



LAWMAKER RON LAM DEMANDS THAT THE TRANSPORT BUREAU INVESTIGATE THE LACK OF BOOKABLE SLOTS FOR VEHICLE INSPECTION SERVICES

UM TO LAUNCH SIX NEW MASTER'S DEGREE INCLUDING AI, ROBOTICS SYSTEMS

DONALD TRUMP TO SURRENDER TO HISTORY-MAKING CRIMINAL CHARGES



AP PHOTO



Japan Images captured by a robotic probe inside one of the three melted reactors at the wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant showed exposed steel bars in the main supporting structure and parts of its thick external concrete wall missing, triggering concerns about its earthquake resistance in case of another major disaster. The plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, has been sending robotic probes inside the Unit 1 primary containment chamber since last year. The new findings released Tuesday were from the latest probe conducted at the end of March.

AP PHOTO



India An avalanche swept away a group of tourists in the Himalayas in northeastern India on yesterday, killing at least seven and injuring 11, officials said. Army spokesperson Lt. Col Mahendra Rawat said rescuers pulled out at least 23 tourists from the snow and took them to a hospital for treatment. India's Border Roads Organization said the tourists were hit by the avalanche near the Nathu La mountain pass in Sikkim state.

AP PHOTO



New Zealand Jacinda Ardern, who stepped down as New Zealand's prime minister in January, will begin an unpaid role this month combating online extremism. New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, who took over as leader from Ardern, announced yesterday he'd appointed Ardern as Special Envoy for the Christchurch Call. Hipkins said Ardern would begin the part-time role this month, right after she leaves Parliament and that she'd declined to accept any pay. He said the role would be reviewed at the end of the year.

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REGULATING AI: EXPERTS EXPLAIN WHY IT'S DIFFICULT TO DO AND IMPORTANT TO GET RIGHT

S. SHYAM SUNDAR,
PENN STATE
CASON SCHMIT,
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

FROM fake photos of Donald Trump being arrested by New York City police officers to a chatbot describing a very-much-alive computer scientist as having died tragically, the ability of the new generation of generative artificial intelligence systems to create convincing but fictional text and images is setting off alarms about fraud and misinformation on steroids. Indeed, a group of artificial intelligence researchers and industry figures urged the industry on March 29, 2023, to pause further training of the latest AI technologies or, barring that, for governments to “impose a moratorium.”

These technologies – image generators like DALL-E, Midjourney and Stable Diffusion, and text generators like Bard, ChatGPT, Chinchilla and LLaMA – are now available to millions of people and don't require technical knowledge to use.

Given the potential for widespread harm as technology companies roll out these AI systems and test them on the public, policymakers are faced with the task of determining whether and how to regulate the emerging technology. The Conversation asked three experts on technology policy to explain why regulating AI is such a challenge – and why it's so important to get it right.

To jump ahead to each response, here's a list of each:

Human foibles and a moving target
Combining “soft” and “hard” approaches
Four key questions to ask

HUMAN FOIBLES AND A MOVING TARGET

The reason to regulate AI is not because the technology is out of control, but because human imagination is out of proportion. Gushing media coverage has fueled irrational beliefs about AI's abilities and consciousness. Such beliefs build on “automation bias” or the tendency to let your guard down when machines are performing a task. An example is reduced vigilance among pilots when their aircraft is flying on autopilot.



Numerous studies in my lab have shown that when a machine, rather than a human, is identified as a source of interaction, it triggers a mental shortcut in the minds of users that we call a “machine heuristic.” This shortcut is the belief that machines are accurate, objective, unbiased, infallible and so on. It clouds the user's judgment and results in the user overly trusting machines. However, simply disabusing people of AI's infallibility is not sufficient, because humans are known to unconsciously assume competence even when the technology doesn't warrant it.

Research has also shown that people treat computers as social beings when the machines show even the slightest hint of humanness, such as the use of conversational language. In these cases, people apply social rules of human interaction, such as politeness and reciprocity. So, when computers seem sentient, people tend to trust them, blindly. Regulation is needed to ensure that AI products deserve this trust and don't exploit it.

AI poses a unique challenge because, unlike in traditional engineering systems, designers cannot be sure how AI systems

will behave. When a traditional automobile was shipped out of the factory, engineers knew exactly how it would function. But with self-driving cars, the engineers can never be sure how it will perform in novel situations.

Lately, thousands of people around the world have been marveling at what large generative AI models like GPT-4 and DALL-E 2 produce in response to their prompts. None of the engineers involved in developing these AI models could tell you exactly what the models will produce. To complicate matters, such models change and evolve with more and more interaction.

All this means there is plenty of potential for misfires. Therefore, a lot depends on how AI systems are deployed and what provisions for recourse are in place when human sensibilities or welfare are hurt. AI is more of an infrastructure, like a freeway. You can design it to shape human behaviors in the collective, but you will need mechanisms for tackling abuses, such as speeding, and unpredictable occurrences, like accidents.

AI developers will also need to be inordinately creative in envisioning ways that the system might behave and try to anticipate poten-

tial violations of social standards and responsibilities. This means there is a need for regulatory or governance frameworks that rely on periodic audits and policing of AI's outcomes and products, though I believe that these frameworks should also recognize that the systems' designers cannot always be held accountable for mishaps.

COMBINING ‘SOFT’ AND ‘HARD’ APPROACHES

Regulating AI is tricky. To regulate AI well, you must first define AI and understand anticipated AI risks and benefits. Legally defining AI is important to identify what is subject to the law. But AI technologies are still evolving, so it is hard to pin down a stable legal definition.

Understanding the risks and benefits of AI is also important. Good regulations should maximize public benefits while minimizing risks. However, AI applications are still emerging, so it is difficult to know or predict what future risks or benefits might be. These kinds of unknowns make emerging technologies like AI extremely difficult to regulate with traditional laws and regulations.

Lawmakers are often too slow to adapt to the rapidly chan-

ging technological environment. Some new laws are obsolete by the time they are enacted or even introduced. Without new laws, regulators have to use old laws to address new problems. Sometimes this leads to legal barriers for social benefits or legal loopholes for harmful conduct.

“Soft laws” are the alternative to traditional “hard law” approaches of legislation intended to prevent specific violations. In the soft law approach, a private organization sets rules or standards for industry members. These can change more rapidly than traditional lawmaking. This makes soft laws promising for emerging technologies because they can adapt quickly to new applications and risks. However, soft laws can mean soft enforcement.

Megan Doerr, Jennifer Wagner and Schmit propose a third way: Copyleft AI with Trusted Enforcement (CAITE). This approach combines two very different concepts in intellectual property — copyleft licensing and patent trolls.

Copyleft licensing allows for content to be used, reused or modified easily under the terms of a license – for example, open-source software. The CAITE model uses copyleft licenses to require AI users to follow specific ethical guidelines, such as transparent assessments of the impact of bias.

In our model, these licenses also transfer the legal right to enforce license violations to a trusted third party. This creates an enforcement entity that exists solely to enforce ethical AI standards and can be funded in part by fines from unethical conduct. This entity is like a patent troll in that it is private rather than governmental and it supports itself by enforcing the legal intellectual property rights that it collects from others. In this case, rather than enforcement for profit, the entity enforces the ethical guidelines defined in the licenses – a “troll for good.”

This model is flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of a changing AI environment. It also enables substantial enforcement options like a traditional government regulator. In this way, it combines the best elements of hard and soft law approaches to meet the unique challenges of AI.

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Plan to retire pollutant scooters falls short of expectations

RENATO MARQUES

The government plan that granted subsidies and exemptions for those who wished to replace old polluting scooters with new electricity-powered vehicles has fallen short of expectations, with the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) stating that during the phase of the plan, only 1,822 applications were received.

When the plan was first unveiled back in February 2022, DSPA's director Raymond Tam told the Times that the bureau aimed to attract participation from between 10% and 30% of such vehicle owners, a rate that translated to between 2,550 and 7,650 motorcycles. This figure was far from the actual number of applications, notwithstanding the fact that the plan, which initially expected to finish on December 31, 2022, was extended for another three months until the end of March this year.

The DSPA noted that the financial support plan was "aimed at encouraging owners to scrap obsolete motorcycles, which are highly polluting, to better optimize air quality and ensure the well-being of citizens." It was also aimed at increasing the popularity of electric motorcycles.

In the same statement, the bureau also noted that from the 1,822 applications received for the "Financial Support Plan for Disposing of Obsolete Motor-



cycles and Their Replacement with New Electric Motorcycles," so far, 1,457 motorcycles have been received by the DSPA to be scrapped and a total of 1,210 new electric motorcycles have been registered.

The financial support plan for the motorcycles granted a MOP3,500 direct subsidy, with vehicle owners also exempted from paying two registration fees for the new vehicles: the MOP900 fee to issue a provisional license plate, and the fee for issuing a formal license plate (MOP3,600 or 4,400 according to the vehicle category).

Back in 2017, the bureau launched a similar project that aimed to reduce the number of two-stroke engine vehicles

(motorcycles). Tam noted that the expectations for the new plan were based on the "successful participation of 52% of the vehicle owners" in the 2017 program.

PLAN FOR DISPOSING OF OLD DIESEL VEHICLES ATTRACTS 33% PARTICIPATION RATE

A different plan with a similar purpose was launched in mid-September last year and finished mid-March this year. This plan attracted far more interest from vehicle owners than the electric scooter plan.

DSPA stated that the participation rate has reached 33%, which equates to a total of 313 applications in a six-month period.

Contrary to the plan laun-

ched for the motorcycles, the plan for the old diesel vehicles (light or heavy duty) aged 20 years or older granted a direct subsidy from MOP25,000 to MOP115,000, according to the classification and specifications of the vehicle, without the need to replace the obsolete vehicle for another.

This plan also included old tour buses with 31 or more seats within its scope, and awarded a subsidy of MOP85,000 per vehicle retired.

Although the results obtained are far from the goal established by the DSPA, the bureau said that results were nonetheless positive and that it "has already been possible to successfully eliminate a series of obsolete motorcycles and old vehicles powered by diesel with high levels of pollution, which not only made it possible to achieve the objective of improving air quality in the short term but also to further promote the use of electric motorcycles, helping to achieve the targets for peak carbon emissions and carbon neutrality."

