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AP PHOTO



Indonesia Rescuers were searching for 42 people still missing Tuesday after two landslides triggered by torrential rains hit villages on an island in Indonesia's remote Natuna regency, disaster officials said. Dozens of soldiers, police and volunteers joined the search in the Genting and Pangkalan villages on a remote island surrounded by choppy waters and high waves in the Natuna group at the edge of the South China Sea.

AP PHOTO



South Korean technology firm Kakao launched a tender offer to buy up to 35% of K-pop agency SM Entertainment and become its largest shareholder, escalating Tuesday a battle with entertainment firm Hybe for control of the company. Kakao offered a tender price of 150,000 won (\$115) per share, making the total value of the offer 1.25 trillion won (\$960 million).

AP PHOTO



Sri Lanka's president said that China has given crucial debt restructuring assurances that mean the bankrupt Indian Ocean nation could get its \$2.9 billion bailout package approved soon. President Ranil Wickremesinghe told Parliament that a letter from China's EXIM bank with the necessary assurances was received on yesterday [Macau time] and immediately he and the Central Bank governor sent a letter of intent to the International Monetary Fund for the final approval.

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'WE WANT TO ADD VALUE' TO MACAU, GBA

LYNZY VALLES



In an exclusive interview with the Times, visiting UK Consul General Brian Davidson says he wants to 'assess and identify' opportunities in diversification, GBA project development

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CULTURE

PANSY HO WANTS MACAU, HK YOUTH TO STICK TO THEIR VALUES

AP PHOTO



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WOMEN'S DAY

HOW FRANCES WILLARD SHAPED FEMINISM BY LEADING THE 19TH-CENTURY TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

CHRISTOPHER H. EVANS,
BOSTON UNIVERSITY

As younger adults opt for “wellness” products, many are practicing alcohol abstinence. Sometimes referred to as “sober curious,” this trend of often forgoing alcohol has forged public conversations on the health benefits of abstinence.

Few, however, reflect on its connections to the temperance movement, one of the major social movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Its leaders not only believed that alcohol abstinence would lead to better health, but they saw it as a way to create a just society. This movement laid a foundation for the successful campaign for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Enacted in 1920, the 18th Amendment barred the sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages.

Because of the difficulties of legal enforcement, and following a national campaign waged against Prohibition, the amendment was repealed in 1933. That repeal still casts aspersions on how the temperance movement is remembered today. Many Americans see it as a moralistic crusade dominated by religious zealots. However, temperance became an international movement, with many of its leaders being women.

A historical figure who sheds light on this movement is Frances Willard. In a recent biography, I discuss how Willard came to lead the temperance movement.

GLOBAL REACH OF TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

Born in 1839, Willard wanted to become a Methodist minister. Instead, she became a teacher, as women could rarely be ordained at the time. Ultimately, she became the first dean of the newly founded Woman's College at Northwestern University.

In 1874, Willard helped found the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, an organization committed to campaigning for prohibition legislation. She was elected its president in 1879, holding that office until her death in

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Frances Willard stands behind her mother, at left, and Anna B. Gordon, who worked as a secretary and lived in the Willard household

1898. Throughout her presidency, the WCTU ran shelters, medical dispensaries and free kindergartens that reached out to destitute families.

Willard focused on alcohol's impact on women and children. At a time when women had few legal safeguards compared with men, Willard highlighted how what today is known as alcohol use disorder drained economic resources, while liquor manufacturers made huge profits at the expense of the poor. She argued that money spent on alcohol not only took away resources from families, it led to inebriated men committing domestic violence against women and children.

Emphasizing what the WCTU called “organized mother love” – the belief that women could apply the ideals of motherhood to the social issues of the time – Willard built the WCTU into one of the largest women's organizations in the world. By the late 19th century, it had over 150,000 members.

The temperance movement was not confined to the U.S. In 1884, Willard inaugurated the World's WCTU. This organization formed WCTU chapters in over 40 countries including Sweden, Japan and Australia.

In 1905, when a statue of Willard was unveiled in the Natio-

nal Statuary Hall – a chamber devoted to sculptures of prominent Americans in the U.S. Capitol – she became the first woman to receive that distinction. She was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York, in 2000.

ELEVATING WOMEN'S VOICES

For Willard, prohibition was one of her many interests. Through her slogan, “Do Everything,” she challenged women to become politically active, encouraging them to embrace any issues they saw as important.

Under her leadership, the WCTU advocated for women's suffrage, lobbied for prison reform and campaigned for age-of-consent laws that were designed to raise the legal marriage age for women from 10 to 18.

Believing that the best way to ensure prohibition legislation was through giving women the right to vote, Willard mentored WCTU women who became suffrage leaders. These reformers included Anna Howard Shaw and Carrie Chapman Catt, who helped lead the campaign to ratify the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote.

Willard supported third-party political movements that endorsed prohibition, universal suffrage

and economic reforms. Always at the center of her message was the belief that overhauling the American political system required women's voices. “I am glad to live in a day when we are talking about justice,” she wrote in 1892. “What we women want is simply justice.”

Willard was a harsh critic of anyone who stood in the way of women's achievement. Opposing male physicians of the time, who believed that exercise would damage a woman's health, she learned how to ride a bicycle. Willard described her mastery of bicycle riding in a popular book published in 1895.

AN ACTIVIST FAITH

Willard's Methodist faith shaped her reform commitments. She was influenced by the 18th-century founder of Methodism, John Wesley, who emphasized doing good works in service to the poor. His example influenced later religious-based reform movements, including temperance.

Willard built on this Methodist foundation, believing that reforming society required that one's faith be put into practice. Motivated by Jesus' commitment to serve the poor, she pushed WCTU women to work for economic justice and social equality.

Willard supported the fledgling

labor movement. She called for women to receive the same pay as men in the workplace, and backed federal legislation to regulate business monopolies.

She also pushed for the ordination of women, believing that increasing women's voices in churches would facilitate the building of a just society.

Willard's model of progressive religion is evident today in former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Like Willard, the 2016 Democratic presidential nominee often discusses how her Methodist faith inspires her political vision.

COMPLICATED LEGACY

Willard was far from perfect. Her legacy is haunted by an absence of a systemic understanding of racism.

In the 1890s, she became embroiled in a controversy with the African American journalist Ida B. Wells. Wells criticized Willard for not taking a stand against the lynching of African Americans in the South. She noted how Willard's desire to placate white Southerners blinded her to the atrocities of Jim Crow racism.

Willard's reluctance to address Wells' accusations was typical of white reformers of the time. It reflects the historical failure of many white Americans to prioritize issues of racial justice.

Despite her shortcomings, Willard's leadership not only played a critical role in the temperance movement. She helped shape 21st-century feminism and progressive-based movements associated with today's religious left.

At the height of her fame, many believed that if women won the right to vote Frances Willard would be the first woman elected president. Oftentimes, she expressed hope that she would live to see a woman elected to that office. This dream of Willard's remains unfulfilled.

Ever the optimist, however, Willard wrote in 1889, “I have sincerely meant in life, to stand by the great cause of poor, oppressed humanity. There must be explorers along all pathways. ... This has been my ‘call’ from the beginning.”

Willard died before the passing of the 18th and 19th Amendments. Yet she played a vital role in molding movements that led to their enactment. Her contributions are a reminder to celebrate the work of many visionary women, like Willard, who did not live to see their dreams become reality. **MDT/THE CONVERSATION**

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CGTN INTERVIEW

Pansy Ho wants Macau, Hong Kong youth to stick to their cultural values

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL businesswoman and member of the standing committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Pansy Ho, wants young people in both Macau and Hong Kong to find pride in their cultural values and identify as Chinese, she said in an interview with Chinese state media CGTN.

