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A 32-YEAR-OLD TAXI DRIVER WAS CHARGED WITH RECKLESS DRIVING AND BODILY HARM DUE TO NEGLIGENCE IN AN ACCIDENT FRIDAY: POLICE

▲ P4

MORGAN STANLEY: CHOPPY RECOVERY EXPECTED AS MAINLAND CASES SPIKE

▲ P5

GUANGZHOU LOCKS DOWN MILLIONS IN 'ZERO-COVID' FIGHT

▲ P6



AP PHOTO



Malaysia Its longest-ruling coalition said yesterday it has not decided which bloc to support after weekend divisive elections left neither with enough seats to form a government on its own. The National Front's announcement has prolonged election uncertainty. King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah extended by a day a 2 p.m. deadline for political leaders to submit their choice for prime minister and an alliance that represents a parliamentary majority.

AP PHOTO



Indonesia A strong, shallow earthquake toppled buildings and collapsed walls on Indonesia's densely populated main island of Java yesterday, killing at least 56 and injuring hundreds as people rushed into the streets, some covered in blood and white debris. Emergency workers were treating the injured on stretchers outside main hospitals, on terraces and in parking lots. Many included children, some of whom were given oxygen masks, IV lines and were being resuscitated.

AP PHOTO



Afghanistan More Afghans will be struggling for survival as living conditions deteriorate in the year ahead, a top official of the International Committee of the Red Cross said in an interview, as the country braces for its second winter under Taliban rule. The religious group's seizure of power in August 2021 sent the economy into a tailspin and fundamentally transformed Afghanistan, driving millions into poverty and hunger as foreign aid stopped almost overnight.

More on backpage

E-GOVERNANCE AT ODDS

ANTHONY LAM



Digital government was at the core of André Cheong's policy debate session at the AL where a new generation ID was announced

▲ P3

BORDER

GOV'T ISSUES NEW NAT REQUIREMENT FOR MAINLAND ARRIVALS



**HUANG LIUQUAN
TIPPED TO BE NEW
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF
CITY'S BEIJING OFFICE**

A deputy director responsible for Macau and Hong Kong affairs under the country's state council will join Beijing's liaison office in the city, Hong Kong media have reported. The new deputy director at the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR is tipped to be Huang Liuquan, the deputy director at the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council. According to media reports, Huang is slated to take office soon following the departure of the former deputy director Zhang Rongshun, who assumed the position in June 2018.

**INWARD INVESTMENTS
UP 12% Y-O-Y**

Inward direct investment flows in Macau totaled MOP38.20 billion in 2021, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has indicated. Analyzed by industry, inflows of direct investment in the gaming sector, financial activities and wholesale and retail trade stood at MOP 16.96 billion, MOP 14.93 billion and MOP 4.74 billion respectively. As at the end of 2021, stock of inward direct investment totaled MOP 333.76 billion, up by 12.4% year-on-year. Meanwhile, outward direct investment flows of Macau enterprises totaled MOP 25.78 billion in 2021; income earned by Macau enterprises amounted to MOP 880 million.

**COMPOSITE CPI
SLIGHTLY INCREASE**

The composite CPI for October this year (103.88) increased 1.02% year-on-year. The increment was attributed to higher wages for domestic helpers and tuition fees, rising charges for eating out, as well as dearer prices of gasoline and fruit. The rise was partially offset by lower housing rentals and reduced charges for telecommunication services, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). Among the various sectors of goods and services, price indices of household furnishings and services and education grew 12.70% and 10.02% year-on-year respectively.

POLICY ADDRESS 2023

**ADMINISTRATION AND JUSTICE TO SEE
WIDE SCOPE OF WORK IN COMING YEAR**

ANTHONY LAM

AMONG many work items in the legal field next year, Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong and his teams will make laws for two higher education institutions.

Different from the University of Macau, the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) and the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) do not currently have their own specific laws. Next year, they will see at least the draft of the law going to the parliament.

Another law that arguably concerns the public the most is the Road Transport Law, as it affects the daily commuting of people. In previous years, the public has condemned the Transport Bureau for liberally

RENATO MARQUES



canceling roadside parking spaces without replacing them with parking lots.

The new generation of the ID card will also roll out next year.

Other laws will be reviewed or

made to facilitate e-governance or digital public service applications. During the process, the government will also try to improve data intercommunications between bureaus.

In addition, Cheong's teams will also strive to digitize procedures for property and business registrations as well as notarial services. For example, the official disclosed that the government will gradually fully digitize property acquisition procedures.

Also towards this direction: vehicle acquisition as well as birth and death registrations will eventually be fully digitized.

Regional and international cooperation will be a core part of the secretary's job in the coming year. Besides, the government will also face the UN's scrutiny on the implementation of The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

COVID-19

**GOV'T ISSUES NEW NAT REQUIREMENT
FOR MAINLAND ARRIVALS**

LYNZY VALLES

ALL mainland visitors will be required to undergo a nucleic acid test (NAT) on the second day after arriving, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre has stated.

The announcement came amid several cases that the city has recently recorded which were linked with mainland China, including the woman who arrived from Zhuhai after flying from Suzhou in Jiangsu Province, and who

stayed at the Harbourview Hotel, causing the hotel to be cordoned off.

The measure came into effect yesterday and will be applicable to those who entered Macau from mainland China on or after November 17.

The southern Chinese metropolis of Guangzhou locked down its largest district yesterday as it tries to tamp down a major Covid-19 outbreak, suspending public transit and requiring residents to present a negative test if they want

to leave their homes.

Baiyun district, home to 3.7 million people in Guangzhou, has also suspended in-person classes for schools and sealed off universities. The measures are meant to last until Friday, the city has announced.

Guangdong province, home to Guangzhou, reported the largest number of new cases yesterday with 9,085 out of a total of 27,095 cases nationwide.

**IAO HON ESTATE OLD NEIGHBORHOOD
RENEWAL PROJECT UNDERWAY**

THE Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) is pushing forward the Iao Hon Estate old neighborhood renewal project, the company announced yesterday.

Currently, condominium owners are being assisted to set up management committees and reach an agreement on the redevelopment plan.

In 2020, MUR carried out a research study on Iao Hon Estate, including



face-to-face household interviews with property owners, to serve as a da-

tabase for the promotion of urban renewal. Over the last year, the com-

pany has been meeting with property owners to discuss redevelopment.

The local area plan for Iao Hon Estate adopts a "stock optimization" approach, where redevelopment will take place under the notion of not increasing resident population density or household numbers.

Under the plan, there will be footbridges to connect the malls between the buildings and

pedestrian streets to improve the area's business environment, while roadways and footpaths will be separated, as well as the addition of green space to "create a liveable environment."

To prepare for Iao Hon Estate's redevelopment, MUR is building temporary housing units on Lot P in Areia Preta which will serve as temporary accommodation for property owners when their properties are being redeveloped as part of the urban renewal process. LV

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POLICY ADDRESS 2023

E-governance: Core of André Cheong's policy debate session

ANTHONY LAM

THE parliamentary debate session held yesterday on next year's policies revolved mainly around e-governance and related topics, and included a rare instance of the parliamentary president expressing his views.

Yesterday's plenary meeting debated policies in the administration and justice branch, with the topical secretary, André Cheong, as well as officials in the area, answering questions from lawmakers.

After finishing the first set of questions and answers, parliamentary president Kou Hoi In spoke on e-governance. He called for the government to "contemplate the matter in a realistic fashion."

Being a businessman himself, the president has deep feelings on public reforms, especially on licensing matters.

