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**REPORT: GBA HAS SEEN A SURGE IN PATENT APPLICATIONS, WITH DOMINANCE IN OVERSEAS INVENTION PATENTS LICENSED NATIONWIDE**

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**LAWMAKER RON LAM CALLS FOR BETTER SUPERVISION ON CREDIT CARD BINDING**

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**G7 URGES CHINA TO PRESS RUSSIA TO END WAR IN UKRAINE, RESPECT TAIWAN'S STATUS, FAIR TRADE RULES**

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AP PHOTO



**Pakistan** Transgender activists said they plan to appeal to the highest court in the land an Islamic court's ruling that guts a law aimed at protecting their rights. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was passed by Parliament in 2018 to secure the fundamental rights of transgender Pakistanis. It ensures their access to legal gender recognition, among other rights.

AP PHOTO



**East Timor** Vote counting was underway in the country's parliamentary election yesterday with two former independence fighters considered for the post of prime minister. Two main political parties — the incumbent Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, or Fretilin, and opposition National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction, or CNRT — are believed to be in a close race for the 65-seat National Parliament. A total of 17 parties were running.

AP PHOTO

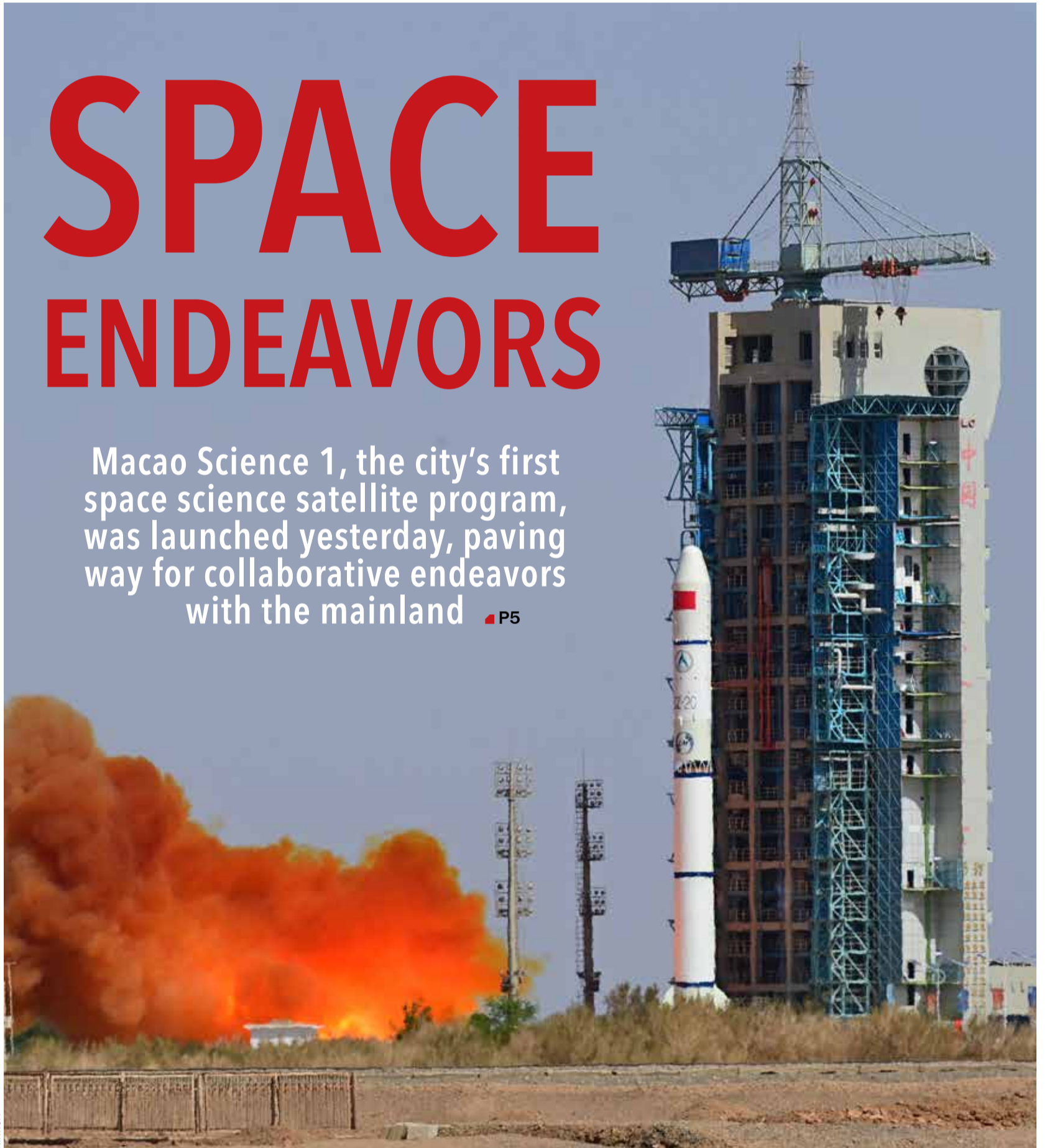


**Lebanese** militant group Hezbollah put on a show of force yesterday, extending a rare media invitation to one of its training sites in southern Lebanon, where its forces staged a simulated military exercise. Masked fighters jumped through flaming hoops, fired from the backs of motorcycles, and blew up Israeli flags posted in the hills above and a wall simulating the one at the border between Lebanon and Israel.

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# SPACE ENDEAVORS

Macao Science 1, the city's first space science satellite program, was launched yesterday, paving way for collaborative endeavors with the mainland P5



XINHUA

## CASINO CREDIT BILL

# LAWMAKERS WORRY OVER PROTECTIONS FOR CASINO INTERMEDIARIES

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## ELECTIONS

# WHY IS SANCTIONING THE CALL TO VOTE BNS A POLITICAL MISTAKE?

SÉRGIO DE ALMEIDA CORREIA  
LAWYER AND POLITICAL  
SCIENTIST

**T**HE Final Report on Electoral Activities for the 2021 legislative elections was recently released by the Commission of Electoral Affairs (CAEAL). I will not comment on the content of the document, but rather on two short paragraphs (page 55), which I transcribe here:

“The current Electoral Law does not provide clear sanctions for acts that incite or encourage voters to vote blank or produce null votes.

CAEAL considers that these acts obviously aim to disrupt electoral procedures and destroy electoral equity, proposing to establish the respective sanctions.”

The day after, I read in some newspapers that by sanctions, they should understand the possible criminalization of BNS (Blank, Null, and Spoiled) votes. I don't know if anyone from CAEAL mentioned that. In any case, the idea of penalizing advocates of this type of voting is frightening, even in an electoral system where only a tiny fraction of the deputies are elected by direct and universal suffrage.

The concern of CAEAL is understandable, but one mistake cannot be corrected with another.

In the last election, a group of candidates was disqualified by CAEAL and excluded from the election. The decision was criti-

cized and condemned in various instances, including the European Union, China's trading partner, and the United Nations Human Rights Commission in July 2022, citing a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). It should be noted that China is a member of the UN and even holds a permanent seat on the Security Council.

It is worth mentioning that there are no grounds for sanctioning the “promotion” of the BNS ballots. In any fair, democratic, and decent electoral system, this is a legitimate option for voters, possessing its own significance. For the Constitutional Court of Colombia, “the blank vote constitutes a valuable expression of dissent with political effects through which the protection of the freedom of the voter is promoted.” (Decision c-490/2011). It is therefore untrue to claim that BNS votes disrupt procedural or electoral equity.

