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AP PHOTO



**South Korea's** new conservative government said yesterday it will push to abolish a gender equality ministry and create a new agency with broader responsibilities, one of President Yoon Suk Yeol's campaign promises that roiled March's hotly contested election. During the campaign, Yoon faced criticism that his vow to scrap the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family was an appeal to young male voters who oppose gender equality policies in a highly competitive job market. Yoon said it was time to launch a ministry with a more comprehensive role, saying women in South Korea no longer face structural barriers to success.

AP PHOTO



**Malaysia** An additional 21 Malaysians rescued from human traffickers in Cambodia and Laos returned home yesterday, as the government intensified efforts to locate scam victims reported missing abroad. Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah, who met some of the returning victims at Kuala Lumpur's airport, said the government has now managed to rescue 273 people out of 401 reported missing in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. Most have returned except for 60 still in immigration detention centers in those countries who are waiting to be processed, he said at a news conference.

**Myanmar** EU lawmakers yesterday condemned the crackdown on media freedom in military-ruled Myanmar and called for the release of "every unfairly detained journalist." Since the military seized power in February last year, it has forced at least 12 media outlets to shut down and arrested about 142 journalists, 57 of whom remain detained. Most of those still detained are being held under an incitement charge for allegedly causing fear, spreading false news or agitating against a government employee.

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# JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION FINDS NATIONAL SECURITY LAW REVIEW PLAN UNCLEAR

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE Macau Journalists Association has expressed its concerns over the vagueness and breadth of the proposed review on the National Security Law in a document released October 5.

The same day also saw the cessation of the public consultation period.

In contrast to the public consultation conducted for the legislation of the current law, this consultation was done in such a way that express provisions were absent. Discussions were about the direction of the review, rather than on actual provisions proposed by the government.

A similar approach was taken for the review of the gambling law.

In the preamble of its document of opinions, the association emphasized Macau needs a National Security Law that "stabilizes society and takes into account both basic human rights and freedom."

The association called for the government to consider the actual situation and weigh various factors, as well as to avoid over-powerful proposals.

Moreover, the association warned that the core of the debate on the law review should be about the necessity, legality, suitability and benefits of the review, based on the fact that, on certain occasions, those expressing doubtful or opposing opinions were hastily smeared as being unpatriotic or of damaging national security.



The association expressed concern that if the reviewed National Security Law was not to be promulgated side-by-side with the Law on SAR Secrets, press freedom may be threatened, with particular emphasis on journalists' sources and the public's right to know. The association described the expansion of police power in certain areas as "prodigious."

The association said it found insufficient grounds for the law review, mainly because the current law had never been triggered, meaning that no judicial precedents are present. As such, "it is difficult to prove that the current law and criminal investigation tools are [inadequate]."

It warned an overly strict law review may lead to political censorship and extensive police power, which would eventually jeopardize Macau's harmony and stability.

On the other hand, the association found the proposed review imprecise. For example, it pointed out, the government had not succeeded in clearly explaining the definition of "the key factors constituting a criminal act," which is opposed to allowing the public to be informed of the activities that constitute a criminal act as a basic principle in the criminal laws of Macau.

In another area, the association said the direction of the law review is different from what the government claimed in the first place. The government said the law review would lead to greater protection, but the association thinks only punishments will prevail.

For instance, the association pointed out that the government intends to restrict a person's freedom to leave Macau if that person is under suspicion without the government having to identify the person in question as a suspect. This is contrary to the provisions in Article 47 of the Criminal Procedure Code, the association noted.

In Macau, Codes of Law are above single laws in terms of legal hierarchy.

The association also questioned the necessity of "opening another door" by the security branch in terms of requesting information from people under

suspicion, when existing laws effectively cover the matter.

Furthermore, the law review has a tendency to rely extensively on wiretapping, the association pointed out. Although security officials have reiterated the role of the court of law in the loop, the association cited the recent Suncity lawsuit as an example to prove that wiretapping can be constant and extensive.

Communication data spanning 10 years was presented to the court as evidence in the Suncity lawsuit.

Most importantly, the association noticed, the proposed law review may transgress the authority of the Central Government, by expanding the coverage of the provision on inter-organizational contacts from political organizations to any individual, groups or organizations, as well as from foreign organizations to non-local organizations. It warned that the proposed changes may eventually violate Article 144 of the Basic Law.

While the government is considering introducing incitement and non-violent alienation and subversion, in addition to the lack of a well-defined "national secret" to the law, the association feared it would hurt public confidence in expressing their dissatisfactions against certain policies, even non-political types of policies.

LYNZY VALLES

TNRS

**T**HE number of non-resident workers fell by nearly 3,800 in August, a drop that has been ongoing due to the economic downturn caused by Covid-19, as well as blue-card holders choosing to leave amid current pandemic restrictions.

Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) data shows Macau now has 154,000 non-resident workers, with 106,300 from the mainland.

The data from the Public Security Police shows mainland blue card holders led the downturn, totaling about 2,100 workers, followed by a drop of 500 workers from Vietnam.

The hotel and restaurant

## Non-resident workers plunge by 3,800 in August

sector lost some 1,100 non-resident workers as the city battled its largest outbreak in mid-June that led to a partial lockdown, with the suspension of non-essential services.

Previous DSAL data shows there were 162,391 non-resident workers living in the city as of June. However, when compared to the same period last year, the figure corresponds to a reduction of 9,870 people.

From January to June this year, 8,707 non-resident workers left the SAR in

just over six months.

The latest government data shows the city's unemployment rate has continued to rise as the city struggles through the fallout from the pandemic crisis that has caused a downturn in the local economy.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicates the general unemployment rate (4.3%) and the unemployment rate of local residents (5.5%) for June-August 2022 rose 0.2 and 0.1 percentage points from the

previous period (May-July 2022) respectively, a record high since 2008.

