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THE MICE INDUSTRY HAS SEEN A 40% RECOVERY IN WORKFORCE HANDLING JOBS, RECOVERING TO 70% OF PRE-COVID TIMES

MACAU'S CASINO REVENUES FOR THE FIRST 10 DAYS OF THE MONTH HAVE REACHED MOP4 BILLION

POLL: CHINA TOPS GLOBAL GROWTH POTENTIAL



Indonesia Three suspected Uzbek militants escaped from an immigration detention center in Indonesia's capital after fatally stabbing an officer and seriously injuring four others, police said. Two were later recaptured and the third drowned in a canal while being pursued by police, said Aswin Siregar, operations chief of the elite counterterrorism police group known as Densus 88.

Afghanistan The Taliban's chief spokesman said yesterday there are no obstacles for the U.N. to function in Afghanistan, after they barred Afghan women from working at the global body. Last week, the country's Taliban rulers took a step further in the restrictive measures they have imposed on women and said that female Afghan staffers employed with the U.N. mission can no longer report for work.

Netherlands Police tackled and detained a protester yesterday after he ran, shouting, toward Emmanuel Macron as the French president arrived at a University of Amsterdam science campus on the second day of his state visit to the Netherlands. It was the second straight day that protesters targeted Macron, who is facing angry unrest at home over his pension reforms.



Switzerland's lower house of parliament issued a searing rebuke yesterday of an emergency plan spearheaded by the executive branch to prop up embattled Credit Suisse and shepherd it into a takeover by Swiss banking rival UBS. The National Council, through an unusual left-right alliance, voted 102 to 71 to reject government guarantees authorized last month of 100 billion Swiss francs to help keep Credit Suisse afloat and 9 billion francs to help UBS mop up any losses it may incur in the takeover.

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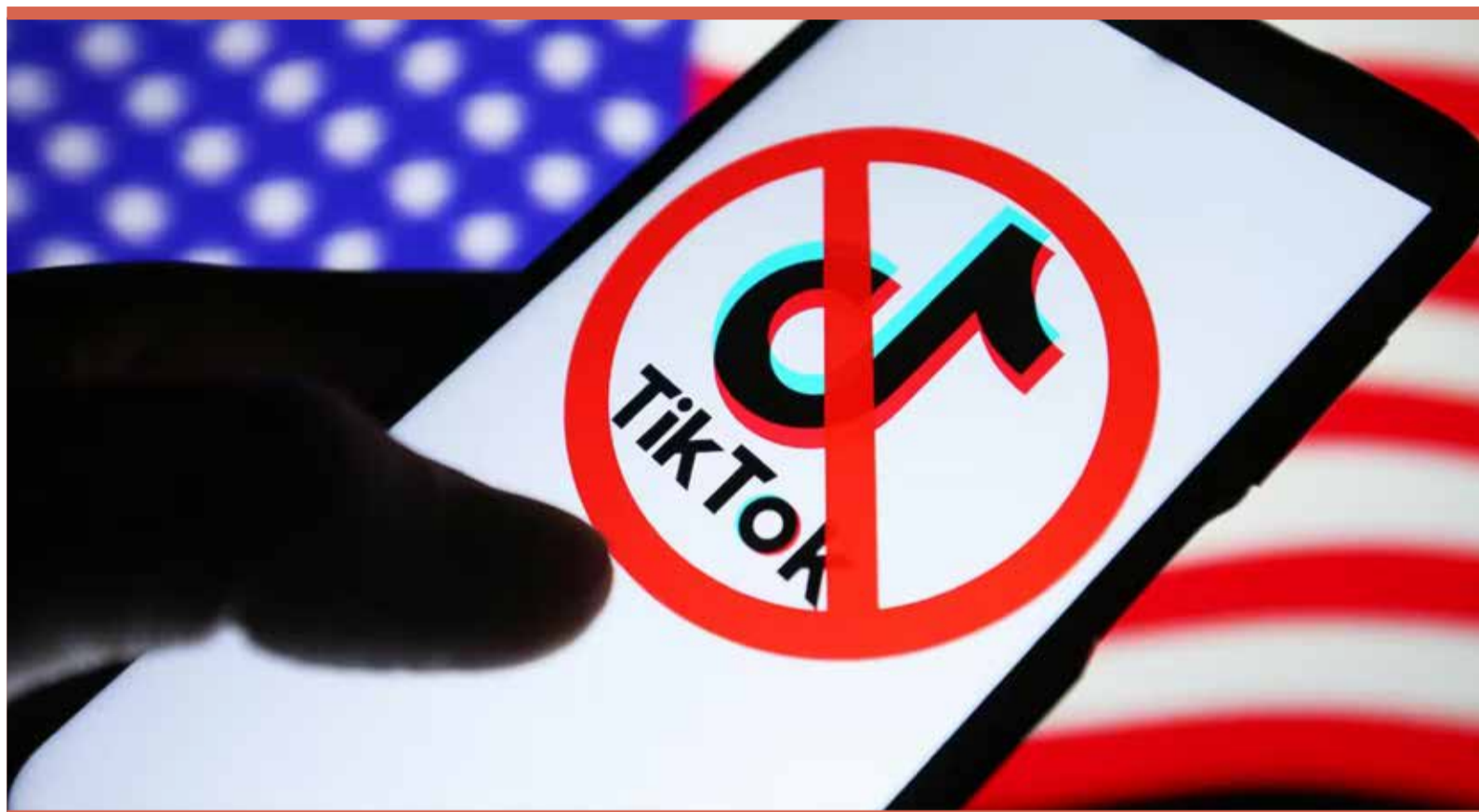
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SOCIAL MEDIA

BANNING TIKTOK COULD WEAKEN PERSONAL CYBERSECURITY

ROBERT OLSON ROCHESTER
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

TIKTOK is not to be the first app to be scrutinized over the potential exposure of U.S. user data, but it is the first widely used app that the U.S. government has proposed banning over privacy and security concerns.

So far, the discussion has focused on whether TikTok should be banned. There has been little discussion of whether TikTok could be banned, and there has been almost no discussion of the effects on cybersecurity that a TikTok ban could cause, including encouraging users to sidestep built-in security mechanisms to bypass a ban and access the app.

As a cybersecurity researcher, I see potential risks if the U.S. attempts to ban TikTok. The type of risk depends on the type of ban.

BLOCKING TIKTOK IN THE NETWORK

Blocking access to TikTok by filtering traffic destined for addresses believed to be owned by TikTok is possible but would be difficult to accomplish. Server addresses can be changed and a

TikTok ban could devolve into a game of cat and mouse.

Additionally, this sort of block could be bypassed using virtual private networks (VPNs), which encrypt data flowing between servers and devices. VPNs can be used to shield traffic between servers in other countries and devices in the U.S. VPNs were once widely recommended for people using public Wi-Fi, and people are already using VPNs to access blocked streaming services. While security experts no longer recommend VPNs for public Wi-Fi, many people have used them and so are familiar with a tool that would help them bypass a TikTok ban.

DNS sinkholes are another technique that could be used in TikTok bans. DNS, the Domain Name System, is a network protocol that behaves like the internet's phone book. Computers need to know the IP address of a server in order to communicate with it. DNS allows a computer to look up that address using a name convenient for humans to remember, such as google.com.

DNS sinkholes stop that lookup. DNS sinkholes don't directly block access to a server. Rather, they stop other compu-

ters from being able to look up the server's address. It's fair to think of a DNS sinkhole as removing someone's name from a phone book.

DNS sinkholes are often used to stop malware and advertisements. They could be used in a TikTok ban. However, DNS sinkholes only work if lookups are confined to DNS servers that are configured to be sinkholes. A ban using DNS sinkholes would likely cover most DNS servers that people's computers use by default.

However, you can relatively easily change DNS settings on your computer to circumvent a ban based on DNS sinkholes. There are many public DNS servers that people could use instead of their current DNS servers, which are commonly maintained by internet service providers. Blocking TikTok with DNS sinkholes would require significant international cooperation to make it difficult for people to find DNS servers that could access TikTok.

People circumventing a ban by looking for an alternate DNS server would be at risk. Unless a DNS server uses an uncommon extension named DNSSEC, you

can't verify the integrity of a DNS response. A malicious DNS server could reply to a lookup with an IP address of a server that's under criminal control. This opens the door for a number of different kinds of attacks that could put your data at risk.

BANNING TIKTOK FROM YOUR PHONE

Another way TikTok could be banned is by blocking the TikTok mobile app. This would not affect U.S. users' ability to access the TikTok website, but it could change how and how often people access TikTok. Blocking the app could address the concern that TikTok could be used without the user's knowledge to access other systems on a network that a mobile device is connected to. This has been the motivation for some local TikTok bans.

Removing TikTok from app stores is unlikely to succeed by itself. Both Android and iOS devices have the ability to install apps from alternative sources, a technique known as sideloading. While this added step may discourage some people, sideloading tutorials are widely available online, and there is already popular software that must be

sideloaded to be used on a phone.

Mobile devices assume that mobile apps are coming from a trusted source. Both Google and Apple audit mobile apps prior to the app being available for download. While these reviews aren't perfect, they help ensure apps don't contain vulnerabilities or malware. When app stores aren't involved, security responsibilities change. Sideloading makes users responsible for verifying an app's legitimacy, and criminals could trick users into installing malicious apps from third-party sources.

But what about the millions of people who already have TikTok installed on their phones? Enforcing a TikTok app ban would likely require that it be removed from mobile devices. Apple has long had the ability to remove software from iPhones, and Google could remove apps using Google Play Protect. These tools are important security controls that, at least on Android devices, can remove malware even if it was sideloaded. Enforcing a ban using security controls could motivate users to disable these controls, which would weaken the security of their devices.

Users might even be motivated to "jailbreak" their iOS devices or "root" their Android devices to prevent Apple or Google from removing the TikTok app, which would further weaken security. Jailbreaking an iOS device allows users to bypass security restrictions in the operating system. Rooting an Android device means gaining the highest level security access, which allows users to make changes to the operating system. Jailbreaking and rooting are prohibited by Apple and Google. Both actions void the user's warranty and undermine the security controls that limit criminals' access to mobile devices.

SECURITY TRADEOFFS

I find it unlikely that a TikTok ban would be technologically enforceable. Even China struggles with content filtering. These difficulties may be why proposed legislation includes significant punishments for bypassing the ban.

