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China The collapse of a nine-story building in central China that killed 54 people last year was caused by shoddy, illegal construction and local officials’ failure to enforce standards, according to an official report released last weekend. At least nine people including the building owner were reported arrested following the April 2022 disaster in Changsha. The report by investigators appointed by the ruling Communist Party said the collapse of the “self-built” structure was due by “illegal and irregular construction” and additions by residents.



China’s stepping up a feud with Washington over technology and security, China’s government told users of computer equipment deemed sensitive to stop buying products from the biggest U.S. memory chipmaker, Micron Technology Inc. Micron products have unspecified “serious network security risks” that pose hazards to China’s information infrastructure and affect national security, the Cyberspace Administration of China said on its website.



Philippines A massive fire tore through Manila’s historic post office building overnight, slightly injuring seven people and razing the nearly 100-year-old landmark in Manila, police and postal officials said yesterday. The fire started before midnight in the basement of the neoclassical, five-story building and was brought under control yesterday morning more than seven hours after it began, firefighters said.

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GAMING

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SJM TO CO-HOST WITH GOV'T FOUR SPORTING EVENTS

Daisy Ho, executive director of SJM Resorts, S.A., revealed after a dragon boat religious ritual that the company will co-organize, with the government, four major sport events in the second half of the year. The four events are dragon boat races, a wushu competition, a golf competition and the China Tennis Open. Moreover, the company plans to organize an exhibition that revolves around Château de Versailles. She also expressed satisfaction with the company's first quarter income and confidence in attracting more visitors to its properties in the coming months.

WORK TAX REFUND FOR 2021 TO START THIS THURSDAY

The refund for Professional Tax collected in 2021 will start May 25. Each of the 164,000 eligible taxpayers will receive 60% or MOP14,000 of the tax amount that they paid, whichever is lower. The tax refund is part of the promise that the government made in the Public Budget 2023, and equates to about MOP930 million from public funds. The refund will be issued either electronically, by bank transfer, or physically by check. Taxpayers can confirm their eligibility at any Financial Services Bureau counter or e-kiosk. Inquiries as to missing checks can be made to the bureau from Jun. 16.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS SECRETARY ATTENDS WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY IN GENEVA

Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao leong has departed for Geneva, Switzerland for the 76th World Health Assembly. She is attending as part of the Chinese delegation. This year's assembly has adopted a list of over 70 issues focusing on sudden public health incidents, full-population healthcare coverage, and non-contagious diseases, as well as planning and budgeting for the coming two years, among other topics. Accompanying Ao leong are Health Bureau director Alvis Lo, public hospital medical director Warren Tai, and government public health doctor Leong Iek Hou, as well as Ao leong's office director and an advisor.

IFTM RUNS MACANESE FOOD BUFFET, MERCHANDISE SALE EVERY SATURDAY

The Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) has announced that it will start operating a Macanese food lunch and dinner buffet at its Educational Restaurant every Saturday. At the same time, gastronomic merchandise, such as Macanese shrimp paste and fig preserve, will also be available for sale. The buffet will feature some of the most iconic Macanese dishes, such as steamed stuffed bitter melon, Macanese sauteed mixed vegetables and pickled starfruit. According to the IFTM, this initiative aims to prevent Macanese culture, and its intangible cultural heritage, from going extinct.

JUDICIARY

COURT RULES USE OF PHONE CONVERSATION RECORDINGS AS EXHIBITS NEEDS PRIOR APPROVAL

ANTHONY LAM

The Court of Second Instance (TSI) has ruled that using phone conversations recorded by dashboard cameras as exhibits requires prior judicial approval.

In a recent case, five suspects were convicted of conducting a relatively major fraud. An exhibit presented to the Court of First Instance was a clip of a recorded phone conversation that took place in a suspect's car and was captured by the dashboard camera.

With all suspects filing an appeal to the second court, one of them presented the argument that the recorded phone conversation should not have been used as an exhibit due to its lack of legality.

In the appeal procedure, the second court cited an earlier ruling by the same court, num-



bered 741/2021, to point out that in-car conversations captured by a dashboard camera in the same car can be used by the court during its evaluation of evidence for a criminal procedure.

Despite this ruling, the court underlined that phone conver-

sations captured by dashboard cameras are of a different nature and governed by Article 172 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Pursuant to the provision, such recordings can only be initiated with prior court approval.

With that said, the Court of First Instance's acceptance of

the recording as an exhibit was against the law.

The same dashboard camera recorded the in-car conversation between two suspects, which was also accepted by the first court as an exhibit. The second court found this to be legal.

On the other hand, the conversation between a suspect and the brother of the suspect during the former's prison custody was also treated by the first court as an exhibit.

Commenting on this, the second court pointed out that committing this crime attracts a sentence of at least three years' imprisonment. Based on the severity of the punishment, competent laws permits the use of wiretapping as investigative apparatuses.

Therefore, the recording of the conversation is acceptable as a court exhibit.

EDUCATION

TIS hosts robotics competition for students to facilitate theoretical knowledge

The International School of Macao (TIS) has concluded a robotics competition aimed at providing students with opportunities to test their theoretical knowledge.

Held at the school's Innovation Lab, which was opened three months ago as a milestone celebrating the school's efforts in technology, engineering and design, the competition "provided an opportunity for TIS students to showcase their knowledge and skills in using the latest programming software and engineering functioning robots to classmates, parents, teachers and members of the wider community," the TIS noted in a statement.

It added that "the Innovation Lab is a dedicated space



where secondary students conduct Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM)-related projects with access to state-of-the-art equipment and advanced resources at their disposal."

There were several events in the competition. For example, in the event called Bottle Sumo, robots were programmed to strive to become the first to push a two-liter bottle off the table or be the last robot remaining against their

opponents.

In another event that was called Exhibition, teams had complete freedom to create interactive and intelligent robotics projects. In the Unknown Mission Challenge, robots were built and programmed on site for an unknown mission that was only revealed during the competition.

"TIS continues to provide students with personalized education that encourages them to pursue their passions and better develop their skills and knowledge in STEAM subjects, preparing them for the ever-changing world of technological advancement," Technology Department Head and Teacher, Todd Voykin stated. **AL**

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Security chief deems substitute driver service legal

ANTHONY LAM

THE Secretary for Security Office has deemed that substitute driver services should not be seen as illegal car hiring.

Earlier, lawmaker Ella Lei questioned the legality of this service in an inquiry, and whether insurance companies would cover relevant liabilities should accidents happen.

In the case of substitute driver services, drivers are temporarily hired to drive service seekers' cars to designated destinations. This service is normally most popular after late-hour drinking.

Debates have long existed regarding the legality of the service, as Uber in Macau was heavily curtailed by the Secretary for Security, who deemed it illegal.

In relation to its legality, insurance companies are obligated to cover any damage or liability should a car driven by a substitute driver face an accident. The office's explanation is that pursuant to Decree-Law No 57/94/M amended by Executive Regulations No 8/2011, substitute driver service is not within the scenarios for "excluded liabilities."

On the other hand, the Mone-



tary Authority of Macao (AMCM) pointed out that another type of insurance – substitute driver service liability insurance – mainly covers the damages or liabilities caused to third-party individuals during substitute driver service. Buyers of such insurance plans are usually substitute driver service providers.

The AMCM added that, in nearby regions, the specific type of insurance policies is non-mandatory. In addition, due to

the special nature of the policy, terms and conditions are normally different from those in normal third-party policies.

