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Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edf. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR



PRESIDENT XI JINPING CONGRATULATES MUST FACULTY AND STUDENTS ON THE LAUNCH OF MACAO SCIENCE 1 SATELLITE INTO SPACE EXPLORATION P4

PUBLIC WORKS: DSAT TO IMPROVE TRANSPORT-RELATED APPS, TRAFFIC LIGHTS P4

CATHAY SACKS CREW MEMBERS ACCUSED OF DISCRIMINATING AGAINST NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS P9



AP PHOTO



South Korea canceled its planned launch yesterday of its first commercial-grade satellite due to a technical issue, days after rival North Korea reaffirmed its push to place its first military spy satellite into orbit. The cancellation was announced about two hours before South Korea's homegrown Nuri space launch vehicle carrying eight satellites — including the main, commercial-grade one — was scheduled to lift off from a southern launch facility.

AP PHOTO



Norway A U.S. aircraft carrier arrived yesterday in Oslo with the Norwegian armed forces saying it gives them “a unique opportunity to further develop cooperation and work more closely with our most important ally, the United States.” The nuclear-powered ship USS General Ford entered the Oslo fjord escorted by a rapid dinghy-type boat with armed people on board. The Norwegian armed forces has said any boats must stay a half-kilometer away from the aircraft carrier and a no-fly zone was created over the area where the aircraft carrier was.

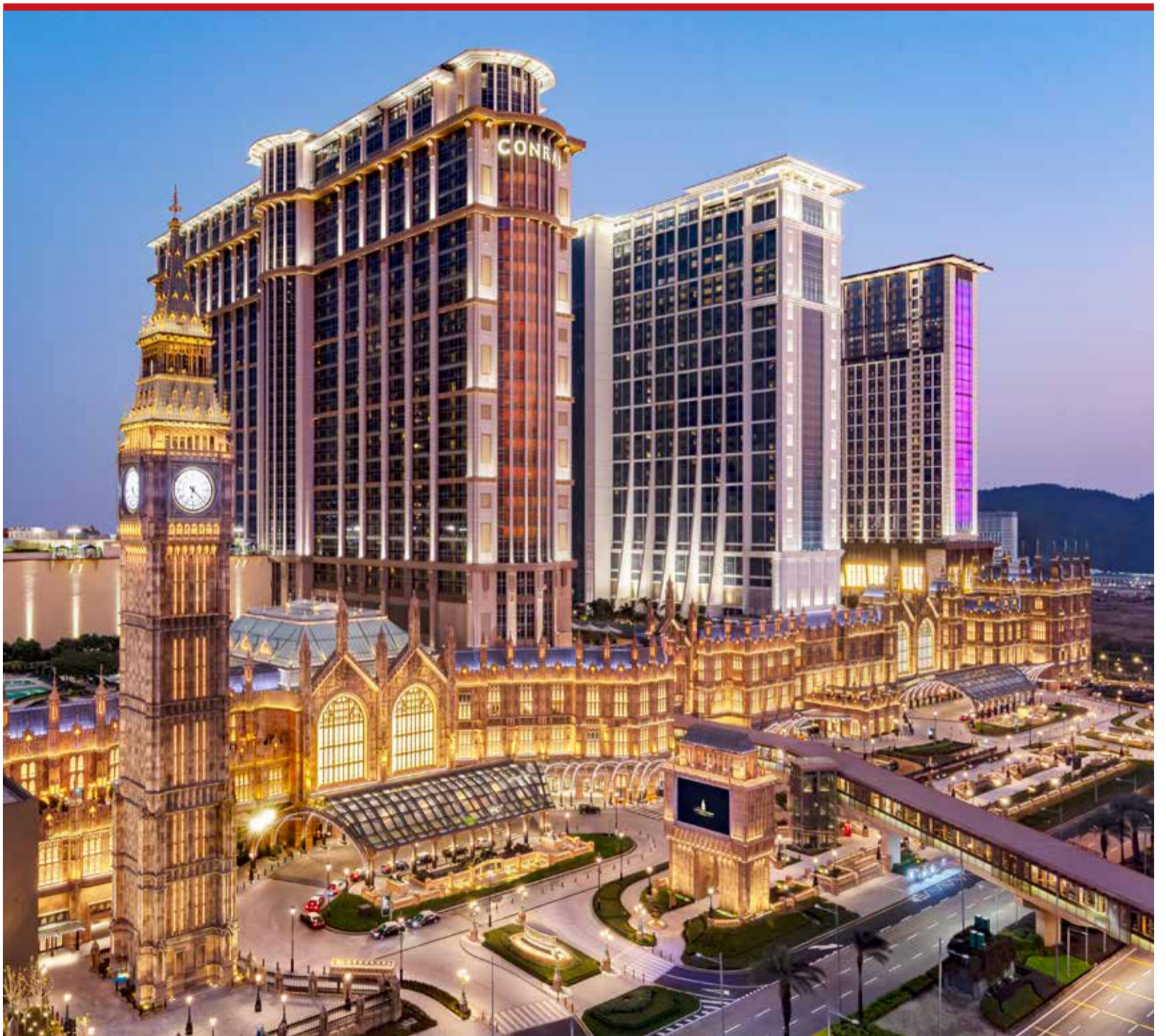
AP PHOTO



Russian forces shot down “a large number” of drones in Russia's southern Belgorod region, a local official said yesterday, a day after Moscow announced that its forces crushed a cross-border raid in the area from Ukraine. The drones were intercepted overnight over the province, Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said in a Telegram post. He said that no one had been hurt, but unspecified administrative buildings, residential buildings and cars were damaged. Ukrainian officials made no immediate comment.

THE SIX KEY AREAS OF XIA

National high official Xia Baolong pinpointed six key areas of governance during a meeting with Macau officials and heads of the legislature and judiciary P5



BIG BEN TO SOUND IN COTAI

As The Londoner celebrates its grand opening this evening, Wilfred Wong says Macau should 'set the standard in hospitality' in the region, being the city with more 5-star hotels worldwide

HIGHER STANDARDS OF MASKS AT HOMES AND REHABILITATION CENTERS

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) is calling for those visiting older adults and nursing homes as well as rehabilitation centers for drug abusers to use higher standard face masks while visiting the venues. The measure enters into force today and requires visitors to use N95, KN95 or FFP2 type masks and warns visitors that activities requiring mask removal, such as eating and drinking, are not allowed. The IAS justified the measure noting the "increased number of new cases of Covid-19 infection seen in recent days." The same rules also apply to workers in the facilities, except for eating and drinking and other situations where mask removal is necessary. The IAS has also called on visitors to refrain from entering venues if they are experiencing any symptoms that could be related to a Covid-19 infection.

INTEREST RATES RISE IN Q1

According to statistics released by the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM), funding costs of the banking sector in Macau generally increased in the first quarter (Q1) of 2023. In end-March 2023, the composite interest rates for MOP and HKD rose respectively by 0.17% and 0.21%, from 1.53% and 2.81% (in end-2022) to 1.69% and 3.03%. Macau's composite interest rates are the weighted average interest rates of all interest-bearing liabilities and non-interest-bearing demand deposits on Macau banks' books. The rise of the interest rates in Macau follows the international trend and is related to the global economic situation and forecast.

MACAO WEEK IN QINGDAO FROM JUN.8

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is continuing its tours through several mainland cities to promote Macau as a travel destination. From June 8 to 12, the caravan of MGTO will tour Qingdao in Shandong province. This is the seventh mainland city the MGTO promotions have targeted under the "Macao Week" program after Beijing, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Chongqing. The MGTO has said the five-day event will promote "Tourism+" elements to attract more mainland visitors to Macau. The Macao Week in Qingdao program includes a seminar on tourism promotion and networking as well as other tourism promotion activities, the MGTO said.

PUBLIC WORKS

DSAT TO IMPROVE TRANSPORT-RELATED APPS, TRAFFIC LIGHTS

RENATO MARQUES

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) has announced improvements to local transport-related mobile applications (apps), Bureau representatives said during a meeting of the Traffic Advisory Committee (CCT).

The improvements will target the Macao Smart Go and Bus Management System apps.

DSAT will optimize the point-to-point travel routes of the Macao Smart Go app and increase information on the location of nighttime parking areas.

In the Bus management system, DSAT will add information about expected arrival times of buses at stops, a real-time warning function selected by the waiting passenger and other functions such as the number of passengers waiting at stops.

According to DSAT representatives, the suggested improvements have come from user feedback.

The meeting also discussed measures to optimize traffic in



the vicinity of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Port and the installation of traffic lights to improve traffic circulation and minimize disputes between vehicles and pedestrians in some areas of the city.

Statistics have revealed that, at peak hours, vehicle flow between Zone A of the new landfills and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge border post reaches between 800 to

1,000 vehicles per hour.

Considering measures already used during the May 1 holidays, the services, in cooperation with the police, have adjusted the time distribution of the traffic lights at the Rotunda da Amizade to help peak hour vehicle flow.

New traffic lights were also installed at the intersection between Rua do Canal Novo and Avenida 1 de Maio to assist the

movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

New traffic lights are to be placed at the intersection between Rua da Escola Comercial and the Avenida do Infante D. Henrique that will create a better link with those at the intersection of Avenida de Lisboa.

CCT members called on DSAT to improve the works in several aspects namely the pre-booking system for vehicle inspections, reviewing the clarity of indications on bus stop signage and optimizing the allocation of time for pedestrian crossings with traffic lights at Rua Central de Toi San.

CCT members also noted the "chaotic" situation of pedestrian crossings near the Qingmao Border Post, among others.

Also debated was the installation of flexible plastic road markers at Pac On to ensure good traffic circulation and prevent traffic infractions that, according to CCT members, put at risk others in the area.