The DSAL has long reiterated the Macau government's adherence to the policy of employing non-resident workers (TNRs) to temporarily make up for the lack of local workers.

The bureau said that, in any situation, whenever there are suitable residents willing to fill a position, it is the obligation of the employing company to give priority to hiring such workers.



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DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF\_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com  
ASSISTANT EDITOR\_Lynzy Valles  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS\_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS\_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNER\_Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS\_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES\_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua SECRETARY\_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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**PUBLIC WORKS**

# Macau New Neighborhood project to reach topping-out stage before year-end

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Macau New Neighborhood (MNN) project on Hengqin island will reach the topping-out stage before the end of this year, Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) has said in a statement.

According to MUR, which oversees development of the whole project, the topping-out of the first tower (out of 27) occurred at the end of September. The topping-out of the remaining 26 residential towers and school buildings is expected to occur at the end of this year.

The residential units will be put on sale next year, with the whole project planned for completion in the second half of 2023.

Construction of the MNN project began in 2021 with the installation of superstructure works and prefabricated components currently underway.

The MNN project includes residential, educational, health and social services. According to the government, the plan layout was designed to create a living environment "similar to Macau" to aid Macau residents' integration into the Greater Bay Area (GBA).



## 15,000 RESIDENTS IN 4,000 RESIDENTIAL UNITS

Located between Xiao Hengqin Mountain and Tianmu River, the project includes 27 residential towers with heights ranging between 19 and 26 floors. The building's floorplan includes seven to eight housing units per floor, and can provide housing to around 10,000 people in about 4,000 residential units.

The MUR also said over 200 of the residential units are reserved for the housing of "talent."

The two-bedroom units are about 80% of the project layout with the remaining 20% being dedicated to three-bedroom housing units.

The project's living area is over 190,000 square meters with a gross area of about 620,000 square meters. It is part of the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, about a six-minute drive from the Hengqin-Macau border checkpoint.

Besides the living space, the project features services that are connected to Macau, comprising a kindergarten (12 classes), a primary school (18 classes), a healthcare service center, a seniors' service center and a family service center.

About 5,000 square meters of commercial space is planned, which is enough for around 60 retail

units to provide the residents with offerings for their daily needs.

The neighborhood will have over 4,000 car parking spaces, more than 3,000 square meters of children's playgrounds and sports venues, and green areas that occupy about 35% of this area.

Including visitors, friends, and other family members, the community is expected to host between 12,000 to 15,000 people.

To recreate some of the characteristics of Macau, the MUR says the designs of the streetlamps, railings, and pavement in the public areas are built in southern European styles and Portuguese-style cobblestone pavements.

## CTT SHORTENS MAIL DISINFECTION TO 24 HOURS

Disinfection and retention procedures for mail arriving in the SAR has been shortened from 72 to 24 hours, the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT) said yesterday. This comes after it had previously prolonged disinfection periods as part of its measures to deter the spread of Covid-19. Residents can now receive parcels and mail more quickly. Earlier this year, all mail and parcels from outside Macau had to undergo three rounds of disinfection upon arrival.

## RESIDENT DEPOSITS INCREASE SLIGHTLY TO MOP669B

Resident deposits have increased 1.2% from last month to MOP668.8 billion, while non-resident deposits also grew 6% to MOP346.8 billion, data from the Monetary Authority of Macao shows. Public sector deposits with the banking sector rose 0.7% to MOP262.3 billion in the same time period. As a result, total banking sector deposits expanded 2.3% from a month earlier to MOP1,277.9 billion. Domestic loans to the private sector, meanwhile, grew 0.3% from a month ago to MOP564 billion, whereas external loans fell 1.7% to MOP749.7 billion. As a result, total loans to the private sector fell 0.9% from a month earlier to MOP1,313.7 billion.

**EDUCATION**

# International schools at One Oasis to start operations next year

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE two social facilities built on land plot 12a on Coloane's One Oasis development, which will be used by two international schools, will potentially start operation in the next school year, which starts in September 2023.

The Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, provided information on the sidelines of the National Day reception.

According to the Secretary, the construction of the two facilities has been com-

pleted and a series of government entities will soon carry out the last inspections of the building before the government takes possession from the developer.

She also explained that, after the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) takes charge of the facilities, a decision from the Bureau on which organization(s) will be granted use of the venue will also be made known.

Without mentioning any names, Ao Ieong said several organizations have shown interest in using the

venues and have submitted applications to run the schools according to government requirements, which included running the schools according to international education criteria or programs.

The new development next door to One Oasis, separating the largely residential area from the Concordia Industrial Park, also includes a new public transport hub that public buses will use. The hub operates at the ground-floor level, like the Seac Pai Van and Lake Building in

Taipa, and will potentially replace existing bus stops along the Estrada de Seac Pai Van. The new hub provides better shelter for those waiting to take buses in the area.

The Secretary also revealed the future "School Village" planned at Zone A of the new landfill facilities will include eight school facilities and an activity center dedicated to young people. These schools will function in a community style, sharing some of the resources to be built in that area of the new city.



EMPLOYMENT

# YOUTH JOB FAIR TO OFFER 1,100 VACANCIES, DEBUT ENGLISH JOB INTERVIEW WORKSHOPS

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE upcoming Youth Career Expo 2022 will feature two job interview workshops conducted in English, the head of a local association has highlighted.

The remark was made by Wong Chi Choi, deputy executive director of the Macao New Chinese Youth Association, at a topical press conference yesterday. The association is co-hosting the upcoming job fair with the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) and the General Association of Chinese Students of Macau.

Wong said this will be the first time a workshop will be conducted in English at the namesake job fair. The two sessions will be taught by two representatives from Wynn Macau Ltd and Sands China Ltd.

