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VETERAN MACAU GAMING EXECUTIVE CARRUTHERS SAYS HIS TIME HERE HAD LEFT HIM 'WELL-EQUIPPED TO NAVIGATE A STRICTER AUSTRALIAN REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT' P2

ZHUHAI MULLS ALLOWING MACAU PUBLIC TRANSPORT TO OPERATE ON HENGQIN P2

CHENGDU ENFORCES STRICT LOCKDOWN DESPITE EARTHQUAKE P6



AP PHOTO



Indonesia Hundreds of workers and students in Indonesia rallied yesterday demanding the government cancel fuel price hikes, a politically sensitive issue that has triggered past unrest. Members of trade unions, farmers, fishermen, temporary teachers and domestic workers protested in front of the parliament building in Jakarta and provincial governors' offices against the fuel price increase of 30% that was announced by President Joko Widodo on Saturday.

AP PHOTO



US An American diplomat in Tokyo on Tuesday criticized China's "increasingly hostile maritime actions" as a threat to the safety of waterways in the resource-rich Indo-Pacific, as the United States seeks to strengthen security cooperation with allies Japan and the Philippines. U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Raymond Greene (pictured, center) said disregard for international law and heavy-handed actions by Beijing are aimed at increasing its control over the region. "No one nation should be able to dominate Indo-Pacific waters through coercion and outright intimidation."

AP PHOTO



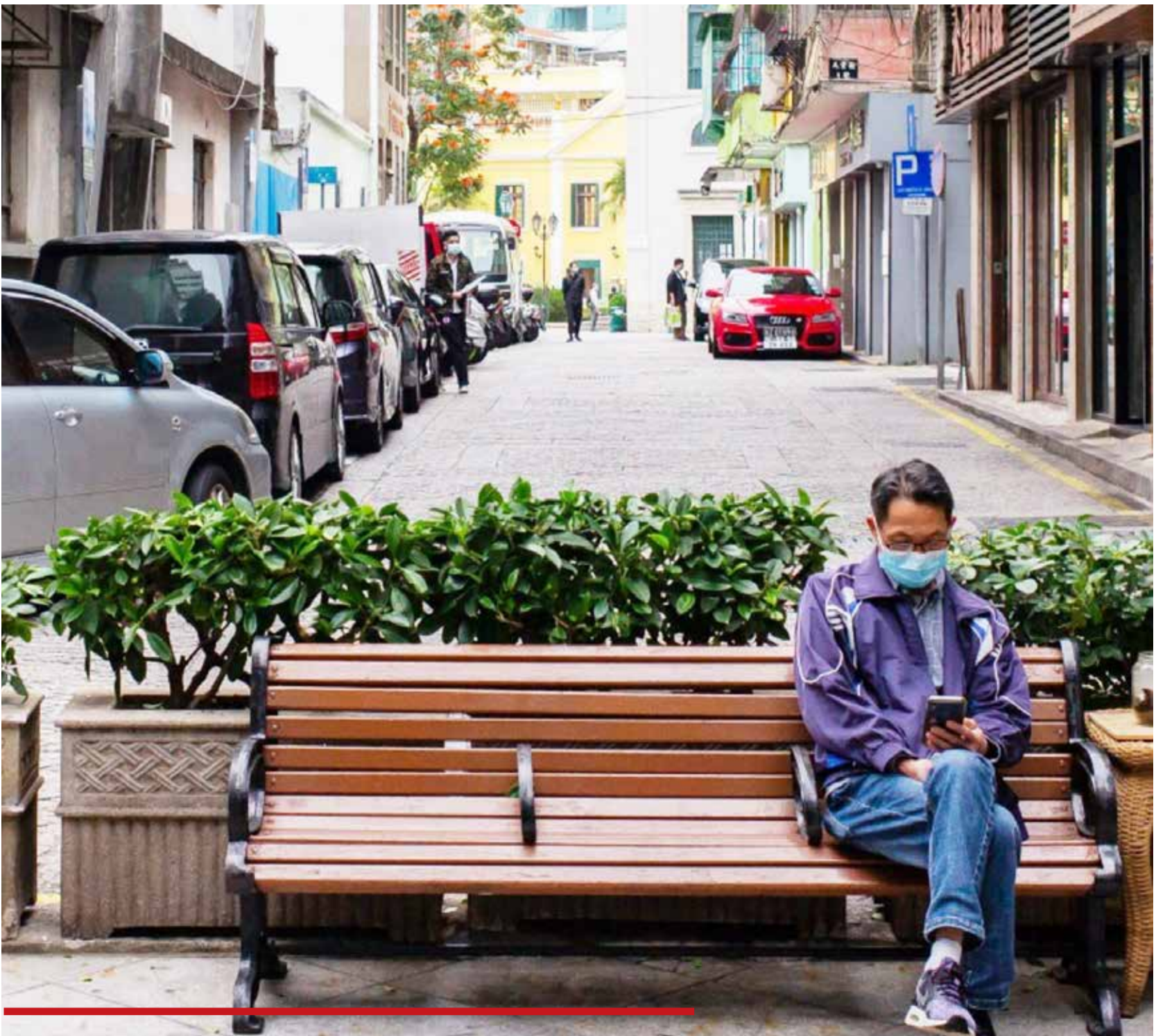
Japan Bribery allegations against a former Tokyo Olympics organizing committee member widened yesterday as Japanese prosecutors "re-arrested" Haruyuki Takahashi (pictured) in a case involving suspected payments from a publisher which became a sponsor for the Games. The latest allegations center on 76 million yen (\$540,000) Takahashi received from Tokyo-based publishing company Kadokawa, according to Tokyo District prosecutors.

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'FAULTLESS'

Ten local academics published a paper in the International Journal of Biological Sciences praising Macau Government's handling of the pandemic: 'faultless' P5

MDT ARCHIVE



PANDEMIC MEASURES PUT ECONOMY ON VERGE OF COLLAPSE P3

IC TO 'SUPPORT' PUI CHING ADMINISTRATION BUILDING REVAMP



Pui Ching Middle School's Administration Building

ANTHONY LAM

PRESIDENT Leong Wai Man of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) disclosed yesterday the government would support the restoration of a private school's administration building.

The Cultural Heritage Committee held this year's fourth regular plenary meeting yesterday morning. At the meeting, Leong revealed the topic was on the agenda.

Originally part of the mansion of local business mogul Lou Lim leoc, the building is now held by the private Pui Ching Middle School. The school has a history stretching back approximately 130 years in Macau. Its principal, Kou Kam Fai, is an appointed

lawmaker at the parliament.

About the current condition of the building, Leong noted that leakage and cracks can be seen on its exterior walls and roof. The building is also structurally less reliable. "Considering the fact that it has a certain historic value, the Committee has come to the consensus that assistance be offered," Leong said.

When questioned how much money will be designated to "assist" Pui Ching with the restoration, the IC president said that the sum has not yet been determined, but that a tender procedure would be run at a later date.

Government projects usually require budgeting, however. At the same time, Leong also

announced that the IC would release a new set of guidelines on the management of intangible cultural heritages, with the guidelines applicable to all walks of life.

Leong explained that it would list out the criteria and standards for the listing of intangible cultural heritages, the entities responsible for protecting different listed heritages and related responsibilities, as well as the direction to nurture professionals in heritage protection, among other responsibilities.

Furthermore, the committee also discussed projects that had been passed by previous plenaries, including the Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Ka Ho, the Nüwa Temple, the current Casa de Portugal building, the city wall on Pátio do Espinho, as well as the current Institute of European Studies of Macau building. Leong highlighted that, with the exception of the last project, all projects "were basically concluded."

GAMING

NEW CROWN BOSS CARRUTHERS 'NOT BANKING' ON CHINESE HIGH ROLLERS RETURNING TO AUSTRALIA

CROWN Resorts' new chief executive Ciaran Carruthers said the Australian casino giant is not banking on Chinese high rollers returning to Australia to boost its bottom line, The Sydney Morning Herald has reported.

"I think there's probably been an over reliance on the Chinese tourists in Australia; they've been such an easy target for some of the casinos of the past," the veteran Macau gaming executive and entrepreneur said at a meeting with staff.

"Though I have great confidence tourism will return as the international borders continue to open up, Crown will not be going down the path of the old junket model," Carruthers said, as quoted by the paper.

