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TWO KENYAN RUNNERS WILL TAKE PART IN THE 2023 SANDS CHINA MACAO INTERNATIONAL 10 KM RACE ON SUNDAY MORNING: SPORTS BUREAU

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HK, MACAU OFFICE TO REPORT DIRECTLY TO PARTY'S CENTRAL LEADERSHIP

▲ P2

BAIDU UNVEILS CHATGPT-RIVAL ERNIE BOT; 650 COMPANIES SIGN UP

▲ P6



AP PHOTO



North Korea test-launched an intercontinental ballistic missile yesterday morning just hours before the leaders of South Korea and Japan were to meet at a Tokyo summit expected to be overshadowed by North Korean nuclear threats. The North's first ICBM test in a month and third weapons test this week also comes as South Korean and U.S. troops continue joint military exercises that Pyongyang considers a rehearsal to invade.

War games The United States, Canada, India, Japan and South Korea are staging joint anti-submarine warfare drills amid talks between Japanese and South Korean leaders aimed at strengthening their alliance with Washington against threats from China and North Korea. The Sea Dragon 23 exercises this week will culminate in more than 270 hours of in-flight training "ranging from tracking simulated targets to the final problem of tracking a U.S. Navy submarine."

AP PHOTO



USA-India Former Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti won confirmation yesterday [Macau time] from a divided Senate as the nation's next ambassador to India, more than a year and a half after he was first nominated by President Joe Biden and after weathering doubts about his truthfulness in a sexual harassment scandal involving a City Hall adviser. The 52-42 vote gave the administration a long-sought victory.

More on backpage

TROUBLE SLEEPING

74% Macau students have poor sleep quality: Study ▲ P5



MDT ARCHIVE

GAMING

ID NOT FULLY AWARE OF BIG SIX PROPOSALS FOR SPORTS EVENTS

▲ P5



INVISIBLE MONEY

▲ P11

PAL TO RESUME FLIGHTS TO MACAU IN MAY

Flag carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL) has announced the airline will resume regular flights between Manila and Macau, and will ramp up the frequency of flights between Manila and Beijing, China, to six-weekly by May. Quoting the airline's president, Stanley Ng, the state media outlet reported the "decision to invest in these nonstop flights means that we can help boost tourism and introduce more foreign visitors to enjoy our local attractions and some of the world's best beaches and adventure destinations." The airline is expecting continued strong market recovery, hence there are plans to enhance and upgrade the fleet.

TAIWAN'S USD165 SUBSIDY APPLICABLE TO HK, MACAU TOURISTS

Taiwan earlier this month announced an initiative that seeks to attract travelers mainly from Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Macau, Europe and America, by paying up to USD165 to half a million tourists to visit the island. The government said it will provide aid of up to USD658 to 90,000 tourist groups. The subsidy will be sent digitally, and tourists will be able to use the funds to cover their expenses, including accommodation and food. According to authorities, the strategy seeks to attract six million tourists by the end of 2023, double that number by 2024 and achieve 10 million visitors by 2025.

OVER 4,500 PENSIONERS FAILED TO PROVIDE PROOF-OF-LIFE

Of the approximately 148,000 beneficiaries receiving old-age and disability pension this year, about 4,559 still have not yet provided proof-of-life, the Social Security Fund (FSS) has said. According to the law, beneficiaries are required to provide proof-of-life every year, otherwise their pension payment will be affected. If a beneficiary has not provided proof-of-life by the end of March, the related pension payment will be suspended from April, the bureau said.

CITYWIDE CONSUMPTION CARNIVAL ENDS WITH GRAND LUCKY DRAW FOR MOPIM

A total of 78 lucky draw winners in the Consumption Carnival won prizes including cash, catering and accommodation services worth MOP3 million, among them cash prizes totaling MOP1 million. The list of winners was published on the official webpage yesterday. The carnival, which concluded at the end of February, was organized by the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSEDT) and the Macao Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and sponsored by various companies. About 23,000 merchants participated. MOP1 billion e-coupons were distributed during the four-month event, boosting over MOP1.65 billion of consumption. The grand lucky draw winners were drawn from 21 million eligible transactions.

EDMUND HO: QUALITY DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT ALWAYS EQUAL ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

ANTHONY LAM

AT a seminar hosted by Beijing's representative in Macau yesterday, former Chief Executive Edmund Ho highlighted the unnecessary conflation of quality development and advanced technology.

Ho, vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), reminded the audience at the Sharing Seminar of the Spirits of the Two Sessions – hosted by the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in Macao SAR – that differentiating between quality development – a goal set by Beijing – and development towards advanced technology is critical.

In Chinese political tradition, CPPCC vice chairs are categorized as national leaders.

In elaboration, he said quality development should be sought in a manner suitable for the places concerned. For example, he said, introducing an advanced technology company in Macau that only hires a workforce of a dozen people may not be suitable



for the city.

Moreover, he pointed out that however Macau is to thrive, the "base field" of "one center, one platform, one base" and One Country, Two Systems should be safeguarded. He stressed that by innovation, Chinese people should not expect an overhaul. Rather, long-existing but still useful characteristics should be kept.

Meanwhile, Ho also suggested implementing policies and even public funds to encourage Macau youths to relocate to the mainland part of the Greater Bay Area. He also suggested local associations and personages do more to

promote this goal.

At the same occasion, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng pledged the government would closely follow Beijing's directives of developing the Macau economy, by means such as attracting international clientele. Strategies will also be formulated regarding youth.

Recapping the National People's Congress (NPC) plenary, leader of the Macau NPC delegation, Lao Ngai Leong, said the entire agenda of the NPC plenary had been concluded. He added that the past five years were very "unusual" and the country has faced "multiple tests."

Chui Sai Cheong, CPPCC

Macau member, added the last five years had seen the country under pressure exerted by the US and its allies. However, China managed to overcome these challenges and eventually achieved 5.2% economic growth. He also encouraged local entrepreneurs as President Xi Jinping spoke highly about private enterprises.

Director Zheng Xincong of the Liaison Office said people in Macau should "unify thoughts and actions" with the spirits of the Two Sessions, maintain Macau's stability and momentum of development, as well as achieve quality development in Macau.

Beijing merges HK, Macau Affairs Office

STAFF REPORTER

THE Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council has established the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the Central Committee and will no longer retain the separate Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council.

The Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the Central Committee is responsible for the investigation, research, overall planning, coordination, and supervision of the implementation of the 'One country, two systems' policy, the implementation of the

central government's overall governance power, the rule of law in Hong Kong and Macau, the maintenance of national security, as well as the support of Hong Kong and Macau's integration into the overall development of the country.

The changes imply the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office will answer to the party's Central Committee instead of the State Council, according to an institutional reform proposal released yesterday.

The announcement came just three days after China concluded its annual meetings of the legislature and top political advisory body.



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

RENATO MARQUES



Wilfred Wong



Pun Weng Kun

Kenyan athletes return to Macau runs for the 10K

RENATO MARQUES

TWO Kenyan runners will take part in the 2023 Sands China Macao International 10K event due to occur this Sunday morning.

