



90% OF THE 361 OPINIONS OBTAINED BY THE GOVERNMENT OPPOSE CONSTRUCTING HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS AT THE FORMER COTTON MILLS IN TAIPA P4

DOUBLE-ROUND OF MASS TESTING FINDS ZERO P2

AIR MACAU HAS INCREASED THE NUMBER OF FLIGHTS BETWEEN MAINLAND AND MACAU BY 41% WITH THE RESUMPTION OF EVISAS P4

AP PHOTO



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said at an international fleet review yesterday that his country urgently needs to strengthen its military capabilities as security risks increase including threats from North Korea's nuclear and missile advancement and Russia's war on Ukraine. Eighteen warships from 12 countries participated in the review, including the United States, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Singapore and South Korea, while the U.S. and France also sent warplanes.

AP PHOTO



South Korea Two miners who were rescued after being trapped deep underground for nine days said they had lived on instant coffee powder and water falling from the ceiling of a blocked shaft. The two men, aged 62 and 56, were pulled out to safety on Friday night from the shaft at a zinc mine in the southeastern town of Bonghwa. They had been stranded there after a heap of earth fell and clogged the entrance of the shaft about 190 meters underground on Oct. 26.

AP PHOTO



Iran's powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Guard on Saturday launched a new satellite-carrying rocket, state TV reported, seeking to demonstrate the hard-line force's prowess even as anti-government protests rage across the country. Iranian state TV said the Guard successfully launched the solid-fueled rocket and aired dramatic footage of the rocket blasting off from a desert launch pad into a cloudy sky. The report did not reveal the location, which resembled Iran's northeastern Shahroud Desert.

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NO WAY OUT

Beijing quashes rumors of relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions; Macau authorities blame the elderly for the continuing policy in the SAR P2

LYNZY VALLES



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PORTUGUESE CONSULATE INFORMATION BEING SOUGHT ON CITIZEN CHARGED UNDER HK'S SEDITION LAW P3

BACK TO ZERO

CITY RESUMES NORMALCY AS DOUBLE-ROUND OF MASS TESTING FINDS NO CASES

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU has now returned to the previous pandemic prevention state after two consecutive rounds of citywide mass testing failed to detect a single positive result, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center has announced.

In the second round of nucleic acid tests (NATs), which took place last Friday and Saturday, over 660,000 samples were collected. The purely negative results indicate that there are no cases of Covid-19 in Macau.

Evaluating the work related to the response to this potential outbreak, the center considered the prevention work very effective. It noted that two of the 10 cases involved were imported cases related to people who frequently travel between Zhuhai and Macau. The remaining eight cases were



detected in isolation and were among close contacts, "which effectively prevented the disease from spreading within the community."

"After a comprehensive analysis, the center announces that Macau is resuming [a normal level] of pandemic prevention," health authorities said while calling on people to continue to pay close attention to the pandemic situation as the "pandemic situation around the globe remains severe," the center noted in a statement.

HOME ADDRESS ON HEALTH CODE TO MOVE TO 'MANUAL MODE'

In an effort to prevent false yellow or red health codes being given due to old or incorrect addresses being registered in the Macau Health Code system, health authorities have announced that from November 9 (Wednesday) it will no longer collect address information automatically from the Identification Services Bureau. People using this option should, before

this day, input their updated home addresses manually in the health code system.

The bureau explained that the measure was necessary to comply with the government's "zone-specific, multi-level targeted approach to pandemic prevention and control."

For those with difficulties in using and updating the system, the Social Welfare Bureau will assist them at its social service centers, the center noted.

COVID-19

CHINESE OFFICIALS SIGNAL NO CHANGE TO 'ZERO-COVID' POLICY

CHINESE health officials gave no indication Saturday of any relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, following several days of speculation that the government was considering changes to a "zero-COVID" approach that has stymied economic growth and disrupted daily life.

The officials said at a news conference that they would "unswervingly" stick to the policy, which seeks to stop cases from coming into the country and snuff out outbreaks as they are uncovered.

The announcement was not a surprise and doesn't preclude the possibility that discussions are taking place behind closed doors. But there has been no official confirmation of talks, and most analysts believe any change will be gradual with major easing unlikely until sometime next year.

The speculation rallied stock markets in China this week, with investors as well as the public latching onto any hints of possible change.

Anyone entering China must quarantine at a designated hotel for seven to 10 days. People in the country line up several times a week to get a virus test at outdoor booths, to meet a requirement for a negative result within the last 72 hours to enter office buildings, shopping malls, restaurants, parks and other public places.

Tuo Jia, a National Health Commission official, acknowledged complaints in some cities about the zealous enforcement of the zero-COVID policy and said that local authorities need to balance epidemic prevention with economic development.

"We must conduct prevention and control resolutely, decisively, scientifically and accurately, and resolutely clean up and stop all forms of simplification, a one-size-fits-all approach and excessive local measures," she said.

Scattered outbreaks across the country continue to prompt travel restrictions and lockdowns. China on Saturday reported identifying about 3,500 new cases the previous day, including about 3,000 who tested positive despite not having any COVID-19 symptoms.

In the city of Guangzhou in the southeast, Haizhu district suspended bus and subway service for three days and urged residents to stay home as it conducts mass testing of its 1.8 million people. One person per household is allowed out each day to shop for necessities. MDT/AP

ZERO-COVID

Authorities blame the elderly for the continuing policy

LYNZY VALLES



RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL health authorities identify the unsatisfactory vaccination rate of the elderly and those with chronic diseases as the reason for maintaining the "zero-Covid" policy in Macau, the coordinator of the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Leong Iek Hou said at Saturday's briefing.

Questioned on the topic by the media, Leong explained that the need to maintain the policy is related to the "still less than high"

vaccination rate among the elderly and the people with chronic diseases, "which is about 60%, so there is a risk that a large number of infected people in Macau will create a burden to the health system. We need to continue this measure of 'dynamic zero-cases' and do more prevention work. When we are better prepared and the key groups have a higher vaccination rate or medicines to cure the disease, we will adjust our prevention measures," she concluded.

According to the most up-to-date vaccination records, almost 89% of the population of Macau has received at least two doses of a vaccine against Covid-19 and, from those, 48% of the population has received three or more doses of the vaccine.

The same authorities admit that the vaccination rate of those currently in Macau could be higher if taking into account those who were vaccinated in the mainland or other countries and regions, calling on the public to register in the local system vaccinations taken abroad.

For the time being, authorities know that from the 1.6 million doses of vaccines recorded in the local system, over 48,000 were inoculated outside Macau.

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Cash handout to be retained next year with estimated GGR at MOP130b

ANTHONY LAM

IN the proposed budget for next year, the government is retaining the cash handout at MOP10,000 and estimates the gross gambling revenue (GGR) at MOP130 billion.

The budget proposal, which must pass through parliament, has been uploaded without fanfare by the legislative body to its website. A plenary meeting will be held November 10 for the first reading of the bill.

As of press time, no breakdown for the budget had been announced.

The government highlighted that the budget will be the third deficit budget in three years, meaning that the forecast income would not afford the year's spending. Despite all government entities being ordered to shrink expenditure, the government has also decided to extend its policy of retaining certain social welfare and expanding investments in public projects.

Taxes will either be waived or lowered in the coming year. For example, revenue tax, stamp taxes for insurance contracts, bank businesses, auctions and performances, as well as for advertisement or promotional material

RENATO MARQUES



placements or posting will be waived. Tourism tax will also be waived for restaurants.