Crown will continue to cater to international tourists seeking accommodation, hospitality or entertainment, he said.

Officially in his second day on the job, Carruthers said he would like to cement Crown as the gold standard for gaming,

acknowledging that the business still had a lot of "heavy lifting" to do before he is able to fully focus on transforming the culture as a whole.

"I'm here for the long term. My goal is to ensure Crown is the gold standard of a responsible gaming, [an] entertainment integrated resort for our domestic, interstate and international customers," he said.

According to the SMH, Carruthers addressed employees from Melbourne on Monday, thanking incumbent chief executive Steve McCann – who served in the role for about a year – for stabilizing the group over the past 15 months.

In 2019, an investigation by the Sydney Morning Herald and 60 Minutes revealed Crown had been infiltrated by international criminal syndicates and money launderers. Since then, government inquiries in the three states where its casinos operate have ruled it unfit to hold a casino license, preventing it from opening the high-rise casino at its newest AUD2.2 billion tower at Sydney's Barangaroo in late 2020.

COURTESY ASGAM



Ciaran Carruthers

Carruthers' appointment was announced just two weeks after New York-based private equity firm Blackstone took the reins at Crown in July. Crown shareholders voted to accept an AUD8.9 billion takeover offer from Blackstone in May, ending three years of chaos under former major shareholder James Packer.

Carruthers, a former chief operations officer at Wynn Macau, said his time at the Chinese gambling hub had left him well-equipped to navigate a stricter Australian regulatory environment.

"None of it is new or alien to me," he said. **MDT**

ZHUHAI MULLS ALLOWING MACAU PUBLIC TRANSPORT TO OPERATE ON HENGQIN

ANTHONY LAM

IN the future, public transport vehicles in Macau may be allowed to enter and operate in Hengqin, following the elimination of quotas for Macau private light vehicles entering the neighboring jurisdiction.

According to a tender notice recently released by the Zhuhai government, a tender is now open seeking a research entity to study the possibility of permitting Macau commercial vehicles to enter and operate in Hengqin.

Currently branded as the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, Hengqin is positioned as the key area to assist Macau in diversifying the latter's economy. In the past two decades, the local city has been over-reliant on gambling, many have deemed.

To gradually cultivate the attractiveness of Hengqin to Macau residents and to attract more people from Macau to relocate to the Cooperation Zone, the neighboring government has started allowing non-commercial light vehicles from Macau to enter Hengqin

without a mainland license plate.

This tender notice is seen as being a step further. The 2.3-million-yuan tender aims at outlining the possibility of permitting Macau buses, taxis and coaches in Hengqin. It should look into the management styles and legal systems between the two jurisdictions.

The study should also make proposals to the neighboring government about several areas, namely the means by which these vehicles should enter and leave the Cooperation Zone, the types of vehicles eligible for the future policy and the routes they can take.

In addition, proposals on the manner of implementation of the future policy and administrative formalities should also be made as part of the study. The results of the study can be submitted as a consultative report or plan for implementation.

The tender notice has also pointed out that consultation sessions will be held in both Macau and mainland China. The sessions in Macau will cater to government entities and commercial enterprises.

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RENATO MARQUES



ECONOMISTS SOUND ALARM

Pandemic measures causing GDP collapse

RENATO MARQUES

ECONOMISTS are sounding the alarm over the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) results for Macau this year.

On the line seem to be the pandemic prevention and control measures that are driving local GDP to the point of collapse.

Official statistics released show that at the end of the second quarter of this year (Q2) the GDP of Macau recorded a 39.3% fall when compared with the same period last year.

This figure is even more relevant if compared with the results of the first quarter of the year (Q1), when the GDP also fell, but in a more moderate manner (-8.9%).

The results of Q2, when compared to the same period of 2020, show that local economic performance has fallen some 66.3%, that is, by almost two-thirds.

Local economists are not just alarmed by these figures but also anticipate that the results from the second half of this year could be as bad as the first, with 2022 to be historic for negative reasons.

"These numbers are alarming and represent a brutal drop," local economist José Luís de Sales Marques said to Hoje Macau newspaper.

Despite considering the figures worrying, Sales Marques said that they are not that sur-

prising considering the effects of the measures to fight the pandemic, that lasted for a very long period.

On the same note, Albano Martins also outlined a very bleak scenario for the local economy.

"The data is indeed alarming, but it was just natural that the GDP would fall substantially since the economy [was] at a standstill. The zero covid policy has prevented it from growing as people refrain from consuming, and the economic drivers with particular relevance to the gaming sector, do not have the necessary components [visitors] to be able to grow," Martins said to the same media.

Another economist, António Félix Pontes, a former member of the board of directors of the Monetary Authority of Macao, added that the "local economy is sick as a direct result of the implementation of the zero Covid policy, which has been much more efficient in causing devastating economic effects," he said.

For Pontes, the Covid-19 policies of the government have had a catastrophic impact on the economic health of Macau, with consequences still unpredictable.

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Regarding the potential recovery of the local economy, Sales Marques said that some

recovery can be expected in Q3 as a result of the Golden Week of the National Day holidays period, which includes largely the first week of October, although noting that "it is difficult to say to what extent this [week] will account for a better performance of the GDP." "We have already lost half a year, and we will see if we can at least prevent GDP to fall any further. We are assuming that the [Covid-19] policies will be unchanged until the end of this year. For the next year we will have a new situation with the entry into force of the gaming concessions," Sales Marques concluded.

Less optimistic, Martins said that the drop in GDP will continue not only for the rest of 2022 but can also extend throughout 2023, depending on government policies.

For Martins, in order to have a realistic approach to the topic, it must be considered that the local economy will hardly return to pre-pandemic figures. This is due not only to the pandemic and zero-Covid-19 case policy but also due to a clear message that there are intentions to restrict gaming activities to the essential minimum.

Also sharing a similar opinion, Pontes noted the recurring use by the government of the Financial Reserves, from which around 168 billion patacas have already been withdrawn, a figure that represents roughly a 25%

reduction of its assets.

With the growing number of companies closing their doors and the direct effect on the unemployment rate, it is difficult to see, at this point, any light at the end of the tunnel.

In a reply to the Times, Professor Kwan Fung, Assistant Professor at the University of Macau and advisor of the Economic Development Committee of Macau, said "Since the most recent outbreak [of Covid-19] happened in the second half of June and lasted until mid-August, the Q3 GDP growth will be affected tremendously."

For Kwan, the uncertainty over the anti-pandemic measures makes it very difficult to any economic analyst to predict the timing of economic recovery, given that Macau relies a lot on services driven by the flow of customers.

According to Kwan, the Macroeconomic Model is about to revise the GDP forecast for 2022, "in which one might expect an inevitable substantial downward adjustment."

Touching the subject of ways of economic recovery, other academics recommend the government to look at "the model of the development of the Internet economy of mainland China and vigorously develop e-commerce, internet shopping, video clip marketing and so on."

In a paper on the government's pandemic response, academics from the University of Macau and the United Nations University Institute (see p5), state that "the government can also coordinate and assist in terms of payment, logistics, and management, to increase the size of Macau's economy and facilitate the rapid recovery and development of the economy."

HONG KONG ENVIRONMENTALISTS 'JEALOUS' OF MACAU PLASTIC BAN

Hong Kong "has fallen behind Macau" in banning single-use plastic tableware, green campaigners have said. Critics quoted by the South China Morning Post yesterday said the Hong Kong government's progress in outlawing plastic cutlery was moving at "a snail's pace" as Macau's government announced Monday it would ban importation of the items next year. Yau Wing-kwong, chief executive of the Environmental Association green group, said: "Dumping of disposable plastic tableware is becoming an urgent environmental issue here as more people opt to buy takeaways during the epidemic."

DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE OF THE CCAC HAS FIVE NEW MEMBERS

Having started the role in mid-August, the five new members of the Monitoring Committee on Discipline of the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) Personnel visited the Taipa office yesterday. The new members include president Wang Yu and members Fang Qian, António José Dias Azedo, Tong Kai Chung, and Tai Ka Peng. To better understand the different aspects of the CCAC's duties, the new members toured the offices of the Taipa branch of CCAC as well as the Community Relations Department and the Declaration of Assets and Interests Division. During the meeting, Commissioner Chan Tsz King praised having such a group composition in the new term of the Discipline Committee, noting the fact the members were legal experts, university professors, and higher education institution leaders as well as a youth representative.

