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MACAO WATER EXPECTS SUMMER TO SEE UP TO 5% INCREASE IN CONSUMPTION, WHILE GOV'T HAS NO PLANS TO INCREASE WATER TARIFFS THIS YEAR

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TWO SUSPECTS ARRESTED FOR ALLEGEDLY SCAMMING OVER MOP40 MILLION FROM MORE THAN 30 PEOPLE

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IS IT REAL OR MADE BY AI? EUROPE WANTS A LABEL FOR THAT AS IT FIGHTS DISINFORMATION

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AP PHOTO



US, Japan and Philippines coast guard ships staged law enforcement drills in waters near the disputed South China Sea yesterday as Washington presses efforts to reinforce alliances in Asia amid an increasingly tense rivalry with China. The drills, witnessed by journalists onboard a Philippine coast guard patrol boat, the BRP Cabra, included a scenario involving the interdiction and boarding of a vessel suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction off the Bataan Peninsula, Philippine coast guard spokesperson Commodore Armand Balilo said.

AP PHOTO



EU The president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, says she has no interest in becoming the new leader of NATO as the trans-Atlantic military alliance seeks a successor to Jens Stoltenberg. Stoltenberg, a former Norwegian prime minister, has been NATO secretary general since 2014. His term was due to expire last year but was extended to provide stability after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022.

AP PHOTO



Ukraine The wall of a major dam in a part of southern Ukraine that Moscow controls collapsed yesterday, triggering floods, endangering Europe's largest nuclear power plant and threatening drinking water supplies as both sides in the war rushed to evacuate residents and blamed each other for the emergency. Ukraine accused Russian forces of blowing up the Kakhovka dam and hydroelectric power station on the Dnieper River, while Russian officials blamed Ukrainian military strikes in the contested area. It was not possible to verify the claims. *More on p8*

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AGEISM AT WORK

Secretary Lei under fire for claiming Macau has no age discrimination on job access as lawmakers slam gov't for absence of relevant measures P3



**HZMB
GOODS
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TO START
OPERATION
THIS YEAR**

P2



**AIR MACAU
FLIGHTS
IN
SUMMER
TO
EXPAND**

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IC LAUNCHES APPLICATION CAMPAIGN FOR 'HUSH BAZAAR!'

As the event "Concerts hush! 2023" will be held on November 4 and 5 in Hác Sá, the Cultural Institute (IC) launched a registration campaign for the "Hush Bazaar!" which will feature many tents to promote various products and local gastronomical specialties. Those interested in operating a stall can apply on the event website from now until July 10. Should the number of subscribers who meet the eligibility criteria exceed the number of available tents, operators will be selected via a draw, with results announcements planned on October 13.

ELECTRONIC IDS FOR BORDER-CROSSINGS BY END-JUNE

Still under review by the First Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL), a draft bill aimed at upgrading the Macau ID card system could digitalize physical ID cards on the Macau One Account mobile app. The aim of the bill is to facilitate border-crossings and the use of local identification documents in public services, as well as remove some of the information shown on physical documents, such as height and the date of first issuance. If passed, the bill will take effect on December 15. However, the use of electronic identification will come into effect on June 30.

UM HOLDS RESEARCH ACTIVITY FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

On the occasion of its 10th anniversary, the University of Macau (UM) Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) organized the fourth instalment of its science popularization activity "The Pursuit of Research." The activity provided an opportunity for students from six secondary schools in Macau to visit the core facilities of FHS and conduct a series of hands-on experiments, with the aim of enhancing their interest in health sciences and inspiring them to pursue their dreams in science. Under the guidance of FHS's faculty members, the students conducted experiments related to biomedical sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, and bioinformatics to learn about different scientific theories.

HZMB

PASSENGERS ARRIVING AT HK AIRPORT WILL SOON BE ABLE TO TRANSFER DIRECTLY TO MACAU

RENATO MARQUES

PASSENGERS arriving at Hong Kong airport whose final destination is Macau will soon be able to transfer directly to Macau via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB) without going through immigration and entering Hong Kong, local authorities said yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL) during the continuation of the two-day Q&A session between lawmakers and government officials.

In the debate that followed an inquiry from lawmaker Ip Sio Kai, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sion Chak, said that work to improve utilization of the HZMB is underway and soon will be enacted.

In the debate that followed, lawmaker Wang Sai Man further queried when passengers traveling to Macau would be able to avoid entering Hong Kong and instead be directly transferred to Macau via the HZMB.

Adding to the Secretary's response, a representative from the Transport Bureau (DSAT) stated that further details would be "soon revealed," disclosing that the method will be similar to past measures that provided passengers with the ability to acquire

RENATO MARQUES



tickets for a direct transfer bus service during their airport ferry service, and staff from the same operator would handle the passenger luggage at the airport and transfer it onto the same bus to Macau.

Such measures have been requested by the public since the opening of the bridge. To date, the bridge has been seen to provide only limited convenience in conveying passengers to Macau, and they are currently required to use several separate modes of transport to arrive in Macau.

For the time being, no further details have been revealed on the

date that the new method will enter into force, nor on the price of the service.

GOODS TRANSFER CENTER TO START OPERATION THIS YEAR

The Goods Transfer Center that will allow goods and products to be transported from Hong Kong to Macau via the HZMB more quickly and directly will enter into operation in the second half of this year, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak said in the reply to an inquiry from lawmaker Ip.

Wong noted that the construction of the facilities concluded in early May and work is now

being undertaken in relation to the center's operations.

Wong noted the Customs Service (SA) will be responsible for supervising the passage of goods.

The SA director, Vong Man Chong, advanced at the AL that the transference area is now being prepared and the surveillance system that will inspect the truck routes has already installed.

Vong also added that the customs inspection procedure is expected to take around 40 minutes, and this will provide an inspection capacity of 396 vehicles per day.

CRIME

Two suspects prosecuted for scamming MOP40m

ANTHONY LAM

Two suspects have been arrested for allegedly scamming over MOP40 million in total from more than 30 people, the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) announced yesterday in a statement.

The MP noted that the police cracked down on the case recently.

According to the MP,

the two suspects – among others who are at large – persuaded the victims to invest in a company, claiming that if they did so they would either receive high returns within a short period of time or become the founding shareholders of the company.

The victims invested in excess of MOP40 million into the alleged company. Nonetheless,

when their respective contracts reached their termination dates, they could neither retrieve their capital, obtain the promised return on their investment, nor be registered as shareholders of the company.

Suspecting that they might have been scammed, they reached out to the police for further investigation.

Preliminary investi-

gations suggest that the suspects are likely to have committed the crimes of fraud and major fraud, which are subject to a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment.

The prosecutor has also suggested that restrictive measures be imposed on them, a suggestion that was accepted by the judge at the Criminal Procedure Court in light of the severity of the cri-

mes committed.

In light of the prosecutions, the MP reminded members of the public to remain vigilant against potential scammers. The monetary authority should be approached to verify the legality of any purported investment company or broker beforehand. Any suspected scams should also be reported to the police as soon as possible.