Taking into account the series of events that unfolded in 2017 when the first plan of this kind was implemented, it is expected that the government will soon implement punitive measures applicable to the type of vehicles involved in the subsidy plans by raising the standards that such vehicles need to comply with to continue circulating in Macau.

HOLIDAY TRAFFIC MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED

Temporary traffic measures will be implemented at sites where residents are expected to gather during the Ching Ming Festival and Easter holidays, according to the Transport Bureau. Among these measures, the governments of Hong Kong and Macau have issued special overtime quotas to Hong Kong and Macau cross-border bus service operators to meet the travel demand between Hong Kong and Macau during the Easter period. The authorities have coordinated with gaming companies and will refer to the passenger volume during the Lunar New Year period as the operating standard during Easter. Consequently, additional support vehicles will be added during the Easter period.

AMCM WARNS OF FAKE BANKING APPS

The Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) stated that the Macau Branch of the Bank of East Asia Ltd. has issued a notice on their website, as required by authorities, to remind the public to pay attention to fake mobile applications to avoid fraud and unnecessary financial loss. The bureau stated that citizens should download official mobile applications through channels provided by financial institutions to prevent malicious programs from being installed and avoid risks such as the leakage of personal information.

IFTM TO START NEW POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS IN 23/24

The Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) will launch two brand-new postgraduate programs: the Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics, and its corresponding Postgraduate Diploma, in the 2023/2024 academic year. Using English as the teaching medium, the programs will focus on the core areas of marketing and high-end retail management in the context of digital transformation. According to a statement, the program aims "to provide technology-based marketing and data analysis education that is interdisciplinary and responsive to new developments in tourism, luxury and other related high-end service businesses."

BROAD MONEY SUPPLY RETREATS IN FEBRUARY

The SARs' broad money supply retreated by 1.1% month-on-month to 716.1 billion in February, the monetary watchdog said on Tuesday. According to statistics released by the Monetary Authority of Macao, currency in circulation and demand deposits (collectively M1) dropped 3.3% and 4.1% respectively. M1 thus decreased by 3.9% from one month earlier. According to official data, resident deposits decreased 1% from the preceding month to 695 billion patacas, while non-resident deposits dropped 11.8% to 289.4 billion patacas. As a result, total deposits in the banking sector fell 3.5% from a month earlier to 1,214.4 billion patacas.

Gov't inclined toward three conditions for medically assisted reproduction

A parliamentary committee reported that the government is inclined to restrict access to medically assisted reproduction in only three scenarios.

The Medically Assisted Reproduction Technology Bill is under examination by the Second Standing Committee of parliament. A meeting and press conference was held yesterday morning.

President of the committee, Chan Chak Mo, told the press conference that the government is



likely to restrict the use of the technology to three situations.

Assisted reproductive

technology is likely to be approved for married or de-facto couples diagnosed with infertility, for

the treatment of severe illness in children of a married couple, as well as the existence of severe genetic or other diseases in a married couple.

Chan stated that the government was concerned that, without proper restrictions, the technology could easily be used for commercial surrogacy and human trafficking, and that misuse of the technology would have negative consequences for the baby.

Chan added that at the meeting, academic research involving em-

bryos was also discussed. The current version of the Bill suggests that only research aimed at preventing, diagnosing, or treating diseases, improving the technology, as well as establishing a stem cell database for transplantation will be considered.

Prior approval by the Health Bureau must be obtained for such research.

In addition, embryos produced initially for reproductive purposes should not be saved for future research use, and vice versa. **AL**

PUBLIC WORKS

PROJECTS FOR GREEN VILLAS AND RECYCLED WATER PLANT IN PUBLIC CONSULTATION

RENATO MARQUES

THE projects to refurbish the green villas located at the Avenida do Coronel Mesquita in Macau and the construction of the recycled water plant in Coloane are two of the most highlighted projects that entered the public consultation period yesterday before being addressed at the Urban Planning Committee (CPU).

According to information from the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU), the public consultation takes place for 15 days between April 4 and April 18, a period in which the members of the public can submit their opinions or concerns over the projects.

For the villa refurbishment project, there is no clear information about the government's intention other than the fact that the renovations must respect the guidelines and input of the Cultural Affairs Bureau.

According to available documentation, the houses should retain the same visual appearance, with the conditions imposed focusing mostly on requirements for the installation of air conditioning



as well as interior renovation.

Regarding the construction of the recycled water plant in Coloane, it will be located in the land plot next to the current Coloane water treatment plant, occupying a total area of 2,930 square meters.

The building will have a maximum proposed height of 20.5 meters and 30% of the area is to have planted vegetation or be filled with green potted plants.

After the conclusion of the public consultation period, the

projects should be raised before a plenary meeting of the CPU to discuss the final urban conditions plan that will establish the conditions for both architecture projects.

Another project that is presented in the same group of projects includes the construction a double residential tower with heights of 110 and 70 meters respectively, to be located across Dr. Sun Yat Sen Municipal Park in the Northern District.

Lawmaker demands space at car inspections

ANTHONY LAM

LAWMAKER Ron Lam demands that the Transport Bureau (DSAT) investigate the lack of bookable slots for vehicle inspection services.

Lam revealed that he has recently received reports from the public that all slots for vehicle inspection services are booked out during government designated periods. All owners of vehicles required to undergo annual inspections should do so during their designated periods, according to the law. Failure to do so will result in a surcharge.

He pointed to a case he received to support the statement. The car owner received a text from the DSAT, notifying him to arrange



an inspection of his car between March 28 and April 13. The owner immediately tried to book a slot but all slots were full. As such, he could only book slots outside of his designated period, causing him to incur a fine of MOP2,000.

According to Lam, the DSAT did not expand the capacity of vehicle inspection centers, but nevertheless required vehicle owners with annual inspection periods concluding on or after April 3 to follow their original designated

10-day period.

The main challenge is that inspections that were delayed due to Covid-19 lockdowns last year were pushing out the timeframes.

Lam criticized the bureau for violating the principle of goodwill in the provision of public services, as the bureau only suggests that car owners monitor the booking system for additional slots or line up on the last day of their designated period, rather than making additional spaces available or guaranteeing service.

The lawmaker asked whether the DSAT had plans to further expand the capacity of vehicle inspection centers to process the current backlog.

Additionally, as the number of motor vehicles due for inspection is expected to further expand, he asked whether the bureau had further plans to provide additional vehicle inspection services – for example, through outsourcing.

EDUCATION

UM TO LAUNCH SIX NEW MASTER'S DEGREE INCLUDING AI, ROBOTICS SYSTEMS

THE University of Macau (UM) will launch six new master's degree programmes in the 2023/2024 academic year.

The new programs focus on the areas of artificial intelligence, robotics and autonomous systems, coastal environment and safety, innovative materials, medicinal administration, and philosophy.

Through these programs, the university aims to "nurture more high-quality professionals for Macau to support the development of emerging industries and assist Macau in its economic transformation," according to the university's statement.

The six new master's degree programs include Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence, Master of Science in Robotics and Autonomous Systems,

and Master of Science in Coastal Environment and Safety offered by the Faculty of Science and Technology; Master of Science in Innovative Materials offered by the Institute of Applied Physics and Materials Engineering; Master of Science in Medicinal Administration offered by the Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences; and Master of Arts in Philosophy offered by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

The UM recently held the fourth UM Language and Culture Day to promote language and cultural diversity. With the theme "Cherish Mother Tongues, Embrace All Cultures," the event featured various cultural performances presented by academic staff and students from different countries and regions. **LV**

COOPERATION ZONE

NDRC RELEASES ENCOURAGED INDUSTRY CATALOGUE TO SPUR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HENGQIN

THE 'Encouraged Industry Catalogue' in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin was recently released by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC).

With a total of 185 items, the catalogue mainly focuses on the scientific and technological research and advanced manufacturing industries, as well as Macau-branded industries including traditional Chinese medicine, cultural tourism, conventions and exhibitions, and commercial and trade industries, modern financial industry.

In addition to specifying the major industries to promote Macau's economic diversification, it highlights the regulatory alignment with Macau.

For instance, the catalogue covers the design, production, and sale of food products, drinks, condiments and health products approved and registered in Macau and produced in the Cooperation Zone, as well as trade brokerage, agencies, and services between the mainland, Macau SAR, Portuguese-speaking countries and other countries in jointly

advancing the Belt and Road Initiative.

It includes insurance services like personal insurance, reinsurance, mutual insurance, self-insurance, and tariff guarantee insurance.

"We can provide Hengqin and Macau residents with better medical services and attract more residents from Macau to work and live in Hengqin through launching various types of insurance, which is also an important financial measure to promote the integrated development of the two places," said Fu Yongge, deputy director of the Executive Committee of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

According to the NDRC, the catalogue holds the key to guide investors, help governments manage investment projects, formulate and implement policies for the development of skills, land development and other industries.

In the future, Guangdong province and other related departments of the State Council will actively support the encouraged industries in terms of project layout, funding, and other aspects. **MDT/NEWSGD**

HK top microbiologist suggests universal antiviral drugs to prevent future pandemic

ANTHONY LAM

HONG Kong microbiologist Kwok-yung Yuen recommends universal antiviral medications as key to preventing future viral outbreaks.

His comment was made at a public lecture hosted by the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST). The lecture was part of a medical summit organized for the university's 23rd anniversary.

Existing antiviral medicine, Yuen said, is difficult to use as a measure to cope with outbreaks because it usually only combats a single virus. When a new virus emerges, "it takes another several years to invent new ones," he said.

In addition, antivirus medicines do not kill viruses but merely obstruct the virus in cleaving segments of a protein to invade and replicate within the nucleus of human cells.

In response to a question from

the audience on whether he considered a cocktail of medication to be a feasible approach against viral infections, he emphasized that currently, viruses can only be neutralized in the process of easing an infection.

When asked to estimate when the next pandemic or outbreak might occur, Yuen emphasized that medical speculations are most of the time incorrect. Adding to this, Yuen noted that outbreaks have recently occurred closer in time to one another.

"SARS-CoV-3 isn't unimaginable," he warned, and pointed out that infections spread by mosquitoes will become more common due to global warming attracting the insect to higher latitude locations.

He recalled that in 1997 and 2003, outbreaks caused by H5N1 flu and SARS-CoV-1 were detected within the Pearl River Delta Region. In 2013, the H7N9 flu outbreak was recorded in the Yangtze River Delta Region.

