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MACAU MAY STOP ISSUING PATACAS AGAINST HKD

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CHINA LASHES OUT AT VISIT BY UK TRADE MINISTER TO TAIWAN

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AP PHOTO

UAE A fire broke out yesterday at a 35-story high-rise in downtown Dubai near the world's tallest building, racing up the side of the structure in the same way seen in other blazes fueled by flammable siding material. A resident at the 8 Boulevard Walk said that the high-rise has cladding that officials planned to replace after a similar blaze tore through an iconic tower on New Year's Eve in 2015. However, that cladding was not replaced across the entire building, said the resident.

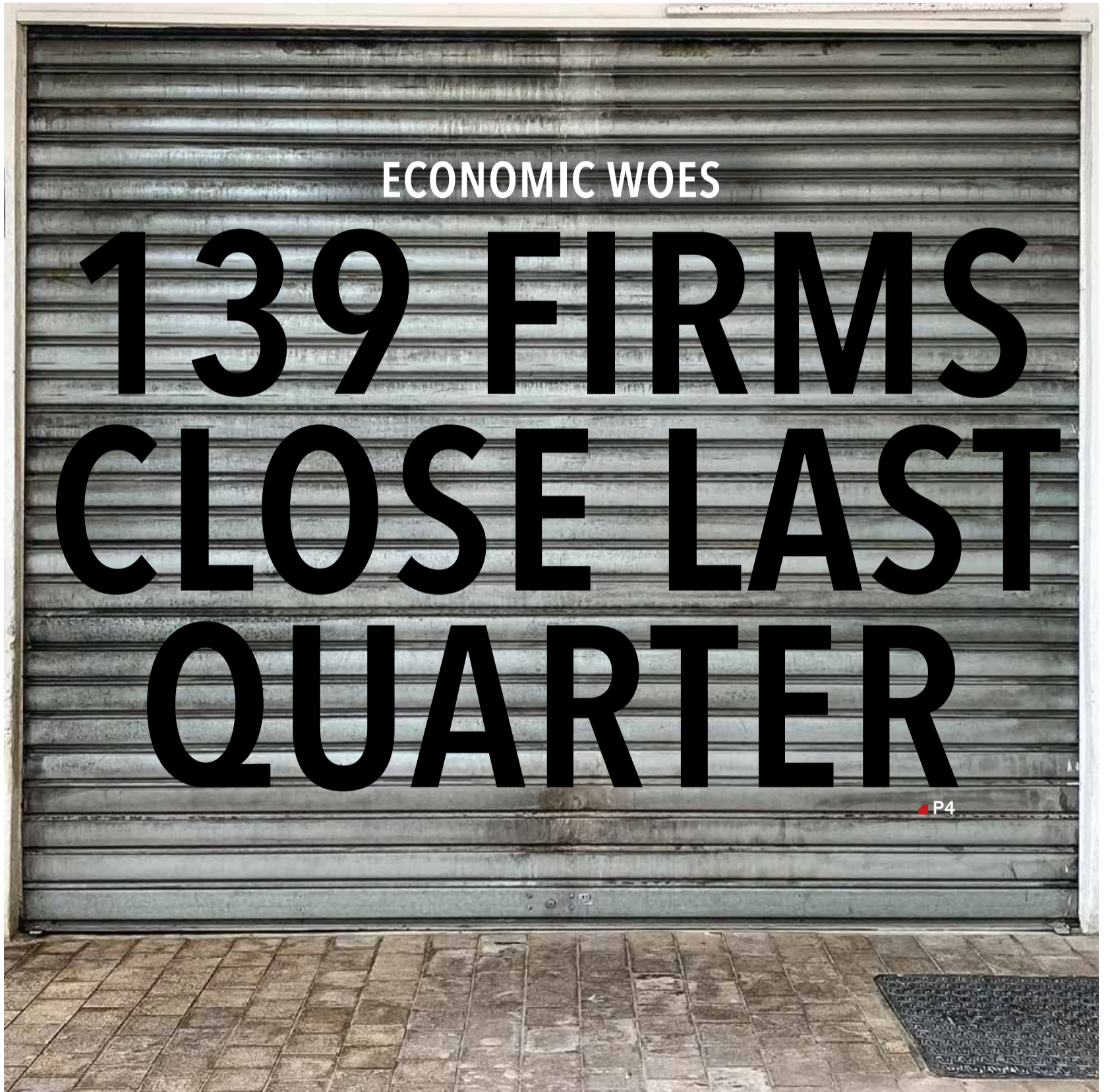


AP PHOTO

Ukraine Russian-appointed authorities say they are working to partially restore power in the occupied Ukrainian city of Kherson following what they have called a Ukrainian terrorist attack on power lines. The southern city in the region that Moscow illegally annexed in September was cut off from power and water supplies this weekend following damage to three power lines.

Iran's official news agency said yesterday that the gunman who killed 13 people at a major Shiite shrine last month was a citizen of Tajikistan. The militant Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the Oct. 26 attack on Shah Cheragh in the city of Shiraz, one of Iran's top five Shiite shrines. But the government has tried to blame the attack on the largely peaceful anti-government protests, without offering evidence.

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TELECOMMUNICATION

GOV'T ISSUES 5G LICENSES FOR CTM AND CHINA TELECOM

RENATO MARQUES

THE government has published in the official gazette the issuing of the 5G telecom licenses for the CTM and China Telecom operators as a result of the public tender held previously.

The licenses of the two operators will have validity for a period of eight years and can be renewed for the same period or less by the initiative of the operator, who should state such intention up to two years before the expiration date.

As also stated in the rules of the tender and now on the licenses, operators have a start to offer the 5G service within one year of the date of the license issuance and offer, by that time, coverage of at least 50% of the territory.

Such coverage should be extended to the whole territory within the next 18 months.

Operators will also have to submit the 5G service price list to the government for approval.

Having said on previous oc-

casions that their network was complete and ready to start operations, CTM has announced its intention of launching the service as early as Monday (Nov. 14).

According to the investment plan, CTM expects to invest MOP206 million by the end of 2023 and MOP1.02 billion, with the larger slice of investment to come during 2026 (MOP219.7 million).

Concurrently, China Telecom has said it wants to invest MOP469.41 million, from which MOP87 million will be invested by the end of 2023.

The larger slice of the China Telecom investment should come in 2024 when the company hopes to invest some MOP158.16 million.

Besides their investments, both companies need to commit to hiring local workers, with CTM promising to reach 2026 with a maximum of 74.1% of local employees (747 workers). China Telecom expects to reach a maximum of 65% (156 workers) by 2027.



TOURISM

Mainland group tours still 'on the table'

ANTHONY LAM

THE head of the local tourism board reiterated that an official announcement on the resumption of mainland excursions is still awaited.

Recently, tourists were seen in popular tourist attrac-

tions across the city moving in groups. Comments expressing concern over their nature as tour groups started to occur. In response, director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) said it is very likely they had arrived in Macau as in-

dividual tourists but signed up for local group tours, although more information is being gathered.

As both the Macau Grand Prix and the Macau Food Festival are just around the corner, the tourism chief was asked for her expectation on tourist arrivals over the period. She revealed the Sports Bureau is working to persuade tour operators to include the grand prix and the food festival in group tours.

While admitting to the convenience factor of the mainland resuming e-applications for travel endorsement, she emphasized her bureau will step up its marketing efforts in the mainland. Air Macau will also be mobilized to promote Macau in cities with its offices.

The main task is to familiarize mainland residents with the resumption of travel endorsement e-applications and group tours, as well as Macau being a "safe destination."

For the time being, she added, large-scale marketing campaigns such as Macao Week will be saved for next year. Campaigns will be on a smaller scale and happen in smaller shopping centers.

Senna Fernandes said the Lights Festival will return from December 3 to January 1 with a rebranding.

EXTRA BENEFITS FOR CIVIL SERVANTS WORKING DURING OUTBREAK

CIVIL servants will either receive financial compensation or holiday hours for working overtime during the June 18 Covid-19 outbreak, a government official has told a lawmaker.

In his reply to lawmaker Ron Lam's written inquiry, Kou Peng Kuan, director of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP), based his advice on a set of general rules governing civil servants.

In addition to this, Kou noted that if special regulations are established to govern certain bureaus or entities, these regulations should prevail.

