



THIS YEAR'S MACAO ARTS FESTIVAL WILL HAVE HALF OF ITS SHOWS PERFORMED BY LOCAL CREWS AND CASTS: CULTURAL AFFAIRS BUREAU

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AP PHOTO

Thailand Police yesterday detained a senior police officer who fired multiple gunshots from his home in Bangkok, ending a standoff of over 24 hours after his colleagues tried to take him to a mental institution. The gunman, identified as police Lt. Col. Kitikarn Sangbun, was taken to a hospital for an injury after the ordeal.



AP PHOTO

Sri Lanka health, railway, port and other state workers were on a daylong strike yesterday to protest against sharp increases in income taxes and electricity charges, as the island nation awaits approval of an International Monetary Fund package to aid its bankrupt economy. Most government hospitals around the country suspended their outpatient clinics because doctors, nurses and pharmacists were on strike.



AP PHOTO

Ukraine A Russian fighter jet struck the propeller of a U.S. surveillance drone over the Black Sea in a "brazen violation of international law," causing American forces to bring down the unmanned aerial vehicle, the U.S. said. But Russia insisted its warplanes didn't hit the MQ-9 Reaper drone. Instead, it said the drone maneuvered sharply and crashed into the water following an encounter with Russian fighter jets.

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GAMING PALAZZO VERSACE TO 'SOFT OPEN' IN APRIL

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AP PHOTO/YUKI IWAMURA

ENVIRONMENT

JAPAN: BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY



A woman places flowers on beach in Iwaki city, Fukushima prefecture on March 11

FRANCISCO LEANDRO
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, CITY
UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

FOLLOWING the announcement of the Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on March 3rd, 2023, the Japanese Government Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsumo has recently confirmed (BBC source) that they are planning to release 1.3 million cubic meters of contaminated water into the sea from the destroyed Fukushima nuclear power plant. This release of dirty water is supposed to occur around this coming Spring or Summer, but the Government of Japan has stated that no discarding will be initiated before receiving the International Atomic Energy Agency "comprehensive report". Four important arguments to mull this dumping over and revoke such plans:

THE PRECAUTIONARY ARGUMENT

The core argument to freeze an environmental risky activity capable of causing a serious or irreversible damage due to the lack of scientific certainty should be avoided. This precautionary principle is part of a number of international legal instruments, and it is a pillar stone of the international environmental law. Indeed, and despite of a single understanding of its legal interpretation, the principle 15 of the

1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, is extensively recognized by states and provides a practical guidance to the concrete application of international law.

"In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." (Rio Declaration, 1992)

CONSULTATION WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development further indicates the need for international effective cooperation to discourage or to prevent the relocation and the transfer to other states of substances that may cause severe environmental degradation or are harmful to human health. In addition, States shall provide prior and timely notification and relevant information to potentially affected States on activities that may have a significant adverse transboundary environmental effect and shall consult with those States at an early stage and in good faith. South Korea, China, several Pacific Island nations and even Japanese fishing communities have objected to the planned release.

THE ILLEGALITY OF SEA DUMPING

Since 1996, Japan is party to The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972 (The London Convention), and its 1996 protocol with 2006 amendments. The UNCLOS provisions are clear to impose a general obligation to States to protect and preserve the marine environment (article 192) and strictly to impose a binding commitment to all parties to ensure that activities under their jurisdiction or control are so conducted as not to cause damage by pollution to other States and their environment, and that pollution arising from incidents or activities under their jurisdiction or control does not spread beyond the areas where they exercise sovereign rights in accordance with this Convention (article 194, paragraph 2). Specifically speaking, article 194, paragraph 3, imposes an obligation to minimize to the fullest possible extent: (a) the release of toxic, harmful or noxious substances, especially those which are persistent, from land-based sources, from or through the atmosphere or by dumping; (...) (d) pollution from other installations and devices operating in the marine environment, in particular measures for preventing accidents and dealing with emergencies, ensuring the safety of operations

at sea, and regulating the design, construction, equipment, operation and manning of such installations or devices.

As Japan is also party to the London Convention of 1972, which is one of the first global conventions to protect the marine environment from human activities and has been in force since 1975, the country should bear in mind that its major objective is to promote the effective control of all sources of marine pollution (not only the vessels) and to take all practicable steps to prevent pollution of the sea by dumping of wastes and other matter. In fact, the article 3 of the London Convention defines and prohibits dumping as any deliberate disposal at sea of wastes or other matter from vessels, aircraft, platforms or other man-made structures at sea. However, the parties to the London Convention (and Protocol) have adopted an amendment to ensure that the dumping of sewage sludge at sea would be prohibited worldwide. Indeed, the amendment to the London Protocol removed sewage sludge from the list of permissible wastes - wastes which may be considered for dumping at sea. The amendment was adopted by the 44th Consultative Meeting of Contracting Parties to the London Convention and the 17th Meeting of Contracting Parties to the London Protocol (LC 44/LP 17), which met at the international Maritime Organization Headquarters in October 2022. In the same

line of reasoning, a number of states (such as Australia) also introduced in their national legislation the prohibition of disposal of dredged or excavated material at sea.

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

History reminds us all that Japanese militarism caused sorrow and disgrace to the international community during the World War II. Up to today, the consequences of this unacceptable action left worries and concerns in many nations, including its closest neighbors. Currently, Japan has insisted in its continuation of an absurd whaling killing program, despite of the UN International Court of Justice rulings, which had ordered (in 2014) an immediate cease of operations. The UN International Court of Justice in addition to a number of other countries, scientists, and environmental organizations, consider the Japanese research program to be unnecessary and lacking scientific merit, and describe it as a thinly disguised commercial whaling operation. Consequently, the question is looming: Is Japan ready to sacrifice once again its branding international reputation, putting at stake its obligations as a responsible sovereign state, and risking to cause severe environmental global degradation and harm to human health? The answer is strident: better to be safe than sorry!

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SPORTS

Dragon boat races event launched with more doubts than certainties

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao International Dragon Boat Races will this year have the title sponsorship of SJM Resorts S.A. (SJM), SJM and the Sports Bureau (ID) announced yesterday in a press conference that launched the event.

This year's edition will take place, as usual, at Nam Van Nautical Center on June 17, 18, and 22.

These are the few certainties about this year's edition, which is now calling for the registration of local teams.

Team registration will be open from 10 a.m. on March 21 until 10 p.m. on March 31, following which teams must then submit a participants list between April 2 and April 10 in the same time frame. As usual, registration will be accepted on a first-come-first-serve basis until all places are filled.

The applications will be made online through the website (www.cmdragonboat.org.mo).

Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the press conference held at Grand Lisboa Hotel, the president of Sports Bureau (ID),

RENATO MARQUES



Pun Weng Kun admitted that there is still little information on some aspects, such as the total budget for this year's event, or which teams will participate from the invitational races.

"We hope that this year, since the borders have reopened, we can have teams from other parts of the world to come to participate and to make it [the event] livelier. We also hope that these

races can have a positive effect on attracting more tourists to assist the races and [consequently] to contribute to the economic recovery," Pun said, noting that it is not yet clear which teams might

be part of this year's event.

"We are still checking which teams might be interested in joining the event but we hope we can have teams of high quality, but we have not yet come to a decision," he said.

Similar doubts extend to the event budget as well as the participation from SJM, with the president of ID saying, "we are still preparing the budget, we don't have yet a final amount but just as a reference, back in 2019 it was MOP13 million. Now we will see according to the situation and also take into [account] the public resources. We [are] only going to use what is needed not waste resources. I believe it would be similar to that number."