In regard to regulating the service, the Office reiterated that it had studied similar regulations in nearby places. In mainland China, for example, guidelines are issued by associations for people to adopt.

In Japan, stricter rules were adopted in 2002. The law requires that only legal persons or in-

dividual persons with complete civil action abilities and without a criminal record can provide substitute driver services. Drivers must possess a driver's license eligible for public transport.

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) added that it has been advising people to use public roads safely and responsibly. It also suggested that local associations do more to help promote this mentality.



BEIJING'S TOP OFFICIAL IN SARS ON A FOUR-DAY TRIP IN MACAU

The head of Beijing's top office overseeing Hong Kong and Macau affairs, Xia Baolong, has commenced a four-day visit to the city today. The official will be in the city until May 26. In an announcement, the SAR government pledged that it "will fully cooperate and make proper arrangements, and wishes the inspection a complete success." In April, Xia made his first visit to Hong Kong as the official since the office had been upgraded to be positioned directly under the Communist Party. Xia is also the vice-chairman of the 13th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

GOV'T TO HOLD SPORTS CARNIVAL THIS WEEKEND

The Sports Bureau will hold its "2023 Public Recreation Carnival" this weekend from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Tap Seac Square. In a press conference yesterday, the bureau announced four themed areas on-site, including a large inflatable props area, a sports game area, a parent-child obstacle experience area, and a sports and leisure area promoting sports and food. During the event, different types of sports performances will be arranged, including Muay Thai, Tai Chi and Roliball, among others.

CHINA APPROVES VACCINES FOR XBB VARIANT: ZHONG NANSHAN

China has approved two Covid-19 vaccines to counter the country's currently dominant XBB variant and the new vaccines will soon be released to the market. China's top respiratory disease expert Zhong Nanshan revealed yesterday. According to Zhong, a small wave of infections at the end of April and early May was "anticipated," and the XBB mutant has become a mainstream strain of Covid-19 in China. According to the data disclosed by the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC), the infection rate of the XBB mutation increased from 0.2% in mid-February to 74.4% in late April and then to 83.6% in early May.



GAMING

May casino revenues to reach new high post-Covid

CASINO revenue is forecast to reach a new post-pandemic high of MOP15.5 billion in May, which translates to an average daily casino

floor income of around MOP500 million, according to JP Morgan analysts DS Kim and Mufan Shi.

In a note, it was stated that the month-to-date

gross gaming revenues have already reached MO11.1 billion, according to the analysts' estimates, which show a daily run-rate of around 85%

of pre-Covid levels.

The figure represents an increase when compared to the recovery rates during the first quarter.

According to the analysts, last week's revenues slowed down to around MOP450 million a day, "we'd again flag the potential margin of error in these weekly checks and would focus on monthly/month-to-date trends (versus just a sin-

gle week)."

On the six gaming operators' casino stocks that have been on a decline, both experts remarked, "We continue to believe – and hope – that better-than-expected fundamentals will ultimately drive the sentiment or stocks higher as the Street numbers move up, which in turn should further shave off valuations to 'too cheap to ignore' levels."

Even analysts at Barclays expect the optimism to continue.

"This isn't the end of Macau's moment," Barclays' U.S. Gaming Leisure & Lodging analyst Brandt Montour wrote in a note last week.

Barclays believes Macau may be "more resilient," than pre-pandemic, and Wynn is strategically benefitting more than other players in the region. According to its research, Wynn is outpacing other Vegas operators in room rates, table spend and slot play. **LV**

IC CALLS FOR PROPOSALS FOR MACAU CITY FRINGE FESTIVAL

As the 22nd edition of the Macau City Fringe Festival will take place in January 2024, the Cultural Affairs Bureau, which organizes the event, has called for proposals of programs and performance venues, effective now until June 23. For the 2024 edition, the organizer encourages all applicants to "show an innovative spirit and risk-taking attitude," to "break the barriers of traditional venues" and to "create works that highlight the characteristics and the cultural connotations of Macau." This open call aims to involve all local arts and cultural associations in Macau, as well as curators, producers, and independent artists.

FINANCE SECTOR EARNINGS RISE UP TO 10%

At the end of the first quarter of 2023, Financial Activities had 8,452 full-time employees; average earnings (excluding irregular remuneration) of full-time employees in March were MOP30,510, up by 2.1% year-on-year. Data from the Statistics and Census Service shows that the Banking Sector had 7,188 full-time employees, an increase of 1.9% year-on-year. Their average earnings in March went up by 1.1% to MOP30,830. Other Financial Intermediation had 260 full-time employees, up by 5.7% year-on-year; their average earnings rose by 10.2% to MOP27,810.

GAMING

GALAXY EYES FURTHER RECRUITMENT AS REVENUES UP 72%

LYNZY VALLES

GALAXY'S revenues during the first quarter (Q1) of 2023 surged up to 72% to HKD7.05 billion year-on-year amid the ongoing robust recovery of the casino sector following the border reopening.

In a statement, the gaming operator said that the figure is an increase of 142% quarter-to-quarter, while its EBITDA stood at HKD1.91 billion versus HKD575 million in Q1 2022 and a negative figure of HKD163 million in Q4 2022.

"We were particularly encouraged by the performance over the Chinese New Year Golden Week, which demonstrated solid demand," said Lui Che Woo, chairman of Galaxy Entertainment Group.

Looking forward into Q2, the group expects further improvements as more existing facilities come online following additional staff recruitment, expanded flight and ferry capacity, and the opening of new amenities such as Galaxy International

MDT ARCHIVE



Convention Center, Raffles at Galaxy Macau and Andaz Macau.

According to Lui, the re-opening after Covid-19 and Phase 3 expansion will generate 900 new jobs for locals.

"We are recruiting additional staff in preparation for the opening of the highly anticipated Raffles at Galaxy Macau and Andaz Macau which will add another 1,150 rooms, bringing our total Macau hotel room count to around 6,000 rooms and suites," he remarked.

Reviewing its Phase 4 project, the integrated resort will bring its hotel capacity to around 7,500 rooms and suites.

"We have submitted our investment plans to the Macau Government for the next 10 years

and are in active discussions with the Government to refine those investment plans. We are

confident that the final mutually agreed plans will further diversify and broaden GEG's nongaming offerings, [and] attract a more diverse customer

base including international visitors," Lui said.

All six operators recorded positive earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) in the three months ending March, with Sands China leading at USD398 million, according to company disclosures.

Data from the local government shows that revenues shot up to MOP34.64 billion in Q1, figures that will lead to the attainment of the government's forecast of MOP130 billion.

SURVEY

Local youth have 'little intention' to seek employment in Zhuhai

STAFF REPORTER

WHILE Macau has promoted several times work cooperation with mainland cities such as Zhuhai, a majority of local youth aged from 18 to 45 asserted they have only a limited interest in going to Zhuhai to find jobs, a recent survey from the Macau Economic and People's Livelihood Alliance revealed.

According to the survey results, about 71% of the respondents claimed that they have minimal intentions to go to Zhuhai in order to find work, from the total of 1,040 valid questionnaires which were collected.

Among the respondents, factors such as family, unfamiliarity with Zhuhai, and transportation are the most important ones making them reluctant to travel to Zhuhai, accounting for more than 30%.

As Zhuhai has launched employment and entrepreneurship support policies targeted at creating more internships or long career posts, respondents



indicated that salary, working environment and development opportunities were their priorities when applying for a post in Zhuhai.