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AL PLENARY

Lei Wai Nong claims no discrimination on access to jobs, lawmakers disagree

RENATO MARQUES

THE Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, said yesterday at a plenary session at the Legislative Assembly (AL) that there are no cases in Macau of discrimination regarding access to jobs.

The statement came in response to an inquiry from lawmaker Lei Chan U calling on the government to take measures to stop discrimination in the access to jobs in Macau, namely by those of older age.

Lei said that based on the statistics collected by the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) there is no such problem as there were no cases reported to the bureau. This reply did not please the lawmakers, with several disagreeing with the statement.

José Pereira Coutinho not only disagreed with the statement, but stated that the problem does exist and takes place “especially in the six gaming concessionaires.” The lawmaker also added that the DSAL has no capacity or has not been exercising its capacity to help residents in lodging complaints about the issue, and this explained the lack of complaints to such a department.

“The Basic Law prohibits discrimination, but the reality is different. In job interviews, discrimination happens often and everyone knows it,” Pereira Coutinho added, remarking that Macau needs a body similar to Hong Kong’s Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to effectively address the problem and process complaints.



Also displeased with Lei Wai Nong’s answer was Ella Lei, another lawmaker who represents workers.

Ella Lei said that there are many cases of age discrimination and no sanctions for such cases. Previously the Secretary has said that in the cases of employers found to be in breach of this rule, a penalty that would be translated into a fine ranging between MOP20,000 and 50,000 would be applied to each case.

Ella Lei said the number of such cases was high and most resulted in a simple dismissal wi-

thout just cause. In such cases, employers simply needed to pay a small amount of compensation, adding that was very easy for the employers to omit the fact that the dismissal took place due to the age of the employee.

“Of course, the employer does not say it is because of the age, but they just give them a job that is not suitable for the workers and then fire them because they cannot perform. The discrimination is very subliminal,” Ella Lei said.

If it is easier to fire a worker based on age, she also noted, is even easier not to hire them for

the same reason as they just need to choose another candidate and there is no justification or requirement to pay compensation, she remarked. She noted that it is during the recruitment stage that most such cases of discrimination occur.

For the lawmaker, the cases of age-based discrimination can only be resolved or minimized if the government implements a series of measures directed at the problem.

Nick Lei added that data collected among people who had lost their jobs showed most of them

had been subjected to different procedures but nonetheless resulted in a dismissal based on age.

He also said that according to official statistics at the end of the first quarter of this year, a total of 11,000 workers were over 65 years old, which led him to think that this might soon become a severe problem.

“People do not have the means to retire. Many of them cannot survive even if they stop working. Others are actually suitable for work. Why can’t they?” he asked, noting as other lawmakers did that the government plays the most important role in resolving this matter.

Agreeing with Pereira Coutinho on the need for a supervising entity to handle cases of discrimination was Ron Lam, who refuted the suggestion that there were no such cases. Rather, there was no entity responsible for handling those cases.

He also said that the government could promote incentives via social enterprises or even the creation of special benefits for companies to hire older workers.

Lam reminded that “Macau does not have a legal age for retirement and those who are working at old age need to have a guiding line.”

This is not the first time that the Secretary for Economy and Finance came under fire from lawmakers for providing responses that they considered “too simplistic” and “divorced from reality,” with lawmakers often accusing him of not ascribing enough importance to their role of supervision on the work of the government.

Water tariff to be frozen this year

THERE is no plan to increase local water tariffs this year, director Susana Wong of the Water and Marine Bureau (DSAMA) said yesterday on the sidelines of a Macao Water event.

She recalled that the last tariff adjustment happened in 2016. Since then, the cost of water supply from the mainland has seen several incremental increases, with another 7% increase

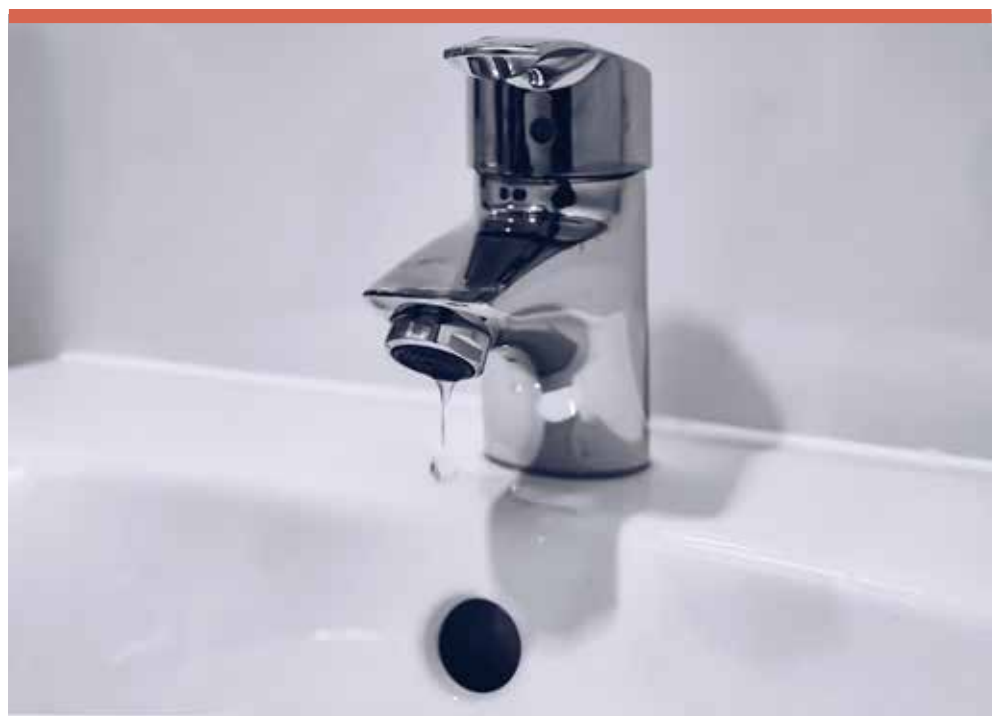
this year. Currently, the mainland charges Macau RMB2.59 per cubic meter of water supplied.

Wong explained that the adjustment factor lies mainly in the consumer price index for the three previous years. In recent years, the local government has used over MOP200 million on water bill sponsorship per year.

Nacky Kuan, executive director at Macao Water, disclosed at the

same occasion that 2.3% more water was supplied during the past five months year-on-year, with the month of May alone seeing a 7% year-on-year increase. Despite this, there is still some distance to catch up with water usage in 2019, she added.

Commercial water consumption has increased in the past five months, but less water was used in domestic consumption, mainly because people have resumed external travel. In addition, she believes that this summer will see a 4% to 5% increase in water consumption year-on-year. **AL**



MEDICAL COMMISSION DISCUSSES ADVERTISEMENTS, OUTREACH SERVICES

ANTHONY LAM

IN its latest plenary meeting, the Medical Commission discussed short to long-term regulating and monitoring of medical advertising and boasted about the efficiency of outreach medical services.