Some academics attribute their appearance to France, particularly the legislative elections of August 21 and September 4, 1881, in which an unusual number of votes under these conditions were recorded (Ihle & Deloye, RFSP, 1991). It is certain that their existence is deeply rooted in democracies to the extent that in some countries, constitutional parties have been created with the explicit message of promoting blank ballots.

In Spain, the party “Esaños en Blanco” states in its electoral program that its elected representatives will not take office or receive any subsidies, seeking to leave the parliamentary seats empty in order to force a change in the electoral system and the current system of representation.

In other circumstances, such as Peru and Brazil, the Shining Path, a Marxist-Leninist movement, in 1983, and the Brazilian Communist Party, under the leadership of Luiz Carlos Prestes in the 1950 elections, called for blank votes as a form of protest against electoral fraud and democratic drift. Noble causes.

Other examples of appeals for blank voting come from the USA (Boston 1985), Argentina (“Voto bronca”, elections of 2001, 1957 with Péron), and Spain in 2004, during the Basque Country elections. In France, there is also a Party for Blank Votes (“Parti du Vote Blanc”), and in Quebec (Canada), there is the Null Party (“Parti-nul”). As far as I know, in the USA in 2012, only the Republicans tried to eliminate blank voting from the ballots in Nevada (Superti, 2016).

Each electoral system has its own rules, although there is no news of democracies or direct and universal suffrage systems sanctioning the call to blank, null, or abstention votes, either through fines or imprisonment. In Portugal, in the first elections after the Carnation Revolution in 1974,

the Armed Forces Movement called for blank voting and intended to derive political consequences from it. There was no problem, and the democratic regime was consolidated.

Regarding their meaning, BNS votes can have various interpretations, but in the case of deliberate null and blank votes, many see them as a perfectly non-violent form of protest aimed at expressing voters' dissatisfaction with the poor political offer, the low quality of candidates, and as a manifestation of a sense of political corruption or simple dissatisfaction with the electoral rules.

If voters believe that the electoral mechanisms are flawed and the candidates unprepared, they should be able to express as much legally and peacefully. In countries like Ukraine and Russia, until dictator Putin eliminated it, the ballot even listed the option “Against all” or “None of the above” (Superti 2016, Alvarez et al. 2018).

In India, the Supreme Court (Writ Petition (C) No. 161 of 2004, September 27, 2013) has held that “Not allowing a person to cast vote negatively defeats the very freedom of expression and the right ensured in Art. 21 i.e., the right to liberty. (...) The voter must be given an opportunity to choose a none of the above (NOTA) button, which will indeed compel the political parties to nominate a sound candidate.”

And in countries such as Gree-

ce, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Colombia, Peru, and even Mongolia, where elections must be repeated with new candidates if blank votes reach the level of 10% (David, 2022), this form of peaceful and legal political intervention is accepted.

In Macau, there is no discussion about the possibility of institutionalizing this option on the ballot.

However, to think that sanctioning the appeal to cast a blank or null vote is a possibility is sad. It is not part of the inherited juridical-political matrix.

CAEAL or the Macau SAR Government should not be afraid of voters. It is a bad sign when this happens, because only bad rulers fear popular scrutiny. What matters is making abstention, blank voting, and null voting, in cases where it is not due to a filing error, less attractive by reducing their numbers and increasing participation. However, this can only be achieved by improving the electoral system, information, transparency, and the quality of the political offer. That is, by having better electoral programs and candidates who are well-prepared and ethically irreproachable.

Political disaffection is not combated by prohibition, fines, or criminalization; especially not in authoritarian regimes. Such approaches constitute a mistake and are not characteristic of civilized political societies. Political disaffection is combated by inclusivity, better policies, and more competence, making the electoral system “more dynamic and competitive.” (Urdánaz Gamusa, 2012).

Driving people away from participation, penalizing free and democratic political struggle, imposing fear and self-censorship on the expression of free opinion, and silencing people does not improve the legitimacy of any political-electoral system, no matter how bad it may be. It does not strengthen institutions and it does not increase love for the country and the party.

Just as in love, in politics it is necessary to have a serious and healthy relationship with the partner (the people), which cannot be achieved through violence.

In each historical moment, institutions and politicians must win the soul of the people through kindness, or else they will prove themselves incompetent for the task. The Chief Executive should consider this option before accepting CAEAL's suggestion.

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ANTHONY LAM

**L**AND premiums shall see their coefficients for calculations amended in a later Chief Executive Dispatch, André Cheong, spokesperson of the Executive Council (ExCo), announced to a press conference over the weekend.

Cheong is also the Secretary for Administration and Justice.

According to Cheong, the Executive Regulations governing the matter have been in use for many years, which is the basis for this amendment.

He underlined that the government has taken into account the latest data on real property prices and number of transactions.

This amendment also sees new categories for five-star deluxe hotels and budget accommodation, as well as the elimination of the tourism complex and apartment categories.

Construction costs and values as stipulated in Tables 1, 3 and 8, as well as the data in Appendices 1 and 3 of the current Executive Regulations, will be republicized in a following Chief Executive Dispatch.

Categorizations concerning the rating of public streets will also be adjusted.

At the press conference, Director Lai Weng Leong of Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) assured the public that the equation that calculates land premiums has not been changed, but the coefficients.

He revealed that the new versus the old coefficients equate to a manifold change for commercial buildings, 30% for residential buildings and 10 to 20-fold for parking lots, among other levels for other types of real properties.

Lai added that pursuant to law, land premiums should be reviewed every two years, but that no changes have been made in the past few years.

When asked whether this amendment would affect the pricing of future economic and sandwich-class housing units, the director said no decision had been made in this respect. While on the topic of pricing of future land plots for auction, he said market data would be acquired for evaluation.

# Coefficients for land premium calculations to be updated



However, the law states that reserve prices cannot be lower than the concerned land premiums.

## MORE REGISTRATION PROCEDURES TO BE DIGITIZED

The ExCo has also concluded its discussions on the amendments of two laws that will affect procedures for births, deaths, marriages, divorces, name changes and car ownership registrations, with most of them seeing future digitization.

In the Civil Registration Code Amendment Bill, the government proposed that the entire procedure for birth or death registrations be digitized. To facilitate this, the future law will construct database connections between hospitals and the Civil Registry. In the future, people will obtain registrations online.

Digitizing the procedure for the registration of marriages has also been proposed. In the future, couples may only need to be present at the Civil Registry once – on their wedding day – to facilitate their marriage registration.

It is also proposed that the location for marriage registration be expanded to places other than the Civil Registry. This has

been in practice in Hong Kong for many years and has caused the wedding and event industry there to thrive.

The bill also proposes that divorce by mutual consent for couples with children under the age of majority be handled by the Civil Registry, so as to ease pressure for the courts. To protect the interests of the children, it was proposed that the Public Prosecutions Office be given a role to intervene if the divorce agreement jeopardizes the interests of the children.

Name changing is suggested to go under the authority of the civil registrar.

In the Vehicle Registration System Amendment Bill, it was proposed that registrations for new and used car ownerships as well as license plate application changes be digitized. Consequently, the Vehicle Ownership Certificate will be dropped.

## CHANGES TO CIVIL SERVANT PENSION AND PROVIDENT FUNDS

The ExCo has also approved certain changes to the structure of the civil servant Pension Fund. It will be supervised by the Secretary for Administration and Justice, rather than the Chief Executive.

