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**NEWLY INCORPORATED COMPANIES
TOTALLED SOME 4,100, A DECREASE
OF 1,300 YEAR-ON-YEAR IN 2022:
OFFICIAL STATS**

P4

**CHINA'S LAND PORTS WITH
SARS SAW 568,000 EXITS
AND ENTRIES**

P5

**QUAKE DEATHS
PASS 5,000 AS
TURKEY, SYRIA SEEK
SURVIVORS**

P8



AP PHOTO



Japanese investor SoftBank Group reported yesterday that it sank into a deep loss for the October-December quarter, slammed by the global plunge in technology shares. SoftBank Group Corp. racked up a 783 billion yen (\$5.9 billion) loss for the fiscal third quarter, a reversal from the 29 billion yen profit recorded the same period a year ago.

AP PHOTO



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ordered his military to expand its combat exercises and strengthen war preparedness as he looks to escalate an already provocative run in weapons demonstrations in the face of deepening tensions with its neighbors and Washington. Kim presided over a meeting of the ruling Workers' Party's Central Military Commission on Monday and encouraged the armed forces to perform "ever-victorious feats" the state news agency reported yesterday.

AP PHOTO



Australia Two pilots walked away with minor injuries after a Boeing 737 jet converted for firefighting crashed in Australia, officials said. The twin-engine tanker owned by Canadian-based Coulson Aviation crashed in Fitzgerald River National Park in southern Western Australia state while fighting wildfires late Monday. Both pilots received only minor injuries even though the plane was engulfed in flames and smoke upon impact.

More on backpage

INNER BARRIERS

Gov't to potentially drop tidal barrier project in Inner Harbour: Rosario P3



GAMING
**FEBRUARY
GGR REBOUND
BETTER THAN
EXPECTED**

P4

TRAVEL
**SEVERAL
FLIGHTS TO
SOUTHEAST
ASIA APPROVED,
TICKETS
ON SALE**

P5

GAMBLING

SPORTS BETTING APPS' NOTIFICATIONS ENCOURAGE MORE AND MORE WAGERS – WHY SOME PEOPLE GET HOOKED

MEREDITH K. GINLEY
EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

JOE is a full-time college student who also works some nights as a security guard. He played basketball all through high school and loves to follow the sport. Tonight one of his favorite teams is playing and he's placed a US\$100 bet for them to win.

As he sits in his vehicle with one eye on the parking lot and one eye on his physics textbook, he listens to the game. His phone keeps vibrating. A notification from a sports wagering app asks if he'd like to place a prop bet – a sort of side bet unrelated to the specific outcomes of the game – for a specific player to make five rebounds tonight. He adds \$20 for this bet. His app buzzes again, now suggesting a prop bet for a certain player to make four three-point shots this game. The odds look good; he knows this player; he adds \$40 here.

The game continues and his app keeps pingping him about more bets. By the end of the game, Joe's team has won. He feels good about how well he knows basketball and his ability to pick a winning team and is buzzing from the thrill of chasing in-game bets. But he's actually down \$50 on the evening, as he lost most of his prop bets, and he's not done nearly enough of his physics homework. He settles in for a long night and tries to push away any thoughts about how much money he actually ended up losing. And I'm certain Joe will be back placing bets the next time his teams are playing.

Although Joe isn't a real person, and the specifics of a sports wagering app can vary from vendor to vendor and even from state to state, this scenario illustrates the kind of game play many sports wagerers report. One estimate suggests there were around 19 million online sports bettors in the U.S. in 2022; as more states gradually legalize these apps, the number of Joes out there is bound to rise.



I'm a licensed clinical psychologist who has researched and treated gambling-related harm for over a decade. I'm interested in how and why bettors like Joe seem able to focus on how they picked a winning team while discounting that they actually ended up in the red. Humans are built to like reward, pleasure and winning. Sports wagering apps bring these specific opportunities right to your smartphone for immediate enjoyment.

GAMBLING FEELS GOOD IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT

Several theories from neuroscience and psychology can point to why some people might be particularly primed to enjoy gambling.

One prominent theory of learning suggests people are driven by two basic brain systems. One leads people to seek new, exciting and novel situations. A complementary system encourages them to apply caution, notice risk and keep themselves safe.

In action, these systems are a bit like the gas and the brake on a car – but imagine driving, as my great uncle used to, with both feet. Everyone has both pedals, but how sensitive you are to the brake or how much you crave

more gas varies from person to person.

Think of how some people avoid airplanes entirely, while others board because of their excitement about the vacation on the other side, and still others willingly launch themselves out of the plane as skydivers. Sports wagering opportunities can be akin to that plane. One person's individual blend of desire for novelty and caution can lead them to hesitantly download an app while another person can't wait to make the jump.

Neuroscientists know that certain genes, brain regions and neurotransmitters, including dopamine, are part of this balancing act of risk and reward. The areas of the brain related to reward may function a bit differently in people who are more driven to engage in higher-risk activities.

For example, when researchers show study participants who are frequent gamblers images of people gambling in casinos, their brains may react in a way similar to when they are exposed to cues for natural rewards like food or sex. These findings mirror what has been shown for how people's brains react to cues for alcohol, cocaine and cigarettes.

WAGERING APPS AMP UP THE ATTRACTION

Beyond the rewarding nature of gambling itself, there may be some structural aspects of sports wagering apps that make them particularly attractive – and, in turn, potentially create higher risk for some people.

For example, Joe really likes basketball, and he's confident about his skill in knowing how his team will play. Placing a bet on the game may make him more excited to watch a game he already enjoys. Each time his favorite teams play will be an automatic cue to place another bet. There's a natural pull to be more engaged in activities you like and are good at. And when researchers told study participants they would either just watch or also bet on a sporting event, it led to different activation in the brain, particularly in areas related to reward.

People are also more likely to participate in activities that are readily accessible and have low barriers to entry. Common advice you might hear if you want to decrease the amount of sugar in your diet is to clear sweets out of your pantry. Sure enough, you're more likely to eat a cupcake on the counter than one you have to go all the way to the store for.

In the same way, proximity to gambling venues is a known risk factor for problematic levels of gambling. Sports wagering apps essentially load a casino onto the phone in your pocket. The easy access – along with the novelty and excitement – likely increase the risk of potential harm.

And wagering apps are heavily “gamified” to feel more like an interactive video game and less like a staid banking app. Push notifications, free play, leaderboards and more can increase engagement and fun. But these features can also make users feel more detached from the actual money they're spending and make it harder to disengage if they become concerned about the cash or time spent on the app.

HARDENING YOUR DEFENSES

Most people who gamble or bet on sports don't experience any harm. Like Joe, they might lose a few bucks. But overall they may find the enjoyment gained by the thrill of deeper engagement with their team and the chance to win is within their budget. Spending on sports wagering can be like springing for movie tickets because of what's gained from seeing the content in a theater – there's an added dimension to the entertainment.

When I work with clients, I suggest setting spending limits or loss limits. Many apps offer responsible gaming tools that let users set deposit, loss and wagering limits. For people who are really concerned about their gambling, blocking software can be an option. The National Council on Problem Gambling's responsibleplay.org site provides additional strategies and resources.

I also remind clients that sports wagering companies are running a business designed to make money despite a user's ability to pick a winning team. The apps are very skilled at tapping into what makes betting exciting and rewarding. Players can aim for a level of expenditure that keeps it fun and low-risk. There's no need to become an app's best customer. **MDT/AP**

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PUBLIC WORKS

Gov't to potentially drop tidal barrier project in Inner Harbour

RENATO MARQUES

THE government may discontinue the tidal barrier project, which aimed to build a barrier at the entrance of the Inner Harbour seaway to prevent heavy flooding in the Inner Harbour area during severe weather events such as storm surges caused by typhoons.