Professional tax will be lowered for 30% with a tax exemption level at MOP144,000. Meanwhile, 60% of the professional tax paid by Macau residents in 2021 will be refunded, with a ceiling at MOP14,000.

All tax waiver, reduction and refund amounts will equate to an estimated MOP2.8 billion.

Apart from the cash handout, the government will also retain a series of financial subsidies, including but not limited to medical vouchers, electricity subsidies for residential units and continuing education subsidies. The general financial support

will cost an estimated MOP8.4 billion.

Subsidies per application, such as student and elderly subsidies, are estimated to cost about MOP12.5 billion, raising the price tag for financial support to MOP20.9 billion.

On this ground, the government proposes to withdraw about MOP35.6 billion from the city's fiscal reserves to even out the budget. As of this year's third quarter, the city has MOP563 billion in fiscal reserves, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong told the parliament last week.

In its introductory document on the bill, the government defended its optimism on the GGR

estimate with mainland's approval to resume group tours to Macau and e-application for travel endorsement for mainland residents.

Previously, the government has said that the normal travel with the mainland should resume between October to November. However, with Macau having just relaxed after a small outbreak and nearby Guangzhou having an outbreak that is described by provincial government officials as the worst in three years, it is unclear if the resumption will happen sooner or later.

Civil servants will see another year of frozen salaries. Current denomination of salary is MOP91.

17TH CONFERENCE OF CHINA-LUSOPHONE FORUM MACAO

The China-Lusophone Economic and Trade Forum (Macao) has recently held its 17th conference in Beijing, China, with the participation of its secretary-general, Ji Xianzheng, the ambassadors of numerous Lusophone countries, as well as officials from the mainland and Macau governments. At the meeting, Ji reviewed the body's work in the previous year and the first three quarters of 2022, as well as previewing the work planned for the fourth quarter. In addition, representatives at the Forum applauded the convening of the special ministerial meeting held in Macau. The fight against Covid-19 was also discussed.

PUBLIC HOSPITAL RESUMES NORMAL VISITING HOURS

As the city reinstates Covid-19 prevention status, the public Conde de São Januário Hospital has resumed normal visitation hours. Over the weekend, the hospital lifted the requirement for a SARS-CoV-2 rapid antigen test (RAT) to be completed on entry. Normal wards will accept visitors daily between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. as well as 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., while emergency wards will accept visitors between 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. as well as between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. The hospital discourages visits from those younger than five years of age. Other disease control measures, such as health code presentations and footprint recording, are continuing.

DAYCARE FACILITIES RESUME NORMAL OPERATIONS

The Social Welfare Bureau has announced that, due to Macau reinstating regular Covid-19 controls, daycare facilities may resume normal operations. This refers to visitation by friends and family members. Such facilities, the bureau added, include but are not limited to elderly homes and rehabilitation centers. Additionally, service users will also be permitted to briefly exit these facilities. The bureau expressed its gratitude to facility users and the family members, as well as workers at the facilities.

Portuguese Consulate seeking information on citizen charged under sedition law

LYNZY VALLES

THE Consulate General of Portugal in Macau is collaborating with Hong Kong authorities after a Portuguese citizen was denied bail after being held in custody in the neighboring region for allegedly "publishing seditious articles online disparaging Beijing and local authorities."

Portugal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is said to be "aware that a citizen holding a Portuguese passport is being detained in Hong Kong."

An official government source said, "at the moment, the ministry, through the Consulate General of Portugal in Macau, is



working with Hong Kong authorities to ascertain more facts, as well as informing the family, with whom we have made contact."

Joseph John, holder of a Portuguese passport, lives in London and is a project engineer at the Royal

College of Music.

Recently, according to a report issued by the South China Morning Post (SCMP), he traveled back to Hong Kong to take care of his mother who was suffering from dementia.

During this time he alle-

gedly published posts that authorities have deemed to have seditious intent on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram and website of the Hong Kong Independence Party – a website that was deregistered in

November 2018 after being created in 2014.

According to SCMP, John faces a charge of conspiracy to do an act or acts with seditious intent over allegedly offensive statements and pictures posted on the website of the Hong Kong Independence Party, as well as the group's accounts on four social media platforms, from October 9 to November 1 this year.

Media reports noted that Hong Kong prosecutors have asked for the case to be delayed for 12 weeks, until January 26, so that police can inspect John's three mobile phones, his laptop computer and his bank account.

MACAU BUSINESSES HEAD FOR CIIE IN SHANGHAI

Delegates from 35 enterprises in China's Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) headed for Shanghai on Friday to attend the fifth China International Import Expo (CIIE). The enterprises cover industries ranging from conventions and exhibitions, finance, science and technology, e-commerce and catering to manufacturing and logistics, according to the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute. About a quarter of the 35 enterprises were attending the expo for the first time, the institute added. The delegation will work to expand business opportunities through exchanges with other delegates during the CIIE, which is scheduled to be held on Nov. 5-10, said the institute.

BROAD MONEY SUPPLY RETREATS IN SEPTEMBER

Macao's broad money supply retreated by 1.4% month-on-month to 679.7 billion patacas in September 2022, the SAR's monetary watchdog said. According to statistics released by the Monetary Authority of Macao, currency in circulation and demand deposits dropped 2.4% and 5.5%, respectively. According to the data, resident deposits decreased 1.4% from the preceding month to 659.4 billion patacas while non-resident deposits fell by 9.0% to 315.7 billion patacas. Meanwhile, public sector deposits with the banking sector dropped 4.0% to 251.8 billion patacas.

90% OF OPINIONS OPPOSE HIGH-RISE AT FORMER TAIPA COTTON MILLS

ANTHONY LAM

AN overwhelming 90% of the 361 opinions obtained by the government oppose constructing high-rise buildings at the former cotton mills in Taipa.

The 10,313-square-meter plot of land, which is located diagonally opposite the southwestern tip of the Nova Mall and was first designated for a provisional car tire park after the demolition of the former factory buildings, has been rezoned for residential development. A height limit reaching 90 meters at maximum has been issued.

The land was further divided into three subplots, measuring 3,509, 3,579 and 3,225 square meters. A 10-time maximum plot ratio has been allowed.

In the meantime, the Land and Public Works Bureau (DSOP) has run a consultation on the condition drafts concerning the plot of land, with a critical majority to the government's proposal to build residential buildings on the site.

Most opposing opinions emphasize that residential buildings in the neighborhood are quite



densely located. Besides, more residential buildings will put additional stress on the traffic. They will also generate walled and heated island effects, lowering the quality of life in the district.

Even data from a government report on residential housing policies said that 7.7%, or 2,046, of residential housing units located in Central Taipa were

unoccupied. With this, the opinion writer suggests that extra residential units are not necessary in the district.

Opposing opinions argued that, instead of residential units, leisure facilities, such as parks or sporting grounds, are a greater priority. Opinion writers added that the original plan of building a car tire park should be refined, perhaps with the addition of a

parking lot.

Some other opinions suggest that the former cotton mills be conserved and transformed to a cultural area, such as The Mills in Hong Kong and The Pier2 Art Center in Kaohsiung. Although some opinions approve of the residential buildings, many of these submissions proposed a much lower height limit, such as a maximum of 60 meters.

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AIR MACAU TO INCREASE FIGHTS BETWEEN MAINLAND AS TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS EASE

LYNZY VALLES

THE local flag carrier has increased the number of flights between mainland China and Macau with the resumption of group travel visas and eVisas being issued – a move that has long been awaited by the city to boost the economy.