In a previous parliamentary session, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng stressed the importance of widening Macau's tourism source market. Ho blamed the tourism industry for over-focusing on the mainland as a source market in the past two decades.



The government has also pushed forward with policies to cultivate and attract talented people to Macau.

The panel of speakers, nonetheless, did not explain whether the move was triggered by the aforementioned policies.

Besides the two workshops conducted in English, there will be 19 other workshops conducted in Chinese. Participants will be educated about curriculum vitae compilation, youth entrepreneurship and labor relations, among other topics.

More than 1,100 vacancies

will be offered at the job fair that will be held this weekend at the Venetian Macao Resort. These vacancies will be offered by over 70 companies, covering nearly 20 professional sectors, with more than 70% of them in tourism and leisure, retail, finance, IT and mechanical engineering.

A new addition to this job fair is the participation of the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. Companies and governmental entities from the island will showcase more than 70 vacancies, as well as presenting the current situation of

the Zone. An exhibition and seminars will be held to familiarize jobseekers with employment conditions and policies in Hengqin.

Participating companies are operating in industries such as science and technology, finance and health.

The co-organizers highlighted that all seminar sessions will be broadcast live online, so that Macau students studying away from the city will not be left out.

Most, if not all, participating entities will offer on-site interview services to shortlist a group of candidates suitable for development.

Pre-registration is required for this job fair. According to Lei Lai Keng, department head for employment at the DSAL, nearly 1,200 people have registered their desire to participate as of the time of the press conference yesterday.

Meanwhile, 856 people have pre-applied for a job, and 375 have had their job interviews arranged, in respect of 513 job vacancies.

When questioned on the sidelines of the press conference about the willingness of local employers to participate or offer vacancies at the job fair, Lei said they are very willing. Local employers are as eager to participate this year, as in previous years.

Lei denied local employers are offering fewer vacancies, when asked about the fact that over 70 job vacancies will be offered by companies in Hengqin.

When questioned how many participants the bureau expects to see, Lei said, judging from pre-registration figures, previous popularity and current Covid-19 control measures, about 3,000 participants are expected.

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## SANDS CHINA NEWS

### Sands China Supports Local NGOs at 2022 Sands Shopping Carnival

**Free booths at the three-day event and fun activities with Sands Cares Ambassadors**

Sands China Ltd. invited several local community organisations to participate in the 2022 Sands Shopping Carnival Sept. 10-12 at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo, as part of the company's ongoing community engagement efforts.

Around 80 Sands Cares Ambassadors volunteered to give on-site support to the community groups during the festival, helping them operate booths and accompanying their members to enjoy some of the festival's attractions. In total, the Ambassadors contributed about 200 hours of volunteer service during the carnival.

The annual free-admission Sands Shopping Carnival is the largest sale event in Macao, and supports the Macao SAR government's Consume for the Economy initiative and consumption e-voucher scheme. The carnival provides a free business platform for local SMEs and Sands retailers to help accelerate business resurgence, while at the same time helping local community organisations promote social inclusion.

Four community organisations ran booths at the carnival's Cultural, Creative and IP Zone: Fuhong Society of Macau, Macau Special Olympics (MSO), Everyone Stray Dogs Macau Volunteer Group, and the Macau Association of the Parents of the Mentally Handicapped. The carnival provided them with an opportunity to gain more exposure in the community and to raise awareness about their missions and support services.

Throughout the three-day event, a group of MSO members had the chance to role-play as news reporters and editors – doing interviews, taking photographs, and shooting video – so they could then write, edit and do post-production for their news reports.

At the carnival's popular Little Master Chef Workshop, Sands Cares Ambassadors accompanied members of the Women's General Association of Macau to join a siew mai wrapping workshop and helped students from Escola Tong Sin Tong Primary School decorate madeleines. The Ambassadors also took the Tong Sin Tong students and members of the Bosco Youth Service Network to play at some of the carnival's game booths.

Sands China's community work is part of Sands Cares, the global corporate citizenship programme of parent company Las Vegas Sands Corp.



# Family of late mogul Stanley Ho risks losing Portugal casinos to rival bidder

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE family of the late casino tycoon, Stanley Ho, is at risk of losing the licenses for operating two of Portugal's biggest casinos following a higher offer from a rival bidder for both operations.

Currently, Casino Lisboa, located in Lisbon, and Casino Estoril in Cascais, are operated by Estoril Sol SGPS SA, whose main shareholder is the Ho family.

The chairwoman of Estoril Sol is Pansy Ho, the current managing director of MGM China.

As cited in media reports, the tender attracted two bids: one from a subsidiary of Estoril Sol and another from an undisclosed bidder.

The license to operate both casinos is set to expire at the end of December.

On August 19, the annou-

ncements of the tenders for the concessions of the Estoril and Figueira da Foz casinos were published in the country's Official Gazette and provide for a contractual duration of 15 years, renewable for a further period of five years.

"Overall, the competing offer had a higher value than the offer presented by our own subsidiary," Estoril Sol said in a regulatory filing earlier this week.

The deadline for submitting proposals for the concession ended September 30. Proposals were opened earlier this week and are being analyzed. Finansol, a holding company controlled by members of the Ho family, owns a 57.8% stake in Estoril Sol.

The company's revenue reached 133 million euros last year, slightly less than the 136 million euros recorded in 2020.



COVID-19

# VAST XINJIANG HIT WITH TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

**T**HE sprawling Xinjiang region in western China has been hit with sweeping COVID-19 travel restrictions as the government ratchets up control measures across the country ahead of a key Communist Party congress later this month.

Trains and buses in and out of the region of 22 million people have been suspended, and passenger numbers on flights have been reduced to 75% of capacity in recent days, according to Chinese media reports.