He pointed out that even though the government had introduced and upgraded the One Account app, which currently can help handle numerous public service procedures, these procedures actually involve a lot of bureaus and entities.

By saying this, he meant that the entire procedure cannot be completely digital, with certain parts or document submissions

needing to be conducted offline. He then questioned, given the concept of big data lingering around for some time, whether this can be solved at the end of the day.

Kou then acknowledged that it could be easy for a single bureau to migrate its services to One Account, but intercommunications between bureaus could be otherwise, reflecting on his comments on submitting documents physically despite certain applications being initiated digitally.

Kou said an overhaul will be needed to complete e-governance. He added that concluding e-governance will help improve the government's image and credibility as well.

Kou's bullet was not fired without targets. Cheong attempted to justify the difficulty of digitizing administration. For example, in response to a question, he said that migration to e-governance is not merely moving offline data online, before saying that law reviews are critical.

In his questions, lawmaker Chan Iek Lap revealed that the One Account app, the efficiency and capacity of which the government has boasted about, could not distinguish between twins.

If they want to sign up for an account, they will need to do so physically at the Public Administration and Civil Services Bureau's

(SAFP) counters, in contrast to the fully digital process experienced by most users.

In response, Cheong admitted that about 3,200 pairs of twins cannot sign up digitally for an account on a digital platform. For the time being, the government has no reliable solutions but required the process be conducted physically. Cheong explained that the main consideration lies with data security. Cheong explained that only twins who look nearly identical will be affected.

With e-governance being prevalent in the government's blueprint for next year's policies, banker-lawmaker Ip Sio Kai asked how the apparatus would be able to help in enticing investments or businesses to Macau.

He pointed out that if businesspeople from lusophone countries could process business registrations fully digitally, they might be more interested in investing in Macau. Ip's colleague at the parliament and the bank, Ngan Iek Hang, also commented that e-governance should be completed for the convenience of the people.

Ngan also expressed concerns over the security of the One Account platform, before questioning how digitization of government services can be achieved.

Cheong did not give a direct answer to Ip's question on attracting investments by e-governan-

ce, but added that cross-border data movements, mainly between Macau and Hengqin, are in fact being operated. Cheong stressed that this must be done with the consent of the concerned parties or stakeholders though.

As he replied to Ngan's question, the senior official emphasized that the One Account service relied heavily on the cloud computerization centre co-established by Chinese internet mogul Alibaba.

Elaborating on migrating services online, Cheong stressed that the government's first priority is to prevent problems from occurring. Minor problems such as system crashes were already a concern, let alone the server being hacked and consequential data leakage.

Although not under his authority, the Macau health code declaration and de-facto entry permis-

sion system mandated by the government has seen intermittent system crashes.

Not happy with the answer, Ip called for a dedicated bureau or office to handle matters related to inviting businesses in his follow-up opportunity.

Alibaba will continue to handle the city's migration to complete e-governance, the secretary disclosed, in response to the questions from several lawmakers.

Declining lawmaker Si Ka Lon's suggestion on unifying all government apps, Cheong explained that each specific service will have a specific app, but services facing the public will be included in the One Account app.

He added that previous commissions of Alibaba had focused on the development of the One Account app. In the future, Alibaba will still be commissioned to help the government develop e-governance.

He even revealed that during the work with Alibaba, the latter was stunned by the differences in workplace culture and law between Macau and mainland China. "They were surprised to find the number of practices allowed by local laws so different from those allowed by mainland laws," Cheong said.

Cheong added that Macau still has a lot to learn on smart city development but promised that the digitization of license applications will start from the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) next year.

Lawmaker Ron Lam spoke highly of the One Account app, saying that within the first hours of legalized digital driving license presentation, he was spot checked by traffic police twice and "the experiences were seamless," he said.

While Cheong disclosed the plan to introduce a new generation of ID cards next year, Lam asked if digitization of the ID card could be achieved. He added that he understands that a physical card must be retained for certain scenarios.

In response, Cheong said the government is in fact constructing a digital identity for each eligible resident. Banks and public entities will be bound by law to accept digital identifications as valid. "Some border checkpoints will also accept digital identification for immigration clearance purposes," Cheong added.

PARLIAMENTARY PLENARY STARTED WITH GLITCH ON MA'S ENROLMENT BUTTON

WHEN the president of the parliament requested lawmakers to register to speak, Ma Chi Seng raised his hand to indicate the failure of his enrolment button. After being asked by the president to try again, his enrolment could still not register. Afterwards, the president allowed

the meeting to continue with Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong introducing the topic. After his introduction, the glitch still existed. The president then proposed to allow Ma to speak in the middle of the queue. The proposal was seconded by all lawmakers.



CRIME

LOCAL WOMAN LOSES MOP670,000 IN AN INVESTMENT SCAM

RENATO MARQUES

A local woman in her 20's has reportedly lost about 670,000 patacas in an online investment scam, the Judiciary Police (PJ) said yesterday during

the regular joint press conference of the police forces.

According to the report, the woman met a man online at the start of September this year through a mobile app; after this, they started chatting on WeChat

frequently, and the man introduced her to a gaming website where she could invest money to make a fast profit.

As usually happens, in the beginning, she invested some money and in a short

period she made over 3,000 patacas.

After she gained confidence with the system, she started to invest larger sums using Tether cryptocurrency (USDT) and, on several occasions, she invested USDT66,583 (over MOP538,000).

Problems started when she decided to withdraw the investment, with the platform declining the withdrawal with several excuses, and later asking her to pay some USDT16,212 of alleged taxes so she could access her money.

Instead of paying, she reported the case to the PJ as a scam in which she claims to have lost USDT82,750 which is equivalent to around 670,000 patacas.

The PJ noted that although this type of scam has become very common and has been happening with a higher frequency over the past year or so, people in Macau are still unaware of this and continue to fall prey to these types of online investment frauds which have been responsible for the loss of several millions of patacas this year alone.

TAXI DRIVER HITS PEDESTRIAN IN TAIPA, VICTIM IN A COMA

RENATO MARQUES

A 32-year-old taxi driver is being charged with reckless driving and bodily harm due to negligence, in a case that took place Friday (November 18) in Taipa, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) has announced.

The taxi driven by the man hit a pedestrian on a zebra crossing that links the two sides of the road between Taipa's Olympic Sports Center (Stadium) and the Olympic Swimming Pool.

The victim was a 30-year-old local man who suffered severe injuries and, according to the PSP report, is currently in a coma at the public hospital.

According to an investigation by the PSP after the accident, the driver started his route at the Hengqin border post,

and during the trip, he exceeded the speed limit on several occasions. The police caught him speeding over 80 km/h at least twice.

Just before the accident, the driver committed another serious driving offense by overtaking other vehicles and running over the chevron markings on the pavement.

He has already been presented to a judge to face charges that may result in a penalty of up to two years' imprisonment or a fine in the equivalent of 240 days for the first charge and up to three years' imprisonment or a fine for the second.

A PSP spokesperson told the media that the driver was not under the influence of alcohol at the time of the accident, as he was tested and passed the breathalyzer test.

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GAMING

MS: Choppy recovery expected as mainland cases spike

LYNZY VALLES

MORGAN Stanley is expecting the gaming industry's near-term recovery to remain choppy due to the Covid-19 spikes in Guangdong and mainland China.

Despite resumption of e-visas for mainland citizens traveling to Macau, the number of visitations to the city has not been boosted in the wake of rising cases in China since the first of November.

Since earlier this month, the mainland has been tightening its restrictions as part of its targeted approach to its zero-Covid policies, while facing multiple outbreaks driven by fast-spreading omicron variants.