It is also not clear, for the time being, what SJM's sponsorship will amount to, with Pun saying only, "we will have the support from SJM for part of the budget but we are still negotiating that too."

During the press conference, SJM's executive director, Daisy Ho, recalled the ties of the company and her father (Stanley Ho) to the event that goes back to the 1960s.

Ho recalled that SJM's parent company STDM consistently organized the Dragon Boat Races in Macau for 21 years until the year 2000, the year that the event turned international for the first time, noting SJM's wishes to continue following this historical path under the new call for "Tourism + Sports" development.

RENATO MARQUES



Daisy Ho

Palazzo Versace to 'soft open' in April

THE last of the three hotels that together comprise the integrated resort of the Grand Lisboa Palace in Cotai - the Palazzo Versace - is to "soft

open" before the end of next month, Daisy Ho, executive director of SJM Holdings confirmed yesterday, on the sidelines of the presentation of this

year's Dragon Boats Races event.

The Palazzo Versace is the last of the three hotels also including the Grand Lisboa Palace (inaugurated on July 30, 2021) and The Karl Lagerfeld (on December 3, 2021).

The hotel comprises a 20-floor tower featuring 270 guestrooms and suites and will be the first hotel in Asia to be designed by a fashion house.

At the same opportunity, SJM's chairperson also revealed the gaming concessionaire's plans for several sporting events. As well as being the title sponsor of this year's Dragon Boat Races, the company is also planning to hold a martial arts event, to be hosted during the summer holidays, and a golf event to take place in the second half of this year, and a tennis event, part of China Open.

Besides these four events, SJM will also be among the main sponsors for the 70th edition of the Macau Grand Prix, Ho also confirmed. **RM**

CRIME

ANTI-CORRUPTION WATCHDOG FINDS ID WORKER MAKING UNLAWFUL PROFIT

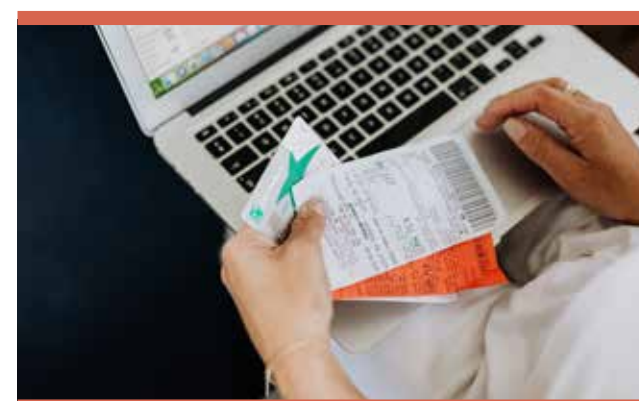
RENATO MARQUES

A worker from the Sports Bureau (ID) was found to have overcharged a government entity when procuring supplies for his department, the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) reported.

According to the anti-corruption watchdog, they uncovered the wrongdoing after complaints were submitted to CCAC of illicit behavior by the civil servant.

A report issued by CCAC yesterday noted that they found the worker had allegedly submitted forged receipts to his department to claim back excessive compensation for the expense of supplies purchased from an online shopping platform on the mainland.

Additionally, the CCAC is also said to have found that he is suspected of selling old



parts from air conditioners that were replaced by the bureau for extra profit.

He allegedly failed to dispose of the scrap air conditioners according to the instructions of his superior, moving the parts, instead, to a hardware store for sale. He did not report these actions to the superior, allegedly violating the duties of impartiality and obedience in the Statute of Personnel of the Public Administration of Macau.

According to CCAC, he may have earned some 14,000 patacas in total from the illicit transactions.

The CCAC has already referred the case to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigation and charging of the man for document forgery and fraud, in relation to the forged receipts, and has also notified the ID for follow-up action regarding the unauthorized sale of the air conditioner components.

MICHELIN GUIDE HK, MACAU RETURNS TO PHYSICAL EVENT

The 15th edition of the Michelin Guide Hong Kong and Macau will return to a physical event after a three-year gap, the organizer announced. The selection for this year will be released on April 26. The Michelin Guide Hong Kong and Macau held a digital ceremony for the past two years due to Covid restrictions in both SARs. Last year, a total of 15 restaurants in the city have been awarded with a combined 26 Michelin stars.

FOREX RESERVES RISE TO USD26.84B BY FEBRUARY

The preliminary estimate of Macau's foreign exchange reserves amounted to 216.9 billion patacas at the end of February, the monetary watchdog said yesterday. The latest statistics from the Monetary Authority of Macao indicated that the reserves increased by 1.7% from the revised value of 213.3 billion patacas for the previous month. The foreign exchange reserves as of the end of February represented roughly 10 times the currency in circulation or 82.1% of the pataca broad money supply (M2) at the end of January.

IC TO CARRY OUT WORKS IN LITERATURE HOUSE

The Cultural Affairs Bureau will carry out partial interior space enhancement works in the annex building of The House of Macao Literature from Mar. 17, which are expected to be completed in early May. During the renovation period, The House of Macao Literature will remain open to the public daily except Mondays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

LOCAL MAN SUSPECTED OF DEFRAUDING MOP340,000 FROM JOB-SEEKERS

The Judiciary Police arrested a 32-year-old man from Macau after he was suspected of defrauding MOP340,000 by falsely claiming that he could introduce others to work. The PJ was tipped off by three foreign workers from the mainland. According to the report, the man claimed that he could refer people to work in the city for an average salary of MOP650 to 800 for construction work. The man was suspected to have cheated some 100 people and received a total of MOP340,000. The suspect attempted to justify his actions by stating that no flight tickets could be booked, or that the pandemic was the reason for the delays.

EVENTS

ARTS FESTIVAL TO SEE EQUAL LOCAL-EXTERNAL PERFORMANCE DISTRIBUTION

ANTHONY LAM

THIS year's Macao Arts Festival will have half of its shows performed by local crews and casts, Leong Wai Man, president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), announced yesterday.

The IC president made this announcement in response to a question from the press at the program showdown event of the festival.

One reason for not having a larger-scale festival and more performers from outside Macau is that preparations and invitations for a festival usually start a year or even longer before the start of the actual festival, Leong said. Since border normalization only happened late last year, the IC did not have much time to invite more overseas performers.

This year's festival that has a budget of MOP22 million will rely on many local efforts. For example, the Patuá drama has been appointed the closing show of the festival. Patuá is a creole unique to Macau, with elements from Portuguese and Asian languages, such as Cantonese, Malay and Hindi.

The cultural official also pointed out that, in future, the festival will focus on promoting progress in the local art circle and cultivating improvements across the local art population, in addition to attracting more overseas performers as a priority.

Parallel to the closing event, the opening event is Rite of Spring by Chinese dancer Yan



Liping, who brings the reinterpretation of the century-old work by Stravinsky, premiered in Paris, to the stage of Macau, in collaboration with an array of international artists, making artistic breakthroughs through combining inspiration from the East and the West.

Leong pointed out that the organizers of the festival had been longing to curate a spectacular opening event, but that Covid-19 border restrictions have obstructed their plans.

The IC president also pointed to On the Substance of Time by the Portuguese Contemporary Dance Company, saying that the deal was closed within a very short time after Macau's sudden

elimination of quarantine requirements.