Currently, medical advertisements are strictly restricted and supervised in Macau. For example, all materials identified by the Health Bureau (SSM) as medical advertisements must obtain prior approval from the bureau before publication.

Medical related materials are also strictly monitored.

Certain medical professionals have told the Times that not even their pricing tables are allowed to be disseminated out of their clinics, for example though being expressed orally over the phone and online.

Commission president Alvis Lo, who is a pulmonologist at the public hospital and the di-

XINHUA



rector of the SSM, commended the commission for its long-term proactive investigations into the medical advertising supervisory

scheme and for having provided a multitude of "valuable opinions, which were considered by the Medical Activities Licensing

Team of the SSM.

U Kuai Kuan, representative of the licensing team, explained the relevant regulatory system and

optimization measures in detail, mainly with regard to the content of advertisements for medical establishments and medical personnel that can be published, providing examples of non-medical advertisements, online applications for medical advertising approval, information platforms for medical service providers and law amendments, and others.

The participating members put forward their opinions and suggestions on how to determine whether an advertisement was of a medical nature, the supervision of medical advertisements on social media networks, as well as the promotion of medical services or products by non-medical service providers.

On outreach medical services for residents at aged care residences, Lo said that 12,756 counts of users were served in 2022, with 9,492 counts in specialist services and 3,264 in general medicine.

He further underlined that the target of the services encompasses three directions: servicing, enabling and destressing. The services have helped older residents with mobility limitations to access medical services, Lo added.

TRAVEL

Thailand's tourism sector has 'high interest' in Macau, local group says

ANTHONY LAM

THE head of a local tourism group said that the tourism industry in Thailand is very much interested in returning to Macau.

President of the Macau Leisure Tourism Services Innovation Association, Wong Fai, recently travelled with the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) to Thailand for a marketing and familiarization trip.

After meeting with the tourism representatives from Macau, industry representatives from Thailand expressed clear interest in operating tours to Macau, Wong disclosed in an interview with local media outlet Macao Daily News following the trip.

He also said that the Thai tourism sector was mainly interested in Macau's post-Covid hotel accommodation and tourism resources. Macau's industry has prepared new products to showcase to their Thai counterparts.

Wong sees this as a good scenario, adding that the most popular tour products were largely three to four day itineraries covering Macau only.

Back in 2019, Macau was a popular travel destination for Thai citizens, and the country



has been a main source market for the city, according to Wong.

With the second overseas marketing trip set for Thailand, Wong sees that the local government has highlighted Thailand as a key market. He also recapped that after the resumption of normal travel, flights between Macau and Thailand were among the first to reopen, with steady growth of Thai entrants in the last two months.

He suggested the government

escalate its marketing work, especially given other travel destinations opened earlier than Macau and their marketing campaigns commenced earlier.

On the other hand, he also suggested that the government extend subsidies for foreign tourists to the end of this year, so as to maintain the attractiveness of Macau as a destination. At the same time, subsidies for travelers entering through Hong Kong should also be extended to boost incentives.

AVIATION

AIR MACAU TO INCREASE NUMBER OF FLIGHTS IN ASIAN COUNTRIES DURING SUMMER

STAFF REPORTER

AS the summer season is approaching, the SAR's flagship airline Air Macau has announced that it will increase the number of flights during July and August to numerous popular travel spots across Asia, including Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Japan and South Korea.

The carrier will operate one daily flight to Seoul and Singapore, four flights per day to Taiwan including two to Taipei and two to Kaohsiung.

The addition also includes 13 weekly flights to Thailand including eight to Don Mueang and five to Bangkok, nine weekly flights to Japan

including four to Tokyo and five to Osaka, as well as eight weekly flights to Vietnam with four to Hanoi and four to Da Nang.

Air Macau explained that this move should provide "greater convenience" to local residents traveling abroad and make access to those destinations easier.

The company appears determined to improve momentum for the aviation industry in Macau for summer this year, in order to compensate for the poor results in 2022, where Air Macau registered a 23% decline in its operating revenue compared to 2021, dropping from MOP1.05 billion to about MOP812 million.



Japan earmarks \$107 billion for developing hydrogen energy to cut emissions, stabilize supplies

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

JAPAN'S government yesterday adopted a revision to the country's plans to use more hydrogen as fuel as part of the effort to reduce carbon emissions.

The plan sets an ambitious target to increase the annual supply by six times from the current level to 12 million tons by 2040. It also pledges 15 trillion yen in funding from both private and public sources to build up hydrogen-related supply chains over the next 15 years.

Japan's decarbonization strategy centers on using so-called clean coal, hydrogen and nuclear energy to bridge its transition to renewable energy. Russia's war on Ukraine has deepened concerns over energy security and complicated that effort, but other advanced Western nations are pushing for faster adoption of renewable energy, such as solar, wind and geothermal.

So far, Japan is relying on hydrogen mainly produced using fossil fuels.

Some experts say strategies like commercializing the use of hydrogen and ammonia mainly cater to big business interests and major industries that are heavily invested in fossil fuel-based technologies

AP PHOTO



The Suiso Frontier, a liquefied hydrogen carrier, is berthed in Otaru, northern Japan, on April 14, 2023

and have power over the government policies.

The revised plan prioritizes nine strategic areas, including development of water electrolysis equipment, fuel storage batteries and large-size tankers for transporting hydrogen.

"Hydrogen is an industrial sector that can make a triple achievement of decarbonization, stable energy supply and economic growth in one shot," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said at the Cabinet meeting Tuesday. "We will promote (hydrogen) on a large scale, both demand and supply."

Japan's leaders say they want to turn the country into a "hydrogen society," but the hydrogen industry is still in its initial stages. The government is still drafting legislation to

support building necessary infrastructure and supply chains for commercial use of pure hydrogen and ammonia, another source of hydrogen.

At a hydrogen council meeting with industrial leaders last week, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Japan aims to achieve an "Asian zero-emission community," contributing Japanese technology in hydrogen, ammonia and other decarbonization technologies.

"By setting an ambitious goal we aim to make our plans more predictable and encourage long-term investment in developing a large-scale hydrogen supply and demand," Kishida said.

The Cabinet also approved an annual energy report saying that economic sanctions against Russia for its war on Ukraine have increased

long-term competition for liquefied natural gas, forecasting that shortages could persist through 2025. European demand for LNG as an alternative to Russian natural gas has pushed LNG prices higher, making it necessary to draw up a long-term strategy for securing stable energy supplies.

Japan adopted a so-called "green transformation" plan in February that calls for promotion of next-generation solar batteries, offshore wind power and renewed use of nuclear energy.

Some experts say strategies like commercializing the use of hydrogen and ammonia mainly cater to big business interests and major industries that are heavily invested in fossil fuel-based technologies and have power over the government policies. MDT/AP

DATA PRIVACY

MICROSOFT WILL PAY \$20M TO SETTLE U.S. CHARGES OF ILLEGALLY COLLECTING CHILDREN'S DATA

MICROSOFT will pay a fine of \$20 million to settle Federal Trade Commission charges that it illegally collected and retained the data of children who signed up to use its Xbox video game console.