The fund's workforce will also be adjusted. Meanwhile, civil ser-

vants will be allowed to allocate their provident fund investment ratios to

each percentage point.

The latter change will take effect on Jun. 13.

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## LAWMAKER SAYS BETTER SUPERVISION ON SPENDING CARD BINDING NEEDED

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE government should order financial institutions to implement stricter or more secure measures when their payment cards are bound to consumption platforms, lawmaker Ron Lam has suggested.

In his latest written inquiry, the lawmaker addressed the problem of abuse of debit or credit cards. He revealed that he had from time to time received requests for assistance concerning this matter.

While urging the government to do more in this regard, the lawmaker recapped that years ago, cases related to payment card data being recorded via the installation of illicit card readers at ATM card slots had occurred across the city.

However, after the local monetary authority followed its Hong Kong counterpart's practice of ordering financial institutions to replace magnetic strip cards to chip cards by a fixed deadline, as well as deactivating by a default overseas withdrawal function, such cases had disappeared in Macau, the lawmaker added.

Therefore, he suggested that the local monetary service gatekeeper once again follow their Hong Kong counterpart, by requiring financial institutions to introduce a wider range of methods to verify their customers' intentions to bind their payment cards to a new device or app.

According to Lam, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority suggested two-way text messages, confirmation through institutions' apps, as well as calls returned to

the institutions. The Hong Kong authority requires institutions to adopt this new measure no later than the end of May.

He also said it was important that financial institutions handle payment card abuse with fairness. For example, he revealed, some banks did not honor monetary losses caused by payment card abuse. As such, he hopes the local monetary authority can follow its Hong Kong counterpart to require financial institutions to handle affected customers "with empathy."

The number of cases related to the misuse of payment cards recorded from 2020 to 2022 was 411, 663 and 174, respectively over each of the years. The number of such cases in Hong Kong in 2021, when it had a population of more than 7.4 million people, was 700.

GBA

## GREATER BAY AREA LEADS IN CHINA'S OVERSEAS INVENTION PATENTS LICENSED: REPORT

**A** report on the patent index regarding the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area was released at a forum held on Saturday in south China's Guangdong Province.

The report on the patent index was released by the National Science Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences at a session of the Greater Bay Area Science Forum. It was based on the patent data gathered and revealed the characteristics and development trends of the Greater Bay Area's scientific and technological innovation.

The Greater Bay Area has seen a surge in patent applications, with dominance in overseas invention patents licensed nationwide. Between 2017 and 2022, overseas invention patents in Greater Bay Area accounted for more than a quarter of the country's total

overseas invention patents licensed, said the report.

The report added that enterprises play a pivotal role in driving technological innovation in the Greater Bay Area. From 2017 to 2022, the number of invention patent applications by enterprises in the Greater Bay Area accounted for 73.44 percent of the area's total patent applications.

Data showed that the Greater Bay Area boasts technological advantages in industries such as next-generation information technology, new energy vehicles, and new materials.

Initiated by the Alliance of International Science Organizations and hosted by the Guangdong provincial government, the Greater Bay Area Science Forum is taking place from May 20 to 23 in Guangdong's cities, including Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Foshan. **MDT/XINHUA**



GAMING

## Individual creditor rights among debate topics at casino credit bill first reading

ANTHONY LAM



ANTHONY LAM

**T**HREE lawmakers expressed their concerns over protections for casino intermediaries during the first reading of the casino credit bill last week.

Ron Lam, Pereira Coutinho and Leong Sun Iok – the latter being a trade unionist – questioned the government about the bill's future effectiveness in protecting creditors.

In response, director Adriano Marques Ho of the Gaming Inspec-

tion and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) assured lawmakers that currently, casino intermediaries have a well-operating mechanism. They are able to evaluate how much they will lend to each customer. He added that casino license holders have an even better mechanism to acknowledge their customers' credit levels.

Adding to Ho's reply, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong said that creditors have their own risk as-

essment system. Except in scenarios stipulated under Article 11 of the bill about confidentiality obligations, creditors are allowed to exchange intelligence on debtors.

He suggested that further discussions may be conducted at the Standing Committee.

While replying to Lam's question on shared access of the bank debtor intelligence platform, Lei said that at the current stage, there is no plan to implement such an arrangement.

Coutinho also asked whether the currency exchange market can be liberalized to ease illicit currency exchange in casinos. The secretary underlined that doors are opened to casino operators to operate such bu-

nesses, but that applications must be made in advance.

Coutinho suggested that the blossoming of the illicit currency exchange business in local casinos is due to the lack of competition in legal operations. There are four gasoline brands used by international cars in Macau, but they provide fuel at exactly the same prices product-wise for unleaded, diesel and premium unleaded products.

Despite this, the secretary pledged that further crackdowns will be conducted to ensure the orderly administration of the casino environment.

The bill was passed unanimously and will then be reviewed by the Second Standing Committee.



# 'Macao Science 1' space exploration satellites pave way for collaborative endeavors

**C**HINA sent two satellites of "Macao Science 1," a space exploration program, into space yesterday.

The China National Space Administration (CNSA) said that the satellites were launched at 4 p.m. by a Long March-2C carrier rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China and entered the preset orbits successfully.

Macao Science 1 takes a twin-satellite approach.

Satellite A carries payloads like high-precision magnetometers to detect Earth's magnetic field. Satellite B is equipped with payloads like high-energy particle detectors and solar X-ray instruments to obtain space environment data.

Macao Science 1 has the capability to complement the observations made by Europe's Swarm satellites and China's first seismo-electromagnetic satellite, Zhangheng 1. This collaborative effort allows for a more comprehensive understanding of Earth's low latitude magnetic field and space environment changes as well as facilitates the monitoring of the South Atlantic Anomaly (SAA).

According to the CNSA, Macao Science 1 is the first space science satellite program jointly developed by the Chinese mainland and Macau. The project is also the first scientific exploration satellite placed in a near-equatorial orbit to monitor the geomagnetic field and the space environment of the near-equator SAA.

The SAA is a giant region of lower magnetic intensity in the skies above the planet, stretching over the South Atlantic.



The weakening of the Earth's magnetic field protection over this area allows more radiation from outer space to penetrate and get closer to the Earth's surface, which easily interferes with the communication of satellites, aircraft and spacecraft passing through this area. Scientists believe the study of the SAA can help them find the reason for Earth's weakening magnetic field.

Macao Science 1 has the highest accuracy of geomagnetic field detection in China and will significantly improve the country's space magnetic survey, according to the CNSA.

The CNSA and the government of the SAR jointly launched the satellite project. The satellite system is developed by DFH Satellite Co., Ltd. under the China Academy of Space Technology and Northwestern Polytechnical University. Macao University of Science and Technology (MUST) provided the scientific payloads aboard the satellites. The State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Sciences at MUST has built a data center for the satellite which will carry out processing and analysis of satellite data.

The project encourages an open sharing and application

of its scientific data. Under related data policies, it will promote extensive cooperation with domestic and foreign research institutions to produce more scientific research outcomes and step up joint talent cultivation and exchange.

Scientists and engineers from 20 countries and regions have participated in the Macao Science 1 project, and a project scientist committee was formed comprising international experts that include academicians from Chinese, American and European institutions. The project team has signed cooperation agreements with scientific research institutions in 18 countries.