In the interview Ho said she was "a very good example" of this idea of adhering to Chinese cultural values, adding, "I was born and brought up in Hong Kong and throughout my life, I have lived and worked in both Hong Kong and Macau. I have been educated abroad but then I returned to Hong Kong and Macau and I loved having that ability. I believe that is [what it means to have] freedom of choice. I had choices [options] but I made a deliberate choice to



return to my own country and to serve my own country," Ho said.

The businesswoman, who is the elder daughter of the late gaming tycoon Stanley Ho, also noted that for younger generations to be able to understand and nurture Chi-

nese values, instead of adopting values from elsewhere, "we need to revise a little some of the educational programs for young people," she said, adding that being "international" is not to "be part of [their culture]" but rather that "we want

other people to respect us and to actually embrace us."

For Ho, the lack of access to what she calls "the true facts" and the failure to teach them to the younger generations leads young people to think that their culture is

not valuable and that they should embrace other countries' cultures or habits as their own.

"It is only fair that we should present to them the true facts so that [the youth] can make their own decisions," Ho remarked.

Ho was also questioned on the project of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) that was launched four years ago. She said that is it a key topic for anyone in the business sector in this part of the world.

On this subject, Ho, who also chairs Shun Tak Holdings, said, "In the past [at Shun Tak] we were dedicated mostly to providing ferry transportation between Macau and Hong Kong and vice-versa but now we are advancing and elevating this and going to hopefully be able to start our plan to create a cross territories sea-to-air-to-land transportation network providing the infrastructural services to the population within the Greater Bay Area in future," she remarked.

PROPERTY

Realtor finds financial uncertainties obstructing Asia-Pacific capital deployment

ANTHONY LAM

A survey by an international realtor agency has discovered that 78% of investors named pricing uncertainty as the biggest challenge to their capital deployment ambitions in 2023.

Further, 70% believed that uneven and unpredictable global interest rate policies would impact their investment decisions.

The findings were announced by realtor firm JLL, which conducted the Asia Pacific Investor Sentiment Barometer 2023 survey.

The firm also pointed out that the results saw a shift from early 2022, when 82% of investors polled by JLL named competition for assets their biggest capital deployment challenge. This is compared to 9% in 2023.

Despite the hesitation over investment due to pricing and interest rate uncertainties, the survey discovered that these respondents were in fact optimistic in the long term. They cited "central bank policy [...] prompting a pause rather than a retreat from investment activi-



ty" as the main reason.

According to JLL analysis, 58% of respondents believed that benchmark rates would first need to adjust down 50 to 100 bps before investment activity picks up. As a result, approximately 60% of investors polled expected volumes to decline further in 2023 from the low base of USD129 billion deployed into Asia Pacific real estate in 2022, aligning with JLL's forecast of a modest 5 to 10% decrease published in its Asia

Pacific Outlook 2023.

JLL also found out that in response, investors are rethinking their strategies and risk tolerance levels in 2023. Value-add strategies are in greater focus for 64% of respondents, up from 53% in last year's survey, including deployment of capital to upgrade and comply with sustainability targets in core markets, and to repurpose hotel assets as multifamily projects considering supportive positive market demographics inclu-

ding residential shortages.

When executing strategies, investors pinpointed direct investments and debt as the two most-favored methods for deploying capital in 2023, with 48% and 39% of respondents increasing their focus on these options respectively.

Respondents cited interest in direct investments, due to limited joint venture and platform opportunities, and the higher potential returns on debt resulting from rising rates pushing these capital strategies regionally.

Discussing its methodologies, the international realtor agency said that it surveyed leaders from global and regional investors on their investment intentions, strategies and general outlook in 2023. Half of the survey respondents identified themselves as real estate and/or private equity investment managers, representing some of the world's largest real estate investors and asset managers, while others were investors with diversified portfolios. North America and Europe are their main sources of capital.

MUST PRESENTS ROYAL SOCIETY MEMBER AT SEMINAR

THE Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) will host a seminar presented by cognitive psychologist Nicola Clayton, a member of the Royal Society, this afternoon at its campus in Taipa.

The session is being held as part of the celebrations of the university's 23rd anniversary.

Dubbing the speaker as a world-famous expert in cognitive psychology, MUST described Clayton as having "fruitful results in cross-disciplinary research" and "actively participating in artistic creations."

Clayton is the founding director of the Cambridge Centre for the Integration of Science, Technology and Culture (CCISTC), which is the frontier platform for interdisciplinary integrations.

The center focuses on the integration and development of the interdisciplinary fields of science and technology research and cultural research. It also holds international academic exchanges, mutual visits between universities and cooperation between international institutions, among other functions.

Besides the seminar session, Clayton will also sign a cooperation agreement with MUST on behalf of her center. **AL**

Q&A BRIAN DAVIDSON
BRITISH CONSUL-GENERAL TO HONG KONG AND MACAU

UK Consulate to boost trade with SAR,

LYNZY VALLES

AS the SAR is moving towards a post-Covid era, it is high time to think about the future of the relationship between UK and Macau and the British businesses in the city in a more targeted and strategic way, according to the British Consul-General to Hong Kong and Macau, Brian Davidson.

In an exclusive interview with the Times, the diplomat seasoned in Sino-British relations said that the consulate has plans to visit the town regularly where it would focus its efforts “where it can make a difference for the development of Macau and promotion of British interests” in the SAR.

Speaking on GBA and the SARs’ integration in the development plan, Davidson is confident that the UK can significantly contribute in several strands of activities including technology, data, pharmaceutical and health.

It was four years ago when, Chinese authorities unveiled the outline development plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, aiming to develop the city cluster into a quality living circle for living, working, health care and traveling.

Davidson has also admitted that there is a “slightly colder relationship between London and Beijing,” yet he pledged to provide support in several areas of collaboration, as well as to “provide a mature, robust framework for the rela-

tionship.”

Macau Daily Times (MDT) – This is your first official visit to Macau since you took up the post in July 2021, and first visit of the consulate since the pandemic. Tell us how the talks with local officials have gone so far.

Brian Davidson (BD) – It has been three years coming and we’re sort of very excited to understand a little bit more about what’s happening in Macau. Not just about the business opportunities but also about what Macau’s objectives are for its own development. I had a good meeting with the Chief Executive and most of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [It was] really to try and get a sense on the ground of what diversification of economy actually means, because I think what we’re looking for in the UK are areas where we can actually support Macau’s growth [...] and part of that is linked to Macau’s role in the Greater Bay Area (GBA). So synergies between Hong Kong and Macau in terms of their contribution to the GBA project and especially in particularly areas in Macau, [...] which fits with UK expertise and interests.

MDT – What has the main focus of the talks in this three-day official visit?

BD – Normally, we’d have a shorter visit with a particular focus. I’ve done most of the official meetings. The trade investment team had been talking to the gaming industry and hospitality, and talking about Macau’s development. The one area that we probably haven’t covered properly is Hengqin and what that means in terms of the structure in the ad-



ministration [...] and what that tells us about the future trajectory of integration and GBA and so [...] I hope to come back and have a more detailed conversation.

We [also] spoke with the cultural bureau [on] [...] some of the software elements of Macau’s development. What the opening of the border now means for collaboration on culture, entertainment and sporting events where the UK can be involved, as we have a strong cultural profile. It has been a while since we have

had that volume of activity [and place in] the synergy we might be doing in UK. We can capture that [and so] make sure we’re also contributing to the development here.

We also sort of had a session with British nationals [...] and sort of introduced ourselves. It’s a newish team after three years without a visit. To get a sense of what their interests are, what issues they face, and obviously they gave us a good perspective on the way Macau was evolving. It’s been

a great trip. It has opened my eyes a bit to some of the opportunities too. Realistically, [...] Macau is a smaller [part of our mission] compared our responsibility [in Hong Kong]. [However,] it’s an important part of why we do what we do and I want to make sure that we’re visiting more regularly and that were focusing our efforts where it can make a difference for the development of Macau and promotion of British interests here.

