



**THE LABOUR AFFAIRS BUREAU ASSISTED NEARLY 5,800 RESIDENTS TO BE HIRED THROUGH THEIR JOB-MATCHING SESSIONS**

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**NEARLY MOP10B GOES TO SMES THROUGH CONSUMPTION CARDS**

P2

**ANOTHER WC STUNNER: JAPAN BEATS MIGHTY GERMANY**

P11



AP PHOTO



**Indonesia** More rescuers and volunteers were deployed in devastated areas on Indonesia's main island of Java to search for the dead and missing from an earthquake that killed at least 271 people. With many missing, some remote areas still unreachable and more than 2,000 people injured in the 5.6 magnitude quake Monday, the death toll was likely to rise. More than 12,000 army personnel were deployed yesterday to help the search.

AP PHOTO



**Ukraine** An overnight rocket attack struck a hospital maternity ward in southern Ukraine, killing a newborn baby, Ukrainian authorities said Wednesday. The baby's mother and a doctor were pulled alive from the rubble. The region's governor said the rockets were Russian. The strike in Vilniansk, close to the city of Zaporizhzhia, adds to the gruesome toll suffered by hospitals and other medical facilities in the Russian invasion entering its tenth month this week.

AP PHOTO



**Jerusalem** Two blasts went off near bus stops in Jerusalem at the height of morning rush hour yesterday, killing one person and injuring at least 18, in what police said were suspected attacks by Palestinians. The first explosion occurred near a bus stop on the edge of the city, where commuters usually crowd waiting for buses. The second went off in Ramot, a settlement in the city's north. Police said one person died from their wounds and at least three were seriously wounded in the blasts.

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# EMERGENCY U-TURN

**Freight plane forced to return to runway after engine failure at Taipa airport** P2



## DIVERSIFICATION FOR GOOD

Secretary Lei sets out a two-step plan for 2023 where diversification within and without gaming industry is key – this time for good



P3

# NEARLY MOP10B GOES TO SMES THROUGH CONSUMPTION CARDS

ANTHONY LAM

THE several rounds of consumption stimulus since 2020 have transferred about MOP9.89 billion of cash to local small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the government has announced in a statement.

Another MOP5 billion has gone to other businesses, the government added.

The data was calculated as of end-October.

Elaborating on the cash that flowed through to SMEs, the government emphasized that different industries had benefitted from the programs.

These amounts have not included the latest MOP8,000 issuance, branded the "Livelihood Subsidy Programme" that started in October.

In addition to that, a year ago, the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) instigated the Simple Pay platform, which facilitates interconnectedness between different mobile payment service providers. With this, provider A's platform will be able to



handle payments made from provider B's accounts.

To attract users to sign up for the platform, the AMCM requested local service providers to waive handling charges on

SMEs until end-February 2023, after two extensions. From October 2021 to September 2022, 20,000 SMEs have enjoyed the waiver that would have otherwise applied to transac-

tions amounting to MOP11.6 billion.

The government also initiated a local tour and staycation program over the past several years. Subsidies were given to eligible residents to explore the city and stay in hotels.

As of end-October, the program has attracted 440,000 counts of participation, generating an economic effect approaching MOP196 million. Each year since the commencement of the program, 162 travel agencies, 70 hotels, 459 local tour guides and 559 coach drivers participated.

The government added that this year, based on the local tour and staycation program, elements of study tours had been added to the existing program to allow students to learn by traveling across the city.

Other fiscal support measures include subsidies for freelancers, cash handouts, water and electricity subsidies, mortgage repayment special arrangements and tax refunds, among others.

# GOV'T TO ADOPT BIG DATA ON DRUG PREVENTION

BIG data strategies will be employed to identify and follow up on hidden substance users, the Anti-drug Commission disclosed after a recent plenary meeting.

The strategies will be developed into tactics, which will be orchestrated to locate unknown substance users and thus conduct interventions. The direction will also help anti-drug departments and entities implement measures more accurately.

Efforts will also be made to improve identifying and testing the use of new addictive substances.

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) presented data of the Central Registry of Substance Abusers in Macau for the first half of 2022.

During this period, 53 substance users have been logged, a 42% drop year-on-year. Three of the 53 people were youths, a 66.7% drop year-on-year. The three most popular types of substance were methamphetamine, midazolam and cannabis. 80% of substance use was conducted at home or in hotel rooms.

The IAS also disclosed that Macau has entered the final stage of legislative work on the eight newly-added internationally scheduled substances in the 64th session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and is also following up the legislative work on the newly-added internationally scheduled substances in the 65th session of the same commission.

In addition, the government actively cooperated with the countries to participate in international anti-drug affairs and participated in the 44th online meeting of the heads of anti-drug law enforcement agencies in the Asia-Pacific region as a member of the Chinese delegation.

The Taskforce against Delinquent Substance Use also reported on the progress of its work at the meeting. It was revealed that work has been done in the areas of preventing substance use among university students, providing emotional support to youths and elevating cooperation across the Greater Bay Area. **AL**



## LABOR

# Over 5,700 residents hired through DSAL sessions amid high-unemployment rate

DATA from the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) shows that it has assisted a total of 5,762 residents to be hired through their job-matching sessions since the beginning of the year.

Since January, 69 job-matching sessions have been held, along with 57 sessions involving gaming operators and two large-scale sessions.

The pandemic-hit region has been striving to adhere to a zero-Covid policy but has been seeing a rise in the unemployment rate due to the economic fallout.

In response, the government has held job-matching sessions to



combat unemployment, and is giving subsidies to those who have hired unemployed residents.

Since 2020, DSAL said that it had matched a total of 12,986 residents to jobs offered by local firms.

Additionally, in collaboration with youth associations, DSAL has been organizing the Youth Job Fair every year after the graduation season, in order to create a job matching platform for companies and you-

ng people in Macau.

Recent data shows that the general unemployment rate decreased slightly 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 total number of people employed was 363,000 and employed residents totaled 280,000, up 100 and 1,700 respectively from the previous period.

Lawmakers have continuously highlighted the unemployment rate dilemma and have suggested creating more jobs in suitable industries to hire local residents. They have also called upon the government to improve the success rate of job-matching sessions and review the Labour Relations Law to improve policies on payments in arrears. **LV**

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POLICY ADDRESS 2023

# Lei sets out a two-step plan for the economic sector in 2023

RENATO MARQUES

**R**EVITALIZING the economy first so that it can then be developed is the plan of the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, for 2023. Lei announced his plans yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL) where he was present for the sectoral debate over the policy address for 2023 (LAG23).

For the official, despite the impacts caused by the pandemic, "we have managed to undertake many works to revitalize the economy [this year]," he said, noting that this will continue to be the priority for the next year.

To achieve that, the Secretary explained that, "First we need to broaden our source of visitors," he noted, advising that there is a plan to collaborate with the Secretariat of Social Affairs and Culture to attract visitors from different markets. The plan budgets 650 million patacas to attract visitors to come to Macau by subsidizing their airfares, among other initiatives, Lei said.

As for revitalizing the local market, the Secretary also noted there is a significant portion of 23.3 billion patacas included in the Macau government's Investment and Development Expenditure Plan (PIDDA) for 2023, about which he said, "We hope that



through this significant investment, we can finally revitalize the market."