Just yesterday, the southern Chinese metropolis of Guangzhou locked down its largest district as it tries to contain a major Covid-19 outbreak.



In Shijiazhuang, a city in northern Hebei province, the city is testing all residents in six districts. In Beijing's Haidian district, home to the city's tech hub and top universities, authorities announced Sunday night that in-person classes were being canceled at elementary and secondary schools.

The brokerage cited in its report that Macau's gaming industry recorded USD1.5 billion negative free cash flow to equity in the third quarter of this year.

Free cash flow to equity is a measure of how much cash is available to the equity shareholders of a company after all expenses, reinvestment, and debt are paid.

Due to the outbreak in the mainland, Morgan Stanley trimmed Macau's 2022-24 gross gaming revenue (GGR) by 15%/3%/13%, respectively, to 15%/43%/70% of 2019's levels.

Last month, Macau saw its GGR rise 31.6% month-to-month to nearly MOP3.90 billion, albeit from a low base

as last month's receipts stood at MOP2.96 billion, which was a plunge of nearly 50% year-on-year.

Casino-license bidders are reportedly pledging to invest MOP100 billion in new proposals, despite the sector bleeding cash with no certainty on recovery.

With the embattled gaming sector suffering slumps, the potential return over the next 10 years is unclear, particularly amid the industry-wide reshuffle.

CASINO SHARES TUMBLE

Shares of casino operators plunged yesterday amid the spike of Covid cases.

Sands China fell 7.8% and Galaxy Entertainment Group declined 5.8%.

US-listed casino stocks related to Macau dropped in premarket trading as well.

Melco Resorts & Entertainment fell 4%, while Wynn Resorts and Las Vegas Sands each lost 3%.

TOURISM

VISITOR ARRIVALS FALLING SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS: INSIDERS

The month-to-date visitor arrivals in Macau fell short of the high expectations of the tourism industry, despite the eagerly awaited return of the Macau Grand Prix.

Tourism industry insiders have stated that daily average visitors so far this month amounted to roughly 16,000, as cited in a report by Macao Daily News.

This figure is below the corresponding one for the same period of the previous year, insiders claim.

Meanwhile, the hotel occupancy rate was estimated to be about 60% during the Grand Prix week, which was watched by some 76,000 spectators.

The tourism and hotel sector has been eyeing some rebound from tourist arrivals sin-

ce the announcement that e-visas from the mainland would resume.

The issuance of group package tours to Macau and e-visas under the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) is shaping up to be a massive boost for the SAR's gaming and tourism operators, which have been negatively affected since the pandemic began in early 2020.

In October, meanwhile, visitor arrivals grew by 4.0% month-on-month to 580,333.

As regards source of visitors, number of visitors from mainland China expanded by 72.4% year-on-year to 518,843, with 202,166 visitors travelling under the IVS.

In the first ten months of 2022, number of visitor arrivals dropped by 18.7% year-on-year to 4,944, 438. **LV**

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PANDEMIC

GUANGZHOU LOCKS DOWN MILLIONS IN 'ZERO-COVID' FIGHT

THE southern Chinese metropolis of Guangzhou locked down its largest district yesterday as it tries to tamp down a major COVID-19 outbreak, suspending public transit and requiring residents to present a negative test if they want to leave their homes.

The outbreak is testing China's attempt to bring a more targeted approach to its zero-COVID policies while facing multiple outbreaks driven by fast-spreading omicron variants. China is the only major country in the world still trying to curb virus transmissions through strict lockdown measures and mass testing.

Baiyun district, home to 3.7 million people in Guangzhou, also suspended in-person classes for schools and sealed off universities. The measures are meant to last until Friday, the city announced.

Meanwhile in Beijing, the capital reported two more COVID-19-related deaths. On Sunday, the city reported China's first COVID-19 death in over six months.

While critics have questioned China's COVID-19 num-



bers, and specifically its death toll, its intensive approach to trying to contain infections has prevented massive outbreaks and kept new daily cases lower than in many other countries.

Earlier this month, China announced that it was relaxing some of its "zero-COVID" policies, such as suspending flights from airlines that had brought a certain number of passengers who tested positive. It also cut down the time required in centralized quarantine for inter-

national arrivals from seven to five days.

The relaxation of some measures was an attempt to make the policies more "scientific and precise," Lei Haichao, the deputy director of the National Health Commission, said.

Larger cities are still holding on to some of the tested measures, though in a more fragmented manner than shutting down an entire city, which they had previously done.

Shijiazhuang, a city in nor-

thern Hebei province, is testing all residents in six districts. In Beijing's Haidian district, home to the city's tech hub and top universities, authorities announced Sunday night that in-person classes were being canceled at elementary and secondary schools.

Guangdong province, home to Guangzhou, reported the largest number of new cases Monday with 9,085 out of a total of 27,095 cases nationwide. **MDT/AP**



Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee (center right) stands next to President Xi Jinping during a gala dinner at the APEC Summit in Bangkok, on Nov. 17

HONG KONG

Leader Lee isolating with Covid-19 after APEC trip

HONG Kong leader John Lee tested positive for the coronavirus after meeting with other regional leaders the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Thailand, the city government said yesterday.

Lee tested negative throughout his four-day stay in Bangkok but his test upon his arrival at Hong Kong's airport on Sunday night was positive, it said.

Lee is now in isolation and will work from home, according to

the statement from the Chief Executive's Office. Other officials at his office who went to Thailand with Lee all tested negative.

Lee's aim at the forum of Asia-Pacific economies was to promote Hong Kong's image as

the city reopens to the world after imposing severe COVID-19 restrictions for much of the pandemic.

During his trip, Lee met various leaders including Indonesian President Joko Widodo and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. In some closed-door sessions, he sat next to Chinese President Xi Jinping, where both leaders were seen without masks. He also shook hands with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who was wearing a mask.

On his first day, he welcomed Xi at the airport in Bangkok and was seen standing next to the Chinese president as they entered the venue of a gala dinner that evening. On Saturday, Lee said he had talked to Xi and briefed the president about Hong Kong's status.

In September, Hong Kong scrapped its mandatory hotel quarantine measures for incoming travelers as it sought to

remain competitive and open up globally. But travelers have to undergo three days of home monitoring. If they test negative for the virus after three days, they will be allowed into venues such as restaurants and bars.

Starting last Friday, rules have been further relaxed for visitors coming to Hong Kong in tour groups. Those who apply and meet certain conditions can eat at designated restaurants during the first three days of their visit.

Lee said Sunday the easing of the restrictions would be gradual and balanced against the risks.

Last week, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen left the Group of 20 summit in Indonesia early because of his own COVID-19 diagnosis. It came just days after he had hosted President Joe Biden and other leaders for a Southeast Asian summit. Biden did not attend the APEC meeting. **MDT/AP**

TROUBLED WATERS

CHINESE COAST GUARD SEIZES ROCKET DEBRIS FROM FILIPINO NAVY

THE Chinese coast guard forcibly seized floating debris the Philippine navy was towing to its island in another confrontation in the disputed South China Sea, a Philippine military commander said yesterday. The debris appeared to be from a Chinese rocket launch.

The Chinese vessel twice blocked the Philippine naval boat before seizing the debris it was towing Sunday off Philippine-occupied Thitu Island, Vice Admiral Alberto Carlos said yesterday. He said no one was injured in the incident.