I think there’s an opportunity

Lawmaker calls for rationalization of payment methods at

ANTHONY LAM

PAYMENT methods at local public car parks should be overhauled to eradicate confusion and expedite flow, lawmaker Che Sai Wang proposed in his latest written inquiry.

The lawmaker stated that many residents have reached out to his office, complaining about the inconsistent combinations of payment methods available at parking lots. For example, he pointed out, certain parking lots only accept cash and Macau Pass, while some others accept MPay

but not Macau Pass, although both products are from the same company.

The situation can be even more confusing, as Che pointed out, as other parking lots accept entry and exit by license plate scanning, but payment must be made by specific collaborator platforms.

Che commented that the situation would cause congestion at entrances and exits because not all drivers are users of all payment methods and familiar with the operator-collaborator match of each parking lot.

“When such congestions

occur during peak hours, it will be even more time-wasting,” Che emphasized in his inquiry. In addition, car congestion at entrances or exits of parking lots also poses environmental concerns because cars are either wasting energy or emitting exhaust gas, which is antithetical to the government’s ecological policy to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles.

In his inquiry, he also discussed the lack of use of parking lots, especially during the small hours. He cited transport officials as saying that parking lots are

mostly underused, although there are sufficient spaces.

With those said, the lawmaker asked whether the government would plan to merge all payment methods at local public parking lots, so that drivers could enjoy the freedom to opt for the methods they favor and to achieve greater convenience.

In addition, he asked whether the government would provide price incentives to attract drivers to park their cars in parking lots instead of on the streets.



pledges to support GBA development

now, as everything is restarting, to think about the future of the relationship between UK and Macau and the British businesses in Macau in a more targeted and strategic way; and using the resources we have to maximum advantage.

MDT – With all these integrations of Hong Kong and Macau into the GBA, the opportunities are huge for several sectors. Are there also big opportunities for acquiring UK expertise? Also, Macau is considered by some as just an account given that it represents small market compared to Hong Kong. Do you see it that way?

BD – I think I would say they are less theoretical. [...] A lot of discussions on the GBA were quite... I wouldn't say academic, but much more in theory rather than in practice. [...] But I think now that travel is completely free between the various two SARs and the mainland, I'm confident we will start to see some of those concepts and initiatives taking shape. [...] The whole project of GBA is so massive. Inevitably, a lot of people are trying to [understand that] it's a work plan, but actually it's a concept with different strands about development and integration. For us it's trying to identify which are the fastest moving, which are the most in synergy with UK interests. [...]

I don't think Macau is just an account. I think there are some very discreet and important [elements,] looking at the scale of the

economy here. There is a discreet strand of activities that we should be looking at more carefully. It's not just around infrastructure. Obviously with tech, data, pharmaceutical and health are areas where there are huge strengths in the UK. I think there's potential opportunity here for more on that. That's something I'd like the team to look at a bit closely.

“ That's partly why I brought the team here, not just to leap in and pick up existing opportunities, but to think carefully where we can add the some value as a government

MDT – As a diplomat seasoned in Sino-British relations, are there plans to organize joint initiatives with other diplomatic representatives in Macau and Hong Kong - mainly with EU's and Commonwealth countries?

BD – I think I'd say there should be. I think we all have slightly different business interests. But I think what unites us all is actually understanding the assessment and the opportunities in the broader GBA context.

Hong Kong is organizing a trip for consul generals to Guangdong. [...] it has been worthwhile. [...]

Obviously we discuss this a lot in Hong Kong and with the Portuguese Consul General here. [...] I think there was an opportunity

to compare notes and understand a bit better to how we can engage individually and collectively.

MDT – Was there a change from before to after the pandemic, through the period when tight restrictions were in place? Did this pose a challenge to the consulate's works?

BD – The pandemic obviously presented different challenges in terms of isolation. There were challenges around movement. During the pandemic, we did quite a lot on the trade and investment side because a lot can be done remotely. I think the main focus shifted to concern for [UK] nationals and supporting the government in their own pandemic responses.

On the [UK] national side, [...] we tried to understand what the regulations were, how can we support British nationals, and particularly those who needed want to travel back to the UK, and see family and those who had to move on.

[We provided assistance by showing British nationals] how to access flights and understand what the regulations were. I think nationals within the territories were being accommodated by the governments, and [we helped them] understand how to comply with local regulations. [...] on the other side, there was a lot of communication with government concerning the health situation and sharing information on what

we see of the Covid trends, vaccines and solutions [...].

Post-pandemic, it isn't quite a return to business as usual. I think the opportunities are to do things differently. I think that has given us time to prepare our thinking in terms of when borders are open. What can we actually do to engage more effectively and more strategically?

The effects start from here. We can actually be a bit better in how we do things.

That's partly why I brought the team here, not just to leap in and pick up existing opportunities, but to think carefully where we can add some value as a government, [...] and where it is that our input will be most useful, whether it's for the government or businesses here.

That's the difference. Not just in terms of post pandemic, but pre-pandemic and post pandemic, we're looking at things in a slightly different way. It's an opportunity for everyone to restart.

MDT – Do you find your role difficult amid a quasi-hostile UK-China relations?

BD – There's no avoiding the fact that the relationship between UK and China is [...] slightly more contentious than it used to be. When I left Shanghai in 2015, it was a golden era. We're clearly in a different position now. That is partly a reflection of geopolitics, and domestic politics in UK and China. So inevitably, I think there is a slightly colder relationship between London and Beijing which inevitably reflects our relationship here as part of the group. However, I think that is something

that as diplomats, we are used to seeing.

I have been involved as a diplomat in China for over 30 years. And there are peaks and troughs in any relationship. There are areas where you're going to disagree and areas where you want to work more and collaborate. What I seek to do is to help provide a mature, robust framework for the relationship, so that the areas we disagree do not pollute the areas where we agree and where we can work together.

[Also, my role is to] to try and make sure we have a complete view of the relationship as it applies to Hong Kong and Macau. [...]. I would say that for Hong Kong, given the colonial past, there's a particular sense of sensitivity, which I fully understand we need to factor that in. We don't have that here.

I would say that the job is difficult. There are different challenges in it. I am 100% passionate and committed to get the most out of this relationship. That means being able to discuss some of the difficult areas but it also means being able to support some of the areas of collaboration. [Those areas of collaboration] might be against global challenges like healthcare or climate and sustainably, or to help driving up the economic prosperity of both sides through more collaboration between business people to people links, sporting and cultural links, you name it. I don't think it's difficult anymore. Broadly speaking, what's difficult is that the [opportunities] would be different if I were in Thailand or in Shanghai.

parking lots



CRIME

PJ WARNS OF SCALPING TICKET SCAMS

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) has issued a statement warning the public of fake scalped concert tickets for sale.

With the gradual resumption of normal travel conditions, local and international destinations are seeing the return of performances and shows. Recently, tickets to a Macau performance by a K-Pop group have been sold.

On several social media platforms, "price lists" for scalped tickets were posted not long after the official box office opened. Some of the scalpers asked for

MOP21,000 for a ticket officially priced at MOP3,699.

However, the existence of scalped tickets is not the main reason the police have issued the warning.

According to the statement from the PJ, several reports have been received of would-be purchasers of scalped tickets being scammed.

Victims have discovered posts on social media advertising the resale of concert tickets. When these victims showed an interest in purchasing the tickets, the ostensible sellers would request the victims to

pay the full price in advance.

Later, the scammers would reply with photo-shopped ticket purchase screens and request the victims transfer the same sum of money again, citing a variety of reasons. After receiving the second transfer, the scammers would cease to respond to messages.