Part of these plans to revitalize the local economy pass through something that the Secretary described as the "community economy" and that can be understood as a "neighborhood economy." He mentioned that the government aims to achieve an increase in the economic activities of the different districts "through a model that diversifies the economy through SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) and that will include both online and offline sessions," as well as "reinforce the plan for the special characteristics stores and also reinforce e-payments."

Nonetheless, despite the insis-

tence of several lawmakers on the topic, including the president of the AL Kou Hoi In who intervened by posing questions to the Secretary, the government left the plans open-ended, noting that there would be "other opportunities to discuss and present them in more detail," according to Lei.

As for the second step of economic development, Lei said this would be achieved through a new model of a "diversified economy 1+4." This model aims to ascribe particular importance to and boost the development of four sectors and the gaming industry, which has been a major industry for decades and at times the only tax revenue source for the government over the last several decades.

This chapter also included the

"continuing of activities regarding bonds," Lei said, as well as a great focus on the non-gaming activi-

ties to be developed by the new gaming concessionaires.

"We will enrich the non-gaming industries and create better conditions for leisure and tourism. We want to achieve synchronization between gaming and non-gaming to raise competitiveness," Lei mentioned.

Lei followed the path introduced by the Chief Executive in his initial presentation of the LAG23, noting that the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) sector needed to be more oriented towards practical results.

"We hope to be able to create a better relationship between the expos and the investment sources as well as coordinate with Hengqin to have the 'one event, two places' policy effectively happening on a regular basis."

Lei also expressed hopes that with the new Islands Medical Complex becoming operative, the health sector will begin to develop and form connections with the Traditional Chinese Medicine sector in Hengqin.

## IDEA OF HANDING OUT MOP8,000 EVERY QUARTER REJECTED BY LEI

**AT** the Legislative Assembly (AL), lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho insisted on the idea that the government should support the population via quarterly distributions of 8,000 patacas each to be handed out via electronic consumption methods.

In response, Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, rejected the proposal, noting that the budget has already been proposed and is being discussed at the Second Standing Committee of the

AL and is soon to be approved. It does not include provision for such a high expense.

Lei also remarked that such a measure would involve a very high level of expenditure that would have to come from the Financial Reserves, highlighting that such resources must be spent in a wiser and fairer manner.

The lawmaker had already proposed such a measure previously to the Chief Executive, and received a similar response.

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, wants the local unemployment rate to drop by 0.2% from the current rate of 5.2% to 5% in 2023, he said yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL), where he was present for the sectoral debate over the policy address for 2023 (LAG23).

Lei said that there are conditions in place to lower the local unemployment rate by 0.2%, although he admitted that the reduction still leaves a "considerable number of people unemployed."

Still, Lei remarked that the fact that the unemployment rate has reduced means that there is progress in this area, noting that this year the government has helped over 5,000 people get new jobs.

Commenting on the subsidy granted to employers for hiring those currently unemployed, Lei said that until No-

POLICY ADDRESS 2023

# Economy chief hopes to lower unemployment rate by 0.2%

ember 22, some 2,000 people had benefited from the scheme. However, he acknowledged that the decision on whether to continue this scheme required further consideration and was not confirmed as yet.

For Lei, the lack of economic diversification and the consequent slowdown of local economic activities is the main factor responsible for the rising unemployment rate and underemployment. Lei noted, "We hope that the revitalization of the economy will take place effectively so we can solve the root of the problem."

Lawmakers Ella Lei and Lei Chan U, both representing the labor sector, criticized the attitude and lack of response

from the government regarding the many labor-related problems that were occurring as a consequence of the pandemic.

While Lei Chan U said the policies to protect the rights of workers and tackle unemployment fell short of people's expectations, Ella Lei disagreed with the Secretary's response on the need to revise the labor law.

Ella Lei had called for a review of the law to add protection mechanisms to ensure local people would be able to secure their jobs, namely those in the gaming sector, but Lei said that now was not the right time to promote such amendments given the recession.

RENATO MARQUES



# Freight plane forced to return due to engine failure

ANTHONY LAM

A freight plane set to depart Macau yesterday afternoon returned to ground after take-off due to engine failure, the Civil Aviation Authority (AACM) confirmed.

Eyewitnesses notified the Times about the sighting of ambulances and fire engines under a plane on one of the two connection bridges at the Macau International Airport (MFM).

Dozens of fire engines were also sighted near the Taipa Maritime Terminal at Pak On, Taipa, as per videos posted online by social media users.

Photos posted by social media users, aviation enthusiasts and other trade media have captured scenes of a fire at the left-center engine on the four-engine Boeing 747F aircraft. Technically, a 747 aircraft is capable of flying with only three functional engines.



Inquiries were made to the Fire Services Bureau (CB), the AACM and the MFM's administration company. Not long after the inquiries were made, the CB replied and confirmed that an

incident had taken place at the MFM, which triggered a specialized contingency mechanism. It necessitated fire engines to be on alert nearby.

Three to four hours after the

incident was first witnessed, the Times received a public reply posted by the AACM to its website, explaining the event.

It confirmed that yesterday afternoon "a cargo aircraft des-

igned to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan from Macau, with flight number BSC4053 and aircraft type Boeing 747-200F, departed from Macau International Airport at 13:16 but then encountered a failure in one of the engines sometime after and returned to Macau International Airport."

Furthermore, the AACM confirmed that the contingency mechanism was enacted. "The cargo aircraft eventually landed safely on the runway at 13:59 and was towed to the apron for inspection. The incident did not cause any injuries to the crew members. The Emergency Operations Centre was deactivated at 14:44 and the airport resumed normal operations hence after."

No reply has been received from the MFM administration company.

Data from the online flight tracking platform Flightradar24.com showed that after take-off from the southbound Runway 16, the aircraft U-turned to its intended destination, before making another U-turn to go southwards. Several other turns were maneuvered to burn fuel so that the aircraft could be below the maximum landing weight to conduct an emergency landing safely.

## ART CHINESE AND ITALIAN ARTISTS MERGE IN SANDS GALLERY'S NEW EXHIBITION

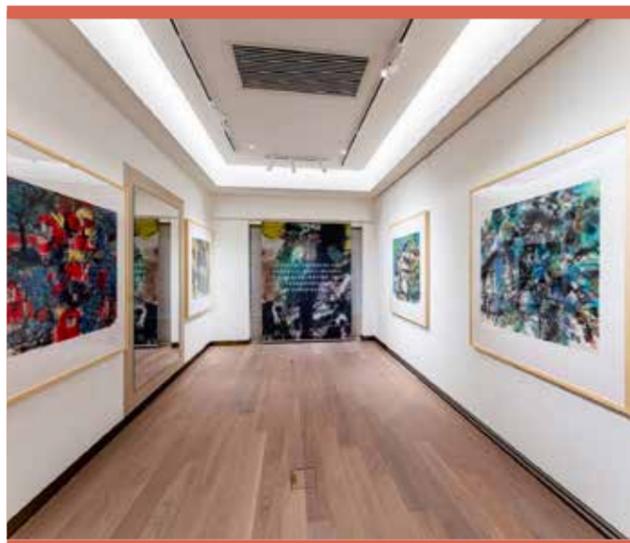
THE Sands Gallery opened an exhibition featuring over 30 artworks from artists in China and Italy, aiming to promote exchange and cooperation among local and international talents.

Titled "Ink Wash • Abstraction," the latest exhibition at the Grand Suites at Four Seasons

integrates Chinese contemporary ink painting and Italian abstract photography.