A notice from the regional government earlier this week said the measures were enacted to "strictly prevent the risk of spillover" of the virus. A Xinjiang official apologized for the spread of the epidemic to other regions and provinces in China, particularly in recent days.

As is often the case with China's "zero-COVID" policy, "the measures seemed out of proportion to the number of cases detected." The National Health Commission announced yesterday that 97 cases had been recorded in Xinjiang in the latest 24-hour period, after 91 cases were reported the previous day. All of them were asymptomatic.

Officials are desperate not to be called out for new outbreaks in their regions and Xinjiang has been under special scrutiny over the government's establishment of a series of re-education centers



A woman pulls her face mask to get her routine COVID-19 throat swab at a coronavirus testing site in Beijing

in which Muslim minorities "have been taught to renounce their religion," observers say, and allegedly subjected to human rights abuses. The Chinese authorities affirm, however, that the education efforts are meant at "de-radicalize" people of different creeds.

According to the Associated Press, Xinjiang's vast surveillance system, relying on ubiquitous checkpoints, facial and even voice recognition software, and "universal cell phone monitoring has made controlling travel among the population especially easy."

An earlier 40-day lockdown in Xinjiang left many residents complaining about inadequate food supplies.

"Zero-COVID" has been closely identified with Communist Party leader Xi Jinping, who is expected to receive a third five-year term in office at the congress beginning Oct. 16. That's despite criticisms from the World Health Organization and constant disruptions to the economy, education and normal life in China.

Last month, a nighttime bus crash that killed 27 people who

were being forcefully moved to a mass quarantine location in southwestern China set off a storm of anger online over the harshness of the policy. Survivors said they had been compelled to leave their apartments even when not a single case had been discovered.

"Zero-COVID" has been celebrated by the country's leaders as "evidence of the superiority of their system over the U.S.," which has had more than a million COVID-19 deaths.

Xi has cited China's approach as a "major strategic success" and

evidence of the "significant advantages" of its political system over Western liberal democracies.

Yet even as other countries open up, the costs to China's pandemic approach have grown. With national and some provincial borders closed, tourism has all but dried up and the economy is forecast by the World Bank to grow by an anemic 2.8% this year. Xinjiang has been hit especially hard because of sanctions brought against some of its officials and products over human rights concerns.

Even without nationally identified criteria, testing and lockdowns have become the norm for tens of millions of people in China from the North Korean border to the South China Sea, as local officials desperately seek to avoid punishment and criticism.

Earlier this year in Shanghai, desperate residents complained of being unable to get medicines or even groceries during a two-month lockdown, while some died in hospitals apparently, "from lack of medical care as the city restricted movement."

All 26 million city residents in China's largest city and financial hub have been ordered to undergo two additional days of testing this week, despite the announcement of just 11 new cases yesterday, none of which showed symptoms. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

# Sri Lanka begins crucial debt restructuring talks with Beijing

**S**RI Lanka's president said yesterday his government has started debt restructuring discussions with China, an important step toward finalizing an International Monetary Fund rescue of the island nation from a severe economic crisis.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe told Parliament that initial talks will continue after China's Communist Party congress, which begins Oct. 16.

Wickremesinghe, who recently returned from a trip to Tokyo, said the Japanese government had agreed to mediate the talks with China.

"China has been supporting us from ancient times and we believe they will do the same in these difficult times," Wickremesinghe said.



Sri Lanka's President Ranil Wickremesinghe in Tokyo

Sri Lanka is nearly bankrupt and has suspended repaying its \$51 billion foreign debt, of which it must repay \$28 billion by 2027.

Sri Lanka has reached

a preliminary agreement with the IMF for a \$2.9 billion rescue package over four years. Its completion hinges on assurances from Sri Lanka's creditors on debt restructuring.

Separately yesterday, Nandalal Weerasinghe, the governor of Sri Lanka's Central Bank, told reporters that steps have been taken towards debt restructuring.

Sri Lanka has made a presentation to global creditors and held meetings with financial advisors, donor countries and commercial creditors.

The discussions were "going forward," Weerasinghe said. But he declined to discuss the progress of the discussions, saying he prefers to maintain "a radio silence" to avoid affecting markets. An announcement will be made once an agreement is reached, he said.

Sri Lanka borrowed heavily from China over the past decade for infrastructure projects that include a seaport, airport and a city being built on reclaimed land. The projects failed to earn enough revenue to pay for the loans, a factor in Sri Lanka's economic woes.

China is not Sri Lanka's

biggest creditor. It accounts for about 10% of Sri Lanka's loans after Japan and the Asian Development Bank. However, Beijing's assent for restructuring its loans is crucial. It has not committed to any restructuring, though it offered an additional loan.

Meanwhile yesterday, Sri Lanka's Central Bank announced that the country's economy is estimated to have contracted by 4.8 percent in the first half of 2022.

It also said the economy is expected to contract in the second half of 2022 as well due to tighter monetary and fiscal conditions, widespread shortages of various necessities including fuel, food and medicines, and uncertainties for businesses given the lack of accessible financing and foreign exchange. **MDT/AP**

# UN rights body rejects Western bid to debate Xinjiang alleged abuses

JAMEY KEATEN, GENEVA

**I**N a close diplomatic victory for China, the U.N.'s top human rights body yesterday voted down a proposal from Britain, Turkey, the United States and other mostly Western countries to hold a debate on alleged rights abuses against Muslim Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in China's western Xinjiang region.

At the 47-member state Human Rights Council, 17 countries voted in favor, 19 were against, and 11 abstained in a vote to hold a debate on Xinjiang at its next session in March. The vote amounted to a test of political and diplomatic clout between the West and Beijing, and would have marked the first time that China's record on human rights would merit a specific agenda item at the council.

