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“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

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MUST SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FACILITY IN COLOANE EXPECTED TO OPEN SOON, THE UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCED P6

TICKETS DISCOUNT PROGRAM TO EXTEND TO OVERSEAS TOURISTS ARRIVING VIA HK P5

ALIBABA'S JACK MA RESURFACES IN MAINLAND CHINA P8



AP PHOTO



Ukraine Two people were killed and 29 wounded yesterday when Russian forces shelled the Ukrainian city of Sloviansk, in the partially occupied eastern Donetsk region, local officials said. Video footage of the aftermath showed damaged residential buildings, debris in the streets and vehicles on fire. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky described the attack as "terrorism."

AP PHOTO



Ghana U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris yesterday praised Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo for his "democratic principles" during a visit with the West African leader, who's facing rising discontent over inflation and security. Harris is just beginning a weeklong trip to the continent that will also take her to Tanzania and Zambia, part of a concerted effort to broaden U.S. outreach at a time when China and Russia have entrenched interests of their own in Africa.

AP PHOTO



USA North Carolina-based First Citizens will buy Silicon Valley Bank, the tech industry-focused financial institution that collapsed earlier this month. The deal could reassure investors at a time of shaken confidence in banks, though the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and other regulators had already taken extraordinary steps to head off a wider banking crisis by guaranteeing that depositors in SVB and another failed U.S. bank would be able to access all of their money.

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SLOW TRAIN

Diversification into non-gaming to remain 'slow' amid billions in investments: Fitch P5



Michael Dunlop

GP HISTORY IN WAX P3

THE VIEW FROM MOSCOW AND BEIJING

WHAT PEACE IN UKRAINE AND A POST-CONFLICT WORLD LOOK LIKE TO XI AND PUTIN

RONALD SUNY

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

JUST a few days after being branded a war criminal in an international arrest warrant, Russian President Vladimir Putin was talking peace with his most important ally, Chinese president Xi Jinping.

The setting for the get-together was the late-15th-century Faceted Chamber, the ornate throne room of Muscovite grand princes and czars. The main topics of discussion were fittingly grandiose: How should hostilities in Ukraine end? And after the war is over, how should the international security system be reshaped?

The reaction of many in the West to the proposals put forward by China and discussed with Russia has been notably suspicious of intentions. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned the world not to be “fooled by any tactical move by Russia, supported by China ... to freeze the war on its own terms.”

Such sentiment is understandable. Putin launched a brutal, unprovoked war in Ukraine. Amid the heightened emotional environment of missile attacks on civilians, horrific atrocities against ordinary citizens and deportation of children from Ukraine, even a cool evaluation of ways to end the fighting, declare a cease-fire, and begin talks by the belligerents has led to accusations of appeasement. And the peace plan put forward by China on Feb. 24, 2023, and discussed with Putin during a March 20-22 meeting in Moscow has been criticized as overly vague and lacking concrete suggestions.

In such circumstances, it can be difficult to consider what the interest of the other side might actually be in bringing the killing to an end, and their sincerity of any purported efforts to do so.

But as a historian, I ask, what does the world look like from the other side? How has the run-up to the war and the war itself been understood by Russia and China? And what do Xi and Putin envision a post-conflict world to look like?

AP PHOTO



PLAYING BY THE RULES – BUT WHOSE?

The rulers of both Russia and China see the West-dominated “rules-based international order” – a system that has dominated geopolitics since the end of the Second World War – as designed to uphold the global hegemony of the United States.

The two men’s stated preference is for a multilateral system, one which would most probably result in a number of regional hegemony. This would include, to be sure, China and Russia holding sway in their own neighborhoods.

Xi put the matter rather gently during his Moscow trip: “The international community has recognized that no country is superior to others, no model of governance is universal, and no single country should dictate the international order. The common interest of all humankind is in a world that is united and peaceful, rather than divided and volatile.”

Reflecting his more street tough style, Putin was more blunt. Russia and China “have consistently advocated the shaping of a more just multipolar world order based on international law rather than certain ‘rules’ serving the needs of the ‘golden billion,’” he said, referencing a theory that holds that the billion people in the richest countries of the world consume the greatest portion of the world’s resources.

Continuing in this vein, Putin said the “crisis in Ukraine” was an example of the West trying to “retain its international dominance and preserve the unipolar world order” while splitting “the common Eurasian space into a network of ‘exclusive clubs’ and military blocs that would serve to contain our countries’ development and harm their interests.”

CHINA AS PEACEMAKER?

Beijing appears intent to play the role of negotiator-in-chief in this transition to a multipolar world order.

After its success shouldering aside the United States and brokering a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, China has turned its attention to Ukraine.

With its peace proposal on Ukraine, China has deftly established certain principles to which other nations would eagerly subscribe.

“The sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries must be effectively upheld. All countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community,” holds the first principle in language that would be hard to object to.

But those anodyne sentences point in two directions at once. Upholding sovereignty appears, at first, to be aimed at Russia a year after it had so clearly violated the sovereignty of neighboring

Ukraine. But the principle also can be read to include the conflict over Taiwan, which is recognized by Beijing and most other states as a part of China. It is perhaps no accident that the plan’s wording comes as the U.S., which officially recognizes the position that Taiwan and mainland China are one country, has toughened its stance, vowing to defend the island should it be invaded. To Beijing, the United States appears intent on turning a rival, China, into an enemy.

Nations, China asserts, have the right to enhance their security but not at the expense of others. This principle echoes directly one of Putin’s most frequently expressed reasons for the conflict with Ukraine: the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe and the alliance’s promise to expand further by admitting Georgia and Ukraine. In Putin’s view, such NATO encroachment is an existential threat to Russia’s security interests.

But the Chinese plan also rejects Putin’s nuclear saber-rattling: “The threat or use of nuclear weapons should be opposed.”

Meanwhile, the Chinese strongly insist on the need for an immediate cease-fire and the start of negotiations, a call that Washington vehemently rejected as a concession that amounted to “diplomatic cover for Russia to continue to commit” war crimes.

WHAT WILL RUSSIA SETTLE FOR?

Russia’s aims in the Ukraine war are simple enough to dissect, though they have been reduced after the effective Ukrainian resistance to the initial invasion.

Instead of taking over all of Ukraine, and perhaps setting up a puppet government, Moscow has been forced to accept limited territorial gains in the Donbas and the coastal crescent linking both the region and Russia with Crimea. Reduced though they are, such Russian goals are completely unacceptable to Ukraine and to the Western alliance – and, indeed, to all countries that accept that principle that international borders cannot be legitimately changed unilaterally by military force.

Although not clearly spelled out, this principle is even contained in the very first sentence of the Chinese peace plan: “Universally recognized international law, including the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, must be strictly observed.”

That notwithstanding, Putin has welcomed the intervention of China and the plan in general terms.

RIVAL GLOBAL AMBITIONS

So what’s in this for Beijing, given that to many, the peace plan is already a non-starter?

The conflict in Ukraine is not only devastating to the two belligerents involved, but destabilizing for states around the world. In the short run, China may be benefiting from the war because it consumes attention and armaments from the West and diverts its gaze from East Asia. The U.S. “pivot to the east” – a planned refocusing from the Obama administration onward aimed at countering the perceived threat of China – has stalled.

But there is an argument that Xi is most concerned with China’s renewal of economic development, which would rely on less confrontational relations with Europe and the United States. Stability, both domestically and internationally, works to China’s economic advantage as a major producer and exporter of industrial goods. And Beijing is mindful that a slump in foreign demand and investment is hitting the country’s economic prospects.

As such, Beijing’s new role as peacemaker – whether in the Middle East or Eastern Europe – may indeed be sincere. Further, Xi may be the only person on the globe able to persuade Putin to think seriously about a way out of war.

Standing in the way of peace, however, is not only the current intransigence of Russia and Ukraine. The United States’ long-held foreign policy aim of maintaining its “indispensable nation” status runs counter to Russia and China’s ambition to end American global dominance.

It presents two, seemingly insurmountable, rival ambitions. **MDT/THE CONVERSATION**

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RENATO MARQUES

Macau GP Museum unveils eight racers' wax figures

THE Macau Grand Prix Museum yesterday inaugurated eight new wax figures by Madame Tussauds, adding to the other racing memorabilia on display at the museum and concluding the full revamp of the space.

The announcement was made at a ceremony that included the presence of the Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, and other government officials. Work on the figures had commenced in 2018 but, due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, they can only now be added to the museum collection.

In the ceremony held yesterday afternoon were also two of the featured racers, Michael Rutter and Rob Huff, invited to the occasion by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

They will be joining John Macdonald, Ron Haslam, Ayrton Senna, Sebastian Vettel, Lewis Hamilton, and Edoardo Mortara, all immortalized in the local museum.

In her opening remarks, MGTO's director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, noted the opportunities that the new figures will bring, especially this when the borders have reopened after the pandemic and the Grand Prix celebrates its 70th anniversary. The director expressed her hopes that the figures will attract more people to Macau and to the museum.

"It will not only make the museum more enchanting but also help continue the Macau Grand Prix's profound history and culture. It will become one of the attractions drawing visitors from diverse source markets worldwide to Macau," Senna Fernandes said.

The event also had the presence of BoBo Yu, Head of Sales and Marketing, Hong Kong Cluster, Madame Tussauds Hong Kong, who remarked that this is the first

RENATO MARQUES



Edoardo Mortara



John Macdonald



Lewis Hamilton



Michael Rutter (left) and Rob Huff posing with their figures

time Madame Tussauds Hong Kong and MGTO has collaborated on a project in Macau, and also the first time that a group of newly cast figures has been presented at the same time.

On stage, the racers and Yu also had the opportunity to explain the process of making the figures, which required each of them to pose for eight hours at a time, and also undergo many measurements to achieve the final expression to be cast.

Huff noted the professionalism and precision of the team who completed all the remarkably impressive work.

Yu also thanked the racers for

"It will not only make the museum more enchanting but also help continue the Macau Grand Prix's profound history and culture

MARIA HELENA DE SENNA FERNANDES
MGTO DIRECTOR

their donation of the racing kits adorning the figures, giving the realism that people will observe in the museum.