In a statement, Air Macau said up to 5,723 flights have been planned until Spring 2023 to 17 destinations, a surge of 41% year-on-year.

Last year, during the same period, the airline recorded 4,058 trips.

In the upcoming winter season, the airline will make 2,938 flights to and from Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Chengdu, a year-on-year increase of 45%.

The 17 routes between the mainland and Macau in the winter and spring seasons include Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Changzhou, Nantong, Qingdao, Ningbo,



Wenzhou, Yiwu, Tianjin, Taiyuan, Chongqing, Xiamen, Nanning, Zhengzhou route.

The airline also said that it plans to soon open a new Macau-Fuzhou route.

In an announcement made by the National Immigration Administration (NIA), mainland residents can apply for a group travel endorsement and an individual travel endorsement to Macau without the need to submit applications in person from November 1.

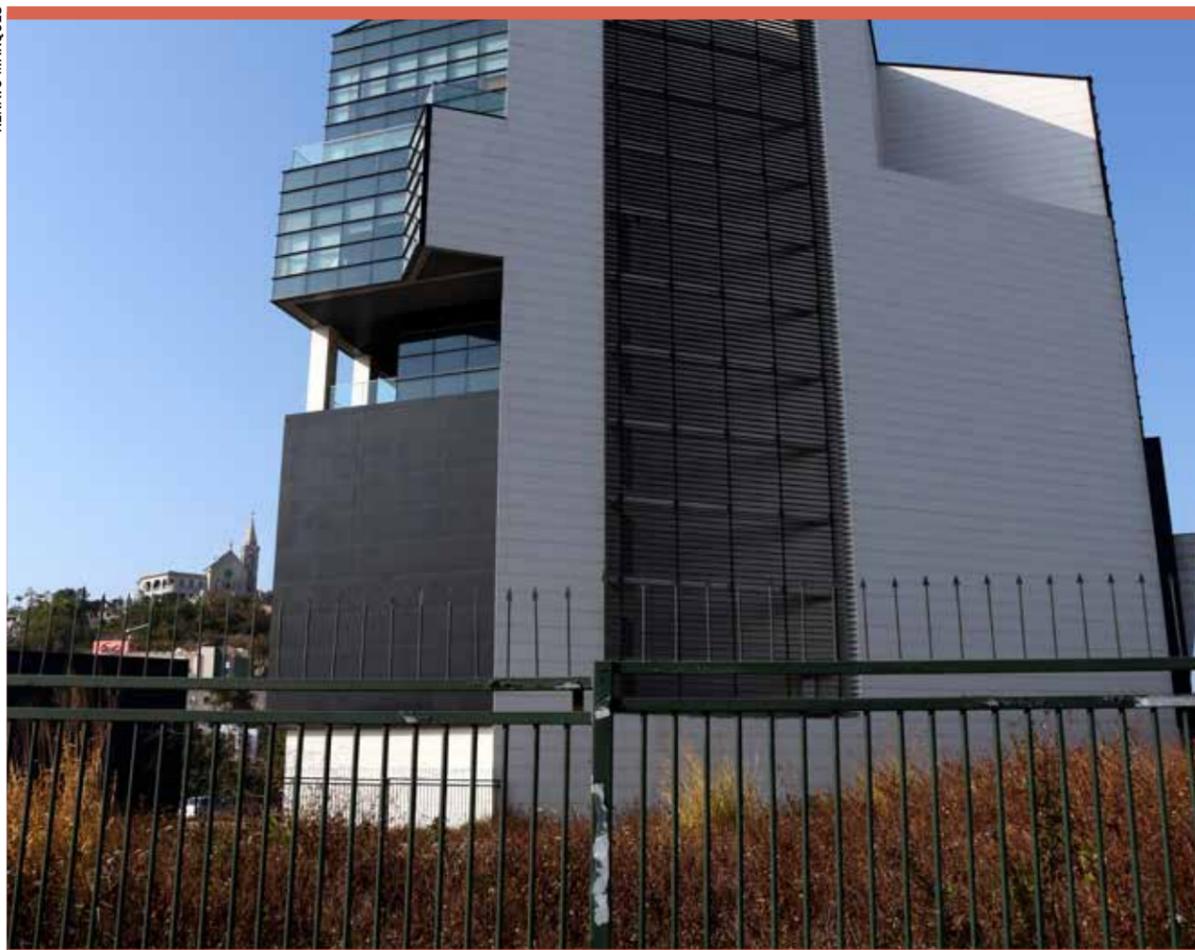
Some travel agencies in

China have unveiled Macau's travel packages in advance. These show the earliest departure date is November 13.

The issuance of these visas considered a great boon for the city's gaming sector, which has been in great turmoil since the start of the pandemic.

In a note, JP Morgan has suggested the issuance of visas will resume for 49 eligible cities, as opposed to the initially announced plan of visas only rolled out in four mainland cities.

RENATO MARQUES



DSSOPT CASE

First day of trial postponed due to absence of 10 defendants

RENATO MARQUES

THE criminal trial involving two former Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) directors (Li Canfeng and Jaime Carion), as well as several well-known local businessmen, opened last Friday but was postponed due to the absence of 10 of the 21 defendants.

The case, which is considered highly important and has received a lot of attention from government and judiciary authorities, has a total of 21 defendants, including the two high officials and the businessmen Sio Tak Hong, Kuan Vai Lam, Ng Lap Seng and Si Tit Sang.

Of those, only the first defendant Li Canfeng, the second defendant Sio Tak Hong and the third defendant Kuan Vai Lam were detained in prison before the trial.

According to infor-

mation from the office of the president of the Court of Final Appeal, 10 of the 21 defendants, including the 12th defendant Jaime Carion, 13th defendant Lei Wai Cheng, 14th defendant Kuong Wan Si, 15th defendant Man Lai Chung, 16th defendant Siu Ka Kuen, 17th defendant Miguel Wu Ka I, 18th Defendant Li Han, 19th Defendant Li Haiyan, 20th Defendant Li Yongfeng and 21st Defendant You Xiaona, have all absconded. This is why the hearing was interrupted and postponed for three weeks. It is scheduled to resume on November 25.

At the hearing on Friday, the first three defendants held in preventive custody were present as well as the fourth defendant Ng Lap Seng, the fifth defendant Si Tit Sang, the sixth defendant Pun Nun Ho, the seventh defendant Ng Kei Nin, eighth defendant Lau Pou Fong, nin-

th defendant Leong Ka I, 10th defendant Huang Qijun and 11th defendant Chor Tin Yin.

Carion and Li are accused of receiving benefits from real estate entrepreneurs and building contractors to illegally assist them in the process of approving and amending construction projects, including the "Project of Alto de Coloane", the "Windsor Arch Project", the "Praia Grande Lot C8 Project", the "Construction Project of Lots TN20 & TN24" and the "Project for the Construction of the Villa in Penha Hill."

The two former government officials are also suspected of having used the illicitly obtained payments to buy a large number of properties as well as other assets, while Li is also accused of providing false information in his declaration of assets and interests, which is mandatory for all high-

-ranking officials.

In addition, defendants Sio, Si, and Li are suspected of helping the defendants Li Han, Li Yongfeng, Chor Tin Yin, and You Xiaona to obtain Macau residence. The residence permits were applied for under provisions for investors in the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute scheme. The suspects are believed to have prepared false documents recording the acquisition of shares in relevant companies.