The agency charged that Microsoft gathered the data without notifying parents or obtaining their consent, and that it also illegally held onto the data. Those actions violated the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, the FTC stated.

In a blog post, Microsoft corporate vice president for Xbox Dave McCarthy outlined additional steps the company is now taking to improve its age verification systems and to ensure that parents are involved in the creation of child accounts for the service. These mostly concern efforts to improve age verification technology and to educate children and parents about privacy issues.

McCarthy also said the company had identified and fixed a technical glitch that failed to delete child accounts in cases where the account creation process never finished. Microsoft policy was to hold that data no longer than 14 days in order to allow players to pick up account creation where they left off if they were interrupted.

The settlement must be approved by a federal court before it can go into effect, the FTC said. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



CORPORATE BITS

Wynn promotes offerings in tourism roadshow in Thailand



As part of the "Experience Macau, Unlimited" mega roadshow held in Bangkok, Thailand, from June 1 to 4.

Wynn showcased numerous tourism offerings and cultural experiences using online and offline promo-

tional channels.

Activities for roadshow visitors who registered to become "Wynn Insider" members were organized, with free stays at Wynn Palace or Wynn Macau to be won, as well as dining credits or exclusive gifts.

Wynn's booth displayed the classic gold hues and the "Tree of Prosperity," which brought visitors together to take photos while interacting with the mascots, "Wing Wing" and "Lei Lei."

Wynn also invited renowned Thai media and bloggers to Macau a few days before the roadshow to promote Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace offerings.

The Venetian Macao wins Asia Pacific award for 'Best Integrated Resort'



The Venetian Macao has won the regional Asia Pacific award for 'Best Integrated Resort' at the Travel + Leisure Luxury Awards Asia Pacific 2023, an awards program

that celebrates the best of hospitality in the region. The award ceremony was held in Bangkok on June 5.

In addition, other luxury hotels and integrated resorts

within Sands Resorts Macao also placed in the Top 10 in five categories, including The Parisian Macao for the Integrated Resorts (Asia Pacific) category; and Conrad Macao, Four Season Hotel Macao, The Londoner Macao, The Venetian Macao in the Hotels (Macao) category.

Kris Kaminsky, senior vice president of Hotel Operations, Sands China Ltd., said, "We are thrilled and honored to have won the regional award, Best Integrated Resort for The Venetian Macao at the Travel + Leisure Luxury Awards Asia Pacific 2023. We are also elated that many of our properties were also recognized as the best in Macau in a variety of categories."

Senior US, Chinese diplomats hold 'candid' talks to avoid escalation of tensions

SENIOR U.S. and Chinese diplomats held "candid and productive" talks in Beijing and agreed to keep open lines of communication to avoid tensions from spiraling into conflict, officials said yesterday.

Daniel Kritenbrink, assistant U.S. secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, was the most senior U.S. official confirmed to have visited China on Monday since tensions between Washington and Beijing soared over the shooting down of a Chinese spy balloon over the U.S. in early February.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the time postponed a planned trip to China, and Beijing has since rebuffed attempts at official exchanges, though two top U.S. and Chinese defense officials briefly interacted at a forum in Singapore over the weekend.

China's Foreign Ministry said Kritenbrink and Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxun "had candid, constructive



and fruitful communication on promoting the improvement of China-U.S. relations and properly managing differences."

Beijing said it had stated its "solemn position on Taiwan" — a self-ruled island China claims as its territory to be annexed by force if necessary — and other issues and that the two sides had agreed to maintain communication.

The U.S. State Department

also said the two officials held "candid and productive discussions as part of ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication and build on recent high-level diplomacy between the two countries."

The U.S. Navy on Sunday complained about an "unsafe interaction" in the Taiwan Strait, after a Chinese warship came within 150 yards of a U.S. destroyer. And last mon-

th, a Chinese fighter jet flew dangerously close to a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea, where Beijing shares overlapping territorial claims with other nations.

CIA Director William Burns last month reportedly took a secret trip to Beijing in another sign the two sides are interested in restoring communication through various channels. **MDT/AP**

CHINESE EX-OFFICIAL'S WIFE SAYS ALLEGED REPATRIATION PRESSURE TURNED HER LIFE IN US 'UPSIDE-DOWN'

A former Chinese official and his wife had left their homeland and kept their U.S. address private. Yet eight years later, two strangers were banging on their New Jersey front door and twisting the handle, the wife testified in a U.S. court Monday.

When the men left and Liu Fang opened the door, she found an ominous note telling her husband that if he returned to China and served 10 years in prison, his wife and children would be OK.

If the lock hadn't held, "what happens if they were able to come in?" she wondered aloud, through a court interpreter, at the criminal trial of a man who helped post the note and two co-defendants. The co-defendants are charged with playing other roles in an alleged campaign to hound ex-official Xu Jin into returning to China.

Prosecutors say the defendants and others subjected the couple, their adult daughter and various relatives to a spate of intimidating overtures at Beijing's behest, as part of a repatriation initiative called "Operation Fox Hunt."

"My life was turned upside-down, at 180 degrees, overnight," Liu told a Brooklyn federal court jury.

The men are charged with acting as illegal agents for China. Their lawyers say the three thought they were helping collect a debt or do some other task for private entities, not the Chinese government.

China describes "Operation Fox Hunt" as a plan to pursue and repatriate nationals Beijing considers fugitives. Those on the wanted list also include people at political or cultural odds with China's ruling Communist Party.

China can't legally compel suspects to return from the U.S., since the countries have no extradition treaty. Beijing has denied issuing threats to induce people to return "voluntarily."

Xu, once a city official in Wuhan, and his wife left China in 2010. Chinese officials then issued international alerts that he was wanted on allegations of embezzlement and bribe-taking and that she was also wanted for allegedly accepting bribes.

Liu told jurors the government went after her husband "because he is upright, and he believes in justice ... and he upset those in power." She said she was targeted simply for being his wife. **MDT/AP**

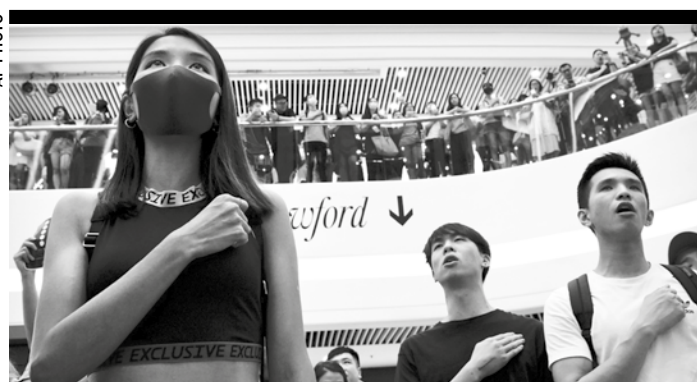
HONG KONG

Gov't seeks court injunction to ban 'Glory to Hong Kong' protest song

HONG Kong's government said yesterday it is seeking a court order to prohibit people from broadcasting or distributing the protest song "Glory to Hong Kong" after it was mistakenly played as the city's anthem at several international sporting events in the past year.