The result, prompting a smattering of applause in the chamber, followed days of diplomatic arm-twisting in Geneva and in many national capitals as leading Western countries tried to



Former U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet

build momentum on a report from former U.N. human rights chief Michelle Bachelet's office, released Aug. 31, which found that possible "crimes against humanity" had occurred in Xinjiang.

A simple majority of voting countries was required.

China locked down "no" votes among its usual allies, plus many African countries and Persian Gulf states Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Somalia was the

only African country, and only member state of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to vote "yes." Turkey is in the OIC, but doesn't have a council seat right now. Argentina, Brazil, India, Malaysia, Mexico and Ukraine were among countries that abstained.

The make-up of the council rotates among U.N. member states each year, and China — a powerful country with a permanent seat on the Security Council — has never been the subject of a country-specific resolution at the council since it was founded more than 16 years ago.

"It's always difficult for countries to vote against a permanent member of the Security Council," said one Western diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

The proposal was for just to hold a debate, with no consistent monitoring of the rights situation, and amounted just about the least intrusive form of scrutiny that the council could seek.

The call stopped short of creating a team of investigators to look into possible crimes in Xinjiang, or appointing a special rapporteur — a tacit acknowledgement by the Western countries that going after increasingly influential China would be a tall order.

Before the vote, Chinese ambassador Chen Xu said Beijing "firmly opposes and categorically rejects" the proposal. He accused Western countries of seeking to turn a "blind eye" to their own issues on human rights and point a finger at others. He insisted that China never gave its support to Bachelet's report, and warned of a bad precedent.

"Today China is targeted," Chen said. "Tomorrow any other developing country could be targeted."

Michele Taylor, the U.S. ambassador, said the request for the debate aimed simply to "provide neutral forum for discussion" that would give China a chance to put its views on record and hear the views of others.

"No country represented here today has a perfect human rights record," she said. "No country, no matter how powerful, should be excluded from council discussions. This includes my country — the United States — and it includes the People's Republic of China." MDT/AP

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ANALYSIS

# North Korean missile launches are a test for Biden

FOSTER KLUG, TOKYO

**A** drumbeat of increasingly powerful North Korean missile launches. A U.S. aircraft carrier floats off the Korean Peninsula. North Korean warplanes buzz the border with South Korea. Worldwide cries of condemnation and worry.

It's a pattern that has repeated many times over the years, and, as in the past, there are plenty of signs in the latest cycle that point to North Korea eventually testing a nuclear bomb.

Yes, this is part of North Korea's dogged march toward building a viable arsenal of nuclear-tipped missiles able to target any city on the U.S. mainland. But the nation's extraordinary run of missile tests this year — its most ever — is also meant to grab the attention of an important, and decidedly distracted, audience of one: Joe Biden.

Washington has responded to the missiles with tough statements and weapons launches of its own in military drills with ally Seoul.

So far, however, there's been little indication that the Biden administration will — or even can — pursue the messy, politically dangerous diplomacy needed to peacefully solve a problem that has bedeviled U.S. presidents for decades.

Yesterday's launches, believed to be two short-range ballistic missiles, were North Korea's sixth round in less than two weeks. On Tuesday, Pyongyang staged its longest-ever launch, sending a missile capable of hitting U.S. military concerns on Guam flying over U.S. ally Japan and into the Pacific.

Later yesterday, North Korea flew 12 warplanes near the Korean border, the world's most heavily armed, prompting South Korea to launch 30 military planes in response.

North Korea is a small, impoverished, widely shunned nation sandwiched between great powers, but it has built, against great odds, its atomic weapons program through tenacity, shrewd political maneuvering and cutthroat persistence.

Each North Korean weapons test does at least three things at once.



It allows Kim Jong Un to show his people that he's a strong leader capable of standing up to foreign aggressors.

His scientists can work on solving the technological issues still holding back the weapons program, including miniaturizing warheads so they fit on an array of missiles and making sure the long-range missiles can smoothly reenter the Earth's atmosphere.

And, perhaps most important, each test sends a clear message that despite all the many problems the Biden administration faces — the war in Ukraine; increasing Chinese aggression; a shaky economy at home — Washington must deal with North Korea as it is. Meaning, a nation that, after many years of striving, is on the edge of being a legitimate nuclear power, and not one that has shown any recent signs of being willing to abandon its nuclear weapons.

Long-term, Kim likely wants U.S. recognition that North Korea is a full nuclear state. Negotiations could then arrange a North Korean roll-back of parts of its weapons program in return for lifting crippling international sanctions and eventually signing a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War.

Further down the road, North Korea wants the nearly 30,000 U.S. forces in South Korea to leave, opening the way for its eventual control of the peninsula.

In the short term, Pyongyang has maintained that talks can't happen unless Washington abandons its "hostility." Presumably, this means economic sanctions,

the presence of those U.S. troops and their annual military drills with South Korean soldiers that the North sees as invasion preparation.

It is unclear, however, how patient Kim can afford to be.

The North's economy, never great, appears to be worse than at any time in Kim's rule, after three years of some of the tightest border controls in the world during the pandemic, crushing sanctions, natural disasters and government mismanagement.

Its weapons tests may be a move to force more favorable conditions in future talks.

Something similar happened after a sequence of long-range missile and nuclear tests during the Trump administration that had many fearing war.

Donald Trump staged face-to-face summits with Kim in 2018-19 aimed at convincing North Korea to give up its nuclear program in return for economic and political benefits. These ultimately failed, with North Korea refusing to go far enough in its disarmament pledges.

After taking office last year, Biden signaled a rejection of both Trump's personal diplomacy with Kim and Barack Obama's more hands-off "strategic patience" policy, in favor of a more incremental approach, where the North gave up parts of its program in return for benefits and sanctions relief.