Even if the punishments are not aimed at the average TikTok user, this proposed legislation – aimed at improving cybersecurity – could motivate users to engage in riskier digital behavior. **MDT/THE CONVERSATION**

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RENATO MARQUES



Hotels still 'wasting' guests due to labor shortage

RENATO MARQUES

THE hotel industry in Macau is still losing business opportunities and letting guests "get away" due to the lack of capacity for handling all the requests for room bookings, industry experts have claimed.

Although Macau hotels have done relatively well during the recent holidays of Ching Ming and Easter, professionals from the sector claim that most large-scale hotels are still limiting their guest capacity to 60% or 70% of actual capacity due to the lack of staff capable to attend to guests' needs.

"A hotel with 200 rooms does not have as many problems as one with 3,000 rooms," the president of the Macau Hotel Association, Luís Heredia, said in a report from Portuguese newspaper *Jornal Tribuna de Macau*, adding that hotels in Cotai should have only made 60% to 70% of their rooms available for bookings over the recent holidays period.

For Heredia, hotel occupancy, in general, should have reached some 80 to 85% over the holidays although it is difficult to tell exactly due to the previously mentioned fact.

According to news agency Bloomberg, several sources including Billy Song, president of the Macau Respon-

sible Gambling Association, have also been quoted as saying that gaming operators have been forced to pull thousands of rooms from booking systems and cut back on guest services such as housekeeping, due to the labor shortage.

In the same report, it was also said that some five-star hotels in resorts made only less than half of the rooms available for booking.

Heredia also noted that many hotel units take advantage of the peak season when the room rates hike to put most if not all their workforce into operation, which causes some disruption to the daily operations.

On the same topic, the vice president of the Macau Hotel Association, Rutger Verschuren was also quoted in a different report supporting a general occupancy of between 60% to 80% over the holidays, noting that those with casinos were practically operating at full capacity.

Verschuren also noted that the manpower shortage has been forcing many hotels to call their workers in for overtime.

"In operational departments, such as cleaning or food and beverage services most hotels have their employees working overtime," he noted.

LABOR SHORTAGE EXPLAINED

Two factors are affecting the operations capacity of hotels: the lengthy processes for hiring new non-resident workers (TNR) on one hand, and the fact that many of the workers who have been performing non-stop activities over the past three years are now also taking time off to reunite with their families outside Macau.

The manpower shortage has been forcing many hotels to call their workers in for overtime

"The process of recruiting labor takes time. You have to look for people, select them, people have to be available, and all that takes time. This cannot be done within a month not even two because it's a lot of people involved. About 30,000 to 40,000 people are lacking just in the sectors of food and beverage and room attendance," Heredia explained noting that the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) is somewhat helping to accelerate the process but the fact that it involves many people at once is stalling it.

In addition, there is ano-

ther process going related to some local workers as well as TNRs, who are unsatisfied with their positions and are taking this opportunity to attempt to move to another post or company offering better conditions.

Heredia noted that the decision of hotels to cut the number of rooms available is not taken lightly and is mostly related to the need to maintain the quality of service.

He remarked that there is currently enough interest in Macau from a travelers' point-of-view, but that Macau needs to find ways to deal with this demand.

"We need to find a solution, step-by-step to take advantage of the fact of people wanting to travel to Macau," he concluded, forecasting that potentially by the summer time the situation might be a little more stable, but probably not much more.

Also addressing the same topic, the president of the Macao Chamber of Commerce, Frederico Ma, called on DSAL to be "more flexible" on the handling of quotas for the hiring of TNRs so that local businesses could take advantage of the rising opportunities coming from the recovery of the tourism sector.

BODY FOUND IN MONG-HA TRAIL

A 73-year-old man's body was found on the Mong-ha trail Tuesday afternoon, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has announced. A hiker discovered the body and a security guard reported the case. No visible injury or sign of struggle were discovered near the body, the PJ noted, which built the ground for preliminary identification as non-criminal. In addition, the man's family revealed the man had expressed feeling uncomfortable during the previous days. The PJ does not rule out the possibility of the man fainting and seeing no rescue.

GBA ROADSHOWS ATTRACT 2.8 MILLION VISITORS

The "Experience Macao, Unlimited" Caravan Roadshow Series across the Greater Bay Area culminated as the last roadshow took place at the ninth stop of the grand tour over the past weekend. The nine roadshows attracted over 2.82 million visitors while KOLs conducted 28 related live streams, engaging more than 190 million viewers cumulatively, according to a statement issued by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO). Last year, the MGTO rolled out the roadshow series across the nine Guangdong cities in the Greater Bay Area – Zhuhai, Zhongshan, Guangzhou, Jiangmen, Huizhou, Shenzhen, Dongguan, Foshan and Zhaoqing. The roadshows were in partnership with the city's leisure tourism businesses, the mainland's e-commerce platforms and online travel agencies.

GOV'T RECLAIMS LOT IN COLOANE

The SAR has recovered a 2,930 square meter area in Coloane that has been illegally occupied, the Land and Urban Construction Bureau has announced in a statement. The recovered land is located in the corner formed between Estrada do Dique Oeste and Rua Marginal da Concórdia in Coloane, which was fenced with metal nets and fences. It had three sets of metal gates installed and contained many vehicles including abandoned trucks, vehicle parts, containers and miscellaneous objects. The bureau has issued an eviction notice demanding that interested parties who illegally occupied the land vacate it and return it within the stipulated period.

NEW RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE LOANS FALL 15% IN FEBRUARY

The new approvals of residential mortgage loans (RMLs) fell, whereas those of commercial real estate loans (CRELs) rose month-on-month in February, the special administrative region's monetary watchdog said yesterday. According to statistics released by the Monetary Authority of Macao, the new RMLs approved by Macau banks in February fell 15.5% month-on-month to 1.22 billion patacas. The new RMLs to residents, representing 96.3% of the total, decreased by 15.2% to 1.18 billion patacas. The non-resident component also dropped to 45.79 million patacas. The new CRELs increased 59.6% month-to-month to 1.56 billion patacas.

PUBLIC WORKS

IC TO REPAIR THREE SITES CONSIDERED OF CULTURAL VALUE

RENATO MARQUES

THE Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) will support the restoration works of three sites considered of cultural value, including one of the buildings which is part of the official residence of the Consul-General of Portugal to Macau and Hong Kong.

The restoration plans were approved yesterday during a plenary meeting of the Cultural Heritage Committee presided over by the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong.

The IC plans to spend some 1.65 million patacas, with the larger slice used to repair a building which is part of the Portuguese consul's official residence. According to the report, the repair cost is estimated at about 1.2 million patacas.

According to information provided after the meeting by the president of IC, Deland Leong, there are several issues involving the Portuguese consul's official residence, located in the former



Bela Vista Hotel building, as the ancillary buildings present numerous instances of damage. These include façade damage,

roof leaks and cracked plaster, as well as in the linking of the building with the old city walls, where several stones have collapsed.

The IC will also repair two other sites, including the wall of the former Iec Long firecracker factory in Taipa and the ancient

gateway house located at the Calçada do Amparo, in the surroundings of the Ruins of Saint Paul's.

The IC plans to spend some MOP1.65 million, with the larger slice used to repair a [...] part of the Portuguese consul's official residence

According to details provided by the director of the Department of Cultural Heritage of IC, parasitic plants have damaged the ancient gateway which has caused the wooden frame to fall, while the roof tiles are also leaking. The IC plans to spend some 350,000 patacas on repairs of this last site and another 100,000 patacas will be spent on repairs of the wall of the Iec Long site in Taipa.

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MICE industry sees 70% job recovery

ANTHONY LAM

THE MICE industry has seen a 40% recovery in workforce handling jobs, recovering to 70% of pre-Covid times, local media has reported.

The local trade has suggested

the government, the education sector and private associations invest efforts in recruitment.

Lo Wang Chun, president of the Macau Federal Commercial Association of Convention and Exhibition Industry, told local publication Macao Daily News that, with the return to normal, the government

has invested a lot in attracting tourists and increased arrivals have proven the government's efforts effective.

As the economy has grown faster than market expectations, all trades have been struggling with labor shortages to cope with the pace of recovery. This has included the

MICE trade, Lo said, but recruitments have not been successful in the past months.

Under Covid-19 restrictions, the MICE industry had seen many leaving the workforce, especially experienced workers, he said.

He said some companies had started recruiting by the end of last year, offering remuneration plans nearing pre-Covid levels, but they had been unable to hire enough people. Their offers started from MOP12,000 per month for entry-level positions to over MOP20,000 for managerial posts.

There were many interns, Lo added, but they decided to leave the company after their internships.

Smaller MICE operators are competing with resort operators, with the latter on the verge of further upgrading or expanding their MICE facilities, Lo said.

Lo highlighted the importance of advanced preparations for upcoming events as many are returning to Macau after the return of normalcy. He suggested more job-matching sessions targeting the MICE trade be held.

In addition, he said the industry has been considering relocating certain work to outside of Macau to ease pressure on the workforce.

HEAD OF HK, MACAU AFFAIRS ON A SIX-DAY VISIT TO HK

The head of Beijing's top office overseeing Hong Kong and Macau affairs, Xia Baolong, starts a six-day visit today, the first visit of the official since the office was upgraded to be placed directly under the Communist Party. According to The Standard, he is expected to visit financial institutions and learn more about the city's plans in developing innovation and technology. According to a government statement, Xia will attend the opening ceremony of the National Security Education Day at the grand hall of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. He will also attend seminars on national security challenges, financial and cyber security and the rule of law.

HONG KONG TO RESUME TRANSFER OF BODIES TO MAINLAND

Hong Kong is set to resume the transfer of bodies awaiting burial in mainland China via a land crossing later this week, according to media reports. The move would clear at least 200 stuck in the city for more than a year, due to Covid restrictions. "The [central government] liaison office and the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office took part in pushing for this decision. They were very concerned about this," said Transport sector lawmaker Frankie Yick Chi-ming. The Heung Yuen Wai control point would be used to start clearing the backlog "this week" following a trial run Tuesday.

GAMING

Casinos registering MOP400 million daily run rate

MACAU'S casino revenues for the first 10 days of the month have reached MOP4 billion, implying a daily run rate of around MOP400 million, according to data from Citigroup.

As cited in a report issued by GGR Asia, Citigroup analysts George Choi and Ryan Cheung stated that the daily run rate "was lower than that

of the final 12 days of March 2023 at circa MOP495 million a day (we believe that might have been padded by some favourable hold rate)."

JP Morgan analysts gave the same estimate, where they noted, "We'd say around 5 to 10% deviation is possible for any given week, and we feel the actual GGR could be a tad stronger than MOP400

million per day."

