



HONG KONG WILL BAN CBD STARTING WEDNESDAY, CATEGORIZING IT AS A 'DANGEROUS DRUG' AND MANDATING HARSH PENALTIES

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AP PHOTO



USA The Memphis police chief disbanded the city's so-called Scorpion unit yesterday [Macau time], citing a "cloud of dishonor" from newly released video that showed some of its Black officers beating Tyre Nichols to death after stopping the Black motorist. Police Director Cerelyn "CJ" Davis acted a day after the harrowing video emerged, saying she listened to Nichols' relatives, community leaders and uninvolved officers in making the decision.

Philippines The government said this weekend it will take steps to assess and prevent abuses including rape and maltreatment of Filipino workers in Kuwait, after a housemaid was killed and dumped in a desert in the oil-rich emirate. The remains of Jullebee Ranara were flown home Friday night from Kuwait, where the 35-year-old was reportedly killed by her employer's son then dumped with burn marks, Migrant Workers Secretary said.

AP PHOTO



Turkey issued a travel warning yesterday [Macau time] for its citizens living in or planning on going to European countries, citing Islamophobia and anti-Turkish demonstrations. The warning comes after last weekend's protests in Sweden where an anti-Islam activist burned the Quran and pro-Kurdish groups protested against Turkey.

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JABS, TOURISTS SOAR

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GROWTH
AMCM SAYS ECONOMY SET TO REBOUND AT DOUBLE-DIGIT RATE



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RENATO MARQUES

AMCM REVIEW

ECONOMY SET TO REBOUND AT DOUBLE-DIGIT RATE THIS YEAR

THE local economy will likely rebound from the poor performance of recent years and grow at a double-digit rate in 2023, the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) has forecast in its Monetary and Financial Stability Review, the first of this year.

“Given the low base effect, Macau’s economy is expected to rebound at a double-digit rate for the whole year of 2023,” AMCM wrote, but also noting that “as a small open economy, Macau’s economic recovery would hinge on the evolution of the pandemic and development of major export markets.”

According to analysis and research by the local authority, economic recovery should pick up in response to external demand directly related to the lifting of border restrictions in neighboring regions.

The report also noted that the government’s recent promotional campaigns should have a positive effect in “attracting regional and international visitors to hasten the recovery of inbound tourism.”

The investment projects that new gaming concessionaires are obliged to undertake under the

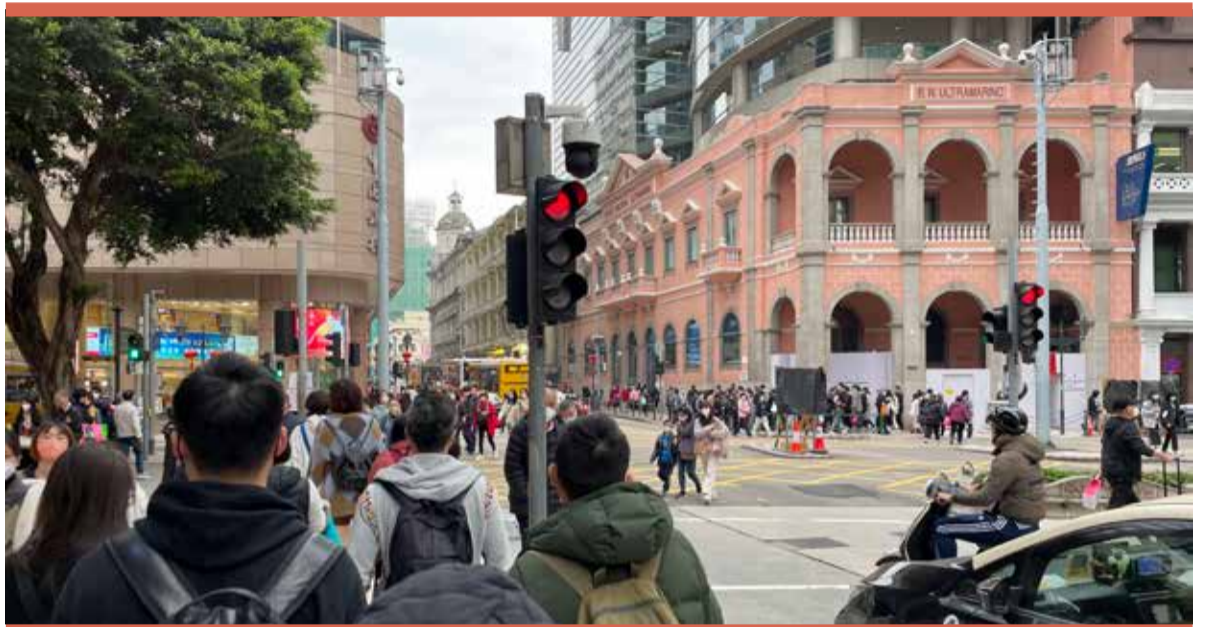
new concessions, which came into effect at the start of this year, are also expected to contribute to the recovery.

AMCM hopes that these investment projects, in non-gaming segments, will also be able to “generate new impetus for growth.”

Good news is also expected for the labor market, with AMCM expecting the unemployment rate to gradually reduce as “labor demand is likely to increase.”

On the other hand, a better economic outlook may result in a rise in the Consumer Price Index, although AMCM predicts that the rise will be “moderate.”

PAULO COUTINHO



AMCM WARNS OF ILLEGAL INDONESIAN 'YOURPAY' APP

THE AMCM has issued a statement asking people to not use a mobile application named “YourPay” that is being used by some to send remittances from Macau to Indonesia.

According to AMCM, the app is being promoted on several media platforms. The local monetary authority noted that this app is not authorized to conduct any financial activities in Macau, and is

therefore considered illegal. Under the rules for financial activity in Macau, those involved in unauthorized financial operations could face hefty fines.

COVID-19

Vaccination figures soar after border reopening

ANTHONY LAM

THERE were 10 times more Covid-19 vaccine doses administered on a single day in December last year than the daily average in November, according to pulmonologist Alvis Lo, director of the Health Bureau (SSM).

This disclosure, with Lo not mentioning the specific date in December, was made in response to separate written inquiries from lawmakers Ron Lam and Leong Hong Sai.

In his replies, Lo revealed that, from December 8, the daily high of vaccination doses was 7,000. On December 8, the city ended the transitional period for co-existing with Covid-19.

Compared to the average daily dose figures in



November last year, it was a 10-fold increase, the health official said.

When discussing boosting the vaccination rate among children and the elderly, the SSM director emphasized that the bureau has long collaborated with

the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) to arrange outreach vaccination services for elders receiving day care or living in aged care facilities. Phone calls have also been made to 4,900 elderly people aged 80 years or above to persuade them to get

vaccinated.

Concerning the vaccination of children, Lo said the third dose has been made available to children between five and 11 years of age since December 19.

In the same inquiry, Lam also asked about the

updating of the contingency plans against Covid-19 and the dissemination of information to the public regarding infections and recovery.