Rutter's figure features a celebration pose, holding a champag-

ne bottle, and Yu noted that he was particularly impressed with the level of detail and accuracy.

Senna Fernandes revealed on the sidelines of the event that each figure cost HKD2 million, which

includes not only the making and assembling of the figures but also all the costs involved with the rights of use of the image of the people featured, and the weekly maintenance for the figures to keep them in perfect shape.

While the figures of Ayrton Senna, Sebastian Vettel, and Lewis Hamilton are recasts of figures already featured in other Madame Tussauds museums, as the Times reported, the ones now featured at the Macau GP Museum have undergone several updates and improvements, being significantly different from the ones in other museums, as the Times could also observe in loco.

Former Macau GP record-holders to return this year

RENATO MARQUES

TWO of the most successful racers at the local Grand Prix (GP) event, Michael Rutter and Rob Huff, are returning this November to the Guia Circuit.

Rutter and Huff's made this announcement on the sidelines of the unveiling of their wax figures by Madame Tussauds, which as of yesterday are on display at the Macau GP Museum alongside other six highlighted figures of worldwide motorsports.

Nine-times winner of the local Motorcycle GP, Rutter told the media that the fact that he has now

been immortalized in a wax figure at the GP Museum is one more reason to return to Macau, noting that since the borders returned to normal after three years of Covid-19 restrictions, this "makes everything easier" and is "impossible to say no to."

Racing in Macau since 1994, the British rider nicknamed "The Blade" confirmed that he will return in November to race in what will be another special edition of the Macau GP, celebrating 70 years of the competition.

This year also marks the 55th edition of the motorcycle race, a competition

that returned last year after a two-year hiatus (2020 and 2021) when the event did not take place due to the restrictions imposed on the entry of foreign racers, who compose the totality of the motorcycle paddock.

The wax figure of Rutter will join the motorcycle currently displayed, as it has been for many years now, in which Rutter won the 2003 edition of the Motorcycle GP.

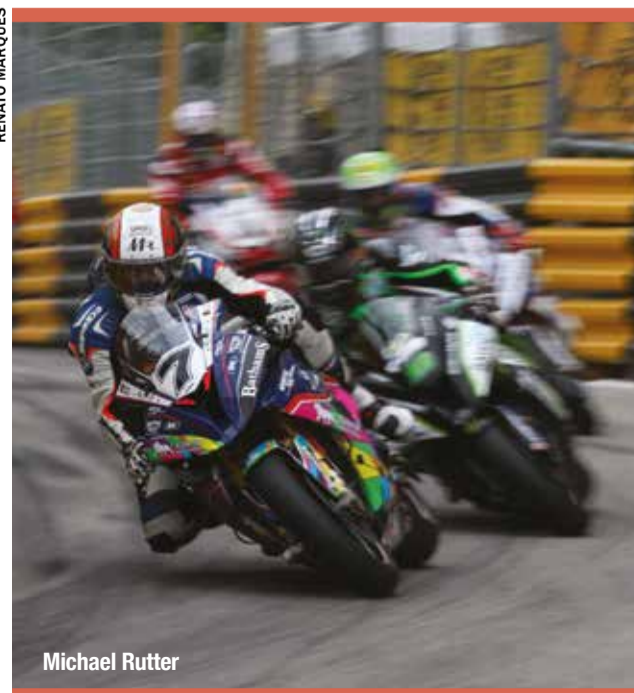
Returning once again to Macau this November, will also be the Brit Rob Huff, the most successful touring cars racer in Macau with 10 wins under his

belt. It was confirmed to the media yesterday that he will be once again racing at the Guia Circuit this year, although he has not yet confirmed which race he will be entering.

Amazed at being also immortalized in the local museum with this wax figure by Madame Tussauds, Huff is said to be a fan of the work and has visited several Madame Tussauds Wax Museums, never guessing that one day he would be featured in one himself.

Huff's wax figure will also be featured next to the Lada Granta in which he won Race 2 of the 2014 Guia Race of Macau.

RENATO MARQUES



Michael Rutter

PALACE MUSEUM CENTER IN THE SAR UNDERWAY

STAFF REPORTER

A new center for the protection of Palace Museum heritage is being built in the SAR and will be completed in two to three years, said an official from the Palace Museum in Beijing, as cited in a report issued by China Daily.

The Macau center will have two major functions — protecting the cultural heritage of Macau, and designing cultural offerings related to the Palace Museum, which is also known as the Forbidden City, according to Dong Dan, deputy director of the International Exchange Department of the Palace Museum.

“We want our Macau center to be different from its counterpart in Hong Kong, which displays exhibits mainly on loan from Beijing,” said Dong in a press conference, according to the report.

Data from the museum shows that the Hong Kong Palace Museum has welcomed more than 900,000 visitors since its opening last July. It has a collection of 900 treasures borrowed from the Palace Museum in Beijing, covering ink paintings, calligraphy, cera-



Palace Museum, Beijing

mic and cultural artifacts related to the imperial families that previously inhabited the Forbidden City.

Dong also added that the Palace Museum aims to spread Chinese culture through products to be exhibited and sold at the Macau center.

“Macau is a popular tourist destination and we hope tourists visiting from across the world will take home our products and learn about Chinese culture,” added Dong.

Since Macau's return to China

in 1999, the Palace Museum has held 31 shows in the SAR.

The latest was Auspicious Beginning: Spring Festival Traditions in the Forbidden City, an exhibition showcasing the imperial traditions of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

In addition to cultural exchanges with Macau and Hong Kong, the Palace Museum has expanded cooperation with counterparts overseas, demonstrating the philosophy, methods and techniques of Chinese archaeology.

NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD TO PRIORITIZE LOCAL SMES IN COMPLEX

STAFF REPORTER

SMALL and medium-sized enterprises and brands from Macau will be prioritized as tenants of the Macau New Neighbourhood complex.

In a reply to an interpellation made by lawmaker Leong Sun Iok, Peter Lam, chairperson of the board of directors of Macau Urban Renewal Limited, stated that the investment promotion will focus on satisfying residents' daily needs, appealing to diverse retail sales, providing convenience to Macau enterprises, and developing and supporting youth entrepreneurs. There are about 60 shop vacancies in the complex.

Meanwhile, over 4,000 residential units will be offered to eligible citizens in the Macau New Neighbourhood program. People

who apply to purchase the units should be over 18 and hold a Macau ID. Additionally, they should possess no more than one unit for residential purposes in Macau and no domestic property in Zhuhai.

The average price of the program will be RMB30,000 (over MOP352,300) per square meter.

Leong mentioned the necessity for the government to adopt a point system to prioritize the citizens who need residential units. He also asked if the shop vacancy offerings would take the form of renting or purchasing. However, the queries were not answered by Lam.

The school and 27 residential buildings were topped out at the end of 2022, and the program will enter the final completion and acceptance stage in the second half of this year.

SPORTS

ZHONGSHAN CROWNED MVPs IN CITY'S DEBUT GBA STANDUP PADDLEBOARDING COMPETITION

ANTHONY LAM

THE team from Zhongshan has been awarded Best Club Award in Macau's first Greater Bay Area (GBA) Stand-up Paddle Board competition.

The pan-GBA competition is organized across the region, with Macau being one of the stations. The Macau station was held on Mar. 18 at Hac-Sa Beach. It attracted over 70 athletes from across the region — including major cities such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Zhongshan and Shantou.

The competition had several categories, namely Master Group, Women's Open Group, Men's Teenager, Young Men and Young Women's 1,000-meter Groups and Men's 2,000-meter Open Circuit Racing Group. In the races for the last group, four buoys were placed on the sea.

The sea was quite rough on race day. From the beginning, Macau athlete Chan Hei Ngan triumphed in the young women's race over

the bumpy sea. Zhang Haixuan and Ye Jiaying — both from Zhongshan — followed Chan.

In the young men's race, Zhongshan athlete Liu Zicheng overtook the lead mid-race and won, with locals Lei In Cheng and Tam Chi Hei following behind.

The Women's Open Group race saw local veteran aquatic athlete Racy Leong secure her lead after the second buoy with better turning skills. She won the race, with Xia Lirong from Shenzhen and Wen Xiu from Zhuhai in second and third places respectively.

Macau athletes took the first and third places in the young men's race, with the captain of the Zhongshan team taking the second. Athletes from Shantou, Guangzhou and Macau took the three top places in the master's race.

The Men's Open race saw Peng Qian from Shenzhen won the first place, Kuok Ka Chun from Macau the second and Chen Zhibao from Guangzhou the third.

DEIGNAN AWARD

Three local SMEs honored for 'responsible entrepreneurship'

STAFF REPORTER

THE first Deignan Award for Responsible Entrepreneurship has unveiled its winners, celebrating the outstanding efforts of SMEs in Hong Kong and Macau who are “encouraging positive business values.”

In April last year, the award for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) was launched, aiming to encourage the continuous pursuit of sustainability, corporate social responsibility (CSR), business ethics, and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations and implementation by SMEs in both Hong Kong and Macau.

Over the weekend, the Deignan Award for Responsible Entrepreneurship



awarded a total of six winners, of which three are from each SAR.

From Macau, MSS Recruitment Limited were crowned with the prestigious Gold Award, while the Silver and Bronze Awards were given to C&C Lawyers & Notaries and Macao Newland Technology Co., Ltd respectively.

“The winners were evaluated based on a range of criteria, such as upholding human dig-

nity, displaying exceptional entrepreneurial spirit, fostering fairness, supporting the disadvantaged, and promoting environmental sustainability,” the organizers said.

During the event, Dr. Stephan Rothlin S.J., chairman of the Steering Committee of the Deignan Award and Director of Macau Ricci Institute said, “The Deignan Award is an inspiring platform to showcase

the powerful impact of sound values, capable of lighting up a path and making a difference in even the most challenging and competitive marketplaces.”

The entry period of the award closed on August 31, 2022, with no application fee.