Tourists have swarmed the city since its reopening and the growth rate has been steady, particularly during the Ching Ming and Easter holidays where it recorded an average of 80,294 tourist arrivals from April 5 to 10. The highest was on April 8 where the SAR welcomed 85,875 tourists, arrivals businesses have long awaited.

The six-day holiday has reached over 481,765 visitors.

According to Citigroup, "Based on industry sources, VIP volumes were down approximately 10 percent month-on-month and mass volumes were largely flat month-on-month. VIP hold rate appears to be around normal level."

The institution has fo-

recasted that the gross gaming revenue (GGR) this month would amount to MOP12 billion. If such figures persist, Macau would be able to achieve its forecast of reaching MOP130 billion in GGR this year.

Casinos generated a GGR of MOP12.738 billion in March 2023, the city's best month since January 2020. LV

MICE

BEYOND EXPO TO BE HELD IN MAY

STAFF REPORTER

FROM May 10 to 12, the annual Beyond Expo, which gathers many companies and industries around new technologies, will take place in Macau.

The live-streamed and in-person conference format will provide exhibitors and attendees with more direct access to media channels and networking opportunities than ever before through influential technology exhibitions in Asia.

The expo will be focused on sub-brands including Beyond Healthcare and Beyond Sustainable. Through exhibitions and industry summits, the expo encourages ideas exchanges for better global innovation ecology, according to a statement issued by the organizer.

For this edition, special events will be held, such as the Business Matchmaking and Reception which aims to create more collaboration between enterprises.

In this context, the spe-

cial event of the Business Matchmaking and Reception has been conceived and nine companies have already announced their participation, including the city's six gaming operators, along with Sino Group, Swire Properties and China State Construction International Holdings Limited.

Several subjects will be discussed, including service robots, foodtech and construction and property technology, always keeping the same goal in



mind; making those technologies of benefit both for humans and the environment.

In the robotics field, robots that greet and guide guests, clean rooms and carry luggage are the goal,

whereas foodtech will include participation of some Michelin Star Chefs, to help companies in the agri-food technology sector and improve the sustainability of the food industry.

NEW COMMANDER APPOINTED FOR PLA GARRISON IN MACAU

Yu Changjiang, commander of the Sansha military garrison in Hainan Province, has been appointed as commander of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Garrison in the SAR. Xi Jinping, chairman of the Central Military Commission, signed an order recently for the appointment, said Wang Hui, spokesperson of the PLA garrison in Macau. Yu vowed to fully implement the 'One country, two systems' principle, and carry out defence duties in accordance with the Basic Law of the SAR and the law on stationing troops in Macau.

THE government may consider changing laws on social welfare eligibility to persuade more people to work and live in Hengqin, the Public Administration and Civil Services Bureau (SAFP) has disclosed.

Joana Maria Noronha, director of the SAFP, was replying to lawmaker Leong Sun Iok's inquiry dated March 3.

Leong asked the government about recruiting Macau residents to work in civil services in the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

The Macau government has long strived to attract more people to relocate from Macau to Hengqin to "construct the Zone", "merge into the Greater Bay Area (GBA)" and "adequately diversify Macau's economy."

On Leong's questions, Noronha noted that "the government is aware of certain legal stipulations regarding social security policies that require Macau residents to stay for at least 183 days in Macau per year" to be benefitted by these policies."

She said the government will "actively listen to suggestions and opinions from society, examine and analyze the stipulations, as well as study the necessity and feasibility of related law amendments."

GOV'T MULLS USING LAW TO ATTRACT MIGRATION TO HENGQIN

Her conclusion is that these steps will be conducted to "create advantageous conditions for Macau residents to conveniently study, work, start businesses and live in the Zone."

Further discussing recruitment-related mechanisms, Noronha underlined that on March 3, the Zone's Executive Committee issued a memo that listed the positions available, remuneration and prerequisites, as well as application procedures and vetting mechanisms.

In addition, the Macau government is entitled to assign local civil servants to work in the Executive Committee, to which it has recently made several appointments.

According to both Noronha and the government's recent appointments, appointee civil servants will enjoy remuneration on par with their Macau counterparts, but follow schedules and holidays with the mainland.

In the recent appointments, civil servants were also offered relocation allowances. **AL**



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NETWORK

Fox attorneys in libel case reveal dual roles for Murdoch

RANDALL CHASE,
WILMINGTON (DEL)

ATORNEYS defending Fox in a defamation case related to false claims about the 2020 election withheld critical information about the role company founder Rupert Murdoch played at Fox News, a revelation that angered the judge when it came up at a hearing yesterday [Macau time].

It was not clear whether the development would affect a trial scheduled to begin Thursday with jury selection. Dominion Voting Systems is suing Fox for \$1.6 billion, saying it damaged its reputation by repeatedly airing false claims that the company helped orchestrate a fraud that cost former President Donald Trump re-election.

The role of Fox executives is at the heart of the case. The company's attorneys have sought to insulate members of the Murdoch family and to keep them from testifying live before a jury, arguing that their roles at the parent company, Fox Corp., put them at a distance from the Fox News shows that aired the bogus claims.

Fox Corp. had asserted since Dominion filed its lawsuit in 2021 that Rupert Murdoch had no official role at Fox News. In its filings, it had listed Fox News officers as Suzanne Scott, Jay Wallace and Joe Dorrego. But on Easter Sunday, Fox disclosed to Dominion's



Fox founder Rupert Murdoch

attorneys that Murdoch also is "executive chair" at Fox News. The disclosure came after Superior Court Judge Eric Davis wondered aloud during a status conference last week who Fox News' officers were.

Davis was clearly disturbed by the disclosure, coming on the eve of the trial.

"My problem is that it has been represented to me more than once that he is not an officer," the judge said.

Davis suggested that had he known of Murdoch's dual role at

Fox Corp. and Fox News, he might have reached different conclusions in a summary judgment ruling he issued last month. In that ruling, the judge said there was no dispute that the statements aired by Fox were false, but that a jury would have to decide whether Fox News acted with actual malice and whether Fox Corp. directly participated in airing the statements.

To Fox attorney Matthew Carter, Davis said: "You have a credibility problem."

In response, Carter said he be-

lieved Murdoch's title at Fox News was only "honorific."

"I'm not mad at you," the judge later told Carter. "I'm mad at the situation I'm in."

In a statement issued after the pretrial hearing, Fox said, "Rupert Murdoch has been listed as executive chairman of Fox News in our SEC filings since 2019 and this filing was referenced by Dominion's own attorney during his deposition."

It's unclear whether the judge will take any action in response to the late disclosure. But an attorney for Dominion said he wanted Fox to further explain Murdoch's role with the network, indicating the issue could come up when the pretrial hearing continues Wednesday.

Dominion attorney Justin Nelson told the judge the disclosure has "a big impact" on the case. He said Fox's failure to disclose Murdoch's status at Fox News has deprived Dominion of "a whole bunch" of information from Murdoch as a custodian of Fox News records that it was entitled to have.

"It is something that really has impacted how we have litigated this case," he said.

Yesterday's development was the latest to turn an uncomfortable spotlight on the network.

Information obtained by Dominion as part of its lawsuit has shown that some network hosts harbored off-camera doubts about election fraud claims but nevertheless allowed program

guests to repeatedly make them in the aftermath of the 2020 election. The case also has drawn scrutiny of various emails and text messages shared among Rupert Murdoch, his son Lachlan Murdoch and Scott, the Fox News CEO, about election coverage and the allegations by Trump and his allies that he was cheated.

They revealed a chorus of voices, from Rupert Murdoch and top network hosts to producers and publicists, who internally cast the election-stealing conspiracy claims as crazy even as the network repeatedly gave them a platform. Internal communications also showed that at the time, major players at Fox were deeply worried about retaining pro-Trump viewers.

In a ruling earlier, the judge denied a motion by Fox seeking to bar any reference at trial to matters involving the Murdoch family, which owns Fox Corp. The judge also said he would allow jurors to hear some testimony about threats directed at the voting machine company, but only to a point.

The judge granted a motion by Fox to prohibit any reference to specific threats or harassment directed at Dominion, saying he did not want the jury to be prejudiced against Fox because of threats made by people with no connection to the network. But he said he would allow Dominion to talk generally about threats it had received to show how it has been damaged by the Fox broadcasts.

"It has decimated Dominion's ability to attract and retain employees, because the company is under siege," said Megan Meier, an attorney for the voting machine company.

The judge already decided last week there would be no testimony about the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. **MDT/AP**

TECH

RoboCop? No, RoboDog: Robotic dog rejoins New York police

NEW York City officials unveiled three new high-tech policing devices this week, including a robotic dog that critics called creepy when it first joined the police pack 2 1/2 years ago.

The new devices, which also include a GPS tracker for stolen cars and a cone-shaped security robot, will be rolled out in a manner that is "transparent, consistent and always done in close collaboration with the people we serve," said police Commissioner Keechant Sewell, who joined Mayor Eric Adams and other officials at a Times Square press conference where the



security robot and the mechanical canine nicknamed Digidog were displayed.

"Digidog is out of the pound," said Adams, a De-

mocrat and former police officer. "Digidog is now part of the toolkit that we are using."

The city's first robot po-

lice dog was leased in 2020 by Adams' predecessor, former Mayor Bill de Blasio, but the city's contract for the device was cut short after critics derided it as creepy and dystopian.

Adams said he won't bow to anti-robot dog pressure.

"A few loud people were opposed to it and we took a step back," the mayor said. "That is not how I operate. I operate on looking at what's best for the city."

Adams said the remote-controlled, 70-pound (32-kilogram) Digidog will be deployed in risky situations like hostage standoffs starting this summer.

"If you have a barricaded

suspect, if you have someone that's inside a building that is armed, instead of sending police in there, you send Digidog in there," he said. "So these are smart ways of using good technologies."

The tracking system called StarChase will allow police to launch a GPS tag that will attach itself to a stolen car so that officers can track the vehicle's location. The New York Police Department's pilot program for using the system will last 90 days, officials said.

The Autonomous Security Robot, which Adams compared to a Roomba, will be deployed inside the Times Square subway sta-

tion in a seven-month pilot program starting this summer, police officials said.

The device, used in shopping centers and other locations for several years, will at first be joined by a human partner, police said.

Civil libertarians and police reform advocates questioned the need for the high-tech devices.