In a statement, the Department of Justice said it had applied for an injunction Monday to prohibit unlawful acts relating to the song, which became an unofficial anthem for the 2019 pro-democracy protests. It is awaiting court direction and for a hearing date to be fixed.

The government said the lyrics of the song contain slogans that have been ruled by the court as "constituting secession" and that it is highly likely that the song will continue to be widely used given that it



Demonstrators sing a theme song written by protestors «Glory to Hong Kong» at the Times Square shopping mall in Hong Kong, Sept. 12, 2019

had been mistakenly played as Hong Kong's anthem instead of China's national anthem, "March of the Volunteers."

In 2020, the government outlawed the protest slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times" for being secessionist and subversive. The "Glory to Hong Kong" lyrics contain parts of the slogan and was therefore widely consid-

ered to be banned.

Hong Kong wanted to prohibit anyone from "broadcasting, performing, printing, publishing, selling, offering for sale, distributing, disseminating, displaying or reproducing in any way" the protest song, or any adaptations of it that are substantially similar to the original in melody and lyrics.

In particular, the injunction

targets anyone who uses "Glory to Hong Kong" to advocate for the separation of Hong Kong from China, such as inciting others to commit secession or sedition, as well as anyone who uses the song to suggest that Hong Kong is independent or to insult the national anthem.

The injunction also seeks to restrain those who allow others to commit similar acts.

In a statement attached to the injunction, the HKSAR Government said it "respects and values the rights and freedoms protected by the Basic Law (including freedom of speech), but freedom of speech is not absolute."

"The application pursues the legitimate aim of safeguarding national security and is necessary, reasonable, legitimate, and consistent with the Bill of Rights," the statement read. **MDT/AP**



Zhu Yong, right, tries to shield himself from photographers as he leaves Brooklyn Federal court, May 31 in New York

As India grieves train crash that killed 275, relatives try to identify bodies of loved ones

KRUTIKA PATHI, RISHI LEKHI & SHEIKH SAALIQ BHUBANESWAR

AP PHOTO

FAMILIES of the victims of India's deadliest train crash in decades filled a hospital in Bhubaneswar city on Monday to try to identify the bodies of relatives, as railway officials recommended a criminal probe of the crash that killed 275 people.

Distraught relatives of passengers killed in the crash Friday lined up outside the eastern city's All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Meanwhile, survivors being treated in hospitals said they are still trying to make sense of the horrific disaster.

Outside the hospital, two large screens cycled through photos of the bodies, the faces so bloodied and charred that they were hardly recognizable.

Each body had a number assigned to it, and relatives stood near the screen and watched as the photos changed, looking for details like clothing for clues.

Many of the people said they spent days on desperate journeys from neighboring states, traveling on multiple trains, buses or rented cars to identify and claim bodies, a process that stretched into a third day.

So far only 45 bodies have been identified, and 33 have been handed over to relatives, said Mayur Sooryavanshi, an administrator who was overseeing the identification process at the hospital in the capital of Odisha state, about 200 kilometers (125 miles) south of the site of the train crash in Balasore.

"It's the first time I have dealt with something like this," said Dr. Utkal Keshari Suna, a senior resident at the Bhubaneswar hospital. "It's been a very difficult experience. I am in forensics, so I am used to dealing with dead bodies, but nothing like this," he said, standing inside the mortuary, where the air was thick with the smell of the dead.

"It's horrific. Time has also passed, so many bo-



dies have started decomposing, so it's becoming more and more difficult to identify them," he said.

Upendra Ram began searching for his son, Retul Ram, on Sunday after traveling about 850 kilometers (520 miles) from neighboring Bihar state. The day-long journey in a rented car, which cost him 35,000 rupees (\$423), was exhausting for Ram. Retul, 17, had been on his way to Chennai to find work, Ram said.

After spending hours looking at photographs of the dead, Ram identified his son around noon Monday.

"I just want to take the dead body and go back home. He was a very good son," said Ram, adding that Retul had dropped out of school to earn money for the family.

"My wife and daughter can't stop crying at home. They are asking me to bring the body back quickly," he said, wiping tears from his eyes with a red scarf he had tied around his head.

Friday's crash was one of the worst rail disasters in India's history. Investigators said a signaling failure might have been

the cause of the disaster, in which a passenger train hit a freight train, derailling on the tracks before being hit by another passenger train coming in the opposite direction on a parallel track.

The collision involved two passenger trains, the Coromandel Express traveling from Howrah in West Bengal state to Chennai in Tamil Nadu state, and the Yesvantpur-Howrah Superfast Express traveling from Bengaluru in Karnataka to Howrah, officials said.

At least 123 trains scheduled to pass through Odisha were either canceled or delayed after the accident. The disruption led air fares to Odisha to spike, prompting India's civil aviation ministry to warn airlines over pricing surges.

Usman Ansari, who came from Bihar to collect the body of his brother-in-law, Kasim Mia, said he spent 24 hours on the road along with two friends. After reaching the site of the crash, they were told the bodies had been moved to Bhubaneswar.

They rented a car to drive to the hospital, where Ansari was finally able

to identify and collect his brother-in-law's body.

"Kasim used to say he wanted to do everything for his children," he said, adding that compensation promised by the federal government would help take care of the man's four young children.

Authorities recommended on Sunday that India's Central Bureau of Investigations, which probes major criminal cases, open an investigation into the crash.

Some train traffic was restored Sunday evening on the tracks where the crash happened, after two days of repair work in which hundreds of workers with excavators removed the mangled debris of the trains.

The crash occurred as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is focusing on the modernization of India's colonial-era railroad network. MDT/AP

AD



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UKRAINE

Collapse of major dam triggers emergency as Moscow and Kyiv blame each other

SUSIE BLANN, KYIV

THE wall of a major dam in southern Ukraine collapsed yesterday, triggering floods, endangering Europe's largest nuclear power plant and threatening drinking water supplies as both sides in the war rushed to evacuate residents and blamed each other for the destruction.

Ukraine accused Russian forces of blowing up the Kakhovka dam and hydroelectric power station on the Dnieper River in an area that Moscow controls, while Russian officials blamed Ukrainian bombardment in the contested area. It was not possible to verify the claims.

The potentially far-reaching environmental and social consequences of the disaster quickly became clear as homes, streets and businesses flooded downstream and emergency crews began evacuations; officials raced to check cooling systems at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant; and authorities expressed concern about supplies of drinking water to the south in Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014.

Both Russian and Ukrainian authorities brought in trains and buses for residents. About 22,000 people live in areas at risk of flooding in Russian-controlled areas, while 16,000 live in the most critical zone in Ukrainian-held territory, according to official tallies. Neither side reported any deaths or injuries.

The dam break added a stunning new dimension to Russia's war in Ukraine, now in its 16th month. Ukrainian forces were widely seen to be moving forward with a long-anticipated counteroffensive in patches along more than 1,000 kilometers of front line in the east and south.