The two athletes, one in the male category and another in the female category, are participa-

ting in the event by invitation of the Sports Bureau (ID), the president of ID, Pun Weng Kun, told the media on the sidelines of the event's press conference launch yesterday.

"We have invited some athletes to come to Macau, namely from Kenya and from the mainland. From Kenya we have one male and one female athlete,"

Pun said, noting there are several athletes from different countries listed who have registered for the event.

According to the same official, local athletes account for around 60% of the total runners, the remaining 40% hailing from 37 countries and regions.

In his speech, the ID president also noted the competition

route of the event covers "many scenic spots along the coastline of Macau, including Sai Van Lake Square, Kun Iam Ecumenical Center, Macao Science Center and Sai Van Bridge, among others. It will allow the participants, while enjoying the fun of the race, enjoy also the fascinating scenery along the way and experience the city's charm through running."

He added he hopes the athletes, after the race, "can also experience Macau's unique tourism attractions and try the local food as a way to create a synergy between sports and tourism and to boost the development of other industries."

The competition is offering some MOP700,000 in total prize money to the winners of the different races, which have starting signals planned for 7 a.m. Sunday (Fun Race) and 7.30 a.m., when the main 10K race will commence.

The run starts at the Sai Van Lake Square, next to Macau Tower, and has the Macau Olympic Stadium in Taipa as a finish line, which is why the ID has called on the population to pay attention to the traffic arrangements during the event.

During the press conference, the president of Sands China Limited (Sands), Wilfred Wong, also noted Sands is committed to the development of local sports as well as the development of Macau as a major sporting events destination, expressing hope the 10K will also have positive effects on this part.

He also noted that Sands is "leading by example," and has organized over 250 team members to participate in both the Fun Run and 10K events as part of the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Additionally, Sands has also invited the Macau Special Olympics and the Richmond Fellowship of Macau to participate in the event to raise public awareness of disabled athletes and promote inclusion.

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LAWMAKER DEEMS IMPROVING WORKPLACE INJURY COMPENSATION NEEDED

ANTHONY LAM

LAWMAKER Ella Lei is seeking, in her latest written inquiry, reviews on laws concerning workplace accidents and occupational diseases to expand protection for laborers.

The lawmaker said current laws were promulgated during the 1980s and 90s but have not seen any major amendment or overhaul since then. The only amendments made are to the upper and lower limits of payable compensation. Nothing has been done about overall policies, the mechanism and procedure for compensation, as well as enhancing support for victims, she said.

She also noted that the Decree-law concerns the concept and identification of work-related accidents, treatment costs, payment during downtime, compensation for disability or death, and support for victims, making it critical for victimized employees.

"Some of the provisions have become dated and unsuitable for the current society," Lei commented, citing real-life examples, such as conflicts between doctors' and



JOSUE FIGUEROA

insurance companies' understandings of necessary injury leave.

As such, the lawmaker questioned the government, except for previously disclosed regular meetings between competent bureaus and private sectors, as to what additional work the government has planned to do in refining the com-

ensation framework.

On the other hand, she asked how the government would plan to refine the mechanism so as to align insurance companies' opinions with medical advice. She also asked if there is necessity to review the list of work-related injuries.

ECONOMIC SUPPORT IS STILL A CONCERN FOR RON LAM

In a separate inquiry, lawmaker Ron Lam raised questions regarding economic revivals, tourism development, employment support and consumption subsidies.

The lawmaker said the city saw a rebound of tourism during the first two months of the year, such as a rise in tourist arrival figures and hotel occupancy rates. However, local employment data has not dropped as obviously as the tourism data has risen.

Lam noted the local workforce's unemployment rate was still high at 4.3% in the period between November 2022 and January. It nearly doubled the figure from the pre-Covid period. The underemployment rate, on the other hand, was 3.2% for the aforementioned period, which was eight times the pre-Covid figure.

He further said that among the unemployed people looking for new jobs, most were engaged in the gaming and gaming junket industry and construction industry before this uptick in unemployment.

"How to help gaming practitioners reasonably transfer to industries and positions that are sufficient to maintain their expenditure and solve structural problems is a situation that the government must face," Lam emphasized.

He also disclosed that some local construction workers reportedly could not find jobs, which were occupied by non-local laborers. He criticized, if the reports were true, that the government's aim to boost employment with skill refinement had become empty talk.

Therefore, he asked the government how it would ensure additionally trained laborers would be matched with vacancies on corresponding levels, so as to ensure reasonable use of public resources, as some trained laborers were told to accept jobs at the most foundational levels.

Furthermore, he asked the government how it would help drive tourists to support traditional districts and whether it would consider issuing another round of consumption subsidy to support those still unemployed.

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SHENG KUNG HUI

74% students have poor sleep quality: Research

STAFF REPORTER

RESearch shows 37% of interviewed middle school students sleep more than seven hours, and 25% sleep fewer than six hours. Students who cannot fall asleep within 30 minutes more than three times weekly constitute 20% of respondents.

The Sheng Kung Hui Macau Social Services Coordination Office conducted a survey from November 2022 to January and collected 1,583 valid responses.

The survey shows average sleep quality is rated at 7.77 points; over 74% of students scored higher than 5 points for their sleep quality, which means poor sleep quality. However, 70% of the interviewees rated themselves as having high or relatively high-quality sleep, which shows people's recognition of their own sleep or health quality may be inconsistent with their real conditions.

Of interviewed junior high school students, 47.5% sleep seven hours, while for senior high school students the proportion is 24.1%.

Of the interviewed students,

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



30% to 50% suffered severe or extremely severe anxiety, and 19% felt depressed. Pressures come from academic performance, family and peers, the survey showed, adding that intermediate school students reported better emotional conditions than senior high school students.

The level of anxiety, depression, stress and sleep quality are correlated. People with family pressures and who lack an exercise habit have the worst sleep quality and emotional conditions.

"Friends" are most often chosen as the people to talk to when interviewees feel pressure, making

up 70.4% of the total, while "parents" and "classmates" only make up 27% and 26.1%, respectively. Some teenagers said friends are the ones who truly understand them; they think sharing their worries with teachers or tutors will "make things seem severe."

The survey results show the sleep quality of middle school students is related to depression, anxiety and stress. It is advised to adopt meditation or brief rest intervals in schools, increase the monitoring mechanisms for the mental health of the adolescent population, and create resources for emotional education.

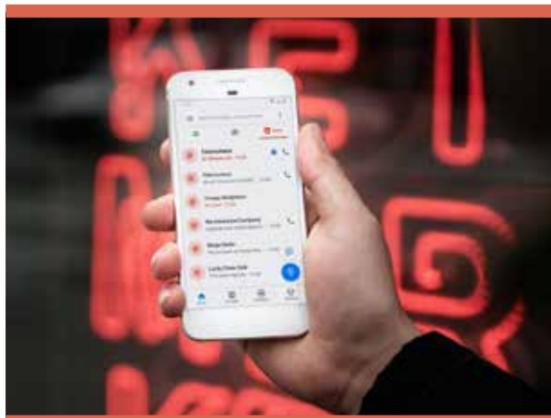
Security secretary emphasizes individual efforts in stopping scams

ANTHONY LAM

AMID the police's crackdown efforts, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak has emphasized in a blog post the importance of individual efforts in stopping scams.