The potential dropping of the mega-project was alluded to by the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário yesterday at the Legislative Assembly, where he was expected to present the results of the analysis of the project's implementation.

"If you want me to be completely honest with you, I believe that, at the moment, the probability of us not building the tidal barrier is higher than the probability of building it," Rosário said in a response to an inquiry from lawmaker Ella Lei.

Risks associated with the project include the very high costs of construction as well as the possibility of the system being inefficient or not concluding as expected due to the need to coordinate it with other similar projects upstream, as mentioned on several occasions by lawmaker Chui Sai Peng.



Both lawmakers and the Secretary expressed concerns regarding the costs of maintenance and repairs of the system.

For the time being, the project has been placed on standby, with Rosário saying that there is a need to wait for multiple other projects to conclude – some of which are currently under development and others which are soon to be developed for flood prevention measures, not only at Inner Harbour but also in other areas of the Peninsula and Coloane Island.

"We need to wait to see if the works that we are already developing and will continue to develop

are able to solve the majority of the flooding issues. This relates not only to the typhoons and

storm surge but also to situations of heavy rain and exceptionally high tides that happen more fre-

quently," the Secretary remarked.

Lawmaker Ron Lam opposed this idea, saying that he disagreed with the Secretary's advice to wait and see if other projects would resolve the flooding issues identified. These works include the creation and increasing in height of flood walls and levees in several areas, as well as the construction of several flood boxes and culverts as well as stormwater lift stations to help with storage and drainage of excessive rain and floodwater from lower areas.

Lam criticized what he described as a "zero response" from the government to address the issue of storm surges in the Inner Harbour, claiming that without a proper and effective solution, "people will not be interested in investing to revive the old neighborhoods."

A more peculiar suggestion came from lawmaker Lo Choi In, who claimed that the Inner Harbour is "not needed" since most supplies to Macau now come via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, hinting that a more permanent solution could be found without accounting for the need for vessels to access the piers.

COLOANE VILLAGE TO HAVE TWO ARTIFICIAL LAKES TO CONTAIN FLOOD

AMONG the government's projects to tackle floods is a new development for the Coloane Village, which will build facilities including a flood wall and two artificial panoramic lakes that will serve to contain the excess seawater.

One lake will be located in the Lai Chi Vun area, and another at the Avenida de Cinco de Outubro.

The DSOP director Lam Wai Hou revealed that this project is currently at the design stage, which is likely

to conclude in the third quarter of this year.

Lam also explained that their purpose is to cause the waves caused by storm surges to break earlier, reaching the coastal area with less strength.

The same official also noted that the new lake areas will be beautified and include some leisure facilities such as gangways and paths similar to the ones installed in the pond in front of the Taipa Houses Museum, to be used for traveling around the lake areas.

PUBLIC WORKS

Feasibility study on tidal barrier claims to solve most of Inner Harbour's flood problems

RENATO MARQUES

A study produced through the creation and analysis of the results of a digital simulation model concluded that the installation of a tidal barrier at the entrance of the seaway between Inner Harbour and the Wanzai, Zhuhai area would be able to solve most of the issues regarding severe flooding caused by storm surge.

The conclusions of the study were presented yesterday in a session dedicated to the lawmakers at the Legislative Assembly.

Gao Wen Jie, a representative of the company that created the computer-si-



mulation model and ran the study said that the results demonstrate the "contribution of the tidal barrier

for drastically reducing the flooded areas in the Inner Harbour area."

The study also modelled

the impacts of the construction and operation of the tidal barrier on the surrounding areas at the South and East of the Peninsula and Northern part of Taipa, concluding that the works would not have a significant impact although they would cause a rise in sea level in those areas.

Gao said that the overall conclusions of the study support the construction of the tidal barrier and additionally propose that levees be raised or built in the South and the East sections of the Peninsula.

According to the same representative, the study involved a simulation of 25

situations in a total of 400 experiments.

It also proposes the barrier have gates high enough to support a water level rise to 3.85 meters – that is, seven centimeters higher than the maximum level reached during the passage of Typhoon Hato, with the whole structure being 5.5 meters above normal sea levels.

He also noted that to test the resistance of the gates, data from Typhoons Hato and Mangkut were used.

The Public Works Bureau (DSOP) director Lam Wai Hou remarked that the construction of the tidal barrier would only be con-

sidered as long-term works for flood prevention, noting that broader efforts are currently being directed into short and medium-term works that include the installation of box culvert and stormwater lift stations in several locations, including at the Inner Harbour and Fai Chi Kei coastal areas.

Lam noted that some of these are already being built or have concluded, with work on the section between the Rua do Dr. Lourenco Pereira Marques and Rua das Lorchas reaching the third phase.

He noted that phase one, which was estimated to take 460 working days, will conclude at the end of Jun next year. Phase two works are estimated to take some 550 working days and are commencing now.

The third and last phase is the most time-consuming, taking at least 650 working days to conclude.

DICJ EMPLOYEE ARRESTED OVER PROSTITUTION WEBSITE

Internal disciplinary proceedings were initiated against a gaming watchdog employee, following police reports that the resident has allegedly been operating a prostitution website. On Monday, the Judiciary Police arrested a 58-year-old employee of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), after investigations revealed that he had received benefits amounting to some MOP12 million over the past 10 years through the website. Some 54 women from the mainland were involved. In a statement yesterday, the bureau said that the suspect will be "dealt with in accordance with the law and severely punished."

SUBSIDIES FOR DISABLED WORKERS RECORD INCREASE

In 2022, the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) has assisted 35 job seekers with disabilities to find employment for various positions including administrative staff, waiters, and graphic design clerks. In the third quarter of last year, a total of 21 applications for employment income subsidies for disabled employees were received, all of which met the requirements and were granted to applicants. The figure represents an increase from the 15 applications in the same period in 2021. The Social Welfare Bureau has also successively launched three social enterprise funding programs. The approved social enterprises are in the initial stages of opening, and the bureau is evaluating the relevant conditions under which the programs will operate.

MOBILE PAYMENT TRANSACTIONS RISE TO NEARLY 73M

The number of transactions carried out by local mobile payment platforms rose 18.4% from the previous quarter to 72.7 million in the fourth quarter of 2022. The transaction value increased by 15.9% to MOP7.3 billion, data from the Monetary Authority of Macao shows. The average amount per transaction was MOP100.2. At end-2022, the number of mobile payment terminals and QR codes totaled 95,200, an increase of 2.5% from end-September. Meanwhile, the total number of personal credit cards issued by banks in Macau reached 1,702,444 at end-2022, up 2.0% when compared with end-September. The total number of debit cards issued by banks in Macau rose quarter-to-quarter by 0.7% to 2,109,930. In addition, the number of credit card transactions reached 7.8 million, up 13.3% on a quarterly basis.

GAMING

FEBRUARY GGR REBOUND SO FAR BETTER THAN EXPECTED

LYNZY VALLES

THE city's gross gaming revenue (GGR) is recording a rebound, with an estimated MOP1.9 billion in the first five days of February, as the city has been swarmed by visitors amid the significant easing of restrictions.

Brokerage firm J.P. Morgan remarked that such a figure represents a recovery of 45% of 2019 figures

The average daily revenue amounts to MOP380 million, slightly more with the daily average of MOP374 million in January.

Last month, the city's casinos saw GGR surge 82.5% year-on-year to MOP11.6 billion as China's reopening and the week-long Lunar New Year break sparked an influx of visitors to the gambling hub, fueling optimism that the region was finally shaking off its zero-Covid doldrums.

According to Morgan analyst DS Kim, "At this level, all operators (perhaps except SJM given the operating expense bur-



den from Grand Lisboa Palace) should already and comfortably be printing positive free cash flow (FCF; i.e. EBITDA in addition to internet costs and maintenance capex)."

The MOP1.9 billion average for the first five days is considered to be "very decent" as the week-long New Year holidays have passed.