Both are coastal regions of China.

Therefore, Yuen and his team had predicted that the next viral outbreak would happen in the Bohai Bay Region near the country's capital. However, contrary to their expectations, China's first outbreak of Covid-19 was recorded in Wuhan, an inland city.

Yuen considered Wuhan's position as a transport hub to be one of the main reasons behind the rapid spread of infection.

The scholar pointed out that since 2003, over 60 new viruses had been discovered, of which over 30 were novel coronaviruses. His research team at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) conducted surveillance on animals and discovered that among the 60 new viruses, two were human viruses, 25 affected bats and 27 affected birds.

His aspiration is to develop a method of detecting over 30 known human-infecting viruses within an hour, in the race against the spread of viruses and to cure as many patients as possible. **AL**



Hong Kong microbiologist Kwok-yung Yuen

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



LEGEND LOSES OVER HKD600M IN 2022

ANTHONY LAM

MACAU Legend Development Ltd. has lost HKD600 million in the 2022 financial year, with HKD712 million in income, or (37.3% less, than the 2021 financial year).

The group lost HKD1.19 billion in 2021.

Among the income, HKD519 million

has been generated by casino gambling activities, which is equivalent to a 43.4% drop year-on-year. The group explained that the plunge was mainly caused by the cessation of the satellite casino contract with SJM Resorts, S.A, which ceased on Jun. 26, 2022. This equates to the closure of 194 gambling tables in its satellite casino.

In light of the poor performance at-

tributed to the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions, the group's Board of Directors have decided not to issue dividends for the year end.

The group made about HKD193 million in 2022 from non-gambling activities, an 11.8% drop year-over-year. Adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) was about HKD219 million in losses, a rise of 27.1% year-over-year.

As of the end of last year, the group's cash and bank balance was HKD89 million. Outstanding guaranteed bank loans amounted to HKD2.16 billion. Loans without guaranty but with interest amounted to HKD400 million.

The group's debt to net worth ratio, as of the end of last year, was 66.6%, a rise from 52.7% in end-2021.

At the end of last year, the group had a total of 1,966 employees, a decrease of 1,637 from 2021. Since the group did not have any gambling tables in Macau from June to December last year, compared with 1,122 gaming operation employees in 2021, the number of relevant employees of the group at the end of last year was zero.

At the end of last year, the group added that a satellite casino management contract had been entered into with SJM. The contract will be effective for three years. The group will also upgrade dining facilities at the Macau Fisherman's Wharf, the group's flagship project.

The group's businesses in Laos are also recovering, it added, and the group remains optimistic about revival.

CIVIL PROTECTION TO HOLD 'CRYSTAL FISH' APR. 22

THE Civil Protection Operation Centre (COPC) will conduct a civil protection drill known as "Crystal Fish" on Saturday, 22 April.

The exercise aims to test the preparedness of different COPC teams to respond to various scenarios anticipated as part of the evacuation of low-lying areas in 'storm surges' during the passage of a severe typhoon. The drill was instigated after the passage of Typhoon Hato in 2017.

As in previous occa-

sions, different incidents will be simulated to test the joint response capacity of the members of the civil protection structure. The exercise will also rely on the participation of civil protection volunteers and members of the civil protection community liaison mechanism.

Given the role of community volunteers in the exercise, the COPC is calling on members of the community to fill 450 vacancies between now and April 18. **RM**



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US Biden offers \$450m for clean energy projects at coal mines

MATTHEW DALY,
WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Joe Biden's administration is making \$450 million available for solar farms and other clean energy projects across the country at the site of current or former coal mines, part of his ongoing efforts to combat climate change.

As many as five projects nationwide will be funded through the 2021 infrastructure law, with at least two projects set aside for solar farms, the White House said Tuesday.

The White House also said it will allow developers of clean energy projects to take advantage of billions of dollars in new bonuses being offered in addition to investment and production tax credits available through the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act. The bonuses will "incentivize more clean energy investment in energy communities, particularly coal communities," that have been hurt by a decade-plus decline in U.S. coal production, the White House said.

The actions are among steps the Biden administration is taking as the Democratic president moves to convert the U.S. economy to renewable energy such as wind and solar power, while turning away from coal and other fossil fuels that produce planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions.

The projects are modeled on a site Biden visited last summer,



President Joe Biden speaks about climate change and clean energy at Brayton Power Station, July 20, 2022, in Somerset, Mass.

where a former coal-fired power plant in Massachusetts is shifting to offshore wind power. Biden highlighted the former Brayton Point power plant in Somerset, Massachusetts, calling it the embodiment of the transition to clean energy that he is seeking but has struggled to realize in the first two years of his presidency.

"It's very clear that ... the workers who powered the last century of industry and innovation can power the next one," said Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, whose agency will oversee the new grant program.

Former mining areas in Appalachia and other parts of the country have long had the infrastructure, workforce, expertise and "can-do attitude" to produce

energy, Granholm told reporters on Monday. "And now, thanks to President Biden's investments in America, we have the resources that can help them bring this new energy economy to life."

Up to five clean energy projects will be funded at current and former mines, Granholm said. The demonstration projects are expected to be examples for future development, "providing knowledge and experience that catalyze the next generation of clean energy on mine land projects," the Energy Department said.

Applications are due by the end of August, with grant decisions expected by early next year.

In a related development, the Energy Department said it is awarding \$16 million from the

infrastructure law to West Virginia University and the University of North Dakota to study ways to extract critical minerals such as lithium, copper and nickel from coal mine waste streams.

Rare earth elements and other minerals are key parts of batteries for electric vehicles, cellphones and other technology. Biden has made boosting domestic mining a priority as the U.S. seeks to decrease its reliance on China, which has long dominated the battery supply chain.

One of the two universities that will receive funding is in the home state of one of Biden's loudest critics, West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, a fellow Democrat who has decried what he calls Biden's anti-coal agenda. Manchin com-

plained on Friday about new Treasury Department guidelines for EV tax credits that he said ignore the intent of last year's climate and health care law.

The new rules are aimed at reducing U.S. dependence on China and other countries for EV battery supply chains, but Manchin said they don't move fast enough to "bring manufacturing back to America and ensure we have reliable and secure supply chains."

Manchin, who chairs the Senate Energy Committee, also slammed Biden last year after the president vowed to shutter coal-fired power plants and rely more heavily on wind and solar energy.

The powerful coal state lawmaker called Biden's comments last November "divorced from reality," adding that they "ignore the severe economic pain" caused by higher energy prices as a result of declining domestic production of coal and other fossil fuels. The White House said Biden's words in a Nov. 4 speech in California had been "twisted to suggest a meaning that was not intended" and that the president regretted any offense caused.

"No one is building new coal plants because they can't rely on it, even if they have all the coal guaranteed for the rest of their existence of the plant. So it's going to become a wind generation," Biden said in the speech in Carlsbad, California. "We're going to be shutting these plants down all across America and having wind and solar."

Biden has set a goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and achieve a net-zero emissions economy by 2050.

White House climate adviser Ali Zaidi said Monday that Biden believes U.S. leaders "need to be bold" in combating climate change "and that includes helping revitalize the economies of coal, oil and gas and power-plant communities." **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Wynn Hosts Asia's 50 Best Restaurants cocktail event in Singapore



Wynn recently hosted a celebratory cocktail event in Singapore to congratulate the 50 most influential restaurants that now rank on Asia's 50 Best Restaurants 2023 list. Chefs from three award-winning Wynn res-

taurants showcased dining experiences at both Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace. At the event, culinary professionals and international media exchanged ideas and learned about Macau's UNESCO-designated

"Creative City of Gastronomy" status as well as the unique "tourism + gastronomy" experiences of the dynamic destination.

The celebratory cocktail event served as an engaging platform for over 40 world-renowned chefs, food critics, media and culinary professionals from China, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan to meet Wynn's food and beverage executives as well as the head chefs from the three award-winning restaurants – Wing Lei Palace Executive Chef Tam Kwok Fung, Sichuan Moon culinary director André Chiang and executive chef Wilson Fam, as well as Golden Flower executive chef Henry Zhang Zhi Cheng.

SJM organizes forum on wellness and spa



Organized by SpaChina Magazine and co-organized by SJM Resorts, S.A, the first SpaChina Global Health Forum was held at Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau.

Exploring current wellness demands and future trends,

the two-day forum gathered industry professionals, international experts and delegates from around the globe.

The global industry event is the first wellness and spa conference held in Macau, bringing into focus the marriage of

traditional culture and people, sparking session after session of inspiring discussions.

Themed "Cultural Immersion," the SpaChina Global Health Forum delved into the latest industry developments, post-pandemic health subjects, nutritional studies and technology advancements. It also included a panel on traditional Chinese wisdom titled "Zen and Tea," as well as a roundtable of experts on the subject: "From antiquity to modernity, from East to West." The collision of different cultures, health practices, arts, traditions, economies, and other aspects have brought about new approaches in the health industry.



Visitors wearing masks look at the ARM-structure server processor Yitian 710, developed by Alibaba's in-house semiconductor unit T-Head, at the Apsara Conference, 2021

CHINA SEETHES AS US CHIP CONTROLS THREATEN TECH AMBITIONS

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

FURIOUS at U.S. efforts that cut off access to technology to make advanced computer chips, China's leaders appear to be struggling to figure out how to retaliate without hurting their own ambitions in telecoms, artificial intelligence and other industries.

President Xi Jinping's government sees the chips that are used in everything from phones to kitchen appliances to fighter jets as crucial assets in its strategic rivalry with Washington and efforts to gain wealth and global influence. Chips are the center of a "technology war," a Chinese scientist wrote in an official journal in February.

China has its own chip foundries, but they supply only low-end processors used in autos and appliances. The U.S. government, starting under then-President Donald Trump, is cutting off access to a growing array of tools to make chips for computer servers, AI and other advanced applications. Japan and the Netherlands have joined in limiting access to technology they say might be used to make weapons.

Xi accused Washington in March of trying to block China's development with a campaign of "containment and suppression."

He called on the public to "dare to fight."

Despite that, Beijing has been slow to retaliate against U.S. companies, possibly to avoid disrupting Chinese industries that assemble most of the world's smartphones, tablet computers and other consumer electronics. They import more than \$300 billion worth of foreign chips every year.

The ruling Communist Party is throwing billions of dollars at trying to accelerate chip development and reduce the need for foreign technology.