ASHES LANDFILL BIDS RANGE BETWEEN MOP550M AND MOP739M

The public tender for the construction of the landfill facility dedicated to housing the fly ashes resulting from the use of the incinerator has received 10 bids, the Environmental Protection Bureau noted in a press statement. Of the 10 bids, one was excluded and the nine accepted contained proposals for construction prices ranging between MOP550 million and MOP739 million. The maximum overall term for the execution of the construction is of 2,370 working days. The landfill facility will be built inside the existing Landfill for Waste Construction Materials and the winning bidder will have to build five landfill ditches at the location indicated for the reception of the solidified fly ashes. In total, the new landfill can take up to 65,000 cubic meters of fly ash.

IC REAFFIRMS LEGALITY OF DEMOLITION OF GUIA HILL WALL

ANTHONY LAM

OFFICIALS at the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) are remaining firm on the legality of the disassembly of the 400-year-old city wall on Guia Hill, despite no Executive Dispatch being issued.

On June 9 evening, the aforementioned city wall was damaged while two adjacent construction projects were underway. The incident caused a landslide and disfigured several adjacent residential buildings.

After review and discussion, the IC decided to tear down 10 meters of the remainder of the city wall, citing public safety and difficulties in retention as justification. The city wall had been registered as one of the city's historic sites and heritages.

The Cultural Heritage Protection Law states that an Executive Dispatch issued by the Chief Executive is required when certain historic artifacts, architectures or sites are proposed to be removed or dismantled.

Nonetheless, no such Dispatch has been seen so far.

On June 17, the bureau announced that four days earlier on June 13, the city's two civil engineering



bureaus discussed the handling of the matter. The three bureaus came to the consensus that part of the less intact wall should be torn down.

The proposal was then put to a discussion by the Cultural Heritage Committee on June 16. The discussion yielded unanimous

support for the IC's proposal. The disassembly started July 7.

At yesterday's Cultural Heritage Committee meeting, President Leong Wai Man of the IC was questioned on the matter. She said no supplementary information was available as of yesterday, since the bureau had earlier issued explana-

tions on the matter.

However, the press was not convinced because the announcement of the disassembly and the disassembly itself were about 20 days apart, which should have been sufficient time for the release of an Executive Dispatch.

Then, the IC president re-capped an earlier explanation that cited the Code of Administrative Procedures, which provide for the skipping of certain procedures during emergency situations.

"After citing the legal provision [of the Code of Administrative Procedures,] we will not cite another law to avoid repetition," Leong added.

She also said she was not worried about the exemption becoming a precedent "because it [was] a collective decision by several bureaus."

At the committee meeting, it was also discussed that a cultural heritage monitor centre will be launched to conduct constant supervision over the conditions of local UNESCO-listed cultural heritage sites.

According to the IC, the center will be launched in the fourth quarter of the year.

Member of the committee and

civil engineer Wu Chou Kit disclosed that committee members were told the center would be equipped with gadgets to assist the supervision of the sites. Such gadgets include, but are not limited to, crack and structural detectors. The reference to using public surveillance cameras, meanwhile, raised certain concerns over privacy protections.

On this, Wu highlighted that the surveillance camera system, which is under the management of the security branch of the government, has long had approval from the Personal Data Protection Office. However, it was raised that the system was not installed for this purpose.

Choi Kin Long, department head for cultural heritage at the IC, further clarified that by surveillance camera system, the IC meant internal closed circuit surveillance cameras installed within enclosed properties.

In addition, data was also sourced from several other bureaus, such as the Macao Government Tourism Office for tourism data, the weather bureau and the Environmental Protection Bureau regarding pollutant or corrosives levels. The IC will look into the possibility of employing the public surveillance camera system for heritage protection purposes, Choi admitted, adding that drones have been used regularly to monitor the conditions of local heritage sites.

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Local scholars consider gov't pandemic response 'faultless'

RENATO MARQUES

THE fact that Macau is a densely populated touristic city and, when compared with other countries or territories with a similar profile, has a much lower mortality rate for Covid-19, has led a group of scholars from the University of Macau (UM) and the United Nations University Institute in Macau (UNU Macau) to conclude that the response of the local government to the pandemic was faultless and serves as an example for other places in their fight against the disease, an academic paper published by the 10 researchers in the International Journal of Biological Sciences has noted.

Titled "Covid-19 prevention and control strategies: learning from the Macau model," the research paper signed by the 10 researchers – nine from the UM and one from the UNU Macau – concluded, through qualitative as well as quantitative analysis methods, that the efforts in Macau "have achieved remarkable results in



Covid-19 prevention and control, effectively safeguarding the lives and health of the people and manifesting the core principle of 'serving the public'. The measures used are sustainable and can serve as an important reference for other countries/regions."

According to the researchers, the results obtained "reveal that Macau has provided undifferentiated mask purchase reservation services [and] Covid-19 vaccina-

tion services to all residents and non-residents in Macau along with delivering multilingual services, in Chinese, English, and Portuguese, to different groups of the population."

Additionally, "to facilitate the travel of people, business and trades between Macau and mainland China, the Macau government launched the Macao Health Code System, which uses the health status declaration, residence history

declaration, contact history declaration of the declarant to match various relevant backend databases within the health authority and provide a risk-related color code operation. The Macao Health Code System connects to the Chinese mainland's own propriety health code system seamlessly, whilst effectively protecting the privacy of the residents."

As for vaccination and nucleic acid testing, the study indicates that Macau "has also developed the Covid-19 Vaccination Appointment system, the Nucleic Acid Test Appointment system, the Port and Entry/Exit Quarantine system, the medical and other supporting systems," actions that researchers state contributed to the lower mortality rate in Macau when compared with other countries or regions of a similar profile.

Financial support measures and the granting of food supplies were also taken into account, with the researchers stating that the "financial support programs" have attained considerable success in relieving people's hardships, stabilizing the economy, and securing

local employment while keeping the whole of society stable.

Another social aspect in which the Macau government is also considered a good example is the "taking of proper measures to provide accommodation and work-for-relief schemes for non-resident workers."

The role of the media was not forgotten, with researchers praising particularly the Macao Daily (newspaper) "for providing public education on Covid-19 vaccination and encouraging the public, particularly vulnerable populations including children and elderly, to get vaccinated."

Although it is said that the low mortality rate of Macau "when compared to other countries and territories" was the main driver of the paper's conclusions, no comparison is made to any country or region, with the study enumerating only the series of measures taken by the central and local governments, mostly during the first year of the pandemic.

The paper notes in its discussion section that, "Generally speaking, the measures and methods for managing Covid-19 in Macau have almost reached perfection, with the only shortfall [being] that the economy has not yet recovered to its level before the pandemic outbreak because the economic connections between Macau and other countries are almost at a standstill."

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CHENGDU ENFORCES STRICT LOCKDOWN DESPITE EARTHQUAKE

AUTHORITIES in southwestern China's Chengdu have maintained strict COVID-19 lockdown measures on the city of 21 million despite a major earthquake that killed at least 65 people in outlying areas.

Footage circulating online yesterday showed workers wearing top-to-bottom protective gear preventing residents of apartment buildings from exiting through locked lobby doors following Monday's 6.8 magnitude quake centered in the surrounding province of Sichuan.

Buildings in Chengdu and other parts of western China were shaken by the quake. No damage was reported in the city. The quake struck a mountainous area in Luding county, which sits on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau roughly 200 kilometers (125 miles) from Chengdu, where tectonic plates grind up against each other.

Despite only recording a handful of cases, Chengdu's lockdown is the most severe since China's largest city of Shanghai was placed in isolation over the summer, prompting rare protests in person and online.

In all, 65 million Chinese in 33 cities including including seven provincial capitals are currently under varying levels of lockdown while the government is discouraging domestic travel during upcoming national holidays.

Outbreaks have been reported



Rescuers transfer survivors across a river following an earthquake in Moxi Town of Luding County, Sichuan Province

in 103 cities, the highest since the early days of the pandemic in early 2020.