Lo said in reply that the government had reacted to the city’s reopening in compliance with the contingencies the SSM had earlier set out. For example, he pointed out, the distribution of about 700,000 Covid-19 response packs was part of the contingency plans.

Furthermore, with more people contracting the virus, a tiered patient management system was later introduced to triage patients and direct them to take various measures, such as staying at home or visiting community outpatient clinics.

Lo boasted that the bureau has expanded the capacity of the accident and emergency (A&E) department of the public hospital. However, this was only undertaken after widespread complaints from patients and their families being reported by local media outlets.

The health official added that various means were used to inform people about the disease.

During the past citywide outbreak of Covid-19, people in Macau complained of the difficulties in getting cough syrup, which was not included in the Covid-19 response packs. Some were therefore forced to visit the public hospital’s A&E department because they experienced severe coughing.

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TOURISM

Macau records almost half a million visitors during CNY Golden Week

RENATO MARQUES

A total of 484,505 tourists entered Macau during the first seven days of the Lunar New Year, known as "CNY Golden Week." Although the figure is a huge increase from last year, with almost three times as many visitor entering as to compared to when Covid-19 restrictions were fully in force, the number is only 40.31% of the visitor numbers entering Macau during the same period in 2019, which was prior to the pandemic. This year's figures are 54% higher than those in 2020.

With the continuing increase in arrivals in the last few days, this year's CNY Golden Week figure represents an average of 69,215 visitors per day, including results obtained on the seventh day (January 28), on which visitor numbers rose again to a total of 65,957 people, which amounts to 2,210 more than those arriving on the previous day (63,747).

As the Times reported previously, the decision to extend the usual week-long holiday to 9 days this year has contributed to increased visitor arrivals.

Tourists from the mainland have dominated the visitor source charts from the first days of the holiday, representing 58.95% of all arrivals, followed by those from Hong Kong who account for 36.42%. Visitors from other places dropped slightly from the previous days, finishing the week-long holiday with only 4.63% of arrivals.

This year, the single-day record holder since the pandemic started continues to be the third day of the Lunar New Year when Macau received 90,416 visitors.

GOLDEN WEEK HOTEL OCCUPANCY AVERAGED 86%

According to industry figures cited by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), local hotels registered an average occupancy rate of 85.7% during the CNY Golden Week.

Although arrival figures are very high when compared year-on-year with 2022, this year's occupancy rate represents an increase of just 22.4%, indicating that a large majority of visitors are not staying overnight in Macau.

However, given this increase and the hiking of prices for hotel rooms in Macau over this

period, receipts to hotels should be significantly higher.

Figures cited by the MGTO note that during the Golden Week, the average room rate of Macau's hotel establishments (including hotels, apartment hotels, and economical accommodation establishments) was approximately 1,575 patacas, up by almost 50% year-on-year.

As with visitor arrivals, the third day of the Lunar New Year was also the peak for the hotel occupancy rate this year, with the MGTO reporting avera-

ge occupancy rate of hotels at 92.1% on this day.

The MGTO added that inspections made by the office at major ports of entry, tourist attractions, hotels and other establishments did not find any signs of irregularities.

The MGTO's tourism hotline received a total of 14 complaints from visitors during this period, mainly about taxi services and land transportation arrangements, as well as ferry schedules, services and pricing, among other issues.

CNY CELEBRATIONS EXTENDED UNTIL FEB 5

The Lunar New Year celebrations in Macau will end on February 5 with the Chinese New Year fireworks display.

The MGTO hopes that, by extending the celebrations for another week, it will continue to attract some visitors, namely from neighboring regions, to Macau.

This effort also includes another closure of the Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro which will once more be open for only pedestrian traffic, on the weekend of February 4 and 5 as part of the "Strolling Through Almeida Ribeiro - Pilot Project for a Pedestrian Area" scheme.

According to the MGTO, this aims to "draw a wider range of visitors to Macau, not just for travel and spending, but also for longer stays and repeated visits to invigorate the economy."

RUINS OF ST PAUL'S VR EXPERIENCE REGISTRATIONS OPEN ON-SITE FROM FEB

From February 1, people interested in the virtual reality (VR) experience at the Ruins of St Paul's can register on-site. The experience is open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. On-site registrations are open for the sessions 20 and 40 minutes past each hour, while online registrations are for sessions on the hour. Participants must be at least five years old; those aged between five and 12 years must be accompanied by an adult. The VR experience will take participants on a digital journey through the 400+ years of the then St Paul's Cathedral.

DSI RECOMMENDS E-APPLICATIONS FOR PASSPORTS

With crowds rushing to get their passport issued or renewed following the end of Covid-19 travel restrictions, the Identification Services Bureau (DSI) recommends those applying for passports utilize the automated passport application kiosks to avoid long queues. Locals aged 18 to 25 years may only use kiosks attached to a DSI office or counter, however this requirement does not apply to those aged at least 25 years old when their ID was last issued. Locals aged over 18 years are entitled to apply for a passport for themselves and their underage children at these kiosks, but each child must have been at least five years old when their ID was last issued.

PSP LOGS 16 TAXI VIOLATIONS DURING NEW YEAR PERIOD

During the recent Lunar New Year period, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) recorded 16 taxi-related violations: an overcharging case, five refusing hire, five breaches of duties and five committing prohibited activities. Three more charges have been laid regarding operations of pak pais – vehicles unregistered for hire – and a charge concerning illegal sale and lighting of fireworks or firecrackers. Some 155 noise complaints were received, of which 79 ended with police intervention and two progressed to prosecutions. The PSP could not determine the source of noise for the remaining 74.

PORTUGUESE ARTIST COTTINELLI APPOINTED HEAD OF FO

Portuguese architect-cum-artist Catarina Cottinelli has been appointed the new Head of Delegation of the Orient Foundation (FO) in Macau, the Lisbon-headquartered foundation announced. Cottinelli will assume her new role in April, replacing linguist Ana Paula Cleto, who has headed the local FO delegation since 2010. With Cottinelli, the local FO delegation's will keep its strategic objectives, the statement said.



GAMING, HOTEL WORKERS COMPLAIN OF LACK OF REST, HOLIDAY CANCELATIONS

RENATO MARQUES

WITH hotels and casinos struggling to handle the sudden influx of visitors to Macau, many workers of both casinos and the hospitality industry are working longer shifts with fewer rest days and, in some cases, the cancelation of previously approved annual leave.

Concerns, initially from the president of the New Macau Gaming Staff Rights Association, Cloee Chao, seem to have spread and reports from several sectors echo these complaints.

A few days ago, Chao gave voice to the complaints of many workers from the gaming industry.

Workers from hotels have similar complaints, some anonymously expressing to the Times that the problem is far broader and affects not only

casinos but the entire hospitality and entertainment industry.

The integrated resorts in Cotai seem most affected, with occupation rates close to 100% over the Lunar New Year, according to the Chairman of the Travel Industry Council of Macau, Andy Wu, in comments to TDM radio.

The lack of workforce to support Macau's return to normality has been a recurring issue affecting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as well as the large businesses.