SPACE

Xi congratulates MUST on 'Macao Science 1' satellite launch

ANTHONY LAM

CHINESE President Xi Jinping congratulated Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) faculty and students Tuesday on the launch of the Macao Science Satellite 1 space exploration satellite.

Xi extended his congratulations and encouragement in a reply letter to faculty and student representatives who participated in the project research and development.

Xi said that from MUST's first letter, he could "perceive the passion and sense of respon-



sibility of the faculty and students in constructing the country into a power of technology and aeronautics."

"In recent years, Macau has deepened [its] technological cooperation with the mainland in areas such as aeronautics

and borne satisfactory fruits," he said.

"[The aims of] constructing a world power in technology and promoting Chinese-style modernization have provided universities and technological professionals in Macau a wider space for development," added Xi.

"I hope that you will continue carrying forward the quality tradition of loving the country and loving Macau, vividly integrate into the country's master plan of development, energetically participate in the construction of the Greater

Bay Area, leverage Macau's adequate economic diversification, as well as make new contributions to the implementation of 'One country, two systems in Macau,'" Xi said.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng described the letter as "not only [expressing] congratulations and recognition to the faculty and students at MUST, but also [disseminating] care and words of expectation to the population of Macau."

He said the letter "significantly inspires and motivates the wide array of residents in Macau."

Ho pledged investments in education and technological development will be expanded, and scientific and technological research teams in local higher education institutions will be enlarged. **AL**

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Times
DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai
NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí DESIGNERS_Miguel Bandeira, Rebeca Almeida | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacaoNews, Xinhua SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION
ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
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Xia pinpoints six key areas, applauds Macau gov't

ANTHONY LAM

NATIONAL official Xia Baolong, currently in Macau, has pinpointed six key areas of governance during a meeting with local officials and heads of the legislature and judiciary.

Xia is the director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council.

The first area is to "make greater achievements in completely, accurately and unwaveringly upholding 'One country, two systems'."

Xia said "the successful practice of 'One country, two systems' in Macau tells us that as long as we firmly believe in and practice 'One country, two systems', the vitality and excellence of 'One country, two systems' will be fully revealed."

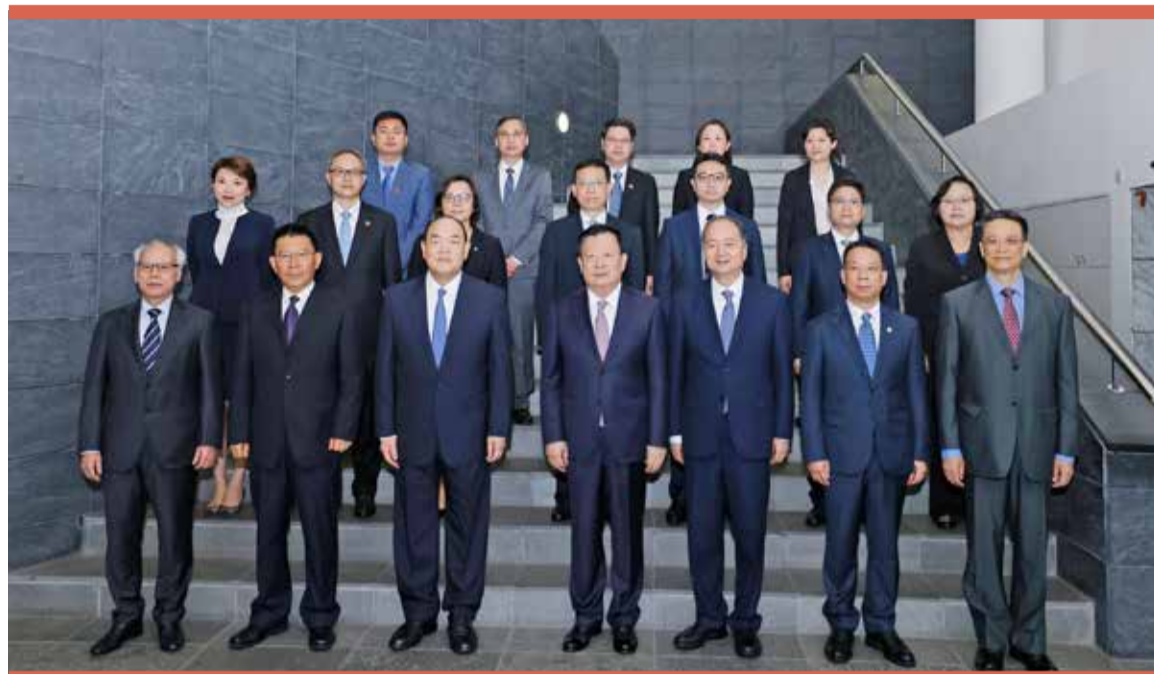
He hoped "the majority of compatriots in Macau would cherish [the policy], better and organically combine the maintenance of the central government's overall governance power with the guarantee of a high degree of autonomy, defend the bottom line of the 'One country' principle and always maintain the constitutional order established by the Constitution and the Basic Law."

His second area was about defending national security.

"Safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests are the highest principles of 'One country, two systems'," he said, adding that safeguarding national security is a constant task.

Macau's entire leadership and the local National Security Commission should accurately implement the amended National Security Law. Supportive legislation should also be developed.

"Education on national securi-



ty should be promoted to construct a defence line for national security," Xia said.

The third area was about the construction of patriotic power. Xia said "the foremost reason behind the successful implementation of 'One country, two systems' in Macau is that people in Macau have long possessed patriotic traditions, as well as a strong sense of national recognition, belonging and ethnic pride."

He demanded further work be done in "committing to and promoting patriotism and implementing 'patriots governing Macau,' which should be crystal clear at all times," in addition to supporting the "refinement of Macau's electoral system to ensure that the power of governance is firmly in the grip of patriots."

The fourth area was about doing more to adequately diversify Macau's economy.

"The way to Macau's long-term prosperity and stability is by diversifying its economy," Xia said. "It is also necessary to improve Macau's economic durabi-

lity and ability to withstand risks."

He said the Macau government should refine and strengthen Macau's role as the center, the platform and the base.

Innovative industries should be nurtured and a sustainable structure of industries that fit Macau's reality should be constructed.

The business environment should be constantly enhanced to attract professionals, techniques, technologies, innovation, research and improvements in competitiveness.

The fifth was to improve exploration on Hengqin.

Xia said Macau should "firmly grip the opportunities from the construction of the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and the key in innovations of systems and mechanisms."

Effort should be exerted with focus and power to eradicate hurdles, while negotiations should be timely conducted, so as to turn Hengqin into the new platform for Macau's economic

diversification.

Sixth, the government should strive for greater achievements in improving its governance.

Xia said governance should be streamlined to meet the new requirements of modern society. Science, precision and efficiency should be introduced in policy-making, social administration and public services respectively.

He made special remarks on helping young people resolve actual difficulties.

The national official also commended Ho's government in five areas, including refining national security and laws, strengthening management of the casino industry, taking new steps toward adequate economic diversification, succeeding in disease control and integrating into national development.

In response, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng pledged the government would from top to bottom implement Xia's six requirements.

He said that by far in this year, "with the strong support of the central government and mainland provinces and cities, [...] the majority of Macau residents have seized the opportunity and forged ahead together. The overall economic development situation has stabilized and improved, and the overall social situation has remained harmonious and stable."

"The government will work with Macau residents to make persistent efforts to comprehensively promote new progress in various undertakings and strive to lay a solid foundation for next year's celebration of the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland," Ho added.

The five Secretaries have also issued respective statements on their firm stances in following Central People's Government's leadership.

MORGAN STANLEY: GAMING REVENUES TO SURGE 125% OF PRE-COVID LEVELS

The city's mass market revenue is forecasted to surge to 125% of 2019 levels amid China's GDP growth and the recovery rate in Las Vegas. In a note, Morgan Stanley said mass market revenue would increase to 115% and 125% of 2019 levels in 2024 and 2025 respectively. With such significant increases, the sector's EBITDA will total USD10 billion and USD11 billion. The brokerage expects 2023 EBITDA will surge 17% amid a fast recovery.

SALES TRANSACTIONS TOTAL MOP24B IN Q1

The value of retail sales increased 29.3% year-on-year to MOP24 billion in the first quarter, driven by the relaxation of border control measures. Excluding the effect of price changes, the sales volume index rose 28.5% year-on-year, according to Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) data. The sales value of Chinese food products surged 230.4% year-on-year, and the sales values of watches, clocks and jewelry, leather goods and cosmetics and sanitary articles grew 52.7%, 41.9% and 37.1% respectively. 48.4% of retailers expected the sales volume to remain stable year-on-year in the second quarter, 33.5% anticipated an increase and 18.1% forecasted a decrease.

PJ WARNS PUBLIC ON SMSS FROM SCAMMERS

Increased reports about fake text messages from scammers disguised as courier service providers have prompted the PJ to advise the public to avoid clicking unfamiliar links and to always check information through official channels. The fake messages were falsely informing people about issues with delivery and were asking name, address and credit card details, among other private information. The messages also contain malicious links.

IC CALLS FOR MUSICIAN COMPETITION CONTESTANTS

Organized by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), the 41st edition of the Macau Young Musicians Competition will take place from late July to mid-August and will be dedicated to the piano category. Participants must register on the competition website through their personal "Macao One Account" from June 1 to 7. In addition, three different talks, to be given only in Mandarin, will occur in early July, during which three competition judges will discuss the performance skills of composers from different periods, memorization skills and four-hand playing techniques.

XIA PROVIDES GUIDANCE TO AL, SAYS PRESIDENT

THE director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council, Xia Baolong, visited the Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday to provide guidance, the AL's president, Kou Hoi In, said in a media briefing after the visit.

