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SECRETARY WONG SAYS GOV'T GUIDELINES NOT NEEDED FOR THE PRESS ON NATIONAL SECURITY, CALLING ON MEDIA TO USE 'COMMON SENSE' WHEN REPORTING ON RELATED ISSUES

P2

LIU XIANFA: MACAU WILL HAVE A STRONGER ROLE IN CHINA-LUSOPHONE RELATIONS

P5

XI TO VISIT CENTRAL ASIA IN FIRST TRIP ABROAD SINCE PANDEMIC

P6



AP PHOTO



Pakistan is grappling with food shortages after deadly floods left the impoverished country's agriculture belt underwater, the prime minister told the Turkish president by phone, as authorities scaled up efforts yesterday to deliver food, tents and other items. Shahbaz Sharif spoke to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan overnight to thank Turkey for dispatching food, tents and medicine by 12 military aircraft, four trains and Turkish Red Crescent trucks. The International Rescue Committee estimated that the floods have damaged more than 3.6 million acres of crops in Pakistan.

AP PHOTO



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is extending a state of calamity declared by his predecessor more than two years ago to deal with continuing concerns over the coronavirus pandemic, an official said yesterday. Press Secretary Trixie Cruz-Angeles also said a previously announced plan to lift the compulsory wearing of masks outdoors will take effect immediately throughout the country, except in crowded areas where people cannot observe social distancing.

AP PHOTO



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (pictured) said yesterday that her government will not pursue any moves to change the country into a republic following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Ardern said she thought New Zealand will eventually become a republic, and it would probably happen within her lifetime, but that there were more pressing issues for her government.

More on backpage

LOW-AUTUMN ARRIVALS

The three-day Mid-Autumn Festival has brought 46,000 visitors to the city, a low figure for a traditional holiday P3



XINHUA

EMPLOYMENT
GAMING
EMPLOYEE
NUMBERS
CONTINUE
DECLINE

P2

ALTA BELLA



ALTA BELLA
BUILDING
A BRAND
WHILE
BUILDING A
COMMUNITY

P4

THE number of workers in the gaming sector has continued to decline, with figures plunging to 53,592 full-time employees in the second quarter of the year.

The latest figures provided by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) show that the number of employees is down 2,176 year-on-year.

Of all gaming employees, dealers totaled 24,093, a drop of 550 year-on-year.

In June 2022, average earnings (excluding bonuses) of full-time employees in the gaming sector were MOP23,270, down by 1.8% year-on-year. Average dealers' earnings dropped by 2.9% to MOP19,370.

At the end of the second quarter, there were just 19 job vacancies in the gaming sector, a decrease of 37 year-on-year.

The city's unemployment rate has been at a record high from May to July, standing at 5.4% with workers' associations urging the government to launch further job-matching schemes and safeguard the livelihood and employment of the population.

In the second quarter, the employee

EMPLOYMENT

GAMING EMPLOYEE NUMBERS CONTINUE DECLINE

recruitment rate (0.3%) and the employee turnover rate (1.5%) for the gaming sector decreased by 0.5 and 0.3 percentage points, respectively, while the job vacancy rate fell to near-zero. This implies that demand for manpower in the gaming sector remained relatively low due to the ongoing impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

The city's economy contracted 39.3% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2022 amid the coronavirus outbreak in neighboring regions, affecting the city's border restrictions, and the city's own mid-June outbreak, the largest to date.

Second quarter results are down 66.3% when compared to the same period of 2020, as a result of the continuous decline in exports of services, exports of gaming services and other tourism services. LV

MDT ARCHIVE



GUIA LIGHTHOUSE PROTECTION LOBBY ASKS GOV'T TO HONOR PROMISES BY PAST ADMINISTRATIONS

ANTHONY LAM

THE government should fulfill its promise of better protection of the views of the Guia Lighthouse made by its predecessors, a representative of the Concern Group for the Protection of the Guia Lighthouse has requested in a recent open letter.

Supported by old news clippings, the group pointed out that, as early as 2008, the then Chief Executive issued Dispatch No. 83/2008 to restrict the height of construction within a certain radius of the lighthouse.

In light of that, a building on Calçada do Gaio, at that time unfinished, should now be lowered to 52.5 meters, according to the dispatch. The group also pointed out that the direction was confirmed in a promise by the then director of the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT).

Recently, the government announced that the green



light has been given to the resumption of construction on the building to its planned height, on the condition that the design be altered. The adjustments have been accepted by UNESCO, the government added.

While asking the current administration to better protect the Guia Lighthouse by lowering the height of the building, "[we] deeply regret that the previous two Chief Executives did not keep the

promise and did not resolve the above mess during their terms of office," the group added.

Apart from that, the group also called for the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) to investigate the matter so as to "help to strengthen the transparency and integrity of public administration, strengthen the supervision mechanism and ensure the legitimacy of the exercise of public power."

NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

WONG SIO CHAK: GOV'T GUIDELINES NOT NECESSARY FOR THE PRESS ON NATIONAL SECURITY

ANTHONY LAM

SECRETARY for Security Wong Sio Chak has put off a request for guidelines for the media on external collaboration within the press, calling on the press to use an "average intelligence level" to understand laws.

At a recent consultation session related to the review of the National Security Law, a question was raised by an executive committee member of a local press association. The member asked the official whether the go-

vernment would issue guidelines to the press to help them understand the definition of "communications with external groups," which is proposed to be criminalized in the future version of the law.

"The English and Portuguese press will definitely have communications with external groups by nature," he explained.

In response, the official said that "generally speaking, no guideline will be issued." Wong then promised that the law review would make clear provi-

sions with regard to the different types of crimes.

Meanwhile, during the law enforcement process, the authorities will stick to 'nulla poena sine lege,' the principle stating that a person cannot be punished for doing something that is not prohibited by law.

"Laws are made to the level that can be understood by most. I expect you [reporters] to have an average intelligence level to understand legal provisions and abide by them," Wong said in his conclusion.



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Mid-Autumn Festival suffers from low arrivals

STAFF REPORTER

THE three-day Mid-Autumn Festival has brought 46,727 visitors to the city, a figure that is considered low for one of the most important holidays in the second half of the year.

The downturn may have been due to many Chinese localities requesting that residents stay put or reduce travel during the holidays in a bid to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Currently, 33 cities in China are under partial or full static management because of Covid-19 outbreaks, including seven provincial capitals and one municipality, affecting 65 million residents in total, Caixin reported.

The first two days of the three-day Mid-Autumn Festival holidays attracted around 32,085 visitors to Macau, with 16,540 of these arriving on the first day, according to data published by the Public Security Police Force.