Kou added that pursuant to the same general rules, if public service entities need to close, the Chief Executive can exempt civil servants from work, but the exemption will not affect entities that are consistently in service.



"Under this situation, civil servants providing services will have the right to obtain compensation in accordance with the law," Kou emphasized in his reply.

Despite the Chief Executive ordering all public service entities to shut down during the June 18 outbreak, a reply signed

by the Macao Customs Service, as cited by Lam, suggested that the order did not equate to exempting "[civil service] workers in general" from work.

Based on this, the Customs Service has said Customs officers who worked during the public service closure will not be additionally compensated. AL



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RENATO MARQUES

CURRENCY

MOP to potentially stop issuance against HKD

THE local currency, historically issued against the Hong Kong Dollar (HKD) currency might stop being so, the president of the Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL), Chan Chak Mo, said yesterday in a media briefing after a committee meeting to analyze in detail the new Currency Establishment and Issuance Legal System.

Chan noted the bill is relatively simple and consensual noting only that there are some omissions in what concerns the reserve fund that backs up the currency issuance, as well as the use of HKD currency in Macau, raising questions from the committee members that will be sent to the government.

"In Article 6, in what concerns the 'monetary issuance coverage' it is said that the issuance of patacas is covered through a reserve fund. This is practically the same norm as the previous law [7/95/M], there is no big difference, just the wording used. But it does not state what is the currency of the reserve fund," Chan said.

He explained, "Currently we use reserve fund in HKD which means that for each MOP issued we need to have one HKD in the reserve. On the new bill, we don't have this reference to HKD, so we are asking the government what

RENATO MARQUES



is the legal intention in leaving this matter 'open'? Is it to potentially stop the issuance against the HKD and do it maybe against

the RMB? We don't know exactly. That's why we are asking."

The committee president further noted reference to the HKD

is also lacking in other articles and parts of the bill, a fact that raised some questions from the lawmakers.

"It is mentioned that the only currency in circulation is the pataca, so this raised doubts about whether payments are or are not accepted in HKD, as we know that traditionally the two currencies have been circulating together and are widely accepted for transactions in Macau," Chan said.

He added, "We think that the intention from the government is not to stop the use or to turn illegal the payments or transactions in HKD, but it is not clear, so we are also asking this."

As for other parts, Chan noted the bill as a legal regime is relatively simple and broad with the specifics to be regulated through several administrative regulations, which are beyond the scrutiny of the AL. He said it is expected the discussion over this law will be brief and fast, with the law potentially to be sent to the plenary for final voting and approval very soon, he said.

As previously mentioned, the new legal regime allows money issuers to continue to issue banknotes and gives them broader scope by allowing the money issuing banks (Bank of China and BNU) to also issue coins, a task that until now was only done by the Monetary Authority of Macao.

Among the new privileges established by this new law for money issuers is also the possibility of the issuance of digital currency.

TRADE UNIONIST LAWMAKERS CALL FOR REFINED CASH HANDOUT

ANTHONY LAM

TWO of the four trade unionist lawmakers have either commented on or questioned the government's lack of refinement in the cash handout scheme, which has been issued 15 times since 2018.

Unionist Leong Sun Iok has made a written inquiry on the matter, while his fellow unionist Ella Lei has issued a statement revealing her views.

With the government recently submitting the 2023 Budget bill to the parliament, it was confirmed that the government still has the intention of keeping the

cash handout at its current level in the coming year.

Both lawmakers have stressed they favor extending the scheme to next year. However, they have an opinion on the criteria for eligibility.

Leong highlighted that, during his recent community visits, residents suggested to him that the government should terminate cash handouts to those ID holders who no longer have connections with the city or who primarily live outside Macau.

The lawmaker called for the government to verify if beneficiaries are still alive before issuing the

payment. Leong finds the situation especially unacceptable when the government, while citing legal restrictions on fund issuance as the reason, has declined to issue central provident fund subsidies to eligible beneficiaries for three years in a row.

Lei has suggested the government restrict eligibility with the duration of stay in Macau. Macau ID holders who cannot remain in the city for at least 183 days in a year, for example, should be excluded from the cash handout. Exemptions can be made for students studying abroad, she added as an example.

E-WALLET

MOBILE PAYMENT TRANSACTIONS REACH MOP6.3B IN Q3

THE number of transactions carried out by local mobile payment tools increased by 13.8% from the previous year to 61.4 million in the third quarter of this year. The transaction value totaled MOP6.3 billion, a growth of 18.6% from a year ago.

At end-September this year, the number of mobile payment terminals and QR code signs stood at 92,900, an increase of 10.5% year-on-year.

Recently, local payment service provider MPay announced an agreement had been made with Chinese internet multinational company Alibaba's shopping site Taobao to allow Macau shoppers to settle bills using MPay.

Statistics released today by the Monetary Authority of Macao, reveal the total number of personal credit cards issued by banks in Macau stood at 1,668,934 at end-September

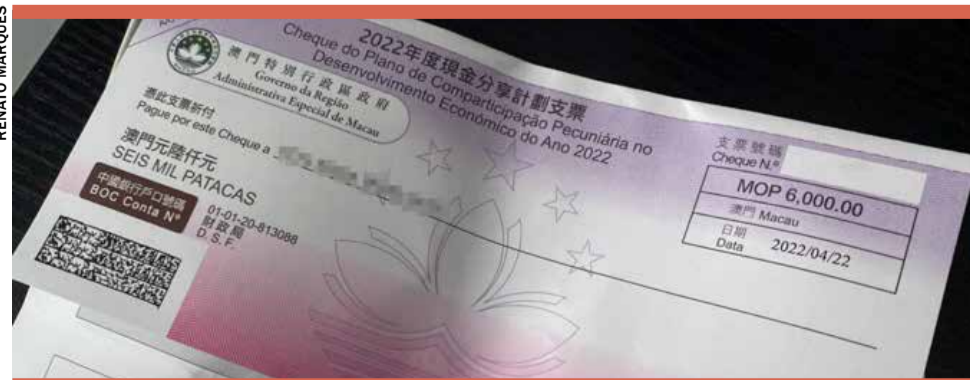
EVA BUCHO



this year, equivalent to a year-on-year increase of 10.5%. The total number of debit cards issued by banks in the city reached 2,095,845, up 9.1% from the preceding year. Also at end-September this year, credit card credit limit granted by banks was MOP47.3 billion, a rise of 5.6% from end-

September 2021. Credit card receivables amounted to MOP2.4 billion.

For the third quarter of this year, the credit card turnover totaled MOP4.5 billion, a decline of 7.8% year-on-year. The cash advance turnover was MOP129.6 million, occupying 2.9% of total credit card turnover. LV



RENATO MARQUES

139 local firms close in Q3

LYNZY VALLES

COMPANY closures totaled 139 in the third quarter, a 19% decrease when compared to last quarter.

The value of registered capital of these companies amounted to MOP333 million.

The business sector has faced renewed headwinds under the recent Covid-19 pandemic outbreak that led to the city's partial lockdown in July.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) indicated 972 new companies were incorporated in the third quarter of this year, from which revenues surged by 139.8% year-on-year to MOP887 million.

However, the figure was a decrease of 422 companies year-on-year.

The number of new companies operating in wholesale and retail trade (434) and business services (243) fell by 67 and 132 respectively.

In terms of origin of capital, mainland China contributed MOP797 million (89.9% of the total) to the capital of newly



RENATO MARQUES

incorporated companies; capital from the mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area totaled MOP127 million, of which Zhuhai accounted for 93.3%.

Capital from Macau and Hong Kong stood at MOP55 million and MOP7 million respectively.

Earlier this year, 261 small

and medium enterprises (SMEs) which benefited from government support measures closed their doors due to bankruptcy, according to data from the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED). The bureau noted 80 of these shutdowns were recorded in just the first three months of this year.

TNR FIGURES RECORD SLIGHT DROP IN SEPTEMBER

THE number of non-resident workers (TNR) continued to drop in September this year, although only slightly, data from the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) shows.

At the end of September, the number of TNR was 153,841, a figure that represents a drop of 159 workers.

The figure seems to point to a stabilization in the market that had been dropping much faster in previous months. In August this year, the number of TNR had dropped nearly 3,800 people.