However, while about 75% of the respondents expected a monthly salary of RMB12,000 or above, corresponding to around MOP13,700 per month.

The Economic and People's Livelihood Alliance explained

that the salary packages are based on the professional level of job seekers and the particular requirements of companies.

In order to encourage youth to work in Zhuhai, the MSAR government said that it can help to provide assistance in accommodation and transportation, such as providing apartments to young people who are working in the mainland.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES TALLY 39 IN 2022

STAFF REPORTER

SUSPECTED domestic violence cases in 2022 stood at 39, of which 19 were domestic violence spouse cases, 16 involved children and three involved elders.

Data from the Women and Children's Affairs Committee shows that the average monthly number of suspected domestic violence cases was 3.3 cases, which is a significant drop from 2021.

In 2021, the city recorded an aggregate tally of 81 registered suspected cases of domestic violence, which was an increase of 43 cases compared to 2020.

The committee members, at their first meeting this year, reported that the committee's research of the "Macau Women's Current Situation Report 2022" carried out investigations into four aspects: gender equality status, employment status and social participation, family sta-

tus, health and physical and mental status.

With regard to gender gap indicators at world level and gender inequality indicators, "Macau is far ahead of several countries and regions in Asia."

General conclusions will be published at a later date, according to the committee.

In March this year, The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has expressed concerns over the city's inadequate protection against domestic violence and high rate of reports.

The committee said it was "concerned that the law on preventing and combating domestic violence does not cover same-sex couples, and about reports of its insufficient implementation in the context of a relatively high reporting rate with conversely proportionate low investigation and low prosecution rate."



BIG DATA

Meta fined record \$1.3 billion, ordered to stop sending European user data to US

KELVIN CHAN, LONDON

THE European Union slapped Meta with a record \$1.3 billion privacy fine yesterday [Macau time] and ordered it to stop transferring users' personal information across the Atlantic by October, the latest salvo in a decadelong case sparked by U.S. cybersnooping fears.

The penalty of 1.2 billion euros is the biggest since the EU's strict data privacy regime took effect five years ago, surpassing Amazon's 746 million euro fine in 2021 for data protection violations.

Meta, which had previously warned that services for its users in Europe could be cut off, vowed to appeal and ask courts to immediately put the decision on hold.

The company said "there is no immediate disruption to Facebook in Europe." The decision applies to user data like names, email and IP addresses, messages, viewing history, geolocation data and other information that Meta — and other tech giants like Google — use for targeted online ads.

"This decision is flawed, unjustified and sets a dangerous precedent for the countless other companies transferring data between the EU and U.S.," Nick Clegg, Meta's president of global affairs, and chief legal officer Jennifer Newstead said in a statement.

It's yet another twist in a legal battle that began in 2013 when Austrian lawyer and privacy activist Max Schrems filed a complaint about Facebook's handling of his data following former Na-

AP PHOTO



tional Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden's revelations of electronic surveillance by U.S. security agencies. That included the disclosure that Facebook gave the agencies access to the personal data of Europeans.

The saga has highlighted the clash between Washington and Brussels over the differences between Europe's strict view on data privacy and the comparatively lax regime in the U.S., which lacks a federal privacy law. The EU has been a global leader in reining in the power of Big Tech with a series of regulations forcing them police their platforms more strictly and protect users' personal information.

An agreement covering EU-U.S. data transfers known as the

Privacy Shield was struck down in 2020 by the EU's top court, which said it didn't do enough to protect residents from the U.S. government's electronic prying. The decision confirmed that another tool to govern data transfers — stock legal contracts — was also invalid.

Brussels and Washington signed a deal last year on a reworked Privacy Shield that Meta could use, but the pact is awaiting a decision from European officials on whether it adequately protects data privacy.

EU institutions have been reviewing the agreement, and the bloc's lawmakers this month called for improvements, saying the safeguards aren't strong enough.

The Ireland's Data Protection

Commission handed down the fine as Meta's lead privacy regulator in the 27-nation bloc because the Silicon Valley tech giant's European headquarters is based in Dublin.

The Irish watchdog said it gave Meta five months to stop sending European user data to the U.S. and six months to bring its data operations into compliance "by ceasing the unlawful processing, including storage, in the U.S." of European users' personal data transferred in violation of the bloc's privacy rules.

In other words, Meta has to erase all that data, which could be a bigger problem than the fine, said Johnny Ryan, senior fellow at the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, a nonprofit rights group that

has worked on digital and data issues.

"This order to delete data is really a headache for Meta," Ryan said. If the company has to scrub data for hundreds of millions of European Union users going back 10 years, "it is very hard to see how it will be able to comply with that order."

If a new transatlantic privacy agreement does take effect before the deadlines, "our services can continue as they do today without any disruption or impact on users," Meta said.

Schrems predicted that Meta has "no real chance" of getting the decision materially overturned. And a new privacy pact might not mean the end of Meta's troubles, because there's a good chance it could be tossed out by the EU's top court, he said.

"Meta plans to rely on the new deal for transfers going forward, but this is likely not a permanent fix," Schrems said in a statement. "Unless U.S. surveillance laws gets fixed, Meta will likely have to keep EU data in the EU."

Schrems said a possible solution could be a "federated" social network, where European data stays in Meta's data centers in Europe, "unless users for example chat with a U.S. friend."

Meta warned in its latest earnings report that without a legal basis for data transfers, it will be forced to stop offering its products and services in Europe, "which would materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, and results of operations." **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

The Londoner Macao to launch 'Changing of the Guard' show to promote British culture



The Londoner Macao will launch its "Changing of the Guard" entertainment extravaganza from May 26, recreating the display of British

pageantry at the London-themed property's Crystal Palace lobby atrium.

The "Changing of the Guard" ceremony at Bu-

ckingham Palace in London has a long history and is one of the most popular tourist attractions in the UK.

This display of pomp and ceremony is performed six days a week.

Modern twists on this traditional pageantry include special effects, music and dynamic images of the guards on 12 moving LED displays across three levels.

The entertainment was created in collaboration with Hasbas Entertainment, while the musical score was arranged by Tim Heintz, a Los Angeles-based musician, composer and arranger whose works are heard on television, films, and theme parks including Disney Parks and Universal Studios.

Studio City Water Park hosts 'Splash in Pink 520 Water Park' for second anniversary



To celebrate its second anniversary, the Studio City Water Park has hosted the "Splash in Pink 520 Water Park" party on May 20, which featured the attendance of hundreds of participants, such as the HK model and actor Jeffrey Ngai, and also the performance of DJs Lokyii and Geek Fox, as well as local pop-funk band Scamper.

As it celebrates its second year since opening, the Studio City Water Park has doubled in size, reaching a total of 26,000 square kilometers with the recent opening of the indoor park, giving the opportunity for all aquatic enthusiasts to go to the park 365 days a year.

SECURITY

US signs new pact with Papua New Guinea amid competition with China

NICK PERRY, PORT MORESBY

THE United States signed a new security pact with Papua New Guinea yesterday as it competes with China for influence in the Pacific.

Papua New Guinea's location just north of Australia makes it strategically significant. It was the site of fierce battles during World War II, and with a population of nearly 10 million people, it's the most populous Pacific Island nation.

The State Department said the new agreement provides a framework to help improve security cooperation, enhance the capacity of Papua New Guinea's defense force and increase regional stability. The full agreement will be made public once politicians in both countries have an opportunity for input, likely in a couple of months.