For the show, Portuguese choreographers Vasco Wellenkamp and Miguel Ramalho transform verses of Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen into dance routines, making lives sparkle through the dancers' bodies and movements.

Several more masterpieces will be staged at the festival, including Electra, jointly revived by the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre and a Greek-based production team based on the classic play by Sophocles, one of the three great ancient Greek tragic poets: the classic story of revenge and justice.

Experimental Cantonese opera Farewell My Concubine, pro-

duced by the Xiqu Centre, Hong Kong's West Kowloon Cultural District, reinvents the legendary story of the downfall of Xiang Yu, the self-proclaimed "Overlord of Western Chu" from a new narrative perspective.

Chinese stage director Liu Fangqi, known for his highly successful plays, brings his heart-warming theatrical adaptation from one of the three masterpieces by Higashino Keigo: The Miracles of the Namiya General Store.

Meanwhile, the bureau would consider the proposal of offering discounted tickets directly with credit card brands, so as to align with the government's overall direction of enticing overseas tourists.

Economy bouncing back from Covid, prosperity ahead

ANTHONY LAM

THE local economy, as reflected by the Prosperity Index, has swiftly bounced back up to 3.6 points in January and is expected to reach 4 points in February, the Macau Economic Association (MEA) announced.

Looking ahead, the association forecasts the index to rise further and expects it will reach 5 points in May, which falls within the Stability scope.

Major factors supporting the bounce, the MEA said, include border normalization, resumption of



normal travel and elevating M2 currency supply.

The last factor rose to over MOP7,240 in January, 4.6% year-over-year increase and a historic high.

As for the first two factors, nearly three times the number of tourists was seen in January compared with the end of last year. Crowds were also seen at

several popular tourist attractions and were so large that crowd control measures were required a few times.

Hotel occupancy rate has risen to 70% in January and average daily gross gambling revenue in January and February to around MOP370 million, which is a new high since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition, both Beijing and the IMF have high expectations for China's economic performance this year, with the former forecasting 5% increase and the latter 5.2%. Moreover,

the association pointed out that several mainland economic indicators, such as the Procurement Manager Index and the Consumer Confidence Index, have indicated rising trajectories. This will help Macau's economic recovery, the association explained, adding that the local tourism board's efforts will definitely attract more tourists.

However, the association also warned the city that geopolitical unsettlement, regional conflicts and financial concerns will be complications affecting recovery. The multiple interest hikes in the US have not only have lowered investor confidence, but also put the Silicon Bank and the Signature Bank into collapse, which, in the opinion of the association, will affect global recovery.

TOURISM

February daily visitor arrival reaches non-festival new high

ANTHONY LAM

THE average tourist arrival count in February has edged towards the 60,000 level, reaching 57,000, while the average count for early March was over 50,000, director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) disclosed yesterday in an event.

Against this backdrop, the MGTO has adjusted the daily target of its work to maintaining an average of 50,000 visitors per day.

Moreover, the MGTO director disclosed that as of January this year, tourists from the non-Greater China market accounted for 2.2% of the total number of tourists. Counting these tourists only, the five major source markets are the Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, Japan



RENATO MARQUES

and the US.

She believes that the proportion of tourists from the non-Greater China market will increase to 10% "rather quickly", given the gradual resumption of international flights and interactions between Macau and Hong Kong.

Most international travelers to Macau opt for flying to Hong Kong before transferring to Macau by ferry or shuttle bus, unless there are direct flights between their cities of origin and Macau.

The MGTO director also drew the audience's atten-

tion to the Travel Stimulation Program, which is led by the Office and aim at providing "incentive measures" to entities in the hopes of enticing them to organize company incentive tours, wedding, student excursions or sporting events in Macau. Events that have at least 25 non-Macau participants who will stay for at least two nights are eligible.

In reference to this year's application number, the tourism official said that as of the end of February, 5,346 people from five events have benefitted from the scheme.

At the same occasion, Jacinto Luiz, executive director of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), disclosed that last year, MICE tourists spent MOP5,000 per person, which was 1.5 times that of general tourists.

ganized a symposium on conventions and exhibitions yesterday, where representatives shared ideas about the status quo and future development of the MICE industry.

The representatives include those from government offices and associations including Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), and the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI), among others.

Expanding Sands China Academy

The company is inaugurating six new sub-academies of Sands China Academy, bringing the total number to eight. According to the gaming operator, Sands China is offering these platforms as a "way for industry experts to share their experience and knowledge with Sands China team members and with industry practitioners in the Greater Bay Area to foster their growth in various areas."

to expanding, improving and optimizing the scale and quality of our convention centers and related amenities. This includes the proposed development of a new MICE facility of approximately 18,000 square meters in the coming decade," Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd revealed

yesterday.

Meanwhile, the MOU proposes new co-operations including in the areas of internships, research, industry-education exchanges, and training and development.

As the first project following the establishment of the MOU, Sands China and IFTM co-or-



STAFF REPORTER

SANDS China Ltd. and the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) yesterday with the aim of "strengthening collaboration between academia and the integrated resort industry."

The goal is also to help develop local MICE talent and the sustainable development of the city's MICE economy through exchange between academics and professional industry practitioners.

The symposium is the first initiative of the Sands MICE Academy, a new sub-academy of the Sands China Academy.

"We are committed

HEALTH

SSM EXPECTS CYCLICAL PEAKS OF COVID INFECTION IN THE FUTURE

STAFF REPORTER

ONLY 0.5% of medical consultation cases involve Covid-19 infection, according to the director of the Health Bureau (SSM), Alvis Lo. However, there may be cyclical peaks of infection of Covid-19 in the future.

According to the monitoring system of SSM, there are 600 to 700 medical consultations per day. Among them, 0.5% were Covid-19 cases, which means there is one case in every 200 samples. There are almost no cases reported on the online self-reporting platform, he said.

Lo noted that people may be infected by new Covid variants three to six months after a round of natural infection because of their decreased immunity.

57% of Macau residents have received the third dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.

Thus, Lo still called for citizens to receive the third or fourth dose of booster to better protect themselves.

According to the official, citizens do not have as much need for masks and rapid antigen test kits, but many people still buy them from the guaranteed supply scheme.

The guaranteed masks and rapid antigen test kits supply scheme will continue in the short run, and medication is also sufficient. The medical and early-warning systems in Macau will be able to meet increased needs if the condition of the pandemic changes.

Lo added that monitoring and early-warning system can help with dynamic analysis and in finding changes in the epidemic and related reasons, for example, influenza or the Norwalk virus, for better deployment of treatment and solutions.

CRIME

LOCAL MAN JAILED AFTER PURCHASING HEROIN, ICE VIA TAOBAO

RENATO MARQUES

A 44-year-old local man has been caught by the Judiciary Police (PJ) purchasing crystal methamphetamine, also known as ice, as well as heroin via the online platform Taobao, the PJ announced on Tuesday.

The arrest was revealed when the mainland police authorities informed their local counterparts that two parcels containing the drugs were on their way to Macau, and had been acquired by the same person in two different purchases.

The police decided to wait for the man to pick up the parcels before making the arrest, catching him red-handed.

According to the mainland police, the first package had been sent in late February but there was a new one on the way. The drugs, disguised as toys and playing cards, had the desti-

nation address of a Taobao order collection point located in the NAPE district.

On March 13, three days after the second order had arrived and was available for collection, the man finally decided to collect both parcels together.

Following the man's steps closely, the police detained him with the two packages.