When compared with June this year, the drop accounts for 5.3% (8,550 workers) who left Macau.

Workers from the mainland are leading the continuous decli-

ne that has been occurring since the Covid-19 pandemic started, followed by those from the Philippines and Vietnam.

The DSAL previously stated that there will be fewer blue-card holders in Macau if the unemployment rate continues to rise.


Latest government data shows that the general unemployment rate slightly decreased to 4% in the July to September period, while the unemployment rate of local residents stood at 5.2%, dropping slightly by 0.3 percentage points.

The figures are still considered high as the city continues to suffer from economic fallout caused by the pandemic, with the government adhering to strict Covid-19 restrictions. **RM**



LYNZY VALLES

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Over 90% support amendments to national security law

OVER 90% of the nearly 6,000 opinions collected during the public consultation period of the national security law are in favor of the amendments that will be made in the bill.

"After summarizing the opinions gathered and comparing the opinions, [...] the majority of opinions are in favor of the guidelines and content of the revision of the [national security law] of the government of the Macau SAR, which fully showed the deep feeling of 'love for the country and love for Macau' of the various sectors of society and the strong will of the population in relation to the defense of the general security of the state," authorities said in the report.

According to a conclusion report of the public consultation, the small number of opposing opinions (0.4%) may not be "well aware of the laws of



XINHUA

Macau, especially the criminal law and the legal system for the defense of national security."

The rest were classified as others or invalid.

Therefore, the government pledged that it will "continue to carry out legal dissemination campaigns in this area."

Launched August 22 and with a duration of 45 days until October 5, the public consultation of the national security law aimed to collect opinions from different sectors and the public in general, "to gather the consensus of the society."

The law, which he indicated will become the "most important law of Macau," aims to put an end to the "many threats and new challenges presented" to ensure the stability of the region.

Recently, on the sidelines of the opening of the new judiciary year, president of the Macau Lawyers' Association (AAM), Jorge Neto Valente, said that at the current stage of the public consultation, it is difficult to understand clearly the real changes that the government wants to promote on the national security law. **MDT**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



SHENG KUNG HUI

40% survey respondents consider their financial problems 'severe'

ANTHONY LAM

A survey directed by a social service provider shows that 70% of the respondents had debt equivalent to over 30% of the gross household income and 30% had debt surpassing 50% of their income.

The survey was led by Sheng Kung Hui Gambling Counseling and Family Wellness Center and was conducted from April to August this year, receiving 372 valid questionnaire responses.

Regarding the types of debt, over 75% of these households were holding property mortgages, nearly 19% consumption loans, nearly 5% student loans and about 1% gambling loans.

Moreover, 30% of respondents expressed worries on the financial practices of their better halves. More than half of the respondents reported having fights with their spouses due to money problems.

In addition, nearly 40% of respondents described their financial problems as severe and reported having middle-range difficulties resolving them.

The survey also discovered a vicious cycle connecting inconsistent understanding of financial difficulties, the severity of the situation and the difficulties in resolving the situation.

Another finding is that setting, and striving to reach, domestic financial targets are not very popular aims among respondents.

Newlyweds are usually less satisfied with discussions on financial topics, while younger couples tend to use stress strategies against conflicts.

In terms of suggestions for couples, the community servi-

ce provider has called for greater concern for younger couples or households. Besides this, it suggested that finances should be based on households instead of individuals.

Even if both of the couple view money differently, the service provider encourages them to seek similarities while living with differences.

Meanwhile, the center calls on married couples to open themselves more to discussions when they are faced with financial difficulties.

Wu Wai Han, director at the Sheng Kung Hui Gambling Counseling and Family Wellness Center, pointed out that, in many cases, financial difficulties deteriorated into marriage crises due to the lack of discussion between spouses, based on feedback from frontline counselors.

Another problematic situation is that, according to a report by local media Macao Daily News, some service users believed gambling was a way to resolve financial difficulties, which usually further disrupted the household's financial sturdiness and internal relations.

She emphasized that correct financial understanding and consistent financial goals for a couple help household harmony.

Moreover, she revealed the community service provider is operating a website dispersing financial knowledge, with a credit card loan repayment calculator to help people understand and plan their finances.

Meanwhile, the service provider has announced the results of a survey concerning domestic financial conditions.

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MGM Embraces the Beauty of Chinese Tea Art

As a pioneer in cultural tourism, MGM pledges to embrace and pass on the beauty of Chinese traditional culture. With the aim of promoting Chinese tea culture and nurture the next generation of Chinese tea sommeliers, MGM joined hands with Tea Art Professionals' Association of Macao to organize "The 9th MingXing Tea Specialists National Final Competition – Greater Bay Area", which took place at MGM COTAI on October 18.

Kenneth Feng, President, Chief Strategic & Financial Officer of MGM, said, "This collaboration exemplifies our dedication in nurturing local tea art professionals, as well as our endeavor in passing on Chinese traditional culture. Throughout the past years, MGM has devoted much of its resources into cultural education in the community – we have organized a lineup of Chinese traditional culture themed events and online learning programs to 36,000 team members and community members, which helped strengthening our community's cultural confidence."



On top of being a co-organizer of the competition, MGM also sent its Food and Beverage team members from restaurants such as Five Foot Road, Imperial Court & Chun to take part and compete with industry peers. With excellent tea art skills, the team has harvested a total of three awards. Geoffrey Simmons, Vice President of Food & Beverage of MGM, expressed his appreciation to the team on their efforts. "Our team members have gone through intensive training and preparation for the past few months. We are thrilled that we have garnered three awards, and would like to extend my appreciation to the contestants, and their trainers and the support group for their dedication and hard work."

Tea is an essence of Chinese gastronomy. In view of offering authentic gastronomic experiences to its guests, MGM's Chinese culinary team take the lead to promote the beauty of Chinese tea by pairing a fine selection of teas from different regions in China to bring out the true flavors of various Chinese cuisines. From tea pairing with Lingnan cuisine at Chun, traditional Sichuan tea dance showcased in Five Foot Road, to creative tea-infused cocktails served at Bar Patua, MGM strives to share the gem of Chinese tea with all of its guests, and at the same time tells the great story of Chinese culture in its daily operations.

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DIRE STRAIT

CHINA LASHES OUT AT VISIT BY UK TRADE MINISTER TO TAIWAN

CHINA lashed out yesterday over a visit to Taiwan by British Trade Policy Minister Greg Hands, the latest foreign official to defy Beijing's warnings over contacts with the self-governing island republic.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory and threatens to annex it by force. It also seeks to isolate it diplomatically, requiring governments that it has formal relations with to respect its "one-China" principle.

The U.K. should "earnestly respect China's sovereignty, uphold the one-China principle, stop any forms of official contacts with Taiwan and stop sending wrong signals to Taiwan independence separatist forces," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a daily briefing.

The British government said Hands was on a two-day visit during which he would meet Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen and co-host the 25th annual trade talks between the sides. China has imposed visa bans and other forms of retaliation against fo-



British Trade Policy Minister Greg Hands

reign officials and governments that extend contacts to Taiwan.

Taiwan has formal diplomatic ties with just 14 nations and is excluded from the United Nations and other major multinational groupings at Beijing's insistence. Yet, its thriving democracy, high-tech economy and strategic location in the Asia-Pacific have drawn strong support in spite

of Beijing's condemnations and threats.

Following a visit to Taiwan by Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the U.S. House and second in line to the presidency, China fired missiles over Taiwan into the Western Pacific and positioned aircraft and ships nearby in a virtual blockade of the island.

Such moves appear to have

had little effect and visits from European and North American elected officials have continued.

Referring to Tsai's ruling party and its strong backing from the U.S. and other Western democracies, Zhao warned Taiwan officials that "their attempt to seek independence with foreign support is doomed to fail."

Beijing's close ties with Moscow following the Russian invasion of Ukraine have complicated matters further.

Latvia and Estonia left a Chinese-backed forum aimed at boosting relations with Eastern European countries following China's boosting of its relations with Russia. China has refused to criticize Russia over its attack on Ukraine and has condemned economic sanctions imposed on Moscow by the West.

