

LAWMAKERS LEONG SUN IOK AND PEREIRA COUTINHO HAVE CLAIMED HIGHER WAGES COULD SOLVE PART OF THE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM AMONG RESIDENTS

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AP PHOTO



Indonesia's military chief dismissed a separatist group claim that they had killed more than a dozen government soldiers who were searching for a New Zealand pilot taken hostage by the rebels in the restive Papua region. Adm. Yudo Margono and the military's top brass flew to the region on Monday after initial information said attackers from the West Papua Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Free Papua Movement, ambushed 36 government soldiers in the hilly district of Nduga in mountainous Papua Highlands province.

AP PHOTO



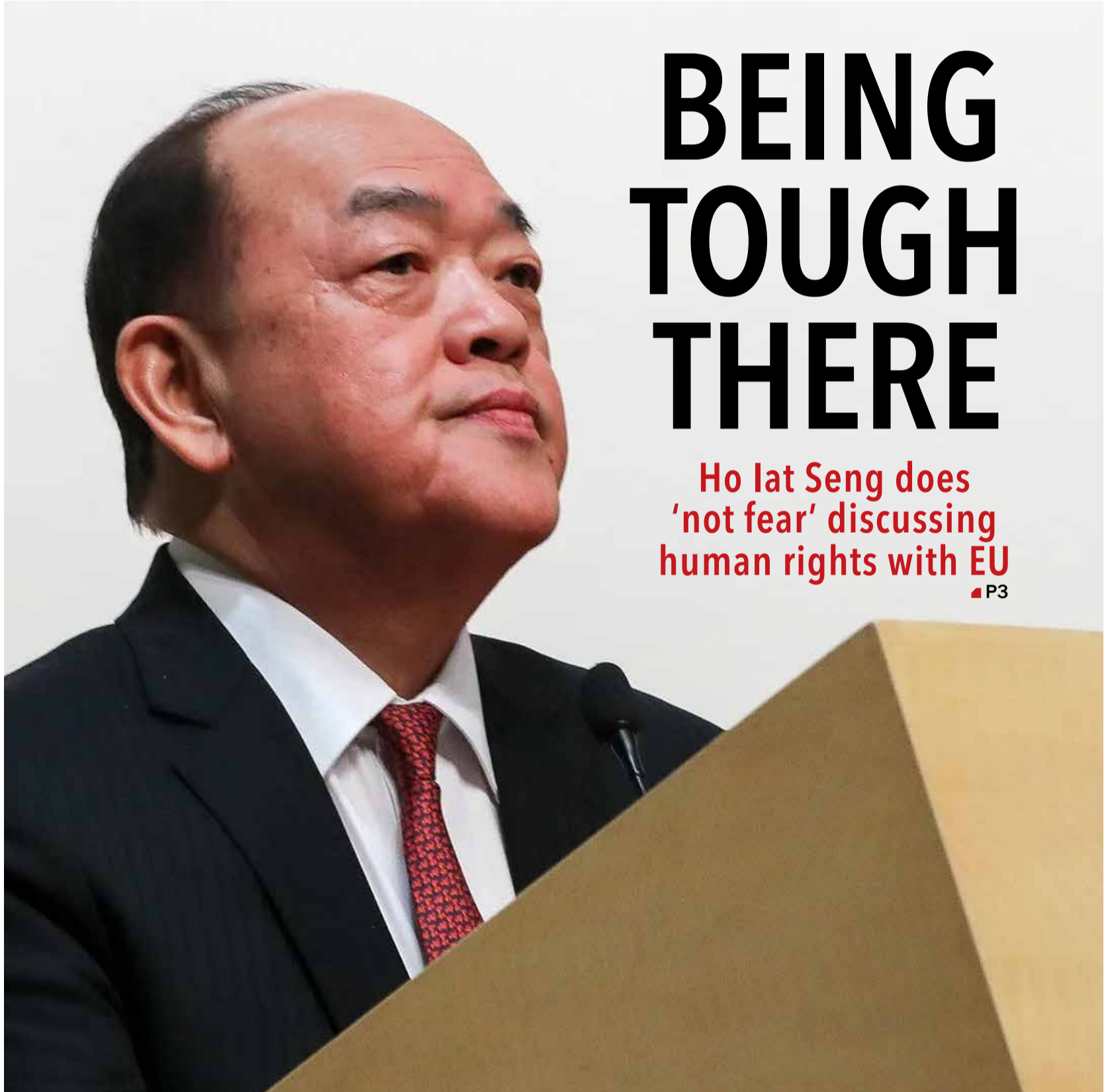
India Apple Inc. opened its first flagship store in India in a much-anticipated launch that highlights the company's growing aspirations to expand in the country it also hopes to turn into a potential manufacturing hub. The company's CEO Tim Cook posed for photos with a few of the 100 or so Apple fans who had lined up outside the sprawling 20,000-square-foot store in India's financial capital, Mumbai, its design inspired by the iconic black-and-yellow cabs unique to the city. A second store will open tomorrow in the national capital, New Delhi.

AP PHOTO



Iran's supreme leader ruled out the holding of popular referendums on state policies. Iran faced calls for a referendum on the Islamic Republic itself during anti-government protests last year, and a moderate former president recently suggested such votes should be held to decide major policies as a way of reducing divisions. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say over such policies, rejected the idea when asked about it during a meeting with university students.

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TECHNOLOGY

AI HAS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES, BUT WHO PAYS THE PRICE? IT COMPANIES' PROBLEM WITH 'ETHICAL DEBT'

CASEY FIESLER
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

As public concern about the ethical and social implications of artificial intelligence keeps growing, it might seem like it's time to slow down. But inside tech companies themselves, the sentiment is quite the opposite. As Big Tech's AI race heats up, it would be an "absolutely fatal error in this moment to worry about things that can be fixed later," a Microsoft executive wrote in an internal email about generative AI, as The New York Times reported.

In other words, it's time to "move fast and break things," to quote Mark Zuckerberg's old motto. Of course, when you break things, you might have to fix them later – at a cost.

In software development, the term "technical debt" refers to the implied cost of making future fixes as a consequence of choosing faster, less careful solutions now. Rushing to market can mean releasing software that isn't ready, knowing that once it does hit the market, you'll find out what the bugs are and can hopefully fix them then.

However, negative news stories about generative AI tend not to be about these kinds of bugs. Instead, much of the concern is about AI systems amplifying harmful biases and stereotypes and students using AI deceptively. We hear about privacy concerns, people being fooled by misinformation, labor exploitation and fears about how quickly human jobs may be replaced, to name a few. These problems are not software glitches. Realizing that a technology reinforces oppression or bias is very different from learning that a button on a website doesn't work.

As a technology ethics educator and researcher, I have thought a lot about these kinds of "bugs." What's accruing here is not just technical debt, but ethical debt. Just as technical debt can result from limited testing during the development process, ethical debt results from not considering possible



negative consequences or societal harms. And with ethical debt in particular, the people who incur it are rarely the people who pay for it in the end.

OFF TO THE RACES

As soon as OpenAI's ChatGPT was released in November 2022, the starter pistol for today's AI race, I imagined the debt ledger starting to fill.

Within months, Google and Microsoft released their own generative AI programs, which seemed rushed to market in an effort to keep up. Google's stock prices fell when its chatbot Bard confidently supplied a wrong answer during the company's own demo. One might expect Microsoft to be particularly cautious when it comes to chatbots, considering Tay, its Twitter-based bot that was almost immediately shut down in 2016 after spouting misogynist and white supremacist talking points. Yet early conversations with the AI-powered Bing left some users unsettled, and it has repeated known misinformation.

When the social debt of these rushed releases comes due, I expect that we will hear mention of unintended or unanticipated consequences. After all, even with ethical guidelines in place,

it's not as if OpenAI, Microsoft or Google can see the future. How can someone know what societal problems might emerge before the technology is even fully developed?

The root of this dilemma is uncertainty, which is a common side effect of many technological revolutions, but magnified in the case of artificial intelligence. After all, part of the point of AI is that its actions are not known in advance. AI may not be designed to produce negative consequences, but it is designed to produce the unforeseen.

However, it is disingenuous to suggest that technologists cannot accurately speculate about what many of these consequences might be. By now, there have been countless examples of how AI can reproduce bias and exacerbate social inequities, but these problems are rarely publicly identified by tech companies themselves. It was external researchers who found racial bias in widely used commercial facial analysis systems, for example, and in a medical risk prediction algorithm that was being applied to around 200 million Americans. Academics and advocacy or research organizations like the Algorithmic Justice League and the Distributed

AI Research Institute are doing much of this work: identifying harms after the fact. And this pattern doesn't seem likely to change if companies keep firing ethicists.

SPECULATING – RESPONSIBLY

I sometimes describe myself as a technology optimist who thinks and prepares like a pessimist. The only way to decrease ethical debt is to take the time to think ahead about things that might go wrong – but this is not something that technologists are necessarily taught to do.

Scientist and iconic science fiction writer Isaac Asimov once said that sci-fi authors "foresee the inevitable, and although problems and catastrophes may be inevitable, solutions are not." Of course, science fiction writers do not tend to be tasked with developing these solutions – but right now, the technologists developing AI are.

So how can AI designers learn to think more like science fiction writers? One of my current research projects focuses on developing ways to support this process of ethical speculation. I don't mean designing with far-off robot wars in mind; I mean the ability to consider future consequences at all, including in the very near future.

This is a topic I've been explo-

ring in my teaching for some time, encouraging students to think through the ethical implications of sci-fi technology in order to prepare them to do the same with technology they might create. One exercise I developed is called the Black Mirror Writers Room, where students speculate about possible negative consequences of technology like social media algorithms and self-driving cars. Often these discussions are based on patterns from the past or the potential for bad actors.

Ph.D. candidate Shamika Klassen and I evaluated this teaching exercise in a research study and found that there are pedagogical benefits to encouraging computing students to imagine what might go wrong in the future – and then brainstorm about how we might avoid that future in the first place.

However, the purpose isn't to prepare students for those far-flung futures; it is to teach speculation as a skill that can be applied immediately. This skill is especially important for helping students imagine harm to other people, since technological harms often disproportionately impact marginalized groups that are underrepresented in computing professions. The next steps for my research are to translate these ethical speculation strategies for real-world technology design teams.

TIME TO HIT PAUSE?

In March 2023, an open letter with thousands of signatures advocated for pausing training AI systems more powerful than GPT-4. Unchecked, AI development "might eventually outnumber, outsmart, obsolete and replace us," or even cause a "loss of control of our civilization," its writers warned.

As critiques of the letter point out, this focus on hypothetical risks ignores actual harms happening today. Nevertheless, I think there is little disagreement among AI ethicists that AI development needs to slow down – that developers throwing up their hands and citing "unintended consequences" is not going to cut it.

We are only a few months into the "AI race" picking up significant speed, and I think it's already clear that ethical considerations are being left in the dust. But the debt will come due eventually – and history suggests that Big Tech executives and investors may not be the ones paying for it.