Daily data as of 9 p.m. yesterday showed 14,642 visitor arrivals to the city.

According to the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), before the holidays, from September 3 to 9, a total of 114,113 tourists arrived in Macau, a daily average



of 16,302, representing a 54.5% increase compared to the daily average of 10,690 visitors in August.

"Although visitor numbers have increased, the figures are almost the same as the numbers of the weekends after Zhuhai and Macau resumed quarantine-free customs clearance in early August," said Andy Wu, president of the Travel Industry Council of Macau.

Wu considers the low arrivals to be related to the shorter validity period of nucleic acid tests (NAT) between Macau and the mainland, and the mainland government's request that residents reduce travel

during the three days of the Mid-Autumn Festival, weakening tourists' confidence in visiting Macau.

"According to past experience, normally, the visitor numbers would pick up quickly after the government eases the valid period of customs clearance," Wu explained.

The sector leader then expressed his expectation that the government would communicate with the mainland government to relax the pandemic prevention policies related to customs clearance at the right time, as soon as possible.

Currently, the policy – which has been in place for a month – states

that people travelling from Macau to Zhuhai must return a negative NAT result taken within 24 hours.

Macau's hotel sector insiders have lamented over the impact on the Mid-Autumn Festival, finding it hard to tell whether the occupancy rate target of 70-80% suggested last week could be achieved amid the Covid relapses in mainland China.

In light of these difficulties, as well as visa issues, current reports have hotel bookings for the festive period at about 40-50% capacity.

Meanwhile in China, enthusiasm for Mid-Autumn travel has remained high despite the pandemic.

Data from an online ticketing service platform shows that, as of August 30, Mid-Autumn Festival holiday orders had increased 137% compared to the same period of the Dragon Boat Festival in June, and orders for airline tickets and train tickets increased nearly two times and five times, respectively, according to a report issued by the Global Times.

TOURISM PLANS FOR GOLDEN WEEK

The MGTO is in discussion with the travel sector about promoting family activities during autumn and winter. The bureau also hopes to hold some exhibitions during the China National Day holiday.

MGTO deputy director Cheng Wai Tong expressed hope that visitor arrivals could return to a daily number between 20,000 and 40,000 during the October Golden Week.

GOV'T LAUNCHES SELF-SERVICE RENEWAL FOR BLUE CARDS

Authorities are launching a self-service renewal process for non-resident workers' identification cards, following the introduction of the new blue card last year. Eligible non-residents holding the new blue card that came out in 2021 may complete renewal formalities via self-service kiosks without being required to visit service counters in person. With effect from September 15, where employers have submitted renewal applications for their employees and been granted approval, their non-resident workers who hold the new blue card will not be required to replace it, and may use the Public Security Police self-service kiosks available in various locations.

BANK LOAN APPROVALS DROP IN JULY

New residential mortgage loans approved by Macau banks dropped by 45% month-on-month to MOP768.2 million in July 2022, according to data from the Monetary Authority of Macao. New residential loans collateralised by uncompleted units (i.e. equitable mortgages) fell by 56.6% month-on-month to MOP13 million. New commercial real estate loans, meanwhile, dropped 89.3% from a relatively high base last month to MOP1.39 billion. Within this figure, new commercial loans to residents, comprising 96% of the total, fell by 89.5% to MOP1.33 billion.

LEVO CHAN TRIAL COMMENCES DEC. 5

Ex-junket boss Levo Chan is scheduled to stand trial on December 5, along with eight other defendants, according to a report issued by TDM Radio. The trial is set to commence three months after the trial of another junket mogul, Alvin Chau. Levo Chan, former CEO of Macau Legend and chairman of junket operator Tak Chun Group, will be indicted on charges of founding and heading a "secret association or society," illicit exploitation of gambling, and money laundering. The charges are similar to those against junket mogul Alvin Chau. Chan is the only one of the nine defendants to have been detained in prison.

SANDS SHOPPING CARNIVAL

Retailers hopeful for revenue boost from shopping event despite cautious spenders

LYNZY VALLES

SANDS China's 2022 Sands Shopping Carnival concluded yesterday, providing a free business platform for local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in turmoil due to the lingering impacts of the pandemic.

The carnival launched Saturday with the aim of providing a "shopping and leisure hotspot for families under one roof," coinciding with the Mid-Autumn Festival this year.

Held for the third consecutive year after it was postponed in July due to the largest coronavirus outbreak Macau has faced, the 2022 carnival comprised over 530 booths and featured a total of eight

exhibition zones.

The event featured Sands retailers, household products, family fun products, gourmet foods, healthy lifestyle products, sports accessories, cultural and creative items and kids' fun.

Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., said: "As Macau navigates the unpredictable ups and downs of the pandemic, it is our responsibility to continue supporting the SAR government's economic revival initiative and the retail sector as we make efforts toward economic recovery."

"We also strive to support the development of local SMEs by providing them a free business platform in this largest sale

event in Macau, with an objective to transform it into a significant event in the city," he added.

Some local firms to whom the Times spoke were enthusiastic about the event, though some retailers expressed worries that financial impacts from the

recent outbreak would cause shoppers to spend less.

"We're positive about the results of this carnival. But we're also worried residents will be more cautious in their spending due to the fact that the [outbreak] has just passed," said a retailer.

"I hope there will be

more events like this, because we SMEs have been affected greatly by the pandemic. Therefore, giving us a free platform to showcase our products is helpful for us even when we are aware that shoppers are more cautious with their spending," said another.

HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATE 'BETTER THAN USUAL'

THE hotel occupancy rate is higher than usual, but still not as strong as before, according to Sands China president Wilfred Wong, who spoke to the press on the sidelines of the Sands Shopping Carnival. He expects that the rate will not increase significantly amid the recent Mid-Autumn Festival. As the city recovers from its largest outbreak to date, from mid-June to July, the weekend occupancy rate stands at 70% to 80%, with hopes that the upcoming Golden Week in

October will reach similar levels. Data shows that, in the first seven months of 2022, the average occupancy rate of guest rooms in hotel establishments decreased to 37.7%, with the number of guests declining by 27.9% year-on-year to some 2.94 million. Wong also mentioned that Sands' bid proposal for the upcoming gaming license tender is set to be completed, noting it will be ready to submit by the September 14 deadline.