"The work that we're doing together to try to shape the future could not be more important, could not be more timely," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters. "We're deeply invested in the Indo-Pacific because our planet's future is being written here. Papua New Guinea is playing a critical role in shaping that future."

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape said the pact is mutually beneficial and "secures our national interests" in "becoming a robust economy in this part of the world."

But the agreement sparked

AP PHOTO



Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape (right) with New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins at a breakfast meeting in Port Moresby yesterday

student protests in the second-largest city, Lae. And many in the Pacific are concerned about the increasing militarization of the region.

Student Naomi Kipoi, 17, said she was opposed to the security pact because she felt it means the U.S. could come to her country whenever it pleased without permission. She said China had been a big help to her country by building roads and funding schools.

"The U.S. didn't help us with aid and other things," Kipoi said.

"They're just trying to sign the agreement."

Last year, nearby Solomon Islands signed its own security pact with China, a move that raised alarm throughout the Pacific. The U.S. has increased its focus on the Pacific, opening embassies in Solomon Islands and Tonga, reviving Peace Corps volunteer efforts, and encouraging more business investment.

But some have questioned how reliable a partner the U.S. is in the Pacific, particularly after

President Joe Biden canceled his plans to make an historic stop in Papua New Guinea to sign the pact. Biden would have been the first sitting U.S. president to visit any Pacific Island country, but he ended up canceling to focus on the debt limit talks back at home.

Blinken traveled in Biden's place, arriving in Papua New Guinea early yesterday. In response to news of Blinken's impending visit, China warned against the introduction of "geopolitical games" into the region.

As well as the defense pact, the U.S. also signed a maritime agreement with Papua New Guinea which will allow the U.S. Coast Guard to partner with the Pacific nation to counter illegal fishing and drug smuggling.

The U.S. visit coincided with a trip by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was hosting a meeting with Pacific Island leaders to discuss ways to better cooperate.

Blinken met with New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins and said the two nations had a shared vision for the region.

"To make sure that it remains free, open, secure and prosperous," Blinken said.

Hipkins told Blinken he was very happy that Blinken had made the trip.

"The increased U.S. presence in the Pacific is something we welcome," Hipkins said.

But Hipkins also drew a distinction to his own nation's efforts.

"We are not interested in the militarization of the Pacific," Hipkins told reporters before the Blinken meeting. "We are interested in working with the Pacific on issues where we have mutual interest. Issues around climate change. And we're not going to be attaching military strings to that support."

Hipkins was one of the few leaders to venture out publicly. He got a rapturous reception from hundreds of well-wishers when he visited Gordons Market, a large fruit and vegetable market. **MDT/AP**

SOCIAL MEDIA

Comedian Uncle Roger 'silenced' on Chinese platforms

A Malaysian comedian better known for mocking attempts by Western chefs at Asian cooking has had his Chinese social media account suspended after making jokes about China.

Nigel Ng, who uses the name Uncle Roger, is the latest comedian to feel the consequences of jokes that could be perceived as reflecting negatively on China under increasingly intense censorship and rising nationalism.

Last week, a Chinese comedian came under police investigation for a joke

about stray dogs.

Ng posted a video clip last Thursday from an upcoming comedy special in which he pokes fun at Chinese surveillance and Beijing's claims of sovereignty over Taiwan.

The video shows Ng interacting with someone in the audience who said he is from Guangzhou, a metropolis in China's south.

"Good country, good country, we have to say that now, correct?" Ng says. "All the phones listening."

Ng then jokes with members of the audience who said they're from

Taiwan, saying Taiwan is not a real country. "I hope one day you rejoin the motherland. One China," he said.

His Weibo account said yesterday that he was banned from posting for "violating relevant laws and regulations." Ng's agency did not respond to a request for comment.

A Chinese comedian, meanwhile, could face jail time as police and government departments investigate him for a joke he made at a performance earlier in May.

Beijing police annou-

nced last Wednesday that they were investigating comedian Li Haoshi "for severely insulting" the People's Liberation Army.

The comedian, who goes by the stage name HOUSE, made a joke about stray dogs by riffing on a well-known propaganda slogan used to describe the Chinese military.

Li said he had adopted two dogs who were very energetic when they went after squirrels, shooting off like artillery shells after a target.

Usually, he said, dogs are cute and melt your heart,

but when he sees his two dogs, he thinks of the Chinese phrase, "Able to win battles, with first-rate style."

The phrase was first used 10 years ago by Chinese leader Xi Jinping to describe planned reforms for the Chinese military, according to the China Media Project, which studies Chinese media.

A government department known as Beijing's Comprehensive Team of Law Enforcement on Cultural Market said in a statement last week it had received tips from the public about Li's performance on

May 13 and in response launched an investigation into the company Li is signed with.

The law enforcement team said it would fine the company, Xiao Guo Wenhua, about \$2 million (13.3 million yuan). The company did not respond to a request for comment.

An officer who did not give his name at Beijing's police headquarters declined to say whether Li was under detention or arrest, saying the investigation was continuing and the results would be publicized accordingly. **MDT/AP**

INDIA

G20 officials arrive in disputed Kashmir as authorities reduces visibility of security in disputed region

AIJAZ HUSSAIN, SRINAGAR

DELEGATES from the Group of 20 nations arrived in Indian-controlled Kashmir yesterday to participate in a tourism meeting condemned by China and Pakistan, as authorities significantly reduced visibility of the security in the disputed region's main city.

The meeting scheduled for today [Macau time] is the first significant international event in Kashmir since New Delhi stripped the Muslim-majority region of semi-autonomy in 2019. Indian authorities hope the meeting will show that the controversial changes have brought "peace and prosperity" to the region.

The delegates will discuss topics like green tourism and destination management. Side events on ecotourism and role of films in promoting tourist destinations have also been scheduled.

Yesterday, the region's main city of Srinagar, appeared calm and roads never as clean. Most of the security checkpoints were removed or camouflaged with cubicle-like security posts made of G20 signages behind which security officials stood.

Officials said hundreds of officers were specially trained for what they call "invisible policing" for the event.

Shops in the city center also opened earlier than usual after several meeting between trade representatives and security officials. But authorities closed the

AP PHOTO



main road leading to the convention center for civilian traffic and shut many schools in the city.

The measures contrasted starkly to the security imposed in the days before the event. A massive security cordon was placed around the venue on the shores of Dal Lake in Srinagar with elite naval commandos patrolling in rubber boats in the water. The city's commercial center was spruced up, with freshly black-topped roads leading to the lakeside convention center and power poles lit in the colors of India's national flag.

"We have the making of a unique meeting," India's chief coordinator for the G20, Harshvardhan Shringla, told reporters Sunday. He said the event will have the highest representation of foreign

delegates in comparison to previous tourism meetings India held in the states of West Bengal and Gujarat earlier this year.

Last week, the U.N. special rapporteur on minority issues, Fernand de Varennes, said the meeting would support a "facade of normalcy" while "massive human rights violations" continue in the region. India's mission at the U.N. in Geneva rejected the statement as "baseless" and "unwarranted allegations."

India's tourism secretary, Arvind Singh, told reporters Saturday that the meeting "was not only to showcase its (Kashmir's) potential for tourism but to also signal globally the restoration of stability and normalcy in the region."