According to MUST, the satellite project has attracted a large number of scientific research and engineering talents in Macau, including scientists, engineers, data analysts, satellite telemetry personnel and other professionals, helping expand the talent pool of the State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Sciences.

Macao Science 1 is designed to operate in orbit for at least five years, providing a platform for the younger generation of researchers to carry out scientific research and develop advanced scientific data products and services, MUST said.

The CNSA added that the project will open up a new path for cooperation between the Chinese mainland and Macau in the fields of innovative technology like aerospace, and add new momentum to the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and high-quality development of aerospace. **MDT/XINHUA**

## CITY RECORDS OVER 2,100 COVID-19 CASES IN FOUR DAYS

The government's Covid-19 center announced over the weekend that it restarted daily announcements of infection figures yesterday "to better reflect the community reality [in respect of] Covid-19 infections." From May 17 to 19, the city logged 702, 658 and 551 infections, respectively across each day. Saturday saw 270 cases. The center highlighted that the city is faced with a cyclical high infection period but the severity of infections is not intense. It added that this round of infection has not yet heavily impacted the city's healthcare system. According to the center, the figures released were based on declarations from doctors, test entities and patients.

## IPIM SEES INCREASE IN ONE-STOP SERVICE USERS

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute's (IPIM) "one-stop" service for investors received 101 new investment plans in the first quarter of 2023, an increase of 38% year-on-year, of which there were 39 projects across the categories of big health, modern finance, high-tech and exhibitions. For the major industries including commerce and trade, the bureau has completed follow-ups for 70 investment plans. According to the data, the total investment to date amounts to MOP926 and 343 jobs have been created.

## RESTAURANT, RETAIL BUSINESSES CONTINUE TO RISE IN MARCH

Restaurants and retail businesses in Macau continued to rise in March from the same period of last year. The latest report from the Statistics and Census Service indicated that the revenue of the interviewed restaurants and similar establishments rose by 54.7% year on year in March. Sales of the interviewed retailers grew by 54.3% year on year in March. In comparison with February, the revenue of the interviewed restaurants and similar establishments went up by 1.8% in March whereas sales of the interviewed retailers dipped by 4.1%. Meanwhile, about 30% of the interviewed retailers forecasted a month-on-month sales growth in April.

## COMPOSITE CPI UP 0.85% IN APRIL

The SAR's composite consumer price index (CPI) grew 0.85% year-on-year to 104.43 in April, according to the latest report from the Statistics and Census Service. The increase was attributed to dearer charges for dining out, rising tuition fees and wages of domestic helpers, as well as higher hotel room rates and prices of fruits and gasoline. However, the rise was partially offset by lower rentals for dwellings and reduced airfares. In comparison with March, the composite CPI rose 0.15% in April. For the 12 months ending April, the average composite CPI grew 0.99% from the previous period.

# IAM carries out inspections pre-typhoon season

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has carried out inspections in low-lying areas and cleared sewers, municipal pumping stations, rainwater catch-pits, open channels and other facilities in various districts in advance of the city's typhoon

and rainy season.

With the aim of improving efficiency in management and control of the sewerage networks, the IAM has strengthened outsourced services and introduced technology, such as drain clearance robots for clearing box culvert drains, and the use of surveillance cameras

(CCTV) in drains.

In addition, the IAM is also continuously optimizing and looking for suitable locations to build additional rainwater pumping stations so as to construct flood barriers along the shore to effectively reduce the risk of flooding.

For the moment, at least 5,000 trees in the

street have been pruned and the care and maintenance of irregularly growing trees has been followed up by tree maintenance personnel. Meanwhile, 61,000 meters of sewers have been cleared and catch basins have been unclogged about 7,600 times, the IAM said.

Meanwhile, the IAM

has appealed to the public or businesses to refrain from pouring waste, grease and other substances down public drains in the streets, as well as reminding them not to enter work areas during tree pruning to avoid accidents, and to carry out regular inspections of trees on their properties.





TECH

# ALIBABA APPROVES CLOUD COMPUTING UNIT SPIN-OFF

**A**LIBABA plans to spin-off of its cloud computing business and said last week that its logistics and grocery units will explore initial public offerings as the Chinese e-commerce company kickstarts a restructuring of its operations in hopes of spurring growth.

The company in March announced plans to reshape itself into six business divisions with plans to allow all but its core e-commerce business to raise external capital and go public.

In an earnings call Thursday, Alibaba CEO Daniel Zhang said that the Alibaba plans to fully spin off its cloud computing unit and complete a public listing in the next 12 months, allowing it to “optimize operations,” Zhang said.

Alibaba’s board of directors approved the full spin-off of the cloud computing unit via a stock dividend distribution to shareholders, the company said.

Zhang also said that Freshippo, its groceries arm, as well as logistics arm Cainiao, are “ready to go public.”

Alibaba’s board has approved plans to begin Freshippo’s IPO process and Cainiao will explore an IPO in the next 12 to 18 months, he said.

Other units such as Alibaba’s international digital commerce group, which operates Singapore-based e-commerce platform Lazada, will also explore raising external capital as it seeks to expand globally.

Alibaba Group Holding last week posted a lower-than-ex-

pected 2% rise in revenue for the quarter ended March, suggesting that spending has been slow to bounce back in China since the removal of COVID-19 restrictions amid slowing economic growth.

The company reported revenues of 208.2 billion yuan (\$29.6 billion) for its March quarter. It also reversed losses from the same quarter last year, posting a net income of 23.5 billion yuan (\$3.3 billion) due to one-off gains from its equity investments.

Revenue from its China commerce business — Alibaba’s largest business unit by revenue — declined 3% compared with the same period last year. Its cloud computing unit also declined 2% in revenue. **MDT/AP**

MERGER & ACQUISITIONS

# MICROSOFT SAYS CHINA APPROVES ITS PLAN TO BUY VIDEO GAME-MAKER

**M**ICROSOFT said that China has unconditionally approved its plan to buy video game company Activision Blizzard, even as the deal still faces antitrust opposition in the U.S. and United Kingdom.

China’s approval is complicated by the fact that Activision Blizzard stopped offering many of its games in mainland China earlier this year because of a dispute with its local publishing partner.

China and the European Union are the two biggest economies to have approved Microsoft’s planned \$69 billion takeover of the California game publisher behind popular titles such as World of Warcraft, Call of Duty and Candy Crush.

European regulators representing the 27-nation bloc approved the deal Monday on condition that Microsoft make some promises meant to boost competition in the emerging cloud-based gaming market.

China’s State Administration for Market Regulation cleared it without conditions, according to Microsoft, though as of this weekend the agency’s website didn’t mention the decision.

Game sales in mainland Chi-

na come with a requirement that game-makers work with a Chinese publisher to release titles in the country. And since earlier this year, popular Activision Blizzard franchises such as World of Warcraft, the StarCraft series, Overwatch and Diablo have been suspended because of a disagreement between Activision subsidiary Blizzard Entertainment and its Chinese partner, NetEase.

Blizzard had a longstanding partnership with NetEase dating to 2008, which helped the latter company grow to become China’s second-largest games distributor after local rival Tencent.

But the U.S. company said late last year it would suspend most of its game services in China after current licensing agreements ended, leading to a public spat between the two companies.