Meanwhile, Success Universe Group Limited, which owns a 49% interest of Pier 16 - Property Development Limited, which operates Ponte 16 Resort, is expecting gaming revenues to recover up to 60% of pre-pandemic levels, with the mass-market income fully returning to pre-pandemic levels.

The expectation also echoes

JP Morgan's projection that the mass-market GGR had recovered to 65-70% of pre-Covid levels.

NEW TAX ON VIP BUSINESS

The government is reportedly placing a levy on junket operators that threatens to "kill" the casino hub's once-thriving VIP business, industry insiders say, according to media reports.

Aside from the standard 35% tax on GGR, under the new rules, casino operators in Macau are due to pay an additional 5% floor "rent" fee.

The city has started enforcing a 5% tax on the commissions that casino operators pay to junkets.

This additional payment is applicable to all junket operators on a monthly basis and is expected to significantly impact the sector.

"The tax had always been waived in prior years," one junket boss, who asked to remain unnamed, told Nikkei Asia. "They are now enforcing it, which will kill our income."

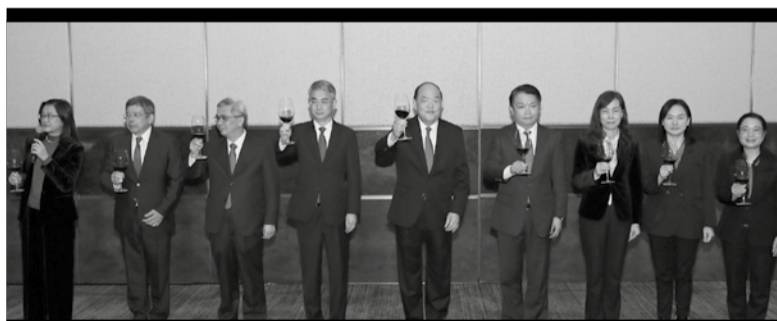
These gaming promoters were required to pay MOP1.50 million to have their licenses renewed from January 1. The day marks the gaming sector's entry into a new year, following the largest gaming law overhaul.

MEDIA LUNCHEON

Ho praises English, Portuguese media as 'bridge' with communities, world

THE Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng said yesterday that he hopes that the Portuguese- and English-language media "will continue to act as supervisors and bridges in order to support and to keep a close eye on" the MSAR's administration, during the annual Spring luncheon with editors of local media outlets.

In the period of "dynamic adjustment of the epidemic-prevention measures," he said that "the Portuguese- and English-language media were active in helping readers and speakers of Portuguese and readers and speakers of English - locally and overseas - to keep track of the latest developments in Macau."



They also helped to convey key information to the government, including "the opinions of these communities during the acute phase of the adjustment, alleviating the information lag sometimes caused by language differences."

In a politically-charged message, Ho said the MSAR Government "is committed to ensuring that the media can better perform their duties in accordance

with the Basic Law and relevant laws, and support the continued development of the industry by strengthening positive interaction with journalists by actively supporting and assisting their reporting work."

In accordance with the overall policy direction, the city's government in the new year will pursue major goals such as "boosting the economy, fostering economic diversification,

relieving livelihood hardships, preventing and controlling COVID-19, and promoting the steady overall development of Macau."

Ho finally thanked the local Portuguese- and English-language press for having provided people overseas "with various perspectives on Macau, and helping them understand China in a comprehensive way via interviews, field trips, and other forms of coverage." PC

SMEs

LESSER FIRMS ESTABLISHED IN 2022

STAFF REPORTER

NEWLY incorporated companies totaled 4,111, a decrease of 1,323 year-on-year in 2022. The total value of registered capital surged by 999.0% to MOP14.93 billion owing to the incorporation of companies with relatively large capital in Financial Activities during the year.

The number of companies in dissolution was 718 in 2022, and the value of registered capital of these companies amounted to MOP552 million.

In the third quarter of last year, the business sector has faced renewed headwinds under the recent Covid-19 pandemic outbreak that led to the city's partial lockdown.

A total of 261 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which benefited from government support measures have already closed their doors due to bankruptcy, data from the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) in August shows. The bureau noted that 80 of these shutdowns were recorded in the first three months of 2022.

In terms of the origin of capital, mainland China contributed MOP141 million (66.9% of the total) to the capital of newly incorporated companies. Capital from the mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area totaled MOP80 million, of which Shenzhen accounted for 90%.



TRAVEL

Several flights to Southeast Asian countries approved, tickets on sale

LYNZY VALLES

SEVERAL international flights between Macau and Southeast Asian countries are expected to commence soon as the government has announced the approval of some

airlines that will operate routes between the regions.

In a statement, the Civil Aviation Authority (AACM) announced that it has approved the requests of several airlines to resume flights back to Macau, a long-awaited move following the lack of international

flights since the border closure in March 2020.

"The transition period for pandemic prevention is now over. Macau residents are now excited about their travel plans, while tourists can enter Macau, taking advantage of the lifting of restrictions," the bu-

reau said in a statement.

"We are therefore confident that with the tourism promotion campaigns launched by the Government, as well as the cooperation between the tourism industry and the air transport industry in offering passenger incentive programs,

Macau's aviation will grow again," AACM added.

Those who are traveling outside of mainland China have either been going through Singapore or transiting through Hong Kong.

However, with this approval, Macau will again have direct flights to cities in Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Cambodia.

The approval includes flights to Danang and Cam Ranh in Vietnam, Chiang Mai in Thailand, Kota Kinabalu in Malaysia, Manila in the Philippines, and Phnom Penh in Cambodia.

As previously announced, AirAsia is set to resume flights between Macau and Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu from February 14 and March 26.

These routes will operate three and four flights per week.

From March 26, Vietjet Air will reopen connections to Danang and Cam Ranh, operating on three and four flights a week.

JC International Airlines, meanwhile, will fly once a week to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from March 7 for now.

For flights to Chiang Macau, AirAsia will resume on March 26.

According to Air Asia's website, flights to Manila will commence April 1 and operate daily, with tickets costing approximately MOP600 one way.

Air Macau will also operate route to Kaohsiung, Taiwan from February 23, with two flights a week.

China's land ports with SARs saw 568,000 exits and entries

IMMIGRATION authorities across China yesterday handled 676,000 exits and entries, hitting a record high since the COVID-19 outbreak, the National Immigration Administration (NIA) said yesterday.

NIA statistics showed that Monday's figure jumped by 124.2% from the average daily entry and exit trips before China downgraded its Covid-19 management on Jan. 8, and accounted for nearly 37% of the pre-Covid-19 level.

Land ports with Hong Kong and Macau saw 568,000 entries and exits on Monday, accounting for 84 percent of the daily total and increasing by 39.2% from the previous day.

On Monday, normal travel between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong and Macau was fully resumed.



The long-awaited resumption of mainland tour groups has commenced, with the city welcoming a total of 135 tourists Monday, divided into six tour groups.

The resumption of group tours is expected to further elevate Macau's tourism industry, a major propellant for its economy.

"Tour operators in Ma-

cau have been making preparations to embrace a full recovery," said Zhang Jianzhong, chairman of China Travel Service (Macao) Ltd.

Data from online travel agency Trip.com Group showed that as of Saturday, bookings for Hong Kong and Macau trips this week were up 228% year on year.

MDT/XINHUA

NUMBER OF BLUE CARD HOLDERS LOWEST SINCE 2013

THE number of non-resident workers in Macau has declined to 154,912 in 2022, a continues decrease of 9.4% year-on-year, data from the Labour Affairs Bureau shows.

The reduction in the number of migrant workers in the region is attributable to the pandemic and border closure that has led to economic and business downturn.

Data from the DSAL late last year noted that non-resident workers employed by the six gaming operators has declined by 47.5% between January 2020 and October 2022.