One of the packages contained 11.1 grams of ice, while the other had 7.8 grams of heroin.

According to the PJ, the drugs had a market value of approximately 50,000 patacas.

The suspect has been sent to the Public Prosecutions Office for further investigation on accusation of the crime of drug trafficking. The PJ did not reveal if the man intended to distribute the drugs or if they were for his own consumption.

DIPLOMACY

HONDURAS WILL SEEK TIES WITH CHINA, SPURNING TAIWAN

HONDURAS President Xiomara Castro announced yesterday [Macau time] that her government will seek to establish diplomatic relations with China, which would imply severing relations with Taiwan. The switch would leave Taiwan recognized by only 13 countries as China spends billions to win recognition for its "One China" policy.

Castro said on her Twitter account that she instructed Honduran Foreign Affairs Minister Eduardo Reina to start negotiations with China and that her intention is "expand frontiers freely in concert with the nations of the world."

Castro said during her presidential campaign in 2021 that she would look for ties with China if elected, but once in power, her government backtracked on those comments. In January 2022, the foreign affairs minister told The Associated Press that Honduras would continue strengthening ties with Taiwan and that establishing a diplomatic relationship with China was not a priority for Castro.

Reina, the Foreign Affairs Minister, had said the government weighed up the benefits that Honduras had received from a good relationship with Taiwan and decided that there was no reason to change at that moment.

In Taipei, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it had "expressed



Honduras' President Xiomara Castro

serious concerns to the Honduran government. Our country has made it clear to Honduras many times that Taiwan is a sincere and reliable cooperative partner to our allies. Honduras is requested to consider carefully and not fall into China's trap or make wrong decisions that damage the long-term friendship between Taiwan and Honduras."

Taiwanese media reported that the Foreign Ministry had summoned Honduras' Ambassador Harold Burgos for discussions. Burgos told reporters he is currently awaiting orders from his govern-

ment.

At a daily briefing this week, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Beijing welcomed the statement from Honduras.

"The fact that 181 countries in the world have established diplomatic relations with China on the basis of the one-China principle fully proves that establishing diplomatic relations with China is a correct choice in line with the general trend of historical development and the trend of the times," Wang said.

China claims self-ruled, demo-

cratic Taiwan is part of its territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary, and refuses most contacts with countries that maintain formal ties with Taiwan, and threatens retaliation against countries merely for increasing contacts.

China expelled Lithuania's ambassador, downgraded diplomatic ties and blocked trade with the Baltic country of 2.7 million people after it boosted relations with Taipei in October 2021. Lithuania has since closed its embassy in Beijing and opened a trade office in Taiwan.

It's not clear what made Honduras' government change its mind. However, China, which is building a massive dam in Honduras, generally uses trade and investment as incentives for switching ties, as it has done successfully with Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador, Nicaragua and, most recently, South Pacific nations including the Solomon Islands.

Taiwan supplies its dwindling number of formal diplomatic partners with agricultural experts, vocational training programs and other forms of economic aid.

However, budgetary restraints imposed by the democratically elected legislature prevent it from splashing out on sports stadiums, conference halls and government buildings as China does.

China's multi-billion dollar "Belt and Road" initiative has also offered developing nations ports, railways, power plants and other infrastructure, funded by loans provided at market rates.

The loss of Honduras would leave Taiwan with formal diplomatic ties just 13 sovereign states, including Vatican City. In Latin America, it also has relations with Belize and Paraguay, with most of its remaining partners being small, poor island nations in the Caribbean and South Pacific.

Taiwan's sole remaining African ally is Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland, whose Prime Minister Cleopas Siphos Dlamini visited Taiwan this month and expressed support for the island's re-admission to the United Nations and its agencies.

Despite China's campaign of isolation, Taiwan retains informal ties with more than 100 other countries. **MDT/AP**

MILITARY

Former Australian PM says subs to counter China 'worst deal in history'

FORMER Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating yesterday launched a blistering attack on his nation's plan to buy nuclear-powered submarines from the United States to modernize its fleet, saying "it must be the worst deal in all history."

Speaking at a National Press Club event, Keating said the submarines wouldn't serve a useful military purpose.

"The only way the Chinese could threaten Australia or attack it is on land. That is, they bring an armada of troop ships with a massive army to occupy us," Keating said. "This is not possible for the Chinese to do."

He added that Australia would sink any such Chinese armada with planes and missiles.

"The idea that we need American submarines to protect us," Keating said. "If we buy eight, three are at sea. Three are going to protect us from the might of China. Really? I mean, the rubbish of it. The rubbish."

Australia's deal — announced Monday in San Diego by U.S. President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak — came amid growing concern about China's military buildup and influence in the Indo-Pacific. Biden emphasized

that the submarines wouldn't carry nuclear weapons of any kind.

Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles said the deal was necessary to counter the biggest conventional military buildup in the region since World War II.

"We have to take the step of developing the capability to operate a nuclear-powered submarine so that we can hand over a much more self-reliant nation to our children and to our grandchildren," Marles said.

China said Tuesday the U.S., Australia and the United Kingdom were traveling "further down the wrong and dangerous path for

their own geopolitical self-interest" in inking the deal, which has been given the acronym AUKUS.

Keating served as prime minister for more than four years in the 1990s. He was from the Labor Party, the same party as Albanese.

Keating said the submarine deal was the worst international decision by the Labor Party in more than 100 years, when it unsuccessfully tried to introduce conscription during World War I.

Keating also mocked the cost of the deal, which Australian officials have estimated at between 268 billion and 368 billion Australian dollars (\$178-\$245



Former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating

billion) over three decades. Australian officials say the deal will create 20,000 jobs.

"For \$360 billion, we're going to get eight submarines," Keating said. "It must be the worst deal in all history."

At the Press Club event,

Keating was questioned about whether his own ties to China had influenced his views.

He said he had no commercial interests in China and had stopped serving on a bank board five years ago.

MDT/AP



Mongolian Prime Minister Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene, left, shakes hands with Rio Tinto's Chief Executive Jakob Stausholm during the start of underground production at the Oyu Tolgoi mine in Khanbogd village, Umnugobi province

NORTHERN ASIA

Mongolia looks to copper to transform stagnant economy

JOE MCDONALD

MONGOLIA plans to channel revenue from rising copper exports into an economic development fund as part of changes to reap more benefit from its mineral riches and root out corruption, the North Asian nation's prime minister said in an interview following the opening of a major expansion of its biggest mine.

Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene attended a ceremony 1,300 meters below ground to mark the start of underground production earlier this week at the Oyu Tolgoi mine in the Gobi Desert in southern Mongolia. He was joined by executives of Rio Tinto, the Australian mining giant that owns a 66% stake in the mine. The government owns the rest.

The multibillion-dollar expansion of Oyu Tolgoi is the latest effort to generate prosperity from Mongolia's copper, coal, gold and other minerals following three decades of complaints about economic malaise and corruption.

Oyun-Erdene, who took office in 2021, represents a younger generation following leaders who grew up under the Soviet-allied former communist government. At 42, the politician with the burly build of an American college football

player has a master's degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School and experience working abroad.

"We are working hard to eliminate the old culture and introduce a new mindset," the prime minister said by video link from Ulan Bator, the Mongolian capital.

Mongolia gets more than 90% of its export revenue from minerals and is benefiting from the surge in global sales of electric cars that use more than a mile (1,500 meters) of copper wire in their motors.