Microsoft says its planned Activision acquisition — considered the priciest tech deal in history — now has been cleared in 37 countries, which includes the 27 in the EU as well as 10 others such as China, Japan and Brazil. But the blockbuster deal is still in jeopardy because British regulators have rejected it and U.S. authorities are trying to thwart it. **MDT/AP**



## CORPORATE BITS

### MUST students score accolade in 39th Mathematical Contest in Modeling



Under the guidance of their professor Cai Zhan-chuan, the undergraduate students Yu Ziqiao, Zhu Yingqi and Tang Qingfeng from the School of Computer Science and Engineering, within the Faculty

of Innovation Engineering of MUST, have won an Honorable Mention after participating in the 39th Mathematical Contest in Modeling.

For many years, the School of Computer

Science and Engineering, Faculty of Innovation Engineering of MUST, has maintained a mathematical modeling guidance team to provide students with specialized training lectures and pre-competition guidance.

The international contest gathered a total of 20,858 teams from more than 20 countries, including the United States, the UK, Germany, Canada, Australia, and others.

The Mathematical Contest in Modeling aims to provide college students with opportunities to cooperate as a team, exercise their ability to analyze problems, solve problems, and write.

### Sands launches singing, dancing contest application for Sands Shopping Carnival



As part of the 2023 Sands Shopping Carnival, an application campaign for the new K-POP Dance Competition event and the return of the Karaoke King Singing Competition has been launched, effective

now until June 20.

It is free to apply for both contests, and people will be able to watch all the events, which will take place at The Venetian Macao’s Cotai Expo from July 20-23, including an invita-

tion-only preview session on the first day.

For the K-POP dance competition, applicants must be residents of Macau aged 18 or below and will be able to compete in groups of three to eight people on July 23, with a judging panel awarding prizes for the top three performances.

For the Karaoke King Singing Competition, applicants must be Macau residents aged 19 and above and will be able to compete as individuals or teams during a preliminary round on July 22, and the final round on July 23, with prizes also to be awarded to the champion, first runner-up, and second runner-up.



AP PHOTO



# G7 urges China to press Russia to end war in Ukraine, respect Taiwan's status, fair trade rules

ELAINE KURTENBACH,  
HIROSHIMA

**T**HE Group of Seven wealthy democracies united in urging China to pressure its strategic partner Russia to end its war on Ukraine and resolve territorial disputes peacefully, and China lashed back.

In a joint statement, the G7 leaders emphasized they did not want to harm China and were seeking "constructive and stable relations" with Beijing, "recognizing the importance of engaging candidly with and expressing our concerns directly to China."

"We call on China to press Russia to stop its military aggression, and immediately, completely and unconditionally with-

draw its troops from Ukraine," said the statement issued over the weekend.

"We encourage China to support a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on territorial integrity and the principles and purposes of the U.N. Charter," including in direct talks with Ukraine.

Cooperation with China is needed given its global role and economic size, the group said, in appealing for working together on challenges such as climate change, biodiversity, debts and financing needs of vulnerable countries, global health concerns and economic stability.

But the leaders expressed "serious concern" about the situation in the East and South China seas, where Beijing has been ex-

panding its military presence and threatening to use force to exert its control over self-governed Taiwan. They called for a "peaceful resolution" of China's claim to Taiwan, which has remained unresolved since the communists gained power on the Chinese mainland in 1949.

The statement said there was "no legal basis for China's expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea, and we oppose China's militarization activities in the region."

"A growing China that plays by international rules would be of global interest," the statement said, alluding to charges that Beijing is undermining the "rules-based international order."

The G7 also united in voicing concerns about human rights

in China, including in Tibet, in Hong Kong and in the far western region of Xinjiang.

But the statement also sought to counter accusations that the G7 is seeking to prevent China's rise as a global power.

"Our policy approaches are not designed to harm China nor do we seek to thwart China's economic progress and development," it said.

The statement highlighted a consensus that efforts to diversify manufacturing supply chains and ensure stable access to strategically vital minerals and other resources is not aimed at unraveling trade ties with the world's second-largest economy.

"We are not decoupling or turning inwards," the statement said. "At the same time, we recognize

that economic resilience requires de-risking and diversifying. We will take steps, individually and collectively, to invest in our own economic vibrancy. We will reduce excessive dependencies in our critical supply chains."

The G7 members vowed to take a stand against various types of "economic coercion," saying they "will counter malign practices, such as illegitimate technology transfer or data disclosure," while also avoiding "unduly limiting trade and investment."

Chinese officials have reacted to various G7 statements about economic coercion and other issues with outrage.

## BEIJING REACTS AGAINST 'BRAZEN INTERFERENCE'

In a statement, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said the G7 "used issues concerning China to smear and attack China and brazenly interfere in China's internal affairs. China strongly deplores and firmly opposes this and has made serious démarches to the summit's host Japan and other parties concerned."

"The G7 needs to stop pointing fingers at China on Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet and take a hard look at their own history and human rights record," it said.

Taiwan, meanwhile, thanked the G7 for its support.

"Taiwan will stand alongside with democracies and communities of the world to cooperate in defusing the risks," its leader, Tsai Ing-wen said Saturday. "Nowadays, the consensus around the world is very clear, which is the fact that cross-strait issues have to be solved in a peaceful manner. War is not an option," she said at a news conference.

Apart from Japan, this year's host of the leader's annual summit, the G7 includes the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada and Italy and the European Union.

The G7 statement was released on the second day of a three-day summit. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived in Hiroshima on Saturday to participate in meetings planned for Sunday. **MDT/AP**

## ACCIDENT

# Authorities say 11 people killed in Vietnam border road, highlighting human smuggling

**C**HINESE authorities say 11 people were killed in a road accident Friday along the China-Vietnam border, including nine Vietnamese citizens.

The incident highlights

the persistence of human trafficking in the mountainous border region, where there has long been a trade in agricultural goods and workers coming from Vietnam to the relatively poor Chinese

province of Guangxi.

One of the other victims was Chinese and the nationality of the other has yet to be determined, according to the social media account of the local Jingxi county government.

They were among 14 people aboard an off-road vehicle that overturned and fell into a gully, the government said.

It said the incident was related to human smuggling.

The survivors included the Chinese driver, a Chinese assistant and two Vietnamese citizens, all of whom are being questioned, the government said.

Limited job opportunities in parts of Vietnam

have prompted some of its citizens to seek their fortunes in countries where wages are higher, including in marginally better-off parts of China, where they work on farms and in factories and where some women have been lured into forced marriages.

In 2019, the bodies of 39 young Vietnamese were found in a container truck in southeastern England in an apparent people-smuggling tragedy. **MDT/AP**





Alondra Ruiz Vazquez walks outside her home at the Periwinkle Mobile Home Park, last month

US

# Low-income tenants lack options as old mobile home parks are razed

**A**LONDRA Ruiz Vazquez and her husband were comfortable in Periwinkle Mobile Home Park for a decade, feeling lucky to own their mobile home and pay about \$450 a month for their lot in a city with spiraling rents.

But now they and dozens of other families have until May 28 to leave the Phoenix park, which nearby Grand Canyon University purchased seven years ago to build student housing. Two other mobile home communities are also being cleared this spring for new developments in a city where no new parks have been built in more than 30 years.

"I'm here, well, because I have nowhere to go," said Isabel Ramos, who lives at Periwinkle with her 11-year-old daughter. "I don't know what's going to happen."