It's the latest flare-up in long-seething territorial disputes in the strategic waterway, involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Chinese coast guard ships have blocked Philippine supply boats delivering supplies to Filipino forces in the disputed waters in the past, but seizing objects in the possession of another nation's military constituted a more brazen act.

Carlos said the Filipino sailors, using a long-range camera on Thitu island, spotted the debris drifting in strong waves near a sandbar about 800 yards away. They set out on a boat and retrieved the floating object and started to tow it back to their island using a rope tied to their boat.

As the Filipino sailors were moving back to their island, "they noticed that China coast guard vessel with bow number 5203 was approaching their location and subsequently blocked their pre-plotted course twice," Carlos said in a statement.

The Chinese coast guard vessel then deployed an inflatable boat with personnel who "forcefully retrieved said floating object by cutting the towing line attached to the" Filipino sailors' rubber boat. The Filipino sailors decided to return to their island, Carlos said, without detailing what happened.

Maj. Cherryl Tindog, spokesperson of the military's Western Command, said the floating metal object appeared similar to a number of other pieces of Chinese rocket debris recently found in Philippine waters. She added the Filipino sailors did not fight the seizure. **MDT/AP**



Thitu Island off the South China Sea on April 21, 2017

SOUTH CHINA SEA

US seeks expansion of military presence in Philippines

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

THE United States is seeking an expansion of its military presence in the Philippines under a 2014 defense pact, U.S. and Philippine officials said, one of the initiatives that will be discussed during Vice President Kamala Harris's visit that focuses on the defense of its treaty ally in the face of China's sweeping territorial claims.

Harris will hold talks with President Ferdinand Jr. and other officials yesterday during a two-day visit that will include a trip to western Palawan province facing the disputed South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety.

She was expected to reaffirm U.S. commitment to defend the Philippines under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty in case Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under attack in the disputed waters.

"The United States and the Philippines stand together as friends, partners, and allies," a statement issued by Harris's aides said. "Now and always, the U.S. commitment to the defense of the Philippines is ironclad."

A range of U.S. assistance and projects would also be launched by Harris to help the Philippines deal with climate change and looming energy and food shortages.

The Philippines, a former American colony, used to host one of the largest U.S. Navy and Air Force bases outside the American mainland. The bases were shut down in the early 1990s, after the Philippine Senate rejected an extension, but American forces returned for large-scale combat exercises with Filipino troops under a 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement.

In 2014, the longtime allies signed the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, which allows larger numbers of American forces to stay in rotating batches within Philippine military camp, where they could build wa-

AP PHOTO



U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, left, reviews an honor guard at the Malacanang presidential palace in Manila, yesterday

rehouses, living quarters, joint training facilities and store combat equipment, except nuclear arms. The Philippines could take over those buildings and facilities when the Americans leave.

After the agreement was signed, the Americans launched construction projects in five Philippine camps and areas, including in the country's south, where U.S. counterterrorism forces have helped train and provide intelligence to their Filipino counterparts for years. Many of the projects were delayed by legal issues and other problems, Philippine defense officials said.

Large numbers of American forces stayed in local camps in southern Zamboanga city and outlying provinces at the height of threats posed by Muslim militants, which have eased in recent years. More than 100 U.S. military personnel currently remain in Zamboanga and three southern provinces, a Philippine military official told The Associated Press.

A U.S. official told reporters new areas have been identified and would be developed to expand joint security cooperation and training. He did not provide details, including the type of military

facilities, locations and the number of American military personnel to be deployed in those sites, saying the projects would have to be finalized with the Philippines.

Philippine military chief of staff Lt. Gen. Bartolome Bacarro told reporters last week that the U.S. wanted to construct military facilities in five more areas in the northern Philippines.

Two of the new areas proposed by the Americans were in northern Cagayan province, Bacarro said. Cagayan is across a strait from Taiwan and could serve as a crucial outpost in case tensions worsen between China and the self-governed island that Beijing claims as its own.

The other proposed sites included the provinces of Palawan and Zambales, he said. They both face the South China Sea and would allow an American military presence nearer the disputed waters to support Filipino forces.

The Philippine Constitution prohibits the presence of foreign troops in the country except when they are covered by treaties or agreements. Foreign forces are also banned from engaging in local combat.

Today, Harris is sche-

duled to fly to Palawan to meet fishermen, villagers, officials and the coast

guard. Once there, she'll be the highest-ranking U.S. leader to visit the frontier

island at the forefront of the long-seething territorial disputes involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

The Philippine coast guard said it would welcome Harris on board one of its biggest patrol ships, the BRP Teresa Magbana, in Palawan, where she is scheduled to deliver a speech, according to coast guard spokesperson Commodore Armand Balilo.

Harris will underscore the importance of international law, unimpeded commerce and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, according to the U.S. official, who said that she would affirm a 2016 ruling by an international tribunal that invalidated China's vast territorial claims in the South China Sea on historical grounds.

China has rejected the decision by an arbitration tribunal set up in The Hague under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea after the Philippine government complained in 2013 about China's increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed waters. Beijing did not participate in the arbitration. **MDT/AP**

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AP PHOTO



North Korea calls UN's Guterres 'puppet of US' after launch

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

NORTH Korea's foreign minister called U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "a puppet of the United States" as she slammed the U.N. chief for joining U.S.-led condemnation of the North's recent intercontinental ballistic missile test.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres earlier issued a statement strongly condemning North Korea's ICBM launch on Friday and reiterating his call on the North to "to immediately desist from taking any further provocative actions." Guterres's statement came after the United States and other countries issued similar criticism of the North's ICBM test that showed a potential to strike anywhere in the continental U.S.

"I often take the U.N. secretary-general for a member of the U.S. White House or its State Department," North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui said in a statement carried by state media. "I express my strong

regret over the fact that the U.N. secretary-general has taken a very deplorable attitude, oblivious of the purpose and principles of the U.N. Charter and its proper mission which is to maintain impartiality, objectivity and equity in all matters."

Choe accused Guterres of overlooking the U.S. and its allies taking the North's ICBM test to the U.N. Security Council, saying that "This clearly proves that he is a puppet of the U.S."

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency meeting for on North Korea's ICBM launch at Japan's request. But it's unclear if it can impose new economic sanctions on North Korea because China and Russia, two of the council's veto-wielding members, have opposed the previous U.S. and its allies' moves to toughen sanctions on the North over its banned tests of ballistic missiles earlier this year.

On Sunday, top diplomats from the world's major industrialized democracies issued a joint statement

calling for strong steps by the U.N. Security Council in reaction to the North Korean missile launch. "(North Korea's) actions demand a united and robust response by the international community, including the need for further significant measures to be taken by the U.N. Security Council," said the statement by foreign ministers from the Group of Seven nations — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Friday's ICBM launch was the latest in North Korea's ongoing torrid run of missile tests that experts say are meant to boost its nuclear capability and increase its leverage in future diplomacy.

North Korea said leader Kim Jong Un observed Friday's launch of its Hwasong-17 missile and called it another "reliable and maximum-capacity" weapon to contain U.S. military threats. Some experts say the Hwasong-17 is still under development but it's the North's longest-range missile and is designed

to carry several nuclear warheads to overcome U.S. missile defense systems.

North Korea has argued its testing activities are a warning to the United States and South Korea over their series of military drills that the North believes were an invasion rehearsal. Washington and Seoul have maintained their exercises are defensive in nature.

In her statement yesterday, Choe again defended her country's missile tests, calling them "legitimate and just exercise of the right to self-defense" against "provocative nuclear war rehearsals" by the United States and its allies. She said it's "most amazing and deplorable to me" as Guterres still blamed North Korea for a recent flare-up in tensions on the Korean Peninsula, not the United States.