Russia's struggles in Ukraine have meanwhile refocused attention on China's possible military intentions toward Taiwan. That has prompted a new emphasis on the island's fighting forces and technology to thwart Chinese aggression. **MDT/AP**

ECONOMY

TRADE DOWN ON WEAK GLOBAL DEMAND, VIRUS CURBS

CHINA'S trade shrank in October as global demand weakened and anti-virus controls weighed on domestic consumer spending.

Exports declined 0.3% from a year earlier to \$298.4 billion, down from September's 5.7% growth, the customs agency reported yesterday. Imports fell 0.7% to \$213.4 billion, compared with the previous month's 0.3% expansion.

China's global trade surplus edged up 0.9% from a year earlier to \$85.2 billion.

Forecasters expected Chinese trade to weaken as global demand cooled following interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve and other central banks to rein in surging inflation.

At home, consumer demand has been hurt by a "Zero COVID" strategy that has repeatedly shut down large sections of cities to contain virus outbreaks. That has disrupted business and confined millions of people to their homes for weeks at a time.

Economic growth picked up to 3.9% over a year earlier in the quarter ending in September from 2.2% in the first six months of 2022. But forecasters say activity is weakening as closures spread in response to a spike in infections.

"The economy slowed again in October due to the tightened Covid controls as well as the slowing external demand," said Larry Hu of Macquarie Group in a report.

The downturn in Chinese demand hurts developing countries that supply oil, soybeans and other raw materials and the United States, Europe, Japan and other suppliers of consumer goods and microchips and other components and technology needed by manufacturers.

Exports to the United States rose 35.3% over a year earlier to \$47 billion despite lingering tariff hikes in a trade war over Beijing's technology ambitions. Imports of U.S. goods rose 52.4% to \$12.8 billion.

China's politically sensitive trade surplus with the United States swelled 29.9% to \$34.2 billion.

Imports from Russia, mostly oil and gas, more than doubled, rising 110.5% over a year ago to \$10.2 billion. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

Court upholds veteran journalist's conviction

KANIS LEUNG,
HONG KONG

AN award-winning Hong Kong journalist lost her appeal yesterday against her conviction over making false statements in obtaining information for her investigation of a violent attack during widespread pro-democracy protests in 2019.

Bao Choy was found guilty in April 2021 of deceiving the government by getting vehicle ownership records for journalistic purposes after she had declared in her online application that she would use the information for "other traffic and transport related issues." She was trying to track down perpetrators of a mob attack on protesters and commuters inside a train station for her documentary for public broadcaster RTHK.

That ruling sparked outrage among local media professionals. Choy



Hong Kong journalist Choy Yuk-ling, also known as Bao Choy, speaks to media outside a court in Hong Kong in April 2021

— who was fined 6,000 Hong Kong Dollars (\$765) for two counts of making false statements — called it "a very dark day for all journalists in Hong Kong."

High Court Justice Alex Lee upheld the verdict in a written judgment, saying there are only three options available in the application form for conducting such searches: transport or traffic-related matters, legal matters, or

vehicle purchases or sales. Journalism is not an option.

"I don't deny that the appellant was trying to obtain the information with good intentions. But as the magistrate had pointed out, in terms of conviction, having good intentions is not a justification," Lee said.

Flanked by veteran journalists who held up placards printed with "Fearless, Selfless," Choy said she was disappoint-

ed with the judgement.

"It's a decision that really hinders the access to free information in the city, which means that will create obstacles for the press to act as a brake on the abuse of power, and to monitor and hold the powerful accountable," she said.

The judgement also called into question whether other activities such as some due diligence searches would be considered illegal, she said, and the ruling's implication should be discussed by the wider society.

Choy added she would make a decision on whether to take the case to the Final Court of Appeal within a month.

The story Choy co-produced, titled "7.21 Who Owns the Truth," won the Chinese-language documentary award at the Human Rights Press Awards in 2021. The judging panel hailed it as "an investigative reporting classic" that had chased

"the smallest clues, interrogating the powerful without fear or favor."

In the months after the journalist was convicted, two media outlets — Apple Daily and Stand News — were forced to shut down.

Some of the top management of the two outlets also have been prosecuted. Apple Daily founder Jimmy Lai faces collusion charges under a sweeping National Security Law enacted in 2020. A trial of two former Stand News editors charged under a colonial-era sedition law that has been used increasingly to snuff out critical voices is underway. One of them, acting editor-in-chief Patrick Lam, has been granted bail on Monday after being detained for more than 10 months.

Hong Kong fell more than 60 places to 148th place in Reporters Without Borders' latest World Press Freedom Index released in May. **MDT/AP**

PHILIPPINES

Prisons chief charged in journalist's killing

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

PHILIPPINE authorities filed murder complaints yesterday against the top prisons official and an aide, accusing them of masterminding the killing of a radio commentator in an elaborate crime they said showed that the country's prisons system had been turned into a "criminal organization."

The complaints were filed against Bureau of Corrections chief Gerald Bantag, who has been suspended from his post, prisons security official Ricardo Zulueta and other key suspects in the Oct. 3 fatal shooting of Percival Mabasa. The journalist had fiercely criticized Bantag and other officials for alleged corruption and other anomalies.

Mabasa, who used the broadcast name Percy Lapid, is among the latest media workers killed in a Southeast Asian country regarded as among the most dangerous for journalists in the world.

A joint statement read at a news conference by top justice, interior and police officials said three gang leaders locked up in the country's largest prison under Bantag's control were tapped to look for a gunman to kill Mabasa for a 550,000-peso (\$9,300) contract.

After the killing, however, the gunman, who was identified by police as Joel Escorial, surrendered in fear after government officials raised a reward for his capture. He then publicly identified an inmate, Jun Villamor, who he said was assigned by detained gang leaders to call him and ar-



Activists light candle beside slogans as they condemn the killing of Filipino journalist Percival Mabasa during a rally in Quezon city, early October

range Mabasa's killing. The gang leaders later killed Villamor inside the prison by suffocating him with a plastic bag allegedly on orders of Bantag and Zulueta, officials said.

"Bantag had a clear motive to effect the murders," officials said in the statement.

Mabasa was shot to death for his critical exposes against the prisons chief, and Villamor was killed by gang leaders as a cover-up after he was publicly identified by the gunman as the inmate who arranged the killing behind bars, they said.

Bantag has denied any involvement in the killings. He and Zulueta have also been charged for

the killing of Villamor. No warrants have been issued yet for their arrests, officials said.

The investigation of the killings bared "the unfortunate transformation of a pillar of justice – the correction pillar – into a deep, large-scale and systematic criminal organization," officials said in their statement.

"This will be the cause of many reforms in government and the strengthening of current mechanisms to ensure that nothing of this nature will happen again," they said.

As suspicions grew over Bantag's involvement in the two killings, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

ordered him suspended indefinitely and replaced with a former military chief of staff, Gregorio Catapang Jr.

A recent search of the maximum-security prison complex under Bantag's control yielded more than 7,000 cans of extra-strong beer, bladed weapons, cellphones, laptop computers and suspected drugs in a discovery that deepened long-held suspicions of prison anomalies involving officials and guards, Catapang said.

"There are many crimes that we have to look into," Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla told a news conference. He cited

the beer, drugs and other contrabands smuggled into prison and the deaths of 18 detained drug lords supposedly of coronavirus infection followed by their cremation in a span of 75 days.

Aside from Bantag, Mabasa had also strongly criticized former President Rodrigo Duterte, who oversaw a deadly crackdown on illegal drugs. Duterte ended his turbulent six-year term in June.

Duterte appointed Bantag as Bureau of Corrections chief in 2019 despite pending criminal complaints. Bantag had faced charges for a 2016 clash that killed 10 inmates when he was the warden in another detention center. A court later cleared him.

Media watchdogs have condemned Mabasa's killing, saying the attack underscores how deadly the Philippines remains for journalists.

Nearly 200 journalists have been killed in the country since 1986, when dictator Ferdinand Marcos was overthrown, according to the journalists' union. The group led a protest Tuesday night and called on the government to do more to stop the killings.

In 2009, members of a powerful political clan and their associates killed 58 people, including 32 media workers, in an execution-style attack in southern Maguindanao province that horrified the world.