The PJ advises interested concert goers to only buy tickets from official or officially commissioned box offices. Prepayments should not be made except to these box offices. **AL**



NPC | DIPLOMACY

US INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY 'SEEKS TO FORM EXCLUSIVE BLOCS TO STIR UP CONFRONTATION': CHINESE FM

XINHUA REPORTERS, BEIJING

THE U.S. "Indo-Pacific Strategy" seeks to "gang up" to form exclusive blocs, stir up confrontation, and undermine regional integration, Foreign Minister Qin Gang said yesterday.

The "Indo-Pacific Strategy" claims to safeguard regional security, but in fact it provokes confrontation and seeks to create an Asia-Pacific version of NATO, Qin said at a press conference on the sidelines of the ongoing annual session of China's national legislature.

The U.S. claim to "shape the strategic environment in which China operates" actually reveals the real purpose of its Indo-Pacific strategy, that is to encircle China.

Such an attempt will only disrupt the ASEAN-centered open and inclusive regional cooperation architecture, and undermine the overall and long-term interests of regional countries. It is bound to fail, he said.

No Cold War should be reignited and no Ukraine-style crisis should be repeated in Asia, he added.

Qin's comments echoed remarks made by leader Xi Jinping in a speech Monday to legislators.

"Western countries led by the United States have implemented all-round containment, blockade and suppression of China, which has brought unprecedented grave challenges to our nation's development," Xi said, as quoted by Xinhua News Agency.

In the face of that, China must "remain calm, maintain concentration, strive for progress while maintaining stability, take active actions, unite as one, and dare to fight," he said.

GOOD WILL

There is no shortage of kindness and goodwill in China's diplomacy, but in face of "jackals or wolves," Chinese diplomats



Foreign Minister Qin Gang at a press conference in Beijing yesterday, on the sidelines of the NPC session

would have no choice but to confront them head on to protect the motherland, Qin said, refuting the claim that the country adopted the so-called "wolf warrior" diplomacy.

"The so-called 'wolf warrior' diplomacy is just a narrative trap," Qin said at the press conference.

Those who made up the term and set the trap either know little about China and the country's diplomacy or have a hidden agenda in disregard of facts, Qin added.

The Chinese FM was adamant on China's stance in world politics: "China will always keep in mind the interests of the world, take an active part in global governance, and contribute more to world peace and development and to human progress."

Global governance should be promoted in accordance with the law and the principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter, Qin added.

Equity and justice must be upheld while hegemonism and selfish interests must be rejected; solidarity must be defended while division and confrontation must be abandoned, he added.

Developing countries account for more than 80% of the global population and contribute to more than 70% of global economic growth.

Qin said, "People in developing countries are entitled to a better life, and developing countries are entitled to greater representation and a louder voice in international affairs."

THE PATH OF MODERNIZATION

Chinese modernization provides "an important source of inspiration for the world, especially developing countries."

Achieving modernization for a country of more than 1.4 billion people will be an unprecedented feat in human history, one of profound global significance in itself, said Qin at the press conference on the sidelines of the ongoing annual session of China's national legislature. He went on to outline five features of Chinese modernization.

"The Chinese path to modernization fits in well with China's national conditions," Qin said. China's success proves that every

country has the right and ability to choose its own path and to hold its future firmly in its own hands.

Putting the people first is another feature of Chinese modernization, one of common prosperity for all, according to Qin. Modernization should not serve the interests of only a few countries or individuals, and people around the world should all enjoy the rights to seek development as equals and pursue happiness, he said.

Chinese modernization is dedicated to peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit, and is committed to harmony between humanity and nature, said Qin. It is a new path different from Western modernization.

Expounding on the openness and inclusiveness of Chinese modernization, Qin said it is important to respect the right of every country to pursue a modernization path tailored to its national reality. Efforts should also be made to encourage exchanges and mutual learning, so that all will flourish and prosper together, he said.

Lastly, Chinese modernization

features the people working hard in unity, according to Qin. "We will persevere in carrying out the set blueprint until it becomes reality," Qin said. Partisan rift, empty talk and frequent policy flip-flop as seen in certain countries will only make even the best blueprint an illusion and a castle in the air, he added.

"The process of Chinese modernization is a boost to the force for peace, justice and progress in the world," Qin said, expressing hope and belief that the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind will become true as more countries begin their own journey of modernization.

SECURITY IN MIDDLE EAST

In the press conference, on the sidelines of the NPC session, Qin Gang also stated that China is willing to promote security and stability, be partner for the development and prosperity, and boost the unity and strength in the Middle East.

The minister noted that China and the Middle Eastern countries enjoy a long history of being good friends and partners.

In the first China-Arab States Summit held on Dec. 9, 2022, China and Arab states agreed to make all-out efforts to build a China-Arab community with a shared future in the new era, which pushed forward the China-Arab friendly cooperation, Qin said.

He also mentioned the visit to China last month by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ebrahim Raisi, during which the two sides agreed to deepen the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership and push the bilateral ties to a new level.

China supports the Middle Eastern countries in upholding strategic independence, and opposes external interference in Middle Eastern countries' internal affairs.

China will continue to uphold justice and support the Middle Eastern countries in seeking political settlement of the region's hotspot issues through dialogue and consultation, Qin said.

China fully respects the Middle Eastern countries as the masters of their own affairs, has no intention to fill the so-called vacuum, and will not build exclusive circles in the region, Qin added.

XINHUA

NPC

Chinese courts to better serve higher-level opening up

CHINESE courts will better serve the country's higher-level opening up by building the capacity of foreign-related justice system, a report from the Supreme People's Court (SPC)

said yesterday. From 2018 to 2022 courts across the country concluded 95,000 foreign-related commercial cases and 76,000 maritime cases, according to the report,

submitted to the ongoing session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) for deliberation.

A total of 10 special courts were established to handle international commer-

cial disputes during the five years.

With an impartial, efficient and transparent maritime justice system, more and more foreign entities have chosen Chinese cour-

ts to settle their disputes, the report said.

Chinese prosecuting agencies also endeavored to protect the legitimate rights of both Chinese and foreign parties when han-

dling more than 20,000 foreign-related criminal cases in the five years, according to a report from the Supreme People's Procuratorate, also submitted to the annual NPC session. XINHUA

NORTH KOREA

Kim's sister warns country ready to act against US, South

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

THE influential sister of North Korea's leader warned yesterday that her country is ready to take "quick, overwhelming action" against the United States and South Korea, a day after the U.S. flew a nuclear-capable B-52 bomber in a demonstration of strength against the North.

The U.S.-South Korean training on Monday involving the B-52 bomber over the Korean Peninsula was the latest in a series of drills between the allies in recent months. Their militaries are also preparing to revive their largest field exercises later this month.

Kim Yo Jong didn't describe any planned actions in her statement, but North Korea has often test-launched missiles in response to U.S.-South Korean military drills because it views them as an invasion rehearsal.

"We keep our eye on the restless military moves by the U.S. forces and the South Korean puppet military and are always on standby to take appropriate, quick and overwhelming action at any time according to our judgment," Kim Yo Jong said in the statement carried by state media.

"The demonstrative military moves and all sorts of rhetoric by the U.S. and South Korea, which go so extremely frantic as not to be overlooked, undoubtedly provide (North Korea) with conditions for being forced to do something to



cope with them," she said.

Hours after Kim's statement, the General Staff of North Korea's Korean People's Army said it put its front-line artillery units on alert and heightened surveillance activities after it detected a live-fire artillery drill by "the enemy" in the South Korean border town of Paju yesterday morning. The General Staff said about 30 rounds were fired during the South Korean exercise, which it described as a "very serious act of armed provocation" that aggravated tensions, and urged its rival to immediately stop such activities near the border.

South Korea's Defense Ministry didn't immediately respond to the

North Korean statement or confirm an artillery exercise in Paju.