According to Sands China, the exhibition is the first joint exhibition in Asia by China's Feng Zhongyun and Italy's Elisa Sighicelli, two artists with different styles "creating an unexpected 'East meets West' encounter between ink paintings and subtle photographic images that form a perfect harmony."

Speaking during the opening ceremony, Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., said, "As Macau embraces different cultures from all over the world, Sands Gallery's ultimate objective has always been to provide a platform where people can exchange artistic ideas and show their appreciation of the arts in a bid to



enrich the art atmosphere in Macau."

The exhibition was co-organized with Lotus Art and Rossi & Rossi Gallery. It is curated by

Zhang Zikang, director of the CAFA Art Museum, and a professor and doctoral supervisor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA).

Born in the same era, Feng and Sighicelli have respectively achieved international recognition for their artworks in the Eastern and Western art worlds, and through this exhibition, "they are offering a precious

visual feast of cultural collision and artistic fusion."

As an ink artist, Feng is well-known for his unrestrained painting style, remolding his art with vigorous brush strokes and rich colors, while Sighicelli is adept at capturing the subtle beauty of sculptures, architecture and still-life objects with experimental photography techniques on unexpected and novel media such as marble, plaster and satin.

The exhibition will run at Sands Gallery from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily until January 8, 2023. LV

## TWO CROSS-BORDER PARENTS APPREHENDED OVER ALLEGED PARALLEL TRADING

ANTHONY LAM

TWO parents of cross-border students have been arrested by Chinese customs at Gongbei, the mainland counterpart of the Border Gate, over allegations of parallel trading, the Gongbei authorities announced.

With a daily cap of a single round trip applying to several Macau-Zhuhai border checkpoints, both governments are attempting to control parallel trading, which the mainland referred to as smuggling.

Parents or registered guardians of cross-border students are exempted from the restriction on the number of round trips, so they can conduct more than a single round trip in a day.

Gongbei Customs revealed that at least two such adults had allegedly abused the exemption and smuggled goods from Macau to the mainland.

Although it did not state on which days the



alleged crime took place, Gongbei Customs disclosed that a parent of a cross-border Macau student was intercepted by officers on duty at the "Nothing to Declare" corridor at the Gongbei Border Checkpoint. The parent was found to be carrying several bottles of Moutai Chinese wines. That was the fifth time that the parent entered mainland China that day.

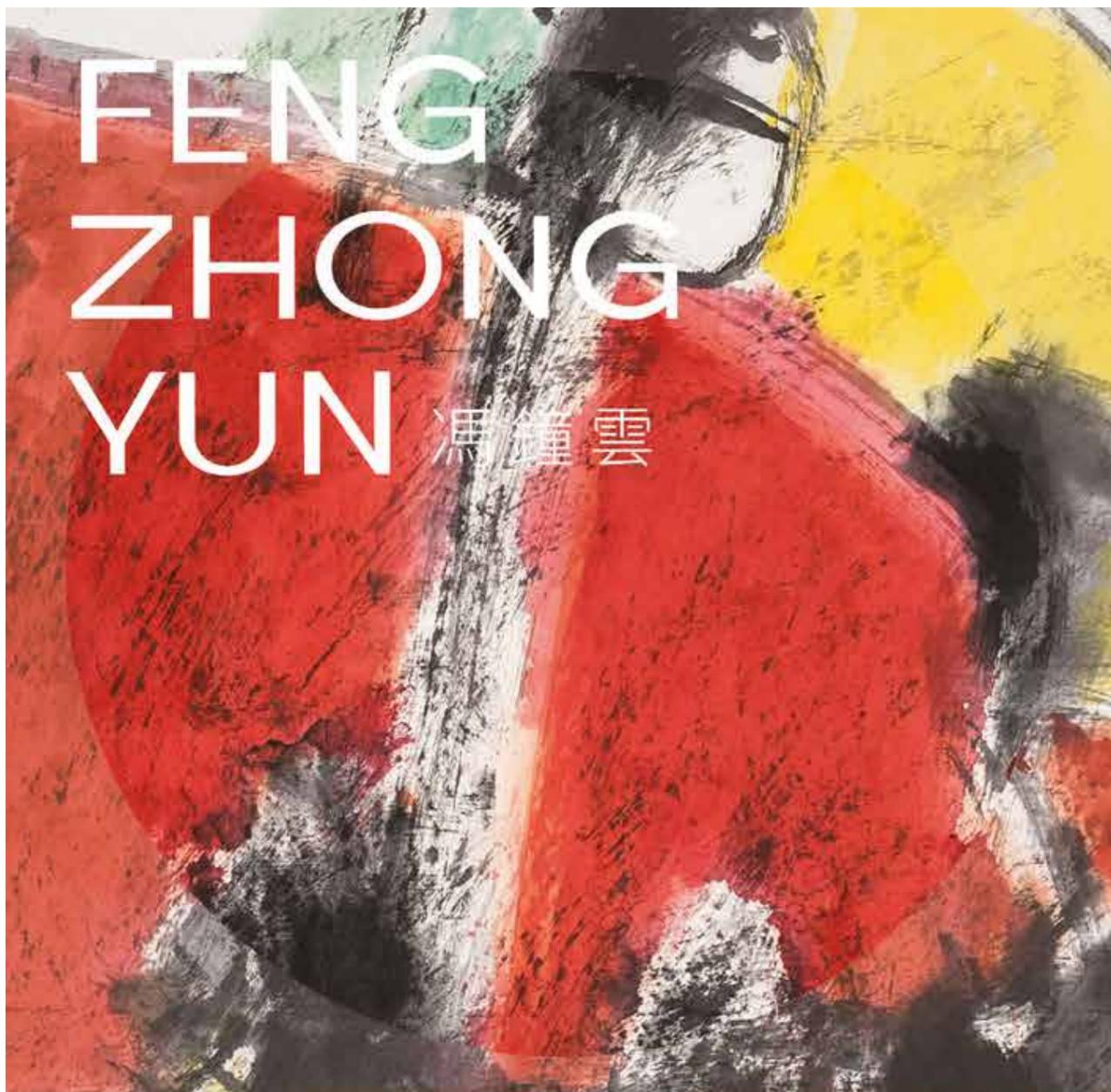
The next day, the officers at the same border checkpoint apprehended another parent, who was carrying "a batch of iPads and cosmetic products" while trying to enter Zhuhai. It was further disclosed that the paren-

ts had been caught bringing six laptop computers at a time into mainland China, and that the parent crossed the border six times that day.

The two parents are now restricted to a single round trip per day across the border.

Gongbei Customs revealed that not only did these parents abuse the system and smuggle goods into Zhuhai, some also instructed their children to smuggle goods on their way home.

Information on the matter will be provided to the Macau government for educational purposes, Gongbei Customs noted.



FENG  
ZHONG  
YUN 馮鐘雲



ELISA  
SIGHICELLI  
艾莉莎·希基切莉

水墨 · 抽象

INK WASH · ABSTRACTION

主辦方 ORGANIZER



LOTUS ART

ROSSI  
ROSSI

協辦方 CO-ORGANIZER



策展人：張子康  
Curator: Zhang Zikang

展覽地點 VENUE:  
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Sands Gallery  
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PANDEMIC

# WORKERS PROTEST AT VIRUS-HIT CHINESE IPHONE FACTORY

JOE MCDONALD  
& ZEN SOO, BEIJING

**E**Mployees at the world's biggest Apple iPhone factory were beaten and detained in protests over contract disputes amid anti-virus controls, according to witnesses and videos on social media yesterday, as tensions mount over Beijing's severe coronavirus strategy.