The razing of older mobile home parks across the United States worries advocates who say bulldozing them permanently eliminates some of the already limited housing for the poorest of the poor. Residents may have to double up with relatives or live in their cars amid spiking evictions and homelessness, they warn.

"Mobile homes are a much bigger part of our affordable housing stock than people know," said Mark Stapp, who directs Arizona State University's master's degree program in real estate development. "Once it's gone, a lot of people will have no place to go."

A recent survey by the Na-

tional Low Income Housing Coalition showed a U.S.-wide shortage of 7.3 million affordable rental homes for extremely low-income renters, defined in Arizona as a three-member household making \$28,850 or less.

Industry groups estimate that more than 20 million people live in some 43,000 mobile home parks across the United States.

"We are in the deepest affordable housing crisis we've ever experienced," said Joanna Carr, acting head of the Arizona Housing Coalition. "Housing for many people is getting completely out of reach. It's very dire."

Ken Anderson, president of the Manufactured Housing Industry of Arizona, said trying to bring an old park up to modern standards can be cost-prohibitive for owners, requiring replacement of electrical and sewage infrastructure for newer homes.

At least six such communities have been torn down in Arizona in the last 18 months, he said, adding that Grand Canyon University "bent over backwards" to help residents more than other park owners.

"A lot of these parks are 70 years old," said Anderson, noting an uptick in demolitions of older communities for redevelopment. "It's going to be a big problem down the line."

Efforts under way to revitalize old mobile homes have limits. Despite their name, most aren't truly mobile, and moving them can be very costly.

The oldest homes are often too decrepit to move at all.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development recently announced \$225 million in grants to governments, tribes and nonprofits to preserve mobile homes, but the money can only be used to replace, not repair dwellings built before 1976, which are common at older parks.

Vermont earlier this year announced a mobile home improvement program to be funded by \$4 million in federal money. It aims to help park owners prepare vacant or abandoned lots for new mobile homes, and help mobile homeowners install new foundations and make their dwellings more habitable.

In Riverdale, Utah, the last of about 50 families at Lesley's Mobile Home Park must leave by the end of May for construction of new apartments and townhouses.

"The state laws don't protect us," said Jason Williams, who sold his mobile home for half what he asked for and will now live in a motorhome.

Some old parks weren't originally envisioned as permanent housing.

Florida City Campsite and RV Camp was built decades ago for vacationers headed to the Florida Keys or the Everglades.

But the dilapidated park eventually became home to retirees on fixed incomes and young families on government assistance. Florida City, the southernmost municipality in

Miami-Dade County, sold it two years ago for a new townhouse project.

Cities often don't like older parks because unlike other housing they don't generate property taxes for municipal services. Rundown parks can also be eyesores, depressing the worth of nearby properties even as the value of the land the mobile homes sit on has increased exponentially.

In Phoenix, Grand Canyon University said in a statement it "waited as long as it could" to build new student housing after buying Periwinkle in 2016. "Now, with the need to expand, the University has raised funds to provide multiple layers of assistance to tenants at Periwinkle."

The university said it initially gave residents six months to leave, then extended the deadline to 13 months. It offered free rent for the first five months of this year, early departure compensation, relocation assistance and some household goods.

Many park residents are Spanish-speaking immigrants earning minimum wage as landscapers or restaurant workers. There are also retirees living on Social Security.

"We haven't found anything under \$1,800. That's way above what we can afford," Ruiz Vazquez said of apartment rents. She said the couple's mobile home is too old to move and must be abandoned.

"It's really taken a toll on our health, mental state of mind."

Maricopa County, home to Phoenix, has a housing shortfall of more than 74,000 units. Zillow.com currently lists the median monthly rental price for all bedrooms and property types in Phoenix at \$2,095.

More than 20 families have moved out of Periwinkle in recent months, leaving behind weed-strewn lots. The rusting hulks of several mobile dwellings with rotting wooden stairs were left behind.

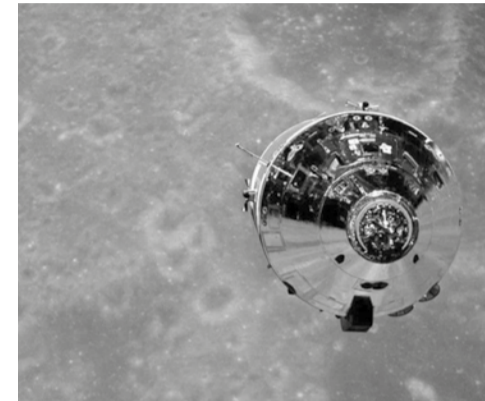
Residents wanted an additional 18-month eviction moratorium or a zoning change to stave off their departure indefinitely.

The Phoenix City Council this spring decided to let the eviction proceed, but set aside \$2.5 million in federal funds to help mobile home park residents facing eviction in the future.

CEO Mike Trailor of the nonprofit Trellis, who once headed the Arizona Department of Housing, said the organization is working with the university to help Periwinkle families find apartments and arrange to move mobile homes that can be moved. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1969 APOLLO 10 GETS BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF MOON



Two US astronauts aboard Apollo 10 are on their way back to the safety of their mother ship after their lunar module came to within eight nautical miles (14kms) of the Moon's surface.

Colonel Thomas Stafford and Commander Eugene Cernan were carrying out a rehearsal for a planned Moon landing this summer.

They were in the lunar module (LM) nicknamed Snoopy and are now about to rejoin the command module (aka Charlie Brown) piloted by Commander John Young 50 miles (80km) above the Moon.

The two spacemen came closer than any human being has come to a celestial body.

"Snoopy" made two passes over the planned landing site for Apollo 11 before making a successful rendez-vous with "Charlie Brown".

After the first sweep at six times the speed of sound, Col Stafford said they had taken so many photographs he feared the camera had jammed while trying to change the film.

If the mission fails to bring back still shots of possible landing sites and approaches it will be a serious blow to Apollo planners. They want to make sure astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin have a safe landing this July in Apollo 11.

But Col Stafford did manage to get a good view of the surface which he described as "very smooth, like wet clay".

Commander Cernan then reported to control at Houston: "We just saw earthrise - the Earth appearing over the edge of the lunar horizon - and it's got to be magnificent. It would be nice to be here more often."

Apollo 10 was launched four days ago from Cape Kennedy. It is the fourth manned Apollo launch within seven months.

It is hoped that the mission will bring back plenty of colour stills and moving images of the Moon and views of the Earth.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

When America decided to land men on the moon cautious astronomers pointed out that the surface could hold unknown dangers - huge boulders could topple any landing craft, a seemingly smooth surface might be covered with moon-dust so deep it would swallow up a spacecraft. The Ranger programme sent rockets onto a collision course with the Moon and sent back images of the surface but left scientists none the wiser.

It was not until the Russians succeeded in landing Luna 9 in 1966 - followed soon after by the Americans' Surveyor soft-landers - that the deep-dust theory could be brushed aside. Apollo 10 did succeed in bringing back the best images yet seen of the Moon and Earth from space.

Apollo 11 successfully landed Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong on the Moon on 21 July 1969. Eugene Cernan became the last man to land on the Moon on the Apollo 17 mission in December 1972.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
 You may be admired by colleagues and employers for your diplomatic way of handling your work and those you work with. Go out with friends or family. Avoid letting children and friends borrow.

**TAURUS**  
 Apr. 20-May. 20  
 Don't be too quick to sign documents. Not everything you hear will be legitimate. Things will be hectic and family members will be erratic.