ALTA BELLA



Bella Horner



Alta Bella Collection

ALTA BELLA

BUILDING A BRAND WHILE BUILDING A COMMUNITY

RENATO MARQUES

CATALYZED by the pandemic, Bella Horner finally decided to act on her long-held wish of creating a fashion-related business, and so her swimwear brand Alta Bella was created. One year later, the Times spoke with Horner in an exclusive interview to understand the brand's developments over yet another year in which Macau remained physically very closed but in which opportunities to try new things and take some risks also surfaced.

In the middle of the pandemic, the need to fit perfectly into a bathing suit led Horner to make one herself, which gave her the idea of doing the same for others. The time was short from the idea to action.

Established in 2021, swimwear brand Alta Bella quickly started to advance, fueled by a keen community which grew around it, the founder and creator told the Times. The secret, Horner says, is in the approach that her label has to women and their individual needs and looks.

At a time when "diversity" seemed to be a meaningless word in the mouths of politicians and businessmen, Alta Bella gave it meaning by producing customized swimwear for a diverse range of women, which reflected the diversity of Macau.

The brand focused on body positivity and empowering customers to choose what they want and feel comfortable wearing, as well as adjusting a general product perfectly to their body type. Alta Bella started to attract attention among friends and by word-of-mouth as well as through social media platforms, and word quickly spread to destinations far beyond the borders of Macau.

"Our customers are from everywhere, [in] Macau and beyond. Our client type is the everyday woman, real people," Horner said, noting that while social media is often fueled by "false testimonials" of people who use their influence purely to advertise products they do not use, Alta Bella does "precisely the opposite," making use of common women from all walks of life, regardless of their age, color, nationality or body type, as their models.

"All of my models are real people from different walks of life. From a bartender to a domestic helper, they all come together. From Chinese to Portuguese, Filipino, Indonesian and many other nationalities, they all want to be a part of this. That amazed me so much and impressed me so much because you know you are helping them in becoming their best selves,"

Horner said, explaining that a community has been forming around the brand.

People also love the fact that they can customize their swimwear to "hide more" or "show more" according to their preference.

Addressing Macau's conservative mindset, Horner feels that this has not been a big problem, as more open-minded people are taking the lead and, in doing so, transmit confidence to other women to try, if they want to, "and they do."

As Horner explained, all customizations came as part of each item's price tag, at no additional cost. In a bid for sustainability, Alta Bella uses high-quality recycled materials, as well as making use of as much as possible of the fabrics, for example, by adding hairbands and other pieces to swimwear, that are made with leftover fabric.

POWER TO DECIDE EXTENDS TO MODELS

In yet another twist on common practice, it is the models who decide what they feel comfortable wearing in the brand's photoshoots, events and shows, Horner explained, as she aims to have people in absolute control of their decisions and looks.

Usually, in events of this kind hosted by brands, each look is decided in advance and then

assigned to a model, who must wear it whether she likes it or not.

"Before I even let them wear their bathing suits, I always ask [models] for their preference: if they prefer a one-piece or two-piece and what kind of model. I want them to be comfortable. I don't want them to wear something someone else decides. It's all about what they want and about being themselves," Horner said, adding that "we are sick and tired of seeing women being forced into a lot of things because they are afraid to be different or to go against a certain norm. Most of the time women are not happy but they are afraid to say anything and this keeps adding up and coming back to them. We are taking the first step so these women can stand on their own feet; and who knows if this community that is building up can push for some other things that can make a difference here."

For Horner, it's a "community of empowered women who want to empower more women until all the women in the world come together and say: 'hey, we're all beautiful, we can be scarred for life, but we're all beautiful queens.'"

MEN AND KIDS' COLLECTIONS COMING SOON

Created for women, Alta Bella is now expanding and

new collections dedicated to men and children are in progress and soon to be presented, Horner told the Times.

The idea is that entire families and friends can be also part of the community and not be excluded by gender or age group.

The collections will follow similar concepts, offering freedom of choice and customization as their main points, as well as the same concern for sustainability.

FIRST PUBLIC RUNWAY EVENT AT MFF

After several private and semi-public events in hotels and nightclubs, Horner revealed to the Times that she is in preparation for the brand's first public runway event, to be part of the Macau Fashion Festival 2022 (MFF) in October this year, during the Macau International Trade and Investment Fair.

Although proud of being able to take such a young brand to the biggest local fashion stage, Horner said that, unfortunately, the runway show cannot be purely swimwear, so she has decided to use some of the resort collection pieces, namely pants, to provide some "coverage" as requested by the event organizers.

Horner said that the solution is not "ideal," but the benefits of brand exposure take priority, noting that this is part of the greater goal of "penetrating the market little by little."

The brand will be also represented at the fair with a booth where the whole swimwear collection will be displayed.

Liu Xianfa: Macau will have a stronger role in China-Lusophone relations

ANTHONY LAM

AS China further develops the Belt and Road initiative, Macau's function as the bridge and link between China and the Lusophone world is sure to become more important, said Liu Xianfa, Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region.

Liu made the remark during his opening speech at the Think-tank Forum between China and Lusophone Countries, held yesterday evening.

The Chinese official noted that Macau is a bridge and link between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. "Since its return to the motherland, Macau has given full play to the advantages of the 'one country, two systems' principle and the uniqueness of its language and cultural backgrounds," Liu said, noting that Macau meanwhile "actively promoted the construction of 'one center, one pla-



tform and one base."

"The economic and trade cooperation between China and the Lusophone world has been continuously deepened and fruitful results have been achieved," Liu added. "With further deepening and expansion [of policies and work], Macau will surely show greater achievements in the cooperation between China and the Lusophone world."

"Under the lead of the Global Development and Security Initiatives, the cooperation and development between China and

the Lusophone world will surely usher in broader prospects," the official said, adding that work should be done to proactively deepen cooperation in areas such as trade, infrastructure and cultural exchange.

He pointed out that emphasis should also be put on areas such as the exchange of experience in state governance and administration, new and sophisticated technologies, modern services and digitization, "[so as] to benefit the people of all countries with bigger and better outcomes."

MACAU'S ROLE IN BILINGUALISM

At the same forum, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong highlighted Macau's role in promoting bilingual exchange between Chinese and Portuguese language as well as traditional Chinese medicine to the Lusophone world.

For example, she said, since the inauguration of the Macau SAR, with major support from Beijing, the city has utilized its background as advantageous to becoming the bridge between China and the

Lusophone world, especially in establishing the China-Lusophone Economic and Trade Cooperation Service Platform.

Furthermore, she added, the government had been trying to persuade high-school graduates to study Portuguese or even pursue a degree in Portugal. Additionally, the city's administration has been strengthening its work on the development of Macau as a Chinese-Lusophone bilingual talent training base and a Chinese-Lusophone youth innovation and entrepreneurship exchange center.