It was not immediately clear whether either side benefits from the damage to the dam, since both Russian-controlled and Ukrainian-held lands are at risk. The damage could also hinder Ukraine's counteroffensive in the south and distract its government, while Russia depends on the dam to supply



This satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies shows an overview of the Kakhovka dam in southern Ukraine on Monday

water to Crimea.

Patricia Lewis, director of the International Security Program at Chatham House think tank in London, said apportioning blame is difficult but "there are all sorts of reasons why Russia would do this."

"There were reports (last fall) of Russians having mined the reservoir. The question we should pose is why the Ukrainians would do this to themselves, given this is Ukrainian territory," she said.

Experts have previously said the dam was suffering from disrepair. David Helms, a retired American scientist who has monitored the reservoir since the start of the war, said in an e-mail that it wasn't clear if the damage was deliberate or simple neglect from Russian forces occupying the facility.

But Helms reserved judgement, also noting a Russian history of attacking dams.

Authorities, experts and residents have expressed concern for months about water flows through — and over — the Kakhovka dam. After heavy rains and snow melt last month, water levels rose beyond normal levels, flooding nearby villages. Satellite images showed water

washing over damaged sluice gates.

Amid official outrage, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he convened an urgent meeting of the National Security Council. He alleged Russian forces set off a blast inside the dam structure at 2:50 a.m. (2350 GMT Monday) and said about 80 settlements were in danger. Zelenskyy said in October his government had information that Russia had mined the dam and power plant.

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called it "a deliberate act of sabotage by the Ukrainian side ... aimed at cutting water supplies to Crimea."

Both sides warned of a looming environmental disaster. Ukraine's Presidential Office said some 150 metric tons of oil escaped from the dam machinery and that another 300 metric tons could still leak out.

Andriy Yermak, the head of Ukraine's President's Office, posted a video showing swans swimming near an administrative building in the flooded streets of Russian-occupied Nova Kakhovka, a city in the Kherson region where some 45,000 people lived before the war. Other footage he posted

showed flood waters reaching the second floor of the building.

Ukraine's Interior Ministry urged residents of 10 villages on the Dnieper's right bank and parts of the city of Kherson downriver to gather essential documents and pets, turn off appliances, and leave, while cautioning against possible disinformation.

The Russian-installed mayor of occupied Nova Kakhovka, Vladimir Leontyev, said it was being evacuated as water poured into the city.

Ukraine's nuclear operator Energoatom said in a Telegram statement that the damage to the dam "could have negative consequences" for the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which is Europe's biggest, but wrote that for now the situation is "controllable."

The U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency said in a statement there was "no immediate risk to the safety of the plant," which requires water for its cooling system.

It said that IAEA staff on site have been told the dam level is falling by 5 centimeters (2 inches) an hour. At that rate, the supply from the reservoir should last a few days, it said.

The plant also has alternative sources of water, including a large cooling pond that can provide water "for some months," the statement said.

Ukrainian authorities have previously warned that the dam's failure could unleash 18 million cubic meters of water and flood Kherson and dozens of other areas where thousands of people live.

The World Data Center for Geoinformatics and Sustainable Development, a Ukrainian nongovernmental organization, estimated that nearly 100 villages and towns would be flooded. It also reckoned that the water level would start dropping only after five-seven days.

A total collapse in the dam would wash away much of the broad river's left bank, according to the Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Working Group, an organization of environmental activists and experts documenting the war's environmental effects. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1981 ISRAEL BOMBS BAGHDAD NUCLEAR REACTOR



The Israelis have bombed a French-built nuclear plant near Iraq's capital, Baghdad, saying they believed it was designed to make nuclear weapons to destroy Israel.

It is the world's first air strike against a nuclear plant. An undisclosed number of F-15 interceptors and F-16 fighter bombers destroyed the Osirak reactor 18 miles south of Baghdad, on the orders of Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

The army command said all the Israeli planes returned safely.

The 70-megawatt uranium-powered reactor was near completion but had not been stocked with nuclear fuel so there was no danger of a leak, according to sources in the French atomic industry.

The Israeli Government explained its reasons for the attack in a statement saying: "The atomic bombs which that reactor was capable of producing whether from enriched uranium or from plutonium, would be of the Hiroshima size. Thus a mortal danger to the people of Israel progressively arose."

It acted now because it believed the reactor would be completed shortly - either at the beginning of July or the beginning of September 1981.

The Israelis criticised the French and Italians for supplying Iraq with nuclear materials and pledged to defend their territory at all costs.

The statement said: "We again call upon them to desist from this horrifying, inhuman deed. Under no circumstances will we allow an enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction against our people."

The attack took place on a Sunday, they said, to prevent harming the French workers at the site who would have taken the day off.

There have been no reported casualties.

The Osirak reactor is part of a complex that includes a second, smaller reactor - also French-built - and a Soviet-made test reactor already in use.

Iraq denies the reactor was destined to produce nuclear weapons.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

News of the audacious raid did not actually emerge until 24 hours later when Israel made its announcement. Only then did Iraq admit it had happened and express indignation.

One of the pilots involved was Ilan Ramon who trained as Israel's first astronaut but was killed in the Columbia shuttle disaster in 2003.

Two weeks after the Osirak attack Israel admitted it had the capability of developing its own nuclear weapons.

And in 1986, Mordechai Vanunu, a former nuclear technician was found guilty of espionage after he told a British newspaper, the Sunday Times, that Israel was secretly building atomic bombs. French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac cultivated France's special relationship with Iraq during the 1970s to maintain an influence in a region dominated by Anglo-Saxons and boost trade links with the oil-rich nation.

He led the universal condemnation of Israel's attack on Osirak.

Then, 22 years later - as French president - Mr Chirac was vehemently against the USA and Britain going to war with Iraq over the issue of weapons of mass destruction.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You must get out and mingle. An older loved one may be having problems. Don't let relatives stand in the way of your personal plans. Try not to lend or borrow money today.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Don't neglect these problems; deal with them once and for all, then move on to more pleasurable tasks. Your ability to get the job done will result in added responsibility and possible promotion.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Do not be surprised if your partner doesn't understand your needs. Don't think the worst if you hear something negative about your partner.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You can win points with children if you take the time to show interest in their accomplishments. Jealousy may be a contributing factor to your emotional ups and downs.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Unique forms of entertainment could capture your attention and bring about a romantic interest. Try to curb your bad habits, and compromise if your partner gives you an ultimatum.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Entertainment could be pleasing if it is of an energetic nature. Avoid purchasing expensive items. You should get out and meet some of those clients that you only speak to on the phone.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You are likely to reveal information unintentionally. You'll have problems with authority figures if you don't play by the rules. Stick to your work and avoid emotional confrontations.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Keep your cash in your pocket and offer them sound advice rather than your financial assistance. Your obviously unique way of doing things has caught the eye of someone in a higher position.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Dinner with clients or business associates should be successful. Ferret out information that will hold them responsible. You might want to spend some time by yourself in order to decide exactly how you feel.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Be careful not to misplace your wallet or belongings. You should get into programs that will enhance your appearance and help you to be the best that you can.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Strengthen your position among your peers. Your tendency to overreact could get you into trouble. Remain calm and you'll shine. Passion should be your goal.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Make changes regarding your status in society. Don't settle for less than the best. Your obviously unique way of doing things has caught the eye of someone in a higher position.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	22	36	rain
Changchun	18	28	thunderstorms
Chengdu	21	30	cloudy
Chongqing	20	29	overcast
Fuzhou	26	33	rain
Guangzhou	25	32	rain
Guiyang	16	27	overcast
Haikou	26	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	19	29	rain
Harbin	15	29	thunderstorms
Hefei	16	30	fine
Nanjing	18	31	cloudy
Shanghai	19	29	rain
Taipei	24	29	rain
Wuhan	20	31	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	31	thunderstorms