**GEMINI**  
 May. 21-Jun. 21  
 Your practical approach to life may charm someone who has been observing you. Keep your cash in your pocket and offer them sound advice rather than your financial assistance.

**CANCER**  
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
 The stamina you possess will be apparent in your approach to your hobbies and creative projects. You could be attracting individuals who are anything but good for you.

**LEO**  
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
 Hard work will payoff if you refrain from expressing your opinion to superiors. You may not be able to help, but your support will be favorable. Be careful when dealing with investments.

**VIRGO**  
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
 Keep important information to yourself. Don't let your boss make you feel guilty enough to take work home with you. Travel opportunities must be taken advantage of.

**LIBRA**  
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
 Seminars will provide you with knowledge and amusement. Do not jump to conclusions concerning your romantic partner. Your emotions are soaring and if you don't get your way, look out world.

**SCORPIO**  
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
 Avoid letting family get involved in your personal life. Ask a close friend for advice. Enlist the aid of family members and consider the feelings of your mate.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
 Compromise if you have to, to avoid verbal battles. You need to lie back and enjoy a little rest. You can ask for favors or run your ideas by those who will be able to support your objectives.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
 Focus on using your creative abilities in other ways. Nagging has never been something that you could tolerate, and it's once again driving you into a lonely state of affairs.

**AQUARIUS**  
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
 Your fight for those less fortunate is not likely to end in sweet victory. Reciprocate by offering helpful hints. Romantic encounters are evident through travel or educational pursuits.

**PISCES**  
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
 Your diplomatic approach and rather outgoing nature will enhance your reputation and bring you the support you need. Social get-together will bring you in contact with intelligent new friends.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	15	28	fine
Changchun	11	24	fine
Chengdu	14	24	cloudy
Chongqing	18	23	overcast
Fuzhou	24	32	rain
Guangzhou	27	35	rain
Guiyang	15	24	overcast
Haikou	27	37	cloudy
Hangzhou	18	22	rain
Harbin	8	23	fine
Hefei	15	22	overcast
Nanjing	15	22	showers
Shanghai	17	21	overcast
Taipei	23	29	overcast
Wuhan	14	23	cloudy
Hong Hong	22	28	cloudy
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	12	21	rain
Frankfurt	14	28	rain
Paris	13	24	overcast
London	9	21	overcast
New York	13	24	overcast

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS** 1- It's a thought; 5- Total; 10- Advocate forcefully; 14- Scoundrels; 15- Titter; 16- Oboe, e.g.; 17- Ho-hum; 18- Square one; 19- Against; 20- Brunch cocktail; 22- Survive longer; 24- Disencumber; 25- Tears; 26- Inseparable friend; 30- First name in photography; 35- Canals; 36- Draft choice; 37- Answer; 38- Hybrid citrus fruit; 41- Money handler; 43- Fragrant oil; 44- Modern address; 45- U.K. record label; 46- Role for Valerie; 47- Emblematic; 50- Bristle; 53- Fleming who created Bond; 54- Kind of medicine; 58- Slum area inhabited by a minority group; 62- Creamy-beige color; 63- Circumference; 66- Feathers; 67- Banned apple spray; 68- Conclude by; 69- Metric unit of mass; 70- Easy to manage; 71- Not hesitant; 72- Alleviate;

**DOWN** 1- SALT subject; 2- Painter of limp watches; 3- Dutch cheese, wrapped in red wax; 4- On solid ground; 5- You're on!; 6- Can be used to catch fish or surf!; 7- There you are!; 8- Vive \_\_\_!; 9- Cessation; 10- River to the Caspian; 11- Actress Sofer; 12- Comprehends; 13- Prepare a book or film for release; 21- Title of a knight; 23- Former Russian rulers; 25- Fish eggs; 26- \_\_\_ Is Born; 27- Reluctant; 28- Scout master?; 29- Day-\_\_\_; 31- O.T. book; 32- Long-winded speech; 33- Fragrant resin; 34- Song part; 39- Wander; 40- Rub out or remove from memory; 41- Weep; 42- God; 44- G-8 nation; 48- Phooey!; 49- Jumpy; 51- Enthusiastic; 52- Triple; 54- Cool!; 55- Arthur Ashe's alma mater; 56- Stuff; 57- Decoy; 59- When said three times, a 1970 war movie; 60- \_\_\_ the night before Christmas ...; 61- Traiter's words; 64- Nutritional std.; 65- Tiny bit;



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



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**BASKETBALL**

# Nuggets on brink of NBA Finals with 119-108 win over Lakers in Game 3

GREG BEACHAM, LOS ANGELES

**N**IKOLA Jokic was far from his usual dominant self while mired in foul trouble, and Jamal Murray cooled off after his scorching first half. The Denver Nuggets' big early lead disappeared entirely in the fourth quarter of Game 3, and the Lakers' home crowd was in a frenzy.

The Nuggets weathered every setback and calmly, methodically took control with a poise worthy of champions.

With one more victory, they'll finally get the chance to play for their first rings.

Murray scored 37 points, Jokic added 24 points and eight assists and the Nuggets rolled to a 3-0 lead in the Western Conference finals with a 119-108 victory over Los Angeles on Saturday night.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 12 of his 17 points in the second half against his former team for the top-seeded Nuggets,



Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray, right, passes over Los Angeles Lakers guard Dennis Schroder (17) in the second half of Game 3 of the NBA basketball Western Conference Final series

who have never been this close to the NBA Finals in 47 years in the league. Denver is making its fifth straight playoff appearance, and the ultimate stage is now just one win away.

"I learn a lot about this team every time we play," Caldwell-Pope said. "We have that dog men-

tality where no matter if we're up, down, we're going to continue to fight and play our game, and do it at a high level. We're going to continue to do that for the rest of these games."

Denver blew a 14-point lead in Game 3, but made a decisive 13-0 run in the fourth quarter to

snap the Lakers' nine-game home winning streak since March 26, including seven straight victories since the regular season ended. The Nuggets excelled down the stretch with Murray and Jokic repeatedly running a two-man pick-and-roll game suggested by "Coach Jokic," according to coach Michael Malone.

"This group is capable of doing great things, and they believe," Malone said. "Belief is a very powerful thing."

No team has rallied from a 3-0 playoff series deficit in NBA history. Game 4 is Monday night in Los Angeles.

"I can't speak for the guys right now because I don't know what's going through all their minds, but I still (believe)," said LeBron James, who had 23 points, 12 assists and seven rebounds. "So it's time to go right back home and start to refuel and start the treatment process and recovery process and get ready for Monday. My mindset is always locked in."

Anthony Davis had 28 points and 18 rebounds for the seventh-seeded Lakers, who hadn't lost three straight games since early February. Los Angeles' prolonged, desperate surge ever since the trade deadline has finally run out of steam against the powerhouse Nuggets, who have won five consecutive playoff games.

"They've been at the top of the food chain for a reason, and have a plethora of guys that can hurt you, as was on full display tonight," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "But you know, circumstances are what they are. Difficult, but not impossible."

James hit three 3-pointers after starting the series 0 for 13 from distance, and Austin Reaves added 23 points and seven rebounds. But Rui Hachimura was the only other Lakers scorer to crack double figures with 13 points, and they couldn't counter the Nuggets' balanced effort down the stretch.