Besides several counts of corruption and money laundering the two former government officials are also accused of founding and running a secret society in collaboration with the businessmen, dedicated to committing these types of crimes.

The suspects are also suspected of other crimes, including document forgery and making false declarations.

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

Serene Jade Retreat for Fall

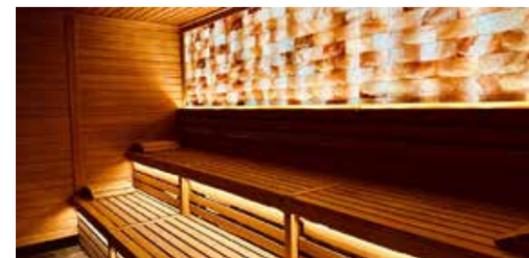
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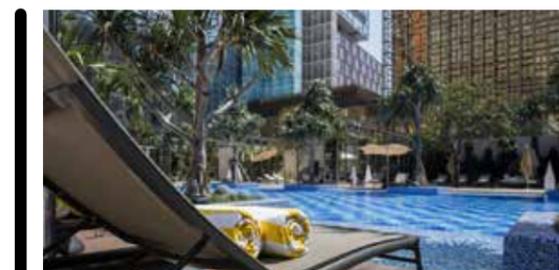
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PUTIN'S WAR

GERMANY'S SCHOLZ URGES XI TO EXERT INFLUENCE ON RUSSIA

IN a much-scrutinized meeting Friday with President Xi Jinping in Beijing, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz urged China to exert its influence on Russia, while the Chinese leader repeated a call for talks between Moscow and Ukraine and warned against the conflict going nuclear.

Scholz was in Beijing for a one-day visit that has drawn criticism over China's support for Russia, lingering controversies over economic ties and human rights issues, as well as the timing of the trip.

It comes after Xi further cemented his authoritarian rule at a major Communist Party congress last month and as China continues to refuse to criticize Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.

Scholz's visit reflects the importance of Germany's trade ties with China, the world's second-largest economy, particularly in the auto and manufacturing sectors. Mercedes Benz alone sold 758,863 cars in China last year, more than in any other country.

Scholz, who traveled with several top German business leaders, received a formal welcome from Xi, who was recently reappointed head of the ruling Communist Party for a third term, at the Great Hall of the People in the heart of Beijing.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, left, meets Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of People in Beijing, China, Friday, Nov. 4, 2022

"At present, the international situation is complex and changeable," Xi was quoted as telling Scholz by state broadcaster CCTV. "As influential powers, China and Germany should work together in times of change and chaos to make more contributions to world peace and development."

On Ukraine, Xi "pointed out that China supports Germany and the EU in playing an important role in promoting peace talks

and promoting the building of a balanced, effective and sustainable European security framework," CCTV reported. That was apparently a nod to Russia's anger over NATO's eastern expansion.

The international community should "create conditions (and) jointly oppose the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons," Xi said.

Scholz is the first leader from the Group of Seven leading in-

dustrialized nations to meet with Xi since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was first detected in China in 2019, and the first European leader to visit China since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which Germany has strongly opposed.

The diplomatically delicate trip came as Germany and the European Union are working on their strategy toward an increasingly assertive and authoritarian China.

Meanwhile on Friday, G-7 diplomats met in Germany to rally support for Ukraine and coalesced around suspicion of China's increasing assertiveness amid a wide range of global crises.

Beijing has provided Moscow with diplomatic backing by repeatedly calling for peace talks while refusing to support measures at the United Nations criticizing Russia's invasion. It has also accused the U.S. and NATO of provoking the attack and scathingly criticized economic sanctions imposed on Russia.

In his opening remarks, Scholz referred directly to the conflict that has created millions of refugees and upended world food and energy markets, saying, "We come together at a time of great tension."

"In particular, I want to highlight the Russian war against Ukraine, which poses many problems for our rules-based world order," Scholz said.

Scholz also touched on global hunger, climate change and developing-world debt as important issues.

At a later news conference, Scholz said he told Xi that "it's important for China to exert its influence on Russia." He gave no details on what the West wanted China to do.

"President Xi and I agree that nuclear threats are irresponsible and highly dangerous. By using nuclear weapons, Russia would cross a line that the international community has drawn together," he said. **MDT/AP**

Beijing marathon returns but China sticks to 'zero-Covid'

KEN MORITSUGU,
BEIJING

THOUSANDS of runners took to the streets of China's capital yesterday for the return of the Beijing marathon after a two-year COVID-19 hiatus, even as another death blamed on China's strict pandemic controls generated more public anger.

Authorities are trying to restore a sense of normalcy while sticking to a "zero-COVID" strategy that locks down neighborhoods when any virus cases are found and quarantines everyone arriving from overseas in hotels for seven to 10 days.

A simmering public frustration, which has grown as the rest of the world opens up, has been fueled by a series of tragic incidents — in several cases because people were denied timely care for non-COVID-19 medical emergencies.

An investigation report



released yesterday by authorities in Hohhot, the capital of China's Inner Mongolia region, blamed property management and community staff for not acting quickly enough to prevent the death of a 55-year-old woman in a sealed building after being told she had suicidal tendencies.

The woman fell from her 12th floor apartment

on Friday evening. Public outrage over her death and her adult daughter's frantic attempts to get help earlier and then get out of the barricaded building immediately afterward prompted the investigation. The building had been locked down after two COVID-19 cases were found about 10 days ago.

The woman's death

followed that of a 3-year-old boy earlier last week from a gas leak at his locked-down residential compound in the city of Lanzhou in northwestern China.

In contrast, the mood was upbeat at the Beijing marathon. Participation was limited to city residents, apart from some invited runners. China's state media said that 30,000 people

took part. They had to be vaccinated, not leave Beijing for seven days before the event and show proof of a negative virus test in the previous 24 hours.

Marathons are also planned later this month in Shanghai and Chengdu, a major city in southwestern China.

The death toll has been relatively low in China — 5,226 by the official count — and most people can move about relatively freely within their cities with little chance of contracting COVID-19.

But lockdowns of residential complexes and even larger areas can happen anytime, with little or no warning. All the visitors to Shanghai Disney had to remain in the park to get tested when it was suddenly closed under anti-virus regulations last week.

There is also the inconvenience of having to get a throat swab test every few

days to be allowed to enter office buildings, shopping malls and other public places. And people who leave Beijing risk not being allowed to return for a week if an outbreak occurs where they traveled to.

National health officials have repeatedly stressed that local authorities need to take targeted pandemic measures that minimize economic disruption and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. But local officials also face possible punishment if an outbreak spirals under their watch.

"Since the outbreak of the epidemic, although we have made every effort to protect the lives, health and safety of the people, such unfortunate incidents still occurred," concluded the investigation into the death of the woman who fell from her apartment in Inner Mongolia. "We will draw a profound lesson from this incident." **MDT/AP**

STRAIT TENSIONS

N. Korea fires more missiles as US flies bombers over South

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

NORTH Korea added to its recent barrage of weapons demonstrations by launching four ballistic missiles into the sea on Saturday, as the United States sent two supersonic bombers streaking over South Korea in a dueling display of military might that underscored rising tensions in the region.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said that the four short-range missiles fired from a North Korean western coastal area around noon flew about 130 kilometers toward the country's western sea.

The North has test-fired more than 30 missiles this week, including an intercontinental ballistic missile on Thursday that triggered evacuation alerts in northern Japan, and flew large numbers of warplanes inside its territory in an angry reaction to a massive combined aerial exercise between the United States and South Korea.