The ministry said after Monday's training that the B-52's deployment demonstrated the allies' capability to deter North Korean aggression. The U.S. deployed B-1B bombers to the peninsula a few times earlier this year. Last month, the U.S. and South Korea also held a simulation in Washington aimed at sharpening their response to North Korean nuclear threats.

Last Friday, the South Korean and U.S. militaries announced they would conduct a computer-simulated command post training from March 13-23 and

restore their largest springtime field exercises that were last held in 2018.

The allies had canceled or scaled back some of their regular drills since 2018 to support now-dormant diplomacy with North Korea and guard against the COVID-19 pandemic. But they have been restoring their exercises after North Korea last year conducted a record number of missile tests and openly threatened to use its nuclear weapons in potential conflicts with its rivals.

In a separate statement, North Korea's Foreign Ministry called the flyover of the U.S. B-52 bomber a reckless provocation that pushed

the situation on the peninsula "deeper into the bottomless quagmire." The statement said "there is no guarantee that there will be no violent physical conflict" if U.S.-South Korean military provocations continue.

North Korea often uses fiery rhetoric in times of heightened animosity with the United States and South Korea. Possible steps North Korea could take include a nuclear test or the launch of a new type of intercontinental ballistic missile capable of targeting the mainland U.S., observers say.

Last month, Kim Yo Jong threatened to turn the Pacific into the North's firing range. In her statement yesterday, she said North Korea would consider a possible U.S. attempt to intercept a North Korean ICBM a declaration of war. She cited a South Korean media report saying the U.S. military plans to shoot down a North Korean ICBM if it is test-launched toward the Pacific.

All known North Korean ICBM tests have been made at steep angles to avoid neighboring countries, and the weapons landed in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

South Korea on Monday took a step meant to ease a thorny history dispute with Japan in what was seen as an effort to boost Seoul-Tokyo-Washington security cooperation. The step involves a plan to use local funds to compensate Koreans who performed forced labor during Tokyo's colonial rule, but without requiring Japanese companies to contribute to the reparations.

U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel on Monday praised the leaders of South Korea and Japan, saying the two came to understand that the "potential of collaboration into the future is more important." **MDT/AP**

JAPAN

Space agency launches H3 rocket, destroys it over second-stage failure

JAPAN'S space agency intentionally destroyed a new H3 rocket minutes after its launch yesterday because the ignition failed for the second stage of the country's first new rocket series in more than two decades.

Coming three weeks after an aborted launch due to a separate glitch, the H3's failure was a setback for Japan's space program — and possibly for its missile detection program — and a disappointment for space fans who were rooting for the retrieval.

The H3 rocket with a



An H3 rocket lifts off from Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima, yesterday

white head blasted off and soared into the blue sky from the Tanegashi-

ma Space Center in southern Japan as fans and local residents cheered.

It followed its planned trajectory and the second stage separated as desig-

ned, but the ignition for it failed, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said.

JAXA officials apologized for the failure, and said it sent a command to destroy the rocket about 14 minutes after liftoff as there was no hope for it to complete its mission.

Yasuhiro Funo, JAXA director for launch implementation, said the second stage and its payload fell into the deep sea off the eastern coast of the Philippines. He said the rocket, which was not going to enter the targeted orbit while carrying a lot of fuel, was unsafe and had to be destroyed.

No damages or injuries were reported from the destruction of the rocket or its falling debris.

The rocket was carrying an Advanced Land

Observation Satellite, or ALOS-3, tasked primarily with Earth observation and data collection for disaster response and mapping, and an experimental infrared sensor developed by the Defense Ministry that can monitor military activity including missile launches.

There is no plan for an alternative satellite launch to replace the earlier generation of ALOS, said Katsuhiko Hara, Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology minister. He did not say if or how the delay could affect disaster and missile detection capability.

The failure is the second in six months since a smaller Epsilon-series solid-fueled rocket designed to launch scientific satellites failed in October. **MDT/AP**

USA

Cartoonists criticize 'Dilbert' creator over racist remarks

MARK KENNEDY,
NEW YORK

CARTOONISTS are pushing back against racist remarks made by "Dilbert" creator Scott Adams, with one artist even using his own strip this week to lampoon the disgraced cartoon now dropped by newspapers nationwide.

Darrin Bell is transforming his strip "Candorville" — which usually features young Black and Latino characters — into a way to address Adams' racism by mimicking the look and style of "Dilbert," complete with wayward necktie.

"The only reason anyone knows who Scott Adams is because of the comics page. So I thought somebody on the comics page should respond to him on the comics page," Bell, the 2019 winner of the Pulitzer Prize for illustrated reporting and commentary, told The Associated Press.

In the strips running Monday to Saturday, Bell paired Dilbert with one of his own characters, Lemont Brown. In one, Dilbert hopes Lemont will side with him in his quest to get a laundry room installed at work.

"You could wash your hoodie," says Dilbert. Responds Lemont: "And you could wash your hood?"

Adams, who is white, was an outspoken — and controversial — presence on social media long before describing Black people as a "hate group" on YouTube last month. Adams repeatedly referred to people who are Black as members of a "hate group" and said he would no longer "help Black Americans." He later said he was being hyperbolic, yet continued to defend his stance.

"When somebody goes too far like Scott Adams did, everyone who knows better should stand up and use their First Amendment to draw a line — to say that this is unacceptable," said Bell, whose new graphic novel "The Talk" explores growing up as a biracial man in white culture.

Other cartoonists have stepped forward to denounce Adams, like Bill Holbrook, the creator of "On the Fastrack," a strip that features an

AP PHOTO



Scott Adams, creator of the comic strip Dilbert (2006)

interracial family and — like "Dilbert" — focuses on a modern workplace.

"One of the things I wanted to spotlight with my characters is that people do rise above their differences. It can work," Holbrook said. "That's the spotlight I wanted to focus on and still do. It's all a matter of where you want to put your focus."

Holbrook said the Adams case is not one of so-called cancel culture but of consequences.

"I am in full support with him saying anything he wants to, but then he has to own the consequences of saying them," he said. "He's not being canceled. He's experiencing the consequences of expressing his views."

Individual newspapers have dropped "Dilbert" and Adams' distributor, Andrews McMeel Universal, said it was severing ties with the cartoonist. While some outlets replaced "Dilbert" with another strip, The Sun Chronicle in Attleboro, Massachusetts, decided to keep the space blank through March "as a reminder of the racism that pervades our society."

The "Dilbert" controversy has rocked a community of daily cartoonists who often

create work in their homes several months ahead of publication. While reliably pro-free speech, they say they're also orientated toward a better future — or at least a chuckle.

"We believe comics are a powerful medium and that cartoonists should perpetuate laughter, not racism and hate," said Tea Fougner, editor in chief of King Features Syndicate — which distributes such strips as "Candorville," "Zits," "Mutts" and "Dennis the Menace" — in a statement to the AP.

"We are proud of our cartoonists who are using their platforms to denounce the hatred spread by Scott Adams and encourage others to join us as we stand together as a community to keep the world of cartooning a safe and welcoming space for everyone," the statement said.

Bell credited King Features Syndicate and his editors for allowing him to rip up the strips intended for this week and pivot to the "Dilbert" send-ups, an unusual request.

"They apparently thought it was important enough to take a risk and to make sure that it goes out on time," Bell said.

Many comic creators said they'd stopped reading "Dilbert" over the past several years, finding the strip's tone darker and its creator's descent into misogyny, anti-immigration and racism alarming. But Adams still had hundreds of newspaper perches before last week.

"We can't move forward and progress as a culture and as a society if there are still people in these gatekeeping roles that are holding onto these archaic ideas," said artist Bianca Xunise, who co-authors the strip "Six Chix" and is the second Black woman in comics history to be nationally syndicated.

Xunise noted the fallout was much quicker when she drew a strip that commented on both the Black Lives Matter movement and the coronavirus pandemic. More than 120 publications immediately dropped the strip.