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has recently disclosed that the first two months of the year saw 3.3- and 1.5-fold more phone and cyber scams year-over-year, equating to MOP17 million in losses.

Wong noted the insensitivity of some members of the public against scams "is undoubtedly" the main reason behind the high occurrence of telecom scams. He described these members of the public as "lacking a sense of alert[ness]" when using telecom services, which are inevitable in contemporary days' socialization, education



and work.

Covid-19 restrictions, meanwhile, have also obstructed interpersonal interactions and, "to a certain extent", hindered anti-crime communications.

At the same time, he also blamed violators for manipulating topics of public interest or concern, such as Covid-19 preventive measures, subsidy applications and job recruitments, into

seemingly credible scripts to increase the odds of success.

With that being said, members of the public should be clear about their responsibilities in fighting against scams, Wong emphasized. They should not have a "numb or contemptuous attitude" towards anti-fraud information, should not distance themselves from reported or cracked cases, and should exerci-

se their efforts in helping disperse the message to people around them - with particular mention given to vulnerable groups.

At the same time, the security official pledged the police departments would continue deploying their efforts in "realistically heightening the alert and the ability to prevent scams" across society.

The police, Wong added, will continue updating and dispersing information against scams through their community networks as well as through conventional and social media. Preventive and crackdown efforts of the police, Wong added, would be constantly improved. Society will also be notified in a timely fashion of the latest criminal inclination and methodologies.



SPORTS

VOLLEYBALL NATIONS LEAGUE TO ONLY RETURN TO MACAU IN 2024

RENATO MARQUES

THE FIVB Volleyball Women's Nations League (VNL) is likely to return to Macau next year, the president of Sports Bureau (ID), Pun Weng Kun, told the media on the sidelines of the launching of the Dragon Boat Races event.

Responding to media, the ID president said, "In the previous years, the volleyball tournament [has] always gathered a lot of interest. We don't know yet if it is in any way possible to return to Macau this year as we already have a lot of events on our calendar, but we have presented [a proposal] revealing our interest in organizing the event next year."

The 2023 VNL is its fifth edition. The competition will be held between May 30 and July 16 and the final round will take place in College Park Center, Arlington, USA.

This year's edition is already confirmed to take place in the neighboring region of Hong

Kong where the Week 2 of Pool 3 of the preliminary round stage will take place.

The Hong Kong round will take place between June 13 and 18 and will have the participation of teams such as China, Bulgaria, Canada, Dominican Republic, Italy, Netherlands, Poland and Turkey.

Asia also has a significant role in hosting the Pool stage of the 2023 VNL event this year with four of six events to take place in Asian countries and regions, including Japan, South Korea, and Thailand, as well as Hong Kong. The only two events not hosted in Asia are to take place in Brazil and Turkey, respectively.

The last time Macau hosted an event was in 2019 with the 2020 edition being canceled amid the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. The competition resumed in 2021 but without Macau as host of any event due to the border restrictions. These also stopped the competition from returning in 2022.

ID NOT FULLY AWARE OF BIG SIX PROPOSALS FOR SPORTS

SPEAKING to the media on the sidelines of the launching of this year's Dragon Boat Races event, the Sports Bureau (ID) president, Pun Weng Kun, said the entity responsible for supervising all sports events and activities in Macau is not fully aware of which kind of events or activities have been proposed by the six gaming concessionaires (Big Six) in relation to sports.

Responding to media questions, Pun said the concessionaires are not dealing with this matter with the ID but, instead, are negotiating directly with the government. He noted the ID is only aware of part

of the proposals when the government discloses the details.

According to the same official, so far it is known there is the intention of resuming several events that have occurred in the past such as tennis, golf and martial arts, but that none of these events have been completely greenlighted or placed in the annual event calendar to date.

On Wednesday, the executive director of SJM, Daisy Ho, revealed the company's proposal included hosting or financing all events so far mentioned, not being clear at this point, what the proposals of the other concessionaires are. **RM**

TECH

TAIWAN CHIP PIONEER WARNS US PLANS WILL BOOST COSTS

TAIJING WU, TAIPEI

U.S. government efforts to shift production of processor chips from Asia to the United States will double their cost and slow the spread of their use in phones, cars and other products, the billionaire founder of the global industry's biggest manufacturer warned yesterday.

Morris Chang of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp. said he can't understand why Washington wants to move so much manufacturing from efficient Asian sites to the United States.

The Biden administration is promising tens of billions of dollars to support construction of U.S. chip foundries and reduce reliance on Asian suppliers, which Washington sees as a security weakness. TSMC is building an Arizona faci-

lity and plans a second for a total investment of \$40 billion.

TSMC has estimated chip costs in Arizona at 50% above its flagship production line in Taiwan, but the real level looks closer to double, said Chang. The veteran of Texas Instruments Inc. founded the company in 1987 and was its chairman until 2018.

"Maybe it's double the cost," Chang said. "When the cost goes up, the pervasiveness of chips will either stop or slow down considerably."

TSMC said in 2021 that it planned to invest \$100 billion over three years in expanding its manufacturing capacity and supporting research and development. It also is building a \$7 billion computer chip plant in southern Japan with Japanese entertainment and electronics giant Sony Corp.

Chang, 91, is regarded as the

founder of the semiconductor industry that made Taiwan, with 22 million people, a global tech center.

Processor chips are a sore point in U.S.-Chinese relations that increasingly are strained by conflicts over security, technology, human rights and territorial disputes.

China's ruling Communist Party is spending billions of dollars to develop its own chip vendors and reduce reliance on imports. Washington has tried to slow that by restricting access to chips, manufacturing equipment and design technology on security grounds.

U.S. policy is "to slow down China's progress in chips," Chang said.

However, Chang said he didn't understand why Washington wants to move so much manufacturing from Taiwan to the United States. He said U.S. officials don't



Former TSMC CEO, Morris Chang

see Taiwan as a site for "friend shoring," or using manufacturing in allied countries to reduce exposure to global supply risks.

The United States accounts for about 11% of global chip manufacturing, according to Chang. He said that should be more than enough for military needs.

"If it's just for national security, it doesn't have to be that high," Chang said. "National security, defense (need) maybe only a couple of percent of chip manufacturing."

TSMC was the first foundry to produce chips only for customers without designing its own. That allowed smaller designers to compete with industry giants without spending billions of dollars to build a factory.