Videos that said they were filmed at the factory in the central city of Zhengzhou showed thousands of people in masks facing rows of police in white protective suits with plastic riot shields. Police kicked and hit a protester with clubs after he grabbed a metal pole that had been used to strike him.

Frustration with restrictions in areas throughout China that have closed shops and offices and confined millions of people to their homes for weeks at a time with little warning have



AP PHOTO

In this photo taken from video footage and released by Hangpai Xinyang, people with suitcases and bags are seen leaving from a Foxconn compound in Zhengzhou last month

boiled over into protests in some areas. Videos on social media show residents in some areas tearing down barricades set up to enforce neighborhood closures.

Last month, thousands of employees walked out of the iPhone factory operated by Taiwan's Foxconn Technology Group over complaints about unsafe working conditions

following virus cases in the facility.

A protest erupted Tuesday over complaints Foxconn changed conditions for new workers who were attracted by offers of higher pay, according to Li Sanshan, an employee.

Li said he quit a catering job in response to advertising that promised 25,000 yuan (\$3,500) for two mon-

ths of work. Li, 28, said workers were angry after being told they had to work two additional months at lower pay to receive the 25,000 yuan.

"Foxconn released very tempting recruiting offers, and workers from all parts of the country came, only to find they were being made fools of," Li said.

The ruling Communist Party promised this month to try to reduce disruption by shortening required quarantines and making other changes. But the party says it will stick to its "zero-COVID" strategy that aims to isolate every case at a time when other governments are relaxing travel and other restrictions and trying to

live with the virus.

Protests have flared as the number and severity of outbreaks has risen across China, including in Beijing. This week, authorities reported the country's first COVID-19 deaths in six months.

More than 253,000 cases have been found in the past three weeks and the daily average is increasing, the government reported Tuesday. Local leaders have responded by closing neighborhoods and imposing other restrictions that residents complain go beyond what the national government allows.

Yesterday, the government reported 28,883 cases found over the past 24 hours, including 26,242 with no symptoms. Henan province, where Zhengzhou is the capital, reported 851 in total.

The government will enforce its anti-COVID policy while "resolutely overcoming the mindset of paralysis and laxity," said a spokesman for the National Health Commission, Mi Feng.

The capital, Beijing, has closed shops, restaurants, office buildings and some apartment compounds.

Shanghai and the southern city of Nanchang banned people from outside the city from visiting public

venues for five days after arrival.

Foxconn said earlier the Zhengzhou factory uses "closed-loop management," which means employees live at their workplace with no outside contact.

The protest lasted through yesterday morning as thousands of workers gathered outside dormitories and confronted factory security workers, according to Li.

Other videos showed protesters spraying fire extinguishers toward police.

A man who identified himself as the Communist Party secretary in charge of community services was shown in a video posted on the Sina Weibo social media platform urging protesters to withdraw. He assured them their demands would be met.

Apple Inc. has warned deliveries of its new iPhone 14 model would be delayed due to anti-disease controls on the factory. The city government suspended access to an industrial zone that surrounds the factory, which Foxconn has said employs 200,000 people.

Foxconn, headquartered in Taipei, Taiwan, didn't respond to requests for information about the situation.

New reports earlier said the ruling party ordered "grassroots cadres" to fill in for Foxconn employees in Zhengzhou who left. The company didn't respond to requests for confirmation and details about that arrangement. **MDT/AP**

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CRIME

## Four detained over trading company fire that killed 38

**F**our people have been detained over a fire at an industrial trading company in central China that killed 38 people, reports said yesterday.

The fire Monday was caused by welding sparks that ignited cotton cloth being stored at a facility run by the firm Kaixinda, authorities said.

Two of the company's employees and two from a clothing firm were detained, Anyang Mayor Gao Yong told reporters late Tuesday, according to state media. They have not been formally arrested and there was no immediate word on

what charges they may face.

In addition to the dead, two people were injured in the fire that took more than four hours to extinguish.

Gao said the city would thoroughly inspect all possible safety risks in the city of more than 5 million people in the central province of Henan.

"This accident has taken such a huge toll on human life, the lessons must be understood at a very deep level," Gao was quoted as saying.

Densely populated and economically prominent Henan has seen a number of recent deadly incidents

blamed on violations of safety regulations and lax government supervision.

Five officials were arrested after a building collapse that killed 53 people on the outskirts of Henan's provincial capital Changsha in April.

The central government has pledged stronger safety measures ever since an explosion in 2015 at a chemical warehouse in the northern port city of Tianjin killed 173 people, most of them firefighters and police officers. In that case, a number of local officials were accused of taking bribes to ignore safety violations. **MDT/AP**

MALAYSIA

# King searches for PM to end deadlock

**M**ALAYSIA'S king met with lawmakers yesterday and will next consult other royal families in a continuing search for a prime minister after inconclusive general elections that saw the rise of Islamists sparked anxieties in the multiracial nation.

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's Pakatan Harapan, or Alliance of Hope, topped Saturday's poll with 82 parliamentary seats, but failed to reach the 112 needed for a majority. Former Prime Minister Muhyiddin's Malay-centric Perikatan Nasional, or National Alliance, won 73 seats. The hung parliament renewed a leadership crisis in Malaysia that saw three prime ministers since 2018.

The biggest winner was the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, the hard-line ally in Muhyiddin's bloc, with 49 seats — more than double what it won in 2018. Known as PAS, it backs Islamic Shariah law, rules three states and is now the single largest party.

As the contest for the top job drags on, police have tightened security as posts on social media warned of racial troubles if Anwar's multiethnic bloc wins.



Armed National palace police stand guard at the National Palace in Kuala Lumpur, yesterday

Malay Muslims form two-thirds of Malaysia's 33 million people, who include large ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities.

National police chief Acryl Sani Abdullah Sani said yesterday that security has been tightened at strategic locations nationwide to ensure public safety and order. Police have earlier warned of stern action against social media users fanning racial

and religious sentiments.

A group of civil society and rights organizations said they detected a coordinated attempt on social media to promote Muhyiddin's bloc and demonize Anwar and one of its Chinese-dominated allies, the Democratic Action Party, or DAP. Islamic stalwarts have often used DAP as a bogeyman to warn Malays of Chinese political dominance if Anwar's bloc wins.

The group said in a statement that the posts blamed DAP for causing violence in 1969 that left hundreds dead, mostly Chinese. An affirmative action program that gives privileges to Malays in jobs, housing and education was introduced after the 1969 unrest to give them more opportunities to narrow the wealth gap with the business-minded Chinese.

"The posts then evolved into

videos containing images of weapons and guns, with messages warning the Malay majority to beware of DAP and Pakatan Harapan. They also threatened a return of racial unrest," the group said. Short video app TikTok reportedly said it has zero tolerance against any form of hate speech and violent extremism and will remove content that violates its community guidelines.

King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah proposed a unity government after meeting the two leaders Tuesday but Muhyiddin rejected the idea. The monarch yesterday met leaders from the third largest bloc, the alliance led by the United Malays National Organization, as well as another influential bloc from Borneo island.