Oyun-Erdene said his government plans to invest copper revenue in public health, education and developing technology, tourism and other new industries. He said his government will propose a law to create a sovereign wealth fund during the parliament session that begins Wednesday.

"We do believe this will be a historic moment for the livelihoods and standard of living of the people of Mongolia," Oyun-Erdene said. He said his government wants to make "the wealth and natural resources of Mongolia beneficial and equally distributed to all the people of Mongolia."

Mongolia's economic growth is forecast by the International Monetary Fund to accelerate this year to 5% from last year's 2.5%. But households have struggled

with inflation that spiked to 14% last year. Economic output per person is about \$4,500, barely one-third of neighboring China's level.

Government plans call for more than doubling average economic output for Mongolia's 3.2 million people to \$10,000 by 2030.

The planned fund includes a pool of money for housing, education and health, a separate fund for development projects and a "stabilization fund" to cushion against changes in commodity prices, according to Oyun. That is similar to sovereign wealth funds operated by Chile, another big copper exporter, and oil producers to invest natural resource revenues.

Other planned investments to "enhance our economic independence" include two hydroelectric power plants to reduce Mongolia's need for electricity from its giant neighbors, China and Russia, according to Oyun-Erdene.

To extract more value from its copper, Mongolia announced an agreement this week with Rio Tinto to look at building a smelter.

Oyu Tolgoi, about 550 kilometers south of Ulan Bator, started digging copper from an open pit in 2012 before developing the underground mine that its operators say is more valuable. The mine, with a workforce of 20,000, says it has paid \$4 billion in taxes

and other fees to the government.

Production is forecast to rise to 500,000 tons per year, or enough to equip 6 million electric vehicles. Its

operators say that would make Oyu Tolgoi the world's fourth-largest copper mine.

"People of Mongolia will benefit greatly from this project," Oyun-Erdene, wearing a green helmet with a mining lamp, said Monday at a ceremony with Rio Tinto CEO Jakob Stausholm.

The mine faces complaints it uses too much scarce water in its desert setting and has displaced traditional nomadic herders. Activists say Rio Tinto and the government failed to carry out a 2017 agreement to compensate them.

The mine's operator responds that it recycles most of its water and has paid the provincial government some \$40.5 million for what it draws from local sources. The company says it has repaired herder wells and installed solar panels to power pumps at 40 of them.

"We are having talks with Oyu Tolgoi on how to improve the environment and especially how we can address the issue of environmental degradation," Oyun-Erdene said.

He acknowledged complaints about corruption in the government-dominated mining industry, saying

his administration has declared this an "anti-corruption year" and is carrying out a five-part plan based on advice from Transparency International, a global anti-graft watchdog.

Mongolia ranked 116th among countries last year in Transparency International's "corruption perceptions index," based on a survey of businesspeople and experts. That was down from No. 94 in 2012.

In December, thousands of people protested in freezing weather in Ulan Bator after Oyun-Erdene's government announced an investigation into officials accused of profiting from the improper diversion of coal exports in 2013-19.

The government aims to make mining more transparent and to reduce political influence by turning state-owned enterprises into companies with publicly traded shares. Oyun-Erdene said.

"Some parliament members are involved in mining and own companies. This is a real challenge," Oyun-Erdene said. "We have to make the private interests of parliament members and public officials separate from the public interests of Mongolia." MDT/AP



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UK

Treasury chief seeks drama-free budget day amid strikes

DANICA KIRKA, LONDON

TREASURY chief Jeremy Hunt will stage a moment of high political theater today [Macau time], unveiling his budget to a crowd of baying lawmakers as consumers demand more help with the high cost of living and workers press for higher wages with strikes at schools, hospitals and the offices of civil servants.

Even as Hunt plays his historically scripted role — emerging from his official residence in a battered red dispatch box, then carrying it to the House of Commons where he will be greeted by jeers and cheers — the truth is he will try to be as boring as possible.

That's because the last time the government staged a similar "fiscal event," the mini-budget presented by Hunt's predecessor last September, it set off an economic catastrophe by promising huge tax cuts without saying how it would pay for them. The value of the pound plunged, mortgage rates soared and the central bank was forced to intervene to protect pension funds.

This time, strong and stable is the goal. Most of the big-ticket items — an extra 5 billion pounds (\$6.1 billion) of defense spending over the next two years, increased funding for child care and help for workers saving for retirement — have already been announced.

"We shouldn't expect much in the way of rabbits or hats in this budget," said Sarah Coles, head of personal finance at the investment adviser Hargreaves Lansdown. "Jeremy Hunt needs to remain boring and predictable to avoid unsettling the markets."

But even as Hunt delivers his remarks to Parliament, many people across the country are seething about a cost-of-living crisis that is eroding the spending power of workers as Russia's war in Ukraine has helped fuel the highest inflation in four decades.

Government workers, teachers and the young doctors who staff the nation's hospitals will be walking



Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt

the picket line, furious that public-sector workers have borne the brunt of the budget austerity implemented by Hunt's Conservative Party after it took power following the global financial crisis.

The British Medical Association, which represents the fully qualified physicians known in the U.K. as "junior doctors," says first-year doctors have seen their pay fall by 26% over the past 15 years after accounting for inflation.

That means first-year doctors now earn as little as 14.09 pounds an hour, compared with up to 14.10 pounds an hour for baristas at Pret a Manger, a sandwich and coffee shop chain that just gave workers a third raise in less than 12 months, the group said.

Rebecca Lissman, 29, a trainee in obstetrics and gynecology, said junior doctors are just asking is to be "paid a wage that matches our skill set."

"I want to be in work, looking after people, getting trained," she said. "I don't want to be out here striking, but I feel that I have to."

The government says the medical association's comparison to baristas is misleading because most doctors actually make more than the basic minimum salary and have much higher lifetime earning potential than shop workers.

Hunt and Prime Minis-

ter Rishi Sunak are trying to hold the line on public-sector salaries because they say big pay increases will only fuel inflation.

Consumer prices rose 10.1% in the year through January, the fifth consecutive month of double-digit increases. To combat inflation, the Bank of England has approved 10 interest rate increases over the past 15 months, raising the cost of mortgages, consumer and business loans.

That is crimping economic growth, with the central bank forecasting a recession that may last a year or more.

Hunt's other major goal is rebuilding Britain's reputation for fiscal responsibility by reducing the public debt built up during the financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. The government wants to cut borrowing to less than 3% of economic output and begin reducing debt as a percentage of output within five years.

As a result, Hunt has been cautious about increasing government spending or boosting salaries.

But higher-than-expected revenue and lower spending, combined with more optimistic forecasts for economic growth and interest rates, may mean the government has room to spend an additional 166 billion pounds without endangering its targets, according to estimates from the National Insti-

tute of Economic and Social Research, an independent think tank.

And several spending initiatives have been leaked ahead of the release of what is being called a "back-to-work budget."

Those include increased child care payments to help young mothers return to work and more generous allowances for tax-free pension saving to entice early retirees back into the workforce.

Even before he got to his feet, Hunt yesterday announced that he was extending the government-subsidized energy price guarantee until the end of June, costing the government 3 billion pounds. That program has helped shield consumers from the soaring cost of electricity and natural gas amid the war in Ukraine.

During a meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese last weekend in San Diego, Sunak announced plans to boost defense spending to 2.5% of economic output amid increasing threats from Russia and China.

But back home, thousands of doctors, nurses and other workers are picketing in front of hospitals and other government buildings.