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EUROPEAN TOUR

CE does not fear discussing human rights with EU

ANTHONY LAM

IF the EU asks me about human rights conditions in Macau, I will not fear discussing it," Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng told a press conference before departing for his first official trip to Europe.

Members of the European Parliament have expressed concerns over Macau's compliance with the Lusophone Joint Declaration in terms of human rights. Members of the Macau public have also raised concerns about the current amendment to the National Security Law (NSL).

When asked, Ho declined to comment on individual opinions, but said these opinions show Macau is a free society, in which anyone can express their own views.

He said he would not fear discussing human rights with anybody, be they EU officials or journalists.

He said this version of the NSL was promulgated in 2009. During its drafting process, the public raised concerns, "but has there been any hinderance or restraint to human rights in Macau?" asked Ho.

He also compared the current NSL amendment to similar laws in Portugal and other EU countries.

"Which country does not have their own national security law?" he asked. "If we are wrong having such a law, all EU countries are wrong too, for all of them have national security laws."

To ease public anxiety, the head of the local government confirmed that "One Country Two Systems is our founding stone." His said the Basic Law will be complied with "in a good manner without any change."



Ho Iat Seng and the Macau delegation at Praça do Comércio, in Lisbon, yesterday

Moreover, he said the Chinese Constitution is superior to the Basic Law, adding that all people of Chinese nationality must abide by the Constitution.

He referred to Article 23 of the Basic Law as the reason for the NSL legislation. In his opinion, this is not a "major or sneaky amendment" for

there was public consultation.

Over 40 consuls-general who had met with him had agreed with his explanation, Ho said.

On the structure of the local gambling industry, Ho reiterated his confidence in achieving the goal of MOP130 billion of gross gaming revenue (GGR) for this year, with the

benchmark for the first quarter already reached.

For the first time, Ho said there are 12 foreigner-only gambling areas in local casinos, adding that casino operators had started chartering private jets to deliver clients to Macau. The local airport has also served them well, Ho said.

HO IAT SENG TO EMPHASIZE MACAU'S POSITIONING IN EUROPEAN VISIT

CHIEF Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng will emphasize Macau's national position to European officials during his first official visit overseas between April 18 and 27.

During a speech before his departure, the CE said Macau is pressing ahead with its strategic positioning as "one center, one platform, one base", while pragmatically engaging with the "Belt and Road" initiative, and the Greater Bay Area, adding Portugal is a crucial part of the "Belt and Road" initiative.

This year marked the 10th anniversary of the initiative's promulgation, and the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macao), the CE said.

The government will make full use of the opportunities presented by the visit to Europe, to promote Macau's role in supporting development of the "Belt and Road" initiative, and to explain Macau's bridging functions for business and trade cooperation serving China and the Portuguese-speaking countries, said Ho.

Ho said the visit to Portugal sought to consolidate the friendly relations between Macau and Portugal and promote people-to-people exchanges.

There was hope of attracting additional enterprises from Portuguese-speaking countries to set up in the Greater Bay Area and the Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, to explore opportunities in the Chinese mainland market. **AL**

TWO CPTTM OFFICIALS RE-ELECTED WORLDSKILLS TECH DIRECTORS

Victoria Kuan and Mak Seng Hin of the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Center (CPTTM) have been re-elected as technical directors of fashion techniques and website techniques, respectively. The two will take charge of the competitions in the two areas. The CPTTM says it shows international recognition of professional skills and performance among Macau people. Kuan is executive director of the CPTTM, while Mak is the manager for information systems and technology. Their first appointment occurred in 2019.

FORUM MACAU SECRETARIAT VISITS CANTON FAIR, GBA

A delegation from the Permanent Secretariat to the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macao) has visited the Canton Fair, held in Guangzhou twice a year, and other parts of Guangdong Province. According to a statement from the Secretariat, delegation members attentively visited the pavilions, met exhibitors and took the initiative to establish exchanges and contacts to actively publicize cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

GOV'T 'SPARES NO EFFORT' REFINING PEARL OF THE ORIENT TRAFFIC

Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário has pledged to parliament the government would spare no effort to refine traffic conditions near the Pearl of the Orient roundabout. He hoped the conditions would improve when the road networks nearby further expand. It is expected the Light Rapid Transit's East Line contract would be signed within three months and construction begin within four, he said. He also refused to remove the artifact built on the roundabout, one of several built to celebrate Chinese-Portuguese friendship.

TOURISM

MGTO hopes visitors to reach over 20 million

STAFF REPORTER

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) hopes incoming visitors will reach over 20 million this year, half the level of pre-pandemic times. Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, the MGTO director, felt optimistic about it during an interview in Lisbon.

Overall visitor numbers to Macau are fine, and visitor numbers during non-holidays also remain stable, according to Senna Fernandes.

Daily international visitors increased from 1,600 in February to 2,000 in March and remain a small portion of all the visitors.

According to TDM Chinese, Senna Fernandes said that compared to 2019, there is still a long way to go and the recovery of international visitors will depend on the global flight market.

During the Chief Executive's visit to Europe, the MGTO has held a large-scale promotion event in Praça do Comércio in Lisbon, one of the largest plazas in

Portugal, including feature booths renovated from cargo containers and video mapping shows. Senna Fernandes said responses to the mapping show are good.

This is the first in-person tourism promotion in Europe after the pandemic. People come to visit after seeing the pictures and short videos. She also said more people in Europe became interested in Macau during the activities, which enhances image promotion.



MAINLAND STUDENT SCAMMED FOR RMB1.2 MILLION

A 19-year-old female university freshman in Macau has been scammed RMB1.2 million, according to the Judiciary Police (PJ). She received a call from an "express company" saying her parcel sent to the mainland contained banned items. The call was then transferred to someone identifying as from the mainland police, who accused her of engaging in illegal activities and demanded a security deposit. The victim deposited RMB1.2 million into nine mainland bank accounts provided by the scammers. She later became suspicious and reported the case to the police.

TUI UPHOLDS DRUG TRAFFICKING CONVICTION IN POSTAL DELIVERY DRUG CASE

A local resident bought the drug "marijuana" and "hemp oil" from an unknown seller to sell them to others and to use himself. The transaction was done in ether, a cryptocurrency. The drug was delivered through the service offered by an online shopping delivery company. The drug was first hidden in tea and crayons, delivered to the resident's Zhuhai address and transferred to the company's Ilha Verde branch. The police seized the resident as he was collecting the package in May 2021. After two appeals and one contestation, the Court of Final Appeal affirmed the original sentence of six years and two months in prison.



Leong Sun lok

José Pereira Coutinho

LABOUR

LAWMAKERS CLAIM HIGHER WAGES COULD SOLVE LOCAL UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM

RENATO MARQUES

LAWMAKERS Leong Sun lok and José Pereira Coutinho have claimed higher wages could solve at least part of the unemployment rate among local residents.

The two lawmakers were speaking in the period before the agenda of yesterday's plenary session of the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Both claimed the employment situation is not improving at the same pace as the faster-than-expected economic recovery.

Leong noted that despite the more than 5,000 jobs the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) is offering in the Macao One Account app, the "supply does not satisfy demand. There are more than 10,000 unemployed. [With only] 5,000 job posts available [only] 5,000 unemployed people will be successful in getting a job matching."

Leong also said the salaries offered are too low and this is "the reason why locals and non-residents are not interested in taking them." He hopes the "government will raise the salaries of civil servants in the hope that

other sectors would follow."

On the same point, Pereira Coutinho noted it is difficult for locals to find good jobs due to "the battalion of non-resident and unskilled workers performing 'white collar' jobs, who are willing to work long hours with low wages, without overtime pay, without rights and benefits."

He also took the opportunity to call once again for the government to reconsider issuing another round of electronic consumption subsidy of 8,000 patacas to residents.

He said most families are still struggling from the after-effects

of the three years of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. It is unlikely three months would be enough to restore the damage caused, he said.

Several lawmakers who also delivered different inquiries in the period before the agenda joined the list of those calling for the reinstatement of the consumption cards, including Song Pek Kei and Lo Choi In.

Ella Lei and Lam Lon Wai raised the topic of unemployment and accused some companies of giving their staff members poor conditions after the pandemic.

They accused some companies of exploiting workers to recover quickly from the financial damage caused by three years of restrictions.

Lei and Lam called on the government to update labor laws to tackle such issues that, according to lawmakers, are adversely affecting the workers' livelihoods.

WTT

First day of Round of 16 starting to reveal favorites

RENATO MARQUES

YESTERDAY saw the first day of the Round of 16 at the World Table Tennis (WTT) Champions Macao 2023 tournament, which started to unveil the favorites and shape up the final stage of the tournament.

Earlier in the day, the third day of the tournament started with the last of the matches of the Round of 32.

In the men's group, Liang Jingkun (China) beat 3:0 the Portuguese Marcos Freitas in the penultimate match of the Round of 32, the same happening to another Chinese player Fan Zhendong who, this time, won 3:1 over Germany's Patrick Franziska.

In the female group, the last matches of the Round of 32 also saw two Chinese players moving forward to the Round of 16 with



Sun Yingsha and Wang Yidi winning easily and for the same score (3:0) over their opponents Hana Matelova (CZE) and Shan Xiaona (Germany).

As for the Round of 16, which started in the evening, Japan's Mima Ito took on Taiwan's Cheng I-Ching and became the first ranking

name to be eliminated from the tournament.

Cheng gave almost no chances to Ito to breathe winning 3:1 with (11-4, 9-11, 11-1, 11-6).

Ito, a semifinalist at last year's WTT Champions event in Macau, and 6th seed to this week's event in Macau was seen as one of

the key contenders in the Women's Singles title race, and she had never lost a Round of 16's match on the WTT Champions stage.

Her impressive streak ended yesterday with Cheng showing complete dominance of the match and moving into the final stage of the event.

In the men's group was Tomokazu Harimoto (Japan), the first to move forward in the tournament after a 3:1 win over Hong Kong's Wong Chun Ting.

Wong started the match better winning the first set 11-6 but Harimoto responded massively with three consecutive wins (7-11, 8-11, 3-11) putting an end to Wong's hopes.

French player Alexis Lebrun was handed a Walkover win over Lin Yun-Ju (TPE) in a match that was only scheduled to take place today. The walkover win is likely to have been handed in advance due to the incapacity of the Taiwanese player to take part in the match this afternoon, handing to Lebrun a direct seat in the Quarterfinals.

RESULTS OF MEN'S SINGLES - ROUND OF 16

Ma Long (CHN)	3	1	Liam Pitchford (ENG)
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RESULTS OF WOMEN'S SINGLES - ROUND OF 16

Jeon Jihee (KOR)	0	3	Hina Hayata (JPN)
Chen Meng (CHN)	3	1	Kasumi Ishikawa (JPN)

RENATO MARQUES

AL PLENARY

THE bill to update the rules regulating the issuing and use of the Macau Identity Card (Macau ID) passed yesterday in its first reading at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

The bill introduces changes to the card and the information contained in it. It also introduces the possibility of an electronic version of the ID for mobile phones, similar to other documents such as the driving license.