The South Korean military said two B-1B bombers trained with four U.S. F-16 fighter jets and four South Korean F-35 jets during the last day of the "Vigilant Storm" joint air force drills that wraps up Saturday. It marked the first time since December 2017 that the bombers were deployed to the Korean Peninsula. The exercise involved around 240 warplanes, including advanced F-35 fighter jets from both countries.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry late Friday described the coun-



Two U.S. Air Force B-1B bombers, top center, four South Korean Air Force F-35 fighter jets and four US Air Force F-16 fighter jets fly over South Korea Peninsula during a joint air drill called "Vigilant Storm," in South Korea, Saturday

try's military actions this week as an appropriate response to the exercise, which it called a display of U.S. "military confrontation hysteria." It said North Korea will respond with the "toughest counteraction" to any attempts by "hostile forces" to infringe on its sovereignty or security interests.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the participation of the B-1Bs in the joint drills demonstrated the allies' readiness to "sternly respond" to North Korean provocations and the U.S. commitment to defend its ally with the full range of its military capabilities, including nuclear.

B-1B flyovers had been a familiar show of force during past periods of tensions with North

Korea, including the North's provocative run in nuclear and long-range missile tests in 2017. But the flyovers had been halted in recent years as the United States and South Korea stopped their large-scale exercises to support the former Trump administration's diplomatic efforts with North Korea and because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The allies resumed their large-scale training this year after North Korea dialed up its weapons testing to a record pace, exploiting a divide in the U.N. Security Council over Russia's war on Ukraine as a window to accelerate arms development.

North Korea hates such displays of American military mi-

ght at close range. The North has continued to describe the B-1B as a "nuclear strategic bomber" although the plane was switched to conventional weaponry in the mid-1990s.

Vigilant Storm had been initially scheduled to end Friday, but the allies decided to extend the training to Saturday in response to a series of North Korean ballistic launches on Thursday, including an ICBM that triggered evacuation alerts and halted trains in northern Japan.

Thursday's launches came after the North fired more than 20 missiles on Wednesday, the most in a single day. Those launches came after North Korean senior military official Pak Jong Chon

issued a veiled threat of a nuclear conflict with the United States and South Korea over their joint drills, which the North says are rehearsals for a potential invasion.

South Korea also on Friday scrambled about 80 military aircraft after tracking about 180 flights by North Korean warplanes inside North Korean territory. The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the North Korean warplanes were detected in various areas inland and along the country's eastern and western coasts, but did not come particularly close to the Koreans' border. The South Korean military spotted about 180 flight trails from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., but it wasn't immediately clear how many North Korean planes were involved and whether some may have flown more than once.

In Friday's statement attributed to an unidentified spokesperson, North Korea's Foreign Ministry said the United States and South Korea had created a seriously "unstable atmosphere" in the region with their military exercises. It accused the United States of mobilizing its allies in a campaign using sanctions and military threats to pressure North Korea to unilaterally disarm.

"The sustained provocation is bound to be followed by sustained counteraction," the statement said.

North Korea has launched dozens of ballistic missiles this year, including multiple ICBMs and an intermediate-range missile flown over Japan. South Korean officials say there are indications North Korea in coming weeks could detonate its first nuclear test device since 2017. Experts say North Korea is attempting to force the United States to accept it as a nuclear power and seeks to negotiate economic and security concessions from a position of strength. **MDT/AP**

ELECTIONS

Malaysia enters tight race as long-dominant party seeks win

EILEEN NG,
KUALA LUMPUR

CAMPAIGNING for Malaysia's general elections started Saturday in a highly competitive race that will see the world's longest-serving coalition seeking to regain its dominance four years after a shocking electoral loss.

The Nov. 19 election will determine if Barisan Nasional, or National Front, can make a strong comeback or whether political reformers can secure another surprise win that will see their leader, Anwar Ibrahim, achieve a long-

-held dream of becoming prime minister.

Led by the United Malays National Organization, the coalition had ruled since Malaysia's independence from Britain in 1957. But anger over government corruption led to its defeat in 2018 polls to Anwar's Pakatan Harapan, or Alliance of Hope. The election victory sparked hopes of reforms as once-powerful UMNO leaders were jailed or hauled to court for graft, but it was short lived after defections caused the new government to crumble in early 2020 and brought UMNO back to power.

Scores of candidates, including Anwar and 97-year-old, two-time former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, submitted their nomination papers Saturday, paving the way for the start of a 14-day campaigning period. Local media reported that police fired tear gas to quell an unruly crowd outside a nomination center in a rural district on Borneo island.

More than 21 million Malaysians are eligible to cast ballots to fill 222 seats in federal Parliament and choose representatives in three state legislatures. **MDT/AP**



Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob, center, waves to his supporters after his nomination documents were accepted for the upcoming general election in Bera, Pahang, Malaysia, Saturday

ELECTIONS

Trump says US 'in decline'; Biden has his own dire warning

STEVE PEOPLES, AAMER MADHANI & MARC LEVY, LATROBE

FORMER President Donald Trump is predicting America's destruction if his fellow Republicans don't deliver a massive electoral wave on Tuesday. Democrats, led by President Joe Biden and two other former presidents, are warning that abortion rights, Social Security and even democracy itself are at stake.

Three of the six living presidents delivered dire closing messages Saturday in battleground Pennsylvania entering the final weekend of the 2022 mid-term elections, but their words echoed across the country as millions of Americans cast ballots to decide the balance of power in Washington and in key state capitals. Polls across America will close on Tuesday, but more than 39 million people have already voted.

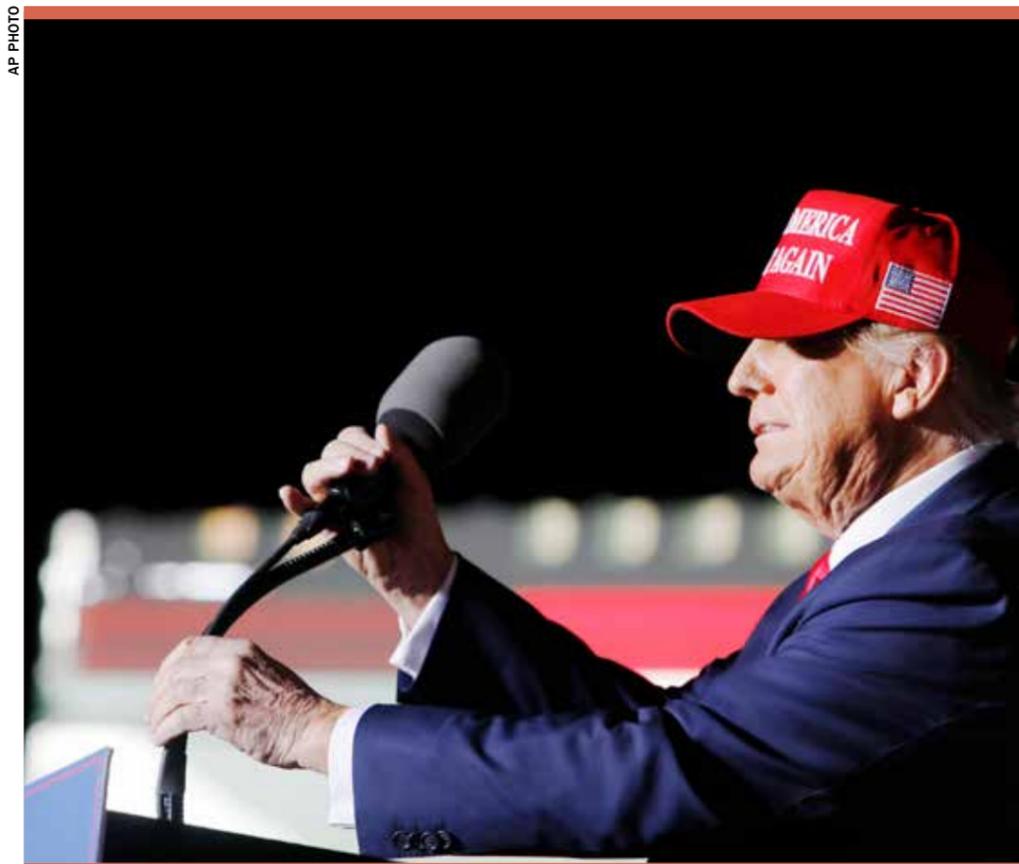
Today (Macau time, Biden was set to campaign in suburban New York, while Trump was headed to Florida.