40,000 non-resident workers have left Macau either because of the lack of jobs or because of the government's decision not to renew the workers' permits to prioritize local residents' access to jobs during times in which



the unemployment rate was high.

Back in mid-2020, integrated resorts did not renew the contracts of most of their non-resident workers, particularly those in the service industry as casinos have been bleeding cash every day due to the strict virus restrictions.

Prior to the pandemic, the city had some 196,500 blue card holders.

The government has previously admitted that the hotel sector is understaffed amid the

current tourism advertising campaign that aims to boost tourist arrivals in the city following the easing of border restrictions on Sunday.

Due to the layoffs during the onset of the pandemic, "it may be difficult to replenish manpower in the short term."

The government is currently examining the shortage of workers to understand which job vacancies can be easily filled with the recruitment of migrant workers. LV

SECURITY

IMPROVED SURVEILLANCE CAUGHT CHINESE BALLOON: WHITE HOUSE

ZEKE MILLER, WASHINGTON

U.S. officials said yesterday [Macau time] that improvements ordered by President Joe Biden to strengthen defenses against Chinese espionage helped to identify last week's spy balloon — and to determine that similar flights were conducted at multiple points during the Trump administration.

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said that after Biden took office, the U.S. "enhanced our surveillance of our territorial airspace, we enhanced our capacity to be able to detect things that the Trump administration was unable to detect."

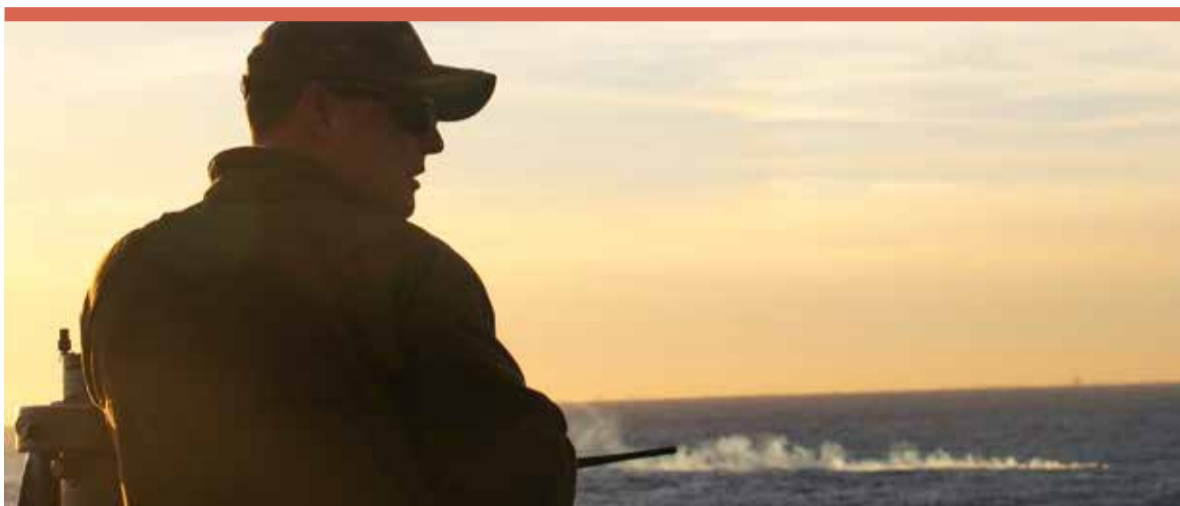
Biden, in turn, has been faulted by some Republicans for not ordering the balloon shot down before it made its way across the U.S. Officials have said there was concern about damage to people on the ground, and Biden addressed the issue yesterday.

"Once it came over to the United States, from Canada, I told the Defense Department I wanted to shoot it down as soon as it was appropriate," Biden said. The military concluded "we should not shoot it down over land, it was not a serious threat."

In a brief exchange with reporters, Biden expressed his continued displeasure with Beijing. Asked why China launched the balloon over the U.S., he replied simply, "Because they're the Chinese."

Biden administration officials have planned a classified briefing for all senators on Thursday to discuss the spy balloon situation, according to Senate Majority Leader

AP PHOTO



Chuck Schumer's office.

Sullivan, speaking at an event hosted by the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, said as part of the surveillance improvements since Biden took office, "we were able to go back and look at the historical patterns" and uncover "multiple instances" during the Trump administration in which Chinese surveillance balloons traversed American airspace and territory.

Several Trump administration officials have said they didn't learn of Chinese spy balloons during their tenures.

Before, U.S. officials had said that at least three times during the Trump administration and at least one other time during Biden's time as president balloons have crossed American airspace, but not for this long. In those instances, the United States determined the balloons belonged to China only after they had left U.S. airspace, said Gen. Glen VanHerck, head of U.S. Northern Command.

"I will tell you that we did not detect those threats," VanHerck

said of his military command. "And that's a domain awareness gap that we have to figure out." He added that the U.S. intelligence community "after the fact" informed his command about the balloons.

Sullivan did not explain what specifically allowed the U.S. to detect and track the latest balloon where the previous administration might not have. Officials have said, without elaborating, that China has flown similar balloons over parts of five continents in recent years.

Sullivan defended Biden's decision to wait until the balloon was off the Carolina coastline before shooting it down, saying military advisers assessed that downing it over water "created a greater possibility that we could effectively exploit the wreckage than if it were shot down over land." That was in addition to the warnings from the Pentagon of a potential risk to Americans on the ground.

VanHerck described the debris spreading on the waters over "15 football fields by 15 foot-

ball fields square."

"The payload itself, I would categorize that as a jet airliner type of size, maybe a regional jet. ... Probably weighed in excess of a couple thousand pounds," he said.

Sullivan said the U.S. was "still piecing through" which Chinese officials knew what about the balloon and would not speak publicly yet about U.S. assessments about China's intentions flying it over the U.S.

The Biden administration had previously raised concerns about China's use of surveillance balloons with Congress, including during briefings last August, according to White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters that the U.S. military had begun collecting debris from the balloon. He also confirmed that the White House has offered to brief key officials from the Trump administration, but said briefings had yet to take place.

Kirby firmly rejected Beijing's claim that the U.S. violated international law by shooting down the balloon.

"The United States, under President Biden's authority and orders acted in accordance with international law and in defense of our homeland and our sovereign airspace," Kirby said. "We were absolutely within our rights to bring down that balloon."

Kirby also dismissed China's contention that the balloon was for meteorological purposes, saying "it strains credulity ... that this was some kind of weather balloon that was floating on the winds."

VanHerck, commander of U.S. Northern Command, said the U.S. "took maximum precautions" to prevent the balloon from collecting information as it crossed the nation. He declined to provide any details on how that was done, including by the military's U.S. Strategic Command. The Navy is taking protective measures during recovery operations, in case there were explosives on the balloon, he said.

He said some debris may float ashore, and he warned the public not to try to collect it.

The decision to strike the balloon when it was six miles off the coast was made after consultations with NASA, which had estimated the potential debris field due to the balloon's altitude, VanHerck said.

The Navy is also using an underwater unmanned vehicle to photograph and track debris. Monday was the first day it could be used due to rough seas, according to White House and Pentagon officials.

The White House said the balloon was a setback to already tense relations with Beijing. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was supposed to visit China but the trip was put on hold because of the incident. **MDT/AP**

OVERSEAS CHINESE

'Tiger Mom' Amy Chua writes first novel, 'The Golden Gate'

AMY Chua, the Yale Law School professor and author sometimes known as "Tiger Mom," has written her first novel. "The Golden Gate," a murder mystery centered around a wealthy family in Berkeley, California in 1944, will come out Sept. 19.

Chua said in a statement released yesterday [Macau time] by St. Martin's Publishing Group that she drew upon memories of growing up in El Cerrito, across the bay

from "glamorous San Francisco."