At the AL, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong, explained that, besides these new changes, the bill also eliminated the group studying the possibility of adding other information to the Macau ID.

He noted it becomes obsolete because the government has started to develop the Macao One Account platform, which combines information and functionalities from different services and purposes.

The changes should be enforced as soon as the new law is approved.

The new cards should be issued before the end of this year, Cheong said, noting that e-Card use for border crossings and health vouchers may start operation even earlier, during the third quarter of this year.

New Generation of Macau ID bill passes in first reading

Responding to lawmakers' inquiries, the Secretary also said that the change for the new system, which includes changes to IT equipment as well as readers and physical card models, is expected to cost 155 million patacas, of which 64 million is for software and hardware changes and 91 million is for the production of the physical cards.

Among the changes to the new cards is the removal of some information from the visible card, such as height, date of the first issuance and the code of the user's birthplace, data that would move into the chip for reading when necessary.

Another of the changes includes adding the spouse's name to the chip. The cards currently only state the marital status of the user. When needed currently, the spouse's name must be requested via a certificate issued by the Identification Services Bureau (DSI), one formality that also ends once the new law comes into force.

PEAK OF ID CHANGES BETWEEN 2024- 2026

According to information provided by Cheong, residents will get the new version of the physical cards, which have only slight layout changes, when they need to renew their ID cards due to expiration, loss, or damage, as well as all newly issued cards from the time the new law comes into force.

The Secretary said that according to information collected by the DSI, the peak of the renewals of ID cards will happen between 2024 and 2026, a time that some 400,000 ID cards are expected to be changed due to expiration and renewal.

Cheong also said that with the electronic version of the cards, added convenience will be added although this version does not replace completely the use of the physical cards that, in some circumstances might still need to be read through a physical device.

RENATO MARQUES



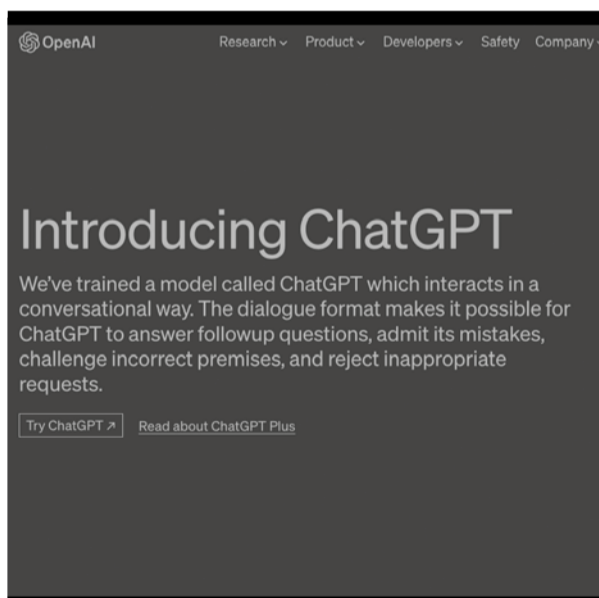
Local academic alerts journalists may lose their jobs in AI era

JOURNALISTS, transcribers and customer service agents, among other jobs, will easily be replaced by AI when it develops further, a local academic has warned in an article.

Peter Chang, lecturer at the City University of Macau and Winston Wong, director at Public Trust International Arbitration Association (Macao) co-authored an article discussing the recent trend of AI utilization triggered by the public use of ChatGPT.

Among the aforementioned professions, proofreaders, translators, copywriters, market analysts, social media managers, dispatchers, travel agents, home tutors and recruiters are among the other professions that the duo believe to be replaced by AI.

Echoing the earlier comments from Goldman Sachs, the two see



these occupations as highly repetitive and faced with a large collection of texts or data. ChatGPT's text or script generation and natural language processing capabilities are capable of these tasks.

"As AI is highly laborious and efficient [in the aforementioned professions], it is difficult for humans to compete," the pair commented.

Comparing the boom of AI with the era of Industrialization, the duo described the emergence and progress of ChatGPT as "a critical milestone" in the first edition of their article.

"ChatGPT has laid the foundation for the development of future AI," the pair said, adding that it has also brought a multitude of exciting applica-

tion prospects.

Their comparison, meanwhile, echoed their views set forth in the second edition of the article, which suggests that humans will not be fully replaced.

On the contrary, human beings will be expected to work in conjunction with AI. "In many aspects, humans still possess creativity, empathy and cross-aspect integrated capabilities, which are irreplaceable by AI," Chang and Wong believe.

Regarding the reliability of ChatGPT, the duo pointed out that it often misunderstands humans and thus provides deviating responses. Besides, the system cannot distinguish if what it says is correct, despite knowing how to compile texts.

ChatGPT needs to be regularly updated to give responses related to current events. **AL**

HK GOV WARNS ABOUT IOS, IPADOS VULNERABILITY

USERS of Apple Inc. devices running on iOS or iPadOS should beware of certain system vulnerabilities and update their operating systems as soon as possible, two Hong Kong information technology (IT) watchdogs have warned.

The warning was co-issued by the Hong Kong Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Centre (HKCERT) and the Government Computer Emergency Response Team Hong Kong (GovCERT.HK).

The two entities cited Apple's earlier report on the issue, saying that the IT giant has "released iOS 15.7.5, iOS 16.4.1, iPadOS 15.7.5 and iPadOS 16.4.1 to fix the vulnerabilities in various Apple devices."

The models of devices concerned include iPhone 6S and later models, as well as the first generation of iPhone SE; iPad 5th generation and later, iPad Air 2 and later, iPad mini (4th generation) and later, iPad Pro (all mo-

odels); as well as iPod touch (7th generation).

Should hackers successfully exploit the vulnerabilities, certain instructions, namely code executions, may be implemented arbitrarily, the two watchdogs explained.

They added that the system updates may be triggered automatically if auto-update is turned on, or manually through the system app.

Established in April 2015, GovCERT.HK is a governmental computer emergency response team dedicated to coordinating information and cyber security incidents for the Government of Hong Kong.

GovCERT.HK works closely with the HKCERT to share information on security threats and vulnerabilities, as well as to provide recommendations to the public and private sectors and individuals in protecting their information systems and digital assets. **AL**

ANTHONY LAM

ARTS FESTIVAL

LOCAL CANTO-OPERA GROUP OPEN TO NEW-OLD HYBRID

THE executive producer of a Cantonese opera in this year's Macao Arts Festival is open-minded about introducing modern elements to the traditional art-form.

Yesterday, the production team of "Bonds of Hato," a Cantonese opera to be presented at the upcoming arts festival, met the press.

Executive producer and lead actor Chu Chan Wa said his group, Zheng Hua Sing Cantonese Opera Association, has always been open to performing Cantonese opera in a modernized form.

However, he rejected a complete break from tradition. Instead, he said tradition should be partially retained because it is the foundation for progress and development.

For example, this opera is set in modern times, although performed with the traditional singing methods that are part of the art-form.

This opera will not be limited to music played on Chinese instruments.

"We have included an electronic keyboard, violin and saxophone in the band for this opera," Chu said.

Recalling his thoughts when he first read the script, the opera's director, Cheng Wei Guo, said his



old feelings of anxiety, panic, excitement and warmth resurfaced.

"Typhoon Hato caused severe destruction to Macau in 2017 but, it was also in this disaster people showed their complete mutual support and care for one another

and the army and local residents worked in solidarity," Cheng said.

Cheng said he was not in Macau but in Shenzhen for work when the typhoon hit Macau. Preparing for the opera, Chu took Cheng to the city's severely affected

locations and recounted the situation as it then was.

A veteran Cantonese opera worker, Cheng has experience working with opera companies around the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

Commenting on this production, he said that despite being part-timers, Macau performers and support workers respect their tasks very much. They work diligently, hoping to present a good work to the audience.

Actress Mok Weng Lam, 25, is one of the youngest in the crew. She started her Cantonese opera "career" aged five. Revealing her family mistakenly believed Cantonese opera is for older people, she said she had never thought the same.


She began learning Cantonese opera in her friends' company, saying many younger people like the artform.

The six-act Cantonese opera is based on a true major event and set on Aug. 23, 2017 and the days that followed, when Typhoon Hato hit Macau, claiming the lives of 10 people.

The opera's story begins with police officer Ho Wa and nurse Lai Sio Ha, who are in love. They are on duty and unable to see each other during the typhoon, which leads to Sio Ha's misunderstanding that Wa is in love with another woman. Conflict gradually arises between the two. In a rescue operation, however, Wa explains the truth to Sio Ha while he is trapped in a lift, and they confide their feelings for each other and reconcile.

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HEALTH

Uneasy marijuana industry seeks broader trade amid vast glut

GENE JOHNSON, ANDREW SELSKY & MICHAEL R. BLOOD, TUMWATER (WASH.)

AP PHOTO



THE email went out to legal cannabis growers around Washington state. Another of their colleagues had gone under.

"Liquidation sale," it said. Attached was a spreadsheet of items for sale: LED grow lights for \$500 apiece. Rotary evaporators for hash oil, \$10,000.

Across the Columbia River in Oregon, where the state's top marijuana regulator recently warned of an "existential crisis" in the industry, it's an open secret some licensed growers have funneled product to the out-of-state black market just to stay afloat.

California's "Apple store of weed," MedMen, is teetering with millions in unpaid bills, while the Canadian cannabis company Curaleaf has shuttered cultivation operations in California, Oregon and Colorado.

Along the West Coast, producers face what many call the failed economics of legal pot. There is vast supply, thanks to great growing conditions and a wealth of expertise, but any surplus remains trapped within each state's borders due to the federal ban on marijuana. Prices have plunged and producers have struggled.

"I'm at rock bottom," said Jeremy Moberg, who owns CannaSol Farms in Washington and, like many growers, complains that the state's 37% cannabis tax leaves virtually no profit margin.

No one expects Congress to help out by legalizing the drug nationwide. Instead, some are pinning their hopes, however faint, on President Joe Biden's administration approving marijuana trade among states that have regulated it.

That would allow the West Coast — with its favorable climate and cheap, clean hydropower for indoor growing — to supply the rest of the country, they argue.

In Senate testimony last month, Attorney General Merrick Garland said the Justice Department will soon announce a new marijuana policy. Drug policy experts say they do not expect it to go as far as permitting interstate commerce.

Nevertheless, lawmakers in Washington last week approved

a "trigger bill" — modeled after ones already passed in Oregon and California — that will allow the governor to enter into interstate cannabis agreements should the feds allow it.

Twenty-one states have now legalized the recreational use of cannabis by adults.

How they have set up their markets has implications for how they might fare if their growers and processors are allowed to sell pot in other states.

Washington and Colorado were the first states to legalize recreational marijuana in 2012. Many of the early regulations Washington adopted to keep the Justice Department at bay — including restrictions on the size of growing facilities and banning out-of-state investment — remain.

That has helped some smaller growers thrive. But it would hamstring those who hope to compete in an interstate marketplace alongside larger, more efficient producers from Oregon or California, who face fewer restrictions.