The goal, however, remained the same: North Korea's total denuclearization. A growing number of analysts believe that this might now be impossible, as Kim likely sees a completed nuclear weapons program as his sole guarantee

for regime survival.

In the meantime, confrontation rules the day.

For the second time in two weeks Washington has sent the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier to waters east of South Korea, a move North Korea called "a serious threat to the stability of the situation on the Korean Peninsula."

The United States and South Korea responded this week to the missiles with their own land-to-land ballistic missiles and precision-guided bombs dropped from fighter jets.

As the Biden administration considers next steps, it is closely watching how North Korea's weapons tests influence its allies in Northeast Asia.

When the North fired its midrange missile over Japan on Tuesday, there were moments of panic as sirens alerted residents in northern Japan to evacuate, train service stopped and newspapers put out special editions.

In South Korea, whose capital Seoul is about an hour's drive from the inter-Korean border, each progression in the North's nuclear program raises doubts about Washington's pledge of nuclear protection, leading to calls for an indigenous nuclear program.

The question for some in Seoul is: If North Korea threatens to hit U.S. cities with its nuclear-armed missiles, will Washington really step in should Pyongyang attack?

Looking ahead, then, expect more missile tests — and, possibly, just in time for crucial U.S. midterm elections in November, a nuclear explosion — as North Korea continues to maneuver in its long face-off with Washington and its allies. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 2001 US LAUNCHES AIR STRIKES AGAINST TALEBAN



The United States has begun its military campaign, Operation Enduring Freedom, against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Cruise missiles and bombers have targeted the airports of Kandahar and Kabul and terrorist training camps near Jalalabad.

The attacks which began around 1630 GMT were quickly followed by a public broadcast from President Bush who promised a "sustained and relentless" campaign.

The Taliban has condemned the strikes and says it shot down a plane, a claim denied by the Americans.

Up to 50 cruise missiles are reported to have been launched from submarines in the Arabian Sea.

The US also flew in B52 bombers stationed on the island of Diego Garcia, and B2 Stealth bombers direct from the US itself.

Tony Blair confirmed the initial strikes involved a British contribution by HMS Illustrious and a small number of submarines.

They form part of a US-British naval coalition gathered in the region within striking distance of Afghanistan, including two US aircraft carriers.

Speaking at a news conference, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, said key targets would be terrorist training camps and Taliban communications, fighter planes and air defence installations.

But the Pentagon says it will be mounting operations from the air and the ground, and defence experts say special forces are likely to be used soon into the campaign.

In his broadcast, George Bush underlined America's commitment to pursue terrorism in light of the events of 11 September.

He warned there was "no neutral ground" and that any government sponsoring terrorism would be taking a "lonely path at their own peril."

The US administration has repeatedly rejected Taliban offers to bargain over the fate of its guest, Saudi-born militant Osama Bin Laden.

The al-Qaeda leader, who is accused of plotting the 11 September attacks, also released a speech to time with the strikes.

In a message delivered to Al-Jazeera television, an Arabic news channel, he sought to portray the bombing as part of a wider war of two sides, the "side of faith, and the side of infidelity".

Tony Blair pledged Britain's commitment to the campaign and stressed it would be fought on three fronts - military, diplomatic and humanitarian.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The strikes were the first retaliatory response to the 11 September 2001 terror attacks in which nearly 3,000 people died.

The key objectives were to stop Afghanistan from remaining a terrorist haven and to find Osama Bin Laden.

Within three months, the Taliban were effectively ousted. With help from the Northern Alliance, an army of rebel Afghan factions, coalition forces have been hunting down al-Qaeda militants, but Bin Laden has not been found.

A US-friendly Afghan administration is in place until 2004. International forces are helping to maintain order in Kabul, but warlords maintain powerbases in the regions.

Human rights abuses are high and heroin production is up.

Estimates of civilian deaths in Afghanistan vary between several hundred and several thousand.





MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

DRIVE IN

# IN 'TÁR,' CATE BLANCHETT IS A MAESTRO AT WORK

JAKE COYLE, MDT/AP

**T**IME is the thing," says Lydia Tár (Cate Blanchett) in Todd Fields' "Tár."

Lydia, a world-renown conductor, is explaining her art as more than waving a baton around — not a mere "human metronome" — but rather an almost god-like ability to mold and contort time. The way Blanchett says this, with her arms swirling and shaping the air like clay, makes you believe, yes, she really can stop time.

But in "Tár" — a movie that likewise measures and sculpts moments with intense precision — time may be catching up with Lydia. She would seem impervious to downfall. Just after the opening credits roll, Lydia is there on a gleaming New York stage before a rapt audience being interviewed at length, and with almost oppressive accuracy for such fawning exchanges, by The New Yorker's Adam Gopnik (as himself). Her listed accomplishments — conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, protégée of Leonard Bernstein, a glass ceiling-shattering figure of the classical music world, an EGOT-winner



Cate Blanchett in a scene from "Tár"

with a new memoir, "Tár on "Tár," out — are as impressive as her regal, polished stage presence.

Yet an introductory, fleeting moment of a phone camera pointed at an asleep Lydia, with mocking texts filling the screen, presages that the conductor's rarified perch may be in jeopardy. "Tár," which opens in theaters Friday, is situated in a very real high-art, big-media world. The spaces Lydia occupies are crisply contemporary architectures. The film is shot by Florian Hoffmeister with a cool, almost documentary-like perspective. It's in these chilly, highbrow environs that Lydia ope-

rates with exquisite intellect and ruthless cunning — and Blanchett gives a colossal tour-de-force performance that may be the finest of her career, a career as decorated as Lydia's.

"Tár," written and directed by Fields, is, itself, distinguished by time. It's Fields' first film in 16 years.