"This latest announcement is just the most recent example of how Mayor Adams allows unmitigated overspending of the NYPD's massively bloated budget," said Ileana Mendez-Penate, program director of Communities United for Police Reform. **MDT/AP**

ANALYSIS

BRAZIL'S LULA VISITS CHINA, SEEKING TIES AND UKRAINE SUPPORT

ELÉONORE HUGHES & CARLA BRIDI, RIO DE JANEIRO

AP PHOTO



BRAZILIAN President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva flew off to China yesterday [Macau time] to strengthen ties with his nation's biggest trade partner and win support for his long shot push for peace in Ukraine.

Lula wants Brazil, China and other nations to help mediate the war as part of his nation's return to the world stage, but his proposals to end the conflict have irked Ukraine and some in the West. Less controversial is the Brazilian and Chinese mutual interest in trade after a rocky period under Lula's predecessor.

China and Brazil are expected to sign at least 20 bilateral agreements during Lula's two-day stay, according to the Brazilian government. Lula plans to visit Shanghai and Beijing, and meet with his counterpart, Xi Jinping, tomorrow.

The two leaders are expected to discuss trade, investment, industrialization, energy transition, climate change and peace agreements, the Brazilian government said.

China is Brazil's biggest export market, each year buying tens of billions of dollars worth of soybeans, beef, iron ore, poultry, pulp, sugar cane, cotton and crude oil. Brazil is the biggest recipient of Chinese investment in Latin America, according to Chinese state media.

Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and members of his family at times caused friction with Chinese authorities during his 2019-2022 term.

In 2020, when Bolsonaro's lawmaker son Eduardo blamed the COVID-19 pandemic on the Chinese Communist Party, the

Chinese ambassador to Brazil called his words "an evil insult against China and the Chinese people." Later that year, Eduardo referred to the giant Chinese technology company Huawei as "Chinese espionage," prompting a sharp rebuke from China's embassy. Last year, China did not have an ambassador in Brasilia for eight months.

The rift stoked criticism in Brazil, even among sectors that supported Bolsonaro, like agribusiness.

"I want the Chinese to understand that their investment here will be wonderfully welcome, but not to buy our companies. To build new things, which we need," Lula told journalists in Brasilia on April 6.

Chinese companies are involved in public works projects in Brazil, including a metro line in Sao Paulo, the country's business

capital. One of the agreements Lula will sign in China will be for construction of the sixth satellite built under a binational program, a satellite that would monitor biomes such as the Amazon rainforest.

China and Brazil are expected to sign at least 20 bilateral agreements during Lula's two-day stay

"Brazil can't afford to turn its back on the benefits China brings. The U.S. doesn't have the capacity to absorb Brazil's exports as China does, nor occupy the same space in investment and infrastructure," said Pedro Brites, an expert on China at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university and think tank in Sao Paulo.

And China is encouraging its companies to find new markets and foreign partners to reduce reliance on the U.S.

"Lula knows you have to treat your clients well. Even more so when it is your best client," said Charles Tang, who chairs the Brazil-China Chamber of Commerce.

In what Tang suggested was the result of a renewed partnership, China ended restrictions on Brazilian beef just before Lula was initially scheduled to make his trip. Sales of Brazilian beef to China were banned in February following the discovery of an atypical case of mad cow disease.

Lula's visit to China, initially scheduled for March but canceled after he fell sick, is also an attempt by the leftist leader to reaffirm Brazil's role on the global stage following Bolsonaro's term, who admired right-wing nation-

alists and showed little interest in international affairs or travel abroad.

Lula visited Argentina and Uruguay in January and the U.S. in February, signaling the importance he gives to international affairs, experts said. He toured the world during his first presidency, particularly in his second term, when he visited dozens of countries, and has visited China twice before.

"Lula is implementing the promise he made that Brazil is back," said Oliver Stuenkel, a political scientist at the Getulio Vargas Foundation.

China and Brazil are members of the BRICS group of developing countries and have pushed for changes in what they say is a U.S.-dominated system of managing global political affairs.

Russia is also a BRICS member, and a key piece of Lula's outreach abroad is his proposal that Brazil and other developing countries, including China, mediate peace.

Lula has irritated Ukraine and some in the West with his position on the war, most recently by suggesting during a meeting with journalists in Brasilia last week that Ukraine cede Crimea as a means to forge peace. Xi met with Putin last month, sending a message to U.S. and European leaders that their condemnation of Russia's invasion is not unanimous.

Earlier this month, a Lula adviser, former foreign affairs minister Celso Amorim, took a discreet trip to Moscow, where he met with President Vladimir Putin.

Amorim "went to listen and to say the time has come to talk," Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira told reporters in the capital, Brasilia, last week.

There is at least some common ground. Vieira noted that the Chinese peace proposal presented in February contains aspects in common with Lula's, such as ceasing hostilities and starting negotiations.

"These are completely plausible and may be stimulus for talks," he said. **MDT/AP**

Poll: China tops global growth potential

MOST Chinese people are confident about the country's development and regard its growth potential as the most promising in the world, a survey has found.

Despite the fact that China ranks second behind the United States in terms of overall national strength, the respondents were more optimistic about the country's development potential. China ranked first in the development potential index with a score of 39.38, while the US

ranked second with a score of 30.67, according to the survey of global public opinions released on Sunday in Beijing. Russia ranked third with 9.09 points.

The survey, Global Public Opinion Index 2023, was conducted by the Ministry of Education's Philosophy and Social Science Laboratory of Big Data and National Communication Strategy and Huazhong University of Science and Technology's National Communication Strategy

Research Institute.

Data was collected online from 22 countries by two professional research companies — Dataway for the Chinese mainland and Qualtrics for the others. A total of 23,512 respondents were interviewed, including 1,500 from the mainland. The survey was conducted from November to December last year.

The study showed that the Chinese people have a high level of national pride and national identity. It

showed that 80 percent of respondents are "honored to be Chinese", and 85 percent are "often proud of the country's achievements".

Nearly 80 percent of respondents said they would stay in China even if given the chance to leave.

The survey found that Chinese people have a strong sense of national identity and take pride in China's remarkable achievements, said Zhang Kun, a professor at Huazhong University of Science and Tech-

nology's Journalism and Information Communication School, who led the survey.

He noted that the survey also showed that most Chinese people believe that China, the US and Russia are the most prominent great powers, reflecting their significant economic, political and military influence on the global stage.

In addition, the US tends to be perceived negatively as a "hegemonic", "aggressive", "problematic", and "military" power by the Chinese people. Zhang also noted that China's growing global presence has led to its people paying close attention

to international affairs and world events.

When it comes to global public views, it is generally recognized that China's growing economic and political power has had a significant impact on the global community, and many people around the world welcome China's increasing role in international affairs.

People across the world generally recognize the positive impact of the Belt and Road Initiative, but there is still room for improvement in promoting greater awareness and understanding of the concept, Zhang said. **CHINA DAILY**

DIRE STRAIT

Beijing says Taiwan encirclement drills a 'serious warning'

RECENT Chinese air and sea drills simulating an encirclement of Taiwan were intended as a "serious warning" to pro-independence politicians on the self-governing island and their foreign supporters, a Chinese spokesperson said yesterday.

The three days of large-scale air and sea exercises named Joint Sword that ended Monday were a response to Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California last week during a transit visit to the U.S. China had warned of serious consequences if that meeting went ahead.

"The People's Liberation Army recently organized and conducted a series of countermeasures in the Taiwan Strait and surrounding waters, which is a serious warning against the collusion and provocation of Taiwan independence separatist forces and external forces," Zhu Fenglian, a spokesperson for the Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office, said at a biweekly news conference.

"It is a necessary action to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity," she said.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary and



A fighter takes off during the combat readiness patrol and military exercises around the Taiwan Island carried out by the Eastern Theater Command of the PLA from Nanjing on April 8

regularly sends ships and warplanes into airspace and waters near the island.

Such missions have grown more frequent in recent years, accompanied by "increasingly bellicose language" from the administration of Communist Party leader Xi Jinping. Any conflict between the sides could draw in the U.S., Taiwan's closest ally, which is required by law to consider all threats to the island as matters of "grave concern."

China has kept up military pressure against Taiwan despite the formal conclusion of the

drills. Yesterday, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said it tracked 35 flights by People's Liberation Army warplanes within the last 24 hours, and eight navy vessels in the waters surrounding the island.

The vast majority of Taiwanese favor maintaining their current de-facto independent status, while Tsai has said there is no need for a formal declaration "since the island democracy is already an independent nation."

Despite that, China, which does not recognize Taiwan's government institutions and has cut off contact with Tsai's administra-

tion, routinely accuses her of plotting formal independence with outside backing — generally seen as referring to the U.S.

"External forces are intensifying their endeavor of containing China with Taiwan as a tool," Zhu said.

Zhu also repeated China's assertion that its military threats are "targeted at Taiwan's independence separatist activities and interference from external forces, and by no means at our compatriots in Taiwan."

"Taiwanese compatriots should clearly recognize the serious

harm that the provocation of Taiwan independence forces poses to cross-strait relations and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, recognize the interests, distinguish right from wrong, and stand on the correct side of history," Zhu said.

The Chinese military issued a threat as it concluded the exercises, saying its troops "can fight at any time to resolutely smash any form of 'Taiwan independence' and foreign interference attempts."

In August, after then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, China conducted missile strikes on targets in the seas around Taiwan and sent warships and warplanes over the median line of the Taiwan Strait. It also fired missiles over the island that landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone in a significant escalation.

The most recent exercises focused more on air strength, with Taiwan reporting more than 200 flights by Chinese warplanes. On Monday alone, Taiwan's Defense Ministry tracked 91 flights by Chinese warplanes.

They also featured the use of China's first indigenously built aircraft carrier, Shandong, which launched dozens of J-15 Flying Shark fighter missions during the exercises, according to Japanese officials.

That came as the USS Nimitz Carrier group is operating in the South China Sea south of Taiwan and as American and Filipino forces hold their largest combat exercises in decades in Philippine waters across the disputed South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. **MDT/AP**

TAIWAN

Ruling party DPP taps Lai as candidate

TAIWAN'S pro-independence ruling Democratic Progressive Party nominated its number two Lai Ching-te as its candidate in the 2024 election, two days after China concluded large-scale wargames around the self-governed island.

At a nominating event yesterday, Lai said he would continue to assert Taiwan's right to international recognition while boosting its high-tech economy and promoting an efficient government.

"We must definitely continue to improve Taiwan's investment environment," Lai, also known as William Lai, told reporters.

His most challenging task, however, will be dealing with threats from



DPP's Lai Ching-te

China, which considers Taiwan its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary.

"A war over Taiwan would be a global disaster," Lai said. "As long as China maintains its military threats against Taiwan, we must continue to strengthen our national defense."