In Oregon, where sales began in 2015, large growers have achieved some economy of scale that could give them a leg up in a broader market — but in the meantime, the state's oversupply is considered the nation's worst.

"Cannabis in Oregon is like corn in Iowa," said TJ Sheehy, an analyst for Oregon's cannabis agency. "If you put a box around Iowa and said you can only grow corn in Iowa to sell to Iowans, you'd have exactly the same dynamic."

The oversupply has been terrific for cannabis consumers.

When legalization started in Oregon in 2015, a pound of cannabis might have gone for \$3,000 wholesale; today, it might be \$100 to \$150, said Isaac Foster, co-founder of Portland Cannabis Market, a wholesale distributor.

In Washington, which has some of the highest cannabis taxes in the country, the prices consumers pay are still cheaper than illicit weed. The state is raking in half a billion dollars a year in taxes.

But with such cheap prices, keeping the industry sustainable is a challenge.

With the spring planting season arriving, Moberg, of CannaSol Farms, says he already has three shipping containers of unsold

weed, including 75% of what he produced last season.

East Fork Cultivars, one of Oregon's first licensed growers, has thousands of pounds stashed, said co-founder Nathan Howard.

"We hope we can sell most of it to keep the lights on," Howard said.

Oregon regulators know producers are suffering, but say they'll be in a good position should the federal government allow interstate commerce.

Legal growers generally want to supply the legal market, rather than risk their businesses and freedom if they get caught selling out the back door. But oversupply and cheap wholesale prices have made it tough for some to survive on legal sales alone.

"They were either going to die or get creative," said Tanner Mariani, head of sales for the Portland Cannabis Market. "And a lot of people chose to get creative and ... found a way to get it from this market into the other side and then out of the state."

Authorities have also contended with illegal farms operating under the guise of legality — notably in Oregon, where many have been financed by foreign cartels.

In California, about two-thirds of communities don't allow legal marijuana activity, which helps the illicit market flourish.

A post-pandemic economy ushered in layoffs in the already-strained legal sector. A glut pushed wholesale prices to fire-sale levels. As in Oregon, it's no secret some growers have fed the black market.

An analysis by cannabis investor Aaron Edelheit determined California's legal market lost nearly one-quarter of its total growing area after the start of 2022 — "a wipeout," he called it.

With so many California producers going out of business, wholesale prices have started to recover. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

SJM celebrates its partnership of 2023 Michelin Guide Hong Kong and Macau



For this 15th edition on April 26 at Grand Lisboa Macau, SJM Resorts will host the first Michelin Guide Ceremony Gala Dinner

since the pandemic. Numerous actors will be present during the event, including many international and local Michelin Star-

red chefs such as Julien Tongourian and Ken Chan, but also industry experts, media and food enthusiasts from around the region.

An 8-course menu has been specially designed for the Gala Dinner, bringing together the seven chefs who received honors in the Michelin Guide 2022 edition.

Hosting this ceremony, SJM affirms its desire to reinforce its leadership role in gastronomy, but also to develop Macau's culinary culture encouraging innovation and co-creation with international chefs.

The SJM goal is to remind why UNESCO designed Macau as a 'Creative City of Gastronomy'.

Galaxy celebrates its resort offering in Portuguese capital



Local resort and casino operator Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) will showcase its tourism offering in Lisbon, Portugal in a Macau-government-held marketing event.

To reclaim tourism activities

after relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is organizing a familiarization program at the Plaza of Commerce in the Portuguese capital.

The program, which comprises

tourism exhibitions and light-mapping shows, was officially launched last night (Macau time).

"Taking place from 15-22 April, 2023, this spectacular event aims to captivate European travel enthusiasts with the wonders of Macau. Galaxy Macau is proud to join the delegation, positioning its one-stop luxury resort experience as Asia's most exciting destination for leisure, entertainment, dining, events and conferences," the resort operator said in a statement.

According to GEG, the exhibition features themed areas and booths made from repurposed cargo containers, adorned with lights and colorful accents "to create a rainbow effect: symbolizing the resort's multi-faceted approach to luxury."

AP PHOTO



ANIMALS

CHINESE PANDA ON LONG-TERM LOAN TO THAILAND DIES SUDDENLY

JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI, BANGKOK

A giant panda on long-term loan from China died in a zoo in northern Thailand yesterday, six months before she was due to return home, officials from the Chiang Mai Zoo said.

The cause of Lin Hui's death was not immediately clear but she appeared to have become ill Tuesday morning, and her nose was seen bleeding when she laid down after a meal, said Wutthichai Muangmun, the zoo director.

She was rushed into the care of a joint Thai-Chinese veterinarian team but her condition deteriorated and she died early yesterday morning, he said.

Tewarat Vejmanat, a veterinarian who spoke at a news conference broadcast live on the zoo's Facebook page, said the panda, who had a health check every day, was already at an advanced age at 21, and there had been no sign of illness or any difference in her behavior before she became sick.

"China is saddened by the death of the giant panda Lin Hui," Wang Wenbin, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson, said in Beijing.

Wang said that after China learned about the panda's illness it "immediately organized experts to guide the Thai side to carry out rescue work through video link, but unfortunately did not save her life." He added that the Chinese authorities would soon set up a team of experts to carry out a joint investigation into the cause of death.

Lin Hui's male mate, Chuang Chuang, who was kept with her at the Chiang Mai Zoo, died there in 2019 at the age of 19. The couple arrived in Chiang Mai in 2003 on a 10-year loan that was later extended for another 10 years.

While the loan was ostensibly for research and conservation purposes, it was generally regarded as an act of friendship by China, which has sent pandas to many countries in what is regarded as a striking example of soft power diplomacy.

When Chuang Chuang died in 2019, Thailand's then-Environment Minister Varawut Silpa-archa said the country had to pay \$500,000 to the Chinese government in compensation. It was later reported that heart failure was the cause of his death.

Zoo director Wutthi-

chai said the zoo has a 15-million-baht (\$435,000) insurance policy on Lin Hui, who was due to be returned to China this October.

Lin Hui and Chuang Chuang had a daughter, Lin Ping, in 2009 through artificial insemination. A scheme to encourage them to mate naturally by showing them videos of pandas having sex made headlines in 2007. Lin Ping was sent to China in 2013 in what was initially said to be a one-year visit for her to find a mate, but has remained there.

The life expectancy of a giant panda in the wild is about 15 years, but in captivity they have lived to be as old as 38. Decades of conservation efforts in the wild and study in captivity saved the giant panda species from extinction, increasing its population from fewer than 1,000 at one time to more than 1,800 in the wild and captivity.

A Chinese influencer living in Thailand who identified herself as Shanshan visited the zoo Tuesday morning and posted several videos of Lin Hui on the Chinese social media platform Douyin. One of them showed her nose, which appeared bloody, and a red spot could be seen on her

neck. In another clip, she was lying down while licking her nose, and there were red stain trails on a concrete slab beneath her head. Screenshots from the videos were widely shared by Thai social media users.

"This is when we just got here, she was lying on her side. Then I saw her nose was bleeding," she commented in one of the clips. "She looked like she had nausea. We were not sure."

Screenshots from the videos were widely shared by Thai social media users.

The cause of Lin Hui's death will take time before it can be determined, Wutthichai said, and how and when that would be revealed will be entirely up to China. Under an agreement between the zoo and the Chinese government's panda conservation project, an autopsy cannot be performed until a Chinese expert is present.

Some Thai internet users speculated that air pollution in northern Thailand, which in recent weeks has spiked to levels considered dangerous to human health, contributed to Lin Hui's death. The zoo staff, however, said that was unlikely, as Lin Hui lived in a closed space in an area of the zoo considered to have "the cleanest air." MDT/AP

DEFENSE

BEIJING REVEALS NEW DETAILS OF RAYTHEON, LOCKHEED SANCTIONS

CHINA revealed new details of sanctions it previously announced against two U.S. weapons manufacturers Tuesday, including a ban on Chinese companies doing business with them.

China imposed trade and investment sanctions in February on Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Technologies Corp.'s Raytheon Missiles & Defense for supplying weapons to Taiwan, the self-governed island claimed by China.

China's Ministry of Commerce said in a statement late Tuesday that the sanctions include a ban on exports and imports by the two companies from and to China "to prevent Chinese products from being used in their military business."

It added that Chinese companies should "strengthen their due diligence and compliance system construction to verify transaction information" and should not knowingly conduct business with the two companies while importing, exporting or transporting products.

It wasn't clear what immediate impact the penalties might have, but the restrictions on imports and exports could hurt the two companies. The United States bars most sales of weapons-related technology to China, but some military contractors also have civilian businesses in aerospace and other markets.

Last September, Raytheon Missiles and Defense was awarded a \$412 million contract to upgrade Taiwanese military radar as part of a \$1.1 billion package of U.S. arms sales to the island.

Taiwan buys the majority of its weapons from the U.S., which is its biggest unofficial ally. In recent years, China has frequently sent fighter jets and warships toward the island, surrounding it at different times in a campaign of military pressure and intimidation.

The sanctions also prohibit the senior executives of both companies from traveling to China or working there. They listed Lockheed Martin CEO James Donald Taiclet, COO Frank Andrew St. John and CFO Jesus Malave, and President Wesley D. Kremer and Vice Presidents Agnes Soeder and Chander Nijhon from Raytheon Missiles & Defense. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



ACCIDENTS

Beijing hospital fire deaths rise to 29, mostly patients

THE death toll from a fire at a Beijing hospital rose to 29, including 26 patients, authorities said yesterday, and a dozen people had been detained including the hospital's head and her deputy.

The fire broke out at the private Changfeng Hospital on Tuesday afternoon and forced dozens of people to evacuate. Some who were trapped had to escape from windows using bedsheets tied together.

A nurse, a medical assistant and a family member also died in the incident, said Li Zongrong, deputy head of Fengtai district.

The cause of the fire is under investigation but officials say they believe it originated from welding sparks from work being done in the hospital's inpatient wing. Among the 12 people who were detained was the head of the construction crew.

A total of 39 people are being treated for injuries, three of them in critical condition, officials said. Rescue crews and medical staff from around the city were mobilized, with squads plucking some of the 142 people who were evacuated from air conditioning units on the building's exterior.

Safety rules "are frequently ignored in China," observers say, but accidents on the level of the Changfeng fire are treated with a much higher level of scrutiny. Construction accidents sometimes result from corners being cut on work hou-

AP PHOTO



People walk by a barricaded building following a fire breaking out at a hospital in Beijing, yesterday

rs and safety conditions, while "local officials are bribed to ignore violations," according to

media reports. The central government has pledged stronger safety mea-

sures since an explosion in 2015 at a chemical warehouse in the northern port city of

Tianjin killed 173 people, most of them firefighters and police officers. MDT/AP

DEFENSE

Military chief vows to bolster ties with Russia



In this handout photo released by Russian Defense Ministry Press Service, Defense Minister Gen. Li Shangfu speaks to academy teachers as Chief of the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation Col. Gen. Vladimir Zarudnitsky stands left of him during a visit to a military academy in Moscow

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,
MOSCOW

THE Chinese defense chief vowed this week to take military cooperation with Moscow to a new level, a statement that reflects increasingly close Russia-China ties amid the fighting in Ukraine.

Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Li Shangfu held talks with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu after attending a meeting Sunday with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin.

"The armed forces of China and Russia will implement the agreements reached by the heads of state and expand military cooperation, military-technical ties and arms trade," Li said in opening remarks at Tuesday's meeting with Shoigu. "We will certainly take them to a new level."

Li's trip follows last month's three-day state visit to the Russian capital by Chinese leader Xi Jinping, reflecting China's strengthening engagement with Russia. Moscow and Beijing have closely aligned their policies in attempt to reshape the world order to diminish the influence of the United States and its Western allies.

China has refused to criticize Russia's actions in Ukraine and blamed the U.S. and NATO for provoking Moscow. Xi's visit to Moscow gave a strong political boost to Putin, sending a message to Western leaders that their efforts to isolate Russia have fallen short.

After the talks, Putin and Xi issued joint declarations pledging to further bolster their "strategic cooperation," develop cooperation

in energy, high-tech industries and other spheres and expand the use of their currencies in mutual trade to reduce dependence on the West.

After more than a year of fighting in Ukraine and bruising Western sanctions, Russia's dependence on China has increased significantly. Facing Western restrictions on its oil, gas and other exports, Russia has shifted its energy flows to China and sharply expanded other exports, resulting in a 30% hike in bilateral trade.

Last month, Putin and Xi also vowed to further develop military cooperation between Moscow and Beijing and conduct more joint sea and air patrols. However, there was no mention of any prospective Chinese weapons supplies to Russia that the U.S. and other Western allies feared, and the Chinese foreign minister reaffirmed Friday that Beijing wouldn't sell weapons to either side in the conflict in Ukraine. MDT/AP

HAWAII

Fatal shooting shows dangers of popular cockfights

JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER,
HONOLULU

POLICE in Hawaii have vowed to step up illegal gambling enforcement after one of the most serious shootings in state history called attention to the dangers that come with cockfighting, which has deep roots in the islands and remains popular despite being illegal.

The shooting early Saturday in a rural community more than 30 miles from downtown Honolulu left a man and woman dead and three others with gunshot wounds. The Honolulu medical examiner's office as of yesterday had yet to release the names of the dead — both of whom were taken in private cars to a hospital — and police had yet to make any arrests but said they were searching for two suspects.

Authorities say investigating cockfights is difficult in part because they are highly organized events on private property and their illegal nature and the large amount of money wagered means they often have links to organized crime. The clandestine fights happen all over Hawaii, usually on large, remote properties shrouded by brush and accessible only by dirt roads, like in Waianae, where the weekend shooting took place.

"Neighbors are also reluctant to get involved for fear of retaliation," Honolulu Police Chief Joe Logan said in a statement.



Despite being illegal in Hawaii since 1884, the fights between roosters with blades affixed to their legs have remained a part of life in the islands, especially among the state's large population of Filipinos, who are credited with bringing the practice from the Philippines, where it was introduced by Spaniards. Many cockfighting fans claim the blood sport is part of local Hawaii culture.

"People that are attendees are local, locally based, and have been doing it for generations," said former Maui police chief Gary Yabuta, now executive director of the Hawaii High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area. "A saying among chicken fighters is, 'It's in my blood.'"

But Saturday's shooting, which police say started with an argument at the end of a cockfight, has some saying enough is enough and cultural claims should no longer be used to excuse the illegal fights that happen every weekend.

"People say, 'I grew up with it. It's a cultural thing. Papa had chickens ... we went to chicken fights, that's how we made our money,'" said Patty Kahanamoku-Teruya,

chair of the neighborhood board in the area of the shooting. "It's not a cultural right. It's illegal. Period."

Yabuta said his program, which helps local and federal law enforcement collaborate in the fight against illegal drugs, is concerned about cockfighting because it's wrapped up in organized crime and has links to drug-trafficking. He notes that the fights often attract hundreds of people placing bets totaling more than \$100,000.

"It's something that is so huge and so popular in Hawaii that it really can't be controlled by law enforcement," he said.

The popularity of cockfighting extends far beyond Hawaii and is truly a global industry, said Wayne Pabelle, president of Animal Wellness Action.

"It was started by the Romans and the Greeks 3,000 years ago. And it spread all over the world with colonialism," he said.

After arriving in Hawaii, the sport has flourished in many areas, including urban parts of the islands, such as Kalihi, where many fighting birds are raised, said state Rep. Sonny Ganaden.

Crowing roosters are "part of the sights and sounds of Kalihi," he said of the neighborhood that's home to many Filipinos and Pacific Islanders.

"Kids will grab a chicken and get them to fight each other," he said.

"Kids will grab a chicken and get them to fight each other," he said.

"Kids will grab a chicken and get them to fight each other," he said.

Cockfighting has been illegal in all 50 states, but hadn't been illegal in U.S. territories until 2019, when a law signed by former President Donald Trump banning all animal fighting went into effect.

The argument that cockfighting is a cultural practice has been used in lawsuits challenging the ban, but with little success. The U.S. Supreme Court turned away a challenge to the federal law brought by individuals and organizations that argued Congress exceeded its power in applying the ban to Puerto Rico.

Some in Hawaii worry that violence linked to cockfighting will grow more volatile in a state that previously had largely escaped the scourge of gun violence seen elsewhere in the U.S.

Saturday's shooting was among the worst since 1997, when seven workers were shot and killed at a Xerox Corp. warehouse. Other shootings that grabbed headlines were a man who killed a taxi driver and a couple taking photos at a Honolulu scenic lookout in 2006 and a highway shooting spree that left one woman dead and two others injured in 2011.

Chris Marvin, a Hawaii resident with Everytown for Gun Safety, said these types of shootings will increase with the proliferation of guns in the islands.

Data from the Hawaii attorney general's office says the number of number of firearms registered annually in Hawaii climbed 319% from 2000 through 2021.

"We are going to start to replicate the trends that we've seen in the mainland," Marvin said. "And in the rest of the country, there is more than one mass shooting per day. We don't hear about all of them." **MDT/AP**

NORTH KOREA

Kim says first spy satellite is ready for launch

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country has built its first-ever military spy satellite and that he planned to launch it on an undisclosed date, state media reported yesterday.

Previous missile and rocket tests have demonstrated that North Korea can send satellites into space, but many experts question whether it has cameras sophisticated enough to use for spying from a satellite because only low-resolution images were released after past test launches.

During his visit to the country's aerospace agency Tuesday, Kim said that having an operational military



reconnaissance satellite is crucial for North Korea to effectively use its nuclear-capable missiles. Kim cited what he described as serious security threats posed by "the most hostile rhetoric and explicit action" by

the United States and South Korea this year, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. He likely hopes to pressure his rivals on issues including joint military drills and international economic sanctions

on North Korea.

Kim said "the military reconnaissance satellite No. 1" had already been built and ordered officials to speed up preparations for its launch. He said North Korea must launch several satellites to establish an intelligence-gathering capability, KCNA said.

North Korea has said its ongoing run of weapons tests, including its first test-launch of a solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile designed to strike the U.S. mainland last week, are a response to joint military exercises between the United States and its regional allies South Korea and Japan. North Korea has car-

ried out about 100 missile tests since the start of last year, including about 30 this year.

The U.S. and South Korean militaries have been expanding combined drills in response to North Korea's growing nuclear threats. This week, the allies launched a 12-day aerial exercise involving some 110 warplanes and staged a one-day naval missile defense exercise with Japan.

Spy satellites are among an array of major weapons systems that Kim publicly vowed to develop during a major ruling Workers' Party conference in January 2021. Kim also pledged to build solid-propellant ICBMs,

nuclear-powered submarines, hypersonic missiles and multi-warhead missiles. North Korea has since conducted tests of such weapons, but observers say those high-tech weapons are still in development stages.

After North Korea launched a test satellite last December, it publicized black-and-white photos showing a space view of South Korean cities.

Kim's sister and senior North Korean official Kim Yo Jong said the test satellite carried a commercial camera because there was no reason to use an expensive, high-resolution camera for a single-shot test.

Kim Jong Un said one of the objectives for its spy satellite is acquiring an ability to "use pre-emptive military force when the situation demands." **MDT/AP**



Attorneys for Dominion Voting Systems speak at a news conference outside New Castle County Courthouse in Wilmington, Del., after the defamation lawsuit by Dominion Voting Systems against Fox News was settled

USA

Fox, Dominion reach \$787M settlement over election claims

DAVID BAUDER, RANDALL CHASE & GEOFF MULVIHILL, WILMINGTON (DEL.)

FOX News agreed yesterday [Macau time] to pay Dominion Voting Systems nearly \$800 million to avert a trial in the voting machine company's lawsuit that would have exposed how the network promoted lies about the 2020 presidential election.

The stunning settlement emerged just as opening statements were supposed to begin, abruptly ending a case that had embarrassed Fox News over several months and raised the possibility that network founder Rupert Murdoch and stars such as Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity would have to testify publicly.

"The truth matters. Lies have consequences," Dominion lawyer Justin Nelson told reporters outside a Delaware courthouse after Superior Court Judge Eric Davis announced the deal.

Outside of the \$787.5 million promised to Colorado-based Dominion, it was unclear what other consequences Fox would face. Fox acknowledged in a statement "the court's rulings finding certain claims about Dominion to be false," but no apology was offered.

"We are hopeful that our decision to resolve this dispute with Dominion amicably, instead of the acrimony of a divisive trial, allows the country to move forward from these issues," Fox

said. Its lawyers and representatives offered no other comment or details about the settlement.

Asked by a reporter whether there was "anything to this other than money," Dominion CEO John Poulos did not answer.

The deal is a significant amount of money even for a company the size of Fox. It represents about one-quarter of the \$2.96 billion the company reported earning last year before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization — a figure often used to approximate a company's cash flow.

The settlement also follows a \$965 million judgment issued last year against Alex Jones by a Connecticut jury for spreading false conspiracy theories about the Sandy Hook school massacre.

Coupled with other lawsuits in the pipeline, the agreement shows there is a real financial risk for conservative media that traffic in conspiracy theories. What remains unknown is how much of a deterrent this will be. Even as the Dominion case loomed this spring, Fox's Tucker Carlson aired his alternate theories about what happened at the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection.

Dominion had sued Fox for \$1.6 billion, arguing that the top-rated news outlet damaged the company's reputation by peddling phony conspiracy theories that claimed its equipment switched votes from former President Donald Trump to Democrat Joe Biden. Davis, in an earlier ruling,

said it was "CRYSTAL clear" that none of the allegations about Dominion aired on Fox by Trump allies were true.

Dominion set out to prove in the lawsuit that Fox acted with malice in airing allegations that it knew to be false, or with "reckless disregard" for the truth. It presented volumes of internal emails and text messages that showed Fox executives and personalities saying they knew the accusations were untrue, even as the falsehoods were aired on programs hosted by Maria Bartiromo, Lou Dobbs and Jeannine Pirro.