China's loudest complaint: It is blocked from buying a machine available only from a Dutch company, ASML, that uses ultraviolet light to etch circuits into silicon chips on a scale measured in nanometers, or billionths of a meter. Without that, Chinese efforts to make transistors faster and more efficient by packing them more closely together on fingernail-size slivers of silicon are stalled.

Making processor chips requires some 1,500 steps and technologies owned by U.S., European, Japanese and other suppliers.

"China won't swallow everything. If damage occurs, we must take action to protect ourselves," the Chinese ambassador to the Netherlands, Tan Jian, told the Dutch newspaper *Financieel-*

le Dagblad.

"I'm not going to speculate on what that might be," Tan said. "It won't just be harsh words."

The conflict has prompted warnings the world might decouple, or split into separate spheres with incompatible technology standards that mean computers, smartphones and other products from one region wouldn't work in others. That would raise costs and might slow innovation.

"The bifurcation in technological and economic systems is deepening," Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore said at an economic forum in China last month. "This will impose a huge economic cost."

Chinese industries will "hit a wall" in 2025 or 2026 if they can't get next generation chips or the tools to make their own, said Handel Jones, a tech industry consultant.

China "will start falling behind significantly," said Jones, CEO of International Business Strategies.

Beijing might have leverage, though, as the biggest source of batteries for electric vehicles, Jones said.

Chinese battery giant CATL supplies U.S. and Europe automakers. Ford Motor Co. plans to use CATL technology in a \$3.5 billion battery factory in

Michigan.

"China will strike back," Jones said. "What the public might see is China not giving the U.S. batteries for EVs."

On Friday, Japan increased pressure on Beijing by joining Washington in imposing controls on exports of chipmaking equipment. The announcement didn't mention China, but the trade minister said Tokyo doesn't want its technology used for military purposes.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman, Mao Ning, warned Japan that "weaponizing sci-tech and trade issues" would "hurt others as well as oneself."

Hours later, the Chinese government announced an investigation of the biggest U.S. memory chip maker, Micron Technology Inc., a key supplier to Chinese factories. The Cyberspace Administration of China said it would look for national security threats in Micron's technology and manufacturing but gave no details.

The Chinese military also needs semiconductors for its development of stealth fighter jets, cruise missiles and other weapons.

Chinese alarm grew after President Joe Biden in October expanded controls imposed by Trump on chip manufacturing technolo-

gy. Biden also barred Americans from helping Chinese manufacturers with some processes.

To nurture Chinese suppliers, Xi's government is stepping up support that industry experts say already amounts to as much as \$30 billion a year in research grants and other subsidies.

China's biggest maker of memory chips, Yangtze Memory Technologies Corp., or YMT, received a 49 billion yuan (\$7 billion) infusion this year from two official funds, according to Tianyancha, a financial information provider.

One was the government's main investment vehicle, the China National Integrated Circuit Industry Investment Fund, known as the Big Fund. It was founded in 2014 with 139 billion yuan (\$21 billion) and has invested in hundreds of companies.

The Big Fund launched a second entity, known as the Big Fund II, in 2019 with 200 billion yuan (\$30 billion).

In January, chip manufacturer Hua Hong Semiconductor said Big Fund II would contribute 1.2 billion yuan (\$175 million) for a planned 6.7 billion yuan (\$975 million) wafer fabrication facility in eastern China's Wuxi.

In March, the Cabinet promised tax breaks and other support for the industry. It gave no price tag. The government also has set up "integrated circuit talent training bases" at 23 universities and six at other schools.

"Semiconductors are the 'main battlefield' of the current China-U.S. technology war," Junwei Luo, a scientist at the official Institute of Semiconductors, wrote in the February issue of the journal of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Luo called for "self-reliance and self-improvement in semiconductors."

The scale of spending required is huge. The global industry leader, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp., or TSMC, is in the third year of a three-year, \$100 billion plan to expand research and production.

Developers including Huawei Technologies Ltd. and VeriSilicon Holdings Co. can design logic chips for smartphones as powerful as those from Intel Corp., Apple Inc., South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co. or Britain's Arm Ltd., according to industry researchers. But they cannot be manufactured without the precision technology of TSMC and other foreign foundries.

Trump in 2019 crippled Huawei's smartphone brand by blocking it from buying U.S. chips or other technology. American officials say Huawei, China's first global tech brand, might facilitate Chinese spying, an accusation the company denies. In 2020, the White House tightened controls, blocking TSMC and others from using U.S. technology to produce chips for Huawei. **MDT/AP**

ECONOMY

ADB forecasts China, India to power strong growth in '23

ELAINE KURTENBACH,
BANGKOK

CHINA'S recovery from the pandemic and strong demand in India will drive strong economic growth in Asia this year, the Asian Development Bank said in a report issued yesterday.

The Manila, Philippines-based ADB's latest update forecasts an expansion of 4.8% in this year and the next, up from 4.2% in 2022. It said inflation would likely cool slightly this year and fall further in 2024.

ADB economists said a weekend decision by oil producing nations to cut output, pushing oil prices sharply higher, might reignite inflationary pressures and add to challenges for the region.

The report's analysis was based on the assumption that Brent crude oil, the pricing basis for international trading, would average \$88 a barrel this year and \$90 a barrel next year.

Oil prices remain below that level, with Brent at \$83 on Monday.



But they soared about 5% after Saudi Arabia and other major oil producers said they will cut production by 1.15 million barrels per day from May until the end of the year, on top of a reduction announced last October that infuriated the Biden administration.

"It's certainly plausible that oil prices could go even higher and introduce another challenge for the region," ADB Chief Economist Albert Park said in a conference call.

However, growing imports of Russian crude oil, especially by China and India, will likely cushion the impact of rising prices — such exports to China, India and Turkey more than doubled last year. As of February, a third of Russia's crude exports were going to India and more than a fifth to China.

Park noted that inflation in Asia seems to be driven more by surging demand for services, such as

tourism, than for goods.

Another factor that could push prices higher is China's rebound from slow growth after its leaders lifted COVID-19 restrictions that disrupted travel, manufacturing and other business activities. The ADB forecasts that China's economy will grow 5% this year and 4.5% next year, an improvement over last year's 3% growth but slower than its long-term average.

India's economy, meanwhile, is

expected to grow at a slower pace of 6.4% this year. That follows a 9.1% annual pace of expansion in 2021 as it rebounded from the worst of the pandemic, and 6.8% last year. But it's one of the fastest expansions for a major regional economy.

Vietnam, meanwhile, is expected to see 6.5% growth this year, down from 8% last year. That's above the average forecast for Southeast Asia, at 4.7% in 2023 and 5% next year. Its central bank has begun cutting interest rates to counter a slowdown in its property sector and weakening exports.

A downturn in demand for computer chips has hurt the outlook for major exporters like Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea, said the report by the regional development lender.

It cited a forecast by World Semiconductor Trade Statistics that sales in semiconductors will fall 4.1% this year from last year but said demand is likely to recover later this year, as is typical in the highly cyclical industry.

Recent worries over the stability of the banking industry after bank failures in the U.S. and Switzerland's rescue of Credit Suisse with a partial takeover by its rival UBS are among other uncertainties facing the global and regional economy, the report noted. The war in Ukraine also might push prices for commodities such as oil, gas and wheat higher, further bedeviling central bank efforts to curb inflation. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

Macron heads to China for delicate talks on Ukraine, trade

SYLVIE CORBET, PARIS

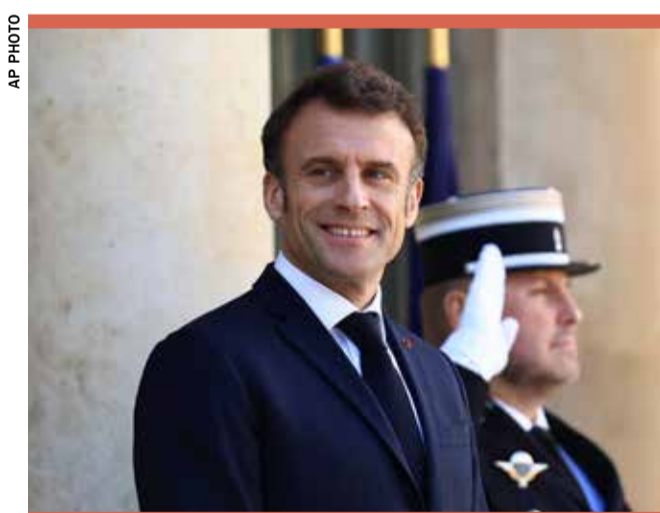
FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron will have to muster all his diplomatic adeptness and political acumen on a three-day state visit to China where the war in Ukraine will be front and center, along with tough talks on trade.

Macron is expected to warn China against sending weapons to Russia and instead ask that the country use its influence to support peace efforts.

Beijing claims to hold a neutral stance in the war, but has also stressed its "no-limits friendship" with Russia. China's President Xi Jinping last month met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

A top French official acknowledged that Paris isn't expecting to see a major shift in that position.

But France will push for initiatives helping ordinary Ukrainians and for possible



avenues toward reaching a halfway solution to the war, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with the French presidency's customary practices.

Paris and Beijing may find a point of convergence following Putin's recent announcement that his country plans to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. China, without naming Russia, made clear its

opposition to the planned deployment.

Macron will also seek to involve China deeper in global discussions on climate-related issues, as things are getting more complicated for him at home.

The 45-year-old leader has in recent weeks faced strong opposition among ordinary French citizens and lawmakers to his plan to raise the legal retirement age from 62 to 64. A surge of

street protests resulted in a state visit by Britain's King Charles III having to be postponed.

While Macron is in Beijing, French trade unions on Thursday will stage the 11th round of nationwide demonstrations since January.

The visit also comes amid ever-rising tensions between the U.S. and China, the world's two largest economies.

Trade will also be a major focus as Macron has asked European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to join him for a meeting with Xi that's meant to show European unity especially on economic issues. The French president said last month that he took such an initiative because he is "attached to European coordination."

Last week, von der Leyen warned the European Union must be prepared to develop measures to pro-

tect trade and investment that China might exploit for its own security and military purposes.

China is both the EU's commercial partner and a rival, Thierry Breton, EU Commissioner for Internal Market, said Monday on French news broadcaster FranceInfo. Breton said the message to Chinese authorities is that they "must stop trying to play one country against another."