Most Chengdu residents are confined to their apartments or residential complexes. In the eastern port city of Tianjin, classes were moved online after a handful of new cases were reported.

China's Communist political system demands strict adherence to measures dictated by the central leadership overwhelmingly dominated by party leader Xi Jinping.

Local leaders, including Si-

chuan's recently appointed provincial party secretary, are often parachuted in from Beijing with little knowledge of local conditions and a firm mandate to carry out Xi's dictates.

The ruthless and often chaotic enforcement of the Shanghai lockdown led to widespread complaints over shortages of food, medication and access to health care. In a sign of how little has changed, at least one district in Chengdu has banned even the ordering of takeout meals and coffee, according to a notice posted

on the internet.

China has stuck to its hard-line "zero-COVID" policy of compulsory testing, lockdowns, quarantines and masking despite advice from the World Health Organization and moves by most other countries to open up again since the virus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019.

China yesterday reported 1,499 new cases of local infection, most of them asymptomatic. Sichuan accounted for 138 of that total figure.

The quake knocked out power and damaged buildings in the historic mountain town of Moxi in the Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Garze, where 37 people were killed. Tents were erected for more than 50,000 people being moved from homes made unsafe by the quake, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

State broadcaster CCTV showed rescue crews pulling a woman who appeared uninjured from a collapsed home in Moxi, where many of the buildings are constructed from wood and brick. Around 150 people were reported with varying degrees of injuries.

Another 28 people were killed in neighboring Shimian county on the outskirts of the city of Ya'an. State media reported 248 people injured, mainly in Moxi, and another 16 people missing.

Three of the dead were workers at the Hailuoguo Scenic Area, a glacier and forest nature reserve.

Along with the deaths, authorities reported landslides that damaged homes, caused power interruptions and stranded people behind a newly created lake. One landslide blocked a rural highway, leaving it strewn with boulders.

The earthquake and lockdown follow a heat wave and drought that led to water shortages and power cuts due to Sichuan's reliance on hydropower.

China's deadliest earthquake in recent years was a 7.9 magnitude quake in 2008 that killed nearly 90,000 people in Sichuan. The temblor devastated towns, schools and rural communities outside Chengdu, leading to a years-long effort to rebuild with more resistant materials. **MDT/AGENCIES**

TAIWAN

Tsai cites threat of Chinese 'cognitive warfare'

TAIWANESE leader Tsai Ing-wen said yesterday that China is conducting "cognitive warfare" by spreading misinformation in addition to its regular incursions into nearby waters and airspace intended at intimidating the self-governing island.

Experts have warned that "China has made substantial inroads within Taiwanese mass media and could plant false narratives in social media and elsewhere to erode military morale and public confidence" in the event it makes good on its threat to use force to take control of the island it claims as its own territory.

"The situation around the Taiwan Strait continues



Tsai Ing-wen

to be tense, and the threat has never ceased," Tsai said in a speech during a visit to an air defense and missile battalion in the eastern county of Hualien.

"In addition to frequent intrusions by China's aircraft and ships, China also conducted cognitive warfare, using false information to create disturbance in

minds of people," Tsai said.

Tsai also referenced China's use of drones "to increase pressure on Taiwan's military."

Taiwan yesterday was

also launching military exercises on the Hengchun Peninsula in the far south of the island simulating ground warfare against an invading enemy, aided by Apache attack helicopters.

Tensions that have been running high ever since Tsai's initial 2016 election and spiked last month when U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taipei. China fired missiles into the Taiwan Strait and over the island into the Pacific and sent ships and planes across the midline of the strait that had long been a buffer against outright conflict.

Since Pelosi's trip to Taipei, there have been at least two other congressional visits and several by gover-

nors of U.S. states, all of which China has condemned. The U.S. also sent a pair of guided missile cruisers through the strait in defiance of China's claims that the waterway, one of the busiest in the world, belongs to it entirely.

Responding yesterday to the U.S. arms sale, China's Defense Ministry accused Washington of "making trouble," adding, "We demand that the U.S. side immediately withdraw the above-mentioned arms sales plan to Taiwan and immediately cease military ties between the U.S. and Taiwan."

"The Chinese People's Liberation Army continues to train and prepare for war, and will resolutely thwart any interference by an external force and separatist 'Taiwan independence' plots," the ministry said in a statement posted on its website. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

East Timorese leader flies to Australia for critical talks

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

EAST Timor's President Jose Ramos-Horta is scheduled to arrive in Australia yesterday for a state visit as negotiations over lucrative gas resources reach a critical stage for his impoverished nation.

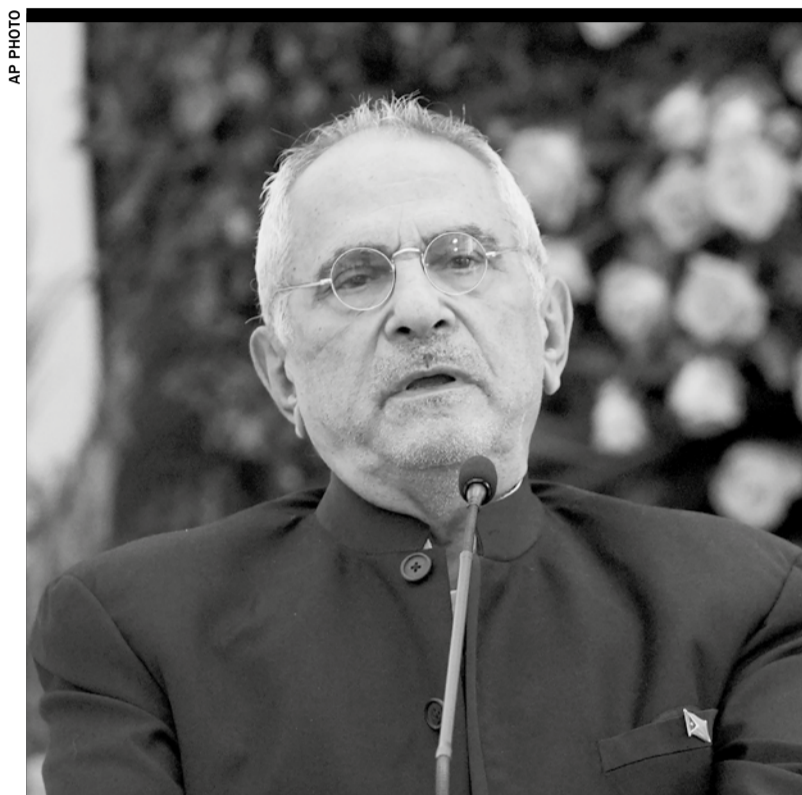
The East Timorese are gaining confidence that they can break a 20-year deadlock with the new Australian government over the development of Greater Sunrise, an estimated \$50 billion in gas that lies beneath the seabed that separates the two countries.

Australia wants the gas to be piped to an existing liquefied natural gas export hub at its northern city of Darwin. East Timor expects more economic benefit for the half-island nation of 1.5 million people if Greater Sunrise energy is piped to the East Timorese south coast.

Australia and East Timor currently share revenue from the Bayu-Undan gas field in the Timor Sea that has been piped to Darwin since 2006. But that field is expected to run dry this year.

Without further oil and gas revenue, East Timor's \$19 billion sovereign wealth fund could be spent within a decade, according to La'o Hamutuk, an East Timorese research institute.

Ramos-Horta, who shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 with East Timorese Bishop Carlos Belo for their efforts to end conflict in their homeland, has suggested



East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta

approaching new potential partners including China to finance an East Timor LNG plant.

Ramos-Horta has also suggested the Japanese, South Koreans and Indonesians as potential partners.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described Ramos-Horta's visit that ends Sunday as an opportunity to deepen the two countries' relationship, as well as to explore avenues for strengthened cooperation both bilaterally and in the region.

"Australia is committed to supporting Timor-Leste's economic

development," Albanese said in a statement, using East Timor's Portuguese name.

Michael Leach, an East Timor expert at Melbourne's Swinburn University, described East Timorese talk of international partners as an effort to leverage Australia to agree to an East Timorese gas hub.

"The big blocking point is whether it goes to Darwin or the south coast of Timor," Leach said yesterday.

"What's going to happen is anyone's guess," Leach added.