Looking to the future, the secretary expects that, with further development of the Greater Bay Area, the concept will be beneficial to the richness of Macau as the link between China and the Lusophone world.

She also expressed the government's hope that China-Lusophone academic and think-tank exchanges can be further deepened, and that interactions between think tanks in both the Chinese and Lusophone worlds would lead to shared prosperity.

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AP FILE PHOTO



Xi and Putin (center) at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Qingdao, Shandong Province (2018)

DIPLOMACY

XI TO VISIT CENTRAL ASIA IN FIRST TRIP ABROAD SINCE PANDEMIC

CHINA'S leader Xi Jinping will travel to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan starting Wednesday in his first trip abroad since the early days of the pandemic two years ago.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a short statement yesterday that Xi will attend a meeting of the heads of state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Samarkand while on a state visit to Uzbekis-

tan. He will also be making a state visit to Kazakhstan, the statement said.

Xi's trip will take place from Wednesday to Friday, it said.

As Macau Daily Times reported last week, Xi is expected to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin at the summit of the SCO, an economic, political and security forum that China and Russia dominate. The two last met in Beijing in

January, just weeks before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The leader of China's Communist Party last traveled abroad in January 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, on a state visit to Myanmar before countries closed off their borders and imposed lockdowns.

Since then, Xi left mainland China to make a one-day visit to the semi-auto-

nomous city of Hong Kong on July 1 to speak at a ceremony commemorating the 25th anniversary of its handover from British rule.

The trip comes just weeks ahead of the 20th Communist Party congress, a major political meeting that occurs every five years where future leaders are unveiled. Xi is expected to receive a third five-year term as party leader. **MDT/AP**

SICHUAN

Death toll from earthquake rises to 93

THE death toll from a major earthquake in western China rose to 93 as the search for survivors continued, authorities said.

A magnitude 6.8 quake hit Sichuan province last week, with much of the damage concentrated in Ganze Tibetan Autonomous Region in the province.

Another 25 people remain missing as of Sunday evening, rescuers said, according to state broadcaster CCTV. The search for survivors and recovery of bodies were complicated by heavy rains and the risks of landslides, which forced some residents to move to temporary shelters.

The earthquake also affected Chengdu, the provincial capital, where residents were under strict zero-COVID controls, meaning they were not allowed to leave



People mourn for the victims of the last week's earthquake during a memorial service in Shimian County of Ya'an City

their buildings. Footage online showed residents banging at metal gates at the front of apartment complexes as they sought to leave their buildings.

Tens of millions remain under China's extensive zero-COVID controls. Chengdu's local government announced that a few districts

where there had been no new COVID19 cases will be allowed to reopen. However, much of its 21 million residents remain under lockdown. The city reported just 143 cases of coronavirus infection yesterday, more than half of which were people who did not have symptoms.

China has stuck to its massive system of lockdowns and mass testing even as the rest of the world has loosened restrictions. The country's approach has minimized deaths, but has kept millions of people locked in their homes for weeks or even months at a time. **MDT/AP**

COVID-19

CHINA QUARANTINES COLLEGE STUDENTS UNDER STRICT POLICY

ALMOST 500 students at China's premier college for broadcast journalists have been sent to a quarantine center after a handful of COVID-19 cases were detected in their dormitory.

The 488 students at Communication University of China, along with 19 teachers and five assistants, were transferred by bus beginning Friday night.

Quarantining anyone considered to have been in contact with someone who tested positive for the virus has been a pillar of China's strict "zero-COVID" policy. The quarantine centers include field hospitals as well as converted stadiums and exhibition centers that have been criticized for overcrowding, poor sanitation and spoiled food.

As of last week, approximately 65 million Chinese residents were under lockdown despite just 1,248 new cases of domestic transmission being reported on Sunday. Most of those were asymptomatic.

The lockdowns have sparked protests online and confrontations with health workers and police, and have exacted a major toll on the economy, affecting global supply chains for electronics and other products. The weeklong lockdown in China's biggest city of Shanghai over the summer prompted an exodus of migrant workers and foreign business people.

With the release of economic data this week, analysts will be looking for insights into how China's handling of the pandemic is impacting economic activity in the world's second-largest economy. Lockdowns have been accompanied by nearly daily testing, travel restrictions and the suspension of classes at all levels.

China has pursued the relentless enforcement of the policy, even as virtually every other country has sought to return to normal life with the help of vaccines and drugs to fight the virus.

"Zero COVID" is closely associated with President and Communist Party leader Xi Jinping, leading to accusations that the government has politicized a public health crisis. His administration has rejected statements from the World Health Organization that the policy is unsustainable, and has refused to approve foreign vaccines that are widely considered more effective than those produced by Chinese companies.

Xi, who has not traveled abroad since the start of the pandemic in early 2020, has taken control of all levers of power and struck a confrontational tone in foreign policy, while sidelining or imprisoning rivals. He has eliminated term limits on the presidency and is expected to receive a third five-year term as Communist leader at next month's party congress. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



JAPAN

Okinawa reelects governor opposing heavy US troop presence

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

OKINAWA'S incumbent governor who opposes an ongoing U.S. Marine base relocation forced by Japan's central government and calls for a further reduction of American troops on the southern island secured his reelection on Sunday despite concerns of escalating tensions between China and nearby Taiwan.

Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki and his supporters declared his victory and celebrated with the chants of "banzai" soon after the exit poll results showed he beat two contenders — Atsushi Sakima, backed by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's governing bloc and supports its base relocation plan, and another opposition-backed candidate Mikio Shimoji.

Tamaki, who is backed by opposition parties, won 339,767 votes, or about 51% of the effective votes, over Sakima's 274,844 votes and Shimoji's 53,677, according to the final results released yesterday by the Okinawa prefecture. Polls were held Sunday before his first four-year term is to end later this month.

Tamaki's victory could deepen

AP PHOTO



Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki, who is backed by opposition parties, speaks to media after the gubernatorial election, in Naha, Okinawa prefecture

tensions between Okinawa and the central government.

The plan to move U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma from a crowded neighborhood to a less populated area on the island has already been delayed for years. Okinawans call it a new construction rather than a relocation and want the Futenma base closed and removed from the island.

"My commitment to resolve

the U.S. military base problem for the future of Okinawa has never been shaken," Tamaki said. He said he will continue his endeavor to convey Okinawan's will to the central government.

During the campaign, Tamaki also vowed to do more to improve Okinawa's economy. Tourism on the semi-tropical island known for its corals, marine life and unique culture was badly hurt by the

coronavirus pandemic.