SMEs in both Hong Kong and Macau employing fewer than 100 people and meeting the entry criteria were eligible for the award.



Diversification into non-gaming to remain 'slow' amid billions in investments

LYNZY VALLES

FITCH Ratings forecasts Macau's economy will rebound sharply by 48% in 2023 following an economic contraction of 26.8% in 2022, according to a recently published report. The forecast was based on its cautious prediction that gaming revenue will recover to about half of the 2019 level.

The forecast of such a high figure comes from the removal of pandemic control measures and resumption of mainland packaged tours as well as receding labor shortages, and also the supply-side capacity constraints that will materially lift the visitation numbers for 2023.

"Macau is well placed to capture strong pent-up demand from mainland tourists, given its status as the sole legal gaming tourism destination across Greater China and its geographic proximity to the mainland. A faster-than-expected revival of visitors poses an upside risk to the recovery outlook," the institution said.

For the gaming sector, Fitch expects the mass-market segment, which accounted for three-quarters of total gaming revenue in 2022, to drive the recovery.

In December of 2022, the six gaming operators renewed the concession contract for the next 10



years, fully pledging to focus on diversification of the local economy with an investment of over MOP100 billion.

The reported MOP100 billion investment from the casinos during the bid proposal period was considered unsurprising, despite the sector bleeding cash with no certainty of recovery.

However, the institution expects this to be slow, amid the operators' moves in launching non-gaming offerings.

"We expect the diversification into non-gaming industries to remain slow. Human capital constraints and skill gaps pose a key challenge for Macau to substan-

tially reduce its high dependence on the gaming industry," said the institution.

Also, junket operators will remain "sensitive to tight regulatory scrutiny in both Macau and mainland China."

Meanwhile, Fitch forecasts Macau's budget deficit will decline to 10.5% of GDP in 2023, from 35.5% in 2022, expecting a deficit for the fourth consecutive year.

"The narrower deficit this year mainly reflects a surge in gaming revenue collection and an unwinding of pandemic-related relief measures. We project the deficit will fall to 1.9% of GDP in 2024 on buoyant gaming revenue and ex-

penditure restraint," the group noted.

Regarding the city's integration with Mainland China, the group expects that the integration

will lead to a stronger role in policymaking for the central government and a gradual convergence of governance and institutional management practices with mainland China.

Currently, the SAR is the only city in China where gambling is legal. However, for Fitch, citing integration, its "baseline assumes that the convergence will not affect the status of Macau as the only legal gaming tourism destination across Greater China."

MACAU TO SEE GD-MO CROSS-BOUNDARY BUS, TAXI SOON

In a recent Executive Dispatch, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, has delegated all necessary authority to the director of the Transport Bureau (DSAT), Lam Hin San, or his legal delegate or representative, to sign on behalf of the Macau government an agreement on the arrangement for Guangdong-Macau cross-boundary bus and taxi quotas. With that said, either a new type of these transports or existing ones will be allowed to operate services in both jurisdictions. The Dispatch has already taken effect.

2023 MEDICAL VOUCHERS CONFIRMED AT MOP600 PER ELIGIBLE USER

Medical vouchers of MOP600 for each eligible user are to be issued for this year, according to a recent Executive Dispatch. All vouchers will be issued digitally, meaning that no physical vouchers will be issued. Vouchers can be transferred to beneficiaries' spouses, first-tier ancestors or descendants. The validity period of this year's vouchers will end on April 30, 2025. Vouchers will not be allowed to be cashed. People bearing Macau Permanent Resident ID card on or before April 30, 2024 will be eligible for the vouchers upon issuance of their ID cards.

PAYMENT PERIOD OF VEHICLE CIRCULATION TAX TO END MAR. 31

The payment period for the annual vehicle circulation tax will end on Mar. 31. Car owners are reminded to pay before this date so as to avoid a fine. As of Mar. 27, taxes on more than 34,000 vehicles had not yet been paid. Among the over 204,000 tax liabilities paid, nearly 79% were paid electronically, with over 85% paid through the Government One Account cellphone app. Payment by One Account requires vehicle owners to link their account with their vehicles, confirming their ownership.

RENATO MARQUES

TOURISM

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) will extend the program that currently offers discounts and special benefits to Hong Kong visitors who visit Macau to include all overseas tourists arriving in Macau via Hong Kong, MGTO director, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said yesterday on the sidelines of the unveiling of the wax figure at the Macau Grand Prix Museum.

The aim is to attract more visitors from overseas, taking advantage of the program targeting Hong Kong residents.

She also said that a subsidy plan targeting foreign group tours as well as those from

Tickets discount program to extend to overseas tourists arriving via HK

Taiwan will be launched soon as well.

According to figures cited by Senna Fernandes, so far a total of 2,048 groups have arrived in Macau after the resumption of this type of traveling in February.

MGTO says that over 2,000 groups account for over 60,000 visitors, and from these 542 groups arrived from Guangdong province, involving a total of 17,000 visitors.

A large majority of the group tours (1,439), which account

for some 41,000 people, have applied for the overnight staying subsidy from the MGTO, she added.

The director of MGTO assured the media that the Office has inspectors on sites and will increase the inspections of tour groups. So far, four tour guides from the mainland were found to be illegally operating in Macau.

Senna Fernandes said that over 330 inspections have been made on this matter since January this year.



CHINA TO SEE 33% INCREASE OF FLIGHTS WITH MACAU

Passenger flights connecting the mainland and Macau will expand 32.85% over last year's number in summer and in autumn, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC). Planned weekly passenger and cargo flights between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong are set to grow 35.44% year on year, and those between the mainland and Taiwan will increase 21.52%. CAAC data showed. From March 26 to Oct. 28, domestic and foreign airlines have scheduled 14,702 international passenger or cargo flights per week, with 6,772 weekly outgoing passenger flights to 101 cities around the world and 3,808 inbound passenger flights from 79 foreign cities, the CAAC said.

IPIM CALLS FOR PARTICIPANTS IN 2023 CHINA INTERNATIONAL IMPORT EXPO

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) is calling for local participants for the 2023 China International Import Expo, which will be held between Nov. 5 and 10 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center (Shanghai) (NECC (Shanghai)). Participants must be enterprises registered in Macau, and offer products produced locally. Otherwise, they must be agencies for products from lusophone countries or providers of professional services catering to the lusophone market. The expo introduces itself as "a significant move for the Chinese government [...] to give firm support to trade liberalization and economic globalization and actively open the Chinese market to the world."

MUST'S COLOANE RESEARCH CENTER EXPECTED SOON

ANTHONY LAM

The science and technology research and development facility at the Concordia Industrial Park in Coloane is expected to open soon, the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) announced yesterday.

On the sidelines of an institute event, Chair Prof. Joseph Hun-wei Lee, MUST president, told the press about the prospective event.

The 10,000-square-meter facility will house several state- to international-level laboratories, such as a marine life lab appointed by the Ministry of Water Resources, and a mass-scale respiratory disease outbreak prediction lab.

Lee pointed out that the new facility will be the home for research and development for several faculties. It will be the space for cross-disciplinary experiment and development. Lee said the



facility would help nurture talents in cross-disciplinary studies.

Last year, the MUST inaugurated the Faculty for Innovative Engineering, which in Lee's opinion will help consolidate the institution's resources in science and engineering. It will also provide pathways for new bachelor's

degree programs, with a new program opening in the coming September. He expects the number of students in science and technology programs to double.

Lee added that the MUST would constantly strive for global accreditations and open on-par new science and technology programs

that suit the needs of the Greater Bay Area. He hopes that in the future, the institution will be able to establish facilities in Hengqin.

MUST CONFERS HONORIS CAUSA DEGREES

The MUST conferred yesterday doctoris honoris causa upon 14 recipients as part of the celebrations for its 23rd anniversary. Those honored included Haruki Murakami, writer of the influential Norwegian Wood and 1Q84, as well as Laureate of the Nobel Prize in Literature and the Franz Kafka Prize; Chua Lam, writer and food critic; Prof. Peter Doherty, Nobel Laureate and immunologist; and Prof. Zhao Yupei, surgeon and president of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, among others.

Additionally, seminar sessions were also held to discuss arts, diplomacy and space.

AD



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DSEC launches Household Income and Expenditure Survey

RENATO MARQUES

The Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2023 (HIES 2023) will continue until March 23, 2024, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) announced.

The HIES 2023 will collect data from 8,320 housing units in 26 bi-weekly cycles, and 320 units will be visited in each cycle.

Each selected household is invited to complete one main questionnaire and all household members aged 16 and above are required to complete an expense diary for seven consecutive days.

DSEC said in a press statement that not only is completing the questionnaires online more convenient for all the parties but it is also safer, averting potential scams.

Considering the many scams targeting people



in Macau lately, the DSEC called on the public to be vigilant and guard against phone scammers impersonating government officers asking for personal information or money.

DSEC said enumerators will only call households via the contact number previously provided to verify questionnaire responses. They will not ask for information such as ID card, bank

account or credit card number, nor will they demand any fees.

Additionally, the DSEC says it will take additional measures to ensure statistical confidentiality and protect the data collected from misuse.

For those that participate in the survey, the DSEC has a series of incentives, including a lucky draw to win several prizes.



GAMING

Renamed Horseshoe to host Poker World Series on Vegas Strip

KEN RITTER, LAS VEGAS

A name paired with poker and Las Vegas lore now has a place on the neon-lit Strip following the rebranding of an iconic hotel with a memorable history at a crossroads shared with some of the most recognizable casinos in the world.

The Horseshoe Las Vegas Hotel & Casino and its corporate owner, Caesars Entertainment Corp., hosted ceremonies last weekend to mark the name change from Bally's Las Vegas, before it again hosts the upcoming 54th annual

World Series of Poker.

"Not only are we excited for guests to experience the redesigned resort and its latest offerings, but we are also proud to reintroduce the historic gaming brand to Las Vegas," Jason Gregorec, Horseshoe senior vice president and general manager, said in a statement.