She said being Black in the cartooning world seems to always trigger pushback from hateful readers and those fearful of "woke" messages, but is heartened that "Heart of the City" — now authored by the Black cartoonist Steenz — replaced "Dilbert" in The Washington Post. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1950 GAS TURBINE CAR GETS ROAD TEST



Car manufacturers Rover have unveiled the first car powered with a gas turbine engine.

JET 1, a two-seater model powered by the same kind of engine used in a jet, will have its first public test drive at the Silverstone racing circuit in Northamptonshire tomorrow.

The model being tested is still only experimental. But the company hopes production models which will be ready in another three or four years.

JET 1 has been built with the engine positioned behind the seats. There are air intake grilles on either side of the car and exhaust outlets on the top of the tail.

During tests, the car has reached top speeds of 90 miles an hour, with the engine running at 50,000 revs per minute.

The Royal Automobile club recorded an acceleration speed of 0-60 (97km) in 14 seconds.

Car designer Spencer King took the car out for an early spin for the benefit of the television cameras.

He said: "I should like to say first of all this car is very easy indeed to drive. I have driven it quite a bit beforehand and there is no difficulty at all.

"You have two pedals, one to start and one to stop with, and the car handles very nicely. It runs dead straight however fast you're going."

The car runs on petrol, paraffin or diesel oil, but consumption is still high - about five to seven miles a gallon (2km to 2.5km per litre).

Chief Engineer Maurice Wilks says he hopes the car will prove a success. "It is obviously the Rover Company's intention to produce a gas turbine engine car as a marketable proposition if and when that becomes practicable," he said.

"It will certainly be as good as, most probably better than, existing piston engine cars in respect of performance and weight. Probably though, it will not be quite so good in respect of fuel consumption, but to balance that the performance will be superb."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Rover first became involved in the development of gas turbine engines during World War II.

Rover and the BRM Formula 1 team joined forces to produce a gas turbine powered coupe, which entered the 1963 LeMans 24-hour race, driven by Graham Hill and Richie Ginther. It averaged 107.8mph (173km) and had a top speed of 142mph (229km).

However, it proved difficult to build an engine small enough to fit in a car, which was also fuel efficient, so the gas turbine powered car was never going to be a viable alternative to the combustion engine.

Rover went into decline in the late 1980s, in common with much of British heavy engineering. BMW took over the company in 1994. It was sold again in 2000 to Phoenix Venture Holdings.

The company began trading as MG Rover, but it struggled to make a profit and went into receivership in 2005.

JET 1 is now on permanent display in the Making the Modern World gallery in the Science Museum.

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

The battle continues. Opportunities for partnerships are present; but get every detail in writing. Older relatives may make unreasonable demands.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20

Trips, educational pursuits, or projects that could lead to new outlooks should be on your agenda. Problems with skin, bones, or teeth may mess up your schedule.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21

You can make successful moves. Sentimental feelings may make it difficult to get much done at work. Difficulties may be encountered while traveling in foreign countries.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Don't forget to read the fine print. Draw up contracts regarding your personal situation. Acceptance will be necessary. Don't overdo it. You need to enjoy yourself.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You can get phenomenal returns if you present your ideas to those who can back your interests. Your dedication and fortitude when dealing with humanitarian groups will enhance your reputation.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Use discretion, especially if involved with someone from work. You need to make changes that will raise your self esteem, such as a new hairstyle or a new image.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Opportunities for new partnerships will develop through the organizations you encounter. Be careful not to divulge secret information today.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You will be able to enlist the help of colleagues who believe in your ideas. Travel should be on your agenda. Make changes that will enhance your appearance.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You will need to work diligently in order to accomplish even the smallest amount. Get ready to discover love, passion, and the desire to enjoy all that life has to offer.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Things may not be as they sound. You will need to spend extra time sorting through your work. Older family members may try to put unreasonable demands on you.

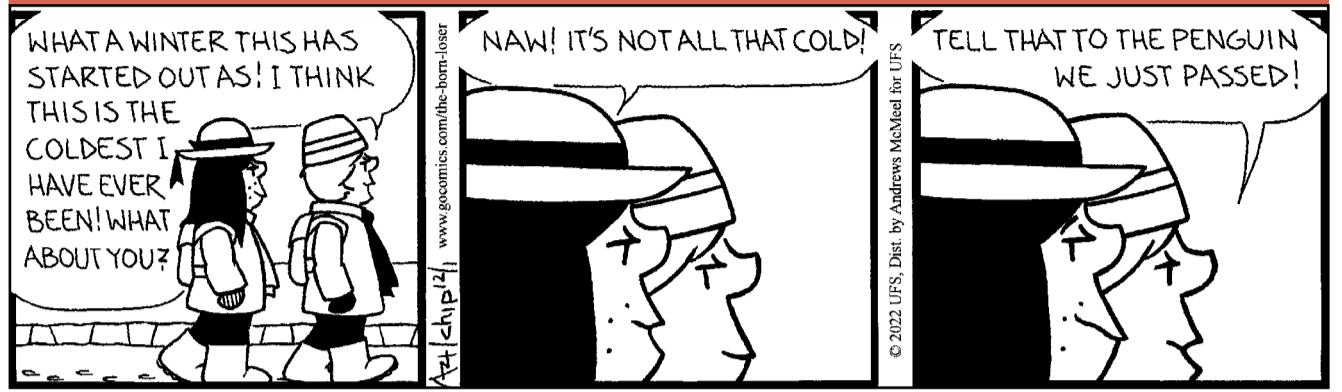
AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Older family members may take advantage of you by making you feel guilty. You will find that unfinished projects at home will be most satisfying. You are best not to say too much to colleagues.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Take a second look; difficulties with appliances, water, or electricity in your home may be evident. Sudden changes regarding friendships are likely to occur if you have tried to change others.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

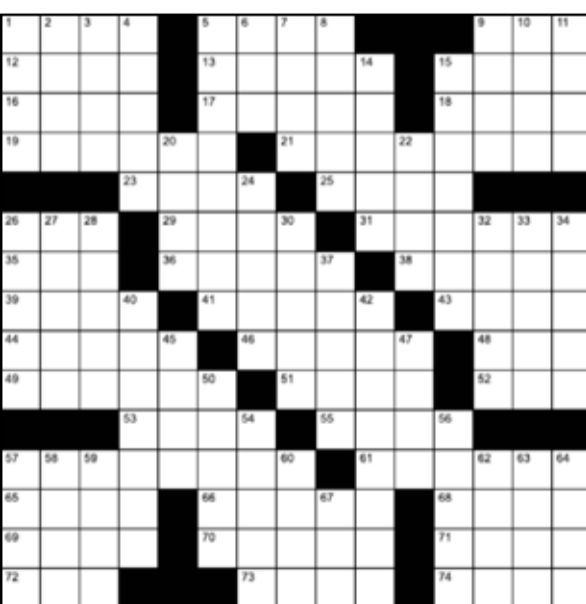
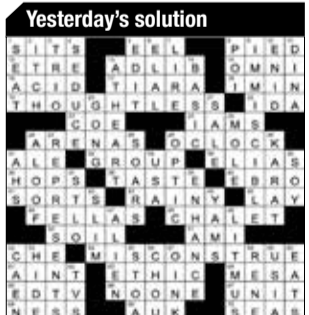
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	6	17	cloudy
Changchun	-4	6	fine
Chengdu	11	25	cloudy
Chongqing	12	22	cloudy
Fuzhou	11	27	fine
Guangzhou	13	27	cloudy
Guiyang	11	18	overcast
Haikou	17	26	cloudy
Hangzhou	12	29	rain
Harbin	-5	4	fine
Hefei	9	26	overcast
Nanjing	11	26	cloudy
Shanghai	12	24	cloudy
Taipei	11	19	fine
Wuhan	13	23	cloudy
Hong Kong	17	21	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	-3	1	snow
Frankfurt	3	6	snow
Paris	9	14	rain
London	1	6	rain
New York	1	9	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Construction beam; 5- Overwhelmed; 9- Jurist Fortas; 12- Indifferent; 13- Back in; 15- Romance lang.; 16- Mine entrance; 17- Sleek swimmer; 18- Timbuktu's land; 19- Social crusader's wish; 21- Narcissism amok; 23- Actual; 25- Hang-up; 26- Crazy ___; 29- School founded by Henry VI; 31- Potemkin setting; 35- Exist; 36- Resides; 38- Muse of love poetry; 39- Salon offering; 41- Small change; 43- Belgian river; 44- Danger; 46- Trades; 48- Posed; 49- Old call to arms; 51- Swerve sharply; 52- Peruvian singer Sumac; 53- Dear, dear!; 55- Ova; 57- Capital of West Bengal; 61- Unit of capacity; 65- The third man; 66- Capital of Vietnam; 68- River in central Switzerland; 69- Teen spots?; 70- Nasal cavity; 71- Vista; 72- Code-breaking org.; 73- Portnoy's creator; 74- Formerly, formerly;