"As the daughter of immigrants who was often teased about my Chinese accent, slanty eyes, and funny clothes, I was acutely conscious of the gap between insiders and outsiders, haves and have-nots, in a state shaped by constant waves of migration and the lure of a better life," Chua said.

"I wove my story around actual events, like the Japanese American internment, labor unrest in the

shipyards where America's battleships were built, and the christening of the Golden Gate Bridge, as well as colorful real-life characters like Madame Chiang Kai-Shek and forensic pioneer August Vollmer of the Berkeley Police Department."

Chua, 60, has been controversial as an author and academic. "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother," a memoir published in 2011, launched an extended debate over parenting as she described her admittedly

harsh approach to raising her two daughters. Chua and her husband, the author and fellow Yale Law professor Jed Rubenfeld, have faced allegations of inappropriate conduct while hosting parties for students at their home.

Her other books include "Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations" and, with Rubenfeld, "The Triple Package: How Three Unlikely Traits Explain the Rise and Fall of Cultural Groups in America." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Author Amy Chua laughs as she talks about her book "Tiger Mother" at the Jaipur Literature Festival in Jaipur, in the western Indian state of Rajasthan, India, last month

DOWN UNDER

Australian, New Zealand leaders' talk focuses on China

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

AUSTRALIAN and New Zealand prime ministers met yesterday to talk about China's importance to their national economies, resolving to voice their disagreements with their most important trading partner that is becoming more assertive in their region.

New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins made Australia the destination of his first overseas trip as his government's leader since his predecessor Jacinda Ardern announced her surprise resignation in January.

The visit to Australia's Parliament House comes two weeks after Hipkins assumed office on Jan. 25. He used a joint press conference with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese to give an assurance that he was keeping New Zealand's foreign policy direction.

"Our foreign policy position hasn't changed just because there's a change of prime minister," Hipkins said. "The government foreign policy is the same as it was under Prime Minister Ardern."

A reporter put to Hipkins that Ardern had been reluctant to stand up against "bad behavior by



New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins (left) and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese during a joint press conference in Parliament House in Canberra yesterday

China" and asked if he was concerned about Chinese coercion in the South Pacific.

"China is an incredibly important partner for New Zealand, a very important trading partner, and a partner in other areas as well," Hipkins replied. "That doesn't mean there aren't going to be areas where we disagree from

time to time, and we'll continue to voice our disagreements with China when that happens and we'll always continue to strive to strengthen that ongoing relationship."

Albanese said Australia's national interests include restoring good trade and economic relations with China.

"Our position on China is clear,

that we'll cooperate where we can, we'll disagree where we must and we'll engage in our national interests," Albanese said.

Albanese's center-left government is rebuilding Australia's trading relationship with China after bilateral ties plumbed new depths under the previous conservative government's nine years in power.

Chinese and Australian trade ministers on Monday had their first meeting in more than three years in a major step toward normalizing relations.

Official and unofficial trade barriers on Australian products including coal, beef, seafood, barley and wood cost Australian exporters 20 billion Australian dollars (\$14 billion) a year. The barriers are largely seen as Beijing punishing the previous government for disagreements including Australian demands for an independent inquiry into the origins of and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some say New Zealand has avoided such trade retaliation by avoiding criticizing China.

New Zealand found itself on the defensive with its Five Eyes security allies — United States, Canada, Britain and Australia — in 2021 by resisting speaking out in unison with them against China on certain human rights issues.

The New Zealand and Australian prime ministers' talks covered their economies, security and climate change. Both countries are also attempting to improve engagement with their South Pacific island neighbors to counter China's growing influence in the region.

China made some bold geopolitical moves in 2022 in the Pacific, first by signing a security pact with the Solomon Islands and then attempting — unsuccessfully — to get 10 Pacific nations to sign a sweeping agreement covering everything from security to fisheries. **MDT/AP**

THAILAND

Concern rises for lives of two activists on hunger strike

CONCERNS about the condition of two hunger strikers seeking political and judicial reforms in Thailand heightened this week after the hospital where the two women are being kept urgently summoned their parents.

Tantawan "Tawan" Tuatulanon, 21, and Orawan "Bam" Phuphong, 23, have been on hunger strike since Jan. 18 — much of that time refusing water as well as food — to back their demands for reform of the justice system, the release of political prisoners pending trial and for lawmakers to amend or abolish laws used against political dissidents.

Their lawyer, Krisadang Nutcharas, said they are in poor condition, and at risk of losing their lives.

"Their parents didn't



Political activists Orawan Phuphong (left) and Tatawan Tuatulanon raise a three-finger salute, a symbol of resistance, in protest outside at Criminal Court in Bangkok, early January

sleep last night and they have been here since morning," said Krisadang at the Thammasat University Hospital in a northern suburb of Bangkok, the capital. "This is not a scripted drama to ask people for their sympathy."

The two women agreed a few days ago to resume taking water. Refusing all liquids in addition to food can cause permanent injury and even death if carried on for an extended period.

The two activists are among at least 228 people,

including 18 minors, have been charged with violating the lese majeste law, which carries a prison term of three to 15 years for insulting the monarchy. Critics say the law, also known as Article 112, is often wielded as a tool to quash po-

litical dissent. Student-led pro-democracy protests beginning in 2020 openly criticized the monarchy, previously a taboo subject, leading to vigorous prosecutions under the law, which had previously been relatively rarely employed.

Sitthichok Sethasavet, a food delivery driver convicted in January of lese majeste, is also on a hunger strike and being kept at the same hospital.

Tantawan and Orawan were charged with lese majeste for conducting public polls on whether people felt bothered by royal motorcades, which can lead to road closures and heavy traffic. They also face other charges such as sedition and refusing to comply with authorities.

The two women had been free on bail but an-

nounced earlier this month that they were revoking their own release to return to prison in solidarity with others held pending trial on the same charge whom they want to be freed, saying that's the main issue at this point.

Krisadang said Monday he reapplied for the release on bail of eight others from the same activist group who have been detained pending trial after they were accused of breaking the law while taking part in political protests. Several previous applications have been turned down.

A Sunday statement by Thammasat University Hospital said the condition of both young women is deteriorating as they continue to reject food and treatment and are only sipping water. **MDT/AP**

AFTERSHOCKS

Quake deaths pass 5,000 as Turkey, Syria seek survivors

MEHMET GUZEL,
ADANA, TURKEY

RESCUERS raced yesterday to find survivors in the rubble of thousands of buildings brought down by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake and multiple aftershocks that struck eastern Turkey and neighboring Syria, with the discovery of more bodies raising the death toll to more than 5,000.

Countries around the world dispatched teams to assist in the rescue efforts, and Turkey's disaster management agency said more than 24,400 emergency personnel were now on the ground.

Nurgul Atay told The Associated Press she could hear her mother's voice beneath the rubble of a collapsed building in the city of Antakya, the capital of Hatay province, but that her and others efforts to get into the ruins had been futile without any rescue crews and heavy equipment to help.

"If only we could lift the concrete slab we'd be able to reach her," she said. "My mother is 70-years-old, she won't be able to withstand this for long."

Across Hatay province, just southwest of the earthquake's epicenter, officials say as many as 1,500 buildings were destroyed and many people reported relatives being trapped under the rubble with no aid or rescue teams arriving.

In areas where teams worked, occasional cheers broke out through the night as survivors were brought out of the rubble.

The quake, which was centered in Turkey's southeastern province of Kahramanmaraş, sent residents of Damascus and Beirut rushing into the street and was felt as far away as Cairo.

The medical aid organization Doctors Without Borders confirmed that one of its staff members was among the dead after his house in Syria's Idlib province collapsed, and that others had lost family members.

"We are very shocked and saddened by the impact of this disaster on the thousands of people touched by it, including our colleagues and their families," said Se-



AP PHOTO

Syrian Civil Defense workers and security forces search through the wreckage of collapsed buildings, in Aleppo

bastien Gay, the group's head of mission in Syria.