The region remains one of the world's most heavily militarized territories, with hundreds of thousands of Indian troops. In 1989, a violent separatist insurgency erupted in the region that sought independence or a merger with Pakistan. India replied with a brutal counter insurgency and tens of thousands of civilians, soldiers and rebels have been killed in the conflict.

India's crackdown intensified after 2019 when New Delhi took the region under its direct control. Since then the territory's people and its media have been largely silenced. Authorities have seized scores of homes and arrested hundreds of people under stringent anti-terror laws. The government says such actions are neces-

sary to stop what it calls a "terror ecosystem."

Authorities have also enacted new laws that critics and many Kashmiris fear could transform the region's demographics.

The G20, made up of the world's largest economies, has a rolling presidency with a different member setting priorities each year. India is steering the group in 2023.

India has been promoting tourism in Kashmir as a sign of peace since 2019 decision. But the region, known for rolling Himalayan foothills, has for decades been a major domestic tourist destination. Millions of visitors arrive Kashmir every year and enjoy a strange peace kept by ubiquitous security checkpoints, armored vehicles and patrolling soldiers.

The mainstay of Kashmir's economy, however, continues to be agriculture, and tourism industry only contributes about 7% to the region's GDP.

China, with which India is locked in a military standoff along the mostly unmarked border in the Ladakh region, has boycotted the event. Pakistan, which controls a part of Kashmir but, like India, claims the entire territory, has also slammed New Delhi for holding the meeting in Srinagar.

Both have argued that such meetings can't be held in disputed territories.

India has dismissed Pakistan's criticism, saying that the country is not even a member of the G20. **MDT/AP**

MONGOLIA

Rare earths, Ukraine top agenda on French President Macron's historic visit

ACCCESS to rare earth minerals and Russia's war against Ukraine topped the agenda on French President Emmanuel Macron's historic visit to Mongolia.

Macron met with his Mongolian counterpart Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh last weekend in the capital Ulaanbaatar and pledged cooperation on the extrac-

tion and trade of minerals used in satellites, cell phones and other key technologies.

The visit was the first by a French head of state to Mongolia, a landlocked democracy of 3 million people twice the size of Texas sandwiched between Russia and China.

Mongolia's grasslands, mountains and deserts

hold vast deposits of coal, copper and lesser-known minerals vital to the modern economy.

Macron's trip followed his attendance at the Group of Seven summit in Japan, where Russia's invasion of Ukraine was a key topic.

The conflict is having a global impact, Macron said, referring to high food prices and more refugees.

More than 8 million Ukrainians have been forced from their homes, according to the United Nations.

"A return to peace on the European continent in compliance with international law," is the ultimate objective, Macron said. "I was able to share with the President our will to support a state that is under aggression." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



GERMANY

Spy chief warns authoritarian states stoking anti-government mood

FRANK JORDANS, BERLIN

THE head of Germany's domestic intelligence agency warned yesterday of a rise in anti-government extremism - fueled by authoritarian states such as Russia - that seeks to divide society and topple the government.

German security agencies have disrupted several plots in recent years by small groups linked to the Reich Citizens movement accused of planning attacks on critical infrastructure, government officials and even the national parliament. While it is unclear how far advanced such plans were, authorities have expressed alarm that the alleged plotters had acquired weapons and included people who aren't usually on the radar of security agencies, such as judges and police officers.

Thomas Haldenwang, who heads the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, or BfV, said the mixing of previously separate groups — from far-right extremists to QAnon conspiracy theorists — and their willingness to use violence was particularly worrying.

"What links all of these groups is that they despise our state and our democracy, reject it and want to abolish it," he told The Associated Press in an interview in Berlin.

Haldenwang said anti-government extremists consciously use wedge issues to stoke fear and gain new followers. These include migration — where far-right actors have perpetuated the myth of a "great replacement" — but also government measures to curb the coronavirus pandemic and combat climate change.

"All of these issues can be used to spread a particular narrative and give the impression that the state isn't in control of certain situations and therefore it needs to be toppled," he said.

Recent government plans to encourage Germans to replace old oil and gas heaters with efficient and climate-friendly heat pumps have



Thomas Haldenwang, head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, poses during an interview with AP

faced hostility from opposition parties but also extremist groups seeking to tap into homeowners' fears that they'll be saddled with high costs, despite warnings from experts that the alternative is more expensive in the long run.

"The more complex an issue is, the more intensively one has to deal with a topic, the more there is a tendency to seek simple answers and run after people who offer an easy solution for problems," said Haldenwang. "Often those are people from the extremist circles."

The BfV chief said such trends are actively fueled by countries like Russia, which has an interest in destabilizing democracy in Europe's biggest economy.

"When they recognize that there are sentiments in the country that can lead to division, then those sentiments are supported," he said. "And we see a large number of measures being taken (to that effect)."

Haldenwang cited disinformation being spread by Russian state media and internet platforms, but said key influencers are also targeted by Russia's agents in Berlin to carry propaganda into German society.

"Naturally there are attempts to get close to certain politicians on the right or left fringes," he told The AP. "Less so to support those political parties than to use their role

to split society."

Aside from the far-right Alternative for Germany party, which has come under scrutiny from the BfV, among the most prominent figures attacking the government are Left party lawmaker Sahra Wagenknecht and Haldenwang's own predecessor, Hans-Georg Maassen, who was fired five years ago after downplaying anti-migrant violence.

"Of course it's nice for Russian actors if they can win such people over for their purposes and possibly use their influence in certain audiences," said Haldenwang.

"If those people have a large number of followers in certain media then the aim of dividing society is achieved in that way," he said, adding: "The fact that my predecessor allows himself to become a mouthpiece for this is something that irritates me beyond all measure."

Haldenwang said there were "astonishing parallels" between the present and the 1920s and 1930s that should prompt concern.

"For too long there was too little opposition to the rise of extremism and authoritarianism," he told a conference of security experts yesterday. "Ninety years ago an elected extremist party gained power that first led Germany into a dictatorship and finally toward total ruin."

While the current conditions are different than a

century ago, Haldenwang said Russia's attack on Ukraine last year has been seized upon by "intellectual arsonists on the new right, demagogues and extremist ideologues, conspiracy theorists and influencers for foreign powers" who have helped stoke anxiety and polarization in some parts of society.

Germany and other European countries have expelled a considerable number of suspected Russian spies since the outbreak of war and sought to curb its state-backed media. China is also increasingly being seen as a threat in the theater of "hybrid warfare," though Beijing's efforts to undermine democracy in Germany and elsewhere are considered more subtle but potentially more dangerous.

"Russia is the storm, China is climate change," he said, echoing a similar warning from last year.

Haldenwang told The AP that coup plots such as those disrupted last year likely won't be the last as some "are again talking about a 'Day X' when certain things are meant to happen."

"We are monitoring such efforts very intensively, very carefully, and I'm certain that we will be able to intervene in time together with other security agencies," he said. "But I can't completely rule out that groups will form under the radar of the security agencies." MDT/AP

this day in history

1958 HISTORIC SHEERNESS DOCKS TO CLOSE



The government has announced the closure of one of the oldest naval dockyards in the UK.

All 2,500 jobs at Sheerness Docks on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent are in jeopardy.

The first ever secretary of the Admiralty, Samuel Pepys, established the dockyard in the 17th century as an extension to the Royal Navy headquarters in nearby Chatham.

The former mayor of Rochester - the nearest city - and President of the Medway Towns Trades Council reported one of his councillors saying, "Pepys would turn in his grave".