A day before her country's ICBM test, Choe threatened to threaten to launch "fiercer" military responses to steps by the U.S. to bolster its security commitment to South Korea and Japan. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1963 KENNEDY SHOT DEAD IN DALLAS



The President of the United States has been assassinated by a gunman in Dallas, Texas.

John F. Kennedy was hit in the head and throat when three shots were fired at his open-topped car.

The presidential motorcade was travelling through the main business area of the city.

Texas Governor John Connally was also seriously injured when one of the unknown sniper's bullets hit him in the back.

The men were accompanied by their wives, who were both uninjured.

Vice-president Lyndon Johnson - who was following in a different car - has been sworn in as the new US leader.

The presidential party was driving from Dallas airport to the city centre when witnesses said shots were fired from the window of a building overlooking the road.

The president collapsed into Jackie Kennedy's arms, who was heard to cry "Oh no". Seconds later Governor Connally was also hit.

Dallas Times Herald photographer Bob Jackson was in the motorcade close behind the Democrat leader's car and heard the shots as it entered Dealey Plaza.

"As I looked up I saw a rifle being pulled back from a window - it might have been resting on the windowsill - I didn't see a man," he said.

Mr Kennedy's limousine was driven at speed to Parklands Hospital immediately after the shooting.

The president was alive when he was admitted, but died at 1400 local time (1900 GMT) - 35 minutes after being shot.

Police and Secret Service agents stormed the School Book Depository building moments after the shots were fired and recovered a rifle with a telescopic sight, said to be the assassination weapon.

The mood of shock in the US was echoed by Senator Mike Mansfield in an emergency forum of the senate.

"This is terrible - I cannot find words," he said.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

A little under an hour after the shooting, a policeman approached Lee Harvey Oswald, believing he recognised his description. The policeman was shot dead. Oswald was arrested almost immediately under suspicion of murder. Shortly afterwards, he was also charged with the assassination of President Kennedy. The suspect was never tried as he was shot dead himself two days later by nightclub owner Jack Ruby. The Warren Report, commissioned to investigate the president's death, concluded he had been killed by shots fired by Mr Oswald from the School Book Depository building. But conspiracy enthusiasts quickly turned the assassination into one of the most disputed events in modern history, with theories ranging from claims it was an elaborately staged suicide to the driver being the murderer.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 You should be putting your cash into long-term investments like real estate. Don't agree to make any of those cosmetic alterations you've been considering.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 You will have a problem with your boss if you haven't done your job. Deal with in-laws today. Avoid any confrontations with colleagues.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Don't let your partner get away with spending too much of your money. You can spend a passionate evening with someone you cherish if you make your plans early.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Opportunities to make financial gains will develop through your connections with other people. You can expect changes in your living arrangements.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Make plans to mix business with pleasure. Dinner with clients or business associates should be successful. Listen to a good friend who is truly looking out for your best interests.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Don't expect support from your mate. Be aware that minor accidents or injury may prevail if you are preoccupied. Things are looking good for you, so open your eyes and get to it.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Patience will be of utmost importance. Put in some extra hours and finish those careful jobs before you move on to some fun and games. Don't exaggerate.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Your hard work will payoff; advancement looks positive. Stop those bad habits. Sudden changes regarding your circle of friends could prove interesting and stimulating.

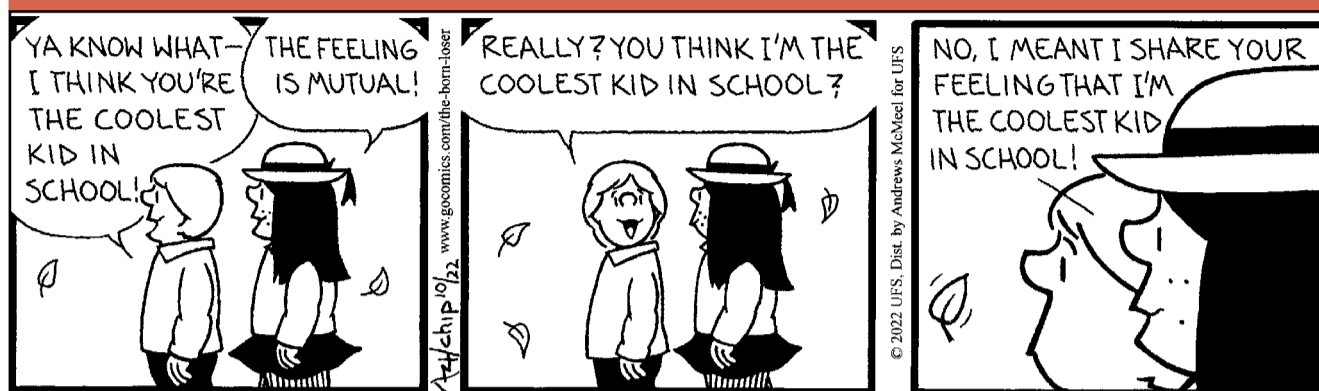
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Someone you work with may be trying to make you look bad. Hard work will not go unnoticed. Uncertain changes regarding your personal life are evident.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Involvement in groups will be favorable and lead to valuable information. If you haven't already, consider starting your own business.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Older members of your family may try to take advantage of you. You may find yourself in a predicament with family members.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Don't hold back. You may be tired of working for someone else. You won't impress anyone by being overly generous.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	4	12	cloudy
Changchun	-6	2	fine
Chengdu	14	19	cloudy
Chongqing	15	18	overcast
Fuzhou	20	24	cloudy
Guangzhou	20	29	showers
Guiyang	12	16	rain
Haikou	23	25	rain
Hangzhou	12	20	fine
Harbin	-10	-1	fine
Hefei	7	18	rain
Nanjing	10	17	overcast
Shanghai	14	20	fine
Taipei	21	23	overcast
Wuhan	12	17	rain
Hong Kong	21	23	thunderstorm
WORLD			
Moscow	-1	1	snow
Frankfurt	4	8	cloudy
Paris	6	10	showers
London	4	9	overcast
New York	2	9	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1-Bridge option; 5- Urges; 10- ___ well...; 14- Environmental sci.; 15- Omega's opposite; 16- Hero; 17- Commedia dell'___; 18- Disinfectant brand; 19- Voice of America org.; 20- Oppose; 22- Judging; 24- Hair goo; 25- Gone by; 26- Vulgar-tongued woman; 30- Glad; 35- Al Jolson's real first name; 36- ___ anglais (English horn); 37- Chilean pianist Claudio; 38- Reticular; 41- Flat oatmeal cake; 43- Gross; 44- Long fish; 45- Classical starter; 46- Gossipmonger; 47- Harlot; 50- One of the Baldwins; 53- Fan sound; 54- "Rent," e.g.; 58- Breed of sheep; 62- Airline to Tel Aviv; 63- Heat home; 66- Mid-month times; 67- Natural blue dye; 68- Skin openings; 69- Damage, so to speak; 70- Makes brown; 71- Maze word; 72- Differently;

DOWN 1- Fleshy fruit; 2- Area of 4840 square yards; 3- Barflies; 4- Sled; 5- Deer attraction; 6- Layer; 7- FedEx rival; 8- Role for Valerie; 9- Type of pitch; 10- Grad; 11- Actress Virna; 12- Beef cut; 13- Hitch; 21- Darn; 23- One of the Allens; 25- For each; 26- Imagination; 27- Grenoble's river; 28- The devil; 29- Adversary; 31- Prince Valiant's son; 32- Lying flat; 33- Nervous person, maybe; 34- Klondike territory; 39- D-Day craft; 40- Stern with a bow; 41- Barbara ___ Geddes; 42- Scaremonger; 44- Computer key; 48- ___-Bo; 49- Three times; 51- Lanterns; 52- Prufrock's creator; 54- Crux; 55- It parallels a radius; 56- Spahn teammate; 57- Evils; 59- Billy ___ had a hit song with "White Wedding"; 60- Capone's nemesis; 61- Bone; Prefix; 64- First name in Notre Dame football; 65- Debussy's "La ___";

Yesterday's solution

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

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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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MATCH OF THE DAY

LEWANDOWSKI AND POLAND READY TO FACE MEXICO AT WORLD CUP

ANNE M. PETERSON, DOHA

AS Poland's all-time leading scorer, Robert Lewandowski is still missing something from his collection: A goal at the World Cup.