Gay said health facilities in northern Syria were overwhelmed with medical personnel working around "around the clock to respond to the huge numbers of wounded."

In Turkey's Hatay province, thousands of people sheltered in sports centers or fair halls, while others spent the night outside, huddled in blankets around fires.

A navy ship docked yesterday at the province's port of Iskenderun, where a hospital collapsed, to transport survivors in need of medical care to the nearby city of Mersin. Thick, black smoke rose from another area of the port, where firefighters have not yet been able to douse a fire that broke out among shipping containers that were toppled by the earthquake.

In the Turkish city of Gaziantep, a provincial capital about 33 kilometers (20 miles) from the epicenter, people took refuge in shopping malls, stadiums, mosques and community centers.

At least 3,381 people were killed in 10 Turkish provinces, with more than 20,000 injured, according to the latest figures from Turkish authorities yesterday. The death toll in government-held areas of Syria climbed to 769 people, with some 1,450 injured, according to the Health Ministry. In the country's rebel-held nor-

thwest, groups that operate there said at least 450 people died, with many hundreds injured. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared seven days of national mourning.

Authorities fear the death toll will keep climbing as the rescuers look for survivors among tangles of metal and concrete spread across the region beset by Syria's 12-year civil war and refugee crisis.

In the latest pledges of international help, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said he was preparing to swiftly dispatch a 60-person search and rescue team as well as medical supplies and 50 soldiers. Pakistan's government sent a flight carrying relief supplies and a 50-member search and rescue team, and said there will be daily aid flights to Syria and Turkey from Wednesday. India said it would send two search and rescue teams, including specially trained dogs and medical personnel.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will travel to Ankara Wednesday to express his condolences and solidarity, according to a statement from Islamabad.

U.S. President Joe Biden called Erdogan to express condolences and offer assistance to the NATO ally. The White House said it was sending search-and-rescue teams to support Turkey's efforts.

The quake piled more

misery on a region that has seen tremendous suffering over the past decade. On the Syrian side, the affected area is divided between government-controlled territory and the country's last opposition-held enclave, which is surrounded by Russian-backed government forces. Turkey is home to millions of refugees from the Syrian civil war.

In the rebel-held enclave, hundreds of families remained trapped in rubble, the opposition emergency organization known as the White Helmets said in a statement. The area is packed with some 4 million people displaced from other parts of the country by the war. Many live in buildings that are already damaged by military bombardments.

Strained medical centers quickly filled with injured people, rescue workers said. Some facilities had to be emptied, including a maternity hospital, according to the SAMS medical organization.

More than 7,800 people were rescued across 10 provinces, according to Orhan Tatar, an official with Turkey's disaster management authority.

The region sits on top of major fault lines and is frequently shaken by earthquakes. Some 18,000 were killed in similarly powerful earthquakes that hit northwest Turkey in 1999. MDT/AP

this day in history

1952 NEW QUEEN PROCLAIMED FOR UK



Princess Elizabeth has formally proclaimed herself Queen and Head of the Commonwealth and Defender of the Faith.

Lords of the Council - numbering 150 - representatives from the Commonwealth, officials from the City of London - including the Lord Mayor - and other dignitaries witnessed the accession of the deceased king's eldest daughter this morning.

The new monarch read an official Proclamation - also ordered to be published - declaring her reign as Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second.

Queen Elizabeth II read: "By the sudden death of my dear father I am called to assume the duties and responsibilities of sovereignty."

"My heart is too full for me to say more to you today than I shall always work, as my father did throughout his reign, to advance the happiness and prosperity of my peoples, spread as they are all the world over."

Her husband, Prince Philip of Greece, the Duke of Edinburgh, was also present at the 20 minute meeting at St James's Palace.

The couple returned to the UK yesterday after cutting short a tour of the Commonwealth - beginning in Kenya a week ago - because of King George VI's sudden death on 6 February.

After the Accession Declaration, at 1000 GMT, the new Queen held her first Privy Council meeting and her Proclamation was signed by the Lord Chancellor, the prime minister, and many other privy counsellors along with representatives of the Commonwealth and the City and the Lord Mayor of London.

During the ceremonies the 25-year-old Queen also took an oath to assure the security of the Church of Scotland and approved several other Orders in Council.

Other dignitaries formally announced the new sovereign across the UK and Commonwealth.

In a statement this evening the Home Secretary, Sir David Fyfe, asked the nation for two minutes' silence on 15 February when the late King will be buried at St George's Chapel, Windsor.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

King George VI's body lay in state in the Great Hall in Westminster from 11 February until the funeral.

Many thousands of people queued for hours to pay their respects.

His funeral was held on 15 February 1952.

Queen Elizabeth II's coronation was held in Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953.

In 2002 the Queen enjoyed a year of celebrations and special visits to commemorate 50 years on the British throne.

Elizabeth II (Elizabeth Alexandra Mary; 21 April 1926 - 8 September 2022) was Queen of the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth realms from 6 February 1952 until her death in 2022.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Do not expect others to do your work. Find out all the facts before you jump to conclusions. Sudden changes in your financial situation are likely.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

A long discussion is in order if you wish to clear the air. You are better off visiting friends or relatives than entertaining at home. Secret affairs could cause upset.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Your concern with older family members and those less fortunate than yourself will only add to your attractiveness. You will easily charm members of the opposite sex.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You may have a tendency to put on weight. You can learn from those who have had similar experiences. Don't let your emotions get out of hand.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You can look into new jobs but don't count on getting help from someone who may have promised you assistance. You will get great satisfaction from your efforts.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You can make changes to your domestic scene that will benefit all who reside there. You can make favorable changes in your home environment.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Coworkers may not be giving you all the pertinent information. It might be time to shake a leg and do a personal makeover. Be careful signing important contracts today.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Travel will enhance romance and adventure. Avoid letting family get involved in your personal life. Your greatest gains will come through your creative ideas.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Don't let children or elders put demands on your time. Expect problems with settlements that you are trying to resolve. Friends and relatives may not understand your needs.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Don't expect anything for nothing and you won't be disappointed. Be confident in your endeavors and others will believe in your efforts. Balance is required if you want stability.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Direct your energy into physical entertainment. You will be highly entertaining when in contact with your lover. Be cautious of making any residential changes today.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Pushy people must be kept at arm's length. Friends or groups that you're affiliated with may want you to contribute more cash than you can really afford.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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9		6	1					
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HARD