The mass killing, linked to a political rivalry, demonstrated the dangers journalists face in the Philippines, which has many unlicensed guns, private armies controlled by powerful clans and weak law enforcement, especially in rural regions. MDT/AP

NORTH KOREA

Missile tests were practice to attack South, US

NORTH Korea's military said yesterday its recent barrage of missile tests were practices to "mercilessly" strike key South Korean and U.S. targets such as air bases and operation command systems with a variety of missiles that likely included nuclear-capable weapons.

The North's announcement underscored leader Kim Jong Un's determination not to back down in the face of his rivals' push to expand their military exercises. But some experts say Kim also used their drills as an excuse to modernize his nuclear arsenal and increase his leverage in future dealings with Washington and Seoul.



North Korea fired dozens of missiles and flew warplanes toward the sea last week — triggering evacuation alerts in some South Korean and Japanese areas — in protest of massive U.S.-South Korean air force drills that the North views as an invasion rehearsal.

U.S. and South Korean officials responded they would further enhance their joint training events and warned the North that the use of nuclear weapons would result in the end of Kim's regime. "The recent correspon-

ding military operations by the Korean People's Army are a clear answer of (North Korea) that the more persistently the enemies' provocative military moves continue, the more thoroughly and mercilessly the KPA will counter them," the General Staff of North Korea's military said in a statement carried by state media.

It said the weapons tests involved ballistic missiles loaded with dispersion warheads and underground infiltration warheads meant to launch strikes on enemy air bases; ground-to-air missiles designed to "annihilate" enemy aircraft at different altitudes and distances; and strategic cruise missi-

les that fell in international waters about 80 kilometers (50 miles) off South Korea's southeastern coastal city of Ulsan.

The North's military said it also carried out an important test of a ballistic missile with a special functional warhead missioned with "paralyzing the operation command system of the enemy." This could mean a simulation of electromagnetic pulse attacks, but some observers doubt whether North Korea has mastered key technologies to obtain such an attack capability.

The North's military statement didn't explicitly mention a reported launch Thursday of an intercontinental

ballistic missile aimed at hitting the U.S. mainland, though its main newspaper published a photo of an ICBM-like missile as one of the weapons mobilized during last week's testing activities.

Some experts say many other North Korean missiles launched last week were short-range nuclear-capable weapons that place key military targets in South Korea, including U.S. military bases there, within striking range.

Later yesterday, South Korea's military disputed some of the North's accounts of its missile tests. Spokesperson Kim Jun-rak said South Korea didn't detect the North's cruise missile launches and that it's also notable that North Korea didn't mention what Seoul assessed as an abnormal flight by an ICBM. MDT/AP

COP27

UN chief tells climate summit, Cooperate or perish

SETH BORENSTEIN,
SHARM EL-SHEIKH

THE only way to “put an end to all this suffering” from “a highway to climate hell” is for the world to cooperate or perish, dozens of leaders were admonished as they gathered yesterday for international climate talks.

More than 100 world leaders will speak over the next few days to try deal with a worsening problem that scientists’ call Earth’s biggest challenge. Nearly 50 heads of states or governments started to take the stage yesterday in the first day of “high-level” talks at this year’s annual U.N. climate conference, known as COP27, with more to come in the following days.

Much of the focus will be on national leaders telling their stories of being devastated by climate disasters, culminating tomorrow with a speech by Pakistan Prime Minister Muhammad Sharif, whose country’s summer floods caused at least \$40 billion in damage and displaced millions of people.

“The planet has become a world of suffering ... is it not high time to put an end to all this suffering,” Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the summit host, told his fellow leaders. “Climate change will never stop without our intervention... Our time here is limited and we must use every second that we have.”

El-Sisi, who called for an end to the Russia-Ukraine war, was gentle compared to a fiery United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who said the world “is on a highway to climate hell.”

He called for a new pact between rich and poor countries to work closer together, with financial help and phasing out of coal in rich nations by 2030 and elsewhere by 2040. He called on the United States and China — the two biggest producers of climate-changing emissions — to especially work together on climate, something they used to do until the last few years.

“Humanity has a choice: cooperate or perish,” Guterres said. “It is either a Climate Solidarity Pact – or a Col-



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi (center right) and United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (center left) after a group photo at the COP27 U.N. Climate Summit, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, yesterday

lective Suicide Pact.”

The fire and brimstone may not quite have the effect as they have had in past meetings.

Why? Because of bad timing and who isn’t showing up, is coming late or is dithering about it.

Most of the leaders are meeting in the first two days, just as the United States has a potentially policy-shifting midterm election. Then the leaders of the world’s 20 wealthiest nations will have their powerful-only club confab in Bali in Indonesia days later. Add to that, “there are big climate summits and little climate summits and this was never expected to be a big one,” said Climate Advisers CEO Nigel Purvis, a former U.S. negotiator.

Leaders of two of the three biggest carbon polluting nations — China and India — appear to be skipping the climate talks, although underlings are here negotiating. The leader of the other top polluting country — U.S. President Joe Biden — is coming days later than most of the other presidents and prime ministers on his way to Bali.

United Kingdom Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was initially going to avoid the negotiations, but public pressure and predecessor Boris Johnson’s plans to come changed his mind. New King Charles III, a longtime environment advocate, won’t attend be-

cause of his new role. And Russia’s leader Vladimir Putin, whose invasion of Ukraine created energy chaos that reverberates in the world of climate negotiations, won’t be here.

“We always want more” leaders, United Nations climate chief Simon Stiell said in a Sunday news conference. “But I believe there is sufficient (leadership) right now for us to have a very productive outcome.”

In addition to speeches given by the leaders, the negotiations include “innovative” roundtable discussions that “we are confident, will generate some very powerful insights,” Stiell said.

The leaders showing up in droves are from the host continent Africa.

“The historical polluters who caused climate change are not showing up,” said Mohammed Adow of Power Shift Africa. “Africa is the least responsible, the most vulnerable to the issue of climate change and it is a continent that is stepping up and providing leadership.”

“The South is actually stepping up,” Adow told The Associated Press. “The North that historically caused the problem is failing.”

The opening session will be heavily dominated by leaders of nations victimized by climate change — not those that have created the problem of heat-trapping gases warming up the atmosphere

from the burning of fossil fuel. It will be mostly African nations and small island nations and other vulnerable nations that will be telling their stories.

And they are dramatic ones, droughts in Africa and floods in Pakistan, in places that could least afford it. For the first time in 30 years of climate negotiations, the summit “should focus its attention on the severe climate impacts we’re already seeing,” said World Resources International’s David Waskow.

“We can’t discount an entire continent that has over a billion people living here and has some of the most severe impacts,” Waskow said. “It’s pretty clear that Africa will be at risk in a very severe way.”

Leaders come “to share the progress they’ve made at home and to accelerate action,” Purvis said. In this case, with the passage of the first major climate legislation and \$375 billion in spending, Biden has a lot to share, he said.

While it’s impressive that so many leaders are coming to the summit, “my expectations for ambitious climate targets in these two days are very low,” said NewClimate Institute’ scientist Niklas Hohne. That’s because of Putin’s invasion of Ukraine which caused energy and food crises that took away from climate action, he said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1990 IRELAND ELECTS FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT



Voters in the Republic of Ireland have chosen their first female president.

Unofficial returns suggest that Mary Robinson, who is standing as an independent, took nearly 40% of the vote in the first round.

Ireland’s system of proportional representation means the result will not be confirmed until tomorrow.

But Mrs Robinson’s performance in the first round means it is now impossible for anybody else to win.

Senior sources in the camp of her main opponent, former deputy prime minister, Brian Lenihan, have already conceded victory to Mrs Robinson.

It is the first time in 70 years that a presidential candidate put up by Mr Lenihan’s party, Fianna Fail, has been defeated.

Mrs Robinson, a Dublin barrister, is considered radical by Irish terms.

A civil and human rights lawyer, she has campaigned for the liberalisation of laws prohibiting divorce and abortion for more than 20 years.

However, she not only won the support of women countrywide but also polled well in traditionally conservative rural areas.

The mother-of-three has been a member of the Irish Senate for more than 20 years.

She twice ran unsuccessfully for parliament as a Labour candidate.

But five years ago she resigned from the Irish Labour party over the Anglo-Irish agreement because she felt unionists in Northern Ireland had not been consulted.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Mary Robinson helped transform the role of Irish president from a largely ceremonial position to one of influence.