Xia, who is currently touring Macau and meeting with several high-ranked government officials and governmental institutions, visited the AL yesterday morning.

In the media briefing that followed, Kou said that during the visit, Xia learned about the AL's operation, the legislative process and the role of supervision over the government's work. He was also briefed on ongoing and upcoming legislative work.

Xia continued to express the central govern-

ment's support to the local government and institutions, saying lawmakers have been performing their duties diligently to support the executive's work according to the law.

Xia also thanked the lawmakers for voting unanimously to pass the National Security Law, which he said contributed to the stability of China and Macau.

Kou noted the AL is supporting the government and its institutions to "maintain a long-term prosperity and stability for Macau" and to promote a "steady and long-term development of the 'One country, two systems' concept in Macau."

Without providing any examples, the AL's president said Xia's visit has provided the AL and its members "guidance" for future work. **RM**

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW | WILFRED WONG, SCL PRESIDENT

'Macau should lead in hospitality' in GBA

PAULO COUTINHO

WITH the largest stock of 5-star hotels worldwide, the city should set the standard in hospitality in the Greater Bay Area and Greater China, Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Limited (SCL), has affirmed, boldly.

In an exclusive interview with Macau Daily Times, Wong said his company is "trying hard" to serve that goal, especially through its incubator and training programs for staff and small and medium enterprises, organized in highly specialized academies.

SCL is expanding the current two academies to eight, namely in hospitality, integrated resorts management and MICE.

On the business front, Wong revealed during Labor Day week the gaming concessionaire's properties recorded over 1.1 million visitors—a number that resembles the good old days—with the gaming results curve surging in a V-shaped fashion.

However, Wong cautioned these "extraordinary" results benefit from three or four holiday periods in the mainland and Hong Kong. He warned the "big test" will be in the summer, June and July, typically the weakest season in gaming.

Also, the visitors' profile has changed to a more spending-cautious, less affluent and younger clientele.

In the interview, which took place at a spacious VIP suite at Four Seasons, Wong commented on the new concession contracts and the fairness of the government requirements, mainly the investment in non-gaming activities and infrastructure toward diversification, the biggest-neglected word in town for decades.

Sands will do "our part," but again, he is sure non-gaming won't pay the bills: "We feel it as an obligation" to give back to the community.

This evening, the grand opening of The Londoner takes place, an all-suites 6,000-room integrated resort, which is proving to be a "sensational" attraction in the SCL universe in the post-pandemic period.

Macau Daily Times (MDT) - Is the Londoner integrated resort finally complete?

Wilfred Wong (WW) - Yes. The Londoner, the \$2 billion investment, is now complete. And that includes the Crystal Palace, the external wall, the Big Ben, the Elizabeth Tower, all

the conversion of rooms at The Londoner into suites, as well as the shopping mall, creating the atmosphere of a street in London. The 6,000-seat arena, it's now complete. Now, The Londoner has 6,000 rooms. Sheraton Grand was the largest, with 4,000, and in the next phase we are going to upgrade its rooms.

MDT - But keeping the same level of service?

WW - That is something to be discussed. But [the upgrade] is going to happen. This year or early next year. Sheraton, Conrad, these hotels that are on the top of the podium, are due for renovations and upgrades.

MDT - So, this evening, we'll have The Londoner grand opening - you call it the Grand Celebration - and there's going to be a big party, I heard, and of course David Beckham's attendance. What else?

WW - Yes, Beckham will be here. What else? There will be a performance at the arena. It will be a very attractive performance.

MDT - Can you be more precise about who?

WW - No, they want to keep it a secret [laughs].

MDT - How many people are you expecting at the Grand Celebration?

WW - At the arena there will be up to 4,000 people and then we also have a gala dinner, which will sit over 400 guests.

MDT - We can count on a 'wow' surprise; is it going to be a Chinese or Western star? Or both?

WW - That is narrowing it too much [laugh]. Let's say: international. It could be Chinese but internationally [known].

MDT - Reading now from a press release, the integrated resort hotel will offer 6,000 rooms in total, over 20 dining options, and 150 renowned brands. Is the visitation and occupation rate up to your expectation?

WW - Well, throughout the two years after the soft opening with COVID in between, The Londoner has established quite a strong brand name. I mean, how many people talk about the Cotai Central anymore? Nobody. So The Londoner has taken over, [and] so far, the business has been very good; Londoner is a very much sought-after hotel.

MDT - Comparing to The Parisian?

WW - The Parisian is more business class; The Londoner is super luxury. And so, the clients pay more for the room, also we complement them more. The room includes breakfast, afternoon tea and... everything. It is a package of total experience that we offer to visitors to the Londoner. Ever since we opened Macau throughout all the long holidays we had this year, The Londoner has been very well-patronized.

" We have been recruiting about 100 people a week! And we have ramped up a lot of staff just last week for the back of house.

MDT - But the labor shortage is still a problem there...

WW - It's getting to be less of a problem. Because when we first began, we could only serve at the whole property up to about 70% of our rooms because of the labor shortage. But now - because the government's responded very quickly - we have been recruiting about 100 people a week! And we have ramped up a lot of staff just last week for the back of house. Housekeeping, receptionists, security, maintenance - all those rank-and-file positions.

MDT - Where are they coming from?

WW - A lot of them from mainland China. But some of them are returnees, former employees, from the Philippines, from Vietnam, who left us during the pandemic. Some of them are coming back.

MDT - How many more do you plan to recruit?

WW - [Since the reopening of border] we've recruited over 2,000. And more to come. But right now, we can service up to 11,000 rooms.

MDT - And how is the occupancy rate?

WW - We were either 100% full or high 90% over the Labor Day holidays. Total visitation of all properties during China's Labor Day Holiday, which took place from April 29 to May 3 is over 1.1 million.

MDT - You already mentioned the 6,000 Arena and the 1,000-seater Theatre. With all that jazz, what can we expect to be seeing in terms of shows? And is it going to be more Chinese Asian or international, Western, or both?

WW - The arena is really multipurpose. It can put on performances, it can put on sports events, it can put on MICE events. So the idea is that now with two arenas, one in The Venetian and one in The Londoner, we can have over the weekends, entertainment programs, together with MICE events,

whereas in the past when we only had one arena, we could only have either a MICE event or an entertainment program. Now, if we have a big MICE event, and we have an attractive entertainment program, they can go hand-in-hand. This is very helpful for the MICE sector for attracting events in Macau. And

we are using that for inviting international performers, not just local. But obviously, there'll be more local, there'll be more Chinese, Hong Kong, but we are also looking at overseas performances.

MDT - Also, one of the requirements put up by the government for the new concessions is to attract the international markets. So how is it going so far, and what is your strategy, and which are the target markets?

WW - We are going to promote Macau as a tourist destination, as a destination for integrated resorts. And therefore, for example, we are going to organize overseas promotion campaigns. In June, we are going to have a Macau showcase in Singapore. And it's not just Singapore. In the future it will be in other cities.

MDT - Is it mostly focused on Southeast Asia?

WW - No, it could be Japan, it could be Korea, it could be India. But you know, obviously the areas where we have the most potential visitors. So, we're also expanding our overseas office network. For example, our offices in Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. We are also sending out private jets to bring the high rollers to Macau. And right now, it's either Southeast Asia or North Asia, like Korea or Japan. And this is proving itself effective. Because, for instance, sometimes a certain

group of people, they like to come and enjoy themselves together. And if we have a private jet that takes 12-14 people, they can come as a group, and we give them a foreign playing area in a room. So, they have a club for them. And this is beginning to take shape.

MDT - Top businessmen, is that what we are talking about?

WW - Yes, I mean, these are people who've got high rolling capability, otherwise, we would not be inviting them on a private jet.

MDT - So, about the diversification - that's always has been a big word here, but now it is in writing in the concessions' contracts. What is the strategy for non-gaming, in order of importance on the budget?

WW - We have promised that over the next 10 years we will invest MOP30 billion and of those, 27.8 billion will be invested in non-gaming. In front of the Eiffel Tower, we are going to convert that garden into a covered area with a Botanical Garden so that it becomes another icon for the market. We're going to build a new convention facility exhibition in the lawn in front of the Venetian exhibition hall. So that will add another 18,000 square meters of exhibition space. For example, yesterday, we signed a MoU with an organization to promote [an inventing] competition at Beyond Expo, and all these inventions can be tested in our properties. So, if you have an idea, you want to test an app, we can be your guinea pig. We are growing our commitment to SMEs, continuing to prioritize the hiring, training and horizontal and upward mobility of Macau residents. To support that effort in particular, Sands China will establish six new academies focusing on MICE, hospitality, integrated resort management, facilities, responsible gaming and entertainment, bring the total to eight. The two existing academies are Retail and Procurement. And so, we will use these academies to drive service standards. And hopefully, we will be able to spread our influence into China, into the Greater Bay Area.

MDT - Will you expand to Hengqin? In terms of hotels, non-gaming?

WW - Not at this stage. Because obviously, we still have a lot to do here in Macau. But we will be spreading our influence



OFF THE RECORD

PORTOFINO TO BE REPLACED BY RETAIL AREA WITH AN ITALIAN RESTAURANT

On Friday May 12, "We bid farewell to Portofino because it's closing down," Wilfred Wong told the Times, explaining a group of old timers among the company's staff had one last lunch at the restaurant and bar that was one of the hottest in the casino industry's heyday, long before the pandemic. Wong revealed Portofino is being converted into a retail area because "the place is close by the shopping mall, so it makes sense." However, another Italian restaurant will be located in that area, he said, without revealing more details. The SCL president also said the upcoming opening of the Gordon Ramsay Pub & Grill and the Thai restaurant (The Mews) at The Londoner "will bring a lot more offerings to patrons." Ramsay's will be opened by the end of the year, in the fourth quarter, he said.