The 2,800-room property once was the MGM Grand Hotel, where a historic fire in 1980 killed 87 people. It was Bally's Las Vegas for 36 years.

Renovations and renaming harken back to Binion's Hor-

shoe, a hotel and gambling hall in downtown's "Glitter Gulch" where the World Series of Poker began.

It also puts the Horseshoe marquee across the street from the Bellagio and its fountains, Caesars Palace and its statues and the glittery Flamingo Las Vegas.

Jack Binion, 86, a former casino executive and member of the American Gaming Association and World Series of Poker halls of fame, was set to present a lucky horseshoe from his family's ranch at an event also including "Jubilee!" costumes recalling the fea-

thy Bally's revue that ran for 35 years before closing in 2016.

The first World Series of Poker in 1970 was hosted by Binion's father, former Texas gambler Benny Binion, as an invitation-only game at his downtown Horseshoe, a 366-room hotel he opened in 1951.

Jack Binion and his brother, Ted Binion, worked at the downtown property, now known as Binion's Gambling Hall & Hotel and operated by the corporate owner of the neighboring Four Queens. Ted Binion's death in 1998 sparked a sensational murder trial and eventual acquittal in

2004 of his ex-stripper, live-in girlfriend and her secret lover.

Harrah's Entertainment acquired the poker tournament in 2004 and moved it to the Rio All-Suites Hotel & Casino. A year later, Harrah's bought Caesars Entertainment, which was purchased in 2020 by Eldorado Resorts, now called Caesars Entertainment Corp. Bally's hotel-casino was part of that deal. The renaming began last year.

The tournament that made championship bracelets and Texas Hold 'em famous now runs for more than seven weeks. It drew nearly 200,000 players last year to Bally's and the adjacent Paris Las Vegas and awarded almost \$350 million in prizes. It is scheduled to start this year on May 30.

After it ends in July, officials said an 18-table poker room will offer tournament-style play year-round.

The 26-story hotel now named Horseshoe opened in late 1973 as the MGM Grand. It had 2,100 rooms and was one of the largest hotels in the world.

The deadly fire seven years later was one of the worst in U.S. history. It led to laws requiring fire safety and sprinkler systems in hotels and high-rises. The hotel was rebuilt and a second tower, adding 700 rooms, was completed in 1981.

Bally Manufacturing bought the property in 1986. MGM Grand Inc. moved a block down the Strip and opened the movie-themed MGM Grand Las Vegas resort in late 1993. That 30-floor property, with more than 5,000 rooms and emerald green exterior, opened as the largest hotel complex in the world.

The Bally's name is still expected to remain on the Las Vegas Strip at the aging, nearly 1,500-room Tropicana resort, now owned by Rhode Island-based Bally's Corp.

CORPORATE BITS

Sands China 10k draws nearly 10,000 runners



The 2023 Sands China Macao International 10K welcomed nearly 10,000 runners from 37 countries and regions March 19, with participants taking part in either the 10K race or the Fun Run. Throughout the course, Sands China's entertainment

performers from The Venetian Macao, The Parisian Macao and The Londoner Macao cheered the runners on and enhanced the festive atmosphere.

Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., said: "Sands

China is very pleased that this year's 10K was a successful event, and we are proud to be the title sponsor again this year. Besides encouraging tourism and stimulating the economy, we hope it inspires exercise and a healthy lifestyle among the Macao community."

Sands China invited members and families of Macao Special Olympics and Richmond Fellowship of Macao to join the 10K event, with accompaniment by Sands Cares Ambassadors to complete the race together.

A 10K themed interactive zone was set up at The Venetian Macao March 17-19, featuring games and DIY medal-drawing workshops.

SJM to collaborate with local artists for an exhibition



SJM Resorts, S.A. is collaborating with six artists from the Macao Youth Art Association as part of an on-going effort toward nurtu-

ring local artistic talent.

On March 30, Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau and the art association will jointly unveil "Blossoms at Grand Lis-

boa Palace – A Group Exhibition by Macao's Emerging Artists", an exhibition of large-scale art installations featuring blossoming flowers in springtime on display in the integrated resort. In addition to these exhibits, Grand Lisboa Palace will host monthly weekend art workshops, according to the gaming operator.

The six artists from the Macao Youth Art Association are: watercolourist Julia Lam; gongbi painting specialist Leong Kit Man; watercolourist Kuok Hoi Leng; Liu Xinjue, who focuses on healing and beauty in her work; as well as Dor Lio and Chiang Wai Lan – both well-known for their fairytale artistic styles.

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

TECH

ALIBABA'S JACK MA RESURFACES IN MAINLAND CHINA

ALIBABA founder Jack Ma has resurfaced in China after months of overseas travel, visiting a school yesterday in the city where his company is headquartered and discussed topics such as artificial intelligence.

Ma founded e-commerce firm Alibaba in the 1990s and was once China's richest man. He has kept a low profile with few public appearances since Nov. 2020, when he had publicly criticized China's regulators and financial systems during a speech in Shanghai.

Shortly afterward, authorities put the brakes on the initial public offering of Alibaba's financial affiliate Ant Group, which had been set to raise \$34.5 billion in what would have been the world's largest share offering at the time. Alibaba was later investigated and fined \$2.8 billion for breaching antitrust rules as Chinese authorities cracked down on the once-freewheeling technology industry.

In the past year, Ma has been travelling, with reports of sightings in Europe, Japan, Thailand and Hong Kong. His itinerary has been closely watched as a barometer of Beijing's attitude towards private businesses.

Yesterday, Ma visited the Yungu School in Hangzhou, in eastern China, that was established by Ma and other partners of Alibaba, according to a WeChat post by the school. Ma discussed technologies such as the

artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT, and spoke of his passion for learning.

Alibaba did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Chinese government has been seeking to raise confidence in the private sector after regulatory crackdowns, on technology, education, online gaming and financial companies, and harsh COVID-19 restrictions slowed the economy.

Earlier this month, China's newly-appointed premier, Li Qiang, sought to reassure entrepreneurs and investors by saying the government would provide "unswerving" support for the private sector. The commitment to this was "unequivocal and steadfast," he said.

Ma stepped down as Alibaba chairman in 2019, saying he hoped to focus on philanthropy. In January, he ceded control of Ant, the financial technology firm, amid a revamp of its shareholding structure.

The same month, a top Chinese central bank official said that the crackdown on the internet industry was "basically" over. MDT/AP

AP FILE PHOTO



Jack Ma, Alibaba founder

ANALYSIS

Experts laud essence of Chinese-style democracy

ZOU SHUO, CHINA DAILY

THE essence of Chinese-style democracy is to respect and safeguard human rights, experts said last weekend.

Its purpose is to realize common prosperity for the large Chinese population, achieve coordinated development of material gains and civilization and people and nature, and pursue peaceful development, said Chen Youwu, dean of Guangdong University of Technology's School of Law.

The leadership of the Communist Party of China is another important characteristic of Chinese-style democracy, which is implemented in a whole-process way that differs from Western-style democracy, Chen said at a forum hosted by Central South University's Human Rights Center.

The core of Chinese-style democracy is to let people make the decisions. All the power of the country belongs to the people, and the happiness of the people



A voter casts her ballot at a polling station in Chongqing's Shapingba district on Friday

is the biggest human right, he said.

Lu Guangjin, deputy head of the China Society for Human Rights Studies, said that similar to many other countries, Chinese people won democracy after fighting for it relentlessly, and they attach great importance to it. However, it should also be remembered that due to the corruption and incompetence of the ruling class in early modern

China, Chinese people did not enjoy democracy.

The CPC liberated Chinese people from oppression and exploitation and enabled them to make their own decisions and win political and human rights, he said.

Each country has its own style of democracy, and the standard to evaluate a country's democracy is whether it has safeguarded the people's interests and is

supported by the people, he said.

Chinese-style democracy, which has some characteristics in common with democracies in other countries, is unique because it is socialist, people-centered, whole-process and still under development, he said.

There are profound historical and social reasons for China to embark on a democratic path different from Western ones. To ea-

sily overlook Chinese-style democracy is unwise, and history has proved that imposing one country's democratic style on another cannot lead to democracy, he added.

He Zhipeng, dean of Jilin University's School of Law, said democracy is only one type of governance model.

Moreover, democracy is a type of human right, and its implementation might influence other rights, he said.

Western-style democracy is based on voting, capitalism and partisan rivalry, while the ideal Chinese-style democracy features whole-process participation and consultation of different political parties, and aims to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, he added.

Chang Jian, director of Nankai University's Research Center on Human Rights, said democracy also has its shortcomings, as there are all kinds of people who have different voices. So in order to realize democracy, compromises need to be made and such policies can sometimes be the worst ones.

In order to overcome the shortcomings, Western countries have chosen elections and parliament to reach consensus, while China focuses on the Party's lead and lets the Party coordinate different opinions, he said.

China's whole-process people's democracy means democracy in elections, policymaking, grassroots-level governance and enterprise management as well as democracy in international relations, he added. CHINA DAILY

HUIZHONG WU
& JOHNSON LAI, TAOYUAN

ONE-CHINA

Taiwan's former leader Ma begins mainland visit

FORMER Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou departed for a tour of China yesterday, in what he called an attempt to reduce tensions a day after Taiwan lost one of its few remaining diplomatic partners to China.

Ma is visiting in a private capacity, bringing a delegation of academics and college students for exchanges, as well as members of his family, but the trip is loaded with political meaning.

Ma's policies brought Taiwan and Beijing to their closest relationship ever, but his exit from office was overshadowed by massive protests against a trade deal with the mainland and his successor has focused on bolstering ties with the U.S. and defending the autonomy of the democratically governed island that is part of China's territory.

Current leader Tsai Ing-wen is expected to launch a 10-day diplomatic tour of her own Wednesday, ostensibly to visit the island's remaining allies in Latin America. She will stop in the U.S., Taiwan's biggest unofficial partner and supplier of arms.