"Our backs have been against the wall (for) probably about the last two months, maybe more than that since the trade deadline," Reaves said. "Swinging, throwing punches to fight to get to this opportunity. ... We can either come out Monday and go home, or we can fight for another day. And with the group of guys that we've got, I know what that answer will be." **MDT/AP**

AD



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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**XI'AN SUMMIT  
 BOOSTS SECURITY,  
 DEVELOPMENT  
 COOPERATION**

The joint statement and the list of cooperation projects released after the China-Central Asia Summit concluded in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, on Friday show the event has been highly fruitful.

As President Xi Jinping said in his keynote speech at the opening of the summit, the six countries need to increase mutual assistance, promote common development, better safeguard security and strengthen friendship, in order to consolidate the foundation for peace, stability and common prosperity in the region.

The obvious threat to the region comes from the United States, which has been trying to turn Central Asia into its backyard since the 1990s so it can intensify the geopolitical pressure on both China and Russia. To fulfill its goal, the US has been using every possible excuse to trigger "color revolutions" in the region and drive a wedge between the Central Asian countries and China, which have caused turmoil, conflicts and mayhem, with the unrest in Kazakhstan early last year being the latest example.

Although China-Central Asia strategic cooperation does not target the US, the summit has made it clear that the external forces trying to turn the region into a geopolitical battlefield will never succeed.

Accordingly, President Xi said on Friday, "No one has the right to sow discord or stoke confrontation in the region, let alone seek selfish political interests."

As their joint statement indicates, the six countries will unequivocally support each other when it comes to safeguarding their core interests such as sovereignty and territorial integrity, national security and economic development.

Taking advantage of their economic complementarity, China and the Central Asian countries should continue to strengthen regional cooperation through Belt and Road projects. For instance, they should work together to realize their full potential of cooperation in green and low-carbon industries, medical services and the digital economy so as to develop new drivers of growth.

The six countries have advanced the Silk Road Economic Belt since President Xi proposed it during his visit to Kazakhstan in 2013. Expectedly, the Belt and Road projects have improved the region's connectivity with China and Europe, benefiting the people in the region and beyond.

The achievements of the Xi'an summit mark an important step toward building a China-Central Asia community with a shared future, a goal that was set at the virtual summit to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the Central Asian countries last year.

Steeped in history, driven by actual needs and built on popular support, the China-Central Asia community with a shared future will be characterized by mutual assistance, mutual trust, win-win cooperation and common development.

**AT LEAST 9 DEAD IN STAMPEDE AT  
 SOCCER STADIUM IN EL SALVADOR**

At least nine people were killed and dozens more injured when stampeding soccer fans pushed through one of the access gates at a quarterfinal match in the Salvadoran league Saturday.

The National Civil Police said in a preliminary report via Twitter that nine dead were confirmed at the match between clubs Alianza and FAS at Monumental stadium in Cuscatlan, which is about 25 miles northeast of the capital.

At least two of the injured transported to hospitals were in critical condition, police said.

Carlos Fuentes, spokesman for the first aid group Rescue Commandos, also confirmed the deaths.

"We can confirm nine dead — seven men and two women — and we attended to more than 500 people, and more than 100 were transported to hospitals, some of them were serious," Fuentes said.

Play was suspended about 16 minutes into the match, when fans in the stands waving frantically began getting the attention of those on the field and carrying the injured out of a tunnel and down to the pitch.

**THE  
 BUZZ**



US

**US  
 USING 'HE/HIM,' 'SHE/HER'  
 IN EMAILS GOT 2 DORM  
 DIRECTORS FIRED**

**BOBBY CAINA CALVAN,  
 NEW YORK**

**S**HUA Wilmot and Raegan Zelaya, two former dorm directors at a small Christian university in western New York, acknowledge their names are unconventional, which explains why they attached gender identities to their work email signatures.

Wilmot uses "he/him." Zelaya goes by "she/her."

Their former employer, Houghton University, wanted them to drop the identifiers in line with a new policy for email formats implemented in September. Both refused and were fired.

"My name is Shua. It's an unusual name. And it ends with a vowel, 'a,' that is traditionally feminine in many languages," Wilmot said in a nearly one-hour video he and Zelaya posted on YouTube shortly after they were let go last month. "If you get an email from me and you don't know who I am, you might not know how to gender me."

Ongoing culture wars in the U.S. over sexual preferences, gender IDs and transgender rights have engulfed politics, school campuses and many other facets of public and private life. At least 17 Republican-led states have severely restricted gender affirming care. Debates continue to rage in some

communities about school curricula mentioning sexual orientation or gender identity. And pickets have sprung up outside public libraries hosting "drag story hours."

Meanwhile, controversies swirl at campuses with religious affiliations. The recent firings prompted more than 700 Houghton alumni to sign a petition in protest.

In the Northwest, 16 plaintiffs are suing Seattle Pacific University, a Christian liberal arts college, to challenge the school's employment policy barring people in same-sex relationships from full-time jobs.

In New York City, LGBTQ students are challenging Yeshiva University's decision to bar their student-run club from campus.

Paul Southwick, director of the Religious Exemption Accountability Project, a 2-year-old advocacy group for LGBTQ students at publicly funded religious colleges and universities, said actions such as these are cause for despair.

"There's a backlash against the rise of LGBTQ rights," he said, and not just with "white evangelical Christianity in the South [...]" but in places like New York and Oregon that we wouldn't think would be experiencing this backlash."

Earlier this year, a federal judge in Oregon dismissed a

lawsuit that LGBTQ students filed against the U.S. Department of Education claiming it didn't protect them against discrimination at religiously affiliated universities receiving federal money.

Houghton University, an 800-student campus 60 miles southeast of Buffalo, says it offers a "Christ-centered education in the liberal arts and sciences."

In a statement emailed to The Associated Press on Saturday, the university said it could not speak publicly about personnel matters, but it "has never terminated an employment relationship based solely on the use of pronouns in staff email signatures."

The university said it had previously asked employees to remove "anything extraneous," including Bible quotes, from email signatures.

The university also shared with the AP an email outlining its new policy sent to staff. The memo cautioned employees against using politically divisive and inflammatory speech in communications bearing the Houghton name. It also directed them to use standardized signature styles and forbade the use of pronouns.

Also attached to the statement was a copy of a letter university President Wayne D. Lewis Jr. sent to students. **MDT/AP**



**Greeks** voted yesterday in the first election since their country's economy ceased to be subject to strict supervision and control by international lenders who had provided bailout funds during its nearly decade-long financial crisis. The vote pitches conservative Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, 55, a Harvard-educated former banking executive, against 48-year-old Alexis Tsipras, who heads the left-wing Syriza party and served as prime minister during some of the financial crisis' most turbulent years, as the two main contenders.



**Serbia** Tens of thousands of people rallied in Serbia's capital last week for a third time in a month in protest at the government's handling of a crisis after two mass shootings in the Balkan country earlier this month, even as officials rejected the criticism and ignored their demands. In a show of defiance, the nationalist right-wing party of autocratic Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic organized a counter-protest in a town north of Belgrade attended by thousands of his supporters.



**Mexico** is flying migrants south away from the U.S. border and busing new arrivals away from its boundary with Guatemala to relieve pressure on its border cities. In the week since Washington dropped pandemic-era restrictions on seeking asylum at its border, U.S. authorities report a dramatic drop in illegal crossing attempts. In Mexico, officials are generally trying to keep migrants south away from that border, a strategy that could reduce crossing temporarily, but experts say is not sustainable.