TSMC has grown into the biggest chip producer, supplying Apple Inc., Qualcomm Inc. and other customers. TSMC-produced chips are in millions of smartphones, automobiles and high-end computers. MDT/AP

TECH

Baidu unveils ChatGPT-rival Ernie Bot; 650 companies sign up

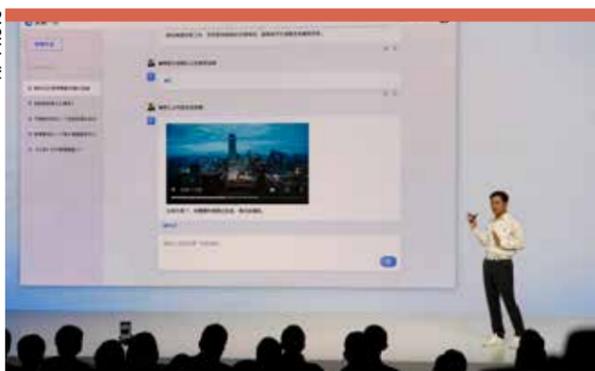
CHINESE search giant Baidu unveiled its artificial intelligence chatbot Ernie Bot, presenting its rival to the Microsoft-backed ChatGPT in a pre-recorded video presentation yesterday that appeared to investors.

Baidu CEO Robin Li said Ernie Bot was still not perfected, but the company went ahead with presenting it due to high demand. Shares plunged 10% after Li showed a prerecorded demonstration of the Ernie bot instead of the real-time live demonstration of its capabilities that many had expected. They closed down 6.4%.

During the demonstration, Ernie Bot was asked questions about a Chinese science-fiction novel, "The Three-Body Problem," and was asked to make an image based on prompts.

The Ernie in Ernie Bot stands for "Enhanced Representation of Knowledge Integration."

"Baidu has for over a decade persisted in investing in artificial intelligence ...



Baidu CEO Robin Li introduces the functions of Ernie Bot during an event in Beijing yesterday

Ernie Bot is the result of many years of hard work," said Li. He said the first version of Ernie Bot was developed in 2019.

Li said 650 companies had signed up to use Ernie Bot, which can be implemented in a variety of applications such as searches, AI cloud, autonomous driving and in smart devices.

The Ernie Bot launch comes months after OpenAI's ChatGPT was first released, demonstrating the AI-chatbot's ability in answering questions and even writing essays. Baidu is among several Chinese

firms working on similar chatbots.

In February, Baidu first mentioned that the internal testing of its Ernie Bot was almost complete. The company, known in China for its search engine, has shifted its focus in recent years to artificial intelligence, including working on autonomous driving technology and other AI applications.

In its 2022 fiscal year, the company says it spent 23.3 billion yuan (\$3.4 billion) on research and development, equivalent to about a fifth of its revenue. MDT/AP

SOCIAL MEDIA

BEIJING SAYS US SPREADING DISINFORMATION, SUPPRESSING TIKTOK

CHINA accused the United States yesterday of spreading disinformation and suppressing TikTok following reports that the Biden administration was calling for its Chinese owners to sell their stakes in the popular video-sharing app.

The U.S. has yet to present evidence that TikTok threatens its national security and was using the excuse of data security to abuse its power to suppress foreign companies, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told reporters at a daily briefing.

"The U.S. should stop spreading disinformation about data security, stop suppressing the relevant company, and provide an open, fair and non-discriminatory environment for foreign businesses to invest and operate in the U.S.," Wang said.

TikTok was dismissive of a report in The Wall Street Journal that said the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., part of the Treasury Department, was threatening a U.S. ban on the

app unless its owners, Beijing-based ByteDance Ltd., divested.

"If protecting national security is the objective, divestment doesn't solve the problem: A change in ownership would not impose any new restrictions on data flows or access," TikTok spokesperson Maureen Shanahan said.

Shanahan said TikTok was already answering concerns through "transparent, U.S.-based protection of U.S. user data and systems, with robust third-party monitoring, vetting, and verification."

The Journal report cited anonymous "people familiar with the matter." The Treasury Department and the White House's National Security Council declined to comment.

In late February, the White House gave all federal agencies 30 days to wipe TikTok off all government devices. Some agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security and the State Department already have restrictions in place. The White House

already does not allow TikTok on its devices.

Congress passed the "No TikTok on Government Devices Act" in December as part of a sweeping government funding package. The legislation does allow for TikTok use in certain cases, including for national security, law enforcement and research purposes.

Meanwhile, lawmakers in both the House and Senate have been moving forward with legislation that would give the Biden administration more power to clamp down on TikTok.

TikTok remains extremely popular and is used by two-thirds of teens in the U.S. But sources say "there is increasing concern that Beijing could obtain control of American user data that the app has obtained."

China has long been concerned about the influence of overseas social media and communications apps, and bans most of the best-known ones, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube — and TikTok. MDT/AP

DIPLOMACY

Japan, South Korea renew ties at Tokyo summit

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

JAPAN and South Korea agreed to resume regular visits between their leaders and took steps to resolve a trade dispute as a highly anticipated summit began yesterday, a sign that the two countries are rebuilding their nations' security and economic ties as they try to overcome a century of difficult history.

The summit could revise the strategic map of northeast Asia. The two U.S. allies, who have long often been at odds over their history, are seeking to form a united front, driven by shared concerns about a restive North Korea and a more powerful China.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol both stressed the importance of improved ties as they opened the summit, hours after a North Korean missile launch and encounters between Japanese and Chi-

nese vessels in disputed waters.

"I'm delighted that a chance has come for us to open a new chapter of Japan-South Korea relations together," Kishida said in his opening remark. He added that their meeting will mark the resumption of regular visits between the leaders, which have been on hold for more than a decade.

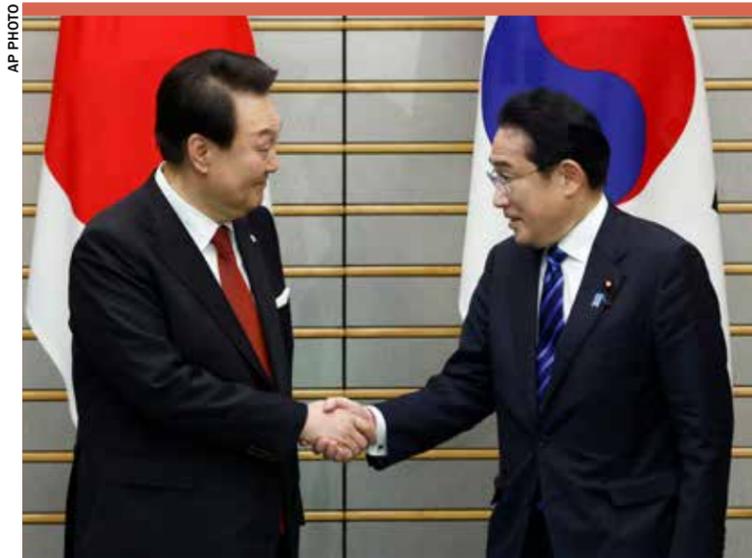
Yoon said yesterday's meeting "has special significance as it shows the people of both countries that South Korea-Japan relations are off to a new beginning after being plagued by various issues." He added that the two countries that share same democratic values "are partners that must cooperate on security, economic issues and global agendas."