FANG LIJUN AND TEAMLAB

"Fang Lijun is considered one of the pioneers of [Chinese] contemporary art. He started appearing on the art scene in the 1990s, as a very liberal-minded artist," Wong said about the new exhibition that opened last week at the Sands Gallery (SG).

The famous artist brought to town "something different." Fang is not exhibiting his paintings at the gallery, "which are the most famous and valuable works;" he preferred to bring his less known works in ceramics. "Every piece of his ceramic is different, although it's like a congregation, of bone and flesh. And it's because of his technique... something inspirational."

Wong told the Times the SG, which opened in 2022, already had six displays mostly of Chinese contemporary art, or classic art with modern approaches.

teamLab, on the other hand, is the jewel in the crown which tomorrow celebrates its Grand Opening after more than three years since its inception. According to Wong, it is the world's 10th most sought-after visual art exhibition, seen by over 200,000 people - mostly from Macau, because for years the city was closed.

"But ever since the opening [of the borders], Hong Kong and mainland visitors have filled the teamLab gallery. And every long weekend we are breaking visitation records." PC

but not through the building of a hotel. But if the opportunity arises, we will look at it.

MDT - I am hearing all these numbers that are being budgeted, and wondering whether the pandemic had an impact on your budget...

WW - Of course the pandemic has had an impact on our financial performance. And the last two years have been really difficult for any company. But we are confident about the future because we now have been given another 10 years. And we are thankful for the government in giving that to us. We will keep our promise as we did in the last 20 years. We kept our promise. We built everything we promised the government we would build before the concession ended. And we intend to do the same thing and make good on our promise in the next 10 years. And if the opportunity comes and there are more investment opportunities, then we will have to look at our own capability and to see whether we can take up the challenge.

MDT - Right after the so called Big Six signed the new contracts, there was a 'gift' from China, the opening of the borders in December, which was very good for business. Altogether you faced problems like staff and other shortages. You were not expecting this at all?

WW - No, we weren't. We were expecting that there

would be a gradual ratcheting up. But then with the change, the pent-up demand is there. And therefore, we do have the business coming back very quickly, especially because immediately after the opening-up was the Chinese New Year holiday. That helped. Because that pushed a lot of people to come. Many of them have not been to Macau for three years. They were very eager to come. And because we have the Grand Suites in The Londoner, the whole thing was new. And that helped us to attract a lot of customers to our place.

MDT - What is your forecast for this year in terms of GGR?

WW - It's very difficult.

MDT - Well, your first quarter is on the upper side of the government forecast for the year, MOP130 billion (\$16 billion). Do you think is achievable, even beatable?

WW - I think it's achievable. If you look at the first quarter, Sands China's GGR was \$398 million [adjusted property EBIDTA].

MDT - It will be over the government estimate.

WW - Let's say, yes. But we cannot be too boastful. The fact is all this is happening against the backdrop of an

economy in danger. The Chinese economy is developing slower. All of this has an impact. Now, what will happen in the second half of the year? Of course, we hope we will do better. But we have to weigh against what's happening globally.

"We are sending out private jets to bring the high rollers to Macau [from] either Southeast Asia or North Asia.

MDT - Do you believe that China has a plan for Macau not being so reliant on gaming, which is very volatile. And do you believe Macau can grow another strong sector to balance the act?

WW - Obviously, this is the intention of the government, that they would like us to invest in non-gaming to diversify the economy hence the hospitality business. So, do we see that happening very soon? Probably not. Because, you know, you have to build up all this investment and direction, and you have to wait for Hengqin to materialize, because Macau has very little land available. So, all of that takes time. But we can see that in the direction. And

the government is pointing in that direction.

MDT - Do you think that the deal with the government for this new concession and all the requirements they put in is a fair deal?

WW - I think it is a good deal, in the sense that we are not building a lot of new buildings. The investment we have is really a diversification investment in the future. And I think we have the responsibility to help. And so, I think it is a good deal. Whereas in the past, you know, we invested so much money in all these buildings, whereas for the next 10 years, we're not required to do that.

MDT - In the economic pie, the share of gaming in the past went from 60 to 80%. In the next 10 years, what do you think that will be?

WW - I think it depends on how you count. If you count tourism as separate from gaming, then obviously, with more events, the income from the tourism industry will increase. Also, the investment, for example, in high technology and finance sectors, all of this will take time [to return results]; they will come and hopefully catch-up and have a higher share of the economy.

READY FOR A DIGITAL EURO?

At 25, European Central Bank preps for future of money

DAVID MCHUGH, FRANKFURT

As it marks its 25th anniversary, the European Central Bank is readying a proposed design for a digital version of the euro, responding to pressure from developing technology that could change how money is used over the bank's next decades.

ECB President Christine Lagarde says a digital euro could offer a way for people to buy things without depending on payment service providers controlled by non-European companies. Those could include Mastercard, Visa, Apple Pay and Google Pay.

The European Union's executive Commission is expected to come up with proposed legislation on the idea in the next several weeks, ECB officials say, while the central bank will publish a detailed proposal for the design of a digital currency in October.

Central banks worldwide, including the U.S. Federal Reserve, are cautiously studying digital currencies as cash increasingly gives way to electronic payments. Some smaller economies such as Nigeria, the Bahamas and Jamaica already have introduced digital currencies, while China is holding trial runs.

Central banks also are responding to the emergence of cryptocurrencies, which have raised concerns that someday people could turn to rival forms of digital money that would undercut national currencies.

Digital currency backed by a

AP PHOTO



central bank would be a safe and stable means of payment — unlike volatile crypto, whose price crashes over the past year and collapses of exchanges like FTX have spurred calls for regulation. The EU became a global leader by giving final approval last week to rules for the freewheeling crypto sector.

As Europe considers its own central bank-based digital currency, the biggest question is: How would it improve on what's already available for consumers?

"Nobody is able to answer this question, not even the ECB," said Philipp Sandner, head of the Blockchain Center at the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management.

"As the user I ask myself, 'What is the benefit, why do we need another solution?'" he said.

Apple Pay, for instance, allows people to buy their morning coffee — and anything else — by tapping twice on their phones, a seamless experience the digital euro would have to match.

"You have to be at least as good as Apple Pay and Mastercard, which is difficult, otherwise people will not use it," he said.

The goal of a digital euro would be Europe's autonomy and resilience when it comes to the largely unseen but critical systems that move money from consumers to merchants through banks and payment services providers, Lagarde said in a recent panel discussion.

She drew an analogy to Europe's previous reliance on Russian oil and natural gas, which led to an energy crisis when the invasion of Ukraine disrupted that supply.

"It's very unhealthy to rely on one single source of energy, it's very unhealthy to rely on one single source of payment," she said.

A digital euro also could help people who don't have bank accounts, the thinking goes, because they could hold money on their phones.

The move toward increased digitalization comes as the ECB marks 25 years since its creation on June 1, 1998, seven months ahead of the introduction of the euro currency. An anniversary ceremony with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and former ECB Presidents Mario Draghi and Jean-Claude Trichet is planned today [Macau time] at the bank's Frankfurt headquarters.

The ECB envisions a digital euro for retail use that could even be transferred offline using a digi-

tal wallet on people's phones. Early designs call for a standard app, along with use through existing online banking apps. It wouldn't replace cash but add another way to hold euros.

Even after the proposal is made, there would be three years of testing. A decision to actually introduce the digital euro would only come after that and require EU approval.

Fabio Panetta, a member of the ECB's executive board and head of the digital euro task force, says it wouldn't replace cash and people would have the option, not the requirement, to use it.

"It would reduce dependence on a few dominant providers, increasing competition and resilience," he told European lawmakers last month.

Europe's banks have greeted the proposal with caution. They warn that without strict limits, digital euros could draw deposits out of commercial banks — depriving them of funding for things like business loans and mortgages.

Panetta has indicated holdings could be limited to the value of banknotes in circulation, around 3,000 to 4,000 euros per person.

The European Banking Federation supports payment autonomy but said a digital euro alone would not accomplish that without banks and payment services companies creating new and better ways to handle payments themselves.

"A retail digital euro, particularly if not able to offer a concrete value-added compared to existing electronic payments, is not an appropriate or sufficient tool to meet all the goals that have been put forward," the group said.

Merchants, in theory, could push for greater adoption if they find taking payment in digital euros helps them avoid the fees charged by credit card companies, said Sandner of the Frankfurt School. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Melco volunteers celebrate Mother's Day in local NGOs



As part of the Melco "Simple Acts of Kindness 2.0" initiative, more than 200 volunteers dedicated time during May to almost 450 local chil-

dren and older adults, who were beneficiaries of Melco's NGO community partners. Different activities such as pastry-making workshops

under the guidance of the Melco pastry team from Studio City, cotton towel-making workshops at the Heart-of-House area and dried flower workshops were featured.

Some Melco volunteers also joined the Pou Tai Elderly Choir to perform Mother's-Day-themed golden classics during an event attended both by Pou Tai Integrated Service Center for the Elderly members and their families.

Melco volunteers also spent time with senior beneficiaries at older adult centers through singing performances and games to celebrate Mother's Day.

MGM's culinary team wins 'Golden Bauhinia Cup'



During the Hong-Kong International Culinary Classic (HKICC) contest in early May, the MGM Golden Lion culinary team garnered nine accolades, including the competition's most prestigious award the

"Golden Bauhinia Cup," as well as two Gold, two Silver and four Bronze, outperforming MGM's previous records.

"MGM is incredibly proud of our culinary team who has achieved greatness in this in-

ternationally acclaimed competition," vice-president of food and beverage at MGM, Geoffrey Simmons, said.