Ma's visit comes amid rising tensions. Beijing has stepped up pressure against Taiwan in recent years, poaching its diplomatic allies while also sending military fighter jets flying towards the island on a near daily basis. On Sunday, Honduras established diplomatic relations with China, leaving Taiwan with only 13 countries that recognize it as a sovereign state.

Ma, a member of the opposition Nationalist Party (Kuo-mintang), will land in Shanghai



Former Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou waves as he leaves for the mainland, at Taoyuan International Airport

before starting his visit in nearby Nanjing. He is expected to tour the mainland from March 27 to April 7, stopping in Wuhan and Changsha, as well as other cities. He is bringing college students from Taiwan to meet with fellow students from Shanghai's Fudan University and Changsha's Hunan University.

Ma has framed the visit as a bid to lower the tensions in cross-strait relations through people to people exchange. "I hope through the enthusiasm of the youth and their interactions to improve the cross-strait mood, so bring peace faster, and earlier," he said to reporters ahead of his departure on Monday af-

ternoon. He also said it would be his first time visiting China.

His trip has not drawn much controversy in Taiwan, where the public is used to seeing Kuo-mintang politicians visit China. However, it has been criticized by some political opponents and activists.

A former mainland student

leader in the 1989 Tiananmen square protests called on Ma to cancel his trip. "If you have even a strand of affection for Taiwan ... you should announce the cancellation of your trip," said Wang Dan, a Chinese dissident who previously lived in Taiwan, on his Facebook page.

A handful of protesters from a pro-independence group held a demonstration at the departures area at Taoyuan airport before Ma's departure.

On the other side, a small group of people from the pro-unification camp also came to the airport to show their support. "Cross-strait relations are like flowers blossoming in spring and both sides are a family," they shouted.

The trip is also a chance for him to honor his ancestors, ahead of Tomb Sweeping Day on April 5. During the festival, which is celebrated in Taiwan and China among other countries, families visit ancestral graves to maintain the burial grounds and remember the dead.

Ma will not go to Beijing, but may meet with Chinese officials.

Ma met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Singapore in 2015, while he was still in office. The meeting was the first between the leaders of the two sides since Taiwan split from mainland China in 1949 during the Chinese civil war, but was considered more symbolic than substantive.

In 2016, the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party won national elections and Beijing cut off contact with Taiwan's government, citing Tsai's refusal to endorse the idea that Taiwan and China are one country. **MDT/AP**

ESPIONAGE

Tokyo demands Beijing free detained Japan national

TOKYO has demanded that China release a Japanese national who was detained in Beijing earlier this month on suspicion of spying, Japan's top government spokesperson said yesterday.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told a news conference that Japan's Embassy in China was informed by Chinese authorities that a Japanese man in his 50s was taken into custody in Beijing earlier in March.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in Beijing that "the Japanese citizen is suspected of engaging in espionage activities in violation of the criminal law ... and the Anti-

-Espionage Law of the People's Republic of China."

All foreigners who visit and live in China "must abide by Chinese laws, and those who break the law and commit crimes must be held accountable according to the law," Mao said at a regular news briefing.

He said that similar cases involving Japanese citizens have occurred repeatedly and urged the Japanese government to "strengthen education among its citizens and send them reminders."

In Tokyo, Matsuno said the Japanese government had demanded the early release of its citizen. Japan also requested that Chinese authorities allow the man access to Japanese consu-

lar officials. He said Japan's government is providing as much support for him as possible, including communicating with relevant parties.

A Japanese pharmaceutical company, Astellas Pharma Inc., acknowledged that the man detained is its employee, but declined to disclose further details, including his name, position and whether he is based in China. The company said it was seeking information from the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

More than a dozen Japanese citizens with business or other connections to China have been arrested in the past over allegations including spying. A Japane-



Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno

se diplomat was detained for questioning in 2022 and released hours later, prompting strong protests from

Japan. Tokyo and Beijing have been increasingly at odds in recent years as Japan

considers China's growing influence in the region as a threat to its national security and the economy. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

GOV'T STEPS TOWARD MAKING BIG POLLUTERS REDUCE EMISSIONS

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

THE Australian government took a major step toward implementing a key climate policy that would force chief greenhouse gas polluters to reduce emissions, with the minor Greens party pledging their support yesterday.

The center-left Labor Party administration said the so-called Safeguard Mechanism reforms are essential to Australia reaching its target of reducing its emissions by 43% below 2005 levels by the end of the decade. The reforms would create a ceiling on the nation's emissions and force Australia's 215 biggest polluting facilities to reduce their emissions over time.

The Climate Council, a leading climate communicator, described the reforms as the first Australian legislation in a decade that would regulate greenhouse gas pollution.

With the support of the Greens' 11 senators, the government only needs the backing of two unaligned or minor party senators to get the reforms through the upper chamber. Greens leader Adam Bandt said a "hard cap" on emissions would mean that half of the 116 new coal and gas projects proposed in Australia would not go ahead.

The amount of greenhouse gas emissions allowed under the cap has not been made public. The cap would be reduced over

AP PHOTO



Some of the coal-burning Hazelwood Power Station's eight chimneys begin to topple as they are demolished and the station is decommissioned in Hazelwood, Victoria

time as polluters scaled back their emissions.

"The Greens, through the negotiations, has secured a big hit on oil and gas," Bandt told reporters as he confirmed his party's support for the reforms.

The legislation was passed yesterday by the House of Representatives, where Labor holds a majority of seats.

Prime Minister Anthony Alba-

nese said the Safeguard Mechanism "is the vehicle to achieve our commitment for 43% reduction by 2030."

Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen said that without the mechanism, Australia would only reduce its emissions by 35% by the end of the decade.

"Today we're a big step closer to passing the Safeguard Mechanism reforms through Parlia-

ment," Bowen said.

The reforms would reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 205 million metric tons (226 million U.S. tons) by 2030, equivalent to taking two-thirds of Australia's cars off the road in the same time, Bowen said.

Big polluters would be able to buy carbon credits to help achieve their emission reduction targets. But polluters that use carbon

credits to achieve more than 30% of their abatement would have to explain why they were not doing more to reduce their own emissions.

Opposition climate change and energy spokesperson Ted O'Brien rejected the reforms, saying capping emissions would drive Australian industrial investment offshore to China and India.

"This is not a plan to decarbonize the Australian economy but rather a plan to deindustrialize it," O'Brien said.

The conservative opposition created the Safeguard Mechanism when it was in power in 2016. But the emission limits were so high that the 215 major polluters, which account for 30% of Australia's emissions, were able to increase their emissions by 4%.

The previous government had set a less ambitious target of reducing Australia's emissions by only 26% to 28% below 2005 levels by 2030.

The Climate Council welcomed the Greens' deal with the government as a historic agreement.

"This will be the Federal Parliament's first reform to genuinely cut pollution in a decade," Climate Council CEO Amanda McKenzie said in a statement.

The Australia Institute, a left-wing policy think tank, was critical that the reforms would allow some new fossil fuel projects to proceed, though fewer than under the current mechanism.

Greenpeace Australia Pacific spokesperson Glenn Walker said the most important task for the Australian Parliament was to rule out new fossil fuel mines in favor of clean, future-proof industries.

MDT/AP

JAPAN

Student goes to graduation dressed like Zelenskyy

A Japanese student showed up to graduation as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's lookalike, wearing his signature olive-colored, snug-fit T-shirt and khaki trousers to show his support for Ukraine's fight against Russia.

Most graduation ceremonies in Japan feature graduates in suits or formal dress. But Kyoto University has its own tradition of students who opt for different attire on their special day.

This year, Zelenskyy was the star at the event.

"I am President Zelenskyy," the student told local TV network Yomiuri. He said it took him three months to grow his beard. He decided to be his lookalike for the graduation ceremony Friday, because

"since December, when I was growing out my beard, I was told I look like President Zelenskyy."

His performance was not just a comical cosplay. The student, who goes by Amiki on Twitter, was holding a sign carrying messages expressing his support for Ukraine, along with a passage from Zelenskyy's speech in December at the U.S. Congress.

In the video from TV Osaka, he said he respects Zelenskyy as "the real man among men."

"We stand for Ukraine! Justice will prevail in the end, I hope so. Glory to Ukraine," he tweeted.

The student also held a wooden shamoji — a rice serving spoon — like the one that Japanese Prime

Minister Fumio Kishida presented to Zelenskyy as a gift during his secret trip to Kyiv last week. The rice paddle is a specialty of Hiroshima, where Kishida is from, and bears a prayer for victory, but was bitterly criticized by opposition lawmakers as "nonsense."

Giving a rice serving spoon to the leader of a country at war didn't seem appropriate, the student said. "Nonetheless, I'm happy if the Ukrainian people were pleased and the traditional prayer behind it was conveyed."

Ukrainian Ambassador Sergiy Korsunsky retweeted a scene from the video of the Zelenskyy lookalike, as well as the student's tweets showing solidarity for Ukraine. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO





USA

DeSantis team welcomes contrast with Trump 'chaos' candidacy

STEVE PEOPLES,
TALLAHASSEE (FLA.)

JIM McKee is standing at the end of a line that snakes through five aisles of fiction inside the Books-A-Million store in Florida's capital city.

He is smiling because in a matter of minutes, the book he's holding will be signed by its author, Ron DeSantis, the Republican governor who McKee believes should be the nation's next president. But as a former Donald Trump loyalist, the 44-year-old Tallahassee attorney almost whispers when he first says it out loud.

"Personally, I'd rather see DeSantis win the Republican primary than Trump," McKee says softly, having to repeat himself to be heard. His voice soon grows louder.

"Trump has upset so many people," McKee says. "DeSantis is more palatable. He has a good story to tell."

Indeed, conversations throughout Tallahassee's book stores, conference rooms, state house offices and sports bars reveal that DeSantis' allies are gaining confidence as Trump's legal woes mount. The former president faces a possible indictment in New York over his role in a hush money scheme during the 2016 campaign to prevent porn actor Stormy Daniels from going public about an extramarital sexual encounter, which he denies.