"Of course, China still is an important market for many European companies. But the (EU) internal market is a crucial market to China," Breton added.

Macron will be accompanied by a delegation of over 50 CEOs including from French energy giant EDF, rail transport manufacturer Alstom and European plane-maker Airbus.

The top French official said negotiations were still being held on a potential

deal with Airbus that would come on top of China's 2019 order for 300 aircraft.

Macron, who last traveled to China in 2019 before the COVID-19 crisis, is to start his trip today in Beijing with a speech to the French community.

Tomorrow, he will have meetings with the head of the National People's Congress, Zhao Leji, and China's new No. 2 leader, Premier Li Qiang, in addition to a meeting and a state dinner with Xi in the presence of von der Leyen.

On Friday, Macron will head to the southern Chinese metropolis of Guangzhou, where Xi's father used to work as provincial governor in the 1980s.

The French president will answer questions there from some of the 1,000 Chinese students at Sun Yat-Sen university. He will then meet Xi again for a private dinner and later meet with Chinese investors. **MDT/AP**

SOCIAL MEDIA

Australia bans TikTok from federal government devices

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

AUSTRALIA has become the last of the “Five Eyes” security partners to ban the Chinese-owned video-sharing app TikTok from its federal government’s devices.

Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus said in a statement Tuesday that based on intelligence and security agencies’ advice, that ban would come into effect “as soon as practicable.”

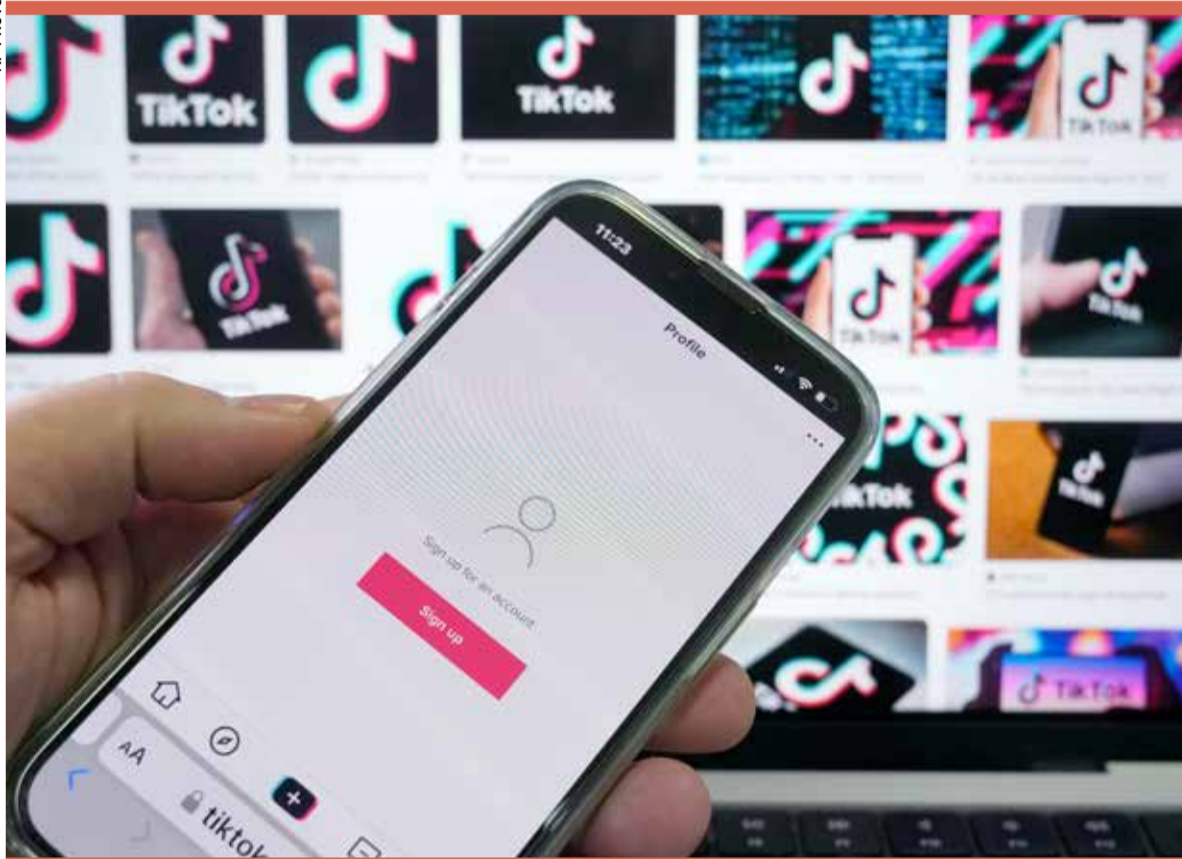
The so-called Five Eyes intelligence-sharing partners -- the United States, Canada, Britain and New Zealand -- have taken similar steps.

TikTok objected to the decision.

“We are extremely disappointed by this decision, which, in our view, is driven by politics, not by fact,” the company’s general manager for Australia, Lee Hunter, said in a statement. “Again, we stress that there is no evidence to suggest that TikTok is in any way a security risk to Australians and should not be treated differently to other social media platforms.”

He urged the Australian go-

AP PHOTO



vernment to treat all businesses fairly, “regardless of country of origin.”

Western governments are worried that TikTok poses risks to cybersecurity and data privacy,

and that the app could be used to promote pro-Beijing narratives and misinformation.

TikTok is owned by the Chinese technology company ByteDance and has long maintained that it

does not share data with the Chinese government. It is carrying out a project to store U.S. user data on Oracle servers, which it says will put the information out of China’s reach.

The company has disputed accusations it collects more user data than other social media companies, and insists that it is run independently by its own management.

The European Parliament, European Commission and the EU Council, the 27-member bloc’s three main institutions, have also imposed bans on TikTok on staff devices. Under the European Parliament’s ban, which took effect last month, lawmakers and staff were also advised to remove the TikTok app from their personal devices.

India imposed a nationwide ban on TikTok and dozens of other Chinese apps, including the messaging app WeChat, in 2020 over privacy and security concerns. The ban came shortly after a clash between Indian and Chinese troops at a disputed Himalayan border killed 20 Indian soldiers and injured dozens.

In early March, the U.S. gave government agencies 30 days to delete TikTok from federal devices and systems. The ban applies only to government devices, though some U.S. lawmakers are advocating an outright ban.

China has lashed out at the U.S. for banning TikTok, saying it is an abuse of state power and is suppressing companies from other countries.

More than half of the 50 U.S. states also have banned the app from official devices, as have Congress and the U.S. armed forces. **MDT/AP**

Rights groups welcome Malaysia’s move on death penalty

HUMAN rights groups yesterday applauded Malaysia’s move to scrap the mandatory death penalty as a major step forward in the push for the abolition of capital punishment in Southeast Asia.

Instead of the death penalty, lawmakers on Monday approved bills to give courts the option of imposing prison sentences of between 30 and 40 years and caning not less than 12 times. Previously, courts had no choice but to mandate hanging as punishment for a range of crimes including murder, drug trafficking, treason, kidnapping and acts of terror.

Phil Robertson of Human Rights Watch said Malaysia’s progressive stance could help “break the logjam on forward movement towards abolition of the death penalty” in the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

“Far too many ASEAN states like to brandish the

AP PHOTO



death penalty as some sort of big stick to scare criminals, but that tactic is not really working. Singapore has gone on an execution spree, Vietnam puts dozens to death every year, and even Myanmar is now executing political prisoners, but crime has hardly diminished,” he said.

“Hopefully, the Malaysia move will signal a step back

from the death penalty that will be picked up by other states like Thailand, Laos, Brunei and elsewhere who have not put people to death for some time,” he said.

Cambodia and the Philippines are the only two countries in the region that abolished the death penalty, although there were calls to revive it in Manila.

Myanmar had a de-facto

moratorium on the death penalty since 1989, but the country’s military rulers executed four political prisoners last year. Singapore resumed executions by hanging 11 people last year after a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Singapore has come under fire for executions of what critics said were low-level drug smugglers but

the government has defended the use of the death penalty as a deterrent. Officials said Singapore had arrested about 6,000 people a year for illegal drugs in the 1990s, but the number has now dropped to about 3,000 people a year.

Reports said three studies conducted or commissioned by the government showed that more than seven in 10 people in the city-state supported the death penalty for the most serious crimes such as intentional murder, use of firearms and drug trafficking.

Robertson said the Malaysian government should show regional leadership by encouraging others in ASEAN to rethink their continued use of the death penalty. He also urged Malaysia to scrap whipping, which he called “feudal anachronism.”

Malaysian rights groups called on the country’s Senate to swiftly pass the bills so that the king can sign

them into law.

Once that happens, nearly 850 prisoners on death row who had exhausted all appeals can seek a review of their death sentences, but not their convictions. Most cases were linked to drug trafficking. The review can only be done once.

Some 500 others on death row are still going through the appeal process. Dozens of others who are serving natural life sentences can seek to commute them.

Charles Hector from the Malaysians Against Death Penalty and Torture group said it was clear capital punishment had failed to deter crime as the number of killings and drug trafficking cases remained high. He said the removal of imprisonment for natural life, considered by Pope Francis as a “secret death penalty,” would give prisoners a chance to rehabilitate. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



US Donald Trump to surrender to history-making criminal charges

MICHAEL R. SISAK, ERIC TUCKER & WILL WEISSERT, NEW YORK

AN extraordinary moment in U.S. history is set to soon unfold in a Manhattan courthouse today (Macau time): Former President Donald Trump, who faces multiple election-related investigations, will surrender to face criminal charges stemming from 2016 hush money payments.

The booking and arraignment are likely to be relatively brief — though hardly routine — as Trump is fingerprinted, learns the charges against him and pleads, as expected, not guilty.

Trump, who was impeached twice by the U.S. House but was never convicted in the U.S. Senate, will become the first former president to face criminal charges. The nation's 45th commander in chief will be escorted from Trump Tower to the courthouse by the Secret Service and may have his mug shot taken.

New York police are braced for protests by Trump supporters, who share the Republican former president's belief that the New York grand jury indictment and three additional pending investigations are politically motivated

and intended to weaken his bid to retake the White House in 2024.