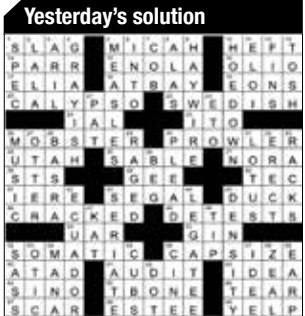
WORLD

Moscow	11	23	cloudy
Frankfurt	14	24	rain
Paris	14	28	overcast
London	9	22	cloudy
New York	14	25	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- ___ la vista; 6- Clench; 10- Chews the fat; 14- Colorado resort; 15- Designer Gernreich; 16- Smell ___; 17- Author Calvino; 18- A Baldwin brother; 19- Mudville complement; 20- Relatives; 21- Examine in detail; 24- Insistence; 26- Exhausts; 27- Skater Midori; 28- Viscous' superiors; 30- Fix hose; 33- Evening party; 35- Jazz org.; 38- Nerd; 40- Lyric tribute; 41- Former Russian rulers; 43- Green or black, e.g.; 44- Straight; 47- One way to run; 48- Pertaining to the moon; 49- Yuck!; 51- Flight of steps; 54- Gastropod mollusk; 58- Highly respected; 61- Acapulco aunt; 62- ___ want for Christmas...; 63- Deep unconscious state; 64- Entrances; 66- Strip of wood; 67- Very, in Versailles; 68- Upright; 69- Biblical verb; 70- Mailed; 71- Wearies;

DOWN 1- Japanese three-line verse; 2- Up and about; 3- Exactly; 4- ___ Aviv; 5- Apply chris; 6- Sauce; 7- Dominion; 8- Roman date; 9- Visible image; 10- Sacred river of India; 11- Met highlights; 12- African language group; 13- At quite an incline; 22- Sgts., e.g.; 23- Atoll unit; 25- Mozart's "___ kleine Nachtmusik"; 28- Duck with soft down; 29- Geographical expanse; 30- Banned spray; 31- Amazement; 32- "Michael Collins" actor; 34- The last Mrs. Chaplin; 35- Where some vets served; 36- Friend in the 'hood; 37- Inquire of; 39- Brief advertisement; 42- Satirist Mort; 45- Six legged creatures; 46- Hick; 48- Female demon in Semitic myth; 50- Ingenious article; 51- Swagger; 52- I cannot ___ lie; 53- ___ once; 54- Halt, salt; 55- Brown-furred aquatic carnivorous mammal; 56- One who cries "uncle"?; 57- Bridge positions; 59- Knowledge; 60- Sign; 65- Onassis, to pals;



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Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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	



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FOOTBALL

Son Jun-ho selected for South Korean team despite being detained in China

JOHN DUERDEN, SEOUL

THE selection of Son Jun-ho despite his detention in China took the focus off Premier League star Son Heung-min for once when South Korea's soccer roster was unveiled.

Son Jun-ho, who plays for Shandong Taishan and won the 2021 Chinese championship with the Jinan-based club, has been held by Chinese authorities for almost four weeks since he was detained at Shanghai Airport last month.

Yet he was picked by South Korea's head coach Jurgen Klinsmann this week for two international friendlies against Peru and El Salvador on June 16 and 20.

Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said Son, who represented South Korea at the World Cup



South Korea's Son Jun-ho speaks during a press conference before a training session at Al Esla Training Site 5 in Doha, Qatar, Nov. 22, 2022

last year in Qatar, was being investigated on suspicion of taking bribes.

Hong Kong newspaper South China Morning Post last month reported that the bribery allegations concerned suspected match-fixing invol-

ving coach Hao Wei.

The Korea Football Association (KFA) said despite visits by officials to China, it has collected little information about the nature of the allegations against the 31-year-old midfielder.

Despite, or because of, the lack of clarity, Klinsmann called him up for international duty.

"We don't know his state of mind, we don't know what physical state he is in but I think it's important to show Jun-ho support (so) he feels we're right there behind him," Klinsmann said in Seoul on Monday. "Obviously, we're all shocked with the situation. We really hope and pray that he gets released. But it's not in our hands. He's on the list in case something happens."

Klinsmann, the former U.S. head coach who was appointed to the South Korean job in February, selected the player in his first two games in charge against Colombia and Uruguay in March.

But with doubt over his ability to report for national team duty, Klinsmann added that there was scope for flexibility

with the squad.

"Our roster you see today might not be the roster you see next week," he said. "It's an open situation."

According to reports in China, Son is the first foreign player to be caught up in the latest attempts by Beijing authorities to clean up the highest levels of Chinese soccer.

Chinese soccer has struggled for years to rid itself of a reputation for corruption among coaches, team owners, players, referees and government sports officials.

Nearly a dozen high-profile figures have been arrested on corruption allegations, including former men's national coach Li Tie.

Son played seven seasons with South Korea's Pohang Steelers and Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors before joining Shandong Taishan in 2021 on a four-year contract. **MDT/AP**

A wooden sign for 'The Roadhouse Macau'. At the top is a logo with a guitar and the text 'THE ROADHOUSE' and 'MACAU'. Below are three banners: 'FAST BIKES', 'ROCK & ROLL MUSIC', and 'FOOD AND FUN'. At the bottom are three circular images: a motorcycle, a band performing, and a hand holding a Guinness can. Text at the bottom reads 'THE ROADHOUSE MACAU IS MACAU'S MOST POPULAR BAR FOR BLUES, BOOZE AND ROCK. COME ON DOWN AND LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL.'

An advertisement for 'Macau Closer' magazine. It features a large '16' and the title '《澳門特寫》MACAU CLOSER'. Below is the text '生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE' and '16TH ANNIVERSARY THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT! 十六週年，感謝您們的支持！'. A magazine cover is shown with a photo of a man and the text 'MACAUCLOSER', '方力鈞', 'FANG LI JUN', and '中國當代藝術家方力鈞 和他人對自我的反思'. A red circle says '現在發售 NOW ON SALE'. A QR code is at the bottom left. A small book 'Macau Arts Festival' is at the bottom right.