Also speaking to TDM, the vice president of the Federal General Commercial Association of Macau Small and Medium Enterprises, Lei Kuok Fai, said the problem could have been avoided if the government had communicated better and in a more timely fashion with SMEs before deciding on a full reopening.

GRAFT TRIAL

DSSCU HEAD TESTIFIES PUBLIC OBJECTIONS NOT CONSIDERED IN PROJECT APPROVAL

ANTHONY LAM

CONSIDERING public opinion was not a requirement if all criteria were met by a construction application, an incumbent civil engineering official testified in a court of law.

Over the weekend, the Court of First Instance (TJB) held an added hearing for judicial procedure concerning the corruption allegations against Jaime Carion and Li Canfeng, both former directors of the now-restructured Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT).

Lai Weng Leong, director of the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU), was subpoenaed to testify at the court as witness. He worked as the acting department head for urban construction and occasionally acted as deputy director of the bureau.

The DSSCU was separated from the DSSOPT where it was previously a branch supervising private construction.

According to his testimony,



the then deputy director of the DSSOPT, Cheung Ion Man, was on leave when he handled the Coloane Hill residential project. This was one of the main projects that triggered this case.

Despite being on leave, Cheung was very concerned with the project's vetting process, Lai testified. Cheung told him that if all criteria were met by the project, it should be approved. Public objections should not have been a main concern, Lai cited Cheung as saying. He said he was even assured that "the rest of the matter" would be handled by the superintendents.

Sio In Ha, prosecutor coordinator, then asked Lai if he had considered a short delay so that Cheung could sign the approval after his leave ended. Lai said in response that he did not remember considering this option, adding that working on dispatches was his task, which explained why he did so.

Recalling the incident further, Lai said that he believed the call from Cheung was in fact an instruction from Li. He was then asked if Li and Cheung were close enough to resemble siblings, to which he replied that someti-

mes those in the bureau "would jokingly say so."

Lai also revealed that, back then, the strategy for projects without all criteria met was to delay. Applicants would be asked for responses but, if they did not reply, the project would be set aside without being approved nor declined.

Lai's testimony to the court contradicted his statements to the corruption commission, and the judge said she would take this into account.

Li was accused of exchanging interests with developers amid widespread opposition against the Coloane Hill project. He was also accused of skipping administrative procedures by approving the use of the Windsor Arch project.

When testifying on the latter project, Lai did not consider Li's instruction to skip procedures for Windsor Arch a legal violation. The developer had lost the engineering log book, but Li made orders to allow the use of the project

before the log book was located.

The main reason for Lai's action, as he explained, was that there was no clear stipulation on the order of occurrence, which he understood as permitting simultaneous occurrence.

Prosecutor Coordinator Sio asked Lai to clarify who gave the order to speed up the approval process for the Windsor Arch project. "Several superintendents, including the secretary, the director and the deputy directors," Lai replied.

When questioned about the order in which the log book was found and the project was approved, Lai said that, according to his understanding, the approval was more urgent because the expire date for land use was soon approaching.

He added that, as far as he understood, his then superintendents did not want to "complicate the matter." When asked to explain the possible complications, he said "it might have been impactful on the project's approval."

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An employee adds drops of water-soluble CBD, or cannabidiol, an essential component of medical marijuana, into a coffee glass at the Found Cafe in Hong Kong

HONG KONG

Authorities to ban CBD, label it a 'dangerous drug'

HONG Kong will ban CBD starting Wednesday, categorizing it as a "dangerous drug" and mandating harsh penalties for its smuggling, production and possession, customs authorities announced last week.

Supporters say CBD can treat a range of ailments including anxiety and that, unlike its more famous cousin THC — which is already illegal in Hong Kong — CBD doesn't get users high. Cannabidiol, derived from the cannabis plant, was previously legal in Hong Kong, where bars and shops sold products containing it.

But Hong Kong authorities decided last year to prohibit the marijuana-derived substance — a change that will soon go into effect. Residents were given three months from Oct. 27 to dispose of their CBD products in special boxes set up around the city.

"Starting from February 1, cannabidiol, aka CBD, will be regarded as a dangerous drug and will be supervised and managed by the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance," customs intelligence officer Au-Yeung Ka-lun said at a news briefing.

"As of then, transpor-

ting CBD for sale, including import and export, as well as producing, possessing and consuming CBD, will be illegal," Au-Yeung said.

Penalties include up to life in prison and Hong Kong \$5 million (\$638,000) in fines for importing, exporting or producing CBD. Possession of the substance can result in a sentence of up to seven years and Hong Kong \$1 million (\$128,000) in fines.

In announcing the ban last year, the Hong Kong government cited the difficulty of isolating pure CBD from cannabis, the possibility of contamination with THC during the production process and the relative ease by which CBD can be converted to THC.

"We will tackle all kinds of dangerous drugs from all angles and all ends, and the intelligence-led enforcement action is our major goal," Chan Kai-ho, a divisional commander with the department's Airport Command, told reporters.

Despite the harsh penalties mandated, Chan said authorities would handle enforcement on a case-by-case basis and "seek legal advice from our Department of Justice to determine what the

further actions will be."

Hong Kong maintains several categories of "dangerous drugs," which include "hard drugs" such as heroin and cocaine, as well as marijuana.

Hong Kong's first CBD cafe opened in 2020 and the ban will force scores of businesses to remove CBD-infused gummies, drinks and other products, or shut down altogether.

The ban is in keeping with a zero-tolerance policy toward drugs in Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous southern Chinese business hub, as well as on mainland China, where CBD was banned in 2022.

Chinese authorities have waged battles against heroin and methamphetamines, particularly in the southwest bordering on the drug-producing Golden Triangle region spanning parts of Myanmar, Thailand and Laos.

Criminal penalties for both sale and usage are also enforced for marijuana. In one of the most high-profile cases, Jaycee Chan, the son of Hong Kong action star Jackie Chan, served a six month sentence in 2014-2015 for allowing people to consume marijuana in his Beijing apartment amid a crackdown on illegal

narcotics in the Chinese capital.

At the same time, China has been a main source

of the precursor chemicals used to manufacture the dangerous drug fentanyl, a trade often facilitated through social media.

A wealthy Asian financial center with a thriving commercial port and major international airport, Hong Kong is a key point of entry to China as well as a market for some drugs, especially cocaine. Police have re-

cently seized hundreds of kilograms (pounds) of the drug worth tens of millions of dollars, some of it hidden in a shipment of chicken feet from Brazil.

Most Asian nations maintain strict drug laws and enforce harsh penalties for violators, including the death penalty, with the exception of Thailand, which made it legal to cultivate and possess marijuana last year.

Debate over CBD policy continues in many countries and regions.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said Thursday there's not enough evidence about CBD to confirm that it's safe for consumption in foods or as a dietary supplement. It called on Congress to create new rules for the massive and growing market.

Marijuana-derived products have become increasingly popular in lotions, tinctures and foods, while their legal status has been murky in the U.S., where several states have legalized or decriminalized substances that remain illegal federally. **MDT/AP**

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TRAVEL

CHINA ANNOUNCES RESUMPTION OF VISAS FOR JAPANESE

CHINA announced it was resuming issuing visas for Japanese travelers beginning yesterday, ending its nearly three-week suspension in an apparent protest of Tokyo's tougher COVID-19 entry requirements for tourists from China.