She resigned a few months before end of her term in 1997 to become the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights

Her forthright style and uncompromising criticism of some countries’ human rights records angered governments around the world.

She made enemies in the United States after with her outspoken criticism of the detention of al-Qaeda suspects at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

In March 2002 Mrs Robinson announced she would not be seeking a second term in the UN post.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 You should try to elaborate on an idea you have regarding a product or service for the home. Red tape could be impossible to clear up today.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 You can ferret out secret information if you just listen to what others have to say. Visit friends you don't get to see that often.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Opportunities to get involved in self improvement projects will be rewarding. Reciprocate by offering helpful hints. You are best to stick to yourself today.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Romance could develop through social activities or short trips. Include friends and family members in your redecorating plans.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 You will find yourself tied to the phone. You can come up with future trends in creative fields. You need to do more research before you make your final decision.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 You will have some wonderful ideas that should bring you extra money. You're in need of love. You will be relentless when it comes to getting yourself back into shape.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 You will be able to get to the bottom of things today. You can have a working relationship with children if you exercise patience and understanding of the dilemmas they face.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Your mate may not be too sure about your intentions. Don't hesitate to present your unique ideas. You may want to invest in something that will grow in value.

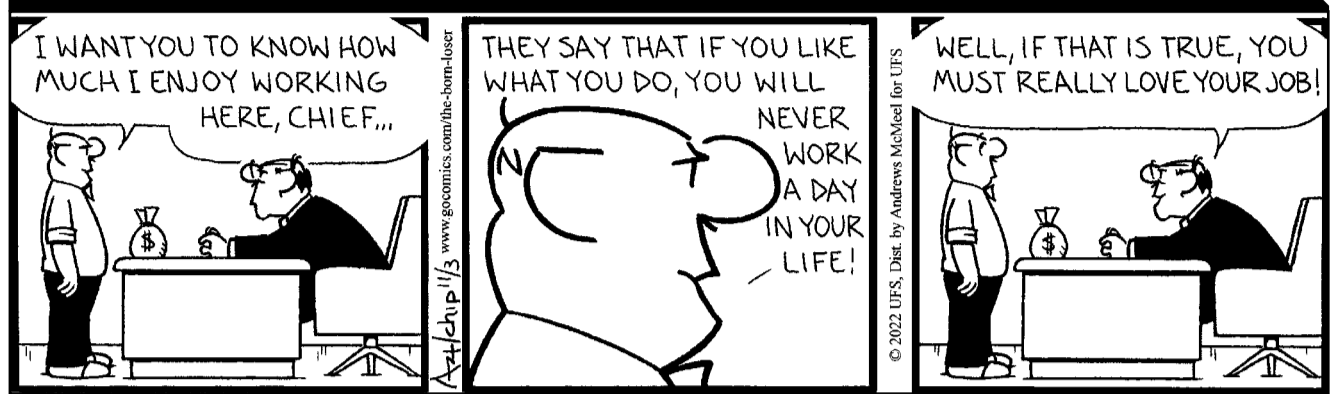
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Don't put your professional reputation on the line. You will be overly sensitive today. You will gain a lot if you listen.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 One sided attractions are likely. Your efforts will be rewarded handsomely. Learn some new skills that will increase your income.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Make love, not war, and all will be fine. A need to be in love may fool you. Finish up any correspondence by early afternoon.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Too much too fast will be the attitude surrounding your home environment. Use your quick wit to win points and friends.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	4	17	fine
Changchun	-2	8	cloudy
Chengdu	15	18	rain
Chongqing	16	23	overcast
Fuzhou	17	24	overcast
Guangzhou	16	22	rain
Guiyang	10	21	cloudy
Haikou	21	25	cloudy
Hangzhou	10	22	fine
Harbin	-3	8	fine
Hefei	7	24	fine
Nanjing	10	23	cloudy
Shanghai	13	21	fine
Taipei	20	22	rain
Wuhan	9	25	fine
Hong Kong	21	23	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	4	5	rain
Frankfurt	11	16	overcast
Paris	12	17	overcast
London	10	14	rain
New York	4	14	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Busy as ____; 5- Colonnade tree; 8- Practice pugilism; 12- Pasternak heroine; 13- Neighborhoods; 15- Florence's river; 16- Three-handed card game; 17- Wild dog of Australia; 18- Part of an eye or camera; 19- Prominent; 22- Contend; 23- Little devil; 24- River in central Switzerland; 26- Degrees in a right angle; 29- Sophisticated; 31- Great length of time; 32- Food and water; 34- Beam; 36- 27th president of the U.S.; 38- Less common; 40- Prophet; 41- Gesture of indifference; 43- Aired again; 45- Compass dir.; 46- Sixth planet; 48- Middy nap; 50- Preserve with salt; 51- One circuit; 52- High-pitched; 54- Sponsor; 61- Sci-fi princess; 63- Scarpa's killer; 64- Make angry; 65- On the peak of; 66- Analyze; 67- "Puppy Love" singer; 68- "___ She Lovely?"; 69- Paris possessive; 70- Lecherous look;

DOWN 1- What's more; 2- Capital of Azerbaijan; 3- Quod ___ demonstrandum; 4- Dines at home; 5- Ireland; 6- Give for a while; 7- Biblical gift bearers; 8- Gal of song; 9- Coming before; 10- Years in old Rome; 11- Wine choice; 13- Power plug transformer; 14- Sub system; 20- Revenuers, for short; 21- Chews the fat; 25- Super Bowl XXXIV champs; 26- ___ Ark; 27- Violation; 28- Long; 29- Software buyers; 30- Actress Verdugo; 31- French connections; 33- Dr. of rap; 35- Before, poetically; 37- Ballerina's skirt; 39- Railroad; 42- Mentor; 44- At hand; 47- Oscar de la ___; 49- Helix; 52- Jai ___; 53- Permits; 55- Improvised bed; 56- "___ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 57- Some TVs; 58- Fork feature; 59- Actress Sommer; 60- The back end of something; 62- Well-put;

Yesterday's solution

E	R	U	P	T		E	L	M	E	R		A	A	R
D	O	N	O	R		N	A	I	V	E		F	R	A
N	O	R	I	A		O	I	R	E	C	T	I	N	G
A	T	E		V	T	E	R		E	E	R	I	E	
F	R	E	E			A	N	I	S	E	E	D		
R	D	I	B	L	E		S	T	E	P	S			
F	I	N	I	S		S	E	S	O	T		W	C	S
T	E	E	S			H	E	M	E	N		G	H	A
T	I	D		I	O	N	I	A		T	R	E	V	I
H	A	T	C	H	E	T								
F	E	D	E	M	A		I	N	S	O		T	S	P
L	O	D	E	S	T	O	N	E				P	O	O
O	R	D		T	I	A	R	A				E	N	N
T	E	Y		E	S	K	E	R				R	E	E

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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

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Nam Long
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AP PHOTO



Rows of olive trees grow in the southern town of Quesada, a rural community in the heartland of Spain's olive country

AGRICULTURE

DROUGHT TESTS RESILIENCE OF SPAIN'S OLIVE GROVES AND FARMERS

RAQUEL REDONDO
& JOSEPH WILSON, QUESADA

AN extremely hot, dry summer that shrank reservoirs and sparked forest fires is now threatening the heartiest of Spain's staple crops: the olives that make the European country the world's leading producer and exporter of the tiny green fruits that are pressed into golden oil.

Industry experts and authorities predict Spain's fall olive harvest will be nearly half the size of last year's, another casualty of global weather shifts caused by

climate change.

"I am 57 years old and I have never seen a year like this one," farmer Juan Antonio Delgado said as he walked past his rows of olive trees in the southeast town of Quesada. "My intention is to hang on as long as I can, but when the costs rise above what I make from production we will all be out of a job."

High temperatures in May killed many of the blossoms on the olive trees in Spanish orchards. The ones that survived produced fruits that were small and thin because of not enough water. A little less moisture can actually yield

better olive oil, but the recent drought is proving too much for them.

This year has been the third-driest in Spain since records were started in 1964. The Mediterranean country also had its hottest summer on record.