Yoon said "the ever-escalating threat of North Korea's nuclear missile program poses a huge threat to peace and stability not only in East Asia but also to the (broader) international commu-

nity." "South Korea and Japan need to work closely together and in solidarity to wisely counter the threat," he added.

Hours before the summit began, South Korean Trade Minister Lee Chang-yang said that Japan had agreed to lift export controls on South Korea following talks this week, and that South Korea will withdraw its complaint to the World Trade Organization once the curbs are removed.

Japan and South Korea have long had disputes over the 1910-1945 Japanese colonization of the Korean Peninsula and atrocities during World War II, which included forced prostitution of "comfort women" for Japanese soldiers, and territorial disputes over a cluster of islands. Ties reached a nadir when the South Korean Supreme Court ordered Japanese companies to pay compensation to Korean victims or bereaved relatives in 2018, and Japan imposed trade sanctions on South Korea shortly after.



South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol (left) and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida shake hands, ahead of their bilateral meeting in Tokyo yesterday

Japanese Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry said Japan acknowledged improvement in South Korea export controls during the talks and that as a result of Seoul's decision to drop the WTO case, Japan decided to drop restrictions against South Korea and restore the country to the status it had before July 2019.

Japanese export controls had covered fluorinated polyimides, which are used in organic light-emitting diode (OLED) screens for TVs and smartphones, and photoresist and hydrogen fluoride, used for making semiconductors. Lee's ministry said the coun-

tries will continue to discuss restoring each other to preferred trade status.

Yesterday, a powerful Japanese business lobby, Keidanren, or the Japan Business Federation, also announced that it and its South Korean counterpart have agreed to each establish private funds for bilateral projects such as youth exchanges. Keidanren said they aim to start with funding worth 100 million yen (\$752,420).

A dozen business leaders traveling with Yoon are to meet their Japanese counterparts today. **MDT/AP**

AD

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ANALYSIS

With Saudi deals, US, China battle for influence in Mideast

AAMER MADHANI,
WASHINGTON

IN a matter of days, Saudi Arabia carried out blockbuster agreements with the world's two leading powers — China and the United States.

Riyadh signed a Chinese-facilitated deal aimed at restoring diplomatic ties with its arch-nemesis Iran and then announced a massive contract to buy commercial planes from U.S. manufacturer Boeing.

The two announcements spurred speculation that the Saudis were laying their marker as a dominant economic and geopolitical force with the flexibility to play Beijing and Washington off each other. They also cast China in an unfamiliar leading role in Middle Eastern politics. And they raised questions about whether the U.S.-Saudi relationship — frosty for much of the first two years of President Joe Biden's term — has reached a détente.

But as the Biden administration takes stock of the moment, officials are pushing back against the notion that the developments amount to a shift in the dynamics of the U.S.-China competition in the Middle East.

The White House scoffs at the idea that the big aircraft deal signals a significant change in the status of the administration's relations with Riyadh after Biden's fierce criticism early in his presidency of the Saudis' human rights record and of the Saudi-led OPEC+ oil cartel move to cut production last year.

But China's involvement in facilitating a resumption of Iran-Saudi diplomatic ties and the major Boeing contract — one the White House said it advocated for — have added a new twist to Biden's roller-coaster relationship with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

As a candidate for the White House, Biden vowed that Saudi rulers would pay a "price" under his watch for the 2018 killing of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a critic of the kingdom's leadership. More recently, after the OPEC+ oil cartel announced in October it was cutting production, Biden promised "consequences" for a move that the administra-



Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani (right), China's most senior diplomat Wang Yi (center) and Saudi Arabia's National Security Adviser Musaad bin Mohammed al-Aiban look on during an agreement signing ceremony between Iran and Saudi Arabia to reestablish diplomatic relations, in Beijing, last week

tion said was helping Russia.

Now, Washington and Riyadh seem intent on moving forward, and at moment when China is at least dabbling in a more assertive Middle East diplomacy.

Saudi officials kept the U.S. up to date on the status of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia on restarting diplomatic relations since they began nearly two years ago, according to the White House. Significant progress was made during several rounds of earlier talks hosted by Iraq and Oman, well before the deal was announced in China last week during the country's National People's Congress.

Unlike China, the U.S. does not have diplomatic relations with Iran and was not a party to the talks.

The Iran-Saudi relationship has been historically fraught and shadowed by a sectarian divide and fierce competition in the region. Diplomatic relations were severed in 2016 after Saudi Arabia executed prominent Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr. Protesters in Tehran stormed the Saudi Embassy and Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, vowed "divine revenge" for al-Nimr's execution.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan earlier this week said China was "rowing in the same direction" with its work at quelling tensions between the Gulf Arab nations that have been fighting proxy wars in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq for years.

"This is something that we think is positive insofar as it promotes what the United States has been promoting in the region, which is de-escalation, a reduction in tensions," Sullivan said.

Iran-allied Houthis seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014 and forced the internationally recognized government into exile in Saudi Arabia. A Saudi-led coalition armed with U.S. weaponry and intelligence entered the war on the side of Yemen's exiled government in 2015.

Years of inconclusive fighting created a humanitarian disaster and pushed the Arab world's poorest nation to the brink of famine. Overall, the war has killed more than 150,000 people, including over 14,500 civilians, according to The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.

A six-month cease-fire, the longest of the Yemen conflict, expired in October, but finding a permanent peace is among the administration's highest priorities in the Middle East.

Beijing swooped in on the Iran-Saudi talks at a moment when the fruit was already "ripening on the vine," according to one of six senior administration officials who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to discuss the private White House deliberations. The Iran-Saudi announcement coincided with Chinese leader Xi Jinping being awarded a third five-year term as the nation's president.

The official added that if

China can play a "reinforcing role" in ending hostilities in Yemen the administration would view that as a good thing. But both the White House and Saudi officials remain deeply skeptical of Iran's intentions in the Yemen war or more broadly acting as a stabilizing force in the region.

Xi this week called for China to play a bigger role in managing global affairs after Beijing scored a diplomatic coup with the Iran-Saudi agreement.

"It has injected a positive element into the peace, stability, solidarity and cooperation landscape of the region," China's Deputy U.N. Ambassador Geng Shuang told the U.N. Security Council yesterday [Macau time]. "We hope it can also create conducive conditions for improving the situation in Yemen."

To be certain, China — a major customer of both Iranian and Saudi oil — has been steadily increasing its regional political influence. Xi traveled to Riyadh in December and received Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Beijing last month.

But Miles Yu, director of the China Center at the Hudson Institute, said that Xi's call to be a more active player on the international stage would require Beijing to dramatically change its approach.

Not every move China takes to engage more deeply with the Middle East necessarily harms the United States, noted Sen. Chris Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat and a frequent critic of Saudi Arabia. MDT/AP

this day in history

1968 ANTI-VIETNAM DEMO TURNS VIOLENT



More than 200 people have been arrested after thousands of demonstrators clashed in an anti-Vietnam war protest outside the United States embassy in London.

The St John Ambulance Brigade said it treated 86 people for injuries. Fifty were taken to hospital including up to 25 police officers.