DOWN 1- Nicholas II was the last Russian one; 2- Predict; 3- In your dreams!; 4- Copter part; 5- Odoriferous; 6- Drenched; 7- Novel ending; 8- At the bottom of the barrel; 9- ___ impasse; 10- Indonesian resort island; 11- "On the Waterfront" director Kazan; 14- Home of the Black Bears; 15- Set of mental pictures; 20- Film spool; 22- Created; 24- Adored; 26- Greek letter; 27- Staggering; 28- ___ firma; 30- Hawaiian state birds; 32- Pert; 33- Water vapor; 34- Trunk line; 37- Old; 40- Extraordinary occurrence; 42- Indolent; 45- Pip; 47- Nintendo rival; 50- Course with pluses and minuses; 54- Flight segment; 56- Bond servant; 57- James of "The Godfather"; 58- Basics; 59- Actress Olin; 60- ___ Domini; 62- Burrow; 63- Raw materials; 64- Salamander; 67- Not in;



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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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

ECONOMY

CHINA'S TRADE CONTRACTS AS WESTERN DEMAND WEAKENS

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINA'S trade contracted again in January and February as U.S. and European demand weakened in the face of interest rate hikes, adding to pressure on official efforts to revive economic growth following the end of anti-virus controls.

Exports sank 6.8% from a year earlier to \$506.3 billion, an improvement over December's 10.1% decline, customs data showed yesterday. Imports fell 10.2% to \$389.4 billion, deepening December's 7.3% contraction.

China's global trade surplus for the two months edged up 0.8% over a year earlier to \$116.9 billion.

Forecasters expected trade to weaken as the likelihood of a recession in Western economies increased following rate hikes by the Federal Reserve and European Central Bank to cool economic activity and record-setting inflation.

"We don't expect exports to rebound," Iris Pang of ING said in a report.

That adds to complications for

AP PHOTO



President Xi Jinping's government, which is trying to revive economic growth that sank last year to 3%, the second-weakest rate since the 1970s. Beijing on Sunday set this year's growth target at "around 5%" while the ruling Communist Party tries to encourage consumer demand to reduce reliance on exports and investment.

A revival in Chinese demand would be a boost to global su-

pliers at a time when U.S., European and Japanese sales are weakening. China is the biggest export customer for its Asian neighbors and a key consumer market.

Retail sales and other activities have started to improve after anti-virus restrictions that kept millions of people at home and temporarily shut down Shanghai and other industrial centers were

lifted in December.

The economy also is under pressure from tighter controls on debt, which triggered a slump in China's vast real estate industry and the economy in mid-2021.

The government has announced no plans to stimulate the economy with higher spending on building roads and other public works, which would boost demand for imported construction

materials and equipment.

"Imports may take some time to recover," Pang said.

China reports January and February trade data together to screen out the effect of the Lunar New Year holiday, which begins at different times each year during those two months. Factories shut down for up to two weeks.

Exports to the United States tumbled 21.8% from a year earlier to \$71.6 billion following repeated rate hikes by the Federal Reserve to cool economic activity and surging inflation. Imports of American goods fell 5% to \$30.3 billion.

The politically sensitive trade surplus with the United States narrowed by 30.9% to \$41.3 billion.

Imports from Russia, mostly oil and gas, surged 31.3% over a year ago to \$18.6 billion. Exports to Russia rose 19.8% to \$15 billion.

China, the biggest global energy consumer, has stepped up purchases from Russia to take advantage of price discounts after Washington, Europe and Japan cut imports to punish President Vladimir Putin's government for its attack on Ukraine.

China can buy Russian oil and gas without triggering Western sanctions, but Biden has warned Beijing against helping Moscow's military. China bought about 20% of Russia's crude exports in 2021 and increased that last year. **MDT/AP**

AD

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MACAUCLOSER

NASCAR

Hendrick Motorsports ends tough weekend with 1-2-3 finish

MARK ANDERSON,
LAS VEGAS

IT had been a tumultuous weekend for Hendrick Motorsports when William Byron decided to do something he seldom does — text his boss.

He told team owner Rick Hendrick that as poorly as the weekend began with Chase Elliott suffering a broken leg while snowboarding Friday, Byron felt good it would end with a strong finish Sunday.

Indeed it did. Led by Byron's victory in the Las Vegas NASCAR Cup Series race, Hendrick Chevrolets occupied the top three places.

"I think just shows the strength that our teams have and the ability to come together in tough situations," Byron said. "I think I speak for everyone in the fact that we miss Chase out here. He's a big contributor to feedback and our debriefs, and he's a great race car driver. Has



Confetti showers Victory Lane after William Byron won a NASCAR Cup Series auto race on Sunday

a lot to offer there. I think there was a void there, but I think we were able to fill it with just kind of coming together as a team."

Hendrick drivers are going to have to continue to perform without Elliott, the 2020 Cup Series champion, for the foreseeable future. He is out indefinitely after undergoing surgery to repair his broken left leg after the accident in Colorado.

His family owns a home at Vail, Colorado.

Elliott is back home in Dawsonville, Georgia, and he began physical therapy yesterday [Macau time].

Josh Berry took the wheel of Elliott's No. 9 Chevy, and the team had to scramble to make adjustments on short notice. Berry finished 29th, and Hendrick general manager Jeff

Andrews said there would be discussions on whether Berry or another driver will be in the seat when the series moves to Phoenix this weekend.

"Josh did an amazing job for us given the circumstances," Andrews said after the race. "And given the fact he's not ever been in one of these Next-Gen cars before, really happy with what he did for us today."

Andrews said Berry's car had a throttle issue that needs to be fixed.

Hendrick will try to carry the momentum.

Even with the Byron winning, Kyle Larson finishing second and Alex Bowman coming in third, there is still ground to make up in the standings. Bowman is second, Byron 13th and Larson 14th.

Bowman has been the most consistent driver of the trio, registering top-10 finishes in all three races with Las Vegas being his high point.

Byron was part of a 13-car

crash at the season-opening Daytona 500. He was running in the top 10 a week later at Fontana, California, but a mechanical issue forced a green-flag pit stop and resulted in a 25th-place finish.

A last-lap crash at Daytona caused Larson to finish 18th after he began second. Mechanical issues just 13 laps into Fontana led to a 29th-place finish.

Then came Sunday in Las Vegas.

Byron had the strongest car most of the day, and he led 176 of the 271 laps. Larson, however, appeared well on his way to victory before a late caution.

Both Hendrick drivers headed to pit road. Byron squeezed by Larson on the exit, setting up an overtime restart that placed him in position to win and lead a parade of Hendrick drivers.