Originally trained as a physician with a master's in public health from Harvard, Lai, 63, was a legislator, mayor of the southern city of Tainan and

Taiwan's premier before challenging Tsai Ing-wen for the party's nomination in 2019.

After Tsai won the primary, Lai accepted her offer to be her running mate and the pair easily defeated the main opposition Nationalist Party in 2020.

Tsai is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term.

It remains unclear who Lai will face in January's election, with the Nationalists, also known as the KMT, yet to name a candidate. Among those most favored are businessperson Terry Gou who founded electronics manufacturer Foxconn, and New Taipei City Mayor Hou Yu-ih who was formerly a top police official.

The Nationalists ruled Taiwan under martial law for decades after Chiang Kai-shek moved his government to the island as Mao Zedong's Communist Party seized power in

mainland China in 1949 amid a bloody civil war.

Democratic reforms were introduced gradually after Chiang's 1975 death and direct presidential elections were held for the first time in 1996. The DPP and Nationalists have alternated in power, although Tsai's initial 2016 election also marked the first time the DPP assumed a legislative majority.

Under nationalist leader Xi Jinping, China has vastly strengthened its armed forces and routinely sends warships and planes into the air and waters near Taiwan.

That threat was on display most recently as China's People's Liberation Army staged large-scale wargames over three days from Saturday, simulating an encirclement of the island in a response to a meeting April 5 in California between Tsai and U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy. **MDT/AP**



JAPAN

Tokyo signs \$2.8b long-range missile development deals

JAPAN'S Defense Ministry announced this week it has signed contracts worth nearly 380 billion yen (\$2.8 billion) with the country's top defense contractor, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, to develop and mass produce long-range missiles for deployment as early as

2026 amid growing fears of China's increasing military strength.

The ministry said the contracts include enhanced versions of Mitsubishi's Type 12 missiles for surface, sea and air launches, and a hypersonic ballistic missile for the defense of remote islands.

Mass production of Type 12 land-to-ship guided missiles and hypersonic gliding missiles, which have already been developed, will begin this year, the ministry said. Officials refused to provide the number of missiles that Japan plans to deploy but indicated that production is

expected to gradually increase over the next five years.

Due to limited land space at home, Japan plans to hold pre-deployment missile tests at military bases in the United States, ministry officials said.

Another contract is for development of submarine-laun-

ched long-range anti-ship guided missiles, beginning this year and planned through 2027. Timing for their deployment is still undecided.

The development plan is based on a new National Security Strategy that Japan announced in December as it seeks to significantly increase its military power to deter potential threats from China, North Korea and Russia.

The new strategy includes developing a preemptive strike capability, a sharp break from Japan's postwar commitment to limit its military to self-defense.

Japan has been strengthening defense in its southwest and recently placed missile units on remote islands as deterrence in case of an emergency involving Taiwan. But residents of Okinawa are divided over the move because of fears of becoming embroiled in a conflict.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Japan is also buying 400 U.S.-made long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles capable of hitting targets up to 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) away for deployment beginning in 2026.

The Tomahawks are a stop gap while Mitsubishi works on upgrading and extending the range of its missiles.

Japan plans to nearly double its military spending over the next five years to 43 trillion yen (\$315 billion). **MDT/AP**

SOUTH CHINA SEA

China warns as US, Philippines stage combat drills

CHINA warned yesterday that a deepening security alliance between the United States and the Philippines should not harm its security and territorial interests and interfere in long-simmering territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

When asked to comment on the combat exercises between American and Filipino forces that started on Tuesday in the Philippines, the Chinese Embassy in Manila yesterday issued a statement by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin, who said that such drills "should not target any third party and should be conducive to regional peace and stability."

Wang did not say how China would respond if it concludes that the U.S.-Philippine security cooperation was hurting Beijing's core interests.

In Washington, the U.S. and Philippine defense and foreign secretaries met



U.S. and Philippines' commanders of the joint military exercise flag called "Balikatan" (shoulder to shoulder)

yesterday [Macau time] to discuss the development of nine Philippine military camps, where American forces have been allowed to stay indefinitely under the

2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

"These sites will support combined training exercises and interoperability between our forces to ensure

that we're even better prepared for future crises," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said. He added the U.S. was allocating more than \$100 million to build infrastruc-

ture at the sites, where Americans would be stationed.

China has strongly opposed that agreement, which would allow American forces to establish military staging grounds and surveillance outposts in the northern Philippines across the sea from the Taiwan Strait and in western Philippine provinces facing the disputed South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety on historical grounds. Washington disputes China's claims.

Austin said he also discussed with his Philippine counterpart, Carlito Galvez, the U.S. delivery of much-needed defense equipment, including radars, unmanned aerial systems, military transport aircraft and coastal and air defense systems to Philippines over the next five to 10 years under a security assistance roadmap.

This year's Balikatan exercises between the treaty allies are the largest since

the two sides started joint military combat-readiness exercises in the early 1990s. They will run until April 28 and involve more than 17,600 American and Filipino personnel and a small Australian contingent. About a dozen countries including Japan and India but not China were sending observers, organizers said.

Marcos, who took office in June last year, has nurtured closer relations with Washington than his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, who often lashed out at U.S. security policies while praising China and Russia.

Left-wing activists and nationalists have steadfastly opposed American military presence in the Philippines, a former U.S. colony where America remains popular among Filipinos based on independent polls.

"The Philippines is caught in an inter-imperialist conflict between the U.S. and China," Renato Reyes of the left-wing Bayan alliance said. "We are merely being used as a footstool for American power projection and provocation in the region." **MDT/AP**



CLIMATE CHANGE

Fishing regulators need more transparency, ocean groups say

WANJOHI KABUKURU

SOME regional fisheries management organizations that were set up by the United Nations to measure and conserve fish populations — but are difficult to hold to account — need to be more transparent about how they make their rules and regulations if fish species are to be protected and maintained for people reliant on healthy fish stocks for their livelihoods, conservation agencies and fishing industry players say.

The 50-some regional fisheries management organizations worldwide bring together local, coastal states and bigger international players to regulate how companies and countries can fish in waters worldwide in a way that best conserves populations of fish and other ocean species based on scientific evidence.

For years, these regional regulators have been accused of undemocratic practices that favor large, industrial fishers but now several conservation groups are banding together to renew calls for a culture change.

A coalition of conservationists and market players like Accountability.Fish, the Ocean Foundation, the Global Tuna Alliance and others have endorsed more open

access to fisheries organizations' proceedings so that more members of the public can participate in conservation efforts.

Larger regional fishing management organizations contacted and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization — the RFMO's parent body — did not respond to requests for comment.

For local and non-commercial fishers who rely on well-managed fish stocks, it's unclear if more open measures will make a difference.

"I only hear of meetings on fisheries, but I have no idea what it is they discuss there. I have never been invited," said Kasim Abdalla, a fisher on Kenya's coast, who's part of a cooperative group of fishers. "In any case it is always a meeting of unequals. How can I compete with the well-financed fishing fleets from the developed nations and all I have is an outrigger canoe?"

The concern among environmentalists and smaller-scale fishers is that large fleets are permitted by fishery organizations to use practices that are only accessible to vessels big enough to go far into the open ocean, depleting fish stocks for those more confi-

ned to the coasts or forcing them to travel into choppy, more dangerous waters their smaller boats aren't fit for.

Many industrial fishing fleets rely on a highly-effective scooping method called purse seining — a two-kilometer-long net positioned around schools of fish by a smaller support vessel, explained Frederic Manach, a marine scientist with the ocean conservation group Bloom. "The seine is then closed from below with a sliding system, allowing the entire school to be caught" which makes it difficult to sustain populations, he said.

For non-commercial fishers who rely on well-managed fish stocks, it's unclear if more open measures will make a difference

The European Union, a prominent actor in eight regional fisheries management organizations worldwide, including Abdalla's Indian Ocean, has been accused of using these fish-aggregating devices as well as pressuring coastal states in order to secure privileged

access to regional fishery management organizations.

The EU Commission denied the claims, saying the bloc is not suppressing Global South countries or other actors for more favorable access. It also previously said that it would stop using fish-aggregating devices if the science backed up a ban, adding that "it is essential that science is the backbone" of decision-making at regulatory bodies.

How its decided how much fish each party is able to catch is what fishery regulatory bodies need to be more open about, said Manach.

"There is absolutely no transparency regarding how quotas are allocated and who gets them," he said.

Ryan Orgera, the global director of Accountability.Fish, an organization that calls for greater awareness in fishery management said that's the result of the makeup of regulatory bodies, made up mostly of industrial fishers.

"We seek to reduce the power of industrial fishers in regional fisheries and balance out the space with market players and non-governmental organizations," including artisanal and small boat fishers, Orgera said.

Regulations for the high seas

— the world's deep oceans — and the marine life that lives there have for a long time been patchwork and it's been hard to reach a global consensus on how best to protect them.

Then last month, the long-awaited worldwide framework to protect the high seas was finally approved. The U.N. high seas treaty will create a new body to manage conservation of ocean life globally and establish marine protected areas in the world's oceans.

But even with the treaty, Orgera said, "if industrial fishers are given a green light by the fisheries management organizations to overfish for, say five years, the effects on the oceans could become irreversible."

The hope for conservation groups is that even before the creation of marine protected areas in the oceans, which could take a few years, fishery bodies involve more and varied stakeholders — no matter the size of their fleet — in open discussion and decisions about conserving fish populations.

Abdalla, the Kenyan fisher, said knowledge-sharing programs in other regions of the world, like China, the Seychelles and among Pacific Ocean states are a better model for those reliant on the same fish stocks to communicate and preserve populations.

Orgera said the key is transparency.

"No nation on earth benefits from mismanaged oceans, especially developing states," said Orgera. He added that more openness can make sure that "societies have access to what happens to our collective resources." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



U.S. President Joe Biden is greeted by British PM Rishi Sunak (left) and US Ambassador to the United Kingdom Jane Hartley as he steps off Air Force One at Belfast International Airport

UK BIDEN TO HELP MARK DECADES OF RELATIVE PEACE IN N.IRELAND

DARLENE SUPERVILLE,
COLLEEN LONG &
JILL LAWLESS, BELFAST

PRESIDENT Joe Biden is in Northern Ireland to participate in marking the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to this part of the United Kingdom after the U.S. helped negotiate an end to decades of sectarian violence that killed thousands.

On his first presidential visit to Northern Ireland, Biden was set to deliver congratulations and encourage its leaders to work on universally beneficial trade and economic policies when he speaks at a business development event at Ulster University's new campus in Belfast.