Resentment and frustration run deep in Okinawa because of the heavy U.S. presence and Tokyo's lack of efforts to negotiate with Washington over how to balance the burden of hosting U.S. troops between mainland Japan and the southern island group.

Okinawa, where one of the bloodiest battles in the World War II was fought, was under Ameri-

can occupation until it returned to Japan's control in 1972. Today, a majority of the 50,000 U.S. troops based in Japan under a bilateral security pact and 70% of U.S. military facilities are still in Okinawa, which accounts for only 0.6% of Japanese land.

Because of the U.S. bases, Okinawa struggled with noise, pollution, accidents and crime related to American troops, Tamaki said.

Japan's government has in recent years shifted the nation's defense posture to southwestern Japan, Okinawa and its remote islands and is pushing to significantly bolster Japan's military capability and budget over the next five to 10 years, citing growing threats from China, North Korea and Russia.

Many in Okinawa are worried about the growing deployment of Japanese missile defenses and amphibious capabilities on outer islands that are close to geopolitical hot spots like Taiwan, the self-ruled island that China claims as its own and has threatened to use force to annex it if necessary. Okinawan people fear that they will be the first to be embroiled in a conflict over Taiwan.

The Futenma base relocation plan was developed after the 1995 rape of a Okinawan schoolgirl, in which three U.S. servicemen were convicted. The case reignited local opposition to the U.S. bases. The relocation has been delayed for years due to Okinawa's resistance as well as environmental and structural issues in the Henoko area, where the new base is supposed to be set up. **MDT/AP**

INDONESIA

Conservative Muslims protest Indonesian fuel price hikes

HUNDREDS of conservative Muslims marched in Indonesia's capital yesterday demanding that the government revoke its decision to raise fuel prices, saying it hurts people already reeling from the economic impact of the pandemic.

Authorities blocked streets leading to the Presidential Palace as the demonstrators, many wearing white Islamic robes, filled a major thoroughfare. Many waved red and white national flags and flags bearing the Islamic declaration of faith.

Prices of gasoline and diesel fuel jumped by about 30% last month after President Joko Widodo's administration cut fuel subsidies to reduce the country's multibillion-dollar budget deficit. The price of gasoline rose from

AP PHOTO



about 51 cents to 67 cents per liter and diesel fuel from 35 cents to 46 cents.

Protests against the increases have been held across Indonesia, mostly by students and workers, but calm had largely returned to Jakarta, the capital, over the past three days before Monday's demonstration.

The protest was organized by a conservative Muslim alliance that held mass demonstrations in 2016 against Jakarta's ethnic Chinese Christian governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, that led to him being imprisoned for blasphemy.

In a speech, Ahmad Khozinudin, a protest

coordinator, condemned the government's decision. He said people were already suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic and the price hikes would further increase their woes.

Widodo's government "has failed in dealing with poverty in this country," he said, standing on top of a truck. "Instead, he

has lied to the people by breaking his promise not to increase fuel prices."

Protesters chanted "God is great" and "We stand with workers" near the blocked roads.

"The government decision to cut the energy subsidy and raise fuel prices is unfair!" said Budi Darma, a protester. "The increase in fuel prices will trigger hikes in other prices, especially the price of basic foods which have a direct impact on the poor."

Several hundred workers and students also staged protests on Monday near the heavily guarded Presidential Palace.

Widodo said the decision to increase fuel prices was his last option because the government's energy subsidies had tripled this year from 152 trillion

rupiah (\$10.2 billion) to 502 trillion rupiah (\$33.8 billion) because of rising global oil prices and the weakening of the Indonesian rupiah currency.

The government has announced an additional 24.2 trillion rupiah (\$1.6 billion) aid package for 20.6 million poor families and workers through the end of the year to cushion the impact of the fuel price increases.

The government has subsidized fuel for decades in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation.

Fuel prices are a politically sensitive issue that can trigger other price hikes and possible mass protests. In 1998, an increase in fuel prices sparked riots that helped topple longtime dictator Suharto. **MDT/AP**

RELIGION

Pope heads to Kazakh interfaith congress, without patriarch

NICOLE WINFIELD &
KOSTYA MANENKOV,
VATICAN CITY

POPE Francis had hoped his trip to Kazakhstan this week would offer a chance to meet with the head of the Russian Orthodox Church — who has justified the war in Ukraine — and plead for peace. Patriarch Kirill bowed out a few weeks ago, but Francis is going ahead with the trip that is nevertheless being overshadowed by Russia's seven-month war.

Francis travels to the majority-Muslim former Soviet republic today to minister to its tiny Catholic community and participate in a Kazakh-sponsored conference of world religious leaders. The conference had as its original goal to promote interfaith dialogue in the post-pandemic world, but Russia's invasion of Ukraine has given it a more immediate cause: for faith leaders from around the world to appeal for peace with a united voice.

"It will be an occasion to meet so many religious representatives and to dialogue as brothers, animated by the common desire for peace, the peace for which our world is thirsting," Francis told thousands of people in St. Peter's Square on Sunday.

In a way, Kirill's absence will make life easier for all involved: Kazakhstan won't have its showcase gathering of Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Shinto and Jewish leaders from 50 countries overshadowed by a headline-grabbing photo op between the pope and the patriarch. Francis won't have the diplomatic headache of having to explain to Ukraine why he met with an ideological supporter of Russia's war before Francis even visited Kyiv. And Kirill will avoid the embarrassment of being present when a global congress of imams, rabbis, ministers and a pope issues a final statement largely expected to denounce war.

But for Kazakhstan's Catholic leaders, Kirill's absence represents something of a lost opportunity.

"Personally I am pained," said Bishop Adelio Dell'Oro of the Kazakh diocese of Karaganda. "I think a meeting



between them on the sidelines of the congress would have been a notable contribution, notable in this process of peace to clarify what religions can contribute to human coexistence in the world. So I am disappointed, but you have to accept it."

The interfaith congress is an important triennial event for Kazakhstan, a country that borders Russia to the north, China to the east and is home to some 130 ethnic groups: It's a showpiece of its foreign policy and a reflection of its own multicultural and multiethnic population that has long been touted as a crossroads between East and West.

"We can say that Kazakhstan is really a place where dialogue is not some formal slogan, but this is a Kazakh brand," said Monsignor Piotr Pytlowany, spokesman for the Kazakh bishops conference. "Kazakhstan wants to share dialogue not only during this congress but also after it, offering the dialogue as one of the possible ways to resolve the various difficulties that the world now faces."