Outside St. Thomas' Hospital in central London, Leah Sugarman, 33, joined other strikers as they chanted, "What do we want? Fair pay! When do we want it? Now!"

The emergency medicine doctor, who has been on the job for nine years, said she can't pay a mortgage and struggles to live a normal life.

"We've all lived through COVID, that was horrendous. Most of us have come out mentally scarred from that," she said. "And every day that I leave work, I pretty much want to cry because I haven't been able to do the job that I chose to go into this profession for."

She added that she has been forced to drop her hours to less than 40 hours a week, "because I can't mentally go to work full time anymore."

"It is just a car crash," she said. "So that's why I'm here." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1978 ALDO MORO
SNATCHED AT GUNPOINT



Former Italian prime minister Aldo Moro has been kidnapped in Rome.

Mr Moro's escort of five police bodyguards were killed when he was snatched at gunpoint from a car near a cafe in the morning rush-hour.

Chief police investigator Signor Moro said 12 gunmen took part in the attack on the former prime minister as he was being driven to parliament.

Police have set up dozens of roadblocks and all exits from the city are being watched. Helicopters are hovering overhead and anti-terrorist officers have been sent to the airport.

The extreme left-wing Red Brigade, in a telephone call to a Rome newspaper, has said it kidnapped the Christian Democratic leader, 61.

A spokesman said: "We kidnapped Aldo Moro. He is only our first victim. We shall hit at the heart of the state."

The man demanded that the Turin trial of Renato Curcio, who is suspected of leading the Red Brigade, and 14 others accused of membership of the group should be suspended.

Witnesses reported seeing a white Fiat car move in front of Mr Moro's vehicle, along with a man on a motorbike. The Fiat braked hard and Mr Moro's car crashed into it.

Gunmen jumped out of the Fiat and others who had been waiting nearby raised pistols and sub-machine guns.

Trade unions have called a 24-hour general strike and workers have left many shops and offices in the city in a shocked reaction to the kidnapping of the much-respected statesman.

Investigators are examining spent bullet cases at the scene of the crime and among guns seized they found "a rarely used Soviet weapon".

Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti has condemned those who took Mr Moro, saying they were "destroying the fabric of the nation and threatening to make it ungovernable".

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In the aftermath of the kidnapping, security forces made hundreds of raids in Rome, Milan, Turin and other cities in their search for Mr Moro.

For two months, Mr Moro was held at a secret location in Rome allowing him to send letters to his family and politicians - begging the government to negotiate with his captors.

The government refused all pleas from family, friends and the Pope Paul VI to concede to any demands.

Eight weeks after he was kidnapped, the body of Mr Moro was found riddled with bullets in the boot of a car in Via Caetani in central Rome.

The Red Brigade was a left-wing terrorist group formed in 1970 with the sole aim of overthrowing capitalist Italy by violent means. Most of their leading members had been captured and imprisoned by the mid-1980s.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Pleasure trips will turn out to be better than anticipated. You are best to look into investments that will grow in value over an extended period of time.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You may have to explain your actions to your family. Too much work and no play will not only result in fatigue and frustration but also loneliness, too.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Don't overspend on luxury items. You may find travel to be most rewarding. Your unique contribution to the organization will enhance your reputation.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Pleasure trips will be emotionally favorable. Sentimental feelings may make it difficult to get much done at work. Don't play on your partner's emotions.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Don't spend too much on products that promise amazing cosmetic results. You should follow through on educational endeavors you have wanted to pursue for some time.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Heed the advice given by family or old reliable friends. Dig deep to find out how costly a new venture will be before you sign on the dotted line.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Try to deal with the problems of those less fortunate; however, don't allow them to make unreasonable demands. Try to have patience and refrain from being judgmental.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Give everyone in the house a physical chore that will help burn off some of the excess energy. You can make money, but try not to let it slip through your fingers.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You will also encounter individuals who can help you further your goals. Give everyone in the house a physical chore that will help burn off some of the excess energy.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You may find it difficult to discuss personal matters with family members. Communication will be your best bet. You need adventure and excitement in your life.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You may have the opportunity to get involved in some interesting conversations. Don't let relatives get the better of you. Avoid lending money or belongings to friends.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You may be overreacting to a situation at hand. Take care of your own responsibilities before you help others. Take a different approach; make an offer they just can't refuse.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

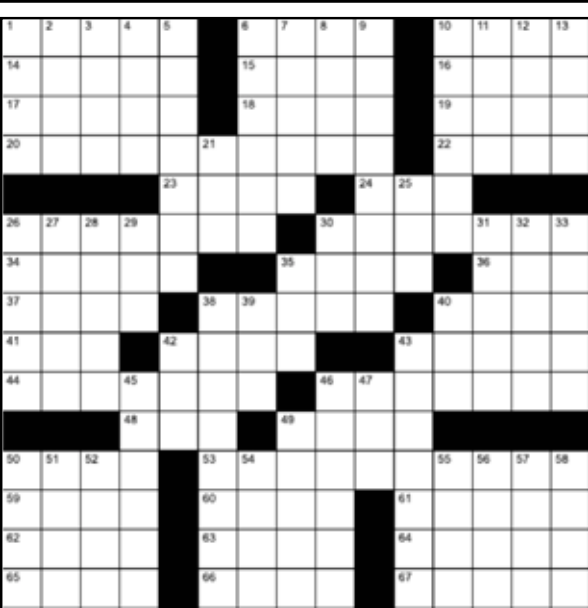
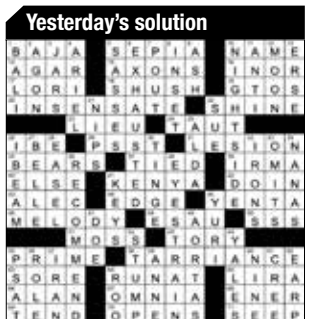
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-1	13	cloudy
Changchun	-5	3	cloudy
Chengdu	13	17	overcast
Chongqing	14	19	rain
Fuzhou	14	24	cloudy
Guangzhou	18	28	cloudy
Guiyang	10	21	showers
Haikou	19	28	cloudy
Hangzhou	10	13	overcast
Harbin	-8	2	cloudy
Hefei	5	14	rain
Nanjing	7	16	rain
Shanghai	10	15	cloudy
Taipei	13	21	rain
Wuhan	10	14	rain
Hong Kong	21	24	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	0	3	rain
Frankfurt	3	12	cloudy
Paris	11	17	cloudy
London	10	13	cloudy
New York	6	13	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Narrow openings; 6- Resinous substances; 10- Sign of healing; 14- On the up-and-up; 15- ___ old chap!; 16- Graph prefix; 17- Together; 18- Cookbook arnts.; 19- Super Bowl XXXIV champs; 20- Improvement; 22- Technical sch.; 23- Sulk; 24- Body shop fig.; 26- British rock group; 30- Astonishing; 34- ... who lived in ___; 35- Incurion; 36- Sun, talk; 37- Keep it, to an editor; 38- Stern with a bow; 40- Spillane's "___ Jury"; 41- Multitude; 42- Impediment; 43- Night noise; 44- Legendary king of Thebes; 46- Downright; 48- Honshu honorific; 49- A type of bake; 50- Equal; 53- Reduce government controls; 59- Raines of film; 60- Away from the wind; 61- One on track?; 62- Clarinet cousin; 63- Stratum; 64- Buenos ___; 65- Arrest; 66- Electric fish; 67- Peace goddess;