"The start of the year is really, really tough on our crew guys, on the road and the shop guys," said Rudy Fugle, Byron's crew chief. "They are working their tails off. These West Coast races and all the stuff that we're doing, we got cars late again this year, and they're tired. They need a morale boost, and one-two-three will boost the morale in the shop, so that's going to be huge." MDT/AP

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**TOP POLITICAL ADVISERS
 MUST FAITHFULLY
 SHOULDER THEIR
 RESPONSIBILITY**

The new leadership of the country's top political advisory body for the next five years will be elected at the [ongoing] First Plenary Session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, making the plenum an important event for the country's socioeconomic development.

Over the past five years, the 13th National Committee of the CPPCC has faithfully fulfilled its duties. About 24,000 out of the more than 29,000 proposals on various fields of the country's social, economic, political and cultural lives it received have been adopted and put forward to the central authorities for reference in making decisions, laws and policies.

In the process, the top political advisory body of the country, which consists of more than 2,000 members, mostly professionals and experts from all walks of life, has taken full advantage of the expertise of its nine special committees that cover all the key areas of the country's development to provide the decision-makers with pragmatic suggestions.

These special committees' candid, constructive and sometimes fierce debates over specific topics, such as emissions reduction, poverty alleviation and rural vitalization, the digital economy and the aging society, are reflections of how consultative democracy, an important part of the whole-process people's democracy of China, works and serves the progress of the nation.

The members of the CPPCC National Committee do not speak for a particular vested interest group, such as an industry, a political party or a certain corporation as is so often the case in many Western countries, but for the people. That guarantees the objectivity and independence of the political advisory body as a whole as well as the efficiency of its work, as its members can concentrate their time and energy on obtaining first-hand information through fact-finding surveys or field research, and make good use of their expertise to suggest workable solutions to problems, or advise the decision-makers to press the brakes on policies that are not having their intended effect.

As the external development environment for the country is changing dramatically, the burdens on the shoulders of the 14th CPPCC National Committee members over the next five years will be even heavier than before. The country has to develop new comparative advantages to maintain, if not strengthen, its position in the global value, industry and supply chains through reforms in the face of the United States' containment, bullying and decoupling efforts.

However, as the reform drive has entered the deep-water zone and as the US is leaving no stone unturned to lockdown the river, the time when the country could wade across the river by feeling for the stones has long gone. Neither the high-standard opening-up nor the high-quality development the country pursues will be easily achieved under these circumstances.

Facing such a challenging and fast-changing situation, the new CPPCC National Committee, as a treasure trove of specialist knowledge and experience as well as a key connection between the authorities and the public, must dutifully shoulder its responsibilities to help the nation make the most of what it has to adapt to the new normal.

On the one hand, the political advisers need to shorten the time it takes to form proposals from months to weeks or even days without compromising the quality to ensure the timeliness of their proposals, which must reflect the actual conditions of the problems they want to resolve.

On the other hand, they should take the initiative to focus on the most pressing bottleneck issues in their respective fields, avoiding some low-hanging fruits. Their research should be forward-looking and problem-oriented, but not pure endorsement of policies that have already proved a success.

Last but not least, there should be a more stringent performance evaluation system that encourages them to devote themselves to providing the best advice possible. Their post by no means represents an honorary title but rather a tremendous responsibility to serve the nation and meet the heavy trust of the people.

**ROMAN SHRINE UNCOVERED BENEATH
 GRAVEYARD IN CENTRAL ENGLAND**

**THE
 BUZZ**

Archaeologists have uncovered what they believe to be a Roman shrine beneath a former graveyard in the grounds of a cathedral in central England.

Experts from the University of Leicester said yesterday that they found what appears to be the cellar of a Roman building and a fragment of a 1,800-year-old altar stone during excavations in the grounds of Leicester Cathedral.

"There's always been this folk tale that there was a Roman temple underneath the cathedral," said Mathew Morris, excavation director for the University of Leicester's Archaeological Services.

"Until now, there's been no way of being able to say whether there was or not," he added, but the new findings reveal that "there is definitely a Roman place of worship underneath the cathedral."

Morris and his team believe the cellar, nearly 10 feet (3 meters) below the ground, was built in the second century. Several pieces of Roman pottery and coins were also found at the site.

The Romans built a fort around A.D. 50 in Leicester, a settlement known as Ratae Corieltauvorum.

The dig was part of a multi-million-pound project to restore Leicester Cathedral, thought to have first been built in the 11th century.

HK MYSTERY MURDER

**WOMAN ARRESTED
 IN GRUESOME
 KILLING OF MODEL**

**KANIS LEUNG,
 HONG KONG**

A woman accused of assisting a suspect in the gruesome killing and dismemberment of model Abby Choi in Hong Kong has been arrested in mainland China, Hong Kong police said yesterday.

The arrest of the 29-year-old woman brought the total number of people allegedly involved in the case to seven. Police said they suspect she assisted another suspect and then fled to mainland China. She was handed over to Hong Kong authorities at Shenzhen Bay Port yesterday, they said.

The grisly killing of Choi, 28, has gripped many in Hong Kong and in mainland China because the semi-autonomous southern Chinese city has a very low level of violent crime.

Last week, her ex-husband, Alex Kwong, his father, Kwong Kau, and his brother, Anthony Kwong, were charged with murder after police found body remains in a house rented by Kwong Kau in a suburban



In this photo released by Hong Kong's Information Services Department, Hong Kong police escort a suspect at the Shenzhen Bay Port border crossing in Hong Kong, yesterday

area of Hong Kong near the border with mainland China. Alex Kwong's mother, Jenny Li, faces one count of perverting the course of justice. All four were detained without bail.

Police also arrested two others accused of assisting other suspects in the case.

Choi, who had more than 100,000 followers on Instagram, disappeared Feb. 21, according to a report filed later with police.

She had financial disputes involving tens of millions of Hong Kong dollars with her ex-husband

and his family, police said earlier, adding that "some people" were unhappy with how Choi handled her finances.

While violent crime is rare in Hong Kong, the case recalls a handful of other shocking killings. In 2013, a man killed his parents, and their heads were later found in refrigerators. In 1999, a woman was kidnapped and tortured by three members of an organized crime group before her death. Her skull was later found stuffed in a Hello Kitty doll. **MDT/AP**

Iraq U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin made an unannounced visit yesterday to the Iraqi capital where he vowed to continue the fight against the Islamic State group until the extremists are defeated. Austin, whose visit came just days before the 20th anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein, said in statement later that he held talks with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani and Defense Minister Thabet Muhammad Al-Abbasi.



USA Thirty-four Tyson Foods employees, former employees and family members filed a lawsuit against the company, saying it failed to take appropriate precautions at its meat-packing plants during the early days of the COVID pandemic. In the lawsuit, filed in Tyson's home state of Arkansas, the plaintiffs said Tyson's negligence and disregard for its workers led to emotional distress, illness and death. Several of the plaintiffs are the spouses or children of Tyson workers who died after contracting COVID.



Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said yesterday [Macau time] he will appoint a special investigator to decide whether there should be a public inquiry into media reports of Chinese interference in Canada's elections. The Globe and Mail, citing unidentified intelligence sources, reported last month that China preferred to see Trudeau's Liberals reelected in the 2021 election and worked to defeat Conservative politicians considered unfriendly to Beijing.

Argentina Police detained a man on suspicion of killing an 11-year-old boy and neighbors wrecked his home yesterday [Macau time] amid anger over escalating drug violence in the Argentine city of Rosario, where a threat was directed at soccer superstar Lionel Messi last week. Máximo Jerez was killed early Sunday when at least one gunman attacked a birthday party. Three other children, including a 2-year-old, were injured.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Lewis Joly



'Non!' Demonstrators holding French flags and a giant puppet representing Justice protest yesterday, in Paris, against a bill raising the retirement age to 64, which unions see as a broader threat to the French social model.