Spain's 350,000 olive farmers typically harvest their crops in early October, ahead of their full ripeness, in order to produce the olive oil. But with his olives still too puny to pick, Delgado left most of the fruit on his trees, hoping for rain. So far, no luck.

If the wished-for rain doesn't

arrive soon, the country will produce nearly half as many olives as it did last year, according to Spain's agriculture minister.

"Our forecast for this harvest season is notoriously low," Agriculture Minister Luis Planas told The Associated Press. "The ministry predicts that it won't even reach 800,000 tonnes (882,000 U.S. tons)," compared with 1.47 million tonnes (1.62 million U.S. tons) in 2021.

Olive trees cover 2.7 million hectares (6.8 million acres) of Spain's soil, with a full 37% of them found in Jaén province, which

is known for its "sea of olives" and where Delgado farms.

On average, Spain grows more than three times as many olives as Italy and Greece, which also are seeing smaller yields.

Olive oil production in the European Union as a whole is forecast to fall drastically compared with last year, according to the Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations and the General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives,

The European farming organizations, known by the acronyms COPA and COGECA, warned in September that the yield could drop by 35% due to drought and high temperatures. The two groups called the situation in Spain "particularly worrying."

The smaller harvest is driving up prices, according to Italian olive oil producer Filippo Berio. The company said the price of European olives for extra virgin oil has soared from 500 euros per tonne (\$495) to 4,985 euros (\$4,938) per tonne.

Along with warmer than usual weather, the drought is affecting Spanish olives in other ways. Farming method consultant Antonio Bernal is witnessing the return of long-forgotten diseases during his visits to Quesada. He believes that milder winters are helping fungi to proliferate.

Bernal also fears that the most widespread variety of olive cultivated in Jaén won't be able to adapt to such a quickly changing climate.

"The solution is to stop climate change: Olive groves cannot adapt at a pace to assume such a fast change," Bernal said.

Besides the olive branch being the universal symbol of peace, the olive is a symbol of the Mediterranean. Plato was said to have dispensed his wisdom under an olive tree and the olive's widespread cultivation in Spain goes back to the Romans. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Galaxy organizes sustainability month



To further promote the significance of environmental protection to its team members, Galaxy Entertainment Group yesterday inaugurated the "Energy and Environmental Conservation Month" which encapsulates a series of the-

med green activities.

Meanwhile, Hotel Okura Macau received both the Green Key Certification and EarthCheck Silver Certification and became GEG's second hotel brand to obtain both accreditations following

Galaxy Hotel.

In line with GEG's sustainability philosophy, Galaxy Macau and Hotel Okura Macau have implemented multiple conservation measures to minimize the carbon footprints of their hotel operations.

These measures include complying with the international standards of the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System and the ISO 50001 Energy Management System.

Phase II of Galaxy Macau also received a GBA Low Carbon Buildings Top 100 Award from the GBA Carbon Neutrality Association, making it one of the 100 representative low carbon buildings in the Greater Bay Area.

Sands China co-hosts metaverse gourmet event



Sands China and Trip.com Group recently co-hosted the "Trip.com Group Gourmet 2022 Global Restaurant Awards Ceremony and the First Metaverse Gourmet Event." The events aimed to spotli-

ght outstanding restaurants, and promote exchange and interaction between local and overseas businesses in every sector of the tourism industry to enhance the visitor experience and accelerate tourism recovery.

Sands China said in a statement that it is "committed to enriching Macao's tourism and leisure elements, promoting Macao as a UNESCO-designated 'Creative City of Gastronomy'."

At the event, Trip.com Group, Shanghai Digital Exchange, Tencent, and Sands China Ltd. also released a limited number of customised NFRs on the Trip.com Group platform.

Grant Chum, chief operating officer, Sands China Ltd., said: "Although the pandemic has brought an impact on the tourism industry, Sands China Ltd.'s pursuit for culinary excellence has never stopped."

RUGBY

Pumas upset England to end 16-year wait at Twickenham

ENGLAND 29, ARGENTINA 30

ARGENTINA pulled off an astonishing upset of England by 30-29 at Twickenham despite hardly any ball or territory and a battered scrum yesterday [Macau time].

The game was scrappy and never flowed, undermined by a slippery ball and soggy field. Those conditions usually suit England's controlled 10-man power game.

But the home side too often spoiled tough gains by conceding soft penalties, and the Pumas not only defended superbly but showed an edge in ambition to down England at Twickenham for the first time in 16 years.

The lead changed four times in the last quarter alone, as Argentina's Emiliano Boffelli, the world's leading scorer in tests this year with a century, and England's Owen Farrell, the third highest scorer in test rugby history, traded goalkicks. Between them, they landed 14 of 15.



Argentina players celebrate after defeating England during the rugby union international match at Twickenham Stadium in London

Boffelli, who had the one miss, made the last penalty kick for 30-29 with 10 minutes to go. He finished with 25 points, including Argentina's brilliant first try.

The Pumas sign-posted more progress under new coach Michael Cheika. Since July, they have beaten the All Blacks in New Zealand for the first time, led the Rugby Championship for the first time, and won a long overdue home series against Scotland.

They'd lost 10 straight tests to England since 2009 but will take a psychological edge into their next meeting in September in Marseille on the opening weekend of the Rugby World Cup.

"It was a first (win) we needed to have before we meet them in the World Cup," Cheika said. "For our confidence. Argentina is still growing legs around getting a winning feeling and learning how to do that."

Heavy rain stopped just before kickoff, and though the sun came out, it started raining penalties, instead.

Boffelli and Farrell each nailed their four goalkicks in the half.

Midway through, England turned a penalty inside the Pumas 22 into an attacking lineout but was repelled. The pressure was sustained when a Ben Youngs chip to the tryline was well chased by flyhalf Marcus Smith. From the five-meter scrum, wing Joe Cokanasiga ran off Youngs and his 112-kilogram bulk was too close to the tryline not to score.

But England was wasteful with all the ball and turf it enjoyed and led only 16-12 at halftime.

"Structurally, we had control of the game but we kept on making fundamental mistakes and letting them in," England coach Eddie Jones said. "We were always in position to win, and I liked the way the team went about it. I didn't like the individual silly mistakes."

England's new inside backs combination of Smith, Farrell and

Manu Tuilagi was well contained and didn't show much. Cokanasiga was the busiest winger on the field by staying close to the pack. The ball was hardly strung along either backline until after halftime when Argentina produced classic moves to regain the lead.

Off quick lineout ball, flyhalf Santiago Carreras looped around center Matias Moroni and gave Boffelli an overlap to slide into the left corner.

England was stunned again moments later when Farrell unloaded a pass to nobody before he was crunched by prop Thomas Gallo. Carreras pounced on the ball and scorched in from 60 meters out. Boffelli's extras made it 24-16.

Twickenham, largely muted, was roused to lift England. Youngs, the team's most capped player but slowing behind the pack, was clapped off and replaced by Jack van Poortvliet. Within seconds, he scored when he burst off a ruck from outside the 22.

The gap was left by Marcos Kremer. The feisty Pumas flanker, who led the team's incredible defense with 19 tackles, was messing with new England lock Alex Coles off the ball.

Farrell's conversion and penalty put England in front for a second time. But England gave the lead away twice more, and for good. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

Madrid-Liverpool, PSG-Bayern in CL last-16

REAL Madrid will play Liverpool, again. Bayern Munich will play Paris Saint-Germain, again.

Two rematches of recent Champions League finals were set up yesterday by the draw for the round of 16 as some of Europe's top heavyweights were paired together.

Madrid beat Liverpool in the 2018 and 2022 finals, to extend its competition record to 14 titles, and Bayern beat PSG in 2020 to become European champion for the sixth time.

Barcelona will face Manchester United, the team it beat in the 2009 and 2011 Champions League finals, in the knockout playoffs of the second-tier competition in February.

For defending champion Madrid, having a difficult path to the title is nothing new. The Spanish team's remarkable run last season saw it knock out PSG, Chelsea, Manchester City and Liverpool to lift the trophy.

PSG being paired with Bayern meant a blockbuster draw at this stage for French champion as well. PSG's quest for a first European title was ended in March by Karim Benzema's stunning late hat trick in the second leg in Madrid.

The tough draw was made possible because PSG finished second behind Benfica in its group after the Portuguese club scored a crucial stoppage-time goal in a 6-1 win last week at Maccabi Haifa.