A joint venture partner in

Greater Sunrise, Australian company Woodside Energy, has raised technical concerns about piping the gas to East Timor. While the gas field is much closer to East Timor than to the Australian coast, the route to Darwin is through much shallower water.

The other partners are East Timorese state-owned company Timor Gap, which holds a 56% stake, and Japanese company Osaka Gas, which holds 34%.

Woodside said its current focus was on finalizing a production sharing contract for Greater Sunrise.

"Woodside remains committed to the development of Greater Sunrise provided there is fiscal and regulatory certainty necessary for a commercially viable development to proceed," the company said in a statement.

"We understand and respect Timor-Leste's desire to process Sunrise gas in Timor-Leste, however, any development plan will need to be assessed against the criteria established" in a maritime boundary treaty signed between Australia and East Timor in 2018.

Under the treaty, East Timor would receive 80% of the Greater Sunrise revenue if the gas is piped to Darwin and 70% if it is piped to an East Timorese plant.

The treaty also gives Australia power to veto any partner that East Timor might choose.

During a visit to the East Timorese capital Dili last week, Foreign Minister Penny Wong warned the

nation against going into "unsustainable debt" to the Chinese in building a new gas hub.

Saul Kavonic, an energy analyst for Swiss-based investment bank Credit Suisse, said the industry's view was that an East Timorese LNG plant was not commercially viable.

Kavonic said East Timor was "bluffing" by suggesting China could become involved because the Chinese lacked LNG expertise.

Trusting the Chinese to develop the technology would be a "very big bet," Kavonic said.

"Timor would essentially be betting its entire economy on a project being built by a company, for example from China, who has no experience in doing this and that would be an exceptionally risky proposition for them," Kavonic told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Greater Sunrise has been a source of friction between the neighbors since 2002 when East Timor became independent of Indonesia.

A treaty signed in 2006 was canceled when East Timor accused an Australian spy agency of bugging government offices in Dili in 2004 to give Australian negotiators an unfair advantage.

Australia's new government, elected in May, pleased East Timor in July by dropping the 4-year-old prosecution of lawyer Bernard Collaery who was accused of attempting to prove the spying.

Oil and gas revenue accounts for 90% of East Timorese government spending.

The U.N. estimates that nearly half of East Timor's population lives below the extreme poverty line of \$1.90 a day and half of children younger than 5 suffer physical and mental stunting as a result of malnutrition. **MDT/AP**

SOUTH PACIFIC

Australia says its navy can resume visits to Solomon Islands

AUSTRALIA said yesterday its navy ships have been given clearance to resume visits to the Solomon Islands, which had last week announced a temporary block on all military vessels during a review of its approval processes.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong confirmed to reporters that military ships from New Zealand and Fiji would also be allowed to visit the South Pacific nation.

But that means military ships from the U.S., Britain and other countries still won't be able to dock

at a time that many Pacific nations are alarmed about the Solomon Islands increasing security ties to China.

"Of course, we welcome the continued access of a member of the Pacific family — in this case, Australia — to Solomon Islands waters," Wong told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. "We are regular visitors."

Asked if she was disappointed the U.S. wasn't also given an exemption, Wong said the Solomon Islands had indicated it was making its decisions on a case-by-case basis.

"They are a sovereign nation and that's a matter for them," Wong told the broadcaster. "What I would say is that the U.S. has a long history of presence in the Pacific, going back to World War II."

The move comes ahead of a visit to Australia by Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare.

"We welcome the Prime Minister's visit," Wong told reporters, adding that she welcomed his assurance "that Australia remains the security partner of choice."

The Solomon Islands put the temporary block in place after the U.S.

Coast Guard cutter Oliver Henry and the British navy patrol boat HMS Spey recently canceled planned port calls due to bureaucratic delays. Both ships were part of an international effort to prevent illegal fishing.

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 instead at Papua New Guinea.

The HMS Spey withdrew its application to visit, Sogavare said.

"The delay in these

approvals demonstrate the need for the government to review and refine its approval requirements and procedures for visiting military vessels to Solomon Islands," Sogavare said in a statement.

The Solomon Islands did allow a visit last week by the U.S. hospital ship USNS Mercy to go ahead.

Meanwhile, Wong angered Sogavare yesterday by publicly revealing that the Australian government had offered to help pay for Solomon Islands elections due next year.

Sogavare's government introduced a bill to the

Solomons' Parliament yesterday to delay the election until 2024. The administration argues the country can't afford to hold a national poll and host the Pacific Games, a multi-sport event held every four years among athletes from Oceania, in 2023.

Sogavare accused Wong of trying to influence Solomons' lawmakers to vote against the bill tomorrow.

"This is an assault on our parliamentary democracy and is a direct interference by a foreign government into our domestic affairs," Sogavare said in a statement. **MDT/AP**

PUTIN'S WAR

Kim's N.Korea supplying Russia with weapons: US reports

AAMER MADHANI,
WASHINGTON

THE Russian Ministry of Defense is in the process of purchasing millions of rockets and artillery shells from North Korea for its ongoing fight in Ukraine, according to a newly downgraded U.S. intelligence finding.

A U.S. official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the intelligence determination, said yesterday [Macau time] that the fact Russia is turning to the isolated state of North Korea demonstrates that "the Russian military continues to suffer from severe supply shortages in Ukraine, due in part to export controls and sanctions."

U.S. intelligence officials believe that the Russians could look to purchase additional North Korean military equipment in the future. The intelligence finding was first reported by The New York Times.

The U.S. official did not detail how much weaponry Russia intends to purchase from North Korea.

The finding comes after the Biden administration recently confirmed that the Russian military in August took delivery of Iranian-manufactured drones for use on the battlefield in Ukraine.

The White House said last week that Russia has faced technical problems with Iranian-made drones acquired from Tehran in August for use in its war with Ukraine.

Russia picked up Mohajer-6 and Shahed-series unmanned aerial vehicles over several days last month as part what the Biden administration says is likely part of a Russian plan to acquire hundreds of Iranian UAVs for use in Ukraine.

North Korea has sought to tighten relations with Russia as much of Europe and the West has pulled away, blaming the United States for the Ukraine crisis and decrying the West's "hegemonic policy" as justifying military action by Russia in Ukraine to protect itself.

The North Koreans have hinted interest in sending construction workers to help rebuild Russian-occu-



piated territories in the country's east.

North Korea's ambassador to Moscow recently met with envoys from two Russia-backed separatist territories in the Donbas region of Ukraine and expressed optimism about cooperation in the "field of labor migration," citing his country's easing pandemic border controls.

In July, North Korea became the only nation aside from Russia and Syria to recognize the independence of the territories, Donetsk and Luhansk, further aligning with Russia over the conflict in Ukraine.

The North's arms export to Russia would be a violation of U.N. resolutions that ban the country from exporting to or importing weapons from other countries. Its possible dispatch of laborers to the Russian-held territories in Ukraine would also breach a U.N. resolution that required all member states to repatriate all North Korean workers from their soil by 2019.

There have been suspicions that China and Russia haven't fully enforced U.N. sanctions on North Korea, complicating a U.S.-led attempt to deprive North Korea of its nuclear weapons.

The provocative move by North Korea comes as the Biden administration has become increasingly concerned about stepped-up activi-

ty by North Korea in pursuit of nuclear weapons.

North Korea has test-fired more than 30 ballistic missiles this year, including its first flights of intercontinental ballistic missiles since 2017, as leader Kim Jong Un pushes to advance his nuclear arsenal despite U.S.-led pressure and sanctions.

The U.S. has frequently downgraded and unveiled intelligence findings over the course of the grinding war in Ukraine to highlight plans for Russian misinformation operations or to throw attention on Moscow's difficulties in prosecuting the war. Ukraine's smaller military has put up a stiff resistance against the militarily superior Russian forces.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Kim have recently exchanged letters in which they both called for "comprehensive" and "strategic and tactical" cooperation between the countries. Moscow, for its part, has issued statements condemning the revival of large-scale military exercises between the United States and South Korea this year, which North Korea views as an invasion rehearsal.

Russia, along with China, has called for the easing of U.N. sanctions imposed on North Korea over its nuclear and missile tests. Both countries are members of the U.N. Security Council,

which has approved a total of 11 rounds of sanctions on the North since 2006. In May, Russia and China vetoed a U.S.-led bid to impose new economic sanctions on North Korea over its high-profile missile tests this year.