That could change today (Wednesday, 00:00) against Mexico, Poland's opening opponent in Group C.

A prolific scorer who moved to Barcelona after a successful stint with Bayern Munich, Lewandowski has 18 goals in all competitions this season. For Poland, he's scored 76 goals from 134 appearances.

At 34, the World Cup in Qatar may be Lewandowski's last chance for a coveted goal in soccer's biggest event.

Poland managed only two goals four years ago in Russia, from Jan Bednarek and Grzegorz Krychowiak, and the team was eliminated from the group stage with losses to Senegal and Colombia.

Poland, ranked No. 26 in the world, didn't even make the 2010 or 2014 World Cups and the team



Poland star Robert Lewandowski

hasn't advanced to the knockout round since 1986. Poland's best finish was third place in West Germany in 1974 and in Spain in 1982.

Lewandowski scored in the 2-0 playoff victory over Sweden in March, giving Poland a spot at the World Cup. He finished with nine goals in the qualification

campaign.

Poland is coming off a 1-0 victory over Chile last week in a final warmup match before the opener against Mexico at Stadium 974. While third-ranked Argentina is the favorite to win Group C, which also includes Saudi Arabia, Tuesday's match could be a good indication of the second team

that moves on to the knockout stage.

"This is an important game for us. It's important that we show confidence. We know Mexico play high quality soccer, we know their potential. We'll fight to win and we'll do our best," Lewandowski said in Doha last week. "They have a lot of quality and pace, and are dynamic. We'll have to be ready to stop them causing us problems."

Mexico has been beset by uncertainty and injuries. Coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino included Wolverhampton Wanderers striker Raul Jimenez, who has been dogged by a groin injury but came off the bench in a 2-1 loss to Sweden last week. It was his first game since August.

Although there were hopes Sevilla forward Jesus Corona could recover from a fractured fibula before the World Cup, he was ultimately left off Mexico's final roster.

But there were a couple of other notable absences. Martino left off young forward Santi Gimenez, who plays for Dutch

team Feyenoord, as well as Mexico's all-time leading scorer, Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez, who hasn't played for his national team since 2019. Hernandez, who currently plays for LA Galaxy, had played in the last three World Cups.

Martino has faced criticism for both the team's recent results and his roster decisions.

"The only thing that can change people's opinion are the results and that's what we're going to play for," he said following the loss to Sweden.

Mexico finished second in CONCACAF qualifying behind Canada — and ahead of the United States — but Martino's team scored only four goals in its final five qualifying matches despite having both Jiménez and Corona available. El Tri went winless against Canada and the United States during the final round.

Four years ago in Russia, Mexico lost to Brazil 2-0 in the round of 16, marking it the seventh straight time that the team has failed to reach the quarterfinals at soccer's premier tournament. The failure to advance to the "quinto partido," or fifth game, has dogged El Tri.

Mexico has reached the quarterfinals only twice, first in 1970 and again in 1986. Mexico hosted both of those tournaments. **MDT/AP**

PORTUGAL

RONALDO DOWNPLAYS IMPACT OF TELL-ALL PRE-WORLD CUP INTERVIEW

CRISTIANO Ronaldo is unfazed by the drama created by his explosive pre-World Cup interview on British TV and maintained yesterday the atmosphere in Portugal's squad was "excellent" heading into the tournament.

The Manchester United striker gave an impromptu news conference at Portugal's training base in the outskirts of Doha where he attempted to quell any concerns his tell-all interview with Piers Morgan published last week had affected squad morale.

"The timing for me is my timing," Ronaldo said. "I don't have to worry about what others think. I am totally convinced this won't have any influence on the national team.

"Every player, manager, president and kit man, they all know who I am, what I think. They know me since I was 11 years old. They won't be influenced by what people say or write."

Manchester United is weighing up how to deal with Ronaldo in the wake of an interview the club didn't sanction, which contained criticism

of the attitude of some of his teammates.

And there was intrigue surrounding a seemingly frosty reception Ronaldo got from Bruno Fernandes, his United teammate, when they met up for the first time at Portugal's pre-World Cup training camp in Lisbon.

That was also played down by Ronaldo.

"I simply made a joke with him because he arrived late due to his flight," he said, "and I asked if he had come by boat. It was a joke and you (the media) did a storm."

"Everything around Cristiano is always a reason for debate and talks," Ronaldo added. "We see it on the TV news. It's normal. I understand it. But I will repeat once again: the environment at the national team is excellent."

This is likely the 37-year-old Ronaldo's last chance to win the World Cup, the only major title missing from the bulging resume of one of the world's greatest ever players.

So, is he feeling the pressure in Qatar?

"The pressure is more or

less the same as always," he said. "I have been dealing with it since a very young age. Sometimes I do it well, sometimes I don't. It depends on the situation, moment and heat. I am not perfect, but I feel ready to take on the pressure when I have to."

The fortunes of Ronaldo and Lionel Messi have long been intertwined and the Argentina star is in a similar position to his great rival as this will also probably be his last World Cup.

The two soccer greats created waves on social media by both posting a photo on social media of them engaging in a game of chess on top of a Louis Vuitton briefcase.

So, a Portugal vs. Argentina final, anyone?

"Being honest, I would like to be the one to give a checkmate against him," Ronaldo said of Messi. "Let's see. It would be beautiful. As it happened in chess, it would be magic to happen in football as well."

Portugal's first group game is against Ghana on midnight Thursday. **MDT/AP**

CALLED OFF

EUROPEAN TEAMS ABANDON PLAN TO WEAR ARMBANDS AT TOURNAMENT

FIFA'S threat of on-field punishment for players forced World Cup teams to back down yesterday and abandon an anti-discrimination campaign aimed at host nation Qatar.

The captains of seven European nations won't wear armbands supporting the "One Love" campaign in games after FIFA said the players would be shown yellow cards. The decision came three days after beer sales at stadiums was suddenly banned under pressure from the Qatari government and two days after FIFA president Gianni Infantino delivered an extraordinary tirade defending the host nation's human rights record.

"As national federations we can't put our players in a position where they could face sporting sanctions, including bookings," the seven soccer federations said in a

joint statement.

The climbdown after threats from FIFA came hours before England's Harry Kane, the Netherlands' Virgil van Dijk and Wales' Gareth Bale were due to wear the armbands in Monday's games. The captains of Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Denmark had also pledged to wear the armbands in the coming days.

"Our number one priority at the World Cup is to win the games," the Dutch soccer federation said in a separate statement. "Then you don't want the captain to start the match with a yellow card."

Monday's decision shows the political situation surrounding the first World Cup in the Middle East — even after Infantino asked all 32 national teams to keep politics off the soccer field.