The optimism around DeSantis comes even as an unlikely collection of establishment-minded Republican officials and Make America Great Again influencers

raise concerns about the Florida governor's readiness for the national stage. DeSantis has stumbled at times under the weight of intensifying national scrutiny as he builds out his political organization and introduces himself to voters in key primary states.

DeSantis' allies privately scoffed at recent reports of anonymous concerns over the direction of his campaign, noting there is no campaign. The 44-year-old governor isn't expected to launch his White House bid for at least two more months. And the first presidential primary contest is roughly 10 months away.

For now, DeSantis' team, headquartered here on the front edge of Florida's Panhandle, believes he holds a position of strength among Republican voters. And as Trump fights to undermine DeSantis, his strongest Republican rival, the Florida governor's growing coalition is eager to highlight the contrast between the two men.

On one side stands Trump, a twice-impeached former president carrying a new level of turmoil into the 2024 presidential contest. On the other is DeSantis, a big-state governor coming off a commanding reelection, who is a far more disciplined messenger and hyperfocused on enacting conservative policies.

"Of all the things that Donald Trump has done and accomplished in his life, it's just constant chaos. And I think the American people are just tired of it," said Florida state Rep. Spencer Roach, a former Trump supporter who thinks DeSantis would be "a very

formidable presidential candidate."

Most voters have only just begun to analyze the differences between the dueling Republican stars as the 2024 presidential election season opens under a cloud of unprecedented scandal.

A former president has never been arrested, but prosecutors in New York, Georgia and Washington are leading criminal probes of Trump's behavior on multiple fronts that could potentially produce indictments in the coming days, weeks or months.

The politics are murky at best.

Should Trump be charged, DeSantis supporters concede that Trump would likely benefit politically — in the short term, at least — as the GOP base rushes to defend their former leader from what they see as a weaponized justice system. But in the long term, DeSantis' team believes primary voters will view Trump's legal challenges as an acute reminder of his extraordinary baggage that could lead to another Republican disappointment in 2024.

Meanwhile, Trump is using his mounting legal challenges as a cudgel to force Republican rivals to line up the GOP behind him. It's the same playbook he employed successfully last summer after the FBI raided his Florida estate to seize classified documents and during special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation.

DeSantis condemned the New York prosecutor's potential indictment over the last week under intense pressure from MAGA influencers and after other White

House prospects had offered their own criticism.

"I hope it doesn't come to where you end up seeing this going forward," DeSantis said in an interview with Piers Morgan, without mentioning Trump by name. "People see that as weaponizing the justice system. So I think it's fundamentally wrong to do that."

And while DeSantis sprinkled a few jabs at Trump and his leadership style throughout the same interview, such remarks are mild in comparison to Trump's scorched-earth broadsides against him.

Last week alone, the former president seized on DeSantis' votes as a congressman to cut Social Security and Medicare and attacked his record as Florida governor on violent crime, public health and education. Trump also shared a photo suggesting impropriety when DeSantis was a teacher two decades ago, despite no evidence of that.

At a rally over the weekend in Waco, Texas, Trump said DeSantis was "dropping like a rock."

In an effort to combat the perception that his numbers might be slipping, DeSantis' allies quietly distributed polling conducted last week in Iowa and New Hampshire by the Republican firm Public Opinion Strategies that suggests vulnerability for Trump.

Meanwhile, DeSantis is only just beginning to navigate the intense national scrutiny that comes with being a top-tier presidential prospect.

DeSantis' recent reference to Russia's invasion of Ukraine as

"a territorial dispute" — a statement he has since walked back — sowed doubt among some would-be supporters about whether he's ready for prime time. There are also consistent concerns that he doesn't have the charisma necessary to connect with voters on a personal level.

"I have heard that there is concern out there that he doesn't have the ability to go the distance because of his interpersonal skills," said New York-based Republican donor Eric Levine, a fierce Trump critic. "If it's a race between him and Trump, I'm a Ron DeSantis guy. But I don't know if I'm with either of them right now."

At Thursday's book signing in Tallahassee, the Florida governor made little effort to speak to people who had waited in the long line — aside from an obligatory "Hey, how are you?" — as he signed their books. Most of the one-on-one interactions were silent and spanned less than 10 seconds as he scribbled his name on the inside cover.

DeSantis' staff wouldn't allow pictures.

At the same event, DeSantis did not answer when asked by an Associated Press reporter whether Trump was being treated fairly by prosecutors.

His decision to ignore the mainstream press, just as he often ignores Trump's attacks, is not new. In fact, his allies praise the discipline that makes him a better presidential contender than Trump.

Yet it carries risks.

By not engaging more directly with the former president in particular, DeSantis is adopting a similar playbook as Trump's 2016 Republican rivals — including former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz — who ignored Trump for much of that campaign. Each ultimately went on the attack more directly, but by that time, Trump had built an insurmountable lead.

"DeSantis will not shrink from the fight. That's not how he's operated in Florida politics to this point," said Matt Caldwell, a former state representative who shared the statewide ballot with DeSantis in 2018 as a candidate for state agriculture commissioner. "One could argue that he's got the upper hand, so he's only engaging when he has to."

Instead of 2016, Caldwell likened Trump's challenges in 2024 to the 1996 presidential election when President Bill Clinton faced serious allegations of sexual impropriety that nearly sank his reelection.

"At end of the day, this is just a hubbub about money and sex, which isn't a whole lot different from 1996," Caldwell said. "I don't like this, and I didn't like '96. But Bill Clinton won reelection."

MDT/AP

FRANCE

In Macron's country, streets and fields seethe with protest

JOHN LEICESTER, PARIS

A big day has come for French high school student Elisa Fares. At age 17, she is taking part in her first protest.

In a country that taught the world about people power with its revolution of 1789 — and a country again seething with anger against its leaders — graduating from bystander to demonstrator is a generations-old rite of passage. Fares looks both excited and nervous as she prepares to march down Paris streets where people for centuries have similarly defied authority and declared: “Non!”

Two friends, neither older than 18 but already protest veterans whose parents took them to demonstrations when they were little, are showing Fares the ropes. They’ve readied eyedrops and gas masks in case police fire tear gas — as they have done repeatedly in recent weeks.

“The French are known for fighting and we’ll fight,” says one of the friends, Coline Marionneau, also 17. “My mother goes to a lot of demonstrations ... She says if you have things to say, you should protest.”

For French President Emmanuel Macron, the look of determination on their young faces only heralds deepening crisis. His government has ignited a firestorm of anger with unpopular pension reforms that he railroaded through parliament and which, most notably, push the legal retirement age from 62 to 64.

Furious not just with the prospect of working for longer but also with the way Macron imposed it, his opponents have switched to full-on disobedience mode. They’re regularly striking and demonstrating and threatening to make his second and final term as president even more difficult than his first. It, too, was rocked by months of protests — often violent — by so-called yellow vest campaigners against social injustice.

Fares, the first-time protester, said her mother had been against her taking to the streets but has now given her blessing.

“She said that if I wanted to fight, she wouldn’t stop me,” the teen says.



Critics accuse Macron of effectively ruling by decree, likening him to France’s kings of old. Their reign finished badly: In the French Revolution, King Louis XVI ended up on the guillotine. There’s no danger of that happening to Macron. But hobbled in parliament and contested on the streets piled high with reeking garbage uncollected by striking workers, he’s being given a tough lesson, again, about French people power. Freshly scrawled slogans in Paris reference 1789.

So drastically has Macron lost the initiative that he was forced to indefinitely postpone a planned state visit this week by King Charles III. Germany, not France, will now get the honor of being the first overseas ally to host Charles as monarch.

The France leg of Charles’ tour would have coincided with a new round of strikes and demonstrations planned for today that are again likely to mobilize many hundreds of thousands of protesters. Macron said the royal visit likely would have become their target, which risked creating a “detestable situation.”

Encouraged by that victory, the protest movement

is plowing on and picking up new recruits, including some so young that it will be many decades before they’ll be directly impacted by the pushed-back retirement age. Their involvement is a worrisome development for Macron, because it suggests that protests are evolving, broadening from workplace and retirement concerns to a more generalized malaise with the president and his governance.

Violence is picking up, too. Police and environmental activists fought pitched battles over the weekend in rural western France, resulting in dozens of injuries. Officers fired more than 4,000 nonlethal dispersion grenades in fending off hundreds of protesters who rained down rocks, powerful fireworks and gasoline bombs on police lines.

“Anger and resentment,” says former President François Hollande, Macron’s predecessor, “are at a level that I have rarely seen.”

For Fares, whose first demonstration was a peaceful protest in Paris this weekend, the final straw was Macron’s decision to not let legislators vote on his retirement reform, because he wasn’t sure of winning a majority for it.

Instead, he ordered his prime minister to skirt parliament by using a special constitutional power to ram the bill through.

It was the 11th time that Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne had to resort to the so-called Article 49.3 power in just 10 months — a telling sign of Macron’s fragility since he lost his parliamentary majority in an election last June.

“It’s an attack on democracy,” Fares said. “It annoyed me too much.”

Her friend Luna Dessommes, 18, added hopefully: “We have to use the movement to politicize more and more young people.”

At age 76, veteran protester Gilbert Leblanc has been through it all before. He was a yellow vest; by his count, he took part in more than 220 of their protests in Macron’s first term, rallying to the cry that the former banker was too pro-business and “the president of the rich.”

Long before that, Leblanc cut his teeth in seminal civil unrest that reshaped France in May 1968. He says that when he tells awe-struck young protesters that he was a “soixante-huitard” — a ‘68 veteran — they “want to take selfies with me.” MDT/AP

this day in history

1965 THOUSANDS JOIN DR KING IN ALABAMA RALLY



Dr Martin Luther King has taken a crowd of nearly 25,000 people to the steps of the state capital of Montgomery, Alabama to highlight black grievances.

The procession marks the end of a five-day march which started in Selma last week and it brings to a close a month of civil rights protests in Alabama.

Troops policed the roads surrounding the capital and army helicopters hovered overhead as the crowd swelled to nearly 25,000.

Dr King, who addressed the protesters from a podium in the square, described the trek as “one of the greatest marches in the history of America”.