Some experts say that Kim could likely bolster his resolve to retain his nuclear weapons because he may think the Russian attack happened because Ukraine had signed away its nuclear arsenal.

Relations between Moscow and Pyongyang go back to the 1948 foundation of North Korea, as Soviet officials installed young, ambitious nationalist Kim Il Sung, the late grandfather of Kim Jong Un, as the country's first ruler. Since then, Soviet aid shipment had been crucial in keeping North Korea's economy afloat for decades before the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

Moscow had since established formal diplomatic relations with Seoul as part of its hopes to draw South Korean investment and allowed its Soviet-era military alliance with North Korea to expire. But after his election in 2000, Putin actively sought to restore his country's ties with North Korea in what was seen as an effort to regain its traditional domains of influence and secure more allies to better deal with the United States. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1992 TROOPS KILL 24 AT ANC RALLY



At least 24 people have been killed and 150 injured when soldiers fired on an African National Congress demonstration on the border of Ciskei in South Africa.

The march was organised to demand an end to the Ciskeian military government of Brigadier Joshua Gqozo and the re-absorption of the so-called black homeland into South Africa.

The protest - led by ANC secretary-general Cyril Ramaphosa and attended by 50,000 people - began at a stadium in King William's Town, and then headed towards the Ciskeian capital of Bisho.

Brigadier Gqozo had warned he would meet force with even greater force, and his troops and police were on standby at the border.

When the demonstrators tried to cross into Ciskei, soldiers opened fire and continued firing indiscriminately into the crowd for about five minutes.

After two volleys of machine gun fire, the troops also fired rifle grenades into the gathering, spreading fear and panic among the protestors.

It has been reported that four young men were shot in the back as they attempted to run away from the firing.

A statement from Brigadier Gqozo said that his soldiers had been fired upon first and their action was in self-defence.

But a statement from the ANC denied the claims, saying the first shots were fired by the troops.

"At no time were the lives of the Ciskeian troops in danger... No warning was issued, and no attempts were made to disperse the crowd using non-lethal means," it said.

The South African foreign minister, Pik Botha, said that the ANC knew the march would end in violence.

"They knew people would be shot - they wanted people to be shot," he said in a TV interview.

The massacre seems certain to damage the negotiating process in the development of a new multi-racial and democratic constitution for South Africa.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Ciskei was one of 10 "tribal homelands" to which all blacks were to be assigned so they could not claim to be citizens of South Africa. They were a product of apartheid and only Pretoria recognised them as independent states. Their removal was one of the ANC's key demands before a new democratic constitution could be created in South Africa. Negotiations between President de Klerk and the ANC did continue after the massacre, and in April 1994 Nelson Mandela, the head of the ANC, became the first black President of South Africa.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You must deal with an emotional problem with your loved one that you have been avoiding for some time now. Your high energy and discipline will enable you to complete any seemingly insurmountable tasks.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
This may not be the day to get involved in risky joint financial ventures. Rewards for past good deeds will highlight your day. Look into some form of physical recreation.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
You should be getting into self-improvement projects. Do not lend money to friends, or contribute more than necessary to groups unworthy of your cash. You can make money if you get involved in real estate deals.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You can make profitable investments if you purchase an art object for your home. You could be emotional if you didn't take care of problems with loved ones.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Older family members may take advantage of you by making you feel guilty. You can make extra cash by moonlighting. Be sure you get accurate information.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Try out for a local sports team such as volleyball, tennis, lawn bowling, or whatever interests you. Opportunities for romance will flourish through travel. Older members of your family may try to take advantage of you.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Focus your efforts on details, and keep to yourself in order to finish your work. You need to get out and have some fun to reduce tension. You're on to something tangible and need to act fast.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Social events will lead to a strong and stable relationship. Spend some time with people who can shed some light on your personal situation. A new you could help your attitude.

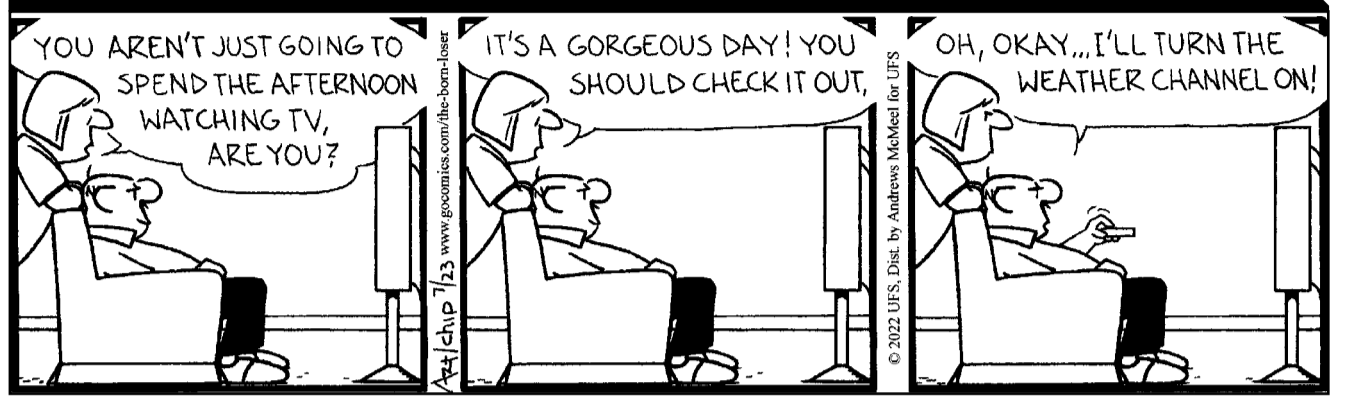
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Your ideas can be put into action. Although it does look promising, be careful not to overextend yourself or you will lose in the long run. You will have to control the way you feel.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Passion will be your only answer. Cultural activities will prove to be quite enlightening for everyone. Be sure to take time for old friends or relatives you don't get to see that often.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Difficulties with children will surface if you try to break a promise you made. Children will want to help, too. Your leadership ability will enhance your reputation.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You can accomplish a lot if you're willing to put in a little extra time. You have worked hard and the payoff is now. Listening can be more valuable than being a chatterbox.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

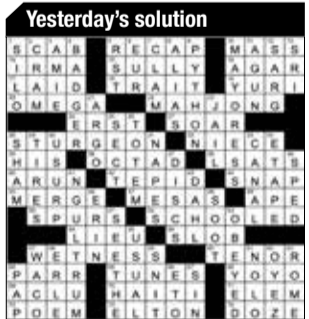
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	14	29	fine
Changchun	10	22	cloudy
Chengdu	19	31	cloudy
Chongqing	22	35	fine
Fuzhou	27	34	cloudy
Guangzhou	24	35	cloudy
Guiyang	16	29	fine
Haikou	24	33	cloudy
Hangzhou	20	31	fine
Harbin	13	20	cloudy
Hefei	21	33	fine
Nanjing	20	32	fine
Shanghai	20	31	fine
Taipei	25	29	rain
Wuhan	21	33	fine
Hong Kong	26	29	thunderstorm
WORLD			
Moscow	6	12	showers
Frankfurt	16	28	rain
Paris	15	24	rain
London	15	21	showers
New York	18	22	showers

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Little helper?; 5- Dress often worn by Hindu women; 9- Bee follower; 12- Scorch; 13- Close friend; 15- Thunder sound; 16- Actress Raines; 17- Florida citrus center; 18- Wine choice; 19- Loud uproar; 21- Swiss dish; 23- Dark purple; 25- ___ on first?; 26- Apply lightly; 29- Jeff MacNelly comic strip; 31- Thick woven straw mat; 35- May ___ excused?; 36- Quizzes, trials; 38- Decoration; 39- Leak slowly; 41- Rudner and Moreno; 43- Painter of limp watches; 44- Boat often made of birchbark, canvas, or fiberglass; 46- Beastly; 48- Sch. group; 49- Separates metal from ore; 51- Queens stadium; 52- Tiny bit; 53- Sewing case; 55- Bern's river; 57- Capital of West Bengal; 61- More nasty; 65- Draft classification; 66- Scope; 68- Unit of potential difference; 69- Heating fuel; 70- Transform; 71- HOMES part; 72- Hole-punching tool; 73- Lubricates; 74- Cheek;