Since being awarded the World Cup hosting rights in 2010, Qatar has



faced years of criticism regarding its treatment of low-paid migrant workers as well as its criminalization of gay and lesbian sex.

FIFA raised the prospect of yellow cards on Sunday during a testy meeting with European soccer federations, including the seven teams that pledged to wear the armband.

The One Love campaign was started in the Netherlands and its symbol is a heart-shaped multi-colored logo aimed at promoting inclusion and diversity in soccer and society. **MDT/AP**

GROUP A

Dismay for Qatar as Ecuador wins opening game

STEVE DOUGLAS, AL KHOR

QATAR 0, ECUADOR 2

THE large swathes of empty seats in the second half summed up the Qatar soccer team's disappointing start to its first ever World Cup.

The night started with more than 67,000 mostly Qatari fans filling the cavernous Al Bayt Stadium, enjoying an opening ceremony that showcased the tiny Arab emirate to a global audience 12 years after winning the right to host soccer's biggest event.

It ended with Qatar's over-matched team trudging off the field, its unwanted place in soccer history secure and with many of its dismayed fans having long disappeared.

The controversy-laced tournament opened Sunday with the 2019 Asian Cup champions getting outplayed in a 2-0 loss to Ecuador, ensuring a host team lost its opening game for the first time at a World Cup.

"I would say we felt bad (for our supporters)," Qatar coach Felix Sanchez said. "I hope in the next game they will be prouder."

Ecuador captain Enner Valencia scored both of his team's goals in the first half of a one-sided game that wound up being a damage-limitation exercise for Qatar on one of the biggest nights in the nation's history.

The match took place after a colorful 30-minute opening



Ecuador's Enner Valencia heads the ball to score his side's second goal

ceremony — fronted by Oscar-winning actor Morgan Freeman and attended by powerful dignitaries including Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — that promoted inclusivity and mankind living "under one tent."

For many, that would jar with this World Cup being hosted by an emirate where homosexual acts are illegal, one that has come under strong criticism for how migrant workers have been treated building stadiums and tournament infrastructure since Qatar won the scandal-shrouded vote in 2010.

The yearslong scrutiny was never going to stop just because play on the field finally entered the narrative of a tournament dogged by human-rights controversies, yet a win for the host nation would have at least put a

favorable light on Qatar, soccer-wise.

Instead, Qatar's players, fresh from spending seven months together in a pre-tournament training camp under Sanchez, froze in front of an expectant crowd and a disciplined Ecuador team that might just pose a danger to more high-profile opponents over the next few weeks.

"This is just the start of the World Cup," said the 33-year-old Valencia, who has now sco-

red Ecuador's last five goals at the World Cup, including three in 2014. "We have to keep dreaming."

In what might go down as one of the worst displays by a host nation to open a tournament, Qatar had five shots in the match and none of them were on target. The team had only two touches inside the opposition penalty area.

Put simply, Ecuador was just too good for a team only playing at the World Cup because it is the host.

"I wouldn't say we were naïve," Sanchez said. "I would say this was about nervousness ... maybe we had too many doubts."

Valencia thought he had scored in the third minute when he headed in from close range following an acrobatic cross from Felix Torres. After a video review of about two minutes, Ecuadorian celebrations were cut short when the goal was ruled out for a marginal offside.

Ecuador did take the lead, however, in the 16th minute when Valencia — running onto a through-ball — was tripped by Saad Alsheeb after rounding the goalkeeper, who was booked

for the challenge. Valencia was nonchalant as he trotted up and converted the spot kick into the bottom corner.

The 33-year-old striker then added his second in the 33rd by heading in a right-wing cross from Angelo Preciado.

With Qatar's passes often going astray and its defensive raggedness repeatedly exposed, Ecuador had no problem holding onto its lead as Sanchez stood helpless in his technical area and the home fans fell quiet.

Many didn't return for the second half. And heading into the final quarter of the game, thousands of seats were empty.

It marked a huge contrast to a few hours earlier.

In a party-like atmosphere, camels and Arabian horses lined the entrance to the stadium, a Bedouin tent-inspired venue located in the rather isolated surrounds of the rural town of Al Khor, north of Doha.

And the seven-act opening ceremony lived up to its billing, the highlight being when Freeman extended one yellow-gloved hand to a FIFA World Cup ambassador suffering from a rare spinal disorder in an image representing inclusion in a country facing international criticism over its human-rights record.

After this display, Qatar will need more than just luck to avoid joining South Africa as being the only host nation to fail to get out of the group stage at the World Cup. **MDT/AP**

TODAY'S MATCHES

	Date	Time	Home	Away	ODDS
Tue	Nov 22	18:00	Argentina	Saudi Arabia	H 1.19, D 8, A 23
Tue	Nov 22	21:00	Denmark	Tunisia	H 1.53, D 4.2, A 8
Wed	Nov 23	00:00	Mexico	Poland	H 2.78, D 3.09, A 2.97
Wed	Nov 23	3:00	France	Australia	H 1.31, D 6, A 12

GROUP B

Saka, Rashford help England rout Iran

JAMES ROBSON, DOHA

ENGLAND 6, IRAN 2

BUKAYO Saka and Marcus Rashford put last year's European Championship loss behind them, combining to score three goals in England's 6-2 rout of Iran yesterday at the World Cup.

Both players missed penalties in the shootout loss to Italy in the Euro 2020 final and were then subjected to racist abuse. A year later, Saka scored twice at Khalifa International Stadium and Rashford came

off the bench to add another with his first move of the match.

It has been a difficult buildup for England, but this was a performance that will provide encouragement to coach Gareth Southgate, who has recently endured the most troubled period of his England tenure.

He was booed after a 4-0 loss to Hungary in June and was humiliated by his own fans when they chanted, "You don't know what you're doing."

Hundreds of fans missed the start of the match

because of an issue with digital tickets. When they eventually made their way to their seats, they witnessed an utterly dominant display from England.

Jude Bellingham scored the first goal in the 35th minute — his first international goal.

Saka then got his first of the match in the 43rd and Raheem Sterling added another in first-half stoppage time. Saka scored his second shortly after the hour, but Mehdi Taremi pulled one back for Iran in the 65th minute.

Rashford struck six mi-

utes later to extend England's lead to 5-1, and Jack Grealish also stepped off the bench to add a sixth in the 90th. Taremi added another for Iran from the penalty spot deep in injury time after John Stones was penalized for holding Morteza Pournajafi's shirt in the box.

The game was delayed for several minutes in the first half when Iran goalkeeper Ali Beiranvand clashed heads with a teammate. He was eventually taken off the field on a stretcher with the score still 0-0.



England's Bukayo Saka (right) celebrates with teammates after scoring his side's fourth goal

His replacement, Hossein Hosseini, was left with the unenviable task of facing England's potent attack.

The match had a total of 29 minutes of injury time, 15 minutes in the first half and 14 in the second. **MDT/AP**

OPINION

World Views

Clara G. Zundel, Wayne S. University
 MDT/The Conversation



AIR POLLUTION HARMS THE BRAIN AND MENTAL HEALTH, TOO

People who breathe polluted air experience changes within the brain regions that control emotions, and as a result, they may be more likely to develop anxiety and depression than those who breathe cleaner air. These are the key findings of a systematic review that my colleagues and I recently published in the journal *NeuroToxicology*.