But Biden was not expected to make any major attempt to help resolve a new political crisis that has rattled the Good Friday peace deal and put Northern Ireland's government on pause.

Instead, the Democratic president will deliver at least two messages, said White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby, who is traveling with Biden.

"Congratulations on 25 years of the Good Friday Agreement, which has brought unprecedented peace and prosperity," Kirby said. "And that kind of goes to the second goal, which is to

talk about the importance of trying to work on trade and economic policies that benefit all communities, as well as the United States."

Biden opens his brief public schedule in Northern Ireland over coffee with U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. Before speaking at Ulster University, he will meet with each of the leaders of Northern Ireland's five main political parties.

Northern Ireland is without a functioning government. Stormont, the seat of its assembly, has been suspended since the Democratic Unionist Party, which formed half of a power-sharing government, walked out a year ago over a post-Brexit trade dispute.

Britain's departure from the European Union left Northern Ireland poised uneasily between the rest of the U.K. and EU member Ireland, and put the peace agreement under increased strain.

After much wrangling, Britain and the EU struck a deal in February to address the tensions over trade, an agreement welcomed by the U.S., which had urged London and Brussels to end their post-Brexit feud. The Democratic Unionist Party, though, says the Windsor Framework doesn't go far enough and has refused to return to government.

As he set off for Belfast,

Biden on Tuesday said a priority of his trip to Northern Ireland was to "keep the peace."

While U.K. officials hope the president's presence can help nudge the unionists back into government, Biden faces mistrust from some unionists because of his Irish American heritage. Sammy Wilson, a DUP lawmaker in the U.K. Parliament, told Talk TV that Biden "has got a record of being pro-republican, anti-unionist, anti-British."

After the speech at Ulster University, Biden will travel to the Republic of Ireland for a three-day visit, including an address to the Dublin parliament, attendance at a gala dinner and trips to two ancestral hometowns. He will fly to County Louth, on Ireland's east coast, on Wednesday to visit a cemetery, tour a castle, walk around downtown Dundalk and attend a community gathering.

A few Belfast residents said Biden's visit was important even though it will be short.

"I think it's great that he's coming because of the anniversary of 'the Troubles,'" Julie McNeill said Monday as she waited in the rain for a bus. She was referring to more than three decades of sectarian violence that left more than 3,600 people dead. "I think it's important that he does come."

Still, McNeill said she was a little disappointed that the Irish American president would spend less than a day in Belfast. But she said she understood.

"I mean, the man's a busy man, and he's 80 years old. I'm sure it's hard for him," she said.

Samuel Olufemia, who is studying for a degree in public health at Ulster University, said he was looking forward to meeting Biden on campus.

"Having him in Belfast here is a privilege," said Olufemia, who is from Nigeria. "It's going to be an historic visit and that's one of the reasons I'm excited."

He said he also understands that Biden is too busy to stay longer. "The president always have other things to do," Olufemia said.

A massive security operation was in place for Biden's stay in Belfast, with a heavy police presence on blocked off streets around the president's hotel and the Ulster campus.

Last month, U.K. intelligence services raised Northern Ireland's terrorism threat level from "substantial" to "severe." But Biden said then that not even the heightened risk of an attack would keep him from making the trip.

Biden last visited Ireland in 2016, when he was U.S. vice president. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1997 TIGER WOODS WINS MASTERS AT 21



The 21-year-old golfing sensation Eldrick "Tiger" Woods has become the youngest-ever player to win the US Masters Championships.

He put in a virtuoso performance that left his opponents far behind and smashed almost every record in the book.

His winning margin was 12 strokes - three more than the previous record, held by Jack Nicklaus.

His final four-round score was 270 strokes, 18 under par - the tournament record.

He is also the first black player to win a major golf championship, and has said he intends to use his success to encourage minorities to play golf.

His challenge started slowly, but quickly gathered pace until by the end of the second day he had taken the lead.

By the end of day three, he had increased his lead to nine shots, and his nearest rival, Colin Montgomerie, was telling journalists that there was "no chance Tiger Woods is just going to lose this tournament."

[...] His rivals had nothing but admiration for his decisive victory.

"This seems to be the next generation, said Tom Kite, competing in his 24th Masters. "He seems to have leapfrogged the rest of the field."

Woods, a child prodigy who won his first public competition at the age of three, had already astonished golfing fans by winning an unprecedented three consecutive US Amateur championships from 1994 to 1996.

He turned professional just eight months ago, his profile already so high that he was immediately signed up for endorsement deals worth \$60 million.

There was immediate speculation over Woods's chances of winning the Grand Slam - the Masters, the US Open, and the US PGA Championship. Woods refused to rule it out.

"It's only a matter of getting hot four times and having a lot of luck at the right time," he told journalists.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

By the end of the 1997 PGA season, Tiger Woods had broken the single-season record earnings with more than \$2 million. He won four tournaments, and finished in the top 10 nine times. He continued to break records, winning four tournaments in a row in 1999, and taking the US Open in June 2000 by a 15-stroke margin - the largest in the history of major championship golf. He completed his Grand Slam in July 2000, winning the Open Championship at St Andrews, Scotland, by eight shots at the age of 24 - two years younger than the previous record-holder, Jack Nicklaus. The 2000 season also saw him put in the most successful performance in golf history in terms of tournament earnings, winning him nearly \$10 million in prize money. Woods lost his world number one spot in 2004 after a record 264 straight weeks, to Vijay Singh. He regained the number one place after clinching his fourth US Masters win - his ninth major title - in April 2005.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You can make new friends if you get involved in group activities. Don't be too quick to respond to a plea for help. You can do well on stage or behind the scenes, the choice is yours.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You can't always have your own way. You may find that romance will unfold through business connections. Tie up your personal papers or push to have legal settlements completed.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Don't get so wrapped up in being rich that you overlook the fact that your plan may not be as solid as you thought. Make career changes that may increase your income.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Help elders in your family. You may need help with your financial situation. It would be in your best interest to stay away from any intimate involvement with a client or coworker.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Your ability to be practical in business will help. You will be entertained and intrigued by the logic foreigners possess. Try not to be overbearing where family is concerned.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Be prepared to deal with groups and organizations of greater magnitude. Don't let them blame you. Problems with colleagues are likely.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Keep a lookout for any individuals eager to confront you with unsavory situations. Help if you can, but more than likely it will be sufficient just to listen.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Over spending or unexpected bills could set you back. Try to be fair in your dealings with acquaintances. Use your charm, but don't be phony.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Make changes around your house and plan to do some entertaining. Disruptions may set you back, but you're strong, and in the end the choices you make will be favorable.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Travel, although enticing, will cost more than you expect. You should be raising your self esteem and confidence in order to promote your work.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You will be encouraged to get involved in a moneymaking venture. Your changing philosophies may lead you into new circles and open doors that will give you a unique outlook on life.

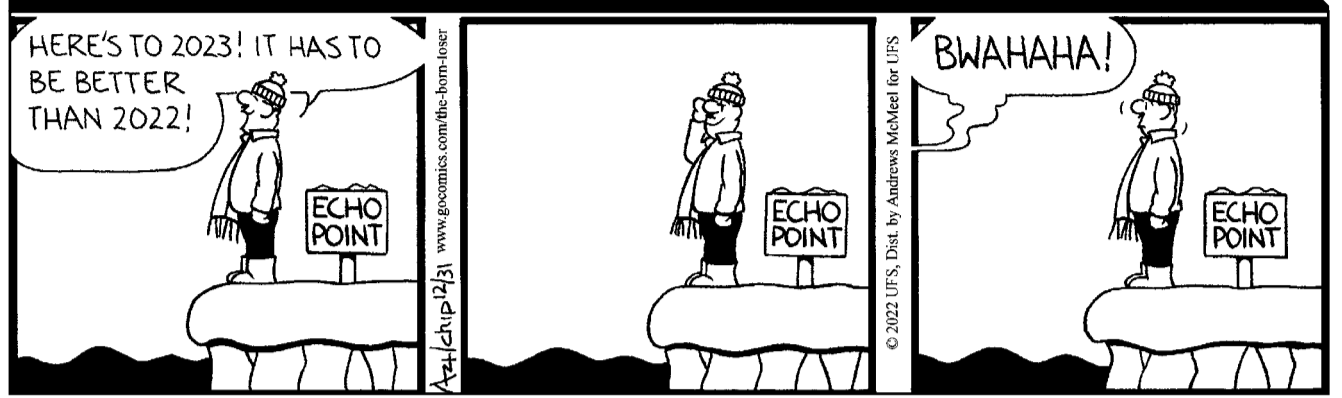


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Don't overspend on friends or children. Limitations will set in if you haven't followed the rules. Changes in your domestic scene are evident. Go to the top if you're being harassed or held back.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

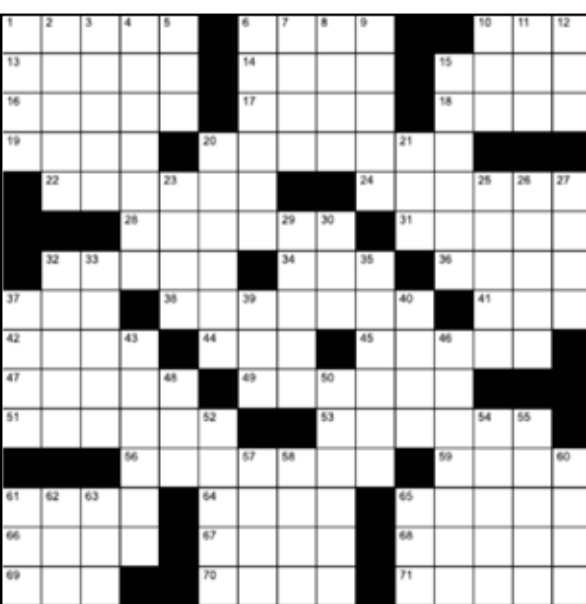
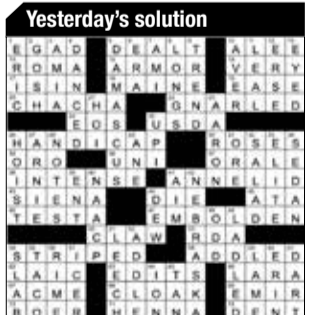
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	10	26	cloudy
Changchun	-1	14	cloudy
Chengdu	18	27	rain
Chongqing	19	29	cloudy
Fuzhou	17	24	overcast
Guangzhou	20	28	showers
Guiyang	16	28	cloudy
Haikou	23	29	cloudy
Hangzhou	12	22	rain
Harbin	-2	13	cloudy
Hefei	12	27	cloudy
Nanjing	14	26	cloudy
Shanghai	12	21	rain
Taipei	19	26	fine
Wuhan	17	26	rain
Hong Kong	23	25	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	3	17	cloudy
Frankfurt	2	12	cloudy
Paris	5	13	rain
London	4	13	rain
New York	17	31	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Driver's invitation; 6- Pro follower; 10- Starchy dish; 13- You ___ right!; 14- Seth's son; 15- Unites; 16- Young haddock; 17- Wet septet; 18- News bit; 19- Physical suffering; 20- Correspondences; 22- Mantra; 24- So far; 28- Something that occupies space; 31- Tint; 32- Elegance; 34- Him, to Henri; 36- Lows; 37- ___ Paulo; 38- Declares positively; 41- Nth; Abbr.; 42- Tarot suit; 44- Involuntary muscular contraction; 45- Listens; 47- Make one; 49- Maroon; 51- Puget Sound city; 53- On the go; 56- Republic in central Europe; 59- Fish appendages; 61- Civil disturbance; 64- Driving aids; 65- Botch; 66- National rival; 67- Broccoli ___ (leafy vegetable); 68- Was Hamlet; 69- Toothpaste type; 70- Somewhat; 71- Guides;