When St. John Paul II visited in 2001, 10 years after independence, he highlighted Kazakhstan's diversity while recalling its dark past under Stalinist repression: Entire villages of ethnic Poles were

deported en masse from western Ukraine to Kazakhstan beginning in 1936, and the Soviet government deported hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans, Chechens and other accused Nazi collaborators to Kazakhstan during World War II. Many of the deportees' descendants remained and some of them make up the country's Catholic community, which only numbers about 125,000 in a country of nearly 19 million.

Kazakh bishops had asked Francis to visit a former Soviet detention camp during his three-day visit, but the 85-year-old pope declined due to his strained knee ligaments, which have forced him to use a wheelchair and cane to get around.

His program has time for private meetings with religious leaders attending the congress. While the Vatican hasn't released a list, expected participants include Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, the seat of Sunni learning in Cairo.

One visitor not currently on his agenda: Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is expected in Kazakhstan on his first foreign trip since the coronavirus pandemic. Vatican spokesman Matteo Brunni said there were no current plans for any meeting and noted that Xi isn't attending

the religious conference. China and the Holy See haven't had diplomatic relations for over a half-century.

Francis has repeatedly denounced Russia's war in Ukraine as an unjust "violent aggression," expressed solidarity with the "martyred" Ukrainian people and sent personal envoys to Ukraine to provide humanitarian and spiritual aid. At the same time, he has refrained from calling out Russia or President Vladimir Putin by name, trying to maintain a path of dialogue with Moscow in keeping with the Vatican's diplomatic tradition of not taking sides in a conflict.

Kirill has justified Russia's invasion of Ukraine on spiritual and ideological grounds, calling it a "metaphysical" battle with the West. He has blessed Russian soldiers going into battle and invoked the idea that Russians and Ukrainians are one people.

The Kazakh congress would have provided a neutral location and coincidental excuse for their second-ever meeting, and both Kirill and Francis had originally confirmed their presence. But Kirill pulled out last month. A former Vatican ambassador to Moscow has suggested that grumblings within the Russian Orthodox hierarchy might have factored into Kirill's decision. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1993 RABIN AND ARAFAT SHAKE ON PEACE DEAL



The Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, and the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, have shaken hands before cheering crowds on the White House lawn in Washington.

The handshake - the first ever in public between the two former arch enemies - marked the signing of a Declaration of Principles for peace between the Arabs and Israelis.

Under the terms of the deal, Israel has agreed to withdraw its troops from Gaza Strip and West Bank by April 1994. Elections will be held in the territories to allow the Palestinians some form of self-government.

A deadline for a final settlement has been set for February 1999.

The deal has only been made possible by talks brokered by the Norwegians earlier in the year - and by the election of Mr Rabin's Labour government which includes the pro-peace campaigners Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin.

President Bill Clinton introduced the two leaders to the crowd of invited guests in front of the White House. By his side, were former Presidents Jimmy Carter and George Bush who had vigorously campaigned for peace during their terms in office.

Mr Clinton said: "The peace of the brave is within our reach. Throughout the Middle East there is a great yearning for the quiet miracle of a normal life.

"We know a difficult road lies ahead. Every peace has its enemies."

The leaders did not sign the declaration themselves. Instead, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and his Palestinian counterpart did the signing.

Mr Rabin then addressed the crowd: "We who have fought against you the Palestinians, we say to you today in a loud and clear voice, enough of blood and tears, enough."

Mr Arafat said: "The difficult decision we reached together was one that required great courage."

The BBC's correspondent John Simpson said Mr Arafat had undoubtedly put his life on the line for this agreement.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Declaration of Principles paved the way for Israel's first withdrawals from occupied territory and Yasser Arafat's triumphant return to Palestinian territory in July 1994.

He was elected president of the Palestinian National Authority in 1996.

Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish extremist wanting to prevent further Israeli withdrawals on 4 November 1995.

Binyamin Netanyahu of Likud won Israeli elections in 1996. He agreed to a withdrawal from Hebron in the West Bank but talks on further peace moves with the Palestinians stalled.

His successor Ehud Barak was equally unsuccessful and in the impasse veteran right-winger Ariel Sharon toured the al Aqsa mosque/Temple Mount complex in what was seen as a provocative move by the Palestinians.

Demonstrations soon turned into another uprising or intifada.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Look before you leap. Opportunities to get ahead are evident. Romance is likely if you participate in unusual forms of entertainment.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Get the whole family involved in a worthwhile cause or cultural event. Stay calm and focus on things that will help you understand the situation better.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You must not let fellow workers take advantage of your fine talents. You can expect changes in your financial situation as well as in your status. Travel for business will not bring you profits.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You should be able to tie up loose ends today. Be cautious when dealing with foreigners. You are best to work at home if you can.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You should visit a friend or relative who hasn't been feeling up to par. Older family members may try to make demands that are impossible for you to handle.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Too much talk will lead to disputes. Colleagues may try to undermine you. Be professional, and you will advance much more quickly.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Your outgoing nature might work against you today. Keep on your toes when dealing with others. Put your efforts into making constructive improvements to your environment and to your state of mind.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Do what you can to help them but don't neglect your own family. Be cautious not to get involved in office chatter that will cause problems for others. Too much talk will lead to disputes.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Deceit with coworkers is apparent. Take care of yourself or you can expect to suffer from minor illness. Accept the inevitable, and opportunities for advancement will follow.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You will attract potential lovers, but be sure that they're unattached. Secret affairs may be tempting, but keep in mind that they will damage your reputation if you decide to indulge.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You'll find love and you'll get into tiptop shape at the same time. You need to take a break with the ones you love. Your involvement in groups will be favorable for meeting new and exciting individuals.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Your emotions are fluctuating, so be careful not to say things you'll regret. You must follow your desires and dreams. You must act quickly.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	20	31	fine
Changchun	15	24	fine
Chengdu	21	25	showers
Chongqing	23	34	cloudy
Fuzhou	24	36	rain
Guangzhou	24	35	fine
Guiyang	17	26	showers
Haikou	25	32	cloudy
Hangzhou	21	25	rain
Harbin	13	23	fine
Hefei	19	28	rain
Nanjing	23	27	rain
Shanghai	23	25	rain
Taipei	24	27	rain
Wuhan	22	34	fine
Hong Kong	29	34	fine

WORLD

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
Moscow	8	18	overcast
Frankfurt	16	23	rain
Paris	14	19	showers
London	19	28	cloudy
New York	17	28	showers