Into it he funnels a gripping portrait of power and art, rigorous and devastating in its exactitude, while impressively less definite about a host of hot-button issues like so-called cancel culture, identity politics and #MeToo.

But though Lydia's mounting

issues — whispers about her propensity to groom young female players as her lovers; the suicide of a former trainee conductor following Lydia's blacklisting of her; a young daughter (Mila Bogojevic) she leaves largely for her wife and philharmonic concertmaster (the brilliant Nina Hoss) to care for — are increasingly public, "Tár" is a thoroughly intimate film. We follow Lydia's every move with a mix of awe (she is genuinely brilliant), curiosity (how much can she get away with?) and wonder. Just how deeply connected is Lydia's cruelty to her genius?

The answers Fields supplies

are not always satisfying, but for much of the film, he and Blanchett orchestrate a mesmerizing character study. The first such beguiling scene places Lydia, who describes herself off-handedly as "a U-Haul lesbian," as a guest lecturer at Julliard with aspiring conductors. One describes himself as "a BIPOC pangender person" who is "not into Bach." He shakes as Lydia, calmly tears into him as "a robot." "Don't be so eager to be offended," she says.

Just how deeply connected is Lydia's cruelty to her genius?

A testament to the deft balance Fields strikes for much of the film's running time, demurring judgement of Lydia and declining to saddle her with the expected art-vs-artist commentaries. But above all, it's because Blanchett has created such a symphony of a character, one that uses every trick and tone of her vast repertoire, that any wrong note jars. The word I'm looking for is "maestro."

"Tár," a Focus Features release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for some language and brief nudity. Running time: 158 minutes.★★★★★

AD



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TASTE OF EDESIA

# Violet Hour at The St. Regis

IRENE SAM, MDT

**C**ELEBRATING the art of drinking and paying homage to the legacy of the original House of Astor, **The St. Regis New York, The St. Regis Macao** features a selection of 40 cocktail recipes inspired by five New York neighborhoods, merging the stylish charm of Manhattan with unique local infusions to create exquisite original creations, as well as the “Violet Hour”, a dedicated ritual to celebrate the end of the day and the beginning of the evening, when the sky is purple and talented bartenders can be found throwing martinis. In the luxurious setting of The St. Regis Bar while jazz tunes play softly in the background, the Violet Hour Martini is made on the spot and each guest at the bar is invited for a taster to whet their appetites for more. In addition to the Violet Hour Martini are the Churchill and Vesper Martinis, each a unique representation and symbol of refinement.

The “Violet Hour” ritual was ins-

pired by “The Hour: A Cocktail Manifesto” by American author Bernard DeVoto, which highlights the transition from day to evening, welcoming the endless possibilities of the night. St. Regis seeks to transcend the ordinary of every day; and the “Violet Hour” ushers in the sights of a theatric cocktail throwing ritual by talented bartenders. Both delicately thrown, the signature **Violet Hour Martini** elevates gin, aromatized wine, orange and violette liqueurs and orange bitters into a delicious work of drinkable art; while the **Churchill Martini**, a reflection of the man himself, promotes spirit purity and showcases the complex aromas and characteristics of today’s premium gins. Made famous by James Bond, the **Vesper Martini** is “shaken, not stirred”, and is a slightly sweet but botanical concoction to satisfy both gin and vodka drinkers. All three “Violet Hour” martinis are served in bespoke glassware specially designed for St. Regis based on the early sketch from Bernard DeVoto’s work.



## Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



### THE NANCHANG 1510 METRES SAND


2022-10-08|Sat|14:00

**W**HO Fancies You from M.C Tam’s yard caught the eye in his work recently, although he has no win record in all his Macau outings, but I believe it wouldn’t been far off for a success for his connection. Looking closely on his race records **Who Fancies You** have placed in the money several times notably all of them on sand; his trainer enter him again this Saturday in a sand race with favourable condition to suit, clearly he wish to oblige his connection with a long overdue success. **Who Fancies You** should be competitive among this grade, again his return on your bets should be quite handsome as envisaged with a 10 pound claimer in A. Liu in the saddle.

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**OPINION**

**Multipolar World**

Jorge Costa Oliveira



**HOW TO FIGHT THE 'FRATELLI' OF THE ANTI-SYSTEM**

The growth of the far right in Europe is causing hysteria and conceptual misunderstandings.

They are ultranationalist, sovereigntist, racist, intolerant of immigrants and refugees, and advocate for the primacy of public security. They take anti-scientific positions and uphold a return to ultra-conservative values ("God, Motherland, Family"). However, none of these parties has advocated for the end of the democratic regime.

After decades of governance by "power parties", many European citizens are now dissatisfied with the results, and their frustration with the "system" has become increasingly widespread.

This frustration fosters disenchantment with the institutions representing the "system" and has paved the way for anti-system movements. Regardless of the formal flags - from xenophobia to security advocacy to outright patriotism - what truly fuels these anti-system movements is a reaction to a "system" that does not solve problems.

A system that excludes so many citizens from the hope of a dignified life, increasingly exhausted in their expectation of a more prosperous society, with more solidarity, with more equality of opportunity, with better governance of public affairs. As a result, given the system's impotence in improving political representation and the functioning of the regime, more and more citizens are distancing themselves from political discussion, and electoral abstention has been on the rise in Europe.

Then there are the concrete fears of many European workers of job losses because of the relocation of plants and production units due to globalization. For other European citizens, the risk of change of the social fabric as a result [of the perception] of significant influx of culturally, religiously, linguistically and socially different people fuels phobias and promotes extremist reactions.

Low disposable income, increasing social inequalities, and the proletarianization of large sectors of the society (especially among young people) have also increased the dissatisfaction of many European citizens.

The anti-system parties have discovered an untapped niche here. The anti-system left movements are no longer an alternative, given the failure of Marxism-Leninism. The "green" movements have abandoned radicalism to fight for environmental protection from within the system, from within the government.