OPINION

China Daily
Editorial, China Daily

**CHANCE TO EASE
TENSIONS SHOULD
NOT BE WASTED**

The studied silence surrounding the visit to Beijing by Daniel J. Kritenbrink, US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, and Sarah Beran, White House National Security Council's senior director for China affairs, points to the sensitivity that now characterizes Sino-US relations.

The visit of the senior US officials to China is the second by members of the Job Biden administration since it unilaterally canceled Secretary of State Antony Blinken's planned visit to Beijing in early February, which put the brakes on the positive momentum in bilateral interactions generated by the talks between the two countries' leaders on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia, in November.

That Beijing gave the nod for the visit of Kritenbrink and Beran shows that it remains open to dialogue with Washington. But the lower level of the two visiting US officials shows that both sides know there is much groundwork to be laid if higher-level talks are not to descend into acrimonious exchanges once again.

But although the talks are at a lower level than they would have been had Blinken's visit gone ahead as planned, Kritenbrink and Beran are major contributors to policymaking in their respective fields, suggesting that both sides are still trying to manage their rapidly souring relations.

That being said, the visit of the two US officials, which began on Sunday, provides a good opportunity for Washington to rebuild its credibility with Beijing. Their posts mean that they do not have to speak to the cameras, and they can listen as well as say their piece.

With the provocations of US battleships and warplanes becoming increasingly frequent in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea, no one would be too surprised if there was an incident on the doorstep of China.

It is to be hoped that the talks will be able to help avert such an undesirable scenario.

Which will not be the case if the two visitors have come all the way just to try and intimidate Beijing with coercion, threats and ultimatums. If they waste the opportunity of the hard-earned meeting in this way, it will only worsen the situation.

If the two US officials have come to Beijing with the willingness to talk in good faith, they will find their hosts willing to reciprocate. But they should always bear in mind that no meaningful exchanges can take place unless the US side respects China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and core interests.

**MYANMAR'S SUPREME COURT AGREES TO HEAR
APPEAL OF SUU KYI'S BRIBERY CONVICTION**

THE
BUZZ

Myanmar's Supreme Court has agreed to hear a special appeal of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi's bribery conviction for allegedly receiving gold and thousands of dollars from a former political ally, legal officials said.

Suu Kyi, 77, was arrested when the army toppled her elected government in February 2021, and was tried on a range of charges for which she was sentenced to a total of 33 years in prison.

Two legal officials familiar with Suu Kyi's cases said the Supreme Court decided last Friday to hear the special appeal of the corruption case, in which she was convicted of receiving

\$600,000 and seven gold bars in 2017-18 from Phyo Min Thein, the former chief minister of Yangon, the country's biggest city.

The legal officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said it has not yet scheduled a date for the appeal hearing. Her lawyers' initial appeal of the conviction to the Supreme Court was rejected last November.

In April, the Supreme Court agreed to hear appeals of Suu Kyi's convictions in five other corruption cases, and requests for reduced sentences in cases in which she was accused of breaching the official secrets act and election fraud. The dates for the hearings for those appeals have also not been set.

AP PHOTO



European Commissioner for Values and Transparency Vera Jourova

**IS IT REAL OR MADE BY AI?
EUROPE WANTS A LABEL
FOR THAT AS IT FIGHTS
DISINFORMATION**

KELVIN CHAN, LONDON

The European Union is pushing online platforms like Google and Meta to step up the fight against false information by adding labels to text, photos and other content generated by artificial intelligence, a top official said Monday.

EU Commission Vice President Vera Jourova said the ability of a new generation of AI chatbots to create complex content and visuals in seconds raises "fresh challenges for the fight against disinformation."

She said she asked Google, Meta, Microsoft, TikTok and other tech companies that have signed up to the 27-nation bloc's voluntary agreement on combating disinformation to work to tackle the AI problem.

Online platforms that have integrated generative AI into their services, such as Microsoft's Bing search engine and Google's Bard chatbot, should build safeguards to prevent "malicious actors" from generating disinformation, Jourova said at a briefing in Brussels.

Companies offering services that have the potential to spread AI-generated disinformation should roll out technology to "recognize such content and clearly label this to users," she said.

Google, Microsoft, Meta and TikTok did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

Jourova said EU regulations are aimed at protecting free speech, but when it comes to AI, "I don't see any right for the machines to have the freedom of speech."

The swift rise of generative AI technology, which has the capability to produce human-like text, images and video, has amazed many and alarmed others with its potential to transform many aspects of daily life. Europe has taken a lead role in the global movement to regulate artificial intelligence with its AI Act, but the legislation still needs final approval and won't take effect for several years.

Officials in the EU, which also is bringing in a separate set of rules this year to safeguard people from harmful online content, are worried that they need to act faster to keep up with the rapid development of generative AI.

Recent examples of debunked deepfakes include a realistic picture of Pope Francis in a white puffy jacket and an image of billowing black smoke next to a building accompanied with a claim that it showed an explosion near the Pentagon.

Politicians have even enlisted AI to warn about its dangers. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen used OpenAI's ChatGPT to craft the opening of a speech to Parliament last week, saying it was written "with such conviction that few of us would believe that it was a robot — and not a human — behind it."

European and U.S. officials said last week that they're drawing up a voluntary code of conduct for artificial intelligence that could be ready within weeks as a way to bridge the gap before the EU's AI rules take effect.

Similar voluntary commitments in the bloc's disinformation code will become legal obligations by the end of August under the EU's Digital Services Act, which will force the biggest tech companies to better police their platforms to protect users from hate speech, disinformation and other harmful material.

Jourova said, however, that those companies should start labeling AI-generated content immediately.

Most digital giants are already signed up to the EU disinformation code, which requires companies to measure their work on combating false information and issue regular reports on their progress. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Sweden's defense minister said yesterday his country's top priority is to gain full NATO membership before the allied leaders gather for their next summit, saying an addition will make the trans-Atlantic alliance even stronger. NATO wants to bring Sweden into the fold by the time United States President Joe Biden and other allied leaders meet July 11-12 in Vilnius, Lithuania, but Turkey and Hungary have yet to endorse the move. All 31 member countries must ratify a candidate's accession protocol for it to join the alliance.

AP PHOTO



Vatican Pope Francis briefly went to a hospital yesterday for tests and returned to the Vatican, witnesses and news reports said, two months after he was hospitalized with an acute case of bronchitis. The ANSA news agency said Francis went to Rome's Gemelli hospital yesterday morning for tests. Witnesses at the Vatican's Perugino gate, one of the main entrances to the city state, told The Associated Press that Francis returned to the Vatican a short while later, and greeted guards as he usually does.

AP PHOTO



Canada Quebec is looking internationally for support as it struggles to battle more than 160 forest fires during what federal officials say is shaping up to be among Canada's worst fire seasons ever. With more than 480 wilderness firefighters on the ground, Quebec can fight around 30 fires, Quebec Premier François Legault told reporters Monday, adding that normally firefighters would come from other provinces to help. Last week there were 324 fires burning across Canada. As of Monday morning that had grown to 413, and by late afternoon, the total jumped again to 42.