Records released as part of the lawsuit showed that Fox aired the claims in part to win back viewers who were fleeing the network after it correctly called hotly contested Arizona for Democrat Joe Biden on election night. One Fox Corp. vice president called them "MIND BLOWINGLY NUTS."

During a deposition, Murdoch testified that he believed the 2020 election was fair and had not been stolen from Trump.

"Fox knew the truth," Dominion argued in court papers. "It knew the allegations against Dominion were 'outlandish' and 'crazy' and 'ludicrous' and 'nuts.' Yet it used the power and influence of its platform to promote that false story."

Several First Amendment experts said Dominion's case was among the strongest they had ever seen. But there was real doubt about whether Dominion

would be able to prove to a jury that people in a decision-making capacity at Fox could be held responsible for the network's actions.

Dominion's Nelson called the settlement "a tremendous victory" and noted that there are six more lawsuits pending regarding election claims.

"We settled because it was about accountability," Nelson said in an interview. "Our goals were to make sure that there was accountability for the lies, and to try to make our client right. And we accomplished both goals."

It's hard to tell what the deal will mean financially for Dominion. The company would not provide its most recent earnings, saying the figures were not public.

In the weeks leading up to the trial, Davis significantly narrowed Fox's potential line of defense, including nixing the network's argument that it was merely airing newsworthy allegations. Newsworthiness is not a defense against defamation, he said.

In a March 31 ruling, he pointedly called out the network for airing falsehoods while noting that bogus election claims still persist more than two years after Trump lost his bid for reelection.

"The statements at issue were dramatically different than the truth," Davis said in that ruling. "In fact, although it cannot be attributed directly to Fox's statements, it is noteworthy that some Americans still believe the election was rigged."

In its defense, Fox said it was obligated to report on a president who claimed that he had been cheated out of reelection.

"We never reported those to be true," Fox lawyer Erin Murphy said. "All we ever did was provide viewers the true fact that these were allegations that were being made."

Dominion had sued both Fox News and its parent, Fox Corp, and said its business had been significantly damaged. Fox said the company grossly overestimated its losses, before agreeing to pay about half of what Dominion had asked for.

In a 1964 case involving The New York Times, the U.S. Supreme Court limited the ability of public figures to sue for defamation. The court ruled that plaintiffs needed to prove that news outlets published or aired false material with "actual malice" — knowing such material was false or acting with a "reckless disregard" for whether or not it was true.

That has provided news organizations with stout protection against libel judgments. Yet the nearly six-decade legal standard has come under attack by some conservatives in recent years, including Trump and Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida, who have argued for making it easier to win a libel case.

"The larger importance of the settlement ... is that the high level of protection for news media in a defamation case remains intact for now," said Doreen Weisnhauser, an instructor of media law at Northwestern University.

In documents released in recent months, Fox executives and anchors discussed how not to alienate the audience, many of whom believed Trump's claims of fraud despite no evidence to back them up. Fox's Tucker Carlson suggested a news reporter be fired for tweeting a fact check debunking the fraud claims.

Some of the exhibits were simply embarrassing, such as scornful behind-the-scenes opinions about Trump, whose supporters form the core of the network's viewers. Text exchanges revealed as part of the lawsuit show Carlson declaring, "I hate him passionately," and saying that "we are very, very close to being able to ignore Trump most nights."

Fox News announced the settlement on Neil Cavuto's afternoon news show. "It's a done deal," he said. "It's a settlement and for at least Fox, it appears to be over."

But Fox's legal problems may not be over. It still faces a defamation lawsuit from another voting technology company, Smartmatic. Its lawyer, Erik Connolly, said yesterday that "Dominion's litigation exposed some of the misconduct and damage caused by Fox's disinformation campaign. Smartmatic will expose the rest." MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Massachusetts Air National Guardsman Jack Teixeira (right) appears in U.S. District Court in Boston, last Friday

USA

JUDGE TO DECIDE WHETHER LEAK SUSPECT SHOULD REMAIN JAILED

ALANNA DURKIN RICHER & ERIC TUCKER, BOSTON

A Massachusetts Air National Guardsman charged with leaking highly classified military documents is due back in court today [Macau time] for a hearing to decide whether he should remain behind bars while he awaits trial.

Jack Teixeira, 21, was arrested by heavily armed tactical agents at his Massachusetts home last week and charged, under the Espionage Act, with unauthorized retention and transmission of classified national defense information. During his first court appearance in Boston's federal court Friday, a magistrate judge ordered him to remain in custody until Wednesday's detention hearing.

Teixeira is accused of sharing highly classified military documents about the Ukraine war and other top national security issues in a chat room on Discord, a social media platform that started as a hangout for gamers. The stunning breach exposing closely held intelligence has sparked international uproar and raised fresh questions

about America's ability to safeguard its secrets.

Air Force leaders said yesterday that they were investigating how a lone airman could access and distribute possibly hundreds of highly classified documents. The Air Force has also taken away the intelligence mission from the Air National Guard 102nd Intelligence Wing based in Cape Cod — where Teixeira served — pending further review.

Court records unsealed last week revealed how billing records the FBI obtained from Discord and interviews with social media comrades led authorities to Teixeira.

Investigators believe he was the leader of an online private chat group on Discord called Thug Shaker Central, which drew roughly two dozen enthusiasts who talked about their favorite types of guns and shared memes and jokes, some of them racist. The group also held a running discussion on wars that included talk of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

A Discord user familiar with Teixeira's online posts told the FBI that a username linked to Teixeira began

posting what appeared to be classified information roughly in December. The person provided the FBI with basic identifying information about Teixeira, including that he called himself "Jack," claimed to be part of the Air National Guard and appeared to live in Massachusetts, according to the affidavit.

The person also told the FBI that Teixeira switched from typing out documents in his possession to taking them home and photographing them because he "had become concerned that he may be discovered making the transcriptions of text in the workplace."

That's different from what posters have told The Associated Press and other media outlets, saying the user they would call "the O.G." started posting images of documents because he was annoyed other users weren't taking him seriously.

The affidavit alleges Teixeira was detected on April 6 — the day The New York Times first published a story about the breach of documents — searching for the word "leak" in a classified system. The FBI says that was reason to

believe Teixeira was trying to find information about the investigation into who was responsible for the leaks.

The classified documents range from briefing slides mapping out Ukrainian military positions to assessments of international support for Ukraine and other sensitive topics, including under what circumstances Russian President Vladimir Putin might use nuclear weapons.

Authorities have not revealed an alleged motive. But members of the Discord group described Teixeira as someone looking to show off, rather than being motivated by a desire to inform the public about U.S. military operations or to influence American policy.

The Biden administration has scrambled to contain the potential diplomatic and military fallout from the leaks since they were first reported, moving to reassure allies and assess the scope of damage. There has been no clear answer on how many documents were leaked. The Associated Press has viewed approximately 50 documents; some estimates put the total number in the hundreds. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1953 UN AND KOREA BEGIN PRISONER EXCHANGE



The Allies and Korea have exchanged sick and wounded prisoners of war at Panmunjon, just a mile away from continued fighting at the north-south border.

One hundred United Nations prisoners were freed today under Operation "Little Switch". They included 12 Britons, 30 Americans, 50 South Koreans, four Turks, one Canadian, one South African, one Greek and one Filipino.

Dressed in blue padded Chinese-style uniforms and Russian-style caps, they were taken to a reception centre at nearby Munsan for a warm welcome.

There, the Red Cross distributed cigarettes and toiletries.

The 12 Britons looked thin but happy to be freed. They shook hands with several generals including General Clark, the UN commander.

Seven of them agreed to talk to the waiting press. It emerged the Chinese had given them new uniforms and fed them well a few days before their liberation.

Last night they were treated to a special farewell banquet at Kaesong, on the north-south border.

Corporal William Greenaway of the Gloucestershire Regiment, captured two years ago, said: "I feel like I'm entering a new world. It feels very good indeed to be back."

On the whole the British and Americans had few complaints about their treatment, although conditions in the prison camps were described as "pretty grim".

But the South Koreans said they were treated like cattle, given "terrible" food and forced to attend indoctrination sessions.

Also today, 400 North Koreans and 100 Chinese prisoners arrived at Munsan and were transferred by ambulance to be sent back to North Korea at Panmunjon.

Further prisoner exchanges will take place over the next few days.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Soviet Union and the US had split Korea along the 38th parallel after Japan's defeat in World War II.

Following a series of border skirmishes, the Communist North invaded the South in June 1950 and a United Nations force under General MacArthur drove the invaders back to the Chinese border.

China entered the war and together with the North Koreans occupied Seoul in 1951. The UN forces counterattacked and by 1953, after an armistice, retook all territory south of the 38th parallel.

The Korean War ended with the signing of the armistice on 27 July to restore the 38th parallel as a border.

In August, prisoners of war were exchanged in Operation Big Switch — 77,000 Communists for 12,700 UN men, of whom 3,597 were Americans. But a peace deal has never been reached. American troops remain stationed in the demilitarized zone on and around the 38th parallel separating North and South Korea.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You will be well looked upon due to your compassionate and giving nature. Those who have been too demanding should be put in their place or out to pasture.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You need to clear up some important personal documents before the end of the year. Don't hold yourself back because you think you're too old.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You're in the mood to party. Avoid any confrontations with colleagues. Romantic opportunities are evident. Your charm will attract someone special.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Reevaluate your motives. You may have been too nice to a friend who just wanted to take advantage of you. Be sure you get accurate information.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Spend time getting to know each other. You must be careful not to trust just anyone. Your reputation will be affected. You may experience financial loss if you don't use good judgment.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Unexpected bills may set you back. Be discreet about your personal life or whereabouts. Be mysterious. It might be best to keep your ideas to yourself today.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

The information that you gain can be used in every aspect of your life. Career changes may not be your choice right now, but in the long run they will be to your advantage.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Make changes that will enhance your appearance. You will meet exciting new people through interest groups or functions that you attend with your children.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Don't let your mate stop you from attending an event that could be most important. Use your creative abilities to come up with new ideas and directions.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You may find that your documents are not in order. You need to lie back and enjoy a little rest. Don't push your opinions on others today or you may find yourself in the doghouse.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

If you have to deal with large institutions, be careful not to make waves. You may want to make changes in your home environment. You have worked hard and the payback is now.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Try not to be too lavish with your lover. You have worked hard and the payback is now. Don't give up what you have until you can be certain just what it is you're getting.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