DOWN 1- Hunk; 2- ___-majesté; 3- ___ Rhythm; 4- Hue; 5- Skyline sight; 6- Chemical indicator; 7- It's a good thing; 8- ___ Crunch; 9- Affecting the whole body; 10- Squirrel; 11- James of "The Godfather"; 12- Prepares for battle; 13- Strong woody fiber; 21- Future fish; 25- Blue; 26- Ezio Pinza, for one; 27- Rival of Helena; 28- In the future; 29- Small drink, young child; 30- Battery size; 31- Playground retort; 32- First prime minister of India; 33- Welcome; 35- Joplin tune; 38- Deluge; 39- Carrier to Copenhagen; 40- CD earnings; 42- Hot tub; 43- Warrior of feudal Japan; 45- Sharon's land; 46- Absconders; 47- Fall behind; 49- Fish basket; 50- Unskilled laborer; 51- Exile isle; 52- "The Time Machine" race; 54- Nobelist Wiesel; 55- Den of wild animals and dragons; 56- 43,560 square feet; 57- High schooler; 58- Scottish Gaelic;



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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HKD 9,000/mth 1 bed 1 bath

AD

TECH

SAMSUNG TO INVEST USD230 BILLION TO BUILD 'MEGA' CHIP CLUSTER

KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

Samsung Electronics said yesterday it expects to invest 300 trillion won (\$230 billion) over the next 20 years as part of an ambitious South Korean national project to build the world's largest semiconductor manufacturing base near the capital, Seoul.

The chip-making "mega cluster," which will be established in Gyeonggi Province by 2042, will be anchored by five new semiconductor plants built by Samsung. It will aim to attract 150 other companies producing materials and components or designing high-tech chips, according to South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy.

Samsung's new plants will be located near its existing domestic factories and will produce both computer memory chips used for storing data and higher-margin logic chips designed to perform a broader range of functions, the company said.

A giant in the global memory business, Samsung is trying to

AP PHOTO



expand its presence in advanced chips, anticipating that demand will soar in coming years with the adoption of new technologies such as 5G wireless networks, artificial intelligence and self-driving cars.

The semiconductor cluster is part of broader government

plans announced yesterday to promote six key technology industries the country sees as most crucial for its export-dependent economy. Apart from semiconductors, they include rechargeable batteries, electric vehicles, robotics, displays and bio-technology. The government hopes

to draw 550 trillion won (\$422 million) in corporate investment on those projects through 2026.

South Korea's plan comes as other technology powerhouses, including the United States, Japan and China, are building up their domestic chip manufacturing, deploying protectionist

measures, tax cuts and sizeable subsidies to lure investments. In a meeting with economic policymakers and business leaders yesterday, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol described technology industries as the country's "key economic growth engines and security and strategic assets that are also directly linked to job creation and livelihoods."

"(South Korea) has world-class manufacturing capabilities and technologies in various high-tech industries such as semiconductors, secondary batteries, and displays, but (government) support and regulatory conditions have been insufficient," the Trade Ministry said in a statement.

Samsung, South Korea's biggest company, has seen its profit plummet in recent months as a weak global economy, rattled by Russia's war on Ukraine and high inflation, depressed demand for its consumer electronics products and memory chips. The company's profit for the three months through December fell near 70%, partially because chip prices fell sharply as clients adjusted their inventories to reflect economic uncertainties.

SK Hynix, another major South Korean chipmaker, reported an operating loss of 1.7 trillion won (\$1.3 billion) for the October-December period, which marked its first quarterly deficit since 2012. **MDT/AP**

AD



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FOOTBALL

Inter reaches Champions League QF after draw at Porto

PORTO 0, INTER M 0

HEROIC defending and the woodwork helped Inter Milan reach the Champions League quarterfinals for the first time in more than a decade.

Inter managed a 0-0 draw at Porto yesterday [Macau time] to progress 1-0 on aggregate and join city rival AC Milan in the final eight. Napoli could become the third Italian team in the quarterfinals when it plays Eintracht Frankfurt on Wednesday.

All the drama was saved for the fifth minute of stoppage time as a goalline clearance, the post and the crossbar prevented Porto from snatching the goal that would have taken the match to extra time.

"In soccer, luck matters relatively," Inter coach Simone Inzaghi said. "I think that over the both legs we deserved to get to the quarterfinals, we didn't concede a goal in the 180 minutes against a team that's used to playing these sort of matches.



Inter Milan players celebrate at the end of the Champions League round of 16, 2nd leg, match

"We shouldn't forget that last year we reached the round of 16 for the first time after more than 10 years, this year the quarterfinals ... Now we will play with a lot of confidence."

There were few other concrete chances at the Estádio Do Dragão as Inter did enough to ensure it advanced to the final eight for the first time since going out at that stage as the defending champion in 2011.

Several Porto players dropped

to the ground in tears at the final whistle.

"I think it's normal to cry after you're eliminated like this, it's normal because my players play with passion," Porto coach Sérgio Conceição said. "They should be proud of how they played these matches, I think we were superior to Inter."

"I'm feeling a mixture of great pride and great frustration. I'm frustrated, sad ... I have the same feelings as the fans here at the sta-

dium and at home."

There are no further restrictions on teams from the same country facing each other so the two Milan sides could be pitted against each other when the draw is made on Friday — just like they were in the semifinals in 2003, when eventual champion Milan emerged victorious.

Romelu Lukaku had scored the all-important goal at San Siro but he started on the bench yesterday as Inter coach Simone Inzaghi op-

ted for Edin Dzeko alongside Lautaro Martínez up front.

And Dzeko had the best of the few Inter chances in the 22nd minute but his effort was saved by Porto goalkeeper Diogo Costa.

Porto could have already been in front by then as Inter goalkeeper André Onana got the slightest of touches to push Mateus Uribe's swerving shot round the post in the third minute and also reacted well to smother a scuffed Stephen Eustáquio effort.

The Inter defense dealt well with the Porto pressure but almost got caught out on the counter midway through the second half but Matteo Darmian — who was suffering from a cramp and on a yellow card — rushed back to make a perfectly timed, last-ditch tackle.

Porto poured forward in the seven minutes of stoppage time and had three incredible chances in the space of a minute. Iván Marcano's shot was cleared off the line by Inter defender Denzel Dumfries, before Onana pushed Mehdi Taremi's header onto his post and, moments later, a Marko Gruji header came off the crossbar.

Porto defender Pepe was sent off two minutes later following a second yellow card.

Manchester City also advanced to the quarterfinals as it routed Leipzig 7-0 in the night's other match, with Erling Haaland scoring a record-equaling five goals in a Champions League match. **MDT/AP**

RUGBY ACADEMY

LUSOFONIA TOUCH CUP FOR MARAUDERS

DONALD SHAW, MDT

AN exciting day's rugby was had at the 2nd Lusofonia Touch Tournament last weekend. The Cup final was played between Macau Marauders and Portugal Wolves, both of whom had comprehensively won their group

games with maximum points. A tough and highly competitive final ensued with the Marauders winning by 2 tries to nil, thus retaining the Cup they had won last year.

The Plate final saw newcomers Guinea-Bissau Cranes win 2-1 against Brasil Bucca-

neers while Mocambique Panthers overcame Cape Verde Blue Sharks 3-1 to win the Bowl and Angola Palancas defeated Timor Leste 4-0 to win the Shield final.