The trouble followed a big rally in Trafalgar square, when an estimated 10,000 demonstrated against American action in Vietnam and British support for the United States.

The mood at the rally was described as good humoured. The violence broke out when the protesters marched to the US embassy in Grosvenor Square.

The embassy was surrounded by hundreds of police. They stood shoulder to shoulder to cordon off the part of the square closest to the embassy.

Tensions rose as the crowd refused to back off and mounted officers rode at the demonstrators.

The protesters broke through the police ranks onto the lawn of the embassy, tearing up the plastic fence and uprooting parts of a hedge.

During a protracted battle, stones, earth, fire-crackers and smoke bombs were thrown.

One officer was treated for a reported serious spinal injury, another for a neck injury.

One officer had his hat knocked off and was struck continuously on the back of the head with a stick from a banner as he clung, head down, to his horse's neck.

Earlier the actress Vanessa Redgrave was allowed to enter the embassy with three supporters to deliver a protest.

She had been one of the speakers at the rally in Trafalgar Square.

Labour MP Peter Jackson, has said he will be tabling a private question for answer by the Home Secretary about what he called "police violence".

He told The Times newspaper: "I was particularly outraged by the violent use of police horses, who charged into the crowd even after they had cleared the street in front of the embassy."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

There was another big anti-Vietnam war demonstration on 27 October 1968. An estimated 25,000 took part in the march and once again trouble flared outside the US embassy in Grosvenor Square. But security was very tight. There were 1,000 police outside the embassy and officers lined the streets of the march to prevent a repeat of the trouble in March. The last American troops left Vietnam on 29 March 1973. The following year there were frequent violations of the peace treaty. In 1975, fullscale warfare resumed between North and South Vietnam -without American intervention. In 1976 the first elections were held to a National Assembly, finally reuniting North and South.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Don't let your partner get away with spending too much of your money. New romantic partners will evolve through group endeavors; however, the association may not be likely to last.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Concentrate on getting ahead financially and let your personal life settle down for a while. You can invest in profitable ventures. Self-improvement could bring amazing results.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
The battle continues. You might find group functions tiring. Travel will be enjoyable but could be expensive. Be discreet and don't reveal any personal information.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Try to calm down emotionally about personal financial matters. Now is the time to concentrate on building a strong financial future for your family.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Don't start any arguments unless you're prepared to accept irrevocable results. You may win favors if you present your ideas and include your family.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Be sure you get accurate information. You will be emotional with regard to your personal life. This is not the best day to visit relatives who get on your nerves.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You may not be too pleased with the actions of those you live with. You will be appreciated for the competence you exhibit and for taking on responsibilities.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Trips, educational pursuits, or projects that could lead to new outlooks should be on your agenda. Self-improvement could bring amazing results.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You should want to feel good about yourself and your goals. Changes regarding family members will set you off. You won't be able to keep a secret.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Don't lend to people who have given you negative vibes. Visit friends who have not been well. You will find that money could slip through your fingers.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Don't let others restrict you from saying how you feel about family issues. Be aware of deception when it comes to your position, and be sure not to jump to conclusions.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
It might be best to work on your own; if possible, do your job out of your home today. Get busy doing all those things at home that you have been putting off for so long.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	2	10	overcast
Changchun	-5	7	fine
Chengdu	11	18	overcast
Chongqing	14	19	overcast
Fuzhou	14	27	cloudy
Guangzhou	17	26	cloudy
Guiyang	10	15	overcast
Haikou	20	27	cloudy
Hangzhou	9	11	rain
Harbin	-9	6	fine
Hefei	5	6	rain
Nanjing	7	8	rain
Shanghai	8	10	rain
Taipei	15	21	cloudy
Wuhan	6	10	overcast
Hong Kong	21	24	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	-9	2	overcast
Frankfurt	7	17	overcast
Paris	10	17	cloudy
London	10	14	rain
New York	6	15	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Grange; 5- One cubic meter; 10- Fellow; 14- Mayberry moppet; 15- Occupied; 16- Prefix with -drome; 17- Medical suffix; 18- Upright; 19- Raised platform; 20- Final course; 22- Tread underfoot; 24- Hotel offering overnight accommodation; 25- Paranormalist Geller; 26- Part of speech; 30- Tidal river; 34- Hindu hero; 35- Center; 37- Movie-rating org.; 38- One-million link; 39- ___ the season...; 40- Part of ETA; 41- Repeat; 43- Ancient tongue; 45- Small songbird; 46- Cleansing preparation; 48- Governing bodies; 50- ___ be an honor; 51- Louis XIV, e.g.; 52- Place in position; 56- Shackle; 60- Just right; 61- Words on a Wonderland cake; 63- Girder type; 64- Dullard; 65- Gastropod mollusk; 66- Resting place; 67- Geraint's lady; 68- Shakers et al.; 69- Exultation;

DOWN 1- Nourishment; 2- Church section; 3- Reformer Jacob; 4- Sicilian port; 5- Breastbone; 6- Sharp to the taste; 7- Just manage, with "out"; 8- Four-sided fig.; 9- Confide; 10- White, ductile metallic element; 11- Jalopy; 12- Seed cover; 13- Prepare to be shot; 21- Ambient music pioneer; 23- Singer Garfunkel; 26- Gets nosy; 27- Cattle spot; 28- City on the Missouri; 29- Part of TNT; 30- Much of Mississippi?; 31- Separated; 32- Street show; 33- Tall tales; 36- Conk out; 42- Left out; 43- Atheistic; 44- Edible seed parts; 45- Lamenting loudly; 47- Sch. group; 49- Votes against; 52- Let ___; 53- High time?; 54- Dress often worn by Hindu women; 55- Alley; 56- Send forth; 57- Genesis shepherd; 58- Urn; 59- Romaine de Tirtoff, familiarly; 62- Tic ___ Dough;



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AD

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

MARK KENNEDY, MDT/AP
ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

DRIVE IN U2 DOCUMENTARY MARRED BY AN ODDBALL AMERICAN

DAVID Letterman joins Bono and The Edge in a new streaming documentary about U2 and one obvious question soon jumps out: What exactly is David Letterman doing here?

The droll, bushy-bearded American comedian is an odd choice to be master of ceremonies for this Disney+ project, unbalancing everything, even the title, "Bono & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming, with Dave Letterman."

Director Morgan Neville does a fabulous job using new interviews — including brilliant insights by musician Glen Hansard and producer Jimmy Iovine — and melding them with old performances as he explores the band's origins, song creations, highs and lows. But he's torn about whether this is a travel show or a music documentary and neither work well.

The film's spine is a concert by Bono and The Edge at the Ambassador Theatre in Dublin, Ireland, where they unveil some of the ways they've stripped down and reworked their catalogue for the new acoustic-led album "Songs of Surrender," including such songs as "Vertigo" "Bad" and "One."

But Letterman not only distracts, he gets in the way. We watch him wander around Du-

AP PHOTO



David Letterman and Bono at the premiere of "Bono & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming, With Dave Letterman"

blin shopping with his clueless, oddball sense of humor, as if the show was about him. "I'm interested in a wheel of cheese. I've never purchased a wheel of cheese," he says.