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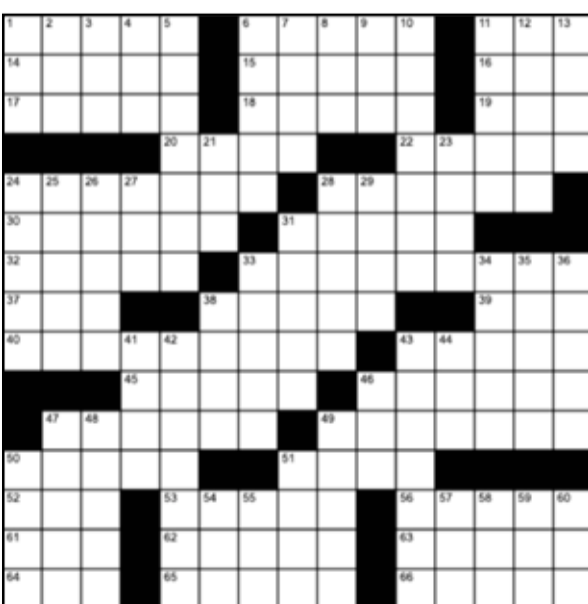
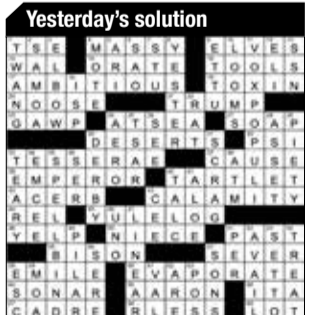
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	7	cloudy
Changchun	-14	-2	fine
Chengdu	9	11	rain
Chongqing	10	13	cloudy
Fuzhou	12	15	rain
Guangzhou	17	23	overcast
Guiyang	5	16	rain
Haikou	21	28	cloudy
Hangzhou	5	8	rain
Harbin	-19	-6	cloudy
Hefei	6	9	rain
Nanjing	5	10	rain
Shanghai	6	10	overcast
Taipei	15	19	rain
Wuhan	7	8	rain
Hong Kong	19	21	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-6	-4	cloudy
Frankfurt	-6	5	fine
Paris	-4	7	fine
London	1	7	cloudy
New York	1	13	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Shoved aside; 6- Monastery; 11- Large container; 14- The end of ____; 15- French wine valley; 16- Extra-wide shoe size; 17- Gives a 9.8, say; 18- Little bits; 19- Figs.; 20- Girder type; 22- Visit habitually; 24- Acariasis; 28- Rings bells; 30- Impelling; 31- Remove hair; 32- Unpaid; 33- Ensure; 37- Bandleader Brown; 38- Ready ____; 39- Ancient; 40- Unsettled; 43- Shut; 45- Get ready to drive; 46- Recluse; 47- Boot part; 49- Sandy shores; 50- Model airplane wood; 51- Muffin topper; 52- News letters; 53- Make one; 56- Rich cake; 61- Accelerate; 62- Shakers et al.; 63- Dostoyevsky novel, with "The"; 64- College sr.'s test; 65- Group character; 66- Some change;

DOWN 1- Musical aptitude; 2- Genetic letters; 3- Acquire; 4- Bard's "before"; 5- Gallant in appearance; 6- Rap sheet info; 7- Rude person; 8- Mouthpiece of a bridle; 9- Diamond stat; 10- Orthodox Jewish school; 11- Locale; 12- Ages; 13- Student's hurdle; 21- Implore; 23- "So be it"; 24- Young salmon; 25- Crouch in fear; 26- Dispatch boat; 27- Coal container; 28- Pandemonium; 29- Mature male European red deer; 31- Morning; 33- Small assemblage; 34- Fang, e.g.; 35- Beast of Borden; 36- Parades; 38- Olive genus; 41- Western Native Americans; 42- Due to the fact that; 43- Disordered; 44- Director Jean-____ Godard; 46- Get the picture; 47- Get to the point?; 48- Martini garnish; 49- Sanctify; 50- Town; 51- Director Preminger; 54- Open mesh fabric; 55- ____ bin ein Berliner; 57- Poem of praise; 58- Oysters ____ season; 59- Rugrat; 60- Aliens, briefly;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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AD

BRITCOIN

UK GETS CLOSER TO LAUNCHING A DIGITAL CURRENCY

DANICA KIRKA, LONDON

BRITCOIN is moving closer to reality.

U.K. authorities yesterday [Macau time] said British businesses and consumers are likely to need a digital version of the pound, formally asking for public comment on the idea of introducing a central bank digital currency.

Britain, home to the world's second-biggest financial center, is trailing former colonies such as Nigeria, the Bahamas and Jamaica in rolling out a digital currency. More than 80% of the world's central banks are considering launching digital currencies or have already done so, according to the consultant PwC.

"While cash is here to stay, a digital pound issued and backed by the Bank of England could be a new way to pay that's trusted, accessible and easy to use," Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt said in a statement. "That's why we want to investigate what is possible first, whilst always making sure we protect financial stability."

The call for public input comes

AP PHOTO



The Bank of England in London

almost two years after the Treasury and Bank of England said they were considering introducing a digital currency.

While Prime Minister Rishi Sunak suggested naming the initiative "Britcoin" when he was Treasury chief, the Bank of England has stressed that the potential currency shouldn't be confused with cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

Backed by the central bank, the new currency would be "reliable

and retain its value over time," in contrast to cryptocurrencies that can fluctuate wildly and threaten the holdings of investors, the Bank of England says on its website.

That industry has been particularly unstable in recent months, escalating calls for greater regulation. Crypto crashes last year tanked assets, while crypto exchange FTX's multibillion-dollar collapse and bankruptcy in November triggered fraud charges

against founder Sam Bankman-Fried.

The proposed digital currency would be denominated in pounds, with 10 pounds of digital currency always equal to a 10-pound note, the bank said. Held in a digital wallet, the currency could be used to pay for goods and services electronically.

Supporters of central bank digital currencies say they make digital transactions easier and cheaper and expand access to

the financial system because they can be used by people who don't have bank accounts.

This is one of the reasons the Bahamas became the first country to introduce a digital currency in 2020. Nigeria and Jamaica have since followed suit, with China and more than 20 other countries running trial projects. The U.S. and European Union are considering introducing digital currencies.

But digital currencies also present risks, including cyberattacks, privacy concerns and the danger that they can be used by criminals.

Because money invested in central bank digital currencies is safer than a bank deposit, they also may draw savings away from commercial banks and weaken the financial system, critics argue.

A digital pound would have "risks but no obvious benefits," former Bank of England Gov. Mervyn King, now a member of the House of Lords, said recently.

While such digital currencies may be useful in countries that don't have effective banking systems, that's not the case in the Britain, he said.

"The government has said that it wants the U.K. to be at the forefront of innovation, crypto-assets and fintech, but we need to be selective and not driven by a misplaced enthusiasm for all things crypto," King said. **MDT/AP**

AD

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FOOTBALL

Former Chelsea forward Atsu rescued after Turkey earthquake

FORMER Chelsea and Newcastle forward Christian Atsu was rescued from the rubble of a collapsed building following the deadly earthquake that struck Turkey, the Ghana Football Association said in a Twitter post yesterday. The Ghana international plays for Turkish club Hatayspor. A club spokesman on Monday told Turkish media that Atsu was thought to be in a building that was brought down by the 7.8 magnitude earthquake and aftershocks that struck southeastern Turkey and neighboring Syria and has killed more than 5,000 people.

Atsu's whereabouts and condition were unconfirmed overnight until the Ghana FA posted an update on its official Twitter site on Tuesday saying:



Christian Atsu (foreground) during an English Premier League soccer match between Chelsea and Newcastle United at Stamford Bridge stadium in London, in January 2019

"We've received some positive news that Christian Atsu has been successfully rescued."

Atsu was receiving treatment but the GFA didn't give details of any injuries.

The 31-year-old Atsu joined Hatayspor, which is based in the southern city of Antakya, last year.

More than 6,000 buildings collapsed in Turkey alone and rescuers are racing to find survivors in freezing temperatures. Officials say as many as 1,500 buildings were destroyed in the Hatay province, just southwest of the earthquake's epicenter and where the Hatayspor club is based. (see p8) MDT/AP

RUGBY

Cockerill to leave England coaching role after Six Nations

RICHARD Cockerill will leave England's coaching staff to join French rugby club Montpellier, a departure that ends all ties to Eddie Jones' era in charge of the national team.

Since Steve Borthwick replaced Jones as head coach, members of the Australian's backroom staff — Matt Proudfoot, Brett Hodgson, Martin Gleeson — have left one by one and Cockerill is the last to go.

Cockerill, a former England front-row forward, was interim coach following Jones' departure and the arrival of Borthwick. He will continue as forwards co-

ach throughout the Six Nations, England said yesterday, before joining Montpellier to take up the same role.

"Having coached and played in France previously, my family and I always had aspirations to return," Cockerill said. "This opportunity presented itself some time ago and it was too hard to turn down personally and professionally.