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Eucalyptus eater; 6- Madagascar monkey; 11- AT&T rival; 14- Hand woven wall hanging; 15- Make ___ of (write down); 16- Gotcha!; 17- Chaplin persona; 18- Unconscious states; 19- Op. ___; 20- Roman date; 22- Blender setting; 24- Scoffed; 28- Many; 30- Bodily organ; 31- Steak order; 32- John of England; 33- Fencer; 37- Hot time in Paris; 38- Martini garnish; 39- Verse starter?; 40- Portray; 43- Atoll unit; 45- Deadens; 46- Kind of garage; 47- Strikes; 49- Conductor; 50- ___ Rica; 51- German economist and socialist; 52- No longer young; 53- Ancient tongue; 56- Yellowish brown; 61- Corp. bigwig; 62- Steve of country music; 63- Have a cow?; 64- CIA forerunner; 65- Transmits; 66- Sum;

DOWN 1- Crazy ___; 2- Bruins great Bobby; 3- First name in Notre Dame football; 4- Flight; 5- It's a relief; 6- Tied; 7- Grandson of Adam; 8- Pop's partner; 9- Tony winner Hagen; 10- Answer in words; 11- PC shortcut; 12- Tribe ruler; 13- Must've been something ___; 21- Singer Shannon; 23- Salt Lake City hoopsters; 24- At quite an incline; 25- Nick of "Cape Fear"; 26- Computer key; 27- That, in Tijuana; 28- Overhead; 29- Knowledge; 31- Nincompoops; 33- Thick slices; 34- Swindle; 35- Lend ___; 36- Part of TNT; 38- Treater's words; 41- Irritated state; 42- Power problems; 43- Not precise; 44- Paris possessive; 46- Lever for rowing; 47- Mends a shoe; 48- Windows predecessor; 49- Creates; 50- First name in fashion; 51- Blend; 54- Actress Charlotte; 55- Directional ending; 57- Long March leader; 58- Sandwich initials; 59- Sister of Zsa Zsa; 60- Fam. reunion attendee;



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Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
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IAM 28 387 333	
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CIARÁN FAHEY, BERLIN

UNION BERLIN 1, COLOGNE 0

AMERICAN forward Jordan Pefok had a penalty saved but Union Berlin held on to win 1-0 at previously unbeaten Cologne to move top of the Bundesliga for the first-ever time yesterday [Macau time].

"I haven't seen a team play as well as Union here for a long time. You have to recognize that," Cologne coach Steffen Baumgart said. "The plan we had didn't work out at all."

An own-goal from Cologne defender Timo Hübers in the third minute was enough for the capital club to finish first after the sixth round – one point ahead of Freiburg, which was held 0-0 by Borussia Mönchengladbach in the late game.

Ten-time defending champion Bayern Munich, Hoffenheim and Borussia Dortmund are two points behind the new leaders, who drew with Bayern 1-1 last weekend and previously scored eight goals over two wins against Schalke and Leipzig.

Hübers was trying to cut out Sheraldo Becker's cross when he inadvertently diverted the ball inside goalkeeper Marvin Schwäbe's near post.

Pefok was back in Union's star-

FOOTBALL

Union Berlin moves top of Bundesliga for first time

AP PHOTO



Berlin's Jordan Pefok reacts after missing a penalty kick

ting lineup after missing two games with a muscle injury. He had a chance to add to his two league goals so far when Cologne's Luca

Kilian was penalized for handball through VAR. The player didn't even see the ball before it hit his arm. Justice was arguably served

when Pefok shot down the middle and saw Schwäbe save his effort in the 10th minute.

Becker had another Union goal

ruled out for offside shortly afterward, but it didn't matter as the visitors played with discipline to see out their fourth win.

"I'm satisfied, a compliment to my team," Union coach Urs Fischer said. "We wound it down without allowing Cologne to pose any danger."

Kilian was sent off in the 81st with his second yellow card as Cologne slumped to its first loss.

Union, the only club in the Bundesliga to have played in the old East German league, was only promoted to the reunified country's top division in 2019. Expected to promptly return to the second division, instead it has steadily improved, finishing 11th, seventh, then fifth last season to qualify for the Europa League.

Fischer and team captain Christopher Trimmel still say the aim this season is to avoid relegation.

"We're on a run but we know there are many things that are not going so well," Trimmel said. "I saw before the game that we're the team with the least possession. But we've played Leipzig and Bayern so the statistics lie a bit."

The Union captain says improvement is needed.

"There were phases today where we did very well. Our defensive work is a strength, but we need to do better playing with the ball," Trimmel said. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily

Djoomart Otorbaev, China Daily*



NEW PAGE BEGINS FOR CENTRAL ASIA AND CHINA

From Sept 14 to 16, President Xi Jinping will attend the 22nd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, and pay state visits to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The visits will be the first trip by the Chinese leader abroad since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the beginning of this year has already been marked by important events in the relations between the countries of Central Asia and China.

The Chinese president and the leaders of all five Central Asian countries held a virtual summit on Jan 25, 2022, marking the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. At the meeting, the presidents discussed the results of joint work and outlined the horizons for further cooperation. It should be noted that next year marks 10 years since the Belt and Road Initiative was first proposed, when Chinese President Xi Jinping called for countries in Central Asia to work together to build the Silk Road Economic Belt in 2013.

During the leaders' virtual meeting in January, the Chinese president presented five concrete proposals for future cooperation with Central Asia.

The first was related to the deepening of neighbourly relations based on the principles of friendship, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness. President Xi specially mentioned that in its external affairs China opposes interference in the internal affairs of countries under various pretexts.

Second, the participants decided to strengthen their economic relations. The Chinese leader stressed that China is ready to open its markets for goods and services from Central Asia. By 2030, China plans to bring the annual volume of mutual trade to \$70 billion. For comparison, according to the Ministry of Commerce of China, the volume of trade between China and the countries of Central Asia in the first 11 months of 2021 amounted to approximately \$45 billion. To achieve better connectivity new logistics and trade corridors between the countries will be built. The development of a feasibility study and construction of a new China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway route will be accelerated. It is expected that during the SCO summit in Samarkand the leaders of the three countries will sign an agreement on the construction of this railway.

Third, special attention is to be paid to ensuring regional security and deepening cooperation to counter terrorism, radicalization, separatism and cyber threats. Particular attention is to be given to stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan. It should be noted that Afghanistan was mentioned as part of greater Central Asia. The Chinese president reiterated that China supports the establishment of an inclusive government in Afghanistan and freeing the country from terrorism and terrorist organizations. The leaders of the countries of Central Asia have repeatedly noted that the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan should be a priority in the development of this country.

The fourth recommendation was devoted to strengthening cultural and humanitarian ties between the Central Asian countries. President Xi suggested opening joint cultural centres in the countries and said that China would like Central Asia to become a vibrant centre for visits by Chinese tourists. He also announced that China will provide more university scholarships for students from Central Asia.