The decision was announced in a statement posted on the Chinese Embassy's website.

China stopped issuing new visas in Japan on Jan. 10 in apparent retaliation for Tokyo's requirement of additional tests for Chinese tourists in late December, ahead of Lunar New Year holidays. Japan cited soaring infections in China after it abruptly eased coronavirus restrictions as well as scarce COVID-19 data from Beijing.

Japan reopened its borders for individual tourists in October, allowing travelers with proof of vaccination instead of testing at airports unless they show symptoms. Burt on Dec. 30, Japan required all travelers from China to show pre-departure negative tests and take an additional test upon arrival.

China also stopped issuing visas to South Koreans after South Korea in early January did the same for short-term travelers from China.

Health authorities in China have said infections have



The Chinese Embassy in Tokyo

peaked but there are concerns abroad that Beijing was not sharing enough data.

The latest wave of infections in Japan appears to be subsiding in recent weeks, with confirmed daily cases falling to about one-fifth of the peak in early January.

Japan's government last week announced plans to downgrade COVID-19 to an equivalent of seasonal influenza in May, a move that would further relax mask wearing and other preventive measures as the country seeks to return to normalcy.

SOUTH KOREA EXTENDS RESTRICTIONS ON CHINESE

Last Friday, South Korea announced it will continue to restrict the entry of short-term travelers from China through the end of February over concerns that the spread of COVID-19 in that country may worsen following the Lunar New Year's holidays.

South Korea in early January stopped issuing most short-term visas at its consulates in China, citing concerns about a virus surge in the country that abruptly eased coronavirus restrictions in De-

cember and the potential for new mutations.

South Korea has also required all passengers from China, Hong Kong and Macau to submit proofs of negative tests taken with 48 hours before their arrival and put them through tests again once they arrive.

The steps, which originally were imposed for the month of January, prompted China to retaliate by suspending South Korean short-term visa applications, raising concerns about disrupted business activities in a country that heavily depends

on exports to China.

Following a meeting on South Korea's COVID-19 response on Friday, health authorities decided to extend the coronavirus measures on short-term travelers from China for another month. While there had been some indications COVID-19 outbreaks in major Chinese cities were slowing, South Korean officials remain concerned about a viral resurgence following the massive gatherings and cross-country travel during the Lunar New Year's holidays that ended this week.

South Korean officials during the meeting left open the possibility of easing the restrictions earlier if it becomes clearer that China's COVID-19 situation is improving, the Ministry of Health and Welfare said in a statement.

When asked about concerns that China may take further retaliatory steps toward South Korea over the extension of the virus measures, Seoul's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that it was closely communicating with Beijing and maintaining that all pandemic responses should be based "only on anti-virus reasons."

According to South Korea's Disease Control and Prevention Agency, around 10% of the 6,900 short-term travelers from China who arrived in the country from Jan. 2 to Thursday tested positive after being tested at the airport.

While allowing the extension of existing visas, South Korea has stopped issuing most short-term visas as its consulates in China, except for essential government, diplomatic and business activities and humanitarian reasons. **MDT/AP**

NATIONAL SECURITY

Hong Kong protests Biden extension of deportation protection

HONG Kong has protested President Joe Biden's two-year extension of a program that protects residents of the semi-autonomous Chinese city living in the U.S. from deportation, accusing Washington of "demonstrating sinister intentions and hegemonic bullying."

An unidentified government spokesperson was quoted Friday as saying the U.S. had "wantonly" smeared Hong Kong's National Security Law, imposed on the city by Beijing in 2020 as part of a sweeping crackdown on the democratic movement. Since the law's enactment by the Chinese legislature, at least 150 opposition politicians, activists and protesters have



been taken into custody, while an unknown number of others have fled overseas.

Biden first authorized the program, the Deferred Enforced Departure for Certain Hong Kong Citi-

zens, in August 2021 for 18 months. It was set to expire on Feb. 5 but has been extended until January 2025.

"The US Government clearly stated that its latest actions are in its 'foreign

policy interest' without any attempt to disguise its motives, demonstrating sinister intentions and hegemonic bullying," the Hong Kong spokesperson was quoted as saying in a state-

ment posted on the government's official website.

"The US has many laws on national security, but chooses to continue to wantonly smear" the National Security Law, the spokesperson said.

The decision to provide a temporary safe haven was in response to the law and other measures that reinforced Beijing's absolute control and undercut rights promised when the territory was handed back to China in 1997.

"With this action, we are demonstrating again President Biden's strong support for the people of Hong Kong in the face of increasing repression by the (People's Republic of China)," the White House National Security Council said in a statement last week.

"We continue to strongly oppose (China's) use of its National Security Law to deny the people of Hong Kong their human rights and fundamental free-

doms, undermine Hong Kong's autonomy, and chip away at Hong Kong's remaining democratic processes and institutions," the statement said.

The Hong Kong spokesperson denied any political bias in its pursuit of those wanted under the law, many of whom had taken part in the push for expanded democracy and months of anti-government protests in 2019.

"All law enforcement actions taken by Hong Kong law enforcement agencies are based on evidence, strictly according to the law and for the acts of the people, institutions or organisations concerned, and have nothing to do with their political stance, background or occupation," the spokesperson said.

"The US Government's remarks about the rights and freedoms in Hong Kong are totally unfounded," the spokesperson added. **MDT/AP**

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

NEW ZEALAND

Three dead, one missing as rain pounds Auckland

AUTHORITIES said over the weekend that three people had died and at least one was missing after record levels of rainfall pounded New Zealand's largest city, causing widespread disruption.

Prime Minister Chris Hipkins flew to Auckland on a military plane after a state of emergency was declared in the region.

"Our priority is to ensure that Aucklanders are safe, that they're housed and that they have access to the essential services that they need," Hipkins said.

He said the city was in for a big cleanup and that people should remain indoors if possible. He said a break in the weather could prove temporary, with more heavy rain forecast.

"This is an unprecedented event in recent memory," Hipkins said.

Friday was the wettest day ever recorded in Auckland, according to weather agencies, as the amount of rain that would typically fall over the entire summer hit in a single day. On Friday evening, more than 15 centimeters (6 inches) of rain fell in just three hours in some places.

The rain closed highways and poured into homes. Hundreds of people were stranded at Auckland Airport overnight after the airport stopped all flights and parts of the terminal were flooded.

Police said they found one man's body in a flooded culvert and another in a flooded carpark. They said fire and emergency crews found a third body after a landslide brought down a house in the suburb of Remuera. One person remained missing after being swept away by floodwaters, police said.

AP PHOTO



Emergency workers and a man wade through flood waters in Auckland

Hipkins said power had been restored to most places, although about 3,500 homes remained without electricity.

Video posted online showed chest-deep water in some places.

Lawmaker Ricardo Menéndez posted a video of water surging into houses. "We've just had to evacuate our home as the water was already rising rapidly and coming in aggressively," he tweeted.