"These remarkable results were only made possible with the talented and hardworking Golden Lion team members, who have undergone months of intensive training under the supervision of management team members and instructors," he said.

Endorsed by WorldChefs, the World Association of Chefs' Societies, and co-organised by the Hong Kong Chefs Association (HKCA), HKICC promotes culinary excellence, chefs' skills and abilities, cooks, pastry chefs and apprentices from near and far.

HONG KONG

Cathay Pacific sacks crew members accused of discriminating against non-English speakers

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

HONG Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways has dismissed three cabin crew members after a passenger accused them of discriminating against non-English speakers, in a case that drew criticism from Chinese state media.

Airline CEO Ronald Lam expressed his apologies to the passenger and the community over the incident, which occurred on a flight from Chengdu in southwest China to Hong Kong on Sunday. He reiterated his company's "zero tolerance" of any serious breach of its policies and code of conduct.

"There is no compromise for such violations," he said in a statement.

The sacking came after the passenger complained in an online post that some crew members



AP PHOTO

were disrespectful to passengers who did not speak English or Cantonese, the language widely spoken in Hong Kong. The person, who sat near the crew's resting area, overheard them complaining about customers.

"During the whole flight, not a moment went by when I was not distressed or angry," the passenger wrote.

In particular, the crew members made fun of other passengers who mixed up the terms

"blanket" and "carpet" in English and appeared to be impatient even when someone tried to seek help in English, the post alleged.

"If you cannot say blanket in English, you cannot have it," a person said in an audio clip posted on social media. The comment was followed by laughter. "Carpet is on the floor," the recording continued. The Associated Press could not independently verify the audio clip.

Cathay issued an apology on Monday on the Chinese social media platform Weibo for "the unpleasant experience" suffered by passengers on the flight, but failed to pacify the anger triggered by the passenger's post.

On Tuesday, a Weibo account belonging to the overseas edition of the official Chinese People's Daily newspaper sternly criticized Cathay over the incident.

"It seems that its company culture still maintains a sense of superiority that worships foreigners and respects Hong Kongers but looks down on mainlanders," it wrote.

It said the airline should rectify itself and establish rules to halt the unhealthy trend.

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee said he was disappointed to learn about the disrespectful acts that had damaged the relationship between Hong Kong and mainland Chinese residents. He said he had told Lam that it was a serious incident and must not repeat again.

Secretary for Transport and Logistics Lam Sai-hung said yesterday he had expressed his deep concern to Cathay and asked the management to improve the company's services immediately. He added he was very distressed by the "inappropriate comments" made by the crew members, calling the incident as a "serious breach of Hong Kong's reputation for service excellence."

Cathay is working to rebuild its business after years of strict pandemic travel restrictions forced the airline into steep losses.

In March, it reported a loss of 6.55 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$834.4 million) in 2022 — an 18.5% increase from 2021 amid strict entry restrictions for the city during the first half of last year. **MDT/AP**

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MIGRANTS

FLORIDA SUED FOR RESTRICTING CHINESE CITIZENS, OTHER FOREIGNERS FROM BUYING PROPERTY

BRENDAN FARRINGTON,
TALLAHASSEE (FLA.)

AP PHOTO



Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is expected to launch a presidential campaign today, signed the bill May 8

A group of Chinese citizens living and working in Florida sued the state earlier this week over a new law that bans Chinese nationals from purchasing property in large swaths of the state.

The law applies to properties within 10 miles of military installations and other "critical infrastructure" and also affects citizens of Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, Iran, Russia, and North Korea. But Chinese citizens and those selling property to them face the harshest penalties. The prohibition also applies to agricultural land.

The American Civil Liberties Union says the law will have a substantial chilling effect on sales to Chinese and Asian people who can legally buy property. The suit says the law unfairly equates Chinese people with the actions of their government and there is no evidence of national security risk from Chinese citizens buying Florida property.

The law "will codify and expand housing discrimination against people of Asian descent in violation of the Constitution and the Fair Housing Act," the ACLU said in a news release announcing the suit. "It will also cast an undue burden of suspicion on anyone seeking to buy property whose name sounds remotely Asian, Russian, Iranian, Cuban, Venezue-

lan, or Syrian."

U.S.-China ties are strained amid growing tensions over security and trade. In nearly a dozen statehouses and Congress, a decades-old worry about foreign land ownership has spiked since a Chinese spy balloon traversed the skies from Alaska to South Carolina last month.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is expected to launch a presidential campaign today [Macau time], signed the bill May 8. His office didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

The law is set to take affect July

1. It will be a felony for Chinese people to buy property in restricted areas or for any person or real estate company to knowingly sell to restricted people. For the other targeted nations, the penalty is a misdemeanor for buyers and sellers.

It applies to military installations as well as infrastructure like airports and seaports, water and wastewater treatment plants, natural gas and oil processing facilities, power plants, spaceports, and telecommunications central switching offices.

The ACLU says the law "will

have the net effect of creating 'Chinese exclusion zones' that will cover immense portions of Florida, including many of the state's most densely populated and developed areas."

"This impact is exactly what laws like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the California Alien Land Law of 1913 did more than a hundred years ago," the lawsuit says.

Those on the restricted list that already own property near critical infrastructure must register with the state or face fines of up to \$1,000 a day. They're also prohi-

bited from acquiring additional property. The law has provisions to allow the state to seize property from violators.

The number of states restricting foreign ownership of agricultural land has risen by 50% this year.

Heading into 2023, 14 states had laws restricting foreign ownership or investments in private agricultural land. So far this year, restrictive laws also have been enacted in Arkansas, Idaho, Montana, Tennessee, Utah and Virginia.

Foreign land ownership has become "a political flashpoint," said Micah Brown, a staff attorney for the National Agricultural Law Center at the University of Arkansas.

Brown said the recent surge in state laws targeting land ownership by foreign entities stems from some highly publicized cases of Chinese-connected companies purchasing land near military bases. Earlier this year, the U.S. Air Force said that the Fufeng Group's planned \$700 million wet corn milling plant near a base in Grand Forks, North Dakota, poses a "significant threat to national security."

After a Chinese army veteran and real estate tycoon bought a wind farm near an Air Force base in Texas, that state responded in 2021 by banning infrastructure deals with individuals tied to hostile governments, including China. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

New ambassador to US taking office amid disputes over trade, access to technology, Taiwan

XINHUA



Xie Feng, China's new ambassador to the United States, speaks to the media upon his arrival at the John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York

CHINA'S new ambassador to the U.S. is taking office amid disputes over trade, access to computer chips and Washington's support for self-governing Taiwan.

Xie Feng arrived in New York yesterday [Macau time] and told reporters at JFK Airport that relations between the world's two largest economies face "serious difficulties and challenges."

"We hope that the United States will work together with China to increase dialogue, to manage differences and also to expand our cooperation, so that our relationship will be

back to the right track," Xie said in remarks delivered in English.

The "Taiwan question" would be among the sensitive issues at the top of his agenda, Xie said.

Exchanges took a downturn after the Trump administration raised tariffs on key Chinese imports that President Joseph Biden has since maintained, while blocking Chinese companies from accessing the most cutting-edge computer chip technology.

China has meanwhile raised its threats to attack Taiwan with regular incursions by ships and fighter jets into airspace

and waters near the island that have drawn concerns about a crisis imperiling the global economy.

Despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations, the U.S. is the island's main source of defense cooperation and political support, drawing frequent protests from Beijing. A visit last August by then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi prompted Beijing to fire missiles into the Pacific and stage send its forces into a rehearsal of a blockade in the Taiwan Strait.

Large-scale exercises were also launched after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen visited the U.S.

in April, during which she met with Pelosi's successor, Kevin McCarthy.

The shutdown in February of a suspected Chinese spy balloon that had traversed the U.S. led to the U.S. canceling a visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, pushing back a resumption of visits interrupted by China's strict COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Dialogue has been maintained on neutral territory, however, with top Communist Party diplomat Wang Yi holding talks with White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan in Vienna earlier this month.

Economic and person-to-person ties also remain robust, with bilateral trade last year also topped \$690 billion, while an estimated 295,000 Chinese students are enrolled in American colleges and universities. **MDT/AP**

CAMBODIA

Land activists arrested for allegedly inciting farmers to hate the rich

SOPHENG CHEANG
& GRANT PECK, PHNOM PENH

THREE Cambodian land rights activists who were arrested on charges of plotting against the government planned to provoke a peasant revolution by teaching farmers about class divisions between rich and poor, an official said this week.

Theng Savoeun, president of the Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community, and his colleagues Nhel Pheap and Than Hach were charged Monday by a court in the country's northeast with plotting against the state and incitement to commit a felony, said Am Sam Ath of the local rights group Licadho.

He said plotting against the government carries a possible prison term of five to 10 years, while incitement to commit a felony is punishable by six months to two years. He described the charges as sending "a message of intimidation" to civil society groups.

The three suspects were not available for comment and their lawyers were not immediately reachable.

A senior government official likened their nonviolent activities to what the communist Khmer Rouge taught peasants five decades ago before carrying out their bloody revolution.

The arrests in Ratanakiri province came as Cambodia prepares for a general election in July that is certain to return to power



Supporters of three land rights activists protest in Phnom Penh

the governing Cambodian Peoples Party of Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has led the country for 38 years with little tolerance for dissent. The opposition Candlelight Party, the sole group posing a credible challenge to the governing party, was not allowed by the National Election Committee to contest the polls and expects a ruling this week on its appeal of that decision.

The three activists were arrested on May 17 after hosting a workshop in Ratanakiri province about land rights and other issues affecting farmers. The police detained 17 of the workshop's 39 participants but released all but the three, who were charged and placed in pre-trial detention on Monday.