UMNO President Ahmad Zahid Hamidi told the Malaysiakini online news portal that the king requested his National Front to be part of a unity government during the meeting. He said the alliance's decision-making body and its 30 lawmakers who won in the polls will hold more talks. The National Front had earlier said it will support neither leader and remain in opposition. MDT/AP



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RUSSIA

# Putin, Díaz-Canel meet in Moscow, honor rebel icon Castro

**R**USSIAN President Vladimir Putin yesterday [Macau time] met with his Cuban counterpart in Moscow, where the two unveiled a monument to Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro and hailed the “traditional friendship” between their sanctions-hit nations.

A video published on the Kremlin’s website showed Putin and the Cuban head of state, Miguel Díaz-Canel y Bermúdez, deliver speeches as Russian military guards flanked a bronze statue of Castro.

The late Castro embraced Soviet-style communism after taking a leading role in a revolution which in 1959 drove dictator Fulgencio Batista from power. He went on to defy a crippling U.S. embargo and dozens of assassination plots during his half-century of rule on the island, before dying in 2016 at the age of 90.

Putin in a speech underscored Castro’s history of defiance, praising him for “selflessly defending the sovereignty of (his) native country” and drawing parallels with Western sanctions imposed on Russia in connection with its military campaign in Ukraine.

“The Soviet Union and Russia have always, and continue to this day, to support the Cuban people in their struggle for independence, sovereignty. We have always stood against any sorts of restrictions, embargoes, blockades and so on. We have always supported Cuba on the international stage and we see that Cuba takes the



same position towards Russia,” Putin said.

Other top Russian officials struck similar tones in their meetings with Díaz-Canel, who arrived in Moscow on Saturday.

Vyacheslav Volodin, the Russian parliament speaker, called Cuba “a symbol of the struggle of independence” during talks on Tuesday, according to a readout published on the State Duma website.

Russian state agencies also cited Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia’s powerful Security Council and a former president, as saying that “no sanctions are capable of holding back the development of Cuba and the Russian Federation” as he met the Cuban leader Monday.

According to the State Duma readout, Díaz-Canel asserted that “Russia can always count on Cuba” in his

meeting with Volodin, and condemned U.S. sanctions against Moscow as “coercive” and “unfair.”

Díaz-Canel began his visit abroad last Wednesday in Algeria, where he negotiated support for the Cuban energy sector, including an undetermined amount of oil purchase and the donation of a solar power plant. He is set to travel on to Turkey and China.

Trade between Cuba and Russia was about 500 million dollars in 2019, as indicated by Russia’s then-Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov during a visit to the island that year.

Cuban state media reported that Díaz-Canel’s agenda will focus on the energy sector, very sensitive for the island as it battles shortages of food, medicines and fuel. Hours-long daily blackouts have occurred in Cuba’s largest cities, sparking protests.

The Cuban government has acknowledged the problem and accused U.S. sanctions, which were tightened under former President Donald Trump, of causing poverty and indirectly fueling protests.

Havana’s main regional political ally, Venezuela, has sold the island the oil Cuba needed for the past two decades. Cuba only produces half the oil it needs for its economy.

From the 1960s to the 1990s, the Soviet Union offered Cuba many vital imports: fertilizers, industrial equipment, spare parts and, above all, oil in exchange for sugar.

When the old alliance collapsed in the 1990s, Cuba owed Russia some \$35 billion in debt, 90% of which was forgiven by the Putin administration in 2014. The balance was refinanced. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1989 NEW ERA FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA



Three weeks of border clashes between Iran and Iraq appear to have finally erupted into all-out war.

Iraq has bombed several Iranian air and military supply bases, including Tehran’s international airport.

The rise in hostilities comes after Iraq tore up a 1975 border agreement with Iran over sovereignty of the Shatt al-Arab waterway.

The southern end of the river forms part of the border between the two countries, leading into the Gulf, and is a vital supply line for oil to the West.

Iraqi and Iranian ships exchanged fire in the disputed estuary yesterday and Iraq claimed to have sunk eight Iranian patrol boats.

Iranian reports say Iraqi forces shelled the Iranian naval base of Khorramshahr, 20 miles (32kms) south of Abadan, and site of the world’s largest oil refinery. There are also reports of ground forces advancing into surrounding Iranian territory.

Iraqi officials say Iranian guns hit Iraqi economic installations in the Shatt al-Arab waterway. Some reports say they fired at an Iraqi oil reservoir in the Basra area in southern Iraq and set it on fire.

Iraq has announced the call-up of all army, police, public security and customs reservists.

It is also reported to have moved bombers and transport aircraft into neighbouring Jordan.

Western diplomats believe Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is seeking to take advantage of the post-revolution turmoil in Iran to seize control of the waterway and other territory handed over to Tehran as part of the 1975 agreement.

In return Iran agreed to end support for a Kurdish rebellion in northern Iraq.

President Hussein also appears intent on destroying the new Islamic leader, Ayatollah Khomeini’s, grip on Iran and the majority Shia Muslim population amid fears they may arouse discontent among Iraq’s Shia majority community.

A senior member of the Iraqi government, Tariq Aziz, is in Moscow for talks in what appears to be a move to seek for more arms.

Iran may be forced to seek support from its traditional ally, the United States. Part of the price for that support would be a demand to release the 52 US hostages who have been held by Islamic fundamentalists in Tehran since November last year.

Oil experts in London say the conflict spells no immediate threat to supplies.

Courtesy BBC News

USA

# Seven people, including assailant dead in Walmart shooting

**A** shooter opened fire in a Walmart in Virginia yesterday [Macau time], leaving six people dead, police said, in the second high-profile mass killing in a handful of days. The assailant is also dead.

The store in Chesapeake is now safe, Officer Leo Kosinski

said yesterday.

The shooting came three days after a person opened fire at a gay nightclub in Colorado late Saturday, killing five people and wounding 17. Earlier in the year, the country was shaken by the deaths of 21 when a gunman stormed

an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Tuesday’s shooting also brought back memories of another at a Walmart in 2019, when a gunman police say was targeting Mexicans opened fire at a store in El Paso and killed 22 people.

Earlier, Kosinski said he couldn’t say how the gunman died but that he didn’t believe police fired shots.

The shooting had apparently stopped when police arrived at the store in Chesapeake, which is Virginia’s second-largest. **MDT/AP**

## IN CONTEXT

The Federal Assembly abolished the Communists’ constitutional hold on power after the resignations. The following month Alexander Dubcek was elected chairman of the new administration and dissident Vaclav Havel became president, completing what became known as the “Velvet Revolution”. In 1990 the country was separated into two independent republics - one Czech and one Slovak - and free elections were held for the first time since 1946. Over the next two years the Slovak separatist movement successfully campaigned for autonomy from the Czech lands. The “Velvet Divorce” was concluded and from 1 January 1993 Czechoslovakia ceased to exist and became two independent states - the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Try to curb overindulgence today. Take precautions while traveling; you don't have to get anywhere that fast. Be sure that you have all the facts before you take action.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Plan events like camping or white water rafting. Your emotional state could leave you vulnerable and confused. Your own small business on the side could ease your financial stress.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
You should be in business for yourself. Take advantage of moneymaking ventures. Turn your present relationship around or start a new one.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
You will do extremely well if you get involved in competitive activities today. Your unique contribution to the organization will enhance your reputation.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Your stubborn nature will backfire if you give your mate an ultimatum. Your outgoing nature will surprise others today. They won't get away with it.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
You need to spend some time reflecting on past experiences and involvements. Don't make those you live with feel unloved or unworthy.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
You can finish projects early, which will bring you praise from superiors. Arguments with relatives may lead to a split in the family.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Your emotions will be touched off concerning recent encounters with your lover. You won't be well received by superiors or by your spouse.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Be cautious of making any residential changes today. The home environment will be unpredictable today. You can't make things better if you don't know what to fix.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Travel will promote new romantic connections. Your temper could get the better of you if you confront personal situations. You should be able to get a lot done.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
Consider making residential changes; either moves or renovations could pay off. Opportunities for financial gains through investments and games of chance are likely.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Your lover will cost you dearly if you let them. Travel for business will be advantageous. You can discuss your findings behind closed doors with your boss.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