Fire and Emergency New

Zealand said crews had responded to more than 700 incidents across the region and staff had taken more than 2,000 emergency calls.

"We had every available career and volunteer crew on the road responding to the most serious events," said district manager Brad Mosby.

Mosby said crews had rescued 126 people who were trapped in houses or cars, or who had been

involved in vehicle crashes.

Air New Zealand said it resumed domestic flights in and out of Auckland on Saturday afternoon, but wasn't yet sure when international flights would resume.

"The flooding has had a huge impact our Auckland operations," said David Morgan, the airline's chief operational integrity and safety officer. "We're working on getting customers to their final destinations and getting our crew

and aircraft back in the right place. It might take a few days to get everything back on track."

In a series of updates on Twitter, Auckland Airport said people were able to leave the airport early Saturday for their homes or accommodation after hundreds spent the night in the terminal.

"It's been a long and challenging night at Auckland Airport, we thank everyone for ongoing patience," the airport wrote.

"Unfortunately, due to earlier flooding in the baggage hall, we are currently unable to return checked luggage to you," the airport wrote. "Your airline will make arrangements for its return at a later time."

The storm also caused an Elton John concert to be canceled just before it was due to start Friday night. A second concert by John that was planned at the stadium on Saturday night was also canceled.

About 40,000 people were expected to attend each concert at Mt Smart Stadium. Thousands were already at the venue Friday night when organizers decided to cancel not long before John was due to take the stage at 7:30 p.m.

Many concertgoers who had braved the conditions were frustrated the decision hadn't been made hours earlier.

Auckland Mayor Wayne Brown defended criticism that his office did not communicate the seriousness of the situation well and held off on declaring an emergency until about 9:30 p.m. Friday.

He said the timing of the emergency declaration was guided by experts.

"We will review everything that took place," Brown said. "We've got to make sure we had the coordination, and the consultation with the public, correct." **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Tiny radioactive capsule lost triggers search

AUTHORITIES in Western Australia were searching for a tiny but potentially deadly radioactive capsule that got lost while being transported on a truck from a mine to a depot in the city of Perth, officials said.

Emergency services said they were hampered by a lack of equipment and have called on the Commonwealth and other states to provide assistance.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services has deployed teams with handheld radiation detection devices and metal detectors along 36 kilometers of a busy freight route

to look for the 8 millimeters by 6 millimeters unit.

It is believed to have fallen off the back of a truck on a 1,400-kilometer journey from the Rio Tinto mine in Newman to the Perth suburb of Malaga.

"What we're not doing is trying to find a tiny little device by eyesight," said Superintendent Darryl Ray, adding they were concentrating on populated areas north of Perth and strategic sites along the Great Northern Highway.

"We're using the radiation detectors to locate the gamma rays," he said.

Authorities were also using the truck's GPS data to determine the exact route the driver took and where it stopped after it left the mine on or about Jan. 10.

There are concerns the solid capsule may have already become lodged in another vehicle's tyre and potentially be hundreds of kilometers away from the search area.

It is believed a screw became loose inside a large lead-lined gauge and the unit fell through a hole.

Rio Tinto said it contracted an expert radioactive materials handler to

package the capsule and transport it "safely" to the depot and was not told it was missing until Wednesday.

Chief Health Officer Andrew Robertson defended the Western Australia government's decision to wait two days to inform the public on Friday, saying the mine and depot had to be searched and excluded, and the route confirmed.

He said the capsule was packed in accordance with the radiation safety transport and regulations inside a box bolted onto a pallet.

"We believe the vibra-

tion of the truck may have impacted the integrity of the gauge, that it fell apart and the source actually came out of it," he said. "It is unusual for a gauge to come apart like this one has."

An investigation will look at the handling of the gauge and capsule at the mine site, the transport route used and the procedures at the depot in Perth after it arrived on Jan. 16.

Police have determined the incident to be an accident and no criminal charges are likely.

Authorities ruled out theft at the depot before the box was opened on

Wednesday.

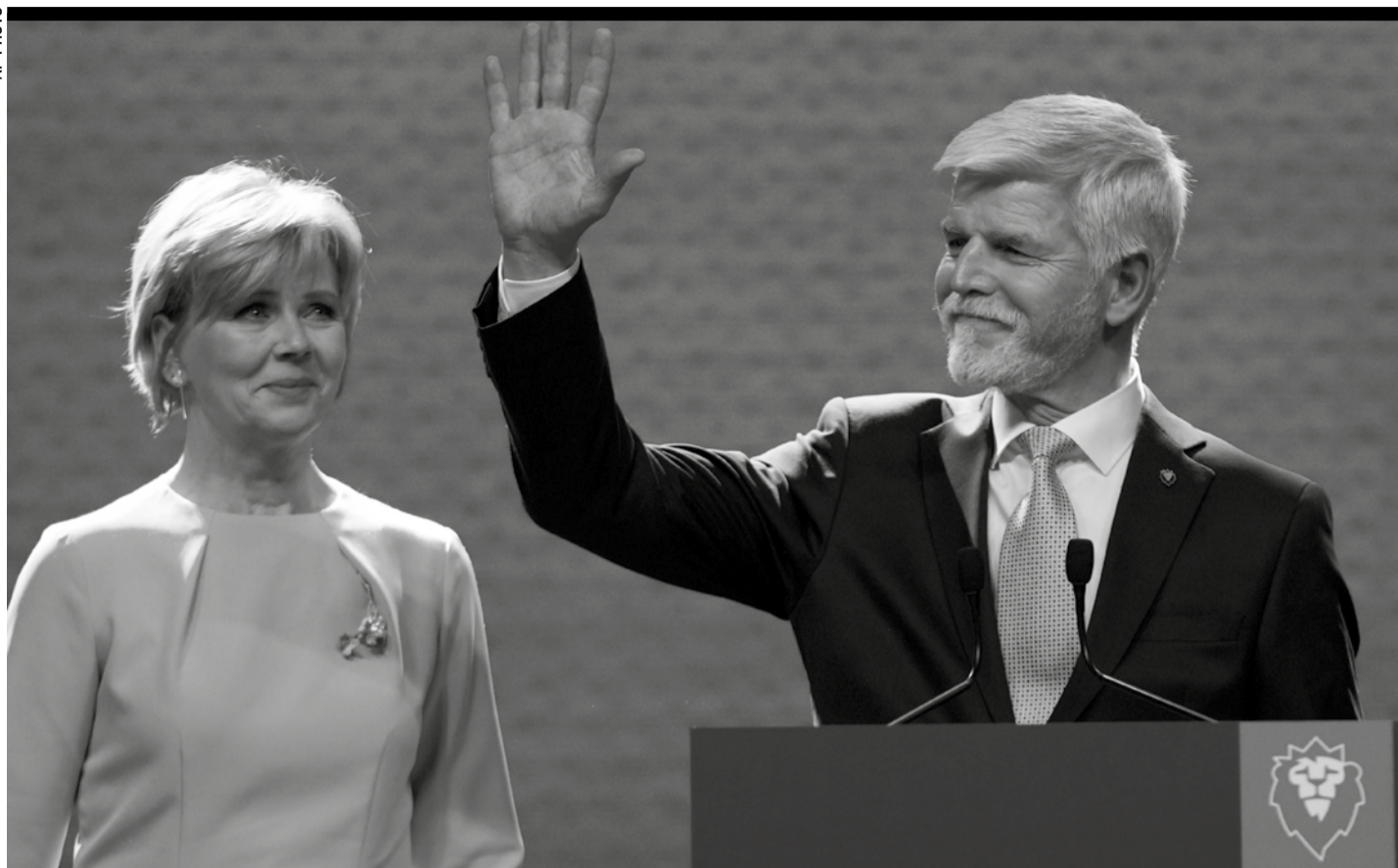
The small silver cylinder is a caesium 137 ceramic source commonly used in radiation gauges.