"If you want to stop the destruction of our country and save the American dream, then on Tuesday you must vote Republican in a giant red wave," Trump told thousands of cheering supporters as he campaigned Saturday in western Pennsylvania, describing the United States as "a country in decline."

Earlier in the day, Biden shared the stage with former President Barack Obama in Philadelphia, the former running mates campaigning together for the first time since Biden took office. In neighboring New York, even former President Bill Clinton, largely absent from national politics in recent years, was out defending his party.

"Sulking and moping is not an option," Obama charged. "On Tuesday, let's make sure our country doesn't get set back 50 years."

Not everyone, it seemed, was on message as the weekend began.



Even before arriving in Pennsylvania, Biden was dealing with a fresh political mess after upsetting some in his party for promoting plans to shut down fossil fuel plants in favor of green energy. While he made the comments in California the day before, the fossil fuel industry is a major employer in Pennsylvania.

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W. Va., chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said the president owed coal workers across the country an apology. He called Biden's comments "offensive and disgusting."

Trump seized on the riff in western Pennsylvania, charging that Biden "has resumed the war on coal, your coal."

The White House said Biden's words were "twisted to suggest a meaning that was not intended; he regrets it if anyone hearing these remarks took offense" and that he was "commenting on a fact of economics and technology."

Democrats are deeply concerned about their narrow majorities in the House and Senate as voters sour on Biden's leadership amid surging inflation, crime concerns and widespread pessimism about the direc-

tion of the country. History suggests that Democrats, as the party in power, will suffer significant losses in the midterms.

Trump peeked ahead toward Florida as he campaigned in Pennsylvania, slapping at the state's Republican governor, Ron DeSantis. After displaying recent presidential poll numbers on the big screens, Trump called DeSantis, a potential 2024 GOP rival, "Ron DeSanctimonious."

Trump's weekend travels were part of a late blitz that will also take him to Ohio. He's hoping a strong GOP showing on Tuesday will generate momentum for the 2024 run that he's expected to launch in the days or weeks after polls close.

Over and over on Saturday, Trump falsely claimed he lost the 2020 election only because Democrats cheated, while raising the possibility of election fraud this coming week. In part, because of such rhetoric, federal intelligence agencies have warned of the possibility of political violence from far-right extremists in the coming days.

"Everybody, I promise you, in the very next — very, very, very short period of time, you're going to be

happy," Trump said of another White House bid. "But first we have to win an historic victory for Republicans on Nov. 8."

Biden's Pennsylvania address was largely the same he has been giving for weeks — spotlighting a grab bag of his major legislative achievements, while warning that abortion rights, voting rights, Social Security and Medicare are at risk should Republicans take control of Congress.

The president highlighted the Inflation Reduction Action, passed in August by the Democratic-led Congress, which includes several health care provisions popular among older adults and the less well-off, including a \$2,000 cap on out-of-pocket medical expenses and a \$35 monthly cap per prescription on insulin. The new law also requires companies that raise prices faster than overall inflation to pay Medicare a rebate.

But with a bigger and more energetic audience in his home state, Biden's energy seemed lifted.

"We have to reaffirm the values that have long defined us," Biden said of threats to democracy. "We are good people. I know this."

He added: "Get out and vote!" MDT/AP

this day in history

1989 PROTESTS FORCE OUT EAST GERMAN RULERS



East Germany's Communist-dominated government has resigned - the first time such an event has occurred in the country's 40-year history.

The decision by the Council of Ministers to give up office leaves the Communists still in power but represents a major concession to the growing protest movement.

The mass government resignation is likely to have been approved by East Germany's leader, Egon Krenz, who is expected to select a new government shortly.

The departure of Prime Minister Willi Stoph and all 44 members of his cabinet followed demonstrations over the past month in several major cities.

On Saturday one million people attended a pro-democracy rally in East Berlin's main square.

Mr Stoph was closely associated with the recently deposed Communist leader, Erich Honecker, and Mr Honecker's wife, Margot, who was sacked last week as education minister.

Mr Krenz will be hoping the resignation of a discredited government may help stem the flow of people fleeing the country.

About 30,000 East Germans are thought to have arrived in West Germany since Saturday by using the recently-opened border with Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovakia is the latest of the former Soviet-bloc countries to ease travel restrictions and allow free access through its borders.

The drive for change within East Germany was reflected in a new approach by the authorities who held their first-ever press conference.

A statement read out by newly-appointed spokesman Wolfgang Meyer gave no explanation for the government's resignation but urged East Germans planning to leave the country to reconsider.

Shortly afterwards the Communist Party's Politburo began a three-day meeting.

It is expected to elect new members which will set the course for the country's political future.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Two days later demonstrators persuaded guards to allow them access through the Berlin Wall to West Berlin.

The wall, a symbol of the division of the two Germanys since 1961, was dismantled by jubilant crowds who began to hack it down.

On 3 October 1990 East and West Germany merged to form a new united country.

In 1997 East Germany's last leader, Egon Krenz, was convicted of manslaughter over the deaths of people shot trying to escape to the West and sentenced to six-and-a-half years in jail.

He was released early in December 2003 after winning an appeal.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Changes in your domestic situation will prove to be favorable in the long run. Be courteous if you wish to avoid major delays. Do something that will be stimulating and creative.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Try not to be too aggressive or judgmental when talking to your mate. Any difficulties with peers could be unnerving. Your energetic personality will make you the center of attention at social gatherings.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Children may be demanding, and entertainment could cost a lot more than you can really afford. Don't let your mate force you into making a decision that you aren't ready to make.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You can meet someone who will become very dear to you if you get out and socialize. Your generous nature could be taken advantage of. Leave your checkbook and credit cards at home.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Sudden changes regarding work and colleagues are apparent. Don't avoid your true feelings. Your position may be in question if you haven't been pulling your weight.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Get involved in groups and organizations that are of a distinguished nature. Hassles with your boss are sure to erupt if you speak your mind. Listen and formulate your course of action.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Avoid any erratic behavior or it could cause isolation at home. You can make extra cash if you act on a hunch. Don't let other people meddle in your private affairs.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You may want to stay in the background today. Mingle with individuals who are established and can give you some serious insight into business and future trends.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Difficulties with children will surface if you try to break a promise you made. Be sure to organize events that will keep the children busy. Escapist tendencies may lead to overindulgence.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Dig deep, ferret out any hidden concerns before you sign your life away. You'll be angry if those you live with aren't pulling their weight. You have worked hard and the payback is now.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You always seem to spend more than you make. A lot can be accomplished if you organize your time. Take time to talk things over. Travel for business or pleasure.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Travel for pleasure. Frustrations and limitations could cause anxiety today. Get involved in the activities of children. They will teach you far more than you expect.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