Interior Ministry spokesperson Gen. Khieu Sopheak said the three were arrested because their ac-

tivities violated the law and were outside the main goals of their organization, which he said were to teach farmers more productive agricultural techniques.

He said the workshop instead discussed political issues such as the division between rich and poor and how to incite farmers to hate the rich.

"Their lecture was to teach about peasant revolution, about the class divide in society," Khieu Sopheak said. He said such language mirrored the ideology taught by the communist Khmer Rouge to poor farmers, especially in Ratanakiri province, in the early days of their revolutionary struggle before taking power in April 1975.

The brutal Khmer Rouge regime, which was ousted in 1979, is blamed for the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians

from starvation, illness and killing.

Hun Sen joined the Khmer Rouge in 1970 when it was fighting against a pro-American government but defected from the group in 1977 and allied himself with a resistance movement backed by neighboring Vietnam.

"Fabricating these bogus charges against prominent civil society leaders shows how far the government is willing to go to silence critics in advance of the Cambodia elections in July," Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement issued yesterday. "There needs to be a chorus of international condemnation targeting Prime Minister Hun Sen and his government to demand an end to these intimidating tactics."

Land grabs by wealthy and influential people have been a major problem for many years in

Cambodia. Land ownership was abolished during the rule of the Khmer Rouge and land titles were lost, making ownership a free-for-all when the communist group lost power. Under Hun Sen's government, much land that had been resettled was declared state land and sold or leased to wealthy investors, many of whom critics said were cronies of the governing party. Security forces have been employed to help evict tenants from such areas.

Khieu Sopheak said the three land activists admitted their crimes during police interrogation and that the authorities had found evidence of their activities on a computer and in documents from the group's training workshop.

However, according to the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, "They were initially denied access to legal representation, before their lawyer was eventually allowed to be present as they were being interrogated by the prosecutor" on May 22.

A statement on Theng Savoeun's Facebook page said, "In this life, we have tasted all sorts of flavors, but we remain firmly strong because our daily work is not what they have accused of us, rather we work at basic humanitarian tasks, helping the victims, helping farmers, helping the community, to make them understand their rights and obligations, and to help them find a solution."

Farmers from other provinces who support the three activists have defied official harassment to travel to Phnom Penh to stage protests in front of the Interior Ministry demanding their release.

Rights worker Am Sam Ath expressed his concern that the three face such serious charges for working for the benefit of farmers and their communities. He said it might make it harder to help farmers in the future. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Modi strikes new agreements on migration and green hydrogen

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi struck new agreements yesterday with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese on migration and green hydrogen, while raising concerns about attacks on Hindu temples in Sydney.

Modi was welcomed Tuesday by around 20,000 cheering fans, many chanting "Modi," at a Sydney stadium for his second visit to Australia as India's leader.

But his visit has also been protested by activists who accuse his government

of restricting Muslim and other minorities' rights, as well as press freedom. Anti-Modi posters appeared around Sydney, and Hindu temples in Sydney's west were recently vandalized. Sikhs have also used the visit to demand a separate state.

Modi, a Hindu, said he had raised the issue of attacks on temples with Albanese, who assured him that authorities would take "strict actions" against the culprits.

"We will not accept any

elements that harm the friendly and warm ties between India and Australia by their actions or thoughts," Modi told reporters through an interpreter in a joint press conference with Albanese. Neither leader took questions.

The Indian diaspora accounts for only 3% of Australia's population but is the nation's fastest growing ethnic minority. Modi described the diaspora as the real strength in the growing bilateral relationship.

Modi is the only leader

of the Quad nations to continue with his scheduled visit to Australia after U.S. President Joe Biden pulled out of a planned meeting of the group in Sydney to return to Washington to focus on debt limit talks. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who hosted a Group of Seven summit last week, later canceled his Australia trip as well.

Modi arrived Monday night in Sydney from Papua New Guinea, where he hosted a meeting with Pacific Island leaders to discuss



Modi and Albanese, in Sydney: put it there

ways to better cooperate.

Modi and Albanese's meeting yesterday "reinforced their commitment to an open, prosperous and secure" Indo-Pacific region, the Australian prime minister's office said in a state-

ment.

The prime ministers announced a new migration agreement that will promote two-way mobility of students, graduates, academic researchers and business people. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Airmen with the 436th Aerial Port Squadron place 155 mm shells on aircraft pallets ultimately bound for Ukraine, last April, at Dover Air Force Base

PUTIN'S WAR

Half of US public approves of Washington's arms deliveries to Ukraine

ELLEN KNICKMEYER,
WASHINGTON

LIKE the blue and yellow flags that popped up around the U.S. when Russia invaded Ukraine 15 months ago, U.S. popular support for Washington's backing of Ukraine has faded a little but remains widespread, a survey by the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy and NORC shows.

It found that half of the people in the U.S. support the Pentagon's ongoing supply of weapons to Ukraine for its defense against Russian forces. That level is nearly unchanged in the past year, while about a quarter are opposed to sustaining the military lifeline that has now topped \$37 billion.

Big majorities among both Democrats and Republicans believe Russia's attack on Ukraine was unjustified, according to the poll, taken last month.

And about three out of four people in the U.S. support the United States playing at least some role in the conflict, the survey found.

The findings are in line with what Ukraine's ambassador says she sees when she makes appearances at think tanks, fancy dinners, embassy parties and other events to rally vital U.S. backing for her country.

"I feel the support is still strong," Ambassador Oksana Markarova said, even as tensions with China, domestic politics, mass shootings and other news often top Ukraine's war in U.S. news coverage these days.

"There are other things happening at the same time," she said. "But I feel the very strong bipartisan support."

When it comes to specific kinds of U.S. backing for Ukraine, popular support for U.S. sanctions against Russia has experienced the most significant drop, falling from 71% a year ago to 58% this spring, although that's still a majority.

The decline in support for the sanctions may reflect people's concern that the efforts to isolate Russia economically have contributed to inflation, analysts said.

Overall, however, the findings show that a couple of early concerns U.S. policymakers had about the strong material assistance for Ukraine have yet to be realized: that public support would crater if the war dragged on, and that the heavy assistance to Ukraine would become a partisan wedge issue, splitting Democrats and Republicans.

"There's no groundswelling of American Ukraine fatigue here, and that has always been the fear," said Samuel Charap, a senior po-

litical scientist at the RAND Corp. research center.

For Cameron Hill, a 27-year-old state employee and Republican in Anadarko, Oklahoma, there was much to dislike about Russia's war and its leader, Vladimir Putin: the statements from Putin that Hill took as misleading propaganda, his heavy-handed rule, and Russian fighters' attacks on civilians and other abuses.

From the start of the Ukraine war, "there was killing of civilians, raping," Hill said. "It didn't seem like a moral-run military in the first place."

By contrast, video showing the courage of a Ukrainian fighter as he appeared to be executed by Russian fighters stood out to Hill. "His last words were something along the lines of 'Slava Ukraini,'" or Glory to Ukraine, Hill said.

The vast majority of U.S. adults believe that Russia has committed war crimes during the conflict, including 54% who say Russia is the only side that has done so. The International Criminal Court at the Hague in the Netherlands in March issued arrest warrants for Putin over Russia's mass deportation of Ukrainian children.

Older adults are more likely to view Russia's invasion as an unjustified attempt to overthrow Ukraine's government — 79% among

people 45 and older, compared with 59% for those 44 and under.

In all, 62% regard Russia as an enemy — or top enemy — of the United States. And 48% are very worried about Russia's influence around the world. At the same time, 50% say they have a favorable opinion of the Russian people, compared with 17% who have an unfavorable view.

Only 8% of people in the U.S. say they have a favorable view of Putin.

Americans' view of Russia and its leader has already been a flashpoint in U.S. politics, as when Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis drew criticism this spring for dismissing Ukraine's fight against Russian forces as a "territorial dispute." The remark was associated with a drop in support for DeSantis, a prospective Republican presidential candidate.

When it comes to the war itself, "it's unfortunate that it's going on as long as it is. And I can't imagine, you know, living there, and that would be my life everyday, with bombs going off," said Laura Salley, 60, a college mental-health counselor in Easton, Pennsylvania, and a Democrat.

"But if we pull back, I'm pretty sure that Russia would find that as an opportunity to encroach again," Salley said. MDT/AP

this day in history

1961 KENNEDY PLEDGES MAN ON MOON



President John F. Kennedy has called for millions of dollars to fund a space program to get the first man on the Moon by 1970.

In a speech to a joint session of Congress broadcast on TV and radio around the United States, he asked for an extra \$1.700m on the federal budget.

The largest proportion of this would be spent on researching and developing ways of getting an American on the Moon by the end of the decade.

"I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth," he said.

He said \$9,000m would be needed over the next five years to fund space rockets and other projects need to get a man on the Moon. But the president added "this very urgent request" would not need to be funded by extra taxes provided the economy continued to grow and companies exercised wage and price restraint.

This was his last address to the country before his meeting with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. He is still basking in the glory of Russia's latest achievements in space exploration - last month Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space.

Three weeks ago, when Alan Shepard became America's first astronaut, President Kennedy said the country had to "work with the utmost speed and vigour" to develop its space programme.

Today, he demonstrated his total commitment to the project.

"If we were to go only half way or reduce our sights in the face of difficulty," he said, "it would be better not to go at all."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

On 21 July 1969, right on schedule, Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the Moon, stepping onto the Moon's surface in the Sea of Tranquility at 0256 GMT.

He was joined by Buzz Aldrin 20 minutes later. The entire event was watched avidly by millions live on television across the world.