Robertson previously said the unit emits the equivalent of 10 X-rays in an hour and members of the public should stay at least 5 meters (16 feet) away. Contact could result in skin damage, burns and radiation sickness, including impacts to the immune and the gastrointestinal systems.

Long-term exposure could also cause cancer, however, experts say the capsule cannot be weaponized.

"Our concern is someone will pick it up, not knowing what it is, think this is something interesting (and) keep it," Robertson said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Czech Republic's President elect Petr Pavel with his wife Eva greets his supporters after announcement of the preliminary results of the presidential runoff in Prague

CZECHIA

Retired army general Pavel wins presidential election

KAREL JANICEK, PRAGUE

PETR Pavel, a retired army general, decisively defeated populist billionaire Andrej Babis in a runoff vote Saturday to become the Czech Republic's new president.

Pavel, 61, will succeed controversy-courting Milos Zeman in the largely ceremonial but prestigious post. His election is expected to cement the country's Western orientation following Zeman's decade in office.

With all the ballots counted by the Czech Statistics Office, Pavel had 58.3% of the vote compared with 42.7% for Babis. Turnout was just over 70%, a record high for a presidential vote.

"We can have different views of a number of issues, but that doesn't mean we're enemies," Pavel said in a message to voters who cast ballots for Babis after what was considered a nasty presidential campaign period. "We have to learn how to communicate with each other."

Babis conceded defeat and congratulated Pavel on his victory. He called on his supporters "to accept that I've lost and accept we have a new president."

Pavel, who ran as an inde-

pendent, is a former chairman of NATO's military committee, the alliance's highest military body. He fully endorsed the Czech Republic's military and humanitarian support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion and stresses the importance of the country's membership in the European Union and NATO.

"Foreign policy is his strong point," Petr Just, an analyst from the Metropolitan University Prague, said. Just noted that Pavel's NATO experience and views would "boost" the country's Western leanings.

The president picks the prime minister after a general election, one of the office's key responsibilities, and appoints members of the central bank. The office-holder also selects Constitutional Court judges with the approval of Parliament's upper house.

Otherwise, the president has little executive power since Czechia is run by a government chosen and led by the prime minister.

President Zuzana Caputova of Slovakia, who beat established politicians to win her country's 2019 presidential election, joined Pavel on a Prague stage Saturday to congratulate him in front of

his supporters.

"Your victory is a victory of hope, of hope that decency and honesty is not a weakness but a power that could lead to victory even in politics," Caputova said.

"Personally, I'm happy that we have a new head of state in our region and Europe who respects democratic values," she said.

Pavel said he planned to travel to Slovakia and Ukraine for his first foreign trips as president, and also to Poland to assure President Andrzej Duda that his country fully respects its NATO commitments and the alliance's principle of collective defense.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy congratulated Pavel in a tweet written in Czech, adding he looked forward to their close cooperation.

Czechia has been a firm supporter of Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion. The Ukraine war was a core campaign issue. Babis presented himself as a peacemaker and labeled Pavel a warmonger due to his military past.

In his most controversial statement, Babis said he wouldn't send troops to Poland or the Baltics if the NATO allies were attacked.

He later backtracked.

Losing the race to Pavel was another major defeat for Babis 68, a former prime minister. His centrist ANO (YES) movement ended up in opposition after losing the 2021 general election.

Zeman, the outgoing president, had backed Babis, one of country's richest people. The two men share euroskeptic views and the habit of using anti-migrant rhetoric.

While Babis has been a divisive figure, he maintained his popular support with older voters. He accused Pavel, during a campaign marred by false accusations, of having been a KGB-trained communist spy. He provided no evidence for the claim, and went on to compare his opponent to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Zeman, who took office in March 2013, was the country's first president elected by popular vote. His second and final five-year term expires in March. Lawmakers elected the previous two presidents, Vaclav Havel and Vaclav Klaus.

Before the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Zeman divided the nation with his pro-Russia stance and support for closer ties with China. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1965 LAST FAREWELL TO CHURCHILL



Thousands of people have paid their last respects to Britain's greatest wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill who was buried today after a full state funeral.

Silent crowds lined the streets to watch the gun carriage bearing Sir Winston's coffin leave Westminster Hall as Big Ben struck 0945. The procession travelled slowly through central London to St Paul's cathedral for the funeral service.

Sir Winston died six days ago, following a stroke earlier in the month from which he never regained consciousness.

A total of 321,360 people filed past the ca-tafalque during the three days of lying-in-state.

Today, millions around the world watched the funeral procession at home and abroad as television pictures were beamed from 40 BBC cameras placed along the route.

The mourners were led by Sir Winston's wife, Lady Clementine Churchill, his son Randolph and daughters Mary Soames and Lady Sarah Audley. The Queen and other members of the royal family, the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, and representatives of 112 countries packed into the cathedral for the service.

The funeral cortege was accompanied by a 19-gun salute and an RAF fly-past as it began the journey to Sir Winston's final resting place. At Tower Hill, the coffin was piped aboard the launch Havengore for the voyage up the Thames.

From Waterloo, it was placed onto a train drawn by a Battle of Britain locomotive named Winston Churchill. Thousands gathered to pay tribute at wayside stations. At many football matches a two-minute silence was observed.

Sir Winston was finally laid to rest in the Oxfordshire parish churchyard of Bladon, close to Blenheim Palace where he was born 90 years before, with only family members present.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Sir Winston Churchill was the first statesman to be given a state funeral in the 20th century. Former prime ministers, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Henry Palmerston and William Gladstone, had preceded him in this posthumous honour in the 19th century.

Sir Winston left a wife and three children. His eldest daughter, Diana, had committed suicide in 1963 and another daughter died in infancy. His political legacy lives on. His grandson, Nicholas Soames, is a Conservative MP and former armed forces minister. Another grandson, Winston Churchill, served as a Tory MP until 1997 when he lost his seat.