There's even a weird sequence in which Bono is reduced to drawing a map of Ireland for his

guest and unpacking the complex history of Irish-English animus. "Who do I dislike in this?" asks Letterman. The answer is Letterman.

The documentary does a masterful job of giving context to U2's rise, the social, religious and cultural changes taking place in the

late 1970s and '80s in Dublin, or as Bono says "as Ireland moves from black and white into color."

There are insights — some small, like that drummer Larry Mullen Jr.'s nickname growing up was "The Jam Jar," and some big, as when Bono reveals tensions within the band regarding his ac-

tivism — and moments to celebrate, like the band's important Super Bowl halftime show after 9/11.

But then there's Letterman popping up again — visiting polar swimmers or stopping by the recording studio, offering no real insight. Bono and The Edge even write him a goodbye song. Letterman is empty-handed.

Watching the documentary you start to realize how crucial The Edge is, and even get to listen to him sing a few songs and tell the story of how he came up with "Sunday Bloody Sunday" while delivering the riff on a guitar. Bono brings up how key his bandmate is, in a sweet way, live in concert.

"The thing I don't like about Edge is that he doesn't need me. He could be doing all of this — writing, singing, performing, playing, producing — on his own. But he doesn't," Bono says.

"Because it's not as much fun," The Edge replies.

The only thing that ruins this special chemistry is the film's third wheel — the American with the wheel of cheese.

"Bono & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming, with Dave Letterman," a Disney+ release streaming Friday, is rated TV-14. Running time: 124 minutes.★★★★

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MACAUCLOSER

AP PHOTO



A portrait of Leon Monet by his brother Claude Monet on display as part of an exhibition showcasing the art of Leon Monet, at the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris

ART

'Invisible' Monet, Leon, was key to impressionism

THOMAS ADAMSON, PARIS

BEHIND some great men, there is a bigger brother. Claude Monet's older sibling is the focus of a landmark Paris exhibit illuminating the hitherto unknown role Leon Monet played in the French impressionist painter's life and art. Leon — a color chemist four years his senior -- is now understood to

have been critical in the emergence of Monet's commercial success as well as the famed color palette that created masterpieces like the "Water Lilies" series.

"It's never been known before, but without Leon there would not have really been a Monet — the artist the world knows today," said Geraldine Lefebvre, exhibit curator at the Musée du Luxembourg.

"His rich big brother supported

him in the first period of his life when he had no money or clients and was starving," she said. "But more than that. The vivid palette Monet was famous for came from the synthetic textile dye colors Leon created" in the town of Rouen — site of some of Claude's best-known paintings.

The groundbreaking exhibit is the fruit of years of investigation by Lefebvre, who visited Monet's

great-grandchildren, studied family albums and brought to light a masterly portrait of Leon by Claude that Leon hid away in a dusty private collection and has never before been seen by the public. The 1874 painting shows Leon with a black suit, stern expression and red — almost wine-flushed — cheeks.

The exhibit dispels a long-held view that Claude and his older brother were estranged.

"Historians always thought the two brothers had nothing to do with each other. It was assumed because there are no photographs of Claude and Leon together, and no correspondence. In reality, they were incredibly close throughout their life," Lefebvre said.

The brothers had an argument in the early 1900s and that may explain why no direct traces of the relationship exist. "Maybe Leon got rid of the traces, maybe it was Claude. Maybe it was jealousy. We will never know. It is a mystery," Lefebvre said.

What is now known is that Leon would wine and dine his younger brother, introduce him to other artists, give him money, and patronize his art — buying it up at auction at high prices to boost his reputation.

"One of the problems was because they shared the surname it seemed like (Claude) Monet was buying back his own pictures. But it was Leon," said professor Frances Fowle, senior curator of French art at the National Galleries of Scotland.

"This exhibit is important as it throws light on Leon Monet, who up until now has been an invisible figure. It also reveals the wider network at work. Leon was a key figure," Fowle added.

Leon's influence went beyond his brother: He financially supported other impressionists such as Camille Pissarro, Auguste Renoir and Alfred Sisley — some of whom would connect around his dinner table in Rouen, where

the wine would flow freely. Claude followed his brother to Rouen, where he painted his Rouen cathedral masterpieces.

Monet also worked for his older brother as a color assistant, a pivotal moment not only in his life — but possibly in the emergence of impressionism as we know it.

Leon would dissolve carbon to create a chemical called aniline, which created incredible synthetic colors that natural pigments couldn't compete with. One of the earlier examples of Leon's color filtering down into Monet's art is from an 1860s illustration — before he was famous — that is featured in the exhibit. Monet drew his future wife Camille in a dress with an eye-popping green that had never been seen before.

"The French press coined the term 'Monet green,'" Lefebvre said, adding that journalists were initially mocking of it. "At the time, they said he would make a good dye artist."

However, both Monets had the last laugh.

Claude Monet founded impressionism — a term coined from his 1872 painting "Impression, Sunrise" — to become one of the most celebrated painters of the last two centuries. And by impressionism's height at the end of the 19th century, an incredible "80% of all impressionists' work" used the synthetic colors borrowed from Leon, according to Lefebvre.

These synthetic hues, which were cutting edge at the time, enabled members of the group to depict the fleeting impression of the moment with shifting colors and luminosity.

"Who knows the exact extent of the impact Leon had on the movement?" Lefebvre said with a shy smile. "But it was extraordinary."

"Leon Monet. Brother of the artist and collector" runs at the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris from March 15 until July 16. **MDT/AP**

Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



THE LEGAZPI 1050M SAND

2023-03-18|Sat|16:05

ORGANIC Winner can continue to improve in this coming Saturday's sand race, he has been tumbled to a suitable grade. His two previous two races saw **Organic Winner** had plenty left in his tank, he can take another step forward here it is no surprise to see him continue his upward trend. The one horse that might step in his way is Joy Of Friendship his old rival but he's draw in barrier seven which make things difficult for K.F. Choi his jock which also has to carry 133. This race could be the renewal of **Organic Winner** and Joy of Friendship again. I will put these two in all my exotics, but my top selection goes for **Organic Winner**.

Race 4 Horse no.3 Organic Winner Win and Place bets.



OPINION

China Daily

Li Yang, China Daily

HOW ENGLISH IS TAUGHT IS THE PROBLEM TO ADDRESS BY

Whether English deserves an equal status as Chinese and mathematics in the syllabuses of primary and middle schools, as well as in the college entrance exam, and whether a certain level of fluency in the language should be made a prerequisite for a bachelor degree even for those that do not major in it has generated heated debate among the country's top political advisors at their annual gatherings for several years.

Both sides of the argument sound reasonable. The opponents claim the nation has wasted its resources on English education as most college graduates, after learning the language for at least 15 years, still cannot adeptly use the language. The advancement of technology, such as artificial intelligence, makes their side of the argument more persuasive, since most college graduates do not need to use English with any frequency after graduation and they can rely on technology to overcome the language barrier when necessary.