In our analysis, 73% of the studies reported higher mental health symptoms and behaviors in humans and animals, such as rats, that were exposed to higher than average levels of air pollution. Some exposures that led to negative effects occurred in air pollution ranges that are currently considered “safe” by the Environmental Protection Agency’s standards. In addition, we discovered that 95% of studies examining brain effects found significant physical and functional changes within the emotion-regulation brain regions in those exposed to increased levels of air pollution.

Most of these studies found that exposure to elevated levels of air pollution is associated with increased inflammation and changes to the regulation of neurotransmitters, which act as the brain’s chemical messengers.

Research into the physical health effects associated with air pollution exposure, such as asthma and respiratory issues, have been well documented for decades.

But only over the last 10 years or so have researchers begun to understand how air pollution can affect the brain. Studies have shown that small air pollutants, such as ultrafine particles from vehicle exhaust, can affect the brain either directly, by traveling through the nose and into the brain, or indirectly, by causing inflammation and altered immune responses in the body that can then cross into the brain.

At the same time, researchers are increasingly documenting the association between air pollution and its negative effects on mental health.

Unfortunately, research suggests that air pollution will only worsen as climate change intensifies and carbon emissions remain unregulated.

For this reason, more research into the health effects of air pollution exposure that goes beyond respiratory health outcomes into the realm of biological psychiatry is badly needed. For instance, the neurobiological mechanisms through which air pollution increases risk for mental health symptoms are still poorly understood.

In addition to our primary findings, our team also identified some notable gaps within the research that need to be addressed in order to paint a fuller picture of the relationship between air pollution and brain health.

Relatively few studies examined the effects of air pollution exposure during early life, such as infancy and toddlerhood, and in childhood and adolescence. This is especially concerning given that the brain continues to develop until young adulthood and therefore may be particularly susceptible to the effects of air pollution.

We also found that within the studies investigating air pollution effects on the brain, only 10 were conducted in humans. While research on animals has extensively shown that air pollution can cause a host of changes within the animal brain, the research on how air pollution affects the human brain is much more limited. What’s more, most of the existing brain studies in humans have focused on physical changes, such as differences in overall brain size. More research is needed that relies on a technique called functional brain imaging, which could enable researchers like us to detect subtle or smaller changes that may occur before physical changes.

In the future, our team plans to use brain imaging methods to study how air pollution increases the risk of anxiety during adolescence. We plan to use a variety of techniques, including personal air monitors that children can wear as they go about their day, allowing us to more accurately assess their exposure.

[Abridged]

A collection of touching and sometimes prescient personal letters written by a young Bob Dylan to a high school girlfriend has been sold at auction to a renowned Portuguese bookshop for nearly \$670,000. The Livraria Lello in Porto, Portugal, which bills itself as “the World’s Most Beautiful Bookshop,” plans to keep the archive of 42 handwritten letters totaling 150 pages complete and available for Dylan fans and scholars to study, auctioneer RR Auction said in a statement last week.

Dylan, a native of Hibbing, Minnesota, wrote the letters to Barbara Ann Hewitt between 1957 and 1959 when he was still known as Bob Zimmerman. They provide an insight into a period of his life of which not much is known.

Remarkably, in some of the letters Dylan writes about changing his name and hoping to sell a million records.

Decades later, the now 81-year-old Dylan and 2016 recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature has sold about 125 million records.

FIVE KILLED, 25 WOUNDED

PATRONS IN US GAY CLUB SHOOTING HIT GUNMAN WITH HIS OWN WEAPON

As bullets tore through a gay nightclub in Colorado Springs, killing five people and wounding many more, one patron who’d been partying moments before rushed into action, grabbing a handgun from the suspect, hitting him with it and pinning him down until police arrived just minutes later.

He was one of at least two customers who police and city officials credit with stopping the gunman and limiting the bloodshed in Saturday night’s shooting at Club Q. The violence pierced the cozy confines of an entertainment venue that has long been a cherished safe spot for the LGBTQ community in the conservative-leaning city.

“Had that individual not intervened this could have been exponentially more tragic,” Colorado Springs Mayor John Suthers told The Associated Press.

Police identified the alleged gunman as 22-year-old Anderson Lee Aldrich, who was in custody and being treated for injuries.

A law enforcement official said the suspect used an AR-15-style semiautomatic weapon in the attack, but a handgun and additional ammunition magazines also were recovered. The official could not discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Club Q on its Facebook page thanked the “quick reactions of heroic customers that subdued the gunman and ended this hate attack.” Investigators were still determining a motive and whether to prosecute it as a hate crime, said El Paso County District Attorney Michael Allen. Charges against the suspect will likely include first-degree murder, he said.

Already questions were being raised about why authorities didn’t seek to take Aldrich’s guns away from



him in 2021, when he was arrested after his mother reported he threatened her with a homemade bomb and other weapons. Of the 25 injured at Club Q, at least seven were in critical condition, authorities said. Some were hurt trying to flee, and it was unclear if all of them were shot, a police spokesperson said. Suthers said there was “reason to hope” all of those hospitalized would recover.

The shooting rekindled memories of the 2016 massacre at the Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, that killed 49 people. Colorado has experienced several mass killings, including at Columbine High School in 1999, a movie theater in suburban Denver in 2012 and at a Boulder supermarket last year.

It was the sixth mass killing this month and came in a year when the nation was shaken by the deaths of 21 in a school shooting in Uvalde, Texas.

Authorities were called to Club Q at 11:57 p.m. Saturday with a report of a shooting, and the first officer arrived at midnight.

Joshua Thurman said he was in the club with about two dozen other people and was dancing when the shots began. He initially thought it was part of the

music, until he heard another shot and said he saw the flash of a gun muzzle.

Thurman, 34, said he ran with another person to a dressing room where someone already was hiding. They locked the door, turned off the lights and got on the floor but could hear the violence unfolding, including the gunman getting beaten up, he added.

“I could have lost my life — over what? What was the purpose?” he said as tears ran down his cheeks. “We were just enjoying ourselves. We weren’t out harming anyone. We were in our space, our community, our home, enjoying ourselves like everybody else does.”

Detectives were examining whether anyone had helped the suspect before the attack, Police Chief Adrian Vasquez said. He said patrons who intervened during the attack were “heroic” and prevented more deaths.

Club Q is a gay and lesbian nightclub that features a drag show on Saturdays, according to its website. Club Q’s Facebook page said planned entertainment included a “punk and alternative show” preceding a birthday dance party, with a Sunday all-ages drag brunch. MDT/AP



Ukraine Powerful explosions from shelling shook Zaporizhzhia region, the site of Europe’s largest nuclear power plant, the global nuclear watchdog said, calling for “urgent measures to help prevent a nuclear accident” in the Russian-occupied facility. A heavy barrage of Russian military strikes — almost 400 on Sunday alone — also hit Ukraine’s eastern regions, and fierce ground battles shook the eastern Donetsk province.



USA Forty seven years after he took the stage at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles in a sequined-studded baseball uniform as the world’s biggest pop star, Elton John walked on to the same stage yesterday [Macau time] wearing a bedazzled Dodgers bathrobe, a uniform more fitting for a 75-year-old man on the verge of retirement. The crowd of more than 50,000 roared at the moment that came in the final minutes of the final North American concert of a tour John says will be his last.



Nigeria Teenage climate activists in Nigeria’s largest city are recycling trash into runway outfits for a “Trashion Show.” Chinedu Mogbo, founder of Greenfingers Wildlife Initiative, a conservation group working with the activists, said the show was designed to raise awareness about environmental pollution. Lagos generates at least 12,000 metric tons of waste daily, authorities say. And implementation of environmental laws is poor: The World Bank estimates that pollution kills at least 30,000 people in this city every year.