A BBC survey in January 2000 voted Sir Winston the greatest British prime minister of the 20th century. BBC viewers and users voted him the greatest Briton in November 2002.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 You will get along well with your colleagues today. Your domestic scene could continue to be in an uproar today. Travel if it's needed to start the ball rolling.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 You need a day to rest and relax with the ones you love. You will have to watch out for minor health problems related to stress.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 You may have a rather hectic day due to events that children are involved in. You must try to include your mate in your activities today.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Romance can develop; however, it will most probably be short-lived. Your practical approach to life may charm someone who has been observing you.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Your ability to put things together will be appreciated by your comrades. Take a look at the possibilities of starting a small part time business with friends or relatives.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 You can get phenomenal returns if you present your ideas to those who can back your interests. Try to be as mellow as possible. Plan to get out and do a bit of travel.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Your determination and sheer desire to do your own thing will be successful. Your compassion will be appreciated more than you can imagine.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 You are ready to blow up and your stress level has gone into over drive. You may have a problem keeping secrets. A need to be in love may fool you.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Leave your checkbook and credit cards at home. You should take good care of your health; get lots of rest. Partnerships could be tense. Don't push your luck.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 You will not be pleased with family members who try to put demands on you when you just don't have the time. Don't be afraid to make additions to your house.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Use your inventiveness to find solutions. They didn't fully understand what was expected. Your talent will be recognized. Be careful what you say.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 You will need to take a look at the renovations that are necessary and try to find the cheapest way to get things done. You should not get involved in joint ventures.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-6	8	fine
Changchun	-18	-4	fine
Chengdu	2	14	fine
Chongqing	4	16	fine
Fuzhou	4	17	fine
Guangzhou	4	20	fine
Guiyang	0	16	fine
Haikou	9	19	cloudy
Hangzhou	-1	13	fine
Harbin	-26	-9	fine
Hefei	-3	14	fine
Nanjing	-1	13	fine
Shanghai	0	12	fine
Taipei	10	15	fine
Wuhan	-2	17	fine
Hong Kong	14	18	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	-2	cloudy
Frankfurt	1	6	showers
Paris	1	9	showers
London	3	9	cloudy
New York	2	11	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Puppeteer Lewis; 6- Africa's most populous city; 11- Nabokov novel; 14- Drops; 15- Citrus hybrids; 16- Game pieces; 17- More tender; 18- Old sailors; 19- Month after avril; 20- Contented sighs; 22- Total; 24- Secondary school; 28- Retract; 30- Wild sheep of Asia; 31- Kingdom; 32- Painter Rousseau; 33- Sagacious; 37- Hot time in Paris; 38- Begin's co-Nobelists; 39- Dundee denial; 40- Abandonment; 43- Four-door; 45- Pick up; 46- Join together; 47- Intellectual; 49- Adjust again; 50- Move to and fro; 51- Sharp; 52- ___ de deux (ballet dance); 53- Nostrils; 56- Creamy white; 61- Washington bill; 62- Blow one's top; 63- Rocky debris; 64- Pitch; 65- Eats to a plan; 66- ___ Perot;

DOWN 1- Brillo rival; 2- Med. care option; 3- Televise; 4- Hwy.; 5- Begin, e.g.; 6- Soft and comfortable; 7- Turkish titles; 8- Green around the gills; 9- Mus. slow-up; 10- Small bone; 11- Capital of Jordan; 12- Distributed cards; 13- Blue dye source; 21- Where ___?; 23- Title; 24- Oohed and ___; 25- El Greco's birthplace; 26- Choreographer de Mille; 27- ___ es Salaam, Tanzania; 28- Aired again; 29- Bridge seat; 31- Radioactive gas; 33- Pixie; 34- Gandhi's land; 35- Civil rights org.; 36- "The Maids" playwright; 38- Ollie's partner; 41- Brio; 42- Ruled; 43- Class where you learn ser, estar, and haber; 44- Antiquity, old-style; 46- Call on; 47- African sir; 48- Stair part; 49- Reposes; 50- Predicament; 51- Held on to; 54- Jackie's second; 55- Bemoan; 57- TV adjunct; 58- Guadalajara gold; 59- Legal thing; 60- Affirmative answer;

Friday's solution

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

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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

New Zealand wins men's, women's titles at Sydney Sevens

NEW Zealand won both the men's and women's titles yesterday at the Sydney leg of the World Rugby Sevens Series, consolidating its overall lead in both series.

New Zealand women beat France 35-0 for their third-straight Sydney title, their third of the season and their 30th since the World Series began.

Tenika Willison and Jazmin Felix-Hotham scored two tries each while veteran Portia Woodman scored the last of the match, her 213th in World Series matches.

The New Zealanders were unbeaten at the tournament, averaging 35.5 points per match while conceding only four tries in six matches, none in the final.

The tone of the final was set early when Willison and Felix-Hotham both scored under the posts within the first four minutes. New Zealand led 21-0 by halftime and added two more tries in the second half.



France defended aggressively but New Zealand was able to manipulate the defense to create gaps by moving the ball quickly wide then back infield and using pace to finish.

"Winning back to back (New

Zealand also won last weekend in Hamilton) is pretty hard and to come out here and have the support we've had in the crowd is fantastic," New Zealand captain Sarah Hirini said.

Hirini also sent aroha (love)

to family in Auckland where four people have died in flash floods since Friday.

New Zealand men beat South Africa 36-0 for their first title of the season. South Africa beat New Zealand 17-14 in group play but

the Kiwis learned from that defeat and were able to hold the South Africans scoreless for the first time in nine years.

Tries to Roderick Solo, Joe Webber and captain Sam Dickson gave New Zealand a 17-0 lead at halftime. But the match was still in the balance: South Africa had rallied from a similar margin to beat New Zealand in the final at Dubai earlier in the season.

Akuila Rokolisoa scored the decisive try in the 12th minute, kicking the ball free from a South Africa scrum and re-gathering before the line. Amanaki Nicole and Ngarohi McGarvey-Black added tries before the end to make the win comprehensive.

New Zealand men have had two second placings and a third in four previous tournaments this year and were relieved to break through for their first win.

"It's pleasing," Dickson said. "I'm so proud of the boys and the management. We've been trying so hard, made a few finals and just missed out.

"It's been an unreal tournament for us and it's about time we produced a polished performance like that."

The win extends New Zealand's overall Series lead to nine points over South Africa. New Zealand women now lead by 12 points over Australia. **MDT/AP**

AD

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OPINION

THE CONVERSATION

Howard Manly, MDT/The Conversation



ACTS THAT DEFY HUMANITY

In the case of the five Black, former Memphis police officers accused of murder in the beating death of Tyre Nichols, justice has moved quickly.

In fewer than 30 days after Nichols' Jan. 10, 2023 death, the former officers were charged with second-degree murder, assault, kidnapping, official misconduct and official oppression.

The Memphis Police Department released video footage of the officers' encounter with Nichols on Jan. 27, 2023. And some who've seen the video, which includes footage captured by body-worn cameras, cameras mounted on dashboards of police vehicles and security cameras on utility poles in the vicinity, have described it as "horrific."

Before the video was released Memphis Police Chief Cerelyn Davis told CNN: "You are going to see acts that defy humanity."

In recent years, as national outrage over the systemic racism within U.S. law enforcement has grown, The Conversation U.S. has published several articles on police brutality, race and the national outrage over systemic racism within the U.S. criminal justice system.