| EASY | | | | | EASY+ | | | | | |
|------|---|---|---|---|-------|---|---|--|--|--|
| 1 | 7 | | 2 | | 8 | | | | | |
| 3 | | 8 | 9 | | 1 | | | | | |
| | 9 | | 7 | | | 2 | 3 | | | |
| | | 7 | 4 | 2 | 5 | | | | | |
| 4 | 7 | | | | | 6 | 9 | | | |
| 2 | 1 | 5 | | 9 | | | | | | |
| 7 | 5 | | 4 | | 6 | | | | | |
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| 8 | | | 2 | | 3 | | | | | |
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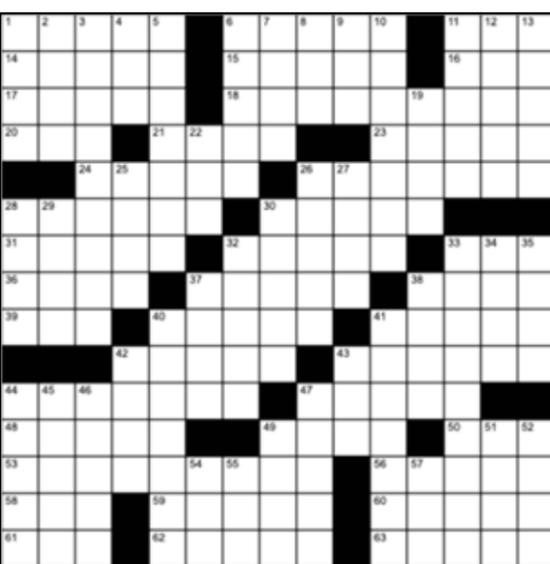
WEATHER

| | MIN | MAX | CONDITION |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----------|
| CHINA | | | |
| Beijing | 4 | 17 | fine |
| Changchun | -2 | 9 | cloudy |
| Chengdu | 14 | 16 | rain |
| Chongqing | 14 | 24 | rain |
| Fuzhou | 18 | 24 | overcast |
| Guangzhou | 17 | 27 | cloudy |
| Guiyang | 10 | 22 | cloudy |
| Haikou | 21 | 26 | cloudy |
| Hangzhou | 11 | 22 | fine |
| Harbin | -4 | 7 | fine |
| Hefei | 8 | 22 | fine |
| Nanjing | 10 | 22 | cloudy |
| Shanghai | 13 | 22 | cloudy |
| Taipei | 19 | 23 | rain |
| Wuhan | 9 | 25 | fine |
| Hong Kong | 20 | 23 | overcast |
| WORLD | | | |
| Moscow | -2 | 1 | snow |
| Frankfurt | 6 | 14 | cloudy |
| Paris | 11 | 16 | cloudy |
| London | 12 | 15 | rain |
| New York | 8 | 24 | overcast |

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Blow; 6- Playwright Rice; 11- Swiss river; 14- Giver; 15- Green; 16- Monk's title; 17- Water wheel; 18- Leading; 20- Greek goddess of rashness and divine punishment; 21- Change direction; 23- Strange and mysterious; 24- Let go; 26- Licorice flavor; 28- Fit to be eaten; 30- Paces; 31- Conclusion; 32- Intoxicate; 33- Loos; 36- Driving aids; 37- Macho guys; 38- Steps down to an Indian river; 39- Avg.; 40- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 41- Rome's Fontana di ___; 42- Pays to play; 43- Scribe; 44- Tomahawk; 47- Ages; 48- Plant problem; 49- Words before "many words"; 50- Cookbook abbr.; 53- Variety of magnetite; 56- Bowwow; 58- Old California fort; 59- Ornamental coronet; 60- Affectation of sophisticates; 61- Mystery writer Josephine; 62- Glacial ridge; 63- Orchestra section;

DOWN 1- Dame ___ Everage; 2- Underground part of a plant; 3- Coarse; 4- Starchy dish; 5- Makes journeys; 6- Drew to a close; 7- Burrow; 8- Russian space station; 9- Holiday start; 10- Proof of purchase; 11- Burning; 12- Golfer with an army; 13- Stormed; 19- Dick Tracy's love; 22- Shoebox letters; 25- Diamond stats; 26- Puzzled; 27- Dodge model; 28- Newts; 29- Low-cal; 30- Penultimate round; 32- "John Brown's Body" poet; 33- Sharpener; 34- Spelunking site; 35- Be up and about; 37- Table d'___; 38- Sheepish look; 40- Rashly; 41- Cavalry soldier; 42- Pinnacle; 43- Bentley of "American Beauty"; 44- Serf; 45- Idolize; 46- Woman's one-piece undergarment; 47- Lend ___; 49- Concerning; 51- Gulf War missile; 52- Greek letters; 54- Shakespearean contraction; 55- Mighty tree; 57- Half and half?;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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RUGBY

Revelers return to Hong Kong 7s for first time since pandemic

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

THOUSANDS of revelers returned to Hong Kong Stadium on Friday to enjoy a highly anticipated international rugby sevens tournament for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

It wasn't a celebration for everyone, though, with some international fans unaware of the city's pandemic restrictions turned away at the gates.

The Hong Kong Sevens, a popular stop on the World Rugby Sevens Series circuit, is part of the government's drive to restore the city's image as a vibrant financial hub after it scrapped mandatory hotel quarantine for travelers.

Hundreds of spectators, some in fancy dress and superhero costumes, had gathered by mid-afternoon. A total of 24,000 fans attended the tournament on Friday.

The city's pandemic rules require spectators to show a photo of their rapid virus test results and scan a risk notification app

AP PHOTO



upon entry. Fans were required to wear masks except when eating or drinking in their seats. The stadium in Causeway Bay was capped at 85% of its 40,000 capacity. Not all fans kept their masks on as required, amid music, fireworks and entertaining rugby on the field.

Hong Kong lost 36-0 to Australia in the final game of the opening day which saw defending champion Fiji beat Japan 59-12.

The world's leading teams are competing in Hong Kong, where the tournament for the condensed rugby format started in the 1970s and really took hold in the 80s, ac-

celerating rugby seven's eventual inclusion in the Olympics in 2016.

Overseas patrons, who used to account for a significant percentage of ticket sales in what has always been a party-like atmosphere at the stadium, need to comply with extra rules set for arrivals, such as undergoing other

COVID tests and monitoring their health. Restaurant and bar visits are not allowed during their first three days in the city.

While some local fans and international spectators weren't bothered by the controls, the rules proved to be an upsetting experience for others.

Businessman Renier du Plessis from South Africa arrived in the city with three friends on Thursday to watch the tournament but he was barred from entering the stadium because he failed to meet the health code requirements.

They were unaware of the rules partly because they bought the tickets months ago, du Plessis said.

"It's disappointing, you know, the fact that we cannot do anything. I'm not allowed anywhere. So where am I supposed to be for the next three days?" he said.

Normally half of the spectators at the stadium would be international visitors but the percentage this year is likely to be in single digits, according to Robbie McRobbie, the CEO of Hong Kong Rugby Union.