Trump, a former reality TV star, has been hyping that narrative to his political advantage, saying he raised \$8 million in the less than a week since the indictment on claims of a "witch hunt." He has assailed the Manhattan district attorney, egged on supporters to protest and claimed without evidence that the judge presiding over the case "hates me" — something his own lawyer has said is not true.

Trump is scheduled to return to his Palm Beach, Florida, home, Mar-a-Lago, on Tuesday evening to hold a rally, punctuating his new reality: submitting to the dour demands of the American criminal justice system while projecting an aura of defiance and victimhood at celebratory campaign events. At least 500 prominent supporters have been invited, with some of the most pro-Trump congressional Republicans expected to attend.

A conviction would not prevent Trump from running for or winning the presidency in 2024.

Inside the Manhattan courtroom, prosecutors led by New

York's district attorney, Alvin Bragg, a Democrat, are expected to unseal the indictment issued last week by a grand jury. This is when Trump and his defense lawyers will get their first glimpse of the precise allegations against him.

After the arraignment, Trump is expected to be released by authorities because the charges against him don't require that bail be set

The indictment contains multiple charges of falsifying business records, including at least one felony offense, two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press last week.

After the arraignment, Trump is expected to be released by authorities because the charges against him don't require that bail be set.

The investigation is scrutinizing six-figure payments made to porn actor Stormy Daniels and former Playboy model Karen

McDougal. Both say they had sexual encounters with the married Trump years before he got into politics. Trump denies having sexual liaisons with either woman and has denied any wrongdoing involving payments.

The arraignment will unfold against the backdrop of heavy security in New York, coming more than two years after Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol in a failed bid to halt the congressional certification of Democrat Joe Biden's win.

Though police said they had no intelligence suggesting any violence was likely, they were on high alert for any potential disruptions.

"While there may be some rabble rousers thinking of coming to our city tomorrow, our message is clear and simple: Control yourselves," Mayor Eric Adams said. He also singled out Georgia Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, one of Trump's staunchest supporters in Congress, who is organizing a rally Tuesday at a park across from the courthouse: "While you're in town, be on your best behavior," Adams said.

Trump pollster John McLau-

ghlin said the former president would approach the day with "dignity."

"He will be a gentleman," McLaughlin said. "He'll show strength and he'll show dignity and ... we'll get through this and win the election."

Trump lawyer Joe Tacopina said over the weekend that he hoped the arraignment would be "as painless and classy as possible" despite its unprecedented nature.

But Trump was also defiant. In a post late Monday night on his social media network he lashed out at Biden, suggesting the current president should be facing legal troubles of his own.

Despite that, the scene around Trump Tower and the courthouse where Trump will stand before a judge was quiet overnight. There were signs both supporting and decrying the former president stuck to posts, one urging passers-by to donate to help fund Trump's presidential library and another showing a shouting Trump behind bars.

The public fascination with the case was evident Monday as national television carried live images of Trump's motorcade from his Mar-a-Lago club to a private, red, white and blue Boeing 757 stenciled with his name. From there, Trump was flown to New York, where cameras followed his motorcade into Manhattan and he spent the night at Trump Tower as he prepared to turn himself in.

The former president and his aides are embracing the media circus. After initially being caught off guard when news of the indictment broke Thursday evening, Trump and his team are hoping to use the case to his advantage. Still, they asked the judge in a Monday filing to ban photo and video coverage of the arraignment.

Though prosecutors routinely insist that no person is above the law, bringing criminal charges against a former president carries instant logistical complications.

New York's ability to carry out safe and drama-free courthouse proceedings in a case involving a polarizing ex-president could be an important test case as prosecutors in Atlanta and Washington conduct their own investigations of Trump that could also result in charges. Those investigations concern efforts to undo the 2020 election results as well as the possible mishandling of classified documents at Mar-a-Lago.

Top Republicans, including some of Trump's potential rivals in next year's GOP presidential primary, have criticized the case against him. Biden, who has yet to formally announce that he's seeking reelection next year, and other leading Democrats have largely had little to say about it.

Prosecutors insist their case against Trump has nothing to do with politics. **MDT/AP**



Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto, left, shakes hands with United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken, right, at NATO headquarters in Brussels, yesterday

FINLAND JOINS NATO IN MAJOR BLOW TO RUSSIA OVER UKRAINE WAR

LORNE COOK & MATTHEW LEE, BRUSSELS

FINLAND joined the NATO military alliance yesterday, dealing a major blow to Russian President Vladimir Putin with a historic realignment of Europe's post-Cold War security landscape triggered by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

The Nordic country's membership doubles Russia's border with the world's biggest security alliance. Finland had adopted neutrality after its defeat by the Soviets in World War II, but its leaders signaled they wanted to join NATO just months after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine sent a shiver of fear through its neighbors.

In praising Finland's membership, U.S. President Joe Biden noted it came on the 74th anniversary of the signing of NATO's founding treaty on April 4, 1949.

"When Putin launched his brutal war of aggression against the people of Ukraine, he thought he could divide Europe and NATO. He was wrong," Biden said. "Today, we are more united than ever. And together — strengthened by our newest ally, Finland — we will continue to preserve transatlantic security, defend every inch of

NATO territory, and meet any and all challenges we face."

The move is a strategic and political setback for Putin, who has long complained about NATO's expansion toward Russia and partly used that as a justification for the invasion.

"I'm tempted to say this is maybe the one thing that we can thank Mr. Putin for because he once again here precipitated something he claims to want to prevent by Russia's aggression, causing many countries to believe that they have to do more to look out for their own defense and to make sure that they can deter possible Russian aggression going forward," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said before accepting the documents that made Finland's membership official.

The U.S. State Department is the repository of NATO texts concerning membership.

Russia warned it would be forced to take "retaliatory measures" to address what it called security threats created by Finland's membership. It had also warned it would bolster forces near Finland if NATO sends any additional troops or equipment to what is its 31st

member country.

The alliance says it poses no threat to Moscow.

Alarmed by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last year, Finland, which shares a 1,340 kilometer (832 mile) border with Russia, applied to join in May, setting aside years of military nonalignment to seek protection under the organization's security umbrella.

"It's a great day for Finland and an important day for NATO, too," said Finnish President Sauli Niinistö. "Russia tried to create a sphere around them and, well, we are not a sphere. I'm sure that Finns themselves feel more secure, that we are living in a more stable world."

Neighboring Sweden, which has avoided military alliances for more than 200 years, has also applied. But objections from NATO members Turkey and Hungary have delayed the process.

Niinistö said Finland's membership "is not complete without that of Sweden. The persistent efforts for a rapid Swedish membership continue."

Earlier, Russia's Foreign Ministry said Moscow "will be forced to take military-technical and other retaliatory measures to counter the

threats to our national security arising from Finland's accession to NATO."

It said Finland's move marks "a fundamental change in the situation in Northern Europe, which had previously been one of the most stable regions in the world."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Finland's membership reflects the alliance's anti-Russian course and warned that Moscow will respond depending on what weapons NATO allies place there. But he also sought to play down the impact, noting that Russia has no territorial disputes with Finland.

It's not clear what additional military resources Russia could send to the Finnish border. Moscow has deployed the bulk of its most capable military units to Ukraine.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said no more troops would be sent to Finland unless it asked for help.

The country is now protected by what Stoltenberg called NATO's "iron-clad security guarantee," under which all member countries vow to come to the defense of any ally that comes under attack.

But Stoltenberg refused to rule out the possibility of holding more military exercises there and said that NATO would not allow Russia's demands to dictate the organization's decisions.

"We are constantly assessing our posture, our presence. We have more exercises, we have more presence, also in the Nordic area," he said.

Finland's Parliament, meanwhile, said its website was hit with a so-called denial-of-service attack, which made the site hard to use, with many pages not loading and some functions not available.

A pro-Russian hacker group known as NoName057 (16) claimed responsibility, saying the attack was retaliation for Finland joining NATO. The claim could not be immediately verified.

The hacker group, which has reportedly acted on Moscow's orders, has taken part in a slew of cyberattacks on the U.S. and its allies in the past. Finnish public broadcaster YLE said the same group hit the Parliament's site last year.

Finland's entry was marked with a flag-raising ceremony at NATO headquarters and a meeting of the alliance's foreign ministers. MDT/AP

this day in history

1955 SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL RESIGNS



Sir Winston Churchill has resigned as prime minister of Britain due to his failing health.

The news was announced in a statement from Buckingham Palace this afternoon.

It said: "The Right Honorable Sir Winston Churchill had an audience with the Queen this evening and tendered his resignation as Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, which Her Majesty was graciously pleased to accept."

Sir Winston Churchill's resignation follows a dinner party held at 10 Downing Street last night attended by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh and a number of the prime minister's past and present government colleagues.

Tributes to the 80-year-old premier, who will be replaced by Sir Anthony Eden tomorrow, have poured in from around the world.

Sir Winston Churchill's political career began in 1900 as Conservative MP for Oldham but in 1906, disillusioned with his party, he defected to the Liberal party.

He first became prime minister, as a Conservative again, in 1940 and led the wartime Coalition Government during World War II.

During this time he inspired courage throughout the entire British nation even though he had promised nothing more than "blood, toil, tears and sweat."

After the war the Coalition Government broke up and Winston Churchill resigned the office of prime minister on 23 May 1945.

He was immediately asked by the King to form a new government and his second tenure as prime minister, this time of a caretaker government, began.

But Churchill, although regarded as a superb wartime leader, was regarded less favourably in peacetime and in the general election which followed in July 1945 he was heavily defeated.

A Labour government, led by Clement Attlee, took the reins of power until 1951 when Winston Churchill once again became prime minister at the age of 77.

In 1953 he was made a Knight of the Order of the Garter in recognition of his services to his country.

Sir Winston will continue to sit in the House of Commons as member for Woodford.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Sir Winston Churchill, who is remembered as Britain's greatest wartime leader, remained a backbencher until 1964.

He died on 24 January 1965, aged 90 at his London home at Hyde Park Gate.

Following his death Sir Winston's body lay in state in Westminster Hall for three days - an honour not accorded any English statesman since Gladstone in 1898.

After a funeral service at St Paul's Cathedral he was buried in Bladon, not far from his birthplace at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire.