“Our aim is not to humiliate and defeat the white man, but to win his friendship and understanding,” he added.

Dr King tried to present a petition of black grievances to Governor George Wallace but he refused to meet the delegation.

The civil rights leader said he would ask trade unions to refuse to transport or use the state’s products and he urged the Federal Government and the Treasury to withdraw all assistance from the area.

Dr King also said that demonstrations would have to continue where essential conditions remained unmet.

When the march began last week, large bombs were planted at a black church, a funeral parlour and a leading black lawyer’s home.

They were later discovered and detonated by experts from the army base at Anniston, Alabama.

To prevent further attacks, US President Lyndon Johnson gave the marchers the protection of nearly 3,000 troops, plus FBI and local police assistance.

But three days ago Viola Liuzzo, a white civil rights advocate who had been ferrying demonstrators to their homes, was shot dead on a lonely stretch of road near the route of the march.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Ku-Klux-Klan movement have reportedly tried to contact President Johnson to discuss his aversion to their organisation.

There was no immediate response from the US President, who recently launched a scathing attack on the group, describing it as “a band of hooded bigots, whose loyalty was not with the United States”.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The protests came just months after the signing of the Civil Rights Bill which created equal rights regardless of race, colour, religion or national origin. The Voting Rights Act, which banned literacy tests and poll taxes which had previously been used to prevent black people from voting, was introduced in August 1965.

But many states acted quickly to circumvent the law and most of the decade was marked by race riots and assassinations.

Further riots followed in Los Angeles in August 1965. They lasted six days and left 34 dead and a further 1,000 people injured.

Dr King was assassinated in April 1968 and this led to riots in 100 US cities.

Black people continued to remain at a disadvantage when looking for work, and programmes of “affirmative action” were introduced during the 1970s under President Nixon.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Your interest in religion and philosophy may lead you to specific destinations. Opportunities will come through behind the scenes activities.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
 You will enjoy socializing and unusual forms of entertainment. Make money using your ingenuity and creative talent. Hard work will bring rewards.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
 Pleasure trips will bring you into contact with new and interesting people. Trips, educational pursuits, or projects that could lead to new outlooks should be on your agenda.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Try to iron out any friction over money with your mate or conflicts could prevail. You can anger others quickly today. Avoid overspending on items for your home.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Partnerships could prove to be lucrative. Toning, fitness, pampering should all be scheduled. Do something constructive outside.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 You may want to take a look at your direction in life. You may have been too agreeable to someone who just wanted to use you.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Talk to people who can give you important knowledge. Don't be too quick to judge. They won't get away with it. Get down to business and do the work yourself.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 You may have the energy to clear up that mound of paperwork facing you. Be creative in your pursuits. Do not force your opinions on others the connections will be short lived.

SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 You can make money if you put your savings into conservative investments. You can continue to make gains if you call a few people who can help you close an important deal.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 You will get bored quickly, so make sure that you have scheduled enough activity to hold your interest. Get ready to discover love, passion, and the desire to enjoy all that life has to offer.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 You can invest in profitable ventures. Home improvement projects will run smoothly. Hard work will not go unnoticed. Your ability to help others will win you points.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Be cautious and use your head wisely in situations that deal with the use of machinery or vehicles. Relax and enjoy what you've accomplished when you're finished.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

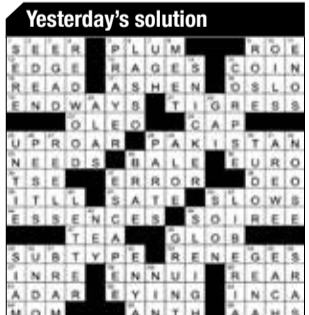
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	5	21	cloudy
Changchun	-3	14	fine
Chengdu	10	16	rain
Chongqing	12	17	overcast
Fuzhou	10	20	cloudy
Guangzhou	12	22	rain
Guiyang	6	12	overcast
Haikou	21	25	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	8	17	cloudy
Harbin	-5	13	fine
Hefei	5	21	cloudy
Nanjing	7	19	cloudy
Shanghai	7	18	cloudy
Taipei	15	19	rain
Wuhan	8	15	cloudy
Hong Kong	20	21	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	6	11	cloudy
Frankfurt	4	9	cloudy
Paris	8	12	cloudy
London	8	9	rain
New York	3	12	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Bluesy James; 5- Swiss peak; 8- Squeezes (out); 12- Travel far and wide; 13- Ancient tongue; 15- Part of MIT; 16- Big do; 17- Long; 18- Actress Talbot; 19- Large self-service retail store; 22- Lump; 23- Coal container; 24- A pop; 26- Be short with; 29- Fancy home; 31- Moo goo ___ pan; 32- Ruhr city; 34- One of the Allens; 36- Breakfast brand; 38- Get to the point?; 40- Indifferent; 41- Muslim messiah; 43- Less common; 45- Olive ___; 46- Cooking devices; 48- Iroquois tribe; 50- Plummet; 51- Nav. officer; 52- Where it's at; 54- Keep cold; 61- Folk singer Burl; 63- Best of a group; 64- Inter ___; 65- Observe the Sabbath; 66- Satisfies; 67- At all; 68- Like duck soup; 69- Pro ___; 70- Miss;

DOWN 1- Historical periods; 2- Beancurd; 3- Waterproof canvas; 4- Simple life form; 5- Disaster ___; 6- Cordelia's father; 7- Enliven; 8- German article; 9- Medieval rank; 10- This, in Tijuana; 11- Thrust with a knife; 13- Summer Olympian; 14- Leg joints; 20- Ready to eat; 21- London gallery; 25- Burmese, Manx, and Scottish Fold; 26- Long stories; 27- Peignoir; 28- Former Russian rulers; 29- Diciebre follower; 30- Gut course; 31- Precious stone; 33- Clean air org.; 35- Cambodia's Lon ___; 37- Scent; 39- Goes back on; 42- Actor Novello; 44- Lacoste of tennis; 47- Sporting blades; 49- Sharon's land; 52- Green land; 53- Optic layer; 55- Planar; 56- Confirmation, e.g.; 57- Romantic couple; 58- Thomas Edison's middle name; 59- Rail supports; 60- Hearing organs; 62- Porcine pad;



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- 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
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IS THE DAVID PORN? COME SEE, ITALIANS TELL FLORIDA PARENTS

NICOLE WINFIELD & TERRY SPENCER, ROME

THE Florence museum housing Michelangelo's Renaissance masterpiece the David invited parents and students from a Florida charter school to visit after complaints about a lesson featuring the statue forced the principal to resign.

Florence Mayor Dario Nardella also tweeted an invitation for the principal to visit so he can personally honor her. Confusing art with pornography was "ridiculous," Nardella said.

The board of the Tallahassee Classical School pressured Principal Hope Carrasquilla to resign last week after an image of the David was shown to a sixth-grade art class. The school has a policy requiring parents to be notified in advance about "controversial" topics being taught.

The incredulous Italian response highlighted how the U.S. culture wars are often perceived in Europe, where despite a rise in right-wing sentiment and governance, the Renaissance and its masterpieces, even its naked



Angela Merkel (left) and Matteo Renzi speak during a press conference in front of Michelangelo's "David statue" after German-Italian summit in Florence (2015)

ones, are generally free of controversy. Sunday's front page of the Italian daily publication Corriere della Sera featured a cartoon by its leading satirist depicting David with his genitals covered by an image of Uncle Sam and the word "Shame."

Carrasquilla believes the board targeted her after three parents complained about a lesson in-

cluding a photo of the David, a 5-meter tall nude marble sculpture dating from 1504. The work, reflecting the height of the Italian Renaissance, depicts the Biblical David going to fight Goliath armed only with his faith in God.

Carrasquilla has said two parents complained because they weren't notified in advance that a nude would be shown, while a

third called the iconic statue pornographic.

Carrasquilla said in a phone interview Sunday that she is "very honored" by the invitations to Italy and she may accept.

"I am totally, like, wow," Carrasquilla said. "I've been to Florence before and have seen the David up close and in person, but I would love to go and be a guest of the mayor."

Cecilie Hollberg, director of the Galleria dell'Accademia, where the David resides, expressed astonishment at the controversy.

"To think that David could be pornographic means truly not understanding the contents of the Bible, not understanding Western culture and not understanding Renaissance art," Hollberg said in a telephone interview.

She invited the principal, school board, parents and student body to view the "purity" of the statue.

Tallahassee Classical is a charter school. While it is taxpayer-funded and tuition-free, it operates almost entirely independently of the local school district and is sought out by parents seeking an

alternative to the public school curriculum.

About 400 students from kindergarten through 12th grade attend the three-year-old institution, which is now on its third principal.

Barney Bishop, chairman of Tallahassee Classical's school board, has told reporters that while the photo of the statue played a part in Carrasquilla's ouster, it wasn't the only factor. He has declined to elaborate, while defending the decision.

"Parents are entitled to know anytime their child is being taught a controversial topic and picture," Bishop said in an interview with Slate online magazine.

"There's been such controversy and such upheaval," she said. "I would really have to consider, 'Is this truly what is best?'"

Marla Stone, head of humanities studies at the American Academy in Rome, said the Florida incident was another episode in escalating U.S. culture wars and questioned how the statue could be considered so controversial as to warrant a prior warning.

"What we have here is a moral crusade against the body, sexuality, and gender expression and an ignorance of history," Stone said in an email. "The incident is about fear, fear of beauty, of difference, and of the possibilities embedded in art." MDT/AP

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

FOOTBALL

Kane and Ronaldo help England and Portugal stay perfect

DANIELLA MATAR

ENGLAND and Portugal made it two wins out of two at the start of European Championship qualifying, helped by their star players continuing their record-breaking streaks.

Harry Kane struck a record-extending 55th goal for his country to help England beat Ukraine 2-0, while Cristiano Ronaldo netted twice in his 198th appearance for Portugal in a 6-0 win over Luxembourg.

Slovenia was the other team with a perfect start to qualifying for Euro 2024 after two matches as it beat San Marino 2-0.