And finally, the Chinese leader announced that China will provide a grant to the countries of Central Asia in the amount of \$500 million to help them realize the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

According to the latest statistics, this year the Chinese economy is experiencing an investment boom. In August 2022, Bloomberg reported that only Chinese mainland companies have raised a record \$58 billion in initial public offerings this year, compared to \$19 billion raised in the US and \$9.9 billion in Europe. Considering China's economic power and its geographic, political and economic proximity to Central Asia, the untapped potential for cooperation is apparent. The implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative opens up unlimited possibilities for this. The multifaceted cooperation of our countries has broad prospects. [Abridged]

The author is a professor at the Belt and Road School at Beijing Normal University, and former prime minister of Kyrgyz Republic.

AMERICANS GIVE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM FAILING MARK: AP-NORC POLL

THE BUZZ

The majority of adults in the U.S. that health care is not handled well in the country, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The poll reveals that public satisfaction with the U.S. health care system is remarkably low, with fewer than half of Americans saying it is generally handled well. Only 12% say it is handled extremely or very well. Americans have similar views about health care for older adults.

Overall, the public gives even lower marks for how prescription drug costs, the quality of care at nursing homes and mental health care are

being handled, with just 6% or less saying those health services are done very well in the country.

"Navigating the American health care system is exceedingly frustrating," said A. Mark Fendrick, the director of the University of Michigan Center for Value-Based Insurance Design. "The COVID pandemic has only made it worse."

In fact, the poll shows an overwhelming majority of Americans, nearly 8 in 10, say they are at least moderately concerned about getting access to quality health care when they need it.

AP PHOTO



King Charles III and Camilla, the Queen Consort leave Westminster Hall

CHARLES III PLEDGES TO FOLLOW QUEEN'S EXAMPLE OF SELFLESS DUTY

MIKE CORDER, LONDON

KING Charles III pledged yesterday to follow his late mother's example of "selfless duty" as he addressed lawmakers from both houses of parliament in London before he boarded a plane to Edinburgh to be with the late queen's coffin as it lies at rest in the Scottish capital.

Earlier, Queen Elizabeth II's grandson Prince Harry hailed her as a "guiding compass" and praised her "unwavering grace and dignity."

The government, meanwhile, announced that the nation will observe a minute of silence on Sunday, the evening before the queen's funeral. The "moment of reflection" will take place at 8 p.m. (1900 GMT). People were encouraged to mark the silence at home or at community events.

Hundreds of lawmakers crowded into the 1,000-year-old Westminster Hall at the Houses of Parliament for the service, rich in pageantry, in which Parliament offered its condolences to the king, and he replied.

A trumpet fanfare greeted the king and his wife Camilla, the queen consort, as they entered the hall, which was packed with hundreds of legislators.

Charles told members of the House of Commons and House of Lords that he would follow his late mother Queen Elizabeth II in

upholding "the precious principles of constitutional governance" that underpin the U.K.'s political system.

He paid tribute to his mother, saying: "As Shakespeare said of the earlier Queen Elizabeth, she was a pattern to all princes living."

The hall, with its magnificent hammer-beam roof, is the oldest part of the parliamentary complex — a remnant of the medieval Palace of Westminster that once stood on the site.

"As I stand before you today, I cannot help but feel the weight of history which surrounds us and which reminds us of the vital parliamentary traditions to which members of both Houses dedicate yourselves, with such personal commitment for the betterment of us all," Charles said.

The ceremony was held in Westminster Hall because monarchs are not allowed inside the House of Commons. That rule dates from the 17th century, when King Charles I tried to enter and arrest lawmakers. That confrontation between crown and Parliament led to a civil war which ended with the king being beheaded in 1649.

Earlier Monday, a personal statement posted on Harry and his wife Meghan's Archwell website said he cherished their times together "from my earliest childhood memories with you, to meeting you for the first time as my

Commander-in-Chief, to the first moment you met my darling wife and hugged your beloved great-grandchildren."

Amid acrimony in the House of Windsor, Harry quit as a senior royal and moved to the U.S. two years ago. On Saturday, there was a possible sign of a reconciliation as Harry and Meghan joined his brother Prince William and sister-in-law Catherine in meeting mourners outside Windsor Castle.

The national outpouring of grief continued Sunday as thousands of people lined streets and roadsides as the oak coffin was borne from the late queen's beloved Balmoral Castle summer retreat, where she died on Thursday, to Edinburgh.

Later Monday in Edinburgh, the king will walk behind his mother's coffin as it is slowly transported from Holyroodhouse to St. Giles' Cathedral, where the crown of Scotland will be placed on the coffin ahead of a service of prayer and reflection on the life and 70-year reign of the widely cherished monarch.

The queen's coffin will lie at the cathedral for 24 hours, giving members of the public a chance to file past and pay their respects. Today, it will be flown to London where the coffin will lie in state at the Houses of Parliament Palace from Wednesday afternoon until the morning of the funeral on Sept. 19. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Ukraine claimed yesterday that it took several more villages, pushing Russian forces right back to the northeastern border, part of a lightning counteroffensive that forced Moscow to withdraw troops from some areas in recent days. After months of little discernible movement on the battlefield, Kyiv's sudden momentum has lifted Ukrainian morale and provoked outrage in Russia and even some rare public criticism of President Vladimir Putin's war.

Germany The government said yesterday that it can't stop a shipment of Russian uranium destined for French nuclear plants from being processed at a site in Germany because atomic fuel isn't covered by European Union sanctions on Russia. Environmentalists have called on Germany and the Netherlands to block the shipment of uranium aboard the Russian ship Mikhail Dudin in the English Channel from being transported to a processing plant in Lingen, close to the German-Dutch border.

AP PHOTO



Lebanon's central bank lifted its remaining subsidies on fuel yesterday, gas station owners said, ending a year-long process of scaling back on the expensive program. The Central Bank over a year ago announced it would gradually lift fuel subsidies, to slow down the draining of its foreign exchange reserves. Fuel subsidies once cost the cash-strapped country some \$3 billion annually. Last week, it subsidized just 20% of the cost of fuel imports.

Kenya The Tigray forces battling Ethiopian troops say they're willing to abide by an immediate cessation of hostilities and participate in a peace process led by the African Union, a significant shift to which Ethiopia's government has not yet responded. The conflict in northern Ethiopia's Tigray region has killed an estimated tens of thousands of people and left millions without basic services for well over a year after fighting erupted in late 2020.