DOWN 1- Briefcase closer; 2- Killer whales; 3- Jeopardy; 4- Equality of political rights; 5- Silent bid; 6- Take as an affront; 7- Work without ___; 8- Just right; 9- It's a plus; 10- Domesticated animal; 11- Form of poem, often used to praise something; 12- Belief; 15- Sagacity; 20- Current; 21- Mythical bird; 23- Big bash; 25- One way to think; 26- Implements; 27- Formerly; 29- Give a seat?; 30- Capek play; 32- Sweatbox; 33- Theme; 35- Home of Odysseus; 37- Rabbit's tail; 39- Bro's sibling; 40- Posted; 43- Summer ermines; 46- Building; 48- Australian bird; 50- Elevated; 52- Latin stars; 54- Prospect; 55- Wound up; 57- Nipple; 58- First name in country; 60- Lays down the lawn; 61- Joplin tune; 62- ___ had it!; 63- Wildcatter's find; 65- ___ de mer;



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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Hellene Garden
HKD 17,900/mth 4 bed 2 bath

AD

NIGHT LIFE

HISTORIC MEXICO CITY ROCK AND COUNTERCULTURE HUB CLOSES

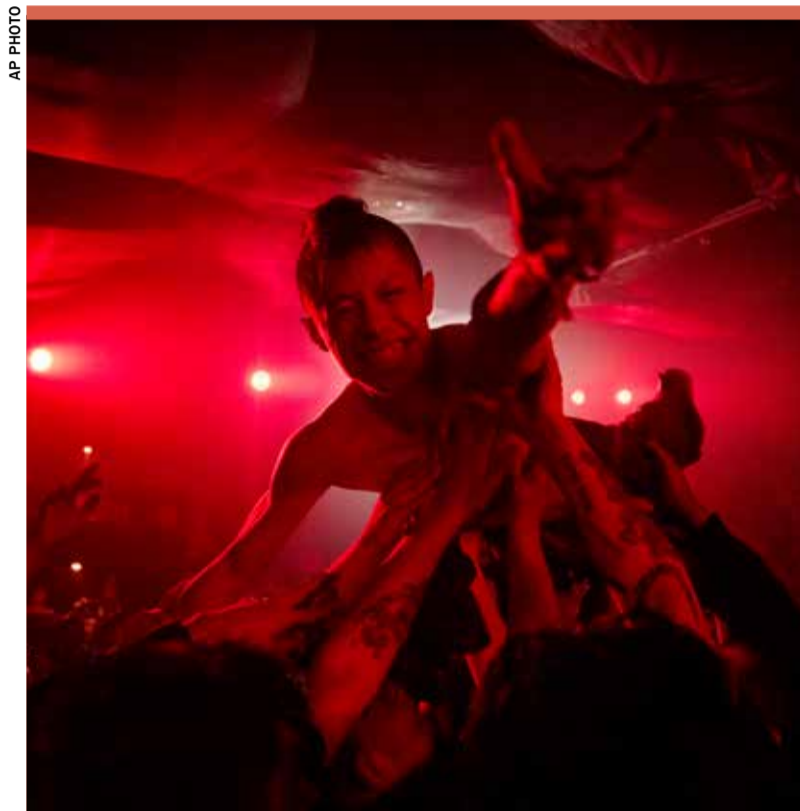
FERNANDA PESCE,
MEXICO CITY

A line of people dressed in black, flannels and piercings wound in front of a two-story building on one of Mexico City's main avenues. Graffiti reading "Alicia" was painted above their heads. Inside, a young man frantically scrolled over a list of names and prepared the entry hand stamp. It could have been any nightclub on a Friday night in the bustling city, but the whole line knew it was their last chance to set foot in what had become an iconic music venue and counterculture hub in the Mexican capital.

After 27 years, Multiforo Cultural Alicia closed its doors forever on March 12. For many, it marked the end of an era and signaled gentrification's toll on the city in recent years. "Nobody came at the beginning. It was a tiny place, uncomfortable, very punk," recalled Ignacio Pineda, 60, the founder of the Alicia. "But I didn't want a trendy bar. I wanted a place for the people."

For decades, Mexico's music scene was suffocated by its long-ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party, or PRI.

Following the brutal army repression of the 1968 student protests — an unknown number of protesters were killed — Mexican authorities harassed long-haired youths. After lurid reports circulated about a 1971 concert in the town of Avandaro, no large public rock concerts were allowed



Fans of the Mexican Punk Rock band Seguirnos Perdiendo dance during one of the last active weekends at the iconic counterculture venue Multiforo Alicia in Mexico City

for about a decade, and rock retreated into tiny venues known as "hoyos funky," or "funky holes."

The Mexican political system was shaken in 1994 when the Zapatista Indigenous rebels from Chiapas, in southeast Mexico, led a brief armed uprising to demand greater rights. The Zapatista movement ignited young Mexicans' political participation. A new generation emerged, looking for outlets to express themselves. Music and cultural spaces like the Alicia be-

came that outlet for many.

In 1995, Pineda founded the venue with a group of friends, who quickly dropped out. At the beginning, Pineda — or "Nacho", as he's known — even considered shutting down the place. But the emerging Mexican music scene pulled him through.

He started inviting hardcore punk, surf, rock, ska, hip-hop and garage bands, and the audience followed. At the same time, Pineda organized talks and conferences to tackle social and political issues.

"We always considered ourselves a political space, rather than a music venue," he told the AP. "We did something that nobody was doing."

Soon, the Alicia became one of the very few libertarian, anarchist, self-managed spaces in Mexico City. Abraham "Muñeco" Torres, the frontman of Nana Pancha, one of the most prominent ska bands in Mexico, first played at the Alicia when he was 16 years old.

Now 43, he recalls fondly being booed off the stage by punks after his drum kit pedal broke mid-concert. But he never stopped playing. His way of saying goodbye to the venue that allowed him to grow into the musician he is today was to play on that same stage one last time.

For him, it was like going back to his very first concert.

A mix of blue, red and pink lights flashed over his hair, dyed a brilliant yellow, and over a crush of young Mexicans in a mosh pit.

They shouted one of the band's most famous songs, one dedicated to 43 Mexican students who were abducted and disappeared in 2014.

"Thanks to the Alicia, a lot of music bands like us learned to organize concerts and build our own spaces," Torres said. "For us (the Alicia) is a safe place, our learning place. It taught us we could live off music."

The late 1990s to mid-2000s saw a growth of self-managed concerts in Mexico City to avoid depending on commercial event

producers. Everything from pamphlets, ticketing, security and production was organized by the bands themselves, supported by political collectives.

It was the golden era of Mexican ska. The Alicia's punk influence was a predecessor of this movement.

The narrow concert hall sheltered prominent Mexican bands like Panteón Rococó, Sekta Core, Botellita de Jerez, Lost Acapulco and Tijuana No! and hosted international artists like Manu Chao, Ska-P and Banda Bassotti.

Fernando Rodríguez, 32, was 15 when he first walked through the Alicia's doors. He said he couldn't miss one of the very last concerts of the Mexican punk-rock band Seguirnos Perdiendo at the venue.

"The Alicia is one of the best spaces to get to enjoy a band from up close," Rodríguez said. "This place has meant a lot for Mexican rock."

The venue's name comes from an Italian counterculture radio station from the 1970s, Radio Alice, and Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. The space was inspired by the leftist self-managed occupied social centers in Italy in the 1980s and similar spaces called gaztetxes in the Basque Country, an autonomous region in Spain.

Pineda said one of the main reasons he chose to close is because he doesn't like how the neighborhood around the venue has changed. A recent wave of digital nomads mostly from the United States has increased gentrification; long-time residents and businesses have been replaced with AirBnBs and hipster coffee shops.

La Roma, a historically middle-class neighborhood in Mexico City, is not what it used to be anymore, Pineda said. **MDT/AP**

MUSIC

Mario, Mariah, Madonna added to US National Recording Registry

MADONNA'S star-making 1984 album "Like a Virgin," Mariah Carey's 1994 holiday perennial "All I Want For Christmas Is You" and the original 1985 theme from Super Mario Bros. are now in the U.S. National Recording Registry as part of "the defining sounds of the nation's history and culture," the Library of Congress announced Wednesday.

In all, 25 albums, singles and other sound artifacts spanning more than a century are being inducted into the registry, from the first

known recording of mariachi music in 1908 and 1909 by Cuarteto Coculense, to 2012's "Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Orchestra" by composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich.

The Super Mario Bros. music, officially known as the "Ground Theme," written by young Nintendo composer Koji Kondo, becomes the first music from a video game to enter the registry, which called it in a news release "the most recognizable video game theme in history." The tune has appeared in countless Ma-

rio-related incarnations, including in the new megahit "Super Mario Bros. Movie."

Queen Latifah becomes the first female rapper with a recording in the registry with the inclusion of her 1989 album "All Hail the Queen," whose songs include the feminist anthem "Ladies First."

Other full albums getting recognition include 1970's "Déjà Vu" by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, 1983's "Synchronicity" by the Police, and 1985's "Black Codes (From the Underground)" by jazz trumpeter Wynton

Marsalis.

Other singles making the list include Bobby Gentry's "Ode to Billie Joe" (1967), John Lennon's "Imagine" (1971), Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" (1971), John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads" (1971), and Jimmy Buffett's "Margaritaville" (1977).