One dockworker said: "I'll have to leave, there's nothing else here."

Members of Sheerness Urban District Council say they are concerned about the future of the town and repaying debts for their massive re-building and slum-clearance programme.

The Council has already telegraphed Prime Minister Harold Macmillan about delaying the closure until its future use has been decided and alternative industries have been developed.

Sheerness Co-operative Society - one of the oldest in the country - is also under threat.

The co-op's managing secretary said: "My society does 50% of its trade with dockyard employees and officials and naturally a large part of our trade will be affected. At the moment we're doing a quarter of a million pound trade annually, so you can work that one out."

The port facilities at Chatham are also likely to be affected as the Admiralty withdraws its headquarters and shuts down the Royal Navy barracks there.

Chatham has an even longer history than Sheerness and Lord Nelson's famous ship, Victory, was built there.

The impact of losing the 5,000 sailors from the barracks will be felt in all the surrounding Medway towns.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Redundancies at Sheerness were spread over several months until the naval dockyards closed permanently in March 1960. It was taken over by the Medway Port Authority and by 2002 was the largest port for motor imports in the UK. Chatham continued as a naval dockyard until it closed in 1984 when the site became a naval museum.

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You must follow your desires and dreams. Take a second look; difficulties with appliances, water, or electricity in your home may be evident. Romantic relationships could be under pressure.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You have been stagnating for some time now and you need a change of pace. Your outgoing charm and obvious talent will be admired. Make alternate plans just in case you need to make a career shift.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
You should be able to get involved in an interesting proposition today. You will find that unfinished projects at home will be most satisfying.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You should visit a friend or relative who hasn't been well. If you try to manipulate emotional situations you will find yourself alienated. Take care of your personal needs.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Unrealistic promises will only get you in trouble. You may be out of sorts if you have been extravagant or have let children or friends take advantage of you financially.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Ideas may sound good, but be careful if people are just looking for handouts. Promote your ideas now. Make career changes that may increase your income.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Don't be too quick to blame others for your bad mood. You need to be inspired and have your spirits lifted. Be aware of any deception on the part of those you deal with.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Control your emotions and everything will fall into place. You have two choices; Get out on your own, or bend to your mate's whims. Accept the inevitable.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You should focus on moneymaking matters and stay away from emotional disputes. Entertainment should include sports events or physical activities.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Lack of cash might be partly to blame for the problems at home. Resistance leading to conflict will only make it twice as hard to turn the situation around.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Your relationship appears to be stressed out and depleted. You are best to back away from commitment. Alienation may be the result of a misunderstanding.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Problems with fire, gas, or oil may cause disruptions and annoyances. You need to spend some time getting to know this person all over again.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

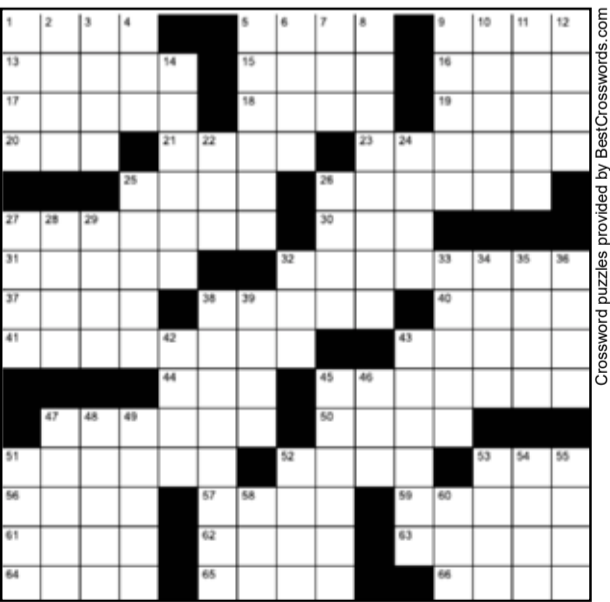
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	15	29	fine
Changchun	9	25	fine
Chengdu	15	25	overcast
Chongqing	17	25	cloudy
Fuzhou	21	23	overcast
Guangzhou	24	31	rain
Guiyang	15	23	overcast
Haikou	25	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	14	24	cloudy
Harbin	8	26	fine
Hefei	12	25	overcast
Nanjing	13	26	cloudy
Shanghai	14	26	cloudy
Taipei	19	22	overcast
Wuhan	14	24	cloudy
Hong Hong	26	27	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	13	21	rain
Frankfurt	8	19	cloudy
Paris	8	21	overcast
London	9	19	overcast
New York	12	21	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Strong criticism; 5- Game played on horseback; 9- Chimney residue; 13- Duck with soft down; 15- Norwegian saint; 16- Morales of "NYPD Blue"; 17- Compadre; 18- Duration; 19- Must've been something ____; 20- Hanoi holiday; 21- At that point; 23- Dared; 25- Physical suffering; 26- Cossack chief; 27- Four singers; 30- Resin; 31- Set free; 32- Aloft; 37- News bit; 38- Biblical brother; 40- Chief; 41- Pertaining to the home; 43- Grocery lane; 44- ____ be an honor; 45- Winter wind; 47- Walk stealthily; 50- Historical chapters; 51- Facade; 52- Nicholas II was the last Russian one; 53- Canard; 56- Writer Dinesen; 57- Cool; 59- Vigilant; 61- Rival rival; 62- Feminizing suffix; 63- Choir member; 64- Like the White Rabbit; 65- Indian exercise method; 66- Outstanding;

DOWN 1- Noteworthy achievement; 2- Gimlet garnish; 3- Mine entrance; 4- Small cask; 5- Powerful; 6- Actress Lena; 7- On the ____ (fleeing); 8- Capsize; 9- Quake; 10- City near Kobe; 11- Like Cheerios; 12- Bound; 14- Revolve; 22- Make haste; 24- Metrical foot; 25- Of first importance; 26- Currency exchange fee; 27- One pound sterling; 28- A law ____ itself; 29- Up and ____!; 32- Joan of ____; French heroine; 33- Leaves out; 34- Like some decisions; 35- Egypt's river; 36- Cabinet dept.; 38- A lawyer; 39- Assistant, particularly to heads of state; 42- Web locale; 43- Turkey's highest peak; 45- Lipton rival; 46- ... ____ mouse?; 47- Unit of magnetic induction; 48- Not proper; 49- Black tea; 51- Pill bottle; 52- Strong taste; 53- Jester Jay; 54- Wrinkle remover; 55- French 101 infinitive; 58- Brian of Roxy Music; 60- Meadow;

Yesterday's solution



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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AD



A wood stork flies, in Carauari, Brazil



Boats navigate a river in Carauari

NATURE

IN THE AMAZON, BRAZILIAN ECOLOGISTS TRY NEW APPROACH AGAINST DEFORESTATION AND POVERTY

FABIANO MAISONNAV,
CARAUARI

IN a remote corner of the Amazon, Brazilian ecologists are trying to succeed where a lack of governance has proved disastrous. They're managing a stretch of land in a way that welcomes both local people and scientists to engage in preserving the world's largest tropical forest.

The goal is ambitious, counter the forces that have destroyed 10% of the forest in less than four decades and create something that can be replicated in other parts of the Amazon.

It began with a four-month expedition along the Juruá River in 2016. Researchers visited some 100 communities that at first sight looked similar: rows of wooden homes on stilts along the water. But they were struck by contrasts in the living conditions.