## SUDOKU

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

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

## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	2	11	cloudy
Changchun	-5	5	rain
Chengdu	12	19	cloudy
Chongqing	14	17	overcast
Fuzhou	17	21	rain
Guangzhou	19	22	rain
Guiyang	10	16	rain
Haikou	23	28	rain
Hangzhou	11	17	overcast
Harbin	-9	1	snow
Hefei	10	20	cloudy
Nanjing	11	19	cloudy
Shanghai	13	18	cloudy
Taipei	19	21	rain
Wuhan	10	20	cloudy
Hong Kong	23	24	showers
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-8	-4	cloudy
Frankfurt	3	11	showers
Paris	7	13	overcast
London	7	13	rain
New York	5	12	overcast

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Fail to include; 5- Shallow circular dish; 10- Pointed end; 14- contendere; 15- Paddled; 16- Hydrox rival; 17- Composed; 18- Trig functions; 19- Carson's predecessor; 20- "Orinoco Flow" singer; 21- Filibuster; 23- \_\_\_ chi chuan; 25- Like; 26- Republic in NW South America; 31- Like corn tassels; 35- Sister of Zsa Zsa; 36- Schemes; 38- Discharged; 40- Hotbed; 42- Overjoy; 44- Lady of Spain; 45- Pay for; 47- Regions; 49- Advanced degree?; 50- Woody inhabitants of forests!; 52- You're on!; 54- Fair-hiring abbr.; 56- Compass pt.; 57- Makeup remover; 62- Agitate; 66- And \_\_\_ goes; 67- Hiding place; 68- Assistant; 69- Realtor's sign; 70- One of the Allens; 71- Thought-provoking; 72- The \_\_\_ the limit; 73- Fowl pole; 74- Periods of history;

DOWN 1- A single time; 2- Haunted house sound; 3- In a bad way; 4- Salad item; 5- Thinkable; 6- Café au \_\_\_; 7- The Ponte Vecchio crosses it; 8- "Lovergirl" singer \_\_\_ Marie; 9- Ford flops; 10- Nightclub of song; 11- Caspian Sea feeder; 12- Authenticating mark; 13- \_\_\_ favor; 22- Street urchin; 24- Roadie's load; 26- Small change; 27- Not concealed; 28- Coherent light beam; 29- Kansas city; 30- Maker of Pong; 32- It may be flipped; 33- Basic monetary unit of Denmark; 34- Gossipmonger; 37- Editorial notation; 39- "James and the Giant Peach" author; 41- \_\_\_-Bo; 43- Convenience; 46- Prepared to drive; 48- Airline to Stockholm; 51- Football, most places; 53- Marquis \_\_\_; 55- Muse of poetry in Greek mythology; 57- Prepare food; 58- Pinguicid; 59- Old Fords; 60- Parrot; 61- Cries of discovery; 63- A wedding cake may have three of these; 64- Inking; 65- Gym counts; 66- Draft org.;



## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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AD



ANALYSIS

WC PUTS SPOTLIGHT ON QATAR, BUT BRINGS ATTENTION TO ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD AND POLITICS

DAVID MEDNICOFF, UMASS AMHERST

WITH the start of the World Cup on Nov. 20, 2022, soccer teams from 32 countries and tens of thousands of fans have converged on Qatar, a tiny Arab country on a peninsula in the Persian Gulf. But search "Qatar 2022" online, and the first nonsport results are about the country's human rights issues.

Like its fellow oil-rich Arab countries, Qatar has enjoyed immense wealth that nurtured grand ambitions of economic growth among rulers and citizens alike. Qatar and its neighbors, including Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, have brought in millions of workers from other countries to support their fast-growing cities and businesses over the past few decades.

In particular, about 30,000 workers came from Bangladesh, India and Nepal to construct the World Cup stadiums. At least 37 died, according to official Qatari counts, while building the US\$220 billion infrastructure for the games.

I am a political scientist and legal scholar of the Middle East who has lived and worked in Qatar. Given the sudden media focus on the country, I think it helpful for both World Cup fans and people who don't know a soccer ball from a ho-

key puck to understand four aspects of Qatar's politics that relate to its human rights challenges.

QATAR IS RULED BY A POPULAR KING

A sparsely populated country in a desert, Qatar gained independence from Great Britain in 1971. With its large oil and natural gas reserves, Qatar has the highest income per citizen in the world.

Qatar's ruler is popular among citizens. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani is part a family dynasty that has run the area's politics since the 1800s, even under Ottoman and British control. This makes Qatar one of eight Arab countries governed by hereditary kings.

Hereditary ruling monarchies may seem archaic to people living in societies with elected leaders. Yet these systems have held onto power, outlasting the Arab uprisings of 2011. The lack of democracy in Arab countries is also part of a broader trend, as autocratic governments are generally on the rise globally.

WORKERS' RIGHTS HAVE BEEN A PROBLEM

Doha, the capital of Qatar, has become a major media, educational, diplomatic and recreational hub over the past few decades. Its breakneck development also required workers from all over the world. As a result, foreign workers

make up about 85% of the country's total population, but they do not have the same rights as Qatari citizens. Qatari natives have been reluctant to share their extraordinary social welfare benefits, like free medical care, with millions of workers from abroad. This makes for a system that gives many more rights to Qatari nationals than the millions of others who live there.

Unusual, rapid growth like Qatar's is a magnet for foreign contract workers worldwide. I enjoyed my opportunity to work there myself as a visiting professor and Fulbright scholar 15 years ago. Yet less privileged foreign workers can fare badly.

In Qatar and its oil-rich peers, control by a minority of citizens over millions of workers with fewer rights leads to discrimination and abuse. Human rights groups, journalists and migrant workers themselves have sought to change harmful workplace practices, such as withholding wages and forbidding unions.

Qatar's summer heat, averaging 106 degrees Fahrenheit (41 degrees Celsius), can make working conditions especially dangerous for outside construction workers. Since it is hard to know whether the alleged worker deaths are due specifically to bad working conditions, work-related issues, or something else, exact mortality numbers have been disputed and may be prone

to exaggeration. Yet no one doubts that conditions have been terrible for many of Qatar's most vulnerable workers.

Other rights issues in Qatar have also attracted global attention. The conservative form of Islam that is part of Qatar's identity allows little tolerance for LGBTQ rights. Human rights groups have documented detentions and other routine discrimination against LGBTQ people.