Defending champion Italy got its first win of the qualifying campaign as it beat Malta 2-0.

KANE CONTINUES

After surpassing Wayne Rooney as England's outright leading scorer with his penalty in Thursday's 2-1 win against Italy in Naples, Kane extended his record streak at

AP PHOTO



Wembley.

The England captain struck in the 37th minute of the Group C game, converting Bukayo Saka's cross at the far post.

Saka deservedly got on the scoresheet himself three minutes later when turning on the edge of the area and curling a shot into the top corner.

Italy bounced back from its

opening defeat to England with victory in Malta, with Mateo Retegui netting again.

The Argentina-born forward, who has Italian citizenship through his maternal grandmother, headed in a corner for the Azzurri's opener in the 15th minute.

Retegui became the first Italy player to score in his first two competitive international mat-

ches in nearly 55 years.

The Azzurri doubled their tally in the 27th minute when Matteo Pessina tapped in a low cross from Emerson.

RONALDO AT THE DOUBLE

Ronaldo, the all-time scoring leader in men's soccer, took his career tally for Portugal to 122 goals in 198 games.

The 38-year-old Ronaldo opened the scoring and netted his team's fourth goal just after the half-hour mark as the 2016 champions easily won in Luxembourg.

João Félix, Bernardo Silva, and substitutes Otavio and Rafael Leão added goals for Portugal.

Also in Group J, Aron Gunnarsson netted a second-half hat trick as Iceland beat Liechtenstein 7-0 and Slovakia beat Bosnia-Herzegovina 2-0.

FIVE-STAR HØJLUND

Rasmus Højlund continued his impressive start to his international career with another two goals but couldn't prevent Denmark surprisingly losing 3-2 at Kazakhstan.

Højlund, who scored a hat trick against Finland on his international debut on Thursday, netted another two goals in the first half to put Denmark in control.

However, Baktiyor Zainutdinov pulled one back from the penalty spot in the 73rd minute and Askhat Tagybergen leveled with four minutes remaining before Abat Aimbetov stunned everyone with the winner in the final minute.

Aimbetov was sent off in stoppage time for a second bookable offence.

Finland beat Northern Ireland 1-0 to leave them level on points with Denmark and Kazakhstan in Group H, three points behind Slovenia. **MDT/AP**

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FOOTBALL | BASKETBALL | DAILY TRAININGS

OPINION

China Daily
Amir Lati, China Daily*



NEW APPROACHES
NEEDED TO ADDRESS
GLOBAL WATER CRISIS

With the lessening of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact, the world is returning its focus to the most pressing existential threat — global warming and climate change and their devastating effects on the world.

Innovative technological solutions to the global water crisis can be a central part of dealing with the climate crisis, regarding both adaptation and mitigation.

One of the main areas critically affected by climate change is the global rainfall cycle, resulting in less rain and more droughts, as well as extreme rain events that bring more destruction than blessings.

The close connection between the water crisis and the climate crisis was noted in the summary statement of the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP27, in November and was a central theme of the UN Water Conference that opened on World Water Day on March 22 at UN headquarters in New York.

While many places around the world still have full access to clean tap water, in many other places this accessibility is limited or almost nonexistent. It is estimated that some 2.5 billion people live in water-scarce areas, a phenomenon that is expected to worsen in coming decades.

Water scarcity is causing migration, wars and conflicts, and placing hundreds of millions of people around the world at risk of displacement in the coming years.

Overcoming this phenomenon and anticipating a cure for this ailment will entail formulating a comprehensive campaign requiring that all necessary steps be integrated, such as guidance and education on water conservation; increasing water use efficiency; accruing international, public and private funding; rehabilitating polluted water resources; encouraging investment, research and development; and learning how to practice good water management on local, national, regional and global scales.

We must explore new approaches to investing in water — and sanitation-related infrastructure and services, while ensuring every person's right to safe drinking water. Emphasis should be placed on the availability and sharing of information about the amount, quality and distribution of water, access to water, and the risks to and use of that water.

In this regard, Israel can make a significant contribution to the world as a country with one of the most advanced water systems in the world and with an abundance of R&D and innovative technologies in many fields.

One example is the treatment and recycling of sewage. Israel holds a world record in this field, with 95 percent of its wastewater being treated, of which almost 90 percent is used in agriculture.

Another field in which Israel leads the world is prevention of water loss in urban systems.

The paradox is that nations with higher loss of water in urban supply systems are often arid and water-scarce countries for whom the absence of available water represents a significant burden. In Israel, technologies and methods have been developed to prevent water loss in supply systems and detect leaks by using remote sensors.

If this was the status quo the world over, it would be possible to greatly reduce and prevent environmental pollution and the destruction of natural systems, all the while allowing treated and purified water to flow back into nature and agriculture. It would also be possible to simultaneously reduce large-scale emissions of greenhouse gases, build agricultural resilience against climate change, allow water in natural systems — which absorb greenhouse gases — to function better and prevent destruction of ecological systems as the result of pollution or water scarcity.

Seawater desalination, the use of brackish water in agriculture, drip irrigation, the development of agricultural varieties that consume less water and even the extraction of water from air are fields that are developed in Israel.

We in Israel are able and willing to share our accumulated knowhow and best practices with other nations around the world, so that every individual across the globe is able to enjoy the essential human right to safe and clean water.

Water, after all, is life.

*Consul general of Israel in Hong Kong and Macao

AMID STRAINED US TIES, CHINA
FINDS UNLIKELY FRIEND IN UTAH

THE
BUZZ

China's global campaign to win friends and influence policy has blossomed in a surprising place: Utah, a deeply religious and conservative state with few obvious ties to the world's most powerful Communist country.

An investigation by the Associated Press has found that China and its U.S.-based advocates spent years building relationships with the state's officials and lawmakers.

Those efforts have paid dividends at home and abroad, the AP found: Lawmakers delayed legislation Beijing didn't like, nixed resolutions that conveyed displeasure with its actions and expressed support in ways that enhanced the Chinese government's image.

Its work in Utah is emblematic of a broader effort by Beijing to secure allies at the local level as its relations with the U.S. and its western allies have turned acrimonious.

Beijing's success in Utah shows "how pervasive and persistent China has been in trying to influence America," said Frank Montoya Jr., a retired FBI counterintelligence agent who lives in Utah.

"Utah is an important foothold," he said. "If the Chinese can succeed in Salt Lake City, they can also make it in New York and elsewhere."

Full Story on macaudailytimes.com.mo

AP PHOTO



TWITTER HUNTS GITHUB
USER WHO POSTED
SOURCE CODE ONLINE

ANNE D'INNOGENZIO,
NEW YORK

SOME parts of Twitter's source code — the fundamental computer code on which the social network runs — were leaked online, the social media company said in a legal filing that was first reported by The New York Times.

According to the legal document, first filed with the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of California on Friday, Twitter had asked GitHub, an internet hosting service for software development, to take down the code where it was posted. The platform complied and said the content had been disabled, according to the filing.

Twitter, based in San Francisco, noted in the filing that the postings infringe on copyrights held by Twitter.

The company also asked the court to identify the alleged individual or group that posted the information without Twitter's authorization. It's seeking names, ad-

resses, phone numbers, email addresses, social media profile data and IP addresses associated with the user account "FreeSpeechEnthusiast" which is suspected of being behind the leak. The name is an apparent reference to Twitter's billionaire owner, Elon Musk, who described himself as a free speech absolutist.

It is difficult to know if the leak poses an immediate cybersecurity risk for users, said Lukasz Olejnik, an independent cybersecurity researcher and consultant, but he did say that breach underscores internal turbulence at the company.

"While this is the internal source code, including internal tools, the biggest immediate risk seems to be reputational," Olejnik said "It highlights the broader problem of Big Tech, which is insider risk," and could undermine trust between Twitter's employees or internal teams, he said.

Musk had promised earlier this month that Twitter would open sour-

ce all the code used to recommend tweets on March 31, saying that people "will discover many silly things, but we'll patch issues as soon as they're found!" He added that being transparent about Twitter's code will be "incredibly embarrassing at first" but will result in "rapid improvement in recommendation quality."

The leak creates another challenge for Musk, who bought Twitter in October for \$44 billion and took the company private. Twitter has since been engulfed in chaos, with massive layoffs and an exodus of advertisers fearful of exposure on the platform to looser rules on potentially inflammatory posts.

Meanwhile, the Federal Trade Commission is probing Musk's mass layoffs at Twitter and trying to obtain his internal communications as part of ongoing oversight into the social media company's privacy and cybersecurity practices, according to documents described in a congressional report. MDT/AP

Poland Prosecutors in northern Poland said yesterday a foreign national suspected of spying for Russia will remain in custody for three months until an investigation is completed. Prosecutors in Gdansk responsible for military matters said the foreigner, whose identity has not been released, admitted to having passed sensitive information to Russian intelligence.

Saudi Arabia The chairman of Saudi National Bank has resigned for "personal reasons," a regulatory filing said yesterday, just after his comments on Credit Suisse sent that firm's stock cratering and ultimately saw rival UBS to acquire the firm. The resignation of Ammar al-Khudairy at Saudi National Bank, the largest commercial bank in the oil-rich kingdom, comes just months after the lender invested an additional \$1.5 billion in Credit Suisse to take its holding in the Swiss bank to nearly 10% of its value.

AP PHOTO



UK Prince Harry and Elton John were in a London court yesterday as the lawyer for a group of British tabloids prepared to ask a judge to toss the lawsuit they brought with several other high-profile people who allege phone tapping and other invasions of privacy. Harry's presence at the High Court in London is a sign of the importance he attaches to the case, one of several lawsuits the Duke of Sussex has brought against the media. The hearing is expected to last four days.

AP PHOTO



Scotland's governing Scottish National Party elected Humza Yousaf as its new leader on Monday after a bruising five-week contest that exposed deep fractures within the pro-independence movement. The 37-year-old son of South Asian immigrants is set to become the first person of color to serve as Scotland's first minister.