To understand what they saw, it's important to know that 29% of the Amazon, an area roughly three times the size of California, is either public land with no special protection, or public land for which no public information exists, according to a study by the Amazon Institute of People and the Environment.

These areas have been shown to be more vulnerable to deforestation. Land robbers drive traditional communities off the land and then clear it, hoping the government will recognize them as owners, which usually happens.

"It's very unequal. Inside protected areas, there are many positive things happening, but outside, they seemed to be 40 years

behind," João Vitor Campos-Silva, a tropical socio-ecologist, told The Associated Press.

The researchers were aware that the part of the river known as Medio Juruá, near the city of Carauari, has remarkable social organization and people manage its fish and forest products, such as acai, sustainably. The land designation here is "extractive reserves," public lands where residents are allowed to fish and harvest some crops.

But outside these reserves, in many places, people take orders from self-appointed landowners, Campos-Silva said. Entire communities are denied access to lakes, even to fish to feed their families. People don't own the land, and they don't know who does.

"We started thinking that it might be interesting to design a conservation model based on a basin scale," where communities could harvest forest produce and fish and protect the forest, instead of moving to the city or resorting to illegal activities, such as unlicensed logging and overfishing.

So they created the non-profit Juruá Institute and purchased a 13 km (8 miles) rainforest property along the Juruá River. It includes about 20 lakes, some with good potential for raising prized pirarucu, the world's largest freshwater scale fish, which can reach up to 200 kilos.

The goal, Campos-Silva said, is to promote high-quality science, grounded in working together with the region's people.

In the vicinity of the Institute's

land there are 12 communities of former rubber-tappers. Brazilians call them "ribeirinhos," or river people, as distinguished from Indigenous residents.

In the past, the chance to make a living from rubber trees drew their grandparents to the Amazon. Nowadays the main revenue comes from pirarucu. Controlling that fishery has proved to be sustainable, reviving a species that was in decline and generating income without the need to clear the forest, with all that means for loss of biodiversity.

The Amazon rainforest, covering an area twice the size of India, also holds tremendous stores of carbon and is a crucial buffer against climate change. Driven by land-robbers, deforestation surged to a 15-year high in recent years while Jair Bolsonaro, who left office in January, was president. Destruction in the eastern Amazon has been so extensive that it has become a carbon source, rather than a carbon sink.

To involve the riverine communities in governance, the institute set up a steering committee and launched a series of public meetings called "community of dreams," where people could prioritize the improvements they want most.

To avoid potential gender and age biases, they worked in three groups - women, youth, and men, said Campos-Silva.

The president of the river communities' association, Fernanda de Araujo Moraes, said the main purpose is to prevent river people from moving to Amazon cities, where unemployment among

low-skilled people is rampant and violence is widespread, thanks to drug-trafficking.

In her own community of Lago Serrado, where 12 families live in stilt houses, both the women and men listed 24-hour electricity as their top priority. Currently, it's only available three hours a day. The youths chose fishing training.

Moraes believes this kind of collaboration is the fastest route to progress. "We want to improve people's lives and the Institute wants the same thing," she said, seated on the floor of her house, tending to her infant daughter. The government, she said, is not always on the same page.

"This is something that doesn't exist here in the Amazon, it doesn't exist anywhere in Brazil. If it works, which it will, it will attract a lot of people's attention," said resident José Alves de Moraes, in an interview by the lake just behind the community.

Moraes works as a lake keeper, watching for trespassers who might take fish or cut trees. His family hopes to take part in the institute's management of pirarucu fishing, which awaits federal approval.

On the scientific front, the institute has built a houseboat and a wooden house for as many as 20 researchers to spend seasons along the Juruá River. One is studying the uakari monkey. Others are looking at what makes social arrangements successful in the region. They created a program, Forest Scientists, to train local high school students in field collection, data systematization, and how to prepare reports.

The initiative is led by Carlos Peres, an Amazon-born professor of tropical conservation ecology at the University of East Anglia, in the United Kingdom. In April this work, begun as an experiment, got some recognition from a Swiss nonprofit when he and three other scientists won the Frontiers Planet Prize, which comes with \$1.1 million. The money will be reinvested in the project, which has already received support from Synchronicity Earth, National Geographic and Rolex within Perpetual Planet Project.

The winning study used data gathered during that 2016 trip. Co-authored by Campos-Silva and others, it found communities living inside protected areas enjoy better access to health care, education, electricity, and basic sanitation, plus a more stable income, than communities in undesignated areas. They found only 5% of adults inside protected areas aspire to move to a city, compared with 58% of adults in unprotected areas.

The article argues that in tropical countries with limited resources, it is possible to achieve conservation and benefit local communities at the same time, by putting more power in their hands.

Peres, the Institute's scientific director, says it hopes to inspire solutions across the Amazon region, by integrating traditional knowledge with the science of Western models.

"We do not have all the answers," he said. "But we have the audacity to try to advance on these issues." **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

Angry fans crash through gate at El Salvador match in stampede that kills 12, injures dozens

MARCOS ALEMÁN,
SAN SALVADOR

FANS angry at being blocked from entering a Salvadoran soccer league match despite having tickets knocked down a small access gate to the stadium, creating a crush that killed 12 people and injured dozens, officials and witnesses said yesterday [Macau time].

Diego Armando, 14, said he went with this father to watch Saturday night's quarterfinals match between clubs Alianza and Fas at Monumental Stadium in Cuscatlan in southern San Salvador, the nation's capital.

He recalled being in the crowd when the tragedy struck. "There were so many people that the small gate couldn't support them and it went down," he told Channel 12 television.

"I fell and my body from my

AP PHOTO



Soccer fans are assisted by others fans at the field of the Cuscatlan stadium in San Salvador

waist to my feet was crushed. Five people pulled me free and saved me by a miracle. Two people in front of me died. I spoke to one and he didn't move," the boy said.

His father, Hectór Rivas, said the crush occurred because there were only two small gates open and the rest were closed.

"People began to push and I

couldn't even breathe," he 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 onto the field.

Local television transmitted live images of the aftermath of the stampede, which appeared to mainly involve Alianza fans. Dozens made it onto the field where they received medical treatment. Fans who escaped the crush furiously waved their shirts attempting to review people lying on the grass barely moving.

"El Salvador is in mourning," said a statement from the press office of Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, which confirmed that at least 12 people were dead.

Alianza fan José Ángel Penado said the game was scheduled to start at 7:30 p.m. but they closed the gate at 7 p.m. and "left us outsi-

de (the stadium) with our tickets in our hands."

Sections of the stadium are often reserved for fans of one team to avoid clashes with rivals, so those fans would have to enter through the indicated gate.

"People got angry. We asked them to let us in, but no. So they knocked the gate down," Penado said.

Civil Protection director Luis Amaya said about 500 people had been tended to at the stadium and about 100 were taken to hospitals. At least two of the injured transported to hospitals were reported in critical condition.

"It was a night of terror. I never thought something like this would happen to me," sAlianza fan Tomas Renderos said as he left a hospital where he had received medical attention. "Fortunately I only have a few bruises ... but not everyone had my luck."

Pedro Hernández, president of El Salvador soccer's first division, said the preliminary information he had was that the stampede occurred because fans pushed through a gate into the stadium.