On Sunday November 24 2002, Winston Churchill was named the greatest Briton of all time in a nationwide poll which attracted well over a million votes.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You are best to ask questions if you aren't certain about issues that are confronting you. Outings with relatives or good friends will provide you with stimulating conversation.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
You can get a great deal accomplished if you bring work home. Arguments may flare up in your home. Rid yourself of that which is old and no longer of use.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
Chances are you could get stuck with a colleague's job unexpectedly. Don't delay; go to your physician or dentist and get to the bottom of the discomfort.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Residential moves should be considered carefully. Try to keep your cool; you may be a tad frazzled by all the rushing around. Your ability to put a deal together will surprise others.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Sudden changes in your financial situation are likely. Don't be too eager to buy things for those who really don't deserve it. First find out if they're married.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Pamper yourself today. Friends may not be completely honest with you. Don't let your partner get away with spending too much of your money.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Listen to the complaints of others. Opportunities to meet new lovers will come through pleasure trips or social events. You'll only hurt your lover if you don't.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You will communicate easily and should be able to develop new friendships. Losses could occur if you haven't been careful when dealing with joint financial ventures.

SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
This is probably causing upset and confusion on the home front. A romantic infatuation from your past may surface if you frequent places that you both used to go.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You will have an interest in foreigners and their cultures. You should be able to get involved in an interesting proposition today. First find out if they're married.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
New projects may lead you into a dead end. Your hypnotic eyes will capture the hearts of those who interest you. Business partnerships should turn out to be quite lucrative.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You may find that someone at work hasn't been trustworthy. Spend time with friends or family. You'll have amazing ideas, but superiors may try to block your attempts at implementing them.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

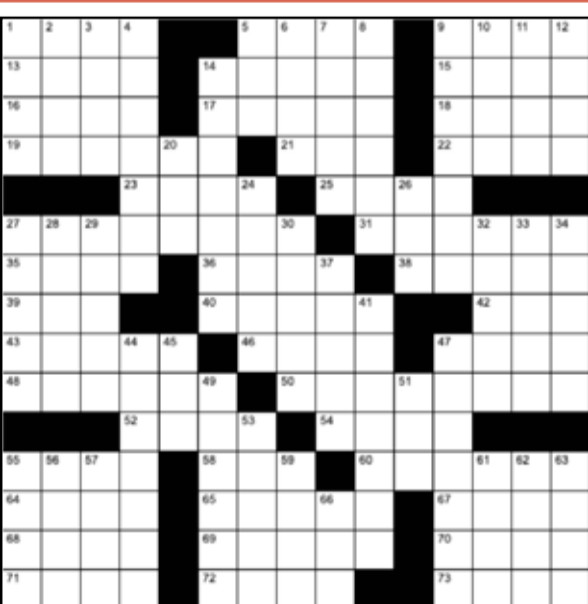
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	8	17	cloudy
Changchun	1	12	cloudy
Chengdu	13	17	rain
Chongqing	15	18	rain
Fuzhou	19	24	rain
Guangzhou	22	26	rain
Guiyang	12	14	overcast
Haikou	25	34	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	12	13	rain
Harbin	-4	12	cloudy
Hefei	8	14	cloudy
Nanjing	10	14	overcast
Shanghai	12	16	rain
Taipei	17	24	rain
Wuhan	7	16	cloudy
Hong Kong	24	26	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	3	14	overcast
Frankfurt	-1	9	overcast
Paris	7	14	fine
London	8	13	overcast
New York	11	13	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Dell side; 5- Hourly rate; 9- Impression; 13- Opera set in Egypt; 14- Luster; 15- Lays down the lawn; 16- ___-do-well; 17- Studied, with "over"; 18- Pond organism; 19- Chinese martial art; 21- Old spy org.; 22- Thought-provoking; 23- Choir member; 25- Monetary unit of Greece; 27- Public; 31- "The Merchant of Venice" heroine; 35- Blunted blade; 36- How sweet ___!; 38- Belt site; 39- Mus. slow-up; 40- Hangs on to; 42- Car club; 43- Dicembre follower; 46- Portrayal by an actor; 47- River to the Caspian Sea; 48- Sister of Venus; 50- Junior, to Senior; 52- Bellyache; 54- Exclamation of fright; 55- Face shape; 58- Former measure of length; 60- Innovation of the late 20's; 64- List from which to choose; 65- Model Campbell; 67- Start of a counting rhyme; 68- JFK postings; 69- Early Mexican; 70- Shrivelled, without moisture; 71- Brief letter, paper money; 72- Travel on water; 73- Hilltop;

DOWN 1- Dropped; 2- Stead; 3- Yemeni port; 4- Simulated military operation; 5- One of the five W's; 6- Prefix with -drome; 7- Farm layers; 8- Finishes; 9- Dancer Duncan; 10- Pineapple vendor; 11- Advantage; 12- Quickly, quickly; 14- Soviet satellite; 20- Sick "season"; 24- Western; 26- Quarrel; 27- Roman name of Demeter; 28- Suppose; 29- Unit just above a yard; 30- Rest atop; 32- Ornamental coronet; 33- Singer Chris; 34- ___ of Two Cities; 37- Spread apart; 41- Hebrew or Phoenician, e.g.; 44- Person who lives in seclusion; 45- ___ roll; 47- Serving no function; 49- Places of contest; 51- Clean air org.; 53- Public square; 55- Portent; 56- Rejection power; 57- Med school subj.; 59- Monetary unit of Lesotho; 61- Ship stabilizer; 62- Memo opener; 63- Gave the once-over; 66- Voice of Bugs;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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HKD 18,800/mth 4 bed 2 bath

Manhattan
HKD 17,500/mth 3 bed 2 bath

AD

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

MARK KENNEDY, NEW YORK

HARRY Styles, Post Malone, Lizzo, Doja Cat, Megan Thee Stallion, the cast of "Ted Lasso" and the web series that gave us a kid loving corn are among the nominees for this year's Webby Awards, recognizing the best internet content and creators.

The International Academy of Digital Arts & Sciences announced the nominees on Tuesday, the result of nearly 14,000 entries from 70 countries.

Styles nabbed a nomination for his commercial for AirPods, Trevor Noah for his segments filmed between the scenes at "The Daily Show" and BTS fans for their YouTube uploads called #MyBTStory. Lizzo got one for her hosting her show "Lizzo's Watch Out For the Big Grrrls," in which she hunts for dancers.

Doja Cat's reluctant social video for Taco Bell's Mexican Pizza — "I like my pizza with refried beans/Peep my ad/ Search YouTube/This ain't even Mexican food" — was nominated for best advertising partnership, and faces-off in that category with the collaboration between "Ted Lasso" and FIFA 23.

Nominees include "Recess Therapy," the show that highlighted 7-year-old corn-loving Tariq, Post Malone's listening experience for "Twelve Carat Toothache" and a VR concert by Megan Thee Stallion was nominated for best metaverse, immersive or virtual performance.

In other music nods, Future's "Wait For U" featuring Drake and Tems, Muse's "Compliance," Disturbed's "Bad Man" and Christina Aguilera's reworked "Beauti-

WEBBY AWARD NOMINATIONS FOR HARRY STYLES, LIZZO, POST MALONE



Harry Styles attends the premiere of "My Policeman" during the Toronto International Film Festival, Sept. 2022

ful" for World Mental Health Day are competing for best music video.

Metallica's teaming up with "Stranger Things" for a collection of Hellfire Club merchandise was nominated for best partnership or collaboration and the social media accounts of Lupita Nyong'o, Stephen Colbert and Jennifer Garner got nods.

A focus on artificial intelligence reflected the tech world's

fascination with its promise, including OpenAI getting a nomination for best science website or mobile site, and nods for the Heinz ketchup AI artwork campaign and the voice-activated AI color system for Sherwin-Williams.

Companies earning the highest number of nominations are Apple with 22, MTV with 15, National Geographic and Netflix each with 14, Audible with 13,

CNN and HBO and The Washington Post each with 12, Google and Meta with 11 apiece and Amazon with 10.

Awards are selected by the Academy, while The Webby People's Voice Awards are voted on by fans around the world. Voting for that award is open now until April 20. Winners for all awards will be announced on April 25.

Academy members include drummer, filmmaker and wri-

ter Questlove, podcaster Roxane Gay, actor LeVar Burton, comedians Samantha Bee and Ziwe Fumudoh, Girls Who Code founder Reshma Saujani, Savage X Fenty executive Natalie Guzman, fashion designer Tan France, "Abbott Elementary" creator and actor Quinta Brunson, Amazon executive Werner Vogels, podcaster Andy Slavitt, software engineer Tracy Chou and artist Takashi Murakami. **MDT/AP**

PHILANTHROPY

Meghan to receive Ms. Foundation's Women of Vision Award

GLENN GAMBOA, NEW YORK

MEGHAN, the Duchess of Sussex, and Black Voters Matter co-founder LaTosha Brown will receive the Ms. Foundation's Women of Vision Award in May, the nation's oldest women's foundation announced Monday.

The awards will be handed out at the Ms. Foundation's annual gala on May 16 at New York City's Ziegfeld Ballroom, part of its 50th anniversary celebration where funds raised will go toward the organization's equity-centered initiatives.

The foundation will



also honor Wanda Irving, co-founder of Dr. Shalon's Maternal Action Project,

and Kimberly Inez McGuire, executive director of URGE, as well as emer-

ging leaders abortion rights activist Olivia Julianna and LGBTQ+ advocate Re-

bekah Bruesehoff.

"Meghan, LaTosha, Wanda, Kimberly, Olivia, and Rebekah are incredible leaders," Teresa C. Younger, Ms. Foundation president and CEO, said in a statement. "We are grateful to be able to shine a light on their many accomplishments and tireless work on behalf of gender and racial equity across the country and the world."

Meghan will receive the award for "her global advocacy to empower and advocate on behalf of women and girls" from Gloria Steinem, Ms. Foundation co-founder. With her husband, Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, Meghan directs their philanthropy through their Archewell Foundation.

According to its 2022 annual report, the organization provided 12.66 million COVID-19 vaccines with partner Global

Citizen and helped resettle nearly 175,000 refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan in the United States with partner Welcome.US. The foundation also helped build a community play space in Uvalde, Texas, following the school shooting there that killed 19 children and two teachers.