DOWN 1- Wait ___; 2- Hawk; 3- Room in a casa; 4- Chaplin persona; 5- Very hot day; 6- Rainbow shape; 7- Laugh loudly; 8- Marriage acquisition; 9- Thicken; 10- 3:00; 11- Fencing sword; 14- Cruising vessel; 15- Pileated; 20- Unseal; 22- Rich soil; 24- Reddish dye; 26- Flat circular plates; 27- At right angles to a ship's length; 28- Designer Geoffrey; 30- Kett and James; 32- Make fit; 33- Mediterranean island; 34- Greek epic poem; 37- Figure skater Cohen; 40- European weasel; 42- Soft-shell clams; 45- Famous last words; 47- Dextrous, lively; 50- Kama ___; 54- Author Calvino; 56- Roof overhangs; 57- Nightclub of song; 58- Once more; 59- Sharon of "Boston Public"; 60- Opposed; 62- "A Doll's House" heroine; 63- Some Ivy Leaguers; 64- Hwys.; 67- Toothpaste type;



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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- CHUN LEONG | 1 BEDS HKD 8,200
- BUCKINGHAM | 2 BEDS HKD 13,900
- HELLENE G. | 3 BEDS HKD 12,500
- NAM LONG | 1 BED HKD 8,500
- COLOANE V. | 1 BED HKD 9,300
- COLOANE V. | 2 BEDS HKD 10,500
- COLOANE V. | 2 BEDS HKD 10,000

FOR SALE

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- NOVA TAIPA | 4 BEDS HKD 12,880,000
- BAI YUEN GRD. | 3 BEDS HKD 12,800,000
- MANHATTAN | 3 BEDS HKD 12,980,000
- HELLENE G. | 4 BEDS HKD 9,588,000
- NAM LONG | 1 BED HKD 3,780,000
- HELLENE G. | 2 BEDS HKD 9,900,000
- TAIPA STUDIO | 1 BED HKD 3,980,000
- NOVA PARK | 2 BEDS HKD 10,800,000

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AVIATION

US AIRLINES COUNT ON BUSINESS TRAVELERS TO KEEP RECOVERY GOING

DAVID KOENIG, DALLAS

WITH summer vacations winding down, airlines are counting on the return of more business travelers to keep their pandemic recovery going into the fall.

Air travel in the United States, bolstered by huge numbers of tourists, has nearly recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

Inflation — and especially this year's sharp rise in airfares — raises concern about how long vacationers can afford to keep flying at their current pace. Airlines say they see no signs of a slowdown in leisure travel.

Business travel, however, remains about 25% to 30% below 2019 levels, according to airlines and outfits that track sales.

And it is not clear when — or if — road warriors will return to their old travel habits.

"The whole challenge for the industry is around the return of the corporate traveler, and whether he is going to come back in enough volume and frequency that is going to help these airlines," says John Grant, an analyst with travel-data provider OAG.

The Global Business Travel Association recently predicted that corporate travel won't fully return until mid-2026, 18 months later than the trade group had previously forecast.

Business travelers generally pay higher fares, so their absence has an outsized impact on airline revenue and profit.

Business travel is slower to return because it is more complicated than somebody deciding they want to take a vacation after

AP PHOTO



staying home during the first two years of the pandemic, says Chuck Thackston, who leads data research at the Airlines Reporting Corp., a ticket-settlement firm that operates as a middleman between airlines and travel agents.

"On the corporate side, it just takes a little more to restart that because there are so many moving parts," Thackston said. "If you want to go visit clients in New York, it could be that nobody is in the office in New York. That is slowly building back."

Conventions and other big meetings are another key driver of business travel, and also seem to be coming back, Thackston said.

Airline officials say that travel by small-business operators has recovered nearly fully, but that many corporate travelers have not returned to the road or skies.

The chief commercial officer of

Southwest Airlines, Andrew Watterson, said that since business travel began picking up this spring, "it was skewed toward smaller businesses and government and education were traveling. Our largest corporates are the ones that are lagging, particularly banking, consulting and technology."

Watterson said that among Southwest's biggest corporate accounts, they all have employees traveling — but not as many of them, and not as often.

The nature of business travel is changing as companies become accustomed to smaller travel budgets. Some trips are being replaced by video calls, perhaps permanently. Speculative sales trips could be especially easy for companies to cut.

Conventions now routinely offer a "hybrid" format with an option to stay behind and watch

online — although that means missing the hallway conversations and other opportunities to network.

Standard & Poor's said this week that many convention center operators are running summer and fall schedules similar to those in 2019, but a recession or new COVID-19 variant are still risks.

Vasu Raja, the chief commercial officer at American Airlines, said demand has dropped for one-day business trips in which someone leaves in the morning and flies home that evening.

"But interestingly, we've seen more demand for blended trips where somebody leaves on a Thursday from Dallas to go to New York, they don't return on the Friday — they stay through the weekend and they come back on Sunday," he said. Sometimes a spouse goes with them, he added.

Business travel is big business worldwide. The Global Business Travel Association estimates that it was worth more than \$1.4 trillion in 2019, then plummeted by more than half each of the next two years. The trade group estimates that after being hindered by the omicron variant early this year, business travel will hit \$933 billion in 2022 — still 35% below the pre-pandemic mark.

The widespread availability of vaccines and better treatment of COVID-19 — along with relaxation of mandatory quarantines and other travel restrictions — have boosted leisure and corporate travel. However, travel is now threatened by deteriorating economic conditions including surging inflation and labor shortages. New COVID-19 variants remain a concern among travel managers, particularly in Asia.

The cost of travel is expected to keep rising, putting pressure on corporate budgets. A recent report from travel-management company CWT predicted that fares paid by business travelers will rise nearly 50% this year and 8% next year, and hotel rates will rise 19% this year and 8% in 2023.

Most U.S. airlines reported profits for the April-through-June second quarter. For American and United, it was their first profitable quarter excluding government aid since the pandemic started, and they should be in the black for the third quarter, which ends with vacation-heavy July and August.

Business travel traditionally enjoys a peak in the spring and another in September and October. Airlines are about to find out whether that happens this year.

"There has been a lot of discussion about, yeah, business travel is coming back, and U.S. airline CEOs being quite bullish about it," said Grant, the OAG analyst. "But the hard evidence now needs to come forward." MDT/AP

CORPORATE BITS

Melco's in-house program wins global accolade



Melco Resorts & Entertainment's in-house training program "Morpheus Moments – Whatever It Takes, Whenever, However" has won the top ATD 2022 Excellence in Practice Award by the Association for Talent Development in the Customer Service Training category, the company announced yesterday in a press release.

The program "has been custom-designed in-house to align with the excellence and service promise of the Morpheus brand."

Akiko Takahashi, Executive Vice President, said, "We are proud to receive this prestigious award from ATD. The achievement is a testament to

the culture of excellence created by our Chairman and CEO, Mr. Lawrence Ho. It is an honor to be recognized for our internally-developed, tailor-made and branded service program 'Morpheus Moments – Whatever It Takes, Whenever, However'. It takes the effort of the entire team to achieve such results."

In the note, Takahashi thanked, in particular, Joyce Wong and David Sisk, Chief Operating Officer of Macau Resorts, "for his leadership."

Organized by the world's largest talent development association, the ATD Excellence in Practice Awards recognize exceptional practices in workplace learning and development.

Swiss retailer rolls out 'coffee balls' to replace capsules



Swiss retailer Migros said yesterday that it is launching a coffee-making system designed to replace capsules

that produce thousands of tons of waste worldwide each year.

The cooperative said its spherical capsules

— described as "coffee balls" — are fully compostable, unlike the plastic and aluminum containers popularized by its rival Nestle under the brand Nespresso 36 years ago.

Migros said its coffee balls are encased in a thin, flavorless, seaweed-based cover that can be discarded with the spent coffee after use.

The company said the CoffeeB system, which also features a special coffeemaker, will be rolled out first in Switzerland and France this year, followed by Germany in 2023.

FOOTBALL

Champions League is a group-stage sprint; marathon to final

GRAHAM DUNBAR, GENEVA

IN this unusual season for European soccer, the World Cup in Qatar has split the Champions League into a sprint and a marathon.