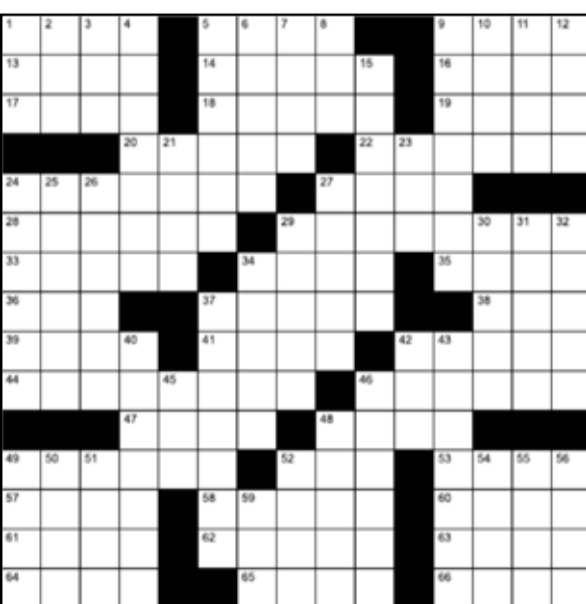
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	14	20	cloudy
Changchun	10	13	cloudy
Chengdu	19	22	rain
Chongqing	20	29	rain
Fuzhou	21	31	rain
Guangzhou	22	28	rain
Guiyang	20	31	rain
Haikou	26	36	cloudy
Hangzhou	18	23	overcast
Harbin	6	11	cloudy
Hefei	16	31	fine
Nanjing	17	30	cloudy
Shanghai	16	24	overcast
Taipei	21	26	rain
Wuhan	18	31	fine
Hong Kong	25	27	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	4	17	overcast
Frankfurt	7	12	rain
Paris	4	14	overcast
London	7	16	overcast
New York	11	18	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Jump; 5- Jester; 9- Pres., militarily; 13- Prod; 14- Together; 16- Some time ago; 17- Stuff; 18- Tenuous substances; 19- Russian river; 20- Mar. honoree; 22- Wedgellike; 24- Jonathan Swift-like; 27- Support for a broken limb; 28- Chase; 29- Person of extraordinary powers; 33- Having wings; 34- Used to be; 35- It's used to walk the dog; 36- Melancholic; 37- Cleave in two; 38- Lux. neighbor; 39- Appearance; 41- Classic railroad name; 42- Urges; 44- Conspicuous; 46- Ultimatum words; 47- License plates; 48- Extended family unit; 49- Next after the third; 52- Move about recklessly; 53- Buenos ___; 57- Swenson of "Benson"; 58- ___ firma; 60- Monty Python's Eric; 61- Slant; 62- Move to and fro; 63- ___ bene; 64- Eye sore; 65- Blunted blade; 66- Glimpse;

DOWN 1- Pull laboriously; 2- It may come before long; 3- Ottoman official; 4- Continue steadily; 5- Talkative person; 6- Stern with a bow; 7- The majority of; 8- Chemical ending; 9- Nation; 10- Concerning; 11- Final Four org.; 12- Red or white, in the blood; 15- One on the run; 21- Test choice; 23- Employ, utilise; 24- Cramps, e.g.; 25- Cafe order; 26- Merchant; 27- Bend; 29- Baseball commissioner Bud; 30- Influential person; 31- Australia's ___ Rock; 32- Scandinavian; 34- Tips off; 37- Elevations; 40- River pollutant; 42- Madrid Mrs.; 43- Until; 45- Krazy ___; 46- Methuselah's claim to fame; 48- Chili con ___; 49- Seizures; 50- Put a lid ___!; 51- Unattractive; 52- Clench; 54- Image of a deity; 55- Violist's clef; 56- Thin stratum; 59- Ram's mate;



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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Jade Garden
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Nova Park
HKD 9,900,000 2 beds 2 bath

Manhattan
HKD 18,800/mth 4 bed 2 bath

AD

AP PHOTO



In this two picture combo Hindu priest Swami Ram Das ,48, (left) and Muslim community leader Syed Mohammad Munir Abidi, 68

RELIGION

ONE CITY, TWO PEOPLE — AND INDIA'S WIDENING RELIGIOUS DIVIDE

SHEIKH SAALIQ AYODHYA

SYED Mohammad Munir Abidi says India is a changed country, one he doesn't recognize anymore.

It's a country, the 68-year-old says, where Muslims are ignored, where rising attacks against them are encouraged, and where an emboldened Hindu majoritarian government is seizing its chance to put the minority community in its place.

Swami Ram Das thinks otherwise, echoing a belief system central to Hindu nationalism.

The 48-year-old Hindu priest says India is on a quest to redeem its religious past and that the country is fundamentally a Hindu nation where minorities, especially Muslims, must subscribe to Hindu primacy.

Abidi and Das are two ordinary citizens living in one city in a country of more than 1.4 billion people that is on the cusp of becoming the world's most populated nation. Together they embody the opposing sides of a deeply entrenched religious divide that presents India with one of its biggest challenges: to safeguard freedoms for its Muslim minority at a time when a rising tide of Hindu nationalism is eroding the country's secular underpinnings.

India will have an estimated 1.4286 billion people against China's 1.4257 billion by mid-2023, according to United Nations projections. It is home to some 200 million Muslims who make up the predominantly Hindu country's largest minority group. They are scattered across almost every part of India, where a systemic anti-

-Muslim fury has descended since Prime Minister Narendra Modi first assumed power in 2014.

Though India's communal fractures date back to its bloody partition in 1947, most Indians trace the roots of the latest religious fault lines to a small temple city in northern India, where the Hindu nationalist movement was galvanized in 1992 after Hindu mobs demolished a historic mosque to make way for a temple.

Since then, the city of Ayodhya has, in many ways, become a religious microcosm of India, where a diverse, multicultural past has gradually been overrun by ruptured relationships between Hindus and Muslims.

It's also a city Abidi and Das call home.

They have meandered through its narrow, winding streets overrun by temple monkeys and Hindu monks who ask passersby for alms in exchange for blessings. They have walked past its brimming bazaars where miniature idols of Ram are sold to pilgrims visiting from India's vast hinterlands. They have begun their mornings with calls for prayers spilling out of mosque loudspeakers and Vedic hymns chant in the temples.

Beyond these shared experiences lie stark differences.

For Das, a broad-shouldered man with a stout frame, Ayodhya is the birthplace of Ram, Hinduism's most revered deity. The city also hosts one of Hinduism's most sacred sites — Ram's grand temple — which will open to pil-

grims next year. It is imperative that the city clings to its Hindu character, Das says.

"Our forefathers have fought for this temple and sacrificed lives for it. Today their dream is getting fulfilled," he says, circled by a group of devotees.

The temple is being constructed where the 16th-century Babri mosque was demolished by Hindu hardliners who claim Muslim rulers built it at the exact spot where Ram was born. When it was razed on Dec. 6, 1992, Das was there, watching a frenzied Hindu mob climb its rounded domes and tear it down with pickaxes and crowbars.

Ayodhya has become a religious microcosm of India, where a multicultural past has been overrun by conflict between Hindus and Muslims. It's also the city Abidi and Das call home

"There was so much excitement to destroy that disgraced structure that no one cared about the falling debris," he recounts, prompting his disciples to chant "Jai Sri Ram," or "Hail Lord Ram," a slogan that has become a battle cry for Hindu nationalists.

The 30-year campaign to build the temple saw subsequent religious violence and a bitter legal battle over the site that Hindus

won in 2019. Muslims were given alternate land on the city outskirts to build a new mosque. A year later, Modi attended the temple's groundbreaking ceremony.

For Abidi, a tall man in clothes that hang off his frame, it marked a sad chapter for India's Muslims.

"The hearts of Muslims are broken. No Muslim opposes the construction of Ram temple, but such unilateral changes are impacting India's culture," he says, arguing the former mosque was essential to the city's Muslim identity.

As for his city, it has already gone through major changes.

For decades Ayodhya city was part of Uttar Pradesh state's Faizabad district. But in 2018, authorities changed the entire district's name from Faizabad to Ayodhya, a move that reflected the Modi government's pattern of replacing prominent Muslim geographic names with Hindu ones.

For Abidi it indicates a worrying trend: "To erase everything that remotely reflects Muslim culture."

Today, Ayodhya is taken over by frenetic construction of hotels, bringing in tens of thousands of Hindu pilgrims. Construction workers are busy making way for wider highways. All that is expected to boost the city's economy. But at what cost, Abidi reckons.

"The relationship Hindus and Muslims used to share is barely visible anymore," he says.

India's religious fault lines have become pronounced under

Modi. Scores of Muslims have been lynched by Hindu mobs over allegations of eating beef or smuggling cow, an animal considered holy to Hindus. Muslim businesses have been boycotted, their localities have been bulldozed and places of worship set on fire. Sometimes open calls have been made for their genocide.

Critics say Modi's conspicuous silence over such attacks has emboldened some of his most extreme supporters and enabled more hate speech against Muslims.

Muslims have been falsely accused of manipulating Hindu women into marriages and producing more children to establish domination. The government data shows otherwise: India's religious composition has been largely stable since 1947 and the fertility rate of Muslims has declined from 4.4 in 1992 to 2.3 in 2020.

"It is never going to be possible if you look at the data. We should forget and ignore this rhetoric," says Poonam Muttreja, director at the Population Foundation of India.

Muslims also have the lowest literacy among all major Indian religious communities. They have faced discrimination in employment and housing and hold a little less than 5% of seats in the parliament, their lowest share ever.

For Abidi, all this represents a grim future, one where India's secular character lives only in people's memories.

"Every Muslim in today's India finds himself unsafe," he says.

Das disagrees, arguing that Muslims are still free to pray and practice their religion. "But we will correct the mistakes made by your ancestors."

Das is referring to the Mughals who ruled India before the British made it their colony.

Scorn for Mughal rulers, who are not ancestors of Indian Muslims and only shared a similar faith, is distinctive to India's Hindu nationalists, who claim Mughals destroyed Hindu culture. It has prompted Hindu nationalists to seek ownership of hundreds of historic mosques they say are built over demolished temples.

In Ayodhya, longtime Muslim locals have made compromises to avoid tension with Hindu neighbors.

Last year when the Muharram procession overlapped with a Hindu festival, Muslim leaders changed the timing of their march to avoid confrontation. This year, Muslims in the city had to forgo selling and consumption of meat during another Hindu festival that coincided with the beginning days of Ramadan.

In such an atmosphere, Abidi says, only religious tolerance can stop India's communal fractures from worsening.

"India will only survive if we mend hearts and not break them," he says. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

No need for Champions League heroics for Madrid this time

JAMES ROBSON,
LONDON

CHELSEA 0, REAL MADRID 2

REAL Madrid's pursuit of a 15th European Cup marches on.

Chelsea, meanwhile, does not know when it will compete on this elite stage again.

Madrid's 2-0 win at Stamford Bridge yesterday completed a 4-0 aggregate victory and saw the Spanish giants advance to the Champions League semifinals for the 11th time in 13 seasons.

Rodrygo scored twice in the second half to derail a spirited Chelsea comeback that lasted the best part of an hour, but ultimately ended in a fourth straight loss under interim manager Frank Lampard.

Madrid can continue its quest for more glory in a competition it has won a record 14 times, with either Manchester City or Bayern Munich to come in the next round.

"We are ready to be there and we are ready to fight for the final," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said.

City was leading Bayern 3-0 after the first leg of the quarterfinals, setting up a likely rematch of last year's semifinals. Madrid scored twice in added time and another in extra time at the Bernabeu last season to win 6-5 on aggregate.