Citizens who want a change in political governance and are fed up with the alternation between center-right and center-left parties end up converging on these extreme right-wing parties.

In the countries in which they currently rule it is clear that these extremists can do no better in solving society's problems. In a few years this will also be clear in Sweden and Italy.

We need to make the system work better, solve citizens' problems, increase people's disposable income, and promote capable and efficient political elites to run the republic. Either the liberal-democratic political leaders - who are still the majority in Europe - reform the system and make it work effectively, or this disenchantment will continue to catalyze the gradual erosion of the credibility of liberal democratic regimes.

In the meantime, let this ridiculous and inconsequential hysteria end.

[linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira)

**AS SUPPORT SAGS, DANISH PRIME MINISTER CALLS NOV. 1 ELECTION**

**THE BUZZ**

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen called a general election for Nov. 1, seven months ahead of the end of her term in office.

Frederiksen, who has headed a minority government since June 2019, has seen her popularity dwindle due to her role in a pandemic-related decision to wipe out Denmark's captive mink population.

The early parliamentary election will select members of the 179-seat Folketing. Polls show the center-left bloc led by her Social Democratic Party is neck-and-neck with the center-right opposition, which includes parties that want to reduce immigration.

"We want a broad government with parties on both sides of the political middle," Frederiksen said as she announced the election. She admitted that "it is, of course, peculiar to have a general election in the middle of an international crisis."

In June, a Danish Parliament-appointed commission harshly criticized Frederiksen's government for its decision to cull millions of healthy mink at the height of the coronavirus pandemic to protect humans from a mutation of the virus.

Frederiksen became Denmark's youngest prime minister when she took office at age 41.

**37 DEAD, MOSTLY PRESCHOOLERS, IN THAI DAY CARE RAMPAGE**



In this image taken from video, a distraught woman is comforted outside the site of an attack at a daycare center, yesterday, in the town of Nongbua Lamphu

**TASSANEE VEJPONGSA**

A former policeman burst into a day care center in northeastern Thailand on Thursday, killing dozens of children and teachers and then firing on more people as he fled in the deadliest rampage in the nation's history.

The assailant, who authorities said was fired from the force earlier this year because of a drug offense, took his own life after killing his own wife and child at home.

A witness said staff at the day care locked the door when they saw the assailant approaching with a gun, but he shot his way in. In footage posted online after the attack, frantic family members could be heard weeping outside the day care, and one image showed the floor of one room smeared with blood and sleeping mats scattered about. Pictures of the alphabet and other colorful decorations adorned the walls.

At least 37 people were killed in the attack, according to police spokesman Archayon Kraithong. Another 12 people were wounded. At least 24 of the dead were children, mostly preschoolers.

"The teacher who died, she had a child in her arms," a witness, whose name wasn't given, told Thailand's Kom Chad Luek television at the scene. "I didn't think he would kill children, but he shot at the door and shot right through it."

Police identified the suspect as 34-year-old former police officer Panya Kamrap. Police Maj. Gen. Paisal Luesomboon told PPTV in an interview that he was fired from the force earlier this year because of drug-related offenses.

In the attack he used multiple weapons, including a handgun, a shotgun and a knife, Paisal said.

Local police chief Damrongsak Kittiprapha told reporters that the suspect was a sergeant on the force before he was fired, and that the main weapon he used was a 9mm pistol that he had purchased himself.

"We are still investigating all of this and have to learn from it," he said. "Today is the first day and we don't have all the details."

Police have not given a full breakdown of the death toll, but they have said at least 22 children and two adults were killed at the day care in the northeastern Thai town of

Nongbua Lamphu.

Firearm-related deaths in Thailand are much lower than in countries like the United States and Brazil, but higher than in countries like Japan and Singapore that have strict gun control laws. The rate of firearms related deaths in 2019 was about 4 per 100,000, compared with about 11 per 100,000 in the U.S. and nearly 23 per 100,000 in Brazil.

Last month, a clerk shot co-workers at Thailand's Army War College in Bangkok, killing two and wounding another before he was arrested.

The country's previous worst mass shooting involved a disgruntled soldier who opened fire in and around a mall in the northeastern city of Nakhon Ratchasima in 2020, killing 29 people and holding off security forces for some 16 hours before eventually being killed by them.

Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, who was to travel to the town today, told reporters that initial reports were that the former officer was having personal problems.

"This shouldn't happen," he said. "I feel deep sadness toward the victims and their relatives." **MDT/AP**



**Lebanon** A judge yesterday fined and issued a six-month travel ban to a woman who stormed her bank with a fake pistol and took her trapped savings to cover her sister's cancer treatment. Lebanon's cash-strapped banks have imposed strict limits on withdrawals of foreign currency since 2019, tying up the savings of millions of people. About three-quarters of the population has slipped into poverty as the tiny Mediterranean country's economy continues to spiral. The Lebanese pound has lost 90% of its value against the dollar.



**Russia** launched missiles that hit apartment buildings in the southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia, a local official said yesterday, killing three people and wounding at least 12 in a region that houses Europe's biggest nuclear power plant and which Moscow illegally annexed. The two strikes, the first before dawn and another in the morning, damaged more than 40 buildings, local authorities said. The attacks came just hours after Ukraine's president announced that the country's military had retaken three more villages in another of the four regions annexed by Russia.



**Europe** The leaders of 44 European countries stretching from Iceland all the way to Turkey met yesterday in what many said was a united stand against Russia's war on Ukraine, as an energy crisis and high inflation fueled by the conflict wreak havoc on their economies. The inaugural summit of the European Political Community involves the 27 European Union member countries, aspiring partners in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, as well as neighbors like Britain — the only country to have left the EU — and Turkey.