The Apollo 11 crew returned safely on 24 July and spent the next 21 days in quarantine at an American military base - a procedure dropped in subsequent missions since no alien organisms were found.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19

If they don't want to get involved, work by yourself. You can dazzle members of the opposite sex with your quick wit and aggressive charm.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20

Romantic encounters will be full of excitement. Be careful if a friend asks you for advice. You will be in an overly generous mood today.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21

Those you live with may be experiencing problems. Secret enemies may be holding a grudge that you're not even aware of. Females may put demands or added responsibilities on you.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Don't let your family put demands on you. You can write beautiful love letters today. You can make personal changes that will enhance your appearance and bring you greater popularity.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You are in a high cycle where travel, education, and creative endeavors are concerned. You should socialize with clients or upper echelons of your industry if possible.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You may find that you're being used. If you haven't planned a vacation, then at least try to get away for the weekend. Family outings will make you feel secure and happy.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You should expect to have changes in your home. Resistance leading to conflict will only make it twice as hard to turn the situation around. Hard work will bring rewards.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Go over their important documents and take the time to suggest alternatives. You have two choices; Get out on your own, or bend to your mate's whims.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Refuse to get involved in idle chatter; it will only make you look bad. Don't confide in anyone for the time being. Matters pertaining to work must be completed before you leave.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Take things slowly, especially for the sake of those you love. Build on friendship rather than starting out in an intimate encounter. Wait and get all the information before consulting your boss.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You might just as well let others do their own thing. Be diplomatic but stem when it comes to giving of yourself. You should be traveling to that exotic destination you've been dreaming about.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20

This will be a good day for research and for sitting down with some good, informative reading material. Talking to those you trust and respect will help you sort out any problems.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

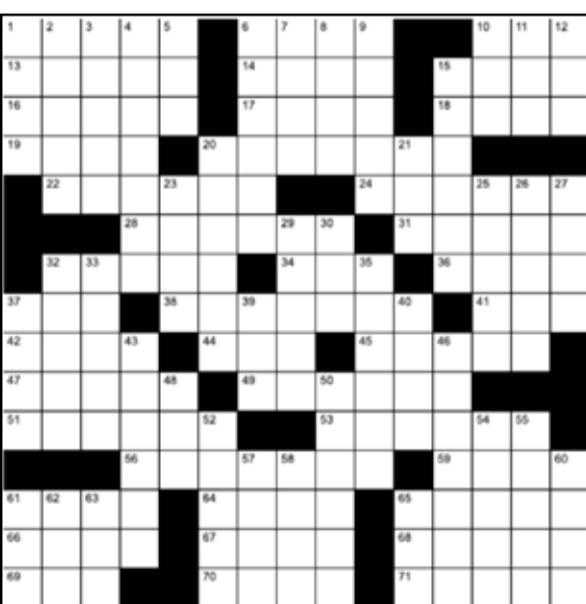
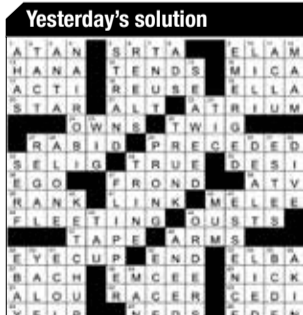
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	18	26	rain
Changchun	17	24	cloudy
Chengdu	18	26	overcast
Chongqing	17	27	rain
Fuzhou	21	30	overcast
Guangzhou	22	32	thunderstorms
Guiyang	13	29	showers
Haikou	26	35	cloudy
Hangzhou	15	29	overcast
Harbin	20	25	rain
Hefei	13	27	cloudy
Nanjing	14	27	cloudy
Shanghai	17	27	fine
Taipei	21	27	overcast
Wuhan	16	29	overcast
Hong Kong	27	29	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	13	22	rain
Frankfurt	9	22	fine
Paris	12	22	overcast
London	8	20	overcast
New York	11	21	fine

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Improvise; 6- Leaf tool; 10- Seed of a legume; 13- Fragment; 14- Charles Lamb's nom de plume; 15- Get one's ducks in ___; 16- North African capital; 17- Keep it, to an editor; 18- Christmas; 19- Med school subj.; 20- Adds yeast; 22- Mythical sea monster; 24- Unit of force; 28- Shred; 31- Skin layer; 32- Sluggish; 34- Lair, often for wild animals; 36- Oboe, e.g.; 37- That, in Tijuana; 38- Legendary king of Thebes; 41- Ottoman official; 42- 554, in stone; 44- Not emp.; 45- Trunk line; 47- Like Fran Drescher's voice; 49- In ___ (sort of); 51- First name in aviation; 53- Candle bracket; 56- Do repeatedly; 59- Bailiwick; 61- Experts; 64- Cubs slugger Sammy; 65- Silvery fish; 66- Olympic event; 67- Unseat; 68- Adjust to zero; 69- Skater Midori; 70- Fountain of jazz; 71- Latin stars;

DOWN 1- Official records; 2- Intoxicated; 3- Pertaining to the moon; 4- Copy; 5- Small shot; 6- Take as an affront; 7- Neighbor of Sask.; 8- Capital of the Ukraine; 9- Taken in; 10- In favor of; 11- Fair-hiring abbr.; 12- Shoe tool; 15- Reply; 20- Mailed communique; 21- Beatty of "Deliverance"; 23- Corn syrup brand; 25- Pay for; 26- Last letter of the Greek alphabet; 27- Zip; 29- Prepares for publication; 30- Agent, briefly; 32- Religion of the Muslims; 33- Racket; 35- Subtlety; 37- Actress Best; 39- Narc's org.; 40- Just okay; 43- Suitcase; 46- Christens anew; 48- Plastered; 50- Fancy home; 52- Man of morals; 54- Summit; 55- Conger catcher; 57- Libertine; 58- Little helper?; 60- Kofi ___ Annan; 61- Boxer Laila; 62- Director's cry; 63- Freudian topic; 65- Madrid Mrs.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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HKD 17,900/mth 4 bed 2 bath

AD

Sands Gallery exhibition features veteran Chinese artist Fang Lijun



 Sands China launched its latest art exhibition, Fang Lijun Ceramic Works Exhibition, as part of the company's ongoing commitment to the diversification of art and culture in the SAR.

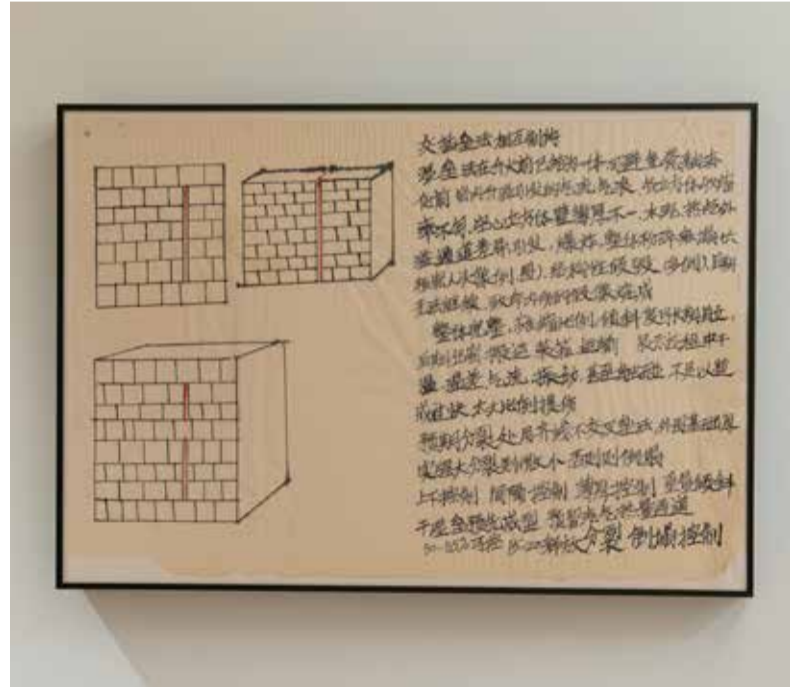
Aiming to provide a platform for promoting extensive exchange and cooperation among local and international art talent, the exhibition presents nearly 60 works of art from Fang Lijun, an internationally sought-after artist known as one of the Four Giants of Chinese contemporary art.

The exhibition theme, "Bone of the Bone, Flesh of the Flesh," is inspired by the story of God creating Eve with one of Adam's ribs, and examines the idea that bones and flesh are the origin of life and looks at their connection with the process of creation.

Fang said: "Artistic creation centres around humanity, without a fixed standard. I have used ceramic as the medium to imitate the physical layers of the human body, thereby initiating broader and more direct representations of life through lifelike ceramics."

Fang is a pioneer of China's "Post-1989 New Art Movement," "Rascal Culture," and "China Pop." Over the past decade, he has continuously experimented with different materials, media, visual effects and artistic forms, applying them in projects like ceramic installations, ink paintings, videos and outdoor public artworks.

Fang Lijun Ceramic Works Exhibition is open for public viewing daily at Sands Gallery with free admission, May 17-June 24, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., on the 6th floor of The Grand Suites at Four Seasons.



FOOTBALL

Valencia slams 'disproportionate' punishment after racial abuse against Vinícius Júnior

TALES AZZONI, MADRID

VALENCIA will appeal the partial closure of its stadium following the racial abuse directed at Real Madrid forward Vinícius Júnior in a Spanish league match, saying the punishment is "unfair and disproportionate."

Spanish soccer's competition committee yesterday [Macau time] fined Valencia in 45,000 euros (\$48,500) and closed one of the sections of Mestalla Stadium for five games in what is the strongest ever punishment for a club in a case of racism in Spain.

The punishment was part of a strong response by soccer officials and Spanish authorities following an outpouring of support for Vinícius after he was targeted by Valencia fans on Sunday.