"Having three days when you can't go to bars and restaurants, to be honest, is a big deterrent for the type of clients that came in for something like Rugby Sevens," he said.

But he was hopeful that there would be a further relaxation in COVID-19 rules for next year's games. **MDT/AP**

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FOOTBALL | BASKETBALL | DAILY TRAININGS

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

CALL FOR WETLANDS TO BE PRIZED AND PROTECTED

Maintaining a fine balance between human habitats and the biophysical environment is of critical significance to meeting many of the existential challenges facing humanity. So even the escalating geopolitical tensions haven't prevented countries from trying to collaborate to address environmental and climate concerns. Despite its latest definition of China as a "pacing competitor" and de facto moves to decouple with it in such realms as high technologies, the Joe Biden administration of the United States has always kept climate change on its list of areas where it seeks to cooperate with Beijing.

Although there have always been those refusing to acknowledge climate change's negative impacts, the consequences are too conspicuous and devastating to ignore. There is no way out unless countries wake up to what is happening and join hands to deal with it. President Xi Jinping's remarks at the opening ceremony of the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP 14) on Saturday sent the inspiring message that China will not only continue its recent campaign for environmental wellness, but is ready to assume a more proactive role in international cooperation.

In a speech delivered via video link, as the meeting is being held in a hybrid manner in China's Wuhan and Geneva, Switzerland, the Chinese leader called for including more wetlands in nature reserves, improving the mechanisms and platforms for cooperation, and expanding wetlands of international significance. Reiterating China's path to modernization highlights harmony between man and nature, he said China will build a number of national parks and incorporate 110 million hectares of wetlands into its national parks network, and roll out a major national wetland preservation program. He also vowed to promote international exchanges and cooperation, and announced the plan to set up an international mangrove center in Shenzhen.

Since joining the Ramsar Convention in 1992, China has made continuous and impressive progress in the protection of its wetlands. In addition to introducing a specific law to protect wetlands, the country has designated 64 wetlands of international importance, 602 wetland nature reserves and nearly 1,700 wetland parks. Just like the Convention, whose concerns have extended dramatically from the original waterfowl habitats to those of migratory birds, the Chinese awareness of environmental wellness has also broadened considerably over the past decades.

Wuhan is a fitting venue for such a meeting both because it is a major city on the Yangtze with wetlands accounting for 18.9 percent of its territory, but, more importantly, because it pioneered the country's legislative efforts for wetland protection. Since 2010, the city has promulgated local legislations respectively on wetland reserves, lakes and corresponding areas for protection.

TWITTER USERS CAN SOON GET BLUE CHECK FOR USD7.99 MONTHLY FEE

THE BUZZ

Twitter has announced a subscription service for \$7.99 a month that includes a blue check now given only to verified accounts as new owner Elon Musk works to overhaul the platform's verification system just ahead of U.S. midterm elections.

In an update to Apple iOS devices available in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the U.K., Twitter said users who "sign up now" for the new "Twitter Blue with verification" can receive the blue check next to their names "just like the celebrities, companies and politicians you already follow."

But Twitter employee Esther Crawford tweeted Saturday that the "new Blue isn't live yet — the sprint to our launch continues but some folks may see us making updates because we are testing and pushing changes in real-time." Verified accounts did not appear to be losing their checks so far.

It was not immediately clear when the subscription would go live. Crawford told The Associated Press in a Twitter message that it is coming "soon but it hasn't launched yet." Twitter did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

AP PHOTO



Women carry belongings salvaged from their flooded home after monsoon rains, in the Qambar Shahdadkot district of Sindh Province of Pakistan, Sept. 6, 2022

AP PHOTO



Syrian government forces shelled tent settlements housing families displaced by the country's conflict in the rebel-held northwest yesterday, killing at least nine people and wounding dozens, opposition war monitors and first responders said. The shelling was the latest violation of a truce reached between Russia and Turkey in March 2020 that ended a Russian-backed government offensive on Idlib province. Idlib is the last major rebel-held stronghold in Syria.

UN WEATHER REPORT

CLIMATE WOES BAD AND GETTING WORSE FASTER

SETH BORENSTEIN, SHARM EL-SHEIKH

EARTH'S warming weather and rising seas are getting worse and doing so faster than before, the World Meteorological Organization warned yesterday in a somber note as world leaders started gathering for international climate negotiations.

"The latest State of the Global Climate report is a chronicle of climate chaos," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. "We must answer the planet's distress signal with action -- ambitious, credible climate action."

In its annual state of the climate report, the United Nations' weather agency said that sea level rise in the past decade was double what it was in the 1990s and since January 2020 has jumped at a higher rate than that. Since the decade began, seas are rising at 5 millimeters a year compared to 2.1 millimeters in the 1990s.

The last eight years have been the warmest on record, the WMO said in a report that didn't break new ground but was a collection of recent weather trends, data and impacts in one central place.

"The melting (of ice) game we have lost and also

the sea level rate," WMO chief Petteri Taalas told The Associated Press. "There are no positive indicators so far."

The only reason that the globe hasn't broken annual temperature records in the past few years is a rare three-year La Niña weather phenomenon, he said.

The data on sea level and average temperatures are nothing compared to how climate change has hit people in extreme weather. The report highlights the summer's incredible flood in Pakistan that killed more than 1,700 people and displaced 7.9 million, a crippling four-year drought in East Africa that has more than 18 million hungry, the Yangtze River drying to its lowest level in August, and record heat-waves broiling people in Europe and China.

"This latest report from the World Meteorological Organization reads like a lab report for a critically ill patient, but in this case the patient is Earth," said climate scientist Jennifer Francis of the Woodwell Climate Research Center in Cape Cod, who wasn't part of the report.

Levels of heat-trapping carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide all reached record high levels, with potent methane in-

creasing at a record pace, the report said.

That means more than just warming temperatures on land. Ice, both Greenland's ice sheet and the world's glaciers, are shrinking precipitously, the report said. For the 26th year in a row, Greenland lost ice when all types of ice are factored in. The volume of glacier snow in Switzerland dropped by more than one-third from 2001 to 2022, the report said.

But 90% of the heat trapped on Earth goes into the ocean and the upper 2000 meters of the ocean is getting warmer faster. The rate of warming the last 15 years is 67% faster than since 1971, the report said.

That ocean heat "will continue to warm in the future — a change which is irreversible on centennial to millennial time scales," the report said.

Outside experts weren't surprised by the report and said no one should be.

"What climate scientists have warned about for decades is upon us. And will continue to worsen without action," said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd.

"Two things must go away: Climate delayism and speaking about climate change impacts in the future tense. It's here." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Ukraine's state electricity operator on Saturday announced blackouts in Kyiv and seven other regions of the country in the aftermath of Russia's devastating strikes on energy infrastructure. The move comes as Russian forces continue to pound Ukrainian cities and villages with missiles and drones, inflicting damage on power plants, water supplies and other civilian targets, in a grinding war that is nearing its nine-month mark.

AP PHOTO



Kosovo Representatives of the ethnic Serb minority in Kosovo on Saturday resigned from their posts in protest over the dismissal of a police officer who did not follow the government's decision on vehicle license plates. Earlier this week Pristina authorities dismissed a senior Serb police officer in northern Kosovo, where most of the ethnic Serbs live, who refused to respect the decision to change vehicle license plates in Kosovo to ones issued by Kosovo. The shift has ignited volatile issues about Kosovo's sovereignty, especially among its Serb minority, many of whom still want the former Serb province to be part of Serbia and not independent.