The group stage kicked off early today [Macau time] and squeezes six rounds of games into eight full weeks, with the last group matches on Nov. 2.

The congestion is caused by the shutdown of top-tier European soccer during a World Cup being played from Nov. 20-Dec. 18 in Qatar's cooler months.

In a normal season, teams never play Champions League games in consecutive weeks and the group stage would run into mid-December.

This time, Champions League games come thick and fast in three separate sets of back-to-back midweeks to get the groups done before many players are called to national-team duty.

For teams off to a poor start in

AP PHOTO



domestic leagues, the Champions League offers no respite with two games by Sept. 14 to set the tone in each of the eight groups.

"You can only enjoy the Champions League when things are going well in the (domestic) league," said Leipzig coach Domenico Tedesco on Saturday after his team lost 4-0 at Eintracht Frankfurt in the Bundesliga. Leipzig hosts Shakhtar Donetsk on Tues-

day in Group F and goes to defending champion Real Madrid next week.

Leipzig, Bayer Leverkusen -- which has lost four of its five Bundesliga games -- and Sevilla, winless and 16th in the Spanish league, all start Champions League play from the bottom half of their domestic standings. Sevilla has it toughest, hosting Manchester City in Group G on Tuesday.

Leverkusen goes to Club Brugge in Group B on Wednesday.

The schedule offers little time to put things right but plenty of time to reflect later during a mid-season pause for the competition that will last more than three months. On Feb. 14, the Champions League resumes with a knockout phase lasting almost four months.

The final on June 10 is the latest ever scheduled -- excluding the COVID-19 pandemic-delayed 2020 season -- since the inaugural European Cup title was decided on June 13, 1956.

It all adds up to a 59-day group stage then a 220-day wait for the trophy to be awarded in Istanbul.

How a team can sustain form between the two phases is among the special challenges of this unprecedented schedule.

Man City currently looks a juggernaut, fueled by new signing Erling Haaland's 10 goals in his first six Premier League games, and is favored by many for a first Champions League title.

Still, an unknown is the impact on the Norway forward of an enforced six-week break from competitive games while most of Haaland's club teammates play at a physically and emotionally taxing World Cup.

Even in a normal season, when the Champions League round-of-16 pairings would be made in mid-December, club executives at the draw at UEFA headquarters would refuse to crow about being paired with an opponent then under-achieving domestically. The accepted wisdom is that the version of the opponent you see in December might not be the one you get when the two-leg series is played in February and March.

That is even more true this time when the last-16 draw will be made Nov. 7 at UEFA's lakeside headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland.

The World Cup is a huge mid-season commitment for many key players, and the January transfer window when teams can reload their rosters is set to be more volatile. The first trading period after a World Cup often is fueled by demand for less-heralded players who stood out on the global stage.

Whichever stories the Champions League tells in this group stage from today, seeing the bigger picture feels a long way off. **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.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has arrived at Queen Elizabeth II's estate in Scotland to formally offer his resignation to pave the way for Liz Truss to succeed him amid an acute cost-of-living crisis facing the country.

Johnson will finally leave office following a carefully choreographed audience with the monarch at Balmoral that is taking place two months after he announced his intention to step down.

Truss, who was named leader of the ruling Conservative party on Monday, will be appointed prime minister during her own

meeting with the queen a short time later.

Speaking outside his Downing Street office yesterday before heading to Scotland, Johnson said his three-year tenure had left Britain with the economic strength to help people weather the energy crisis. He signed off with his typically colorful language.

"I am like one of those booster rockets that has fulfilled its function," Johnson said.

"I will now be gently re-entering the atmosphere and splashing down invisibly in some remote and obscure corner of the Pacific."

THREE RESCUED DOLPHINS SWIM FREE FROM INDONESIA SANCTUARY

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

THREE bottlenose dolphins were released into the open sea in Indonesia last week after years of being confined for the amusement of tourists who would touch and swim with them.

As red and white Indonesian flags fluttered, underwater gates opened off the island of Bali to allow Johnny, Rocky and Rambo to swim free.

The trio were rescued three years ago from their tiny pool in a resort hotel to which they had been sold after spending years performing in a traveling circus.

They regained their health and strength at the Bali sanctuary, a floating pen in a bay that provided a gentler, more natural environment.

Lincoln O'Barry, who worked with the Indonesian government to set up the Umah Lumba Rehabilitation, Release and Retirement Center, said dolphins are wild animals that should live free.

"It was an incredibly emotional experience to see them go," O'Barry said.

The center was initiated in 2019 by the Bali Forestry Department and the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry. "Umah lumba" means "dolphin" in Indonesian.

For some time after the gates opened, the dolphins looked at the opening, uncertain of their next move. But after about an hour, they were on their way, sometimes jumping over choppy waves.

The Associated Press watched their release through an online livestream. O'Barry is documenting the release with drones and underwater footage for a film.

The Indonesian government supported the dolphins' rescue, working with Dolphin Project, founded by Lincoln's father Ric O'Barry, who was also



Rocky with GPS tag attached swims at the Umah Lumba Rehabilitation, Release and Retirement Center in Banyuwedang Bay, West Bali

at the release.

Ric O'Barry had been the dolphin trainer for the 1960s TV show "Flipper," but later came to see the toll exacted on the animals. He has since devoted his life to returning dolphins to the wild.

Center workers clapped as the dolphins swam out. Wahyu Lestari, rehabilitation coordinator at the center, said she was a bit sad to see them go.

"I'm happy they are free, and they are going back to their family," she said. "They should be in the wild because they are born in the wild."

The freed dolphins will be monitored out at sea with GPS tracking for a year. They can return for visits to the sanctuary, although it's unclear what they will do. They may join another pod, stay together, or go their separate ways.

Dolphins in captivity are carted from town to town, kept in chlorinated water, held in isolation or forced to interact with tourists, often leading to injuries.

Johnny, the oldest dolphin, had teeth that were worn down to below the gum line when he was rescued in 2019. Earlier this year, dentists provided him with dolphin-

style dental crowns so that he can now clamp down on live fish.

Johnny was the first of the three dolphins to swim out to sea.

Ric and Lincoln O'Barry have spent half a century working on saving dolphins from captivity in locations from Brazil to South Korea and the U.S. Saturday's release was their first in Indonesia.

The Indonesian government's decision to rescue the dolphins followed a decade-long public education campaign that included billboards, artwork, school programs and a drive asking people not to buy tickets to dolphin shows.

A government minister was at hand to raise the gate at the sanctuary Saturday.

Lincoln O'Barry said the Indonesian sanctuary will continue to be used for other captive dolphins. Similar sanctuaries are in the works in North America and Europe, as more dolphin shows close. With virtual reality and other technology, appreciation of nature doesn't have to involve a zoo or a dolphin show, he said.

Yet dolphin shows are still popular in China, the Middle East and Japan. MDT/AP

European Union's next steps for addressing the continent's worsening energy crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine are expected to be unveiled next week, the European commissioner for energy said Tuesday. Many European countries have tightened their belts as energy costs soar. Russia's state-run energy company has continued its shutdown of a pipeline carrying natural gas to Europe, in what German officials see as a political power play.



Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday attended sweeping war games in his country's far east involving troops from China and other nations, in a show of military muscle amid the tensions with the West over Moscow's action in Ukraine. The weeklong exercise is intended to showcase growing defense ties between Russia and China.

Spain The government yesterday passed a law giving hundreds of thousands of domestic cleaners and carers the right to unemployment benefits and other job protection measures for the first time. Labor Minister Yolanda Diaz said the law would benefit more than 370,000 people, 95% of whom are women. She said the bill was intended to end discrimination against workers whose jobs have been undervalued for too long.



Venezuela The armed forces of Venezuela announced yesterday (Macau time) what they characterized as the largest marijuana bust of the last 10 years in the South American country. Members of the armed forces on Saturday intercepted a vessel carrying more than 3.1 2.8 metric tons of marijuana, almost 8 kg of cocaine and extra outboard boat motors off Venezuela's Caribbean coast, said Gen. Domingo Hernandez, general commander of the Operational Strategic Command of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces. He added that the vessel had departed Colombia and was en route to the island of Martinique.