QATAR HAS MADE MAJOR REFORMS

While workers' rights have received appropriate Western media attention, Qatar's direct efforts to respond to local and international activism are less known. Qatar enacted the most significant labor rights reforms in the Arab world in 2021.

Working with the International Labor Organization, a United Nations agency that promotes fair and decent work worldwide, Qatar instituted a minimum wage of \$275 per month, along with allowances for food and lodging. It also prohibited outdoor work during the peak of summer heat and eliminated many of the laws that gave employers control over their workers' basic freedoms to leave their job or the country.

Because the reforms are recent, it is hard to know whether they represent important steps forward or incremental steps that will change little.

In any case, legislation in and of itself cannot remedy a complicated challenge involving a wide range of companies and other organizations that Qatar's government does not control. Whether Qatar can and will enforce the new regulations consistently is one concern.

Most foreign migrants arrive in Qatar through foreign-based recruitment companies, which charge them to secure jobs. So even if Qatar tries to curb labor abuses, recruitment companies based in migrants' countries of origin would still profit by charging workers expensive placement fees, for example. Such recruiters often work with multinational companies within Qatar to blunt the force of the kingdom's recent reforms.

WESTERN CRITIQUES MAY CONCEAL OTHER AGENDAS

Qatari officials have suggested that international attention to foreign workers' conditions is part of a broader pattern of Westerners belittling Arabs and Muslims. One blatant example is an October issue of the French right-wing satirical magazine "Le Canard enchaîné," which depicted Qatari soccer players as terrorists.

Calls in some parts of Europe for a widespread World Cup boycott add fuel to this and other arguments that the European and American impression of Qatar is hypocritical and possibly Islamophobic. Though hardly a neutral observer, Gianni Infantino, the president of FIFA, which carries out the World Cup, reflected many Gulf Arabs' views when he argued that Europe's history of exploiting Middle Easterners and others gives it little moral high ground on issues of non-Western rights.

Because no Middle Eastern or Muslim-majority country had hosted the World Cup before 2022, Qatar's achievement is significant. The Economist argues that Qatar's responsiveness to pressures to improve its human rights climate may make it a more appropriate host for a global sporting event than other countries with poor human rights records, such as China or Russia.

Yet genuine global concern about rights in countries like Qatar and mistrust between the Middle East and the West will persist. Can new global awareness of Qatar lead to more nuanced understanding of both cross-cultural similarities and differences between Arab Islamic countries and the rest of the world? For the moment, this is as hard to know as which country will win the World Cup. MDT/THE CONVERSATION

TODAY'S MATCHES

Table with 6 columns: Day, Date, Time, Home, Away, ODDS. Rows include matches for Nov 24 and Nov 25.

SCOREBOARD

Table with 5 columns: Group, Home Team, Score, Away Team. Rows show scores for Groups C, D, F, and E.

STEVE DOUGLAS, DOHA

**MATCH OF THE DAY**

**C**RISTIANO Ronaldo is in the shop window as he starts his fifth and probably final World Cup with Portugal.

As of yesterday, the 37-year-old forward was without a club after Manchester United canceled his contract as a result of his explosive interview criticizing manager Erik ten Hag, the club's owners and many of his United teammates.

Ronaldo doesn't appear to have a new team lined up so his performances at the World Cup might yet convince potential employers to take the plunge on the five-time world player of the year, who may be past his prime but remains one of soccer's most lethal finishers on his day.

Speaking before the announcement that he had left United by mutual consent, Ronaldo was adamant that club matters would not impact his displays for Portugal at the World Cup and were not disrupting the atmosphere in the squad heading into today's group game against Ghana at Stadium 974 in Doha [Friday, 00:00].

That might need revisiting now. The motivation of winning the World Cup for the first time is likely driving Ronaldo enough in

AP PHOTO



Qatar, but impressing a potential new club would be a nice bonus to go alongside it.

"Nothing will shake this squad," Ronaldo said at a news

conference in Doha this week.

A loss to Ghana might.

The African nation is the lowest-ranked team at the World Cup — at No. 61 — and is the big

underdog in a group also containing Uruguay and South Korea.

Still, Saudi Arabia showed anything is possible at this tourna-

ment by beating Lionel Messi's Argentina against the odds on Tuesday, and Ghana has previously come within a handball by Luis Suarez of playing in a World Cup semifinal — in 2010.

The Blacks Stars also have some form players in Thomas Partey — the midfield anchor of Premier League leader Arsenal — and Mohammed Kudus, who has been scoring freely for Ajax in the Champions League this season.

Portugal will start as the favorite, with coach Fernando Santos having so much depth in attack, midfield and at full back as well as the experience of leading the national team to the European Championship title in 2016.

Concerns persist over whether Santos is too pragmatic given the talent at his disposal but he remains a popular choice as coach eight years after being hired. Santos has shown he isn't afraid to make tough decisions by leaving Ronaldo out of a starting team in a Nations League game against Iberian rival Spain in June for "tactical reasons."

Doing so again for the first match of a World Cup is highly unlikely, even if Ronaldo's head might be scrambled given the turbulence in his club career over the past week. **MDT/AP**



**GROUP D**

# Giroud, Mbappe help France rout Australia

**FRANCE 4, AUSTRALIA 1**

**F**RANCE showed it can cope without its star striker at the World Cup.

In Karim Benzema's absence, Kylian Mbappe scored one and set up the second of Olivier Giroud's two goals to help the defending champions beat Australia 4-1 yesterday [Macau time].

Giroud equaled Thierry Henry's national record of 51 goals with a header

from Mbappe's cross in the 71st minute. Giroud, who failed to score at the last World Cup but did find the net at the 2014 tournament, can break Henry's record when France faces Denmark on Saturday.

"It's not just about chasing records but what he always does on the field," France coach Didier Deschamps said. "He's a very im-

portant player for us."

Moments before that strike, Mbappe headed in Ousmane Dembele's cross from the right to start this World Cup as he finished the last — with a goal. He knelt with one hand behind his back and his finger on his forehead in a new celebration.

Deschamps joked that Mbappe could now become even

more lethal.

"He always dreams about scoring headers, so if he starts doing that he'll be even more dangerous," Deschamps said, cracking a smile. "I knew he would be ready tonight because this is his competition."

Craig Goodwin gave Australia the lead when he turned in winger Matthew Leckie's cross in the ninth minute.

France midfielder Adrien Rabiot equalized with a powerful header in the 27th and set up Giroud's first goal shortly after.

"It's great for our momentum and confidence to have turned things around," Giroud said. "Even though we could have scored more we combined well."

France was playing without the injured Benzema, who was ruled out of the World Cup last week.

The Socceroos were pumped up and the green-and-gold Aussie fans were loving it. They even mocked Mbappe with chants of "Who are ya? Who are ya?" after he lost the ball dribbling down the left.

That's as good as it got for them. **MDT/AP**

**GROUP E**

# JAPAN GETS TWO LATE GOALS TO BEAT GERMANY

**GERMANY 1, JAPAN 2**

**S**UBSTITUTES Ritsu Doan and Takuma Asano scored late goals last night to give Japan a come-from-behind 2-1 victory over Germany at the World Cup.

Ilkay Gundogan had given four-time champion Germany the lead with a first-half penalty. But Doan, who plays for German team Freiburg, pounced on a rebound to equalize in the 76th minute after Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer blocked a shot

from Takumi Minamino.