Brown will receive her award for "her tireless activism and work to bring about social change" through Black Voters Matter, which works with communities to make their voting more effective. According to the group's most recent impact report, the Black Voters Matter Fund now works with more than 400 partners in 25 states and the District of Columbia. The Black Voters Matter Capacity Building Institute funds voter education, registrations and other programs to expand access to voting. **MDT/AP**

OLYMPICS

Polish president Duda hails a European Games without Russia

GRAHAM DUNBAR,
GENEVA

AHEAD of his country soon hosting the multi-sport European Games with no Russian or Belarusian athletes, Poland President Andrzej Duda thanked Olympic officials on Monday for excluding the military invaders of Ukraine.

President Duda was accepting a flame of peace for the games from the Rome-based European Olympic Committees one week after the IOC detailed how it wants Russians and Belarusians to return to international competitions before the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Poland has consistently urged sports leaders during the war to ban Russia and Belarus, and Duda revealed he would welcome Ukraine's president on a visit in two days' time.



Polish President Andrzej Duda, right, receives the Flame of Peace from President of the European Olympic Committee (EOC) Spyros Capralos during the handover ceremony for the European Games of Krakow-Malopolska 2023 at Rome's Ara Pacis museum, Italy, Monday

"As the host of the European Games," Duda said in translated comments about the competition that opens on June 21, "I will be able to look in the eye of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and tell him, 'Volodymyr, these Games are going to be the

Games of peace and the Games of calm with no pretenses, with no imitation that everything is all right.'" The "pretense" and "imitation" seemed aimed at the prospect of some Russians and Belarusians preparing to be cleared to compete

as neutral athletes in more Olympic sports because of the International Olympic Committee's updated advice to governing bodies. Earlier Monday, World Taekwondo said it could see some athletes — who should be vetted to ensure they have not actively supported the war, nor are "contracted to" military or national security agencies — returning to its world championships in late May.

The IOC and its presi-

dent Thomas Bach have shifted position since urging sports bodies within days of the war starting in February last year to ban Russia and Belarus playing or hosting international sports. Those countries' tennis players and cyclists continued to compete.

Defying Zelenskyy who says Russia and Belarus have "no place" in Paris while the war continues, the IOC now cites advice from U.N.-recognized experts that it would be discrimination to exclude athletes based on their passports.

"Russia is an invader state, a state which is an aggressor which invaded Ukraine and is currently waging war in Ukraine," Duda told Olympic and Italian officials on Monday, describing Belarus as a "regime who has supported this onslaught."

More than 7,000 athletes are due to compete at the European Games centered on the Polish city of Kraków from June 21 through July 2.

A qualifying path toward the Paris Olympics is included in 18 sports on the

program, European Olympic Committees president Spyros Capralos told The Associated Press earlier Monday.

"It's impossible to have Russian and Belarusian participation," he said in a telephone interview from Rome, acknowledging the Polish government's refusal to host them.

Taekwondo has its upcoming world championships in Azerbaijan, where Russians can travel more freely and which hosted the inaugural European Games in 2015. The second edition in 2019 was hosted by Belarus.

The four-yearly sports event has gone to Poland, a member of the European Union which has imposed financial, travel and visa limits on Russians.

"It's a combination of all these things," said Capralos, who is among the 100 IOC members led by Bach. "Now there are so many logistical problems and issues, and because most athletes have already qualified."

Ukraine could field a team of around 200 athletes in Poland, where about two million of their compatriots are living as refugees who fled the war.

"The support for the Ukraine athletes will come from everyone," Capralos said of the Games. "I think Ukraine will get a standing ovation. This is going to be a great moment." MDT/AP

AD

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MACAUCLOSER

Brazil volleyballer suspended for online abuse of Lula

MAURICIO SAVARESE,
SAO PAULO

OLYMPIC volleyball gold medalist Wallace de Souza was suspended for one year by Brazil's Olympic Committee on Monday for online abuse of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The committee's ethics council agreed unanimously to suspend de Souza "due to the anti-ethical action of promoting and stimulating violence" on social media.

He's been suspended from club activities since Jan. 31 after he conducted a social media poll asking whether Lula deserved to be shot in the face. De Souza is a staunch supporter of former President Jair



Bolsonaro, a far-right leader and pro-gun activist.

Lula beat Bolsonaro in October elections and returned on Jan. 1 to the job he held from 2003-10.

The Olympic committee ruling also sidelined de Souza for 90 days from national competitions, which forces him out of the

knockout stages of Brazil's top-flight volleyball league. He plays for Cruzeiro, one of the favorites for the Brazilian Superleague title.

De Souza helped Brazil win gold at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016 but he's already retired from international competitions. MDT/AP

OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

SINO-JAPANESE
TRUST KEY TO ASIA-
PACIFIC STABILITY

A direct hotline between the Chinese and Japanese defense ministries has been set up and is due to be put into operation this spring. Announcing the news on Friday, the Chinese Defense Ministry said it would "strengthen the capabilities of the two sides to manage and control maritime and air crises".

Plans for the hotline have been in the works since 2007, but they stalled due to Japan's "purchase" of the Diaoyu Islands in 2012. It was not until President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida agreed at their meeting in Bangkok in November to accelerate the talks on the mechanism that it was finally realized.

Although this is a welcome sign that the two neighbors want to foster trust and maintain regional peace and stability, China is justifiably concerned about a possible regression in Japan's policy toward it, as Wang Yi, director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said in his meeting with former Japanese prime minister Yasuo Fukuda in the Chinese capital on Friday.

These concerns have been fueled by recent moves by Tokyo that call into question whether Japan will continue to adhere to the direction of peaceful development.

Wang said that China hopes Japan will uphold the commitments made in the four political documents between the two countries and create conditions conducive to the healthy development of China-Japan relations.

This will have been a message reiterated to Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, who paid a two-day visit to Beijing on the weekend, before heading to Brussels to attend the meeting of NATO foreign ministers.

The possibility of Tokyo providing a doorway for NATO to expand its reach into the Asia-Pacific is one of the concerns that Wang was referring to.

Although it is too early to say the relationship between China and Japan has warmed up, the meeting may have helped the two sides orient their relations in the right direction if Tokyo engaged in the exchanges with goodwill and sincerity.

If they can thaw their relations again, China and Japan would hopefully see a rebound in their bilateral trade volume, which dropped in 2022, thus laying a firmer foundation for mutual trust.

But to get bilateral ties back on the right track, Japan needs to recognize that having good relations with its neighbor is of more benefit to it than hanging on to the coattails of an ally 10,000 kilometers away that is only interested in looking after No. 1. It is absurd to please the latter at the cost of friendly relations with the former.

Britain's privacy watchdog hit TikTok with a multimillion-dollar penalty yesterday for a slew of data protection breaches, including misusing children's data.

The Information Commissioner's Office said it issued a fine of 12.7 million pounds (\$15.9 million) to the short-video sharing app, which is wildly popular with young people.

It's the latest example of tighter scrutiny that TikTok and its parent, Chinese technology company ByteDance, are facing in the West, where governments are increasingly concerned about risks that the app poses to data privacy and

cybersecurity.

The British watchdog said TikTok allowed as many as 1.4 million children in the U.K. under 13 to use the app in 2020, despite the platform's own rules prohibiting children that young from setting up accounts.

TikTok didn't adequately identify and remove children under 13 from the platform, the watchdog said. And even though it knew younger children were using its platform, TikTok failed to get consent from their parents to process their data, as required by Britain's data protection laws, the agency said.

VIRGIN ORBIT SEEKS
BANKRUPTCY PROTECTION
AFTER MISSION FAIL

MICHELLE CHAPMAN

RICHARD Branson's Virgin Orbit is filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection after a failed mission this year and increasing difficulty in raising funding for future missions.

The company laid off most of its staff on Friday and told the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware in a filing Monday that it was looking to sell its assets.

Virgin Orbit said that it has secured \$31.6 million in debtor-in-possession financing from Branson's Virgin Investments Ltd.

Virgin Orbit CEO Dan Hart said that once the financing is approved by the bankruptcy court, the funds are expected to provide Virgin Orbit with the necessary liquidity to continue operating as it attempts to sell the company.

"While we have taken great efforts to address our financial position and secure additional financing, we ultimately must do what is best for the business," Hart said.



The Long Beach, California, company said in its bankruptcy filing that it has between 200 and 999 estimated creditors. It had approximately \$243 million in total assets and \$153.5 million in total liabilities as of Sept. 30, according to a regulatory filing.

Last week Virgin Orbit said that it was cutting 675 jobs, about 85% of its workforce. Shortly before the announcement, the company said that it was pausing all operations amid reports of possible job cuts. At the time Virgin Orbit confirmed that it was putting all work on hold, but didn't say for how long.

In January, a mission by Virgin Orbit to launch the first satellites into orbit from Europe failed after a rocket's upper stage prematurely shut down. It was a setback in the United Kingdom which had hoped that the launch from Cornwall in southwest England would mark the beginning of more commercial opportunities for the U.K. space industry.

The company said in February that an investigation found that its rocket's fuel filter had become dislodged, causing an engine to become overheated and other components to malfunction over the Atlantic Ocean. **MDT/AP**



European Union's foreign policy chief yesterday lashed out at China for its support of Russia amid the invasion of Ukraine and called it "a blatant violation" of Beijing's United Nations commitments. "There cannot be siding with the aggressor," Josep Borrell said. "There is a clear expectation from a permanent member of the (U.N.) Security Council to stand up in defense of international rules-based order and China as a moral duty to contribute to a fair peace."

Finland's parliamentary website was paralyzed by a denial-of-service attack yesterday, just before the country made its historic entry into NATO, a move that more than doubles NATO's border with Russia and has angered Russian President Vladimir Putin. The attacks — in which participants flood targets with junk data — made the parliament's site hard to use, with many pages not loading and some functions not available for a time. **More on p12**



Switzerland The chairman of Credit Suisse apologized yesterday to shareholders for failures of the once-venerable bank and acknowledged the shock and anger felt as the troubled Swiss lender is set to be swallowed up by rival UBS in a government-arranged takeover. Axel Lehmann, who took the top board job only last year after joining Credit Suisse from UBS in 2021, decried "massive outflows" of customer funds in October and a "downward spiral" that culminated last month as a U.S. banking crisis unleashed global turmoil.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti



Devotees. Penitents from "San Gonzalo" brotherhood take part in a procession in Seville, Spain. Hundreds of processions is taking place throughout the region during the Easter Holy Week.

HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Wednesday April 12. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.