Benfica was rewarded with a pairing against Club Brugge, the 15th-ranked of the 16 teams in the draw.

The lowest-rated team, AC Milan, will be at home against Tottenham in the first leg in its return to the Champions League knockout rounds after a nine-year gap.

Manchester City was paired with Leipzig, and Chelsea was drawn to face Borussia Dortmund in Premier League vs. Bundesliga clashes.

Napoli, the top scoring team in the group stage, will play Eintracht Frankfurt, and Inter Milan is at home first against Porto.

First-leg games will be played between Feb. 14-22. Return games are scheduled for March 7-15. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

SHARED COMMITMENT TO OPENNESS CAN ENSURE BRIGHT FUTURE FOR WORLD

The fifth China International Import Expo opened in Shanghai on Friday, with President Xi Jinping delivering the opening remarks. That he has done so at all five of the expos that have been held since 2018 conveys the great significance the country attaches to the event.

The CIIE has developed into an international platform and global public good promoting economic and trade cooperation and a major stage for multilateralism.

As the first major international expo the country has hosted after the conclusion of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the fifth CIIE is of great significance as it sends a clear and consistent signal to the world that China will not close its door to the outside world, but will only open it even wider. In light of this, the ongoing CIIE can be considered a weather-vane indicating that China remains steadfast in upholding openness, inclusiveness and mutual benefits.

China has pursued a more proactive strategy of opening-up over the past five years by constantly shortening its negative lists, optimizing its customs clearance system, and adjusting its regulations on and supporting policies for foreign-funded ventures, and these constitute a strong foundation for the success of the expo. More importantly, it will continue to steadily expand its institutional opening-up with regard to rules, regulations, management and standards so as to improve the level and quality of trade and investment cooperation.

As President Xi said in his remarks on Friday, the decision to stage the CIIE each year has been for the very purpose of expanding China's opening-up and turning China's enormous market into opportunities for the world. Today, the CIIE has become a showcase for China's new development paradigm, a platform for high-standard opening-up, and a public good for the whole world.

Its popularity reflects the common voice of most of the international community that protectionism and unilateralism have no place in the world market.

A total of more than 1,500 new products, new technologies and new services were released at the previous four expos. This year, nearly 3,000 exhibitors from 127 countries and regions are taking part in the event, markedly more than the expo last year.

With a population of over 1.4 billion and a middle-income group of over 400 million, China imports about \$2.5 trillion of goods and services every year, making it the second-largest consumer market in the world. No major economies or multinational corporations can ignore the attraction and potential of the Chinese market.

As Xi said in his opening remarks, a shared commitment to openness is essential to meet development challenges, foster synergy for cooperation, build momentum for innovation, and deliver benefits to all. He emphasized that openness is the intrinsic path toward global prosperity and development, while stressing that the path is unfolding before us and a brighter future beckons beyond.

APPLE SAYS IPHONE SUPPLIES HURT BY ANTI-VIRUS CURBS IN CHINA

Apple Inc. is warning customers they'll have to wait longer to get its latest iPhone models after anti-virus restrictions were imposed on a contractor's factory in central China.

The company announcement this weekend gave no details but said the factory operated by Foxconn in the central city of Zhengzhou is "operating at significantly reduced capacity."

"We now expect lower iPhone 14 Pro and iPhone 14 Pro Max shipments than we previously anticipated," the company said. "Customers will experience longer wait times to receive their new products."

Foxconn Technology Group said earlier it imposed anti-virus measures on the factory in Zhengzhou following virus outbreaks. Apple and Foxconn previously hadn't responded to questions about how iPhone production might be affected.

Last week, access to the industrial zone where the factory is located was suspended for one week following a surge in infections in Zhengzhou and the departure of workers from the factory.

Foxconn said in a statement that it is revising its outlook for this quarter downward due to the lockdown.

THE BUZZ



Baron Capital Group Chairman and CEO Ron Baron interviews Tesla CEO Elon Musk at the 29th Annual Baron Investment Conference in New York City last week

MUSK THREATENS TO BOOT TWITTER ACCOUNT IMPERSONATORS

FRANK BAJAK, BOSTON

ELON Musk tweeted yesterday [Macau time] that Twitter will permanently suspend any account on the social media platform that impersonates another.

The platform's new owner issued the warning after some celebrities changed their Twitter display names — not their account names — and tweeted as 'Elon Musk' in reaction to the billionaire's decision to offer verified accounts to all comers for \$8 month as he simultaneously laid off a big chunk of the workforce.

"Going forward, any Twitter handles engaging in impersonation without clearly specifying 'parody' will be permanently suspended," Musk wrote. While Twitter previously issued warnings before suspensions, now that it is rolling out "widespread verification, there will be no warning."

In fact, "any name change at all" would compel the temporary loss of a verified checkmark, the world's richest man said.

Comedian Kathy Griffin had her account suspended Sunday after she switched her screen name to Musk. She told a Bloomberg reporter that she had also used his profile photo.

"I guess not ALL the content moderators were let go? Lol," Griffin joked afterward on Mastodon, an alternative

social media platform where she set up an account last week.

Actor Valerie Bertinelli had similarly appropriated Musk's screen name — posting a series of tweets in support of Democratic candidates on Saturday before switching back to her true name. "Okey-dokey. I've had fun and I think I made my point," she tweeted afterwards.

Before the stunt, Bertinelli noted the original purpose of the blue verification checkmark. It was granted free of charge to people whose identity Twitter employees had confirmed; with journalists accounting for a big portion of recipients. "It simply meant your identity was verified. Scammers would have a harder time impersonating you," Bertinelli noted.

"That no longer applies. Good luck out there!" she added.

The \$8 verified accounts are Musk's way of democratizing the service, he claims. On Saturday, a Twitter update for iOS devices listed on Apple's app store said users who "sign up now" for the new "Twitter Blue with verification" can get the blue check next to their names "just like the celebrities, companies and politicians you already follow."

It said the service would first be available in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the U.K.

However, it was not available Sunday and there was no indication when it would go live. A Twitter employ, Esther Crawford, told The Associated Press it is coming "soon but it hasn't launched yet."

Twitter did not respond on Sunday to an email seeking comment on the verified accounts issue and Griffin's suspension.

Musk later tweeted, "Twitter needs to become by far the most accurate source of information about the world. That's our mission."

If the company were to strip current verified users of blue checks — something that hasn't happened — that could exacerbate disinformation on the platform during Tuesday's midterm elections.

Like Griffin, some Twitter users have already begun migrating from the platform — Counter Social is another popular alternative — following layoffs that began Friday that reportedly affected about half of Twitter's 7,500-employee workforce. They fear a breakdown of moderation and verification could create a disinformation free-for-all on what has been the internet's main conduit for reliable communications from public agencies and other institutions.

Many companies have paused advertising on the platform out of concern it could become more unruly under Musk. MDT/AP



Cyprus Archbishop Chrysostomos II (pictured), the outspoken leader of Cyprus' Greek Orthodox Christian Church whose forays into the country's complex politics and finances fired up supporters and detractors alike, died yesterday. He was 81. Chrysostomos had suffered from liver cancer for the past four years and had spent his final days at the church's headquarters in the capital.



Italy The captain of a charity-run migrant rescue ship refused Italian orders to leave a Sicilian port after authorities refused to let 35 of the migrants on his ship disembark — part of directives by Italy's new far-right-led government targeting foreign-flagged rescue ships. Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni's two-week-old government is refusing safe port to four ships operating in the central Mediterranean that have rescued migrants at sea in distress, some as many as 16 days ago, and is allowing only those identified as vulnerable to disembark.

USA President Joe Biden is holding today [Macau time] a rally in Maryland, where Democrats have one of their best opportunities to reclaim a Republican-held governor's seat. The appearance is in line with Biden's late-campaign strategy of sticking largely to Democratic strongholds rather than stumping in more competitive territory, where control of Congress may ultimately be decided. His predecessor, Donald Trump, will hold his final rally of the campaign in Ohio.



Oscars Jimmy Kimmel is ready to host the Oscars again, completing a trilogy that started with him presiding over the chaotic "envelope-gate" ceremony. The late-night talk show host will preside over the ceremony in March, the show's producers said Monday.