who died Tuesday at age 91, launched drastic reforms that helped end the Cold War. But he also precipitated the breakup of the Soviet Union, which Putin had called the 20th century's "greatest geopolitical catastrophe."

The farewell viewing of his body in an ostentatious hall near the Kremlin was shadowed by the awareness that the openness Gorbachev championed has been stifled under Putin.

"I want to thank him for my childhood of freedom, which we don't have today," said mourner Ilya, a financial services worker in his early 30s who declined to give his last name.

"I am a son of perestroika," he said, using the Russian word for Gorbachev's reform, or reconstruction, initiatives.

"I'd like us to have more people like him in our history," said another mourner, Yulia Prividennaya. "We need such politicians to settle the situation in the world when it's on the verge of World War III."

After the viewing, Gorbachev's body was buried next to his wife Raisa in Novodevichy cemetery, where many prominent Russians lie, including the post-Soviet country's first president, Boris Yeltsin, whose struggle for power with Gorbachev sped up the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The procession that carried the coffin into the cemetery was led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dmitry Muratov, editor of the Novaya Gazeta newspaper, Russia's last major Kremlin-critical news



Nobel Peace Prize awarded journalist Dmitry Muratov carries a portrait of the late former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev after a farewell ceremony at the Pillar Hall of the House of the Unions in Moscow, Saturday

outlet before it suspended operations in March. Gorbachev used funds from his own Nobel prize to help start the paper.

The Kremlin refusal to formally declare a state funeral reflected its uneasiness about the legacy of Gorbachev, who has been venerated worldwide for bringing down the Iron Curtain but reviled by many at home for the Soviet collapse and the ensuing economic meltdown that plunged millions into poverty.

On Thursday, Putin privately laid flowers at Gorbachev's coffin at a Moscow hospital where he died. The Kremlin said the president's busy schedule would prevent him from attending the funeral.

Asked what specific business would keep Putin busy on Saturday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that the president was scheduled to have a series of working meetings, an international phone call and needs to prepare for a business forum in Russia's Far East that he's due to attend next week.

Gorbachev's body

was displayed for public viewing at the Pillar Hall of the House of the Unions, an opulent 18th-century mansion near the Kremlin that has served as the venue for state funerals since Soviet times.

Mourners passed by Gorbachev's open casket flanked by honorary guards, laying flowers as solemn music played. Gorbachev's daughter, Irina, and his two granddaughters sat beside the coffin.

The grand, chandeliered hall lined by columns hosted balls for the nobility under the czars and served as a venue for high-level meetings and congresses along with state funerals during Soviet times. Upon entering the building, mourners saw honor guards flanking a large photo of Gorbachev standing with a broad smile, a reminder of the cheerful vigor he brought to the Soviet leadership after a series of dour, ailing predecessors.

The turnout was large enough that the viewing was extended for two more hours beyond the stated two hours. **MDT/AP**

Russian shelling hit the southern Ukraine port city of Mykolaiv during the night, damaging a medical treatment facility, the city's mayor said yesterday. Mykolaiv and its surrounding region have been hit daily for weeks in the conflict. On Saturday, a child was killed and five people were injured in rocket attacks in the region, governor Vitaliy Kim said. Mykolaiv city mayor Oleksandr Senkevych did not specify whether there were any injuries in the overnight attack, which he said also damaged some residences.



Iranian state television aired footage it said came from the deck of the Iranian navy's Jamaran destroyer, where lifejacket-wearing sailors examined two Saildrone Explorers. They tossed one overboard as another warship could be seen in the distance.

European Union's top executive said that the bloc's electricity market "is no longer operating" amid the Ukraine war, and proposed a price cap on Russian pipeline gas. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen blamed Russian President Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine for the energy crisis and the dramatic rise in gas and electricity prices. She said Europe's priority is to save energy because reserves are scarce.



"Germany stands together in a difficult time. As a country, we will get through this difficult time," Chancellor Olaf Scholz said at a news conference with leaders from the Greens and the pro-business FDP, the two coalition partners of his center-left Social Democrats.