"It is disappointing not to work with Steve and the wider team beyond the Six Nations. I had hoped to be able stay for the Rugby World Cup, but the timings weren't meant to be." MDT/AP



England's head coach Steve Borthwick

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Urology : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

Paediatrics : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan lo

Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery : Dr. Lam U Lin

Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

ENT : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang

Cardiology : Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin

General Medicine : Dr. Ng Kam Hong, Dr. Lam Weng Chio

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USJ-ISE Microplastics Lab Tour

Most of you will be only too aware that plastic pollution is affecting the world, being especially prevalent in the ocean and coastal regions. Although microplastics are not talked about as often as other environmental issues, they are becoming an important focus for our next generation. The Institute of Science and Environment at USJ is offering a Lab Tour and a Microplastic Workshop, a unique experience, for BritCham Members. This will be a chance to comprehend the impact microplastics have on the environment, to learn how to extract and identify them, and the steps you can take to help with this critical issue for us all and for our families of the future.

Date : 16th February 2023 (Thursday)
Venue : Institute of Science and Environment, University of Saint Joseph, 16, Rua de Londres
Time : 10 am - 12 noon
Fee : Free of charge

For further information, please contact:-
Ivone@britchammao.org / Tel: (853) 6331 1124

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**AUSTRALIA CAN SET
 A POSITIVE EXAMPLE**

It is encouraging that Australian Minister for Trade Don Farrell acknowledged that trade and investment has always been “part of the bedrock” for relations between Australia and China and that there is much for the two sides to discuss how to make “that foundation even firmer”.

He made the remarks during a virtual meeting with Chinese Minister for Commerce Wang Wentao on Monday. During the meeting, Wang invited Farrell to visit China at a convenient time so that they could work together “to bring economic cooperation back on track”.

Coming after the meeting between the leaders of the two countries in Bali on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in November and after the meeting of the foreign ministers of the two countries in December, when they marked the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations, this is another sign of the two sides’ shared desire to bring more positive factors into play in their economic cooperation and trade.

The affirmative tone of the opening remarks by the two ministers, which were released by both sides shortly after their meeting, is a welcome sign as it indicates their meeting was productive. If so, that has undoubtedly set the stage for the two sides to work out practical solutions to settle some knotty trade issues that have appeared over the past few years. Their talks reportedly covered all the major issues concerning Sino-Australian trade and investment, which encountered some difficulties under the previous Australian government, due to its blind following of the United States’ strategy to contain China.

As Farrell acknowledged, China is, and continues to be, Australia’s largest trading partner by a very considerable margin, and also, significantly, an important source of investment.

The past five decades since the two countries established diplomatic relations clearly show that the Chinese market and Chinese investment, tourists and students bring jobs and benefits to Australia and deepen mutual understanding between the two peoples, and vice versa.

That their trade and investment cooperation has not proceeded smoothly in recent years has been to the detriment of both sides. There are broad prospects for cooperation in a wide range of areas such as climate change, the green economy and low-carbon and new energy technology and industry, and finding a pathway to fully tap into the full potential of their “highly complementary economies” is in the interests of both sides.

Having frank discussions may not resolve all the differences between the two countries, but facing up to the difficulties can help build trust and expand common ground.

By working with China to get their relations back on a healthy track, Australia would also set a good example to other US allies that a middle path can be found to balance between the two without hurting their own interests.

Pakistan lifted its ban on Wikipedia services before dawn yesterday, after the country’s media regulator blocked the site last week for not removing purportedly blasphemous content, claiming it hurts the sentiments of Muslims.

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif ordered the unblocking late on Monday, according to a government statement. The site was blocked on Friday by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, after a deadline expired that Pakistan gave to Wikipedia to remove the controversial content.

The ban drew criticism and many condemned Islamabad’s action, saying it was a blow to digital rights and deprived the public of the right

to seek knowledge.

As anger grew, Pakistan’s Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Monday that Sharif’s five-member committee had looked into the matter and ordered Wikipedia services be restored immediately.

The government has not provided any explanation or details about the content it deemed anti-Islam, and the media regulator never explained what content was purportedly hurting Muslim sentiments in Pakistan.

Under Pakistan’s controversial blasphemy laws, anyone found guilty of insulting Islam or its figures can be sentenced to death, although the country has yet to carry out capital punishment for blasphemy.

AP PHOTO



Transgender activist Henry Edward Tse speaks to reporters outside of Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong

HONG KONG

**TRANSGENDER MEN
 WIN APPEAL OVER
 STATUS CHANGE**

ZEN SOO & KANIS
 LEUNG, HONG KONG

Hong Kong’s top court ruled this week that full sex reassignment surgery should not be a prerequisite for transgender people to have their gender changed on their official identity cards, in a move that is likely to have a far-reaching impact on the transgender community.

A transgender activist, Henry Edward Tse, and a person identified only as Q appealed to the court last month over the government’s refusal to change the genders on their ID cards because of their decision not to have full sex reassignment surgeries.

Tse and Q are both transgender men who have had their breasts removed, received hormonal treatments and lived their lives as males with professional support and guidance as well as psychiatric treatment.

The judgment by the Court of Final Appeal is expected to have a wide impact on the LGBTQ community because many of its transgender members consider having the opera-

tion unnecessary and risky.

The two went to court because existing government policy only allows transgender men to change their official gender if they have removed their uteruses and ovaries and constructed male genitalia. Only those who cannot undergo the surgical procedures due to medical reasons can be exempted.

Both the Court of First Instance and the Court of Appeal dismissed judicial review proceedings brought by Tse and Q. The two were allowed to go to the Court of Final Appeal.

In a judgment made public Monday, the court said the government’s policy was unconstitutional and imposed an “unacceptably harsh burden.” They also said that the policy was “disproportionate” in its encroachment upon the rights of the two to gender identity and physical integrity.

The judges also said any administrative issues that usually arise tend to pertain to a transgender person’s outward appearance and not the appearance of their genital area, and that leaving the gender on their identity card unamended

“produced greater confusion or embarrassment.”

Tse welcomed the ruling, saying many transgender people have been longing for a “final victory” for years.

“Now I have a male ID card, it will be a lot easier for me to access gender-segregated spaces,” he said. “I wouldn’t be questioned and humiliated by being outed by my ID that’s incongruent to who I am.”

Liam Mak, co-founder and chairperson of local transgender youth organization Quarks, described the win as an “important milestone” for the transgender community in Hong Kong.

“We believe that the gender identity of oneself should not be tied to medical intervention, we should ensure minimal to no medical intervention in the policy,” said Mak. “Given that every individual has different preferences or decisions in their own gender transition journey, I hope that the government will be referencing the advice from the court to protect the right of all transgender people.” **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



USA A majority of Democrats now think one term is plenty for President Joe Biden, despite his insistence that he plans to seek reelection in 2024. That’s according to a new poll from the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research that shows just 37% of Democrats say they want him to seek a second term, down from 52% in the weeks before last year’s midterm elections.

AP PHOTO



USA Someone in Washington state overcame steep odds to win an estimated \$747 million Powerball jackpot. The winning numbers were 05, 11, 22, 23, 69 and the Powerball 07. Lottery officials said yesterday that a single ticket matched all six numbers and was worth \$754.6 million.

AP PHOTO



Peru Landslides triggered by steady rains swept mud, water and rocks into several villages in southern Peru, killing at least 36 people, authorities said. A civil defense official in the Mariano Nicolás Valcárcel municipality in Camana province, told local radio RPP that 36 bodies had been recovered in a remote sector called Miski. Among the dead were five people who were riding in a van that was pushed into a river by a surge of mud.

AP PHOTO



Kenya The new global epicenter of violent Islamic extremism is sub-Saharan Africa where people are increasingly joining because of economic factors and less for religious ones, says a new report by the U.N.’s international development agency. A significant increase of 92% of new recruits to extremist groups are joining for better livelihoods compared to the motivations of those interviewed in a previous report released in 2017, according to the UNDP report released yesterday.