Those recordings are joined by a pair of 1980s standards: "Flashdance...What a Feeling" by Irene Cara (1983) and "Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)" by Eurythmics (1983).

The inductees include



two non-musical entries, astronomer Carl Sagan's recording of his book about humanity's place in the universe, "Pale Blue Dot," and NBC radio reporter Dorothy Thompson's commentaries and analysis from Europe during the runup to World War II in 1939.

The Library of Congress selects the titles for preservation for their cultural and historic importance to the American soundscape.

Artists with recordings added to the registry in recent years include Janet Jackson, Louis Armstrong and Dr. Dre. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

Man City crushes Bayern in Champions League quarterfinals

JAMES ROBSON, MANCHESTER

MAN CITY 3, BAYERN 0

AFTER a 3-0 win against Bayern Munich yesterday [Macau time], Manchester City looks to be cruising toward the Champions League semifinals for the third year in row.

Even if Pep Guardiola claimed it was a tortuous night watching from the sidelines at Etihad Stadium, it will take a remarkable fightback from Bayern to turn things around in next week's quarterfinals second leg in Germany.

"It was not comfortable. Emotionally I'm destroyed," the City manager said. "I have (aged) 10 more years today. It was so demanding (a) game. Now I have to relax."

While Guardiola is trying to keep minds focused, this was a statement performance from the Premier League champions against one of the giants of Euro-



Manchester City's Rodrigo (right) celebrates after scoring the opening goal

pean soccer.

Bayern had gone into the game with a 100 percent record in this season's competition, with eight straight wins, including victories

against Inter Milan, Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain — all under former coach Julian Nagelsmann.

But the visitors were blown

away by City's attacking power, with goals from Rodri, Bernardo Silva and Erling Haaland the difference on the night.

Bayern had chances, too. Leroy Sane forced three saves from Ederson early in the second half, including one when through on goal with only the goalkeeper to beat.

Yet by the time Haaland slid in to convert John Stones' headed knockdown in the 76th minute, the semifinals looked to be within reach, even with a second leg to come at Allianz Arena.

Both Guardiola and Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel pointed to the chances the German champions failed to convert. City, meanwhile, took the lead through a wonder goal from Rodri in the 27th and capitalized on a mistake from Dayot Upamecano for Bernardo to make it 2-0 in the 70th.

But it was still a performance of maturity that City has lacked when playing in European soccer's elite competition in the past.

In previous years Guardiola's team has buckled when under pressure on this stage.

Losses have come against underdogs Monaco, Tottenham and Lyon.

Guardiola, who won the Champions League twice as coach of Barcelona, has so far failed to deliver the trophy to City, despite dominating English soccer during his seven years at the club.

He has won four league titles, one FA Cup and four League Cups but has not been able to transfer that supremacy to Europe.

The closest he came was in 2021 when beaten in the final by a Chelsea team managed by Tuchel.

City was knocked out by Real Madrid in the semifinals last season.

But even with the last four in sight once again, Guardiola, who coached Bayern for three years before taking over at City, is reluctant to look that far ahead.

"Incredible result but I know a little bit what can happen in Munich," he said. "We have to do something new and a little bit more because we suffered too much with the quality they have."

"To knock out these teams you have to have two good games, not just one."

In the other quarterfinal first leg yesterday, Inter Milan won 2-0 at Benfica. **MDT/AP**

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FOOTBALL | BASKETBALL | DAILY TRAININGS

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**AUTONOMY WILL BEST
 BENEFIT BRAZIL'S
 DEVELOPMENT**

That Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's visit to China, from Wednesday to Friday, was rescheduled so soon after his proposed trip in late March was postponed due to him catching pneumonia highlights that it was the common wish of both sides that the visit be materialized as soon as possible.

The postponement of the trip did not forestall encouraging developments in bilateral cooperation — in particular, a yuan clearing deal was signed on March 29 to get their sizable trade rid of its long-term reliance on the US dollar and last week China hosted a forum for 500 Brazilian and Chinese businesspeople that resulted in the signing of more than 20 cooperation agreements in various industries.

That these fruits could be harvested smoothly even before Lula set his foot in China, for his third state visit to the country since 2004, indicates the mutual trust between the two sides has already reached a very high level.

But that does not mean Lula will have a more relaxed agenda for his visit, as there is much for the two largest developing countries, both ardent advocates for fair and just international order, to discuss, ranging from boosting trade, financial, technological and cultural cooperation to upholding multilateralism and defending world peace and stability. In fact, the postponement of his visit has seen his about 300-people delegation further swelling as more businesspeople and politicians have joined it.

Every member of the large delegation will be well aware of the complementarity between the two economies. China has been the largest trading partner of Brazil, China's largest investment destination in Latin America, for years, and their bilateral trade reached \$171.49 billion last year, more than 21 times that of 20 years ago. China now imports 36 percent of Brazil's exports of soy, 20 percent ore and 18 percent oil, and China's equipment and technology in manufacturing, aerospace, digital economy and green development have a broad market in Brazil.

In particular, it is good to hear that the Brazilian side shows strong interest in taking advantage of Lula's visit to discuss Brazil's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, which can greatly enrich the two countries' cooperation framework besides the BRICS system and at the bilateral level, and in exploring feasible ways to work with China to advance a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine crisis.

After following the development path that the US prescribed to Latin America in its Washington Consensus in 1989, Brazil has finally realized that standing on its own two feet is the prerequisite for the country to overcome the trap the US set for countries in the region by pushing for the liberalization of industry, market and finance in a bid to dominate their economies with US capital and companies.

Lula's visit to China will provide the country with a first-hand experience of what a difference keeping its strategic autonomy can make to an emerging market economy of its size, and with its resources and potential. There is no reason for the door of modernization to be shut and bolted on Brazil.

Pope Francis urged world leaders Wednesday to use reason and not arms to resolve differences, evoking memories of the 1960s Cold War between Washington and Moscow.

At his weekly audience in St. Peter's Square, Francis noted that Tuesday (yesterday, Macau time) marked the 60th anniversary of the issuance of a Cold War-era encyclical by Pope John XXIII.

The "Pacem in Terris" encyclical, intended for both the Catholic Church and the world at large, was issued several months after the Cuban missile crisis, which had fueled fears of nuclear war between

the United States and what was then the Soviet Union.

Francis recalled the world then as "full of tensions between two opposing blocs in the so-called Cold War" and said his predecessor's message, which encouraged peace efforts, "is very current today."

The encyclical "opened horizons in which you could speak of peace, construct peace," Francis told thousands of faithful gathered in the square. He called the document issued April 11, 1963 "a real blessing, like a serene break in the midst of dark clouds."

AP PHOTO



**UKRAINE TO PROBE VIDEO
 ALLEGEDLY SHOWING
 SOLDIER'S BEHEADING**

UKRAINE promised yesterday to investigate a gruesome video circulating on social media that purportedly shows the beheading of a Ukrainian soldier.

The video spread quickly online and sparked outrage from Ukrainian officials. The Kremlin called the footage "horrible" but said it needed to be verified.

The Associated Press was not able to verify the authenticity of the video or the circumstances of where and when it was shot.

The video appears to show a man in green fatigues wearing a yellow armband, typically donned by Ukrainian fighters. He is heard screeching before another man in camouflage uses a knife to decapitate him.

A third man holds up a flak jacket apparently belonging to the man being beheaded. All three men speak in Russian.

Since Russia's forces invaded Ukraine more than a year ago, they have committed widespread abuses and alleged war crimes, according to the United Nations, rights groups and reporting by The Associated Press. The International Criminal Court has also issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for war crimes.

The Kremlin denies it has

committed war crimes or that it has targeted civilians.

Ukrainian troops have also been accused of abuses, and last year Kyiv said it would investigate video footage circulated online that Moscow alleged showed Ukrainian forces killing Russian troops who may have been trying to surrender.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the violence in the latest video would not be forgotten — and that Russian forces would be held responsible for such acts.

"Everyone must react, every leader. Do not expect that it will be forgotten, that time will pass," he said in a video posted to his official Telegram channel.

In it, he used strong language to describe Russian soldiers, including calling them "beasts."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that it's necessary to thoroughly check the "horrible" video — including verifying that it's real.

"In the world of fakes we live in the authenticity of the footage must be checked," he said in a conference call with reporters.

Ukraine's state security service launched an investigation the video, according to a statement from Vasyl Maliuk, the head of the

agency, known as the SBU.

Posters in some pro-Kremlin Russian Telegram channels, while not confirming the authenticity of the video, did not dispute it. Some sought to justify it by saying that Russian troops have become hardened by combat.

Andrei Medvedev, a Russian state TV journalist and a member of the Moscow city legislature, speculated that the timing of the video's release was "fairly opportune" for the Ukrainian army, saying it could help "fire up personnel ideologically" ahead of a planned major counteroffensive.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an advisor to Zelenskyy, also linked the video's release to the expected offensive, but said it was meant to "demoralize the public mood or at least change the psychological perception of the war right now."

Ukraine's ombudsman yesterday said that he will request that the U.N. Human Rights Committee investigate the video.

Dmytro Lubinets wrote on Telegram that "a public execution of a captive is yet another indication of a breach of Geneva Convention norms, international humanitarian law, a breach of the fundamental right to life." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



UK Anne Keast-Butler (pictured), who has spent 30 years working in national security for Britain, was named as the first woman to head the U.K.'s communications intelligence agency. Keast-Butler, currently deputy director general at MI5, the domestic intelligence agency, will head the Government Communications Headquarters — better known as GCHQ. Her appointment comes as intelligence agencies focus on threats from Russia and China.

North Macedonia

A U.S. special envoy on countering global disinformation says that countries in the western Balkan region have been "pretty seriously poisoned" by Russia's influence campaigns. James P. Rubin, who heads the State Department's Global Engagement Center, traveled to North Macedonia on a tour that also includes stops in Montenegro and Albania.

AP PHOTO



Saudi Arabia White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan spoke by phone with Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (pictured) amid signs that the Saudis and Iran-allied Houthis in Yemen are making "remarkable progress" toward finding a permanent end to their nine-year conflict, according to the Biden administration. The crown prince, often referred to by his initials MBS, has had a strained relationship with President Joe Biden over human rights and oil production concerns.

USA Saying she is ready to share the "unfathomable" experience of being arrested and incarcerated in Russia, basketball star Brittney Griner (pictured) is working on a memoir that is scheduled for spring 2024. Griner was arrested last year at the airport in Moscow on drug-related charges and detained for nearly 10 months, much of that time in prison.