Funds raised by the event will go towards Cancer Research and Crohn's disease.



OPINION

The Conversation

Christopher Decker,
 University of Nebraska Omaha



INFLATION IS PROVING PARTICULARLY STUBBORN - BUT JITTERS OVER BANKING FAILURES COMPLICATE RATE DECISION

The U.S. Federal Reserve is facing a rather sticky problem. Despite its best efforts over the past year, inflation is stubbornly refusing to head south with any urgency to a target of 2%.

Rather, the inflation report released on March 14, 2023, shows consumer prices rose 0.4% in February, meaning the year-over-year increase is now at 6% – which is only a little lower than in January.

So, what do you do if you are a member of the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee meeting March 21-22 to set the U.S. economy's interest rates?

The inclination based on the Consumer Price Index data alone may be to go for broke and aggressively raise rates in a bid to tame the inflationary beast. But while the inflation report may be the last major data release before the rate-setting meeting, it is far from being the only information that central bankers will be chewing over.

And economic news from elsewhere – along with jitters from a market already rather spooked by two recent bank failures – may steady the Fed's hand. In short, monetary policymakers may opt to go with what the market has already seemingly factored in: an increase of 0.25-0.5 percentage point.

Here's why.

While it is true that inflation is proving remarkably stubborn – and a robust March job report may have put further pressure on the Fed – digging into the latest CPI data shows some signs that inflation is beginning to wane.

Energy prices fell 0.6% in February, after increasing 0.2% the month before. This is a good indication that fuel prices are not out of control despite the twin pressures of extreme weather in the U.S. and the ongoing war in Ukraine. Food prices in February continued to climb, by 0.4% – but here, again, there were glimmers of good news in that meat, fish and egg prices had softened.

Although the latest consumer price report isn't entirely what the Fed would have wanted to read – it does underline just how difficult the battle against inflation is – there doesn't appear to be enough in it to warrant an aggressive hike in rates.

Certainly it might be seen as risky to move to a benchmark higher than what the market has already factored in. So, I think a quarter point increase is the most likely scenario when Fed rate-setters meet later this month – but certainly no more than a half point hike at most.

This is especially true given that there are signs that the U.S. economy is softening. The latest Bureau of Labor Statistics' Job Openings and Labor Turnover survey indicates that fewer businesses are looking as aggressively for labor as they once were. In addition, there have been some major rounds of layoffs in the tech sector.

Housing has also slowed amid rising mortgage rates and falling prices. And then there was the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank – caused in part by the Fed's repeated hikes in its base rate.

This all points to "caution" being the watchword when it comes to the next interest rate decision. The market has priced in a moderate increase in the Fed's benchmark rate; anything too aggressive has the potential to come as a shock and send stock markets tumbling.

SAN FRANCISCO BOARD OPEN TO REPARATIONS WITH \$5M PAYOUTS

THE BUZZ

Payments of \$5 million to every eligible Black adult, the elimination of personal debt and tax burdens, guaranteed annual incomes of at least \$97,000 for 250 years and homes in San Francisco for just \$1 a family.

These were some of the more than 100 recommendations made by a city-appointed reparations committee tasked with the thorny question of how to atone for centuries of slavery and systemic racism. And the San Francisco Board of Supervisors hearing the report for the first time yesterday [Macau time] voiced enthusiastic support for the ideas listed, with some saying money should not stop the city from doing the right thing.

Several supervisors said they were surprised to hear pushback

from politically liberal San Franciscans apparently unaware that the legacy of slavery and racist policies continues to keep Black Americans on the bottom rungs of health, education and economic prosperity, and overrepresented in prisons and homeless populations.

"Those of my constituents who lost their minds about this proposal, it's not something we're doing or we would do for other people. It's something we would do for our future, for everybody's collective future," said Supervisor Rafael Mandelman, whose district includes the heavily LGBTQ Castro neighborhood.

The draft reparations plan, released in December, is unmatched nationwide in its specificity and breadth.

ASSAULT ON ARCHAEOLOGIST TRIGGERS PROTESTS IN GREECE

DEREK GATOPOULOS, ATHENS

STATE-employed archaeologists in Greece launched strike action yesterday [Macau time] to protest an assault on an archaeologist responsible for the resort island of Mykonos, an attack they say may have been linked to commercial pressure to extend tourism development.

Manolis Psarros, an employee of the state archaeological service, was beaten by an unidentified man with a possible accomplice in Athens last week and was left unconscious and bleeding in the street. The 53-year-old was taken to a state hospital in the Greek capital and is currently recovering at home.

Archaeologists employed by the Culture Ministry staged a five-hour work stoppage to protest what their association described as a "mafia-style attack."

Despina Koutsoumba, the head of the protesting archaeologists' association, said Psarros has dealt with multiple cases involving alleged violations on Mykonos and had been called as a witness in the past in trials resulting from those cases.

"He has no trouble in his



State-employed archaeologists in Greece hold placards as they launched strike action outside the Culture Ministry in Athens

personal life debts or anything like that that would justify anything like this. This was a professional attack," Koutsoumba told The Associated Press.

"He was struck from behind before getting into his car. He lost consciousness and was hit after that. He has broken ribs and extensive bruising."

The protest was joined by ministry employees in Athens as well as the national Association of Archaeological Conservators. They are seeking additional police protection for public officials involved in contentious inspections and will refuse to handle cases from Mykonos until the end of the month when they plan to visit the island.

Planning permission in Greece is often subject to a veto by the local archaeo-

logical service, which is tasked with protecting the country's ancient heritage.

One of Greece's best known holiday destinations, Mykonos was settled in ancient times and hosts an archaeological museum. It is located next to the tiny and uninhabited island of Delos, an ancient commercial, religious and political center that is considered one of Greece's most important archaeological sites.

"There are problems caused by the high level of tourism development on many islands, but Mykonos is by far the worst," Koutsoumba said.

The Culture Ministry condemned the assault, while Mykonos Mayor Constantinos Koukas described the beating as a "criminal and brazen attack that has shocked us all." MDT/AP



France Opponents of French President Emmanuel Macron's pension plan are staging an eighth round of strikes and protests as a joint committee of senators and lower-house lawmakers examines the contested bill. The latest step in the legislative process to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 is prompting a peak of political tensions and one key question: Will the bill command a parliamentary majority?



USA Facebook parent Meta is slashing 10,000 jobs, about as many as the social media company announced late last year in its first round of cuts, as uncertainty about the global economy hits the technology sector particularly hard. The company announced 11,000 job cuts in November, about 13% of its workforce at the time. In addition to the layoffs, Meta said that it would not fill 5,000 open positions.

Morocco will join Spain and Portugal in a bid to host the 2030 World Cup, the African nation announced. The announcement was made through a statement signed by King Mohammed VI and read at a meeting of the Confederation of African Football. "The Kingdom of Morocco has decided, together with Spain and Portugal, to present a joint bid to host the 2030 World Cup," the statement said.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Zac Goodwin/PA via AP



Striking. Canada's Michelle Li in action during day one of the YONEX All England Open Badminton Championships in Birmingham.



Music Legendary British singer-songwriter Cat Stevens will release a new album of original songs this summer that took the "Peace Train" hitmaker over a decade to make and revisits familiar themes of togetherness. The 12-song collection is called "King of a Land" and comes out in June on George Harrison-founded Dark Horse Records. The album cover illustration shows a boy playing guitar on top of the Earth, as a cat stretches and a train puffs along a track.