Madrid is already the only team to successfully defend the Champions League in its modern guise - winning it three consecutive times from 2016-18 - and is still in contention to win it back-to-back again.

It is a record that no other team can compete with - and with a forward line of Vinicius Junior, Karim Benzema and Rodrygo in such daunting form, the defending champions will take some stopping.

Chelsea's miserable campaign, however, is now destined to end without a trophy.



Real Madrid's Rodrygo, left, is fouled by Chelsea's goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga after scoring his side's second goal

Defeat left Lampard fielding questions about where the 2021 European champion goes after its troubled start to life under new owners Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital.

"People will make a lot about this season for Chelsea because we've had so much success," Lampard said. "The reality is this club is going to be back, but it will take work."

Chelsea sits 11th in the Premier League and 17 points off the top four despite spending around \$630 million on new signings.

A club that won the Champions League twice under former owner Roman Abramovich now appears certain to miss out on the competition next season.

With the battle for the top four increasing in intensity in the light of a resurgent Arsenal, an improving Manchester United and a Saudi-backed Newcastle, Chelsea's route back to European club soccer's elite competition may not be straight forward.

"In this moment to try to predict what happens

going forward, will it be good, will it be bad, I think is pretty pointless," Lampard said. "But I do think we can set the building blocks now of where we want to get to."

Chelsea's slide has been sudden.

Just two years ago, the London club won the Champions League for a second time in its history, under manager Thomas Tuchel.

The German manager, who was hugely popular among fans, was fired earlier in the season and replaced by Graham Potter, who suffered the same fate at the start of this month.

Lampard's arrival has not prompted an upturn in form, with his team scoring just once in its four losses since his appointment.

That lack of cutting edge was evident again in the quarterfinals second leg against Madrid as Chelsea missed a host of chances.

N'Golo Kante failed to convert clear openings in each half with the score still 0-0. And former Chelsea goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois beat away a close-range effort

from Marc Cucurella just before the break.

The home team was made to pay for those misses as Madrid struck twice on the break.

Ancelotti admitted his team "suffered a lot" before Rodrygo's goals.

The Brazil forward opened the scoring in the 58th minute when turning in Vinicius' cutback. He added a second in the 80th, this time after Federico Valverde's assist.

He might have had a hat trick if not for a first-half effort hitting the outside of the post.

The home fans headed for the exits in numbers once Rodrygo's second goal crossed the line.

But those who remained applauded at the end after being given some cause for encouragement as Chelsea pushed Madrid for a large part of the match.

"I think the fans appreciated the performance today," Lampard said. "Maybe they've had moments this season when they are not feeling like that, so we have to latch onto that."

MDT/AP



BENFICA MACAU ACADEMY
澳門賓菲加體育學校



FOOTBALL | BASKETBALL | DAILY TRAININGS

OPINION

China Daily
Li Jianmin, China Daily*

**RISE AGING
POPULATION DOES NOT
NECESSARILY SLOW
DOWN MODERNIZATION**

Chinese modernization is the modernization of over 1.4 billion people — a number higher than the combined population of all developed countries in the world. To achieve modernization of such a large population is unprecedented.

And the seventh national census in 2020 showed Chinese population above 60 had surpassed 260 million. The year 2022 witnessed negative population growth for the first time in nearly 61 years, decreasing by 850,000.

The rapidly rising aging population and the relatively slow but steady decline of the working-age population and workforce have increased the elderly people's dependency ratio. These trends will continue in the next two decades.

With the country yet to realize complete Chinese-style modernization and progress from a middle-income to a high-income country, the low fertility rate and increasing aging population pose a significant challenge to socioeconomic development and people's well-being.

However, it should be noted that despite challenges, aging doesn't necessarily become an obstacle to achieving modernization. With the help of some measures, senior citizens should and can enjoy fruits of modernization too.

In order to address this problem, reform in various social and economic sectors, particularly in the retirement system, should be deepened.

The advantage of the phased-in reform plan is that it can advance reforms without causing social upheaval. And the disadvantage is that it has to face the pressure on the pension payment system brought about by the declining workforce and rapidly growing elderly population in the short to medium term.

Talks about retirement system reform have been going on for a long time. But reforms were not implemented because of concerns over youth employment. Although the pandemic has had a huge impact on the economy and employment, it has not changed the labor supply and demand patterns. Multiple proactive policies are needed.

First, a flexible retirement age plan can now be implemented on a larger scale. In fact, flexible retirement age policies have already been introduced in some universities for teachers and technicians. Such policies can be expanded to allow any individual or group of professionals or skilled workers who are in demand and willing to postpone their retirement.

Second, favorable policies can be introduced for people who continue to work even after the legal retirement age by, for example, increasing their pension benefits according to the number of years they work beyond the retirement age.

And third, the income distribution system should be reformed in such a way that it helps increase the income of workers, especially of those in the middle- and lower-income brackets. Increased incomes will not only help them to lead a better life and take better care of their aged parents, but also better prepare for their post-retirement life.

In order to address the challenges of rapidly rising aging population, the authorities need a comprehensive and far-sighted policy, of which retirement system reform is just one part. More important strategic measures include:

- promoting innovations and expediting high-tech development, which are key to high-quality development and major drivers of economic growth.
- fully utilizing the market mechanism to promote the entrepreneurial spirit, and stimulate innovations and economic development.
- taking measures to encourage couples to have two, if not three, children in order to raise the birth rate, increase the workforce, reduce the old-age dependency ratio, and get some demographic dividends in the future.
- promoting higher education to tap the potential of new demographic dividend with well-educated population.
- improving the labor market system, making the labor market and working time more flexible, and eradicating gender and other forms of discrimination from the workplace and in the recruitment process.

And given that Chinese-style modernization is people-centered, China will continue to address its unbalanced and inadequate development, including improving welfare services and medical care for the elderly, and strive for common prosperity for all. [Abridged]

* The author is a professor of demography at the Institute of Population and Development, Nankai University.

NETFLIX TO BRING DOWN THE CURTAIN ON ITS DVD-BY-MAIL SERVICE

THE BUZZ

Netflix is poised to shut down the DVD-by-mail rental service that set the stage for its trailblazing video streaming service, ending an era that began a quarter century ago when delivering discs through the mail was considered a revolutionary concept.

The DVD service, which still delivers films and TV shows in the red-and-white envelopes that once served as Netflix's emblem, plans to mail its final discs on Sept. 29.

Netflix ended March with 232.5 million worldwide subscribers to its video streaming service, but it stopped disclosing how many people still pay for DVD-by-mail delivery years ago as that part of its business

steadily shrank. The DVD service generated \$145.7 million in revenue last year, which translated into somewhere between 1.1 million and 1.3 million subscribers, based on the average prices paid by customers.

The growth of Netflix's video streaming service has been slowing down over the past year, prompting management to put more emphasis on boosting profits. That focus may have also contributed to the decision to close an operation that was becoming a financial drain.

But the DVD service was once Netflix's biggest money maker.

Shortly before Netflix broke it off from video streaming in 2011, the DVD-by-mail service boasted more than 16 million subscribers.

AP FILE PHOTO



Members of US 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command stands next to a Patriot surface-to-air missile battery during the NATO multinational ground based air defense units exercise "Tobruq Legacy 2017"

US-MADE PATRIOT GUIDED MISSILE SYSTEMS ARRIVE IN UKRAINE

ADAM PEMBLE, KYIV

AMERICAN-made Patriot missiles have arrived in Ukraine, the country's defense minister said yesterday, providing Kyiv with a long-sought new shield against the Russian airstrikes that have devastated cities and civilian infrastructure.

The U.S. agreed in October to send the surface-to-air systems, which can target aircraft, cruise missiles and shorter-range ballistic missiles such as those that Russia has used to bombard residential areas and the Ukrainian power grid.

"Today, our beautiful Ukrainian sky becomes more secure," Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov said in a tweet.

The missiles are the latest contribution from Western allies, who have also pledged tanks, artillery and some types of fighter jets as Ukraine gears up for an expected counteroffensive.

Reznikov thanked the United States, Germany and the Netherlands, without saying how many missile systems had been delivered or when they arrived.

Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said late Tuesday that delivery of the systems would be a

landmark event, allowing Ukrainians to knock out Russian targets at a greater distance.

Germany's federal government website on Tuesday listed a Patriot system as among the military items delivered within the past week to Ukraine. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock confirmed that to lawmakers yesterday in Berlin.

Germany has also delivered the second of four medium-range IRIS-T air defense systems that it pledged last year, Baerbock said.

Reznikov said he first asked for Patriot systems when visiting the U.S. in August 2021, five months before Russia's full-scale invasion and seven years after Russia illegally annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula. He described possessing the system as "a dream" but said he was told in the U.S. at the time that it was "impossible."

Ukrainian personnel have been trained on the Patriot battery, which requires up to 90 troops to operate and maintain it.

"Our air defenders have mastered (the Patriot systems) as far as they could. And our partners have kept their word," Reznikov wrote.

Experts have cautioned that the system's effective-

ness is limited and that it may not significantly change the shape of the war, even though it will add to Ukraine's arsenal against its bigger enemy.

The Patriot was first deployed by the U.S. in the 1980s. The system costs approximately \$4 million per missile, and the launchers cost about \$10 million each, analysts say. At such a cost, it's not advantageous to use the Patriot to shoot down the smaller, cheaper Iranian drones that Russia has been buying and using in Ukraine.

In other developments yesterday, China denied recent reports that Chinese drones have been found on Ukraine battlefields. China has insisted that it will not help arm Russia, one of its key allies.

The Chinese Commerce Ministry said in a statement that Beijing maintains strict control over the export of drones in keeping with international standards preventing them from being used for nonpeaceful purposes.

China, which has repeatedly criticized the U.S. and other countries' support for Ukraine as "adding fuel to the fire" of the war, has an "objective and fair stance" and seeks peace, the statement said. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Russia and Venezuela reviewed some of their hundreds of bilateral agreements covering the financial, energy, agricultural and other sectors during discussions between their top diplomats and other high-level officials in the South American country. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Venezuelan counterpart Yván Gil held a joint press conference in Caracas hours after the former arrived in the country in the second stop of a tour of four Latin American nations. Both men vowed continued support for each other's country and condemned the economic sanctions Washington has imposed on them.

AP PHOTO



Poland has begun building a state-of-the-art electronic barrier at its land border with Russia's Kaliningrad exclave to monitor and counteract any illegal activity, the Polish interior minister said. The barrier, which will be equipped with 24-hour monitoring cameras and motion detectors, will run for 210 kilometers and is due to be completed in the fall. "We will have full monitoring of the border with Russia," Mariusz Kaminski told a news conference.

AP PHOTO



European Union closing in on approval for a plan to ramp up semiconductor production as it seeks to wean itself off reliance on Asia for the tiny computer chips that control everything from cars to washing machines. The European Parliament and the bloc's 27 member states struck an informal agreement for the 43 billion-euro Chips Act, which pools public and private funds and allows for state aid to kick-start massive investments for chipmaking facilities.