"It was an avalanche of fans who overran the gate. Some were still under the metal in the tunnel. Others managed to make it to the stands and then to the field and were smothered," an unidentified volunteer with the Rescue Commandos first aid group told journalists. **MDT/AP**

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合夥人 PARTNERS:

官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha ° 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues ° 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata ° 趙魯 Zhao Lu °* 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

大律師 ASSOCIATES:

高文軒 Adelino Correia °
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo
白穎怡 Iclia Berenguel
冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins
飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira °
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安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos
巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
陳芷喬 Joana Chan

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OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES NOT US' GEOPOLITICAL PAWNS

The United States has been paying greater attention to the Pacific Island nations as part of the strategy to counter China's rising influence in the region.

Among the moves to deepen its relations with the countries in the region are a defense pact with Papua New Guinea, which was signed on Monday. This gives US troops access to the Pacific nation's ports and airports. It has also signed new strategic pacts with Palau and Micronesia, and plans to sign a similar one with the Marshall Islands in the coming weeks.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is scheduled to hold separate talks with the 14 Pacific Island countries' leaders who have gathered in the Papua New Guinea capital, Port Moresby, for a summit.

China, which has in recent years deepened its exchanges and cooperation with the Pacific Island nations in such areas as public services, education and the fishing industry, has made it clear that it is not interested in engaging in a geopolitical contest with the US in the Pacific Islands' region, or elsewhere.

Thus it is worrying to see the US continuously pushing ahead with the efforts to counter what it sees as a challenge from China's cooperative relations with countries in the region, which bodes ill for peace and stability in the region and beyond.

The plan to open a new geopolitical front against China among Pacific Island nations comes after the US announced the Pacific Partnership Strategy in September 2022, in which it underscored what it claims is "pressure and economic coercion" from China that "risks undermining the peace, prosperity, and security of the region".

Yet despite the latest deals, whether the Pacific Island nations will join the US-orchestrated anti-China chorus is doubtful, mainly because nearly all of the countries see climate change, not China, as the major threat.

The nature of the US' charm offensive among the island nations – which is to contain China's influence rather than address their development needs – determines its Pacific strategy will not go very far, especially given the Pacific Island leaders do not want to be forced to choose sides between China and the US. For example, Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape has denied the signing of the deal with the US would stop his country from working with China, an important trade partner.

The US should contribute more to the development of the Pacific Island nations, rather than trying to cajole them to get on its anti-China chariot.

MADELEINE MCCANN: POLICE TO SEARCH PORTUGUESE RESERVOIR, REPORTS INDICATE

THE BUZZ

Police investigating the disappearance of Madeleine McCann are to carry out searches in a reservoir in Portugal, Portuguese media has reported. A search of the Arade dam will begin today, 50km from where the toddler went missing in Praia da Luz in 2007.

The search was requested by German police as the area was visited by the official suspect in her disappearance.

Christian Brueckner, 45, was made a formal suspect, or an "arguido", by Portuguese prosecutors in 2022.

An area over a mile long was sealed off just after midday, SIC broadcaster reported.

According to BBC, German police would not officially confirm the search, but indicated the reports were correct and are expected to release a statement today.

Three-year-old Madeleine, from Rothley, Leicestershire, was on holiday with her family at the Ocean Club resort in Praia da Luz, in Portugal's Algarve when she disappeared on 3 May 2007.

Earlier this month, the McCann family held a vigil to mark 16 years since her disappearance.

Brueckner, a convicted sex offender, is currently serving a seven-year sentence for rape which he committed in 2005 in Portugal.

AP PHOTO



In this grab taken from video released by Prigozhin Press Service on Saturday, Yevgeny Prigozhin's Wagner Group military company members wave a Russian national and Wagner flag atop a damaged building in Bakhmut

PEACE, FOOD AND FERTILIZER

AFRICAN LEADERS' CHALLENGE HEADING TO TALKS WITH MOSCOW, KYIV

GERALD IMRAY

A delegation of six African leaders set to hold talks with Kyiv and Moscow aim to "initiate a peace process," but also broach the thorny issue of how a heavily-sanctioned Russia can be paid for the fertilizer exports Africa desperately needs, a key mediator who helped broker the talks said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Jean-Yves Ollivier, an international negotiator who has been working for six months to put the talks together, said the African leaders would also discuss the related issue of easing the passage of more grain shipments out of Ukraine amid the war and the possibility of more prisoner swaps when they travel to both countries on what they've characterized as a peace mission.

The talks will likely be next month, Ollivier said.

He arrived in Moscow on Sunday and will also go to Kyiv for meetings with high-level officials to work out "logistics" for the upcoming talks. For one, the six African presidents would likely have to travel to Kyiv by ni-

ght train from Poland amid the fighting, he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have both agreed to separately host the delegation of presidents from South Africa, Senegal, Egypt, Republic of Congo, Uganda and Zambia.

The talks also have the approval of the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, the African Union and China, Ollivier said in a video call with the AP on Friday.

Neither side in the war appears ready to stop fighting, though.

The talks were announced last week by President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa just as Russia launched an intense air attack on Kyiv. On Sunday, Russia claimed to have taken the key eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut after fierce fighting, a claim denied by Ukraine.

"We are not dreamers," Ollivier said on the chances the African leaders will achieve an immediate breakthrough with regard to stopping the 15-month conflict. "Unless something happens, I don't think we

are going to finish our first mission with a ceasefire."

The aim was to make a start, said Ollivier, a 78-year-old Frenchman who brought opposing sides together in high-stakes negotiations in the late 1980s that helped end apartheid in South Africa.

"It starts with signs. It starts with dialogue. And this is what we are going to try to do," Ollivier said. "No guarantee that we are going to succeed but, for the time being, Russia and Ukraine have accepted ... a delegation coming specifically to their countries to talk about peace."

A key starting point for Africa is grain and fertilizers.

The war has severely restricted the export of grain from Ukraine and fertilizers from Russia, exacerbating global food insecurity and hunger. Africa has been one of the hardest-hit continents. Last week, Russia agreed to a two-month extension of a deal brokered by Turkey and the U.N. that allows Ukraine to ship grain through the Black Sea and out to the world, and the six African presidents would like to see that extended further. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Iran's president yesterday appointed a new official to take over the post of secretary of the country's Supreme National Security Council, replacing the longtime powerful official Ali Shamkhani (pictured) after becoming implicated in a recent spy scandal. President Ebrahim Raisi issued a decree replacing Shamkhani who has faced persistent corruption allegations — which he denied — as well as scrutiny because of close ties with a British-Iranian man hanged on spying charges earlier this year in Iran.

Albania Forces from NATO member nations and other countries yesterday launched joint military exercises in Albania and other Balkan states. The two-week Immediate Response maneuvers - the second of three such drills linked to the DEFENDER 23 multi-national joint exercise - involves some 2,800 U.S. troops and 7,000 soldiers from other nations including Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Turkey.

AP PHOTO



Vatican Pope Francis will travel to Portugal for World Youth Day in the first week of August and include a stop at the popular Marian shrine in Fatima, the Vatican said. The Aug. 2-6 visit is longer than originally expected and covers almost the entire week of the big Catholic rally that St. John Paul II inaugurated to try to invigorate young people in their faith.

AP PHOTO



Football World Cup champion Argentina will play Australia at the Workers' Stadium in Beijing and take on Indonesia during a two-game exhibition tour to Asia next month. Argentina will play the Socceroos on June 15 in the Chinese capital. It'll be the first meeting between the teams since Lionel Messi and his Argentina lineup beat Australia 2-1 in the Round of 16 en route to winning the World Cup title last December in Qatar.