The supporters argue that if English became an optional course, the country would have created an unnecessary obstacle for its opening-up to the world, as people-to-people exchanges would be more difficult, which is the foundation of good relations between countries.

As a matter of fact, the two sides have a broad consensus that is widely neglected, which is that they both agree on the importance of English as the most often used language in the world as well as the fact that there are serious problems with how the language is taught in the country and how the students' fluency in English is evaluated.

In other words, what rubs here should not be whether English education should be scrapped in the public education system but how it should be reformed to resolve the aforementioned problems.

To begin with, English education in China should divert more attention from teaching grammar to encouraging students to use it in their daily lives and academic studies by cultivating their interest in the language and inspiring them to create the necessary environment to practice it as much as possible.

Even if most students do not have the chance to converse with native speakers, the enjoyment they will obtain from being able to watch films, read novels and obtain important information in English can motivate them to take the initiative to study it. The test system should be reformed accordingly to reflect that it is a language first, and then a course.

Also, technology can make the process of learning a language more efficient and interesting, and the advancement of technology should by no means become an excuse for people to give up learning new skills.

Last but not least, those worrying learning English may result in the "spiritual pollution" of impressionable young minds go too far, as being bilingual, or multilingual, can effectively broaden people's vision and horizons so that they can have more sources to obtain information and knowledge, better develop critical thinking and use logic, all of which is conducive to their resisting "spiritual pollution".

CREDIT SUISSE SHARES SOAR AFTER CENTRAL BANK AID ANNOUNCED

THE BUZZ

Credit Suisse's shares soared 30% yesterday after it announced it will move to shore up its finances by borrowing up to nearly \$54 billion from the Swiss central bank, bolstering confidence as fears about the banking system moved from the U.S. to Europe.

It was a massive swing from a day earlier, when shares of Switzerland's second-largest commercial bank plunged 30% on the SIX stock exchange after its biggest shareholder said it would not put more money into Credit Suisse.

That dragged down other European banks after the collapse of some U.S. banks stirred fears about the health of global banks. Euro-

pean bank shares recovered a bit yesterday, with the Euro Stoxx Banks index of 21 leading lenders up 1.6%, following a steep 8.4% drop Wednesday.

Credit Suisse, which was beset by problems long before the U.S. bank failures, said Thursday that it would exercise an option to borrow up to 50 billion francs (\$53.7 billion) from the Swiss National Bank.

"This additional liquidity would support Credit Suisse's core businesses and clients as Credit Suisse takes the necessary steps to create a simpler and more focused bank built around client needs," the bank said.

AP PHOTO



Brazil's Environmental Agency, federal agents destroy an illegal mining barge inside Yanomami Indigenous territory

MUSK BROUGHT INTERNET TO BRAZIL'S AMAZON. CRIMINALS LOVE IT.

FABIANO MAISONNAVE, ATALAI DO NORTE

BRAZILIAN federal agents aboard three helicopters descended on an illegal mining site earlier this week in the Amazon rainforest.

They were met with gunfire, and the shooters escaped, leaving behind an increasingly familiar find for authorities: Starlink internet units.

Starlink, a division of Elon Musk's SpaceX, has almost 4,000 low-orbit satellites across the skies, connecting people in remote corners of the Amazon and providing a crucial advantage to Ukrainian forces on the battlefield.

The lightweight, high-speed internet system has also proved a new and valuable tool for Brazil's illegal miners, with reliable service for coordinating logistics, receiving advance warning of law enforcement raids and making payments without flying back to the city.

Agents from the Brazilian environment agency's special inspection group and the federal highway police rapid response group on Tuesday found one Starlink terminal up and running next to a pit, an officer who participated in the raid told The Associated Press. He spoke on condition of anonymity over concerns for his personal safety.

They also seized mercury, gold and ammuni-

tion, and destroyed fuel and other equipment used by miners in an area known as Ouro Mil, controlled by Brazil's most feared criminal organization, known as the First Command of the Capital, according to federal investigations.

Since taking office this year, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has sought to crack down on environmental violations, particularly illegal mining in Yanomami land, Brazil's largest Indigenous territory.

In recent years, an estimated 20,000 prospectors contaminated vital waterways with mercury used to separate gold. They have disrupted traditional Indigenous life, brought disease and caused widespread famine.

The environment agency, known as Ibama, has seized seven Starlink terminals in Yanomami land over the past five weeks, the agency's press office said.

Illegal miners have long used satellite internet to communicate and coordinate, but until now that entailed sending a technician, usually by plane, to install a heavy, fixed antenna that cannot be carried off when mining sites move or are raided. And the connection was slow and unstable, especially on rainy days.

Starlink – which first became available in Brazil last year and has spread rapidly – solved those problems. Installation is do-it-your-

self, the equipment works even on the move, speed is as fast as in Brazil's large cities and it works during storms.

Starlink has long viewed the Amazon as an opportunity. That was underscored by Musk's visit to Brazil last May, when he met with then-President Jair Bolsonaro.

"Super excited to be in Brazil for launch of Starlink for 19,000 unconnected schools in rural areas & environmental monitoring of Amazon," Musk tweeted at the time.

That project with the government hasn't advanced, however. SpaceX and the communications ministry haven't signed any contract, and only three terminals were installed in Amazon schools for a 12-month trial period, the ministry's press office said in an emailed response to questions.

Nevertheless, Starlink has taken off in the region and begun ushering in change.

In Atalaia do Norte, on the western reaches of the Brazilian Amazon near the borders with Peru and Colombia, Rubeney de Castro Alves installed Starlink at his hotel in December.

Now, he can make bank transfers and conduct video calls. He even started bingeing Netflix.

"There are so many new things to watch that I'm not even sleeping," Alves said, chuckling. **MDT/AP**

Russia offered to host a new multi-sports event for countries such as China and India which are members of a regional grouping known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Vladimir Putin previously suggested creating the event at an SCO summit in September. His suggestion came at a time when Russia is excluded from many events in Olympic sports following its invasion of Ukraine last year.

AP PHOTO



Ukraine The Pentagon yesterday released footage of what it says is a Russian aircraft conducting an unsafe intercept of a U.S. Air Force surveillance drone in international airspace over the Black Sea. The 42-second video shows a Russian Su-27 approaching the back of the MQ-9 drone and beginning to release fuel as it passes, the Pentagon said. The released excerpt does not show events before or after the apparent fuel-dumping confrontation.

AP PHOTO



Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau named a former governor general as a special investigator to look into allegations of Chinese interference in Canada's last two elections. Trudeau announced that David Johnston will take the role of special rapporteur. Johnston will decide if a public inquiry is needed and Trudeau said he will abide by recommendations.

AP FILE PHOTO



Hollywood Cameron Diaz's first film in nine years has reportedly been thrown into chaos after co-star Jamie Foxx's on set 'meltedown'. It's been reported the actor, 55, has become so unhappy with production on the London set of "Back In Action", four people have been sacked. The Netflix comedy will mark Cameron's return to acting after previously stepping from the spotlight to raise her son Raddix, three.