Vinícius, who is Black, has been subjected to repeated racial insults since he arrived to play in Spain five years ago. The 22-year-old Brazil forward heavily criticized Spain and its lack of action against racism after the latest incident



Real Madrid's Vinícius Junior (center) leaves the pitch after being shown a red card during a La Liga match against Valencia

against him.

"Valencia wants to express its complete disagreement and indignation over the unfair and disproportionate penalty imposed by the competition committee," the club said in a statement yesterday.

"Valencia wants to publicly denounce that the evidence shown by the committee contradicts what the police and La Liga say.

This sanction is based on evidence that the club has not been able to see."

Valencia also complained that it was not given a chance to defend itself before the ruling was made. The club said it has been cooperating with police from the start and has acted strongly to condemn what happened at its stadium.

Valencia said not long after the

game it would work with authorities to identify those responsible for the abuse, and a day later it banned one person for life for being involved in the incident against Vinícius.

With the club's cooperation, police arrested three people on suspicion of a hate crime for their alleged abuse against the Brazilian on Sunday, with all being banned for life from the stadium. The club said that was the maximum punishment it could impose.

"To punish fans who were not involved in these lamentable incidents is a measure completely disproportionate, unfair and unprecedented," Valencia said. "We will fight against it until the end."

The three people spoke to police and were set free as the investigation against them continues. Four other people were detained in Madrid after being accused of hanging an effigy of Vinícius off a highway bridge in January.

Fans have been fined and banned before for attacks on Vinícius, but so far no one in Spain has ever

gone to trial on criminal charges for racially abusing a player.

Spain created a specific law against violence, racism, xenophobia and intolerance in sports in 2007, and since then an anti-violence commission composed of several entities has been in charge of monitoring and denouncing cases that may break the law.

But the current legislation stipulates that not all cases of racism can be punished criminally, only those in which there is an extra element affecting the victim. Most cases, including many similar to the ones involving the fans in Valencia, end up falling into a category in which punishment only includes fines and bans from stadiums.

Valencia, which is still fighting against relegation to the second division, has one home game left in the league this season, against Espanyol on Sunday. Espanyol is also trying to avoid demotion. Valencia is in 13th place, five points from the relegation zone. MDT/AP

AD



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OPINION

Multipolar World

Jorge Costa Oliveira



**ELECTRIC VEHICLES:
 CHINA AND EUROPE
 CONDEMNED TO
 DIALOGUE**

For 20 years, while Europe continued to push aside the issue of electric mobility and storage, China recognized the enormous potential of these strategic sectors to leverage a significant part of the future economy. Consequently, through clear public policies (including strong financial incentives), Chinese companies invested in all segments of the value chain.

Massive amounts were invested in R&D. Efforts were made to secure access to minerals such as lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese, graphite, rare earth elements, copper, iron and aluminum.

Some companies (Tianqi, Ganfeng) specialized in the chemical processing (refinement) of these minerals into critical metals. Companies specialized in the manufacturing of electrodes (cathodes and anodes), electrolytes and other components of electric batteries received strong state support, producing these components in gigafactories.

The number of electric vehicle (EV) manufacturers in China multiplied, with over 500 EV brands in the country in 2021.

China's progress in electric mobility has reached such a dimension that relevant foreign battery producers (LG Energy) and EV manufacturers (Tesla, BMW, Dacia, Smart, Mini) decided to establish production units there.

In recent years, Europe finally decided to invest in electric mobility and storage. To that end, it established a European strategy, set (unrealistic) deadlines for the end of combustion engine vehicle production, and created IPCEI and other support mechanisms for various aspects of electric mobility. Despite the sector's relevance (7% of the European GDP), it will take until the end of this decade to have European EVs with batteries manufactured in Europe.

In the US, the most important part of the strategy—the financial and fiscal incentives outlined in the Inflation Reduction Act—was only defined in 2022. We will see if it remains in place if the new US president comes from sectors of the Republican Party that believe global warming and greenhouse gases are fantasies.

The European delay is leading to an increase in sales of Chinese EVs in Europe. According to a report by Allianz, by 2030, this should result in a 13% loss of the European market and a 7 billion decrease in net profits for European vehicle manufacturers. Meanwhile, China has become a net exporter of vehicles, and the trend clearly indicates an increase in surplus in this desirable sector.

The emerging EV industry and European gigafactories are dependent on the supply of electric batteries (for 5-10 years) and critical metals (in the long term, for at least 10-20 years) from Chinese companies—many of them state-owned. On the other hand, considering the progressive decoupling between the US and China and the low customs tariffs, Europe will certainly become the second-largest market for Chinese EVs, with analysts predicting a significant increase in their market share.

The European dependency on electric batteries and critical metals cannot be changed in the medium term. The European market is gradually becoming an important source of income for the top Chinese EV manufacturers (BYD, NIO, Li Auto, Xpeng, WM Motor). In this sector as well, the EU and China are condemned to engage in dialogue.

[linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira)

ON BEIJING VISIT, RUSSIAN PM SAYS PRESSURE FROM WEST IS STRENGTHENING TIES WITH CHINA **THE BUZZ**

Pressure from the West is strengthening Russia's ties with China, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart in Beijing yesterday.

Mishustin's visit comes as Russia is increasingly turning to China for diplomatic and economic support amid growing isolation over its invasion of Ukraine.

In opening remarks at his meeting Wednesday with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Mishustin did not mention the 15-month-old war that China, in deference to Moscow, has refused to criticize, focusing

instead on economic cooperation between the neighbors that have partnered in challenging the U.S. lead in global affairs.

Relations between the two countries are "at an unprecedented high level," influenced by the "pressure of illegitimate sanctions from the collective West," Mishustin said.

China says it is a neutral party between Russia and Ukraine and wants to help broker an end to the conflict. But it has blamed the West for provoking Moscow and has maintained strong diplomatic and trade ties with Russia in opposition to sanctions against it.

AP PHOTO



Independent Special Rapporteur on Foreign Interference David Johnston presents his first report in Ottawa

CANADIAN APPOINTEE REJECTS PROBE INTO CHINA ELECTION INTERFERENCE

ROB GILLIES, TORONTO

A Canadian government appointee yesterday [Macau time] rejected holding a public inquiry into leaked intelligence that alleged China interfered in Canada's federal elections, drawing allegations of a cover-up from the Conservative opposition.

Opposition lawmakers have demanded a full public inquiry on the alleged Chinese interference since reports about it earlier this year by the Globe and Mail newspaper. It cited unidentified intelligence sources that China preferred to see Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals re-elected in the 2021 election and worked to defeat Conservative politicians considered unfriendly to Beijing.

Trudeau appointee David Johnston announced recommendations saying that a public inquiry into the leaked materials could not take place because of the sensitivity of the intelligence. However, he recommended public hearings on broader issues, including on foreign influence in Canada's political system.

Johnston wrote that he found no example of Trudeau, his ministers or their offices "knowingly ignoring intelligence, advice or recommendations on foreign

interference or being driven by partisan considerations in dealing with these issues."

Trudeau said he would abide by Johnston's recommendation to not hold a public inquiry.

Opposition Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre immediately slammed Johnston's recommendation, saying that it covers up Beijing's influence in Canada. He also alleged Johnston was compromised because he has family ties with Trudeau.

Trudeau appointed Johnston, a family friend and a widely respected former governor general, to study the issue in March and make recommendations.

Johnston said the government had neither ignored, nor failed to act on, the intelligence and said media reports on the leaked intelligence lacked context and in some cases were wrong. "The leaks are based on partial information. In some cases documents don't tell the full story," he said.

He also said it was troubling and damaging that intelligence was leaked. He said he couldn't speculate on who leaked the intelligence or what their motives were.

The governor general is the representative of Bri-

tain's monarch as head of state, and holds a mostly ceremonial and symbolic position. Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointed Johnston governor general in 2010 and his term was extended under Trudeau until 2017. Johnston is also a former member of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation.

Trudeau said yesterday that he had full confidence in Johnston's handling of his role, and played down the importance of any family connections. "I saw him a few times as a kid. I got to know him after he was appointed to governor general by Stephen Harper," Trudeau said.

Poilievre, the opposition leader, said Johnston "has helped Trudeau cover up the influence by Beijing in our democracy."

"David Johnson is a ski buddy, chalet neighbor, family friend and member of the Trudeau foundation. He has no business in this job because it is a fake job that he is incapable of doing impartially and none of his recommendations can be taken seriously because he is in a conflict of interest," Poilievre said.

Trudeau has said that all political leaders agree that the election outcomes in 2019 and in 2021 were not affected by foreign interference. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Germany Authorities raided 15 properties yesterday and seized assets in an investigation into the financing of protests by the Last Generation climate activist group, prosecutors said. Munich prosecutors said they were investigating seven people, ranging in age from 22 to 38, on suspicion of forming or supporting a criminal organization. They launched the inquiry following numerous criminal complaints they received since mid-2022.

AP PHOTO



UK Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was fined for breaking his own government's pandemic lockdown rules, has been reported to police again over more potential breaches. The Times of London said that Johnson was reported by civil servants over alleged visits to Chequers, the prime minister's official country retreat, as well as potential breaches in the leader's Downing Street residence. The Metropolitan Police force and Thames Valley Police said they were assessing details relating to incidents between June 2020 and May 2021.

AP PHOTO



Brazil In the depths of the Amazon, Brazil is building an otherworldly structure—a complex of towers arrayed in six rings, poised to spray mists of carbon dioxide into the rainforest. But the reason is utterly terrestrial: to understand how the world's largest tropical forest responds to climate change. Dubbed AmazonFACE, the project will probe the forest's remarkable ability to sequester carbon dioxide—an essential piece in the puzzle of world climate change. This will help scientists understand whether the region has a tipping point that could throw it into a state of irreversible decline.