Media Studies Professor Sandra Ristovska examines the use of video as evidence in state and federal courts in the U.S. and writes about the Rodney King and George Floyd cases where jurors interpreted video evidence differently.

In the King case, the four Los Angeles police officers were acquitted of charges of assault and excessive use of force as the jury believed the video showed a justified response to King's allegedly frightening actions.

Lead prosecutor Terry White ended his closing arguments by asking the jury: "Now who do you believe, the defendants or your own eyes?"

In the Floyd case, jurors believed their own eyes and convicted Derek Chauvin for the murder of Floyd.

As Ristovska explains, bystander, bodycam and dashcam videos of policing can be powerful forms of evidence.

"Yet judges, attorneys and jurors may see and treat video in varied ways that can lead to inconsistent renderings of justice," she writes.

As historian Clare Corbould explains, police violence that disproportionately targets African Americans long predates portable video cameras.

Where Black Africans were once enslaved to provide cheap labor, Corbould writes, they are now policed, charged, indicted and incarcerated at staggering rates.

"As many have noted since [George] Floyd's murder, the origins of U.S. policing lie in the control of supposedly disorderly populations," Corbould writes, "whether of enslaved people or, after the end of slavery, an impoverished class of laborers including Black people and immigrants."

In their peer-reviewed study of data on 235 U.S. city police departments from 2000 to 2016, Thaddeus L. Johnson and Natasha N. Johnson found that police forces requiring at least a two-year college degree for employment are less likely to employ officers who engage in actions that cause the deaths of Black and unarmed citizens.

As they explain, "Our results demonstrated that college minimums are associated with as much as three times lower rates of police-related fatalities involving Black people than police forces without a college degree requirement."

Their findings further suggest that the impact of a more educated police force may emerge during only the most dangerous encounters that often precede the use of weapons.

More research needs to be done but they conclude that police agencies trying to reduce fatal confrontations should consider ways to recruit college-degreed applicants while at the same time support college attendance among current officers.

China gave conditional approval for the use of two locally made Covid-19 antivirals as the nation struggles with limited drugs following the end of virus restrictions, Bloomberg reported.

Sincere Pharmaceutical Group Ltd. and Shanghai Junshi Biosciences Co. got approval for their antivirals from the National Medical Products Administration, according to a statement from the government yesterday. The statement didn't elaborate on the conditions for approval.

The avalanche of infections unleashed after China's abrupt pivot from Covid Zero last month created enormous demand for basic

drugs to reduce fever and antiviral pills that protect those at highest-risk of severe disease.

Pfizer Inc.'s Paxlovid, Merck & Co.'s Lagevrio and Henan Genuine Biotech Co.'s azvudine — an HIV drug being used to treat Covid — have already been cleared for use.

China's relatively low vaccination rate for vulnerable groups, especially those aged 80 and above, is fueling antiviral demand. The lack of a readily available supply prompted some people to buy Paxlovid or generic versions at exorbitant prices through illegal channels. In some cases, they purchased counterfeit drugs that didn't work.

AP PHOTO



Conservative Party chairman Nadhim Zahawi

UK LEADER FIRES PARTY CHAIRMAN OVER TAX BILL ALLEGATIONS

MIKE FULLER & JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

BRITISH Prime Minister Rishi Sunak fired the chairman of the governing Conservative Party yesterday for a "serious breach" of ethics rules in failing to come clean about a tax dispute.

Sunak had faced days of pressure to sack Nadhim Zahawi amid allegations he settled a multimillion-dollar unpaid tax bill while he was in charge of the country's Treasury.

The prime minister acted after a standards probe found Zahawi had breached the ministerial code of conduct. It said he had failed to disclose details of his dispute with tax authorities and the fact that he had paid a penalty.

In a letter to Zahawi, Sunak said he had been forced to act to keep his promise that his government "would have integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level."

Zahawi had acknowledged the tax dispute but argued his error was "careless and not deliberate."

In his response to Sunak, Zahawi pledged to support the prime minister as a backbench lawmaker and made no reference to the ethics inquiry. He attacked the media — which first revealed his whopping

tax bill, reported at almost 5 million pounds (\$6.2 million) — and claimed some reporting did not reflect "legitimate scrutiny of public officials."

Zahawi headed the U.K. Treasury from July to September 2022 in the final months of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's tenure, and was appointed Conservative Party chairman when Sunak took office in October.

Sunak has vowed to restore order and integrity to government after three years of turmoil under predecessors Johnson — brought down by ethics scandals — and Liz Truss, who quit within weeks after her policies rocked the U.K. economy.

Last week he asked the government's standards adviser, Laurie Magnus, to investigate Zahawi's tax affairs and said he would wait for the results before acting.

In a report released yesterday, Magnus found Zahawi had shown "insufficient regard" for the requirement "to be honest, open and an exemplary leader through his own behavior" in public life.

The investigation into Zahawi by HMRC, the U.K.'s tax office, centered around the sale of some 27 million pounds (\$33.4 million) in shares in You-

Gov, an opinion polling firm he co-founded. The probe began in April 2021, but Zahawi did not declare it when he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer more than a year later.

The Magnus report found there should have been an understanding from the outset that the matter was serious. It said this was not reflected in public statements given by Zahawi, until he confirmed on Jan. 21 that a settlement had been reached.

Zahawi said it had been "the privilege of my life" to serve in government. The 55-year-old, who came to Britain as a child refugee from Iraq, was vaccines minister in the first year of the coronavirus pandemic, and later served a nine-month stint as education minister.

The Zahawi episode was a test of the authority of Sunak, who is grappling with a staggering economy and a deeply divided Conservative Party. Standards inquiries are also underway into Johnson — over claims he secured a loan with the help of a Conservative donor who was later appointed chairman of the BBC — and Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab, who faces allegations he bullied staff. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Israeli police sealed up the east Jerusalem home of a Palestinian attacker who killed seven people and wounded three outside a synagogue, one of several punitive measures approved by Benjamin Netanyahu's Cabinet overnight. The move came following a deadly weekend in which seven people were killed and five others wounded in two separate shootings in Jerusalem.

Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih won a party primary and will run for a second term in September elections. Solih defeated Mohamed Nasheed, the parliament speaker and a former president, in the Maldivian Democratic Party primary held yesterday. Nasheed played a key role in transforming the Indian Ocean archipelago state into a multiparty democracy after a 30-year autocracy.

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France's prime minister insisted yesterday that the government's bill to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 is "no longer negotiable," further angering parliamentary opponents and unions who plan new mass protests and disruptive strikes this week. The bill is meeting widespread popular resistance — more than 1 million people marched against it earlier this month — and misunderstanding about what it will mean for today's French workers.

AP PHOTO



Lebanon, two international oil giants and state-owned oil and gas company Qatar Energy signed an agreement Sunday that the Qatari firm will join a consortium that will search for gas in the Mediterranean Sea off Lebanon's coast. The deal inked in Beirut brings Qatar into Lebanon's gas exploration market three months after Lebanon and Israel signed a U.S.-mediated maritime border agreement ending a yearslong dispute.