Then Asano, who plays for German team Bochum, sprinted clear of Nico Schlotterbeck and beat Neuer from a narrow angle in the 83rd.

It was the first competitive meeting between the two nations.

Before the game, Germany's players covered their mouths during the team photo in an apparent rebuke to FIFA following its decision to stop plans to wear armbands to protest discrimination in host nation Qatar. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



OPINION

China Daily  
Editorial, China Daily

**CHINA-PHILIPPINES  
RELATIONS NOT DEFINED  
BY MARITIME DISPUTE**

It is to be hoped that the Joe Biden administration is not trying to stir up the embers of the South China Sea disputes, as part of its efforts to assert its presence in Southeast Asia.

After the affirmative messages from Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris last week that the United States does not seek confrontation or conflict with China, it is disappointing that the administration's sincerity should again be called into question.

Harris began a two-day visit to the Philippines on Monday, with Washington seeking to revive and expand the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, a 2014 pact that allows for the US to have what the Pentagon calls "lily pads" in the country. Rather than permanent and expensive bases, the EDCA allows the US military to store defense equipment and supplies at five Philippine bases and rotate US troops through them. One of these bases is Antonio Bautista Air Base in the island province of Palawan near disputed waters in the South China Sea, which Harris will reportedly visit on Tuesday.

The EDCA stalled under previous Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte as relations between Washington and Manila became frosty, but with his successor President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. taking office in June, the Biden administration is hoping that ties can be quickly thawed thanks to the family legacy. Marcos' father ruled the former US colony for two decades during the Cold War with the support of Washington.

While Harris' on-going trip to the Philippines is widely perceived as being aimed at disrupting the robust bilateral ties that were established between China and the Philippines under the Duterte administration, those bonds were forged on the premise that both were willing to keep their territorial dispute at bay and look to the larger picture of bilateral cooperation and friendship. That has borne fruitful results for the Philippines, as China's support has catered to the Philippines' development needs over the past six years.

It is hard to imagine that Manila will jeopardize that at the instigation of the US, especially as President Marcos and President Xi Jinping agreed to enhance the friendly ties between the two countries and expand cooperation in areas such as agriculture, infrastructure and energy, including joint exploration of maritime oil and gas resources, when they met in Bangkok on Thursday.

Washington is seeking to meddle in the South China Sea disputes and manipulate the tensions as a means to keep Beijing on the back foot by undermining regional peace, stability and cooperation.

But despite its efforts, the situation in the South China Sea is generally stable. China and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are fully and effectively implementing the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and actively promoting consultations on a Code of Conduct for the waters. ASEAN has become China's leading trade partner, accounting for 15 percent of China's total foreign trade, while China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner for 13 consecutive years.

With Harris offering the Philippines US assistance and projects to help the country deal with climate change and looming energy and food shortages, Manila will no doubt be willing to lend her a receptive ear, but the Biden administration should not interpret that as it choosing to stand on the US' side.

**KING CHARLES III WELCOMES  
S. AFRICAN LEADER FOR STATE VISIT**

THE  
BUZZ

King Charles III welcomed South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to London yesterday [Macau time] for the first state visit of his reign, which will include a formal banquet as well as talks with government leaders focused on investment and green energy.

Charles and Camilla, the queen consort, greeted Ramaphosa during a ceremony on Horse Guards Parade near Buckingham Palace. William and Kate, the Prince and Princess of Wales, also attended.

The visit was organized before the death of Queen Elizabeth II, a nod to her longtime devotion to the Commonwealth.

Ramaphosa addressed a joint session of the U.K. Parliament, urging U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to triple the number of South Africans studying in the U.K. to build business ties. He spoke in Parliament's Royal Gallery, becoming the first South African president to address lawmakers since Mandela in 1996.

"There are few countries that have the depth of experience and knowledge of the South African economy than Britain," he said. "British companies need to use this advantage to greater effect to seek out opportunities in our country for investment and trade."

AP PHOTO



People hold a Scottish flag as they stand outside Britain's Supreme Court in London, yesterday

UK

**TOP COURT RULES  
AGAINST SCOTTISH  
INDEPENDENCE VOTE PLAN**

JILL LAWLES, LONDON

**T**HE U.K. Supreme Court ruled yesterday that Scotland does not have the power to hold a new referendum on independence without the consent of the British government. The judgment is a setback for the Scottish government's campaign to break away from the United Kingdom.

The top court ruled that the Scottish Parliament "does not have the power to legislate for a referendum on Scottish independence."

Supreme Court President Robert Reed said the five justices were unanimous in the verdict.

The semi-autonomous Scottish government wants to hold a referendum next October with the question "Should Scotland be an independent country?"

The Conservative U.K. government in London refuses to approve a vote, saying the question was settled in a 2014 referendum that saw Scottish voters reject independence by a margin of 55% to 45%.

The pro-independence government in Edinburgh wants to revisit the deci-

sion, though, arguing that Britain's departure from the European Union — which a majority of Scottish voters opposed — has radically changed the political and economic landscape.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon argues that she has a democratic mandate from the Scottish people to hold a new secession vote because there is an independence-supporting majority in the Scottish Parliament.

**First Minister  
Sturgeon argues  
that she has a  
democratic mandate  
from the Scottish  
people to hold a new  
secession vote**

During Supreme Court hearings last month, Dorothy Bain, the Scottish government's top law officer, said the majority of Scottish lawmakers had been elected on commitments to hold a fresh independence referendum. She also said a referendum would be advisory, rather than legally binding — though a "yes" vote would create strong momentum for Scotland to break away.

U.K. government lawyer

James Eadie argued that power to hold a referendum rests with the U.K. Parliament in London, because "it's of critical importance to the United Kingdom as a whole," not just Scotland.

Polls suggest Scots are about evenly split on independence — and also that a majority of voters do not want a new referendum anytime soon.

Independence supporters plan to rally outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and at other sites later Wednesday.

Scotland and England have been politically united since 1707. Scotland has had its own parliament and government since 1999 and makes its own

policies on public health, education and other matters. The U.K.-wide government in London controls matters such as defense and fiscal policy.

Sturgeon has said that if her government loses the court case, she will make the next U.K. national election a de-facto plebiscite on ending Scotland's three-century-old union with England. She has not given details of how that would work. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**USA** The alleged shooter facing possible hate crime charges in the fatal shooting of five people at a Colorado Springs gay nightclub is nonbinary, the suspect's defense team says in court filings. In several standard motions filed on behalf of Anderson Lee Aldrich, public defenders refer to the suspect as "Mx. Aldrich," noting in footnotes that Aldrich, 22, is nonbinary and uses they/them pronouns. The motions deal with issues like unsealing documents and evidence gathering, not Aldrich's identity and there was no elaboration about it.

AP PHOTO



**USA** The Supreme Court cleared the way for the imminent handover of former President Donald Trump's tax returns to a congressional committee after a three-year legal fight. The court, with no noted dissents, rejected Trump's plea for an order that would have prevented the Treasury Department from giving six years of tax returns for Trump and some of his businesses to the Democratic-controlled House Ways and Means Committee.

AP PHOTO



**Brazil** More than three weeks after losing a reelection bid, President Jair Bolsonaro blamed a software bug and demanded the electoral authority annul votes cast on most of Brazil's nation's electronic voting machines, though independent experts say the bug doesn't affect the reliability of results. The electoral authority has already declared victory for Bolsonaro's nemesis, leftist former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.