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GONGBEI PORT IS EXPECTED TO HANDLE 320,000 DAILY PASSENGERS DURING THE UPCOMING DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL: NATIONAL IMMIGRATION ADMINISTRATION

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E-COMMERCE GIANT ALIBABA ANNOUNCES NEW CEO AND CHAIRMAN IN MAJOR MANAGEMENT RESHUFFLE

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AP PHOTO



Indonesia The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is moving ahead with plans for joint naval exercises in September, the first held by countries in the bloc on their own, at a time when several are responding more strongly to increasing tensions in the area. The Indonesian military said that ASEAN member countries held an initial planning conference for the joint exercises, to be held Sept. 18-25 near a disputed area of the South China Sea.

AP PHOTO



Israeli forces killed a Palestinian man in fighting in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian officials said as the death toll from clashes earlier in the city of Jenin rose to six. The fatalities were the latest in a surge of violence that has wracked the region. The Palestinian Health Ministry said late Monday that 21-year-old Zakaria al-Zaoul was shot in the head in the town of Husan, west of Bethlehem.

AP PHOTO



UN members adopted the first-ever treaty to protect marine life in the high seas, with the U.N.'s chief hailing the historic agreement as giving the ocean "a fighting chance." Delegates from the 193 member nations burst into applause and then stood up in a sustained standing ovation when Singapore's ambassador on ocean issues, Rena Lee, who presided over the negotiations, banged her gavel after hearing no objections to the treaty's approval.

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Aviation liberalization bill passes on first reading amid heated discussion as lawmakers seek detail on licensing system

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AL PLENARY

LAWMAKERS LEI AND LAM WANT GOV'T TO RELEASE UNUSED LAND FOR PUBLIC USE

RENATO MARQUES

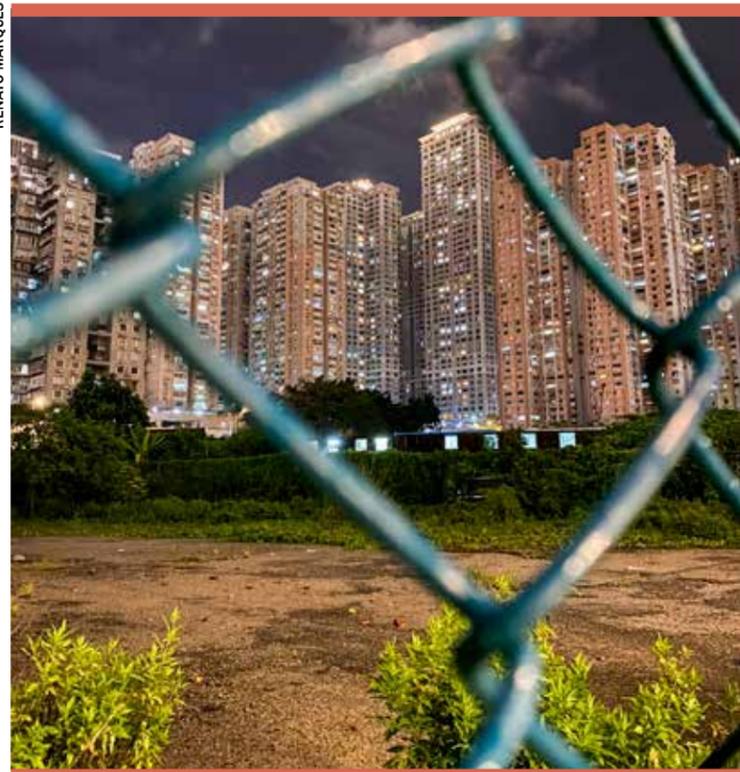
THE government should make better use of idle plots of land by opening them to public use, said lawmakers Ella Lei and Ron Lam in two separate spoken inquiries delivered yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL) during the period before the agenda.

Both Lei and Lam noted there are now many available and unused plots of land, most of which the government reacquired under the expired concession rules.

The lawmakers called on the government to better use such "precious" resources by creating public space, at least temporarily, while there are no plans for development of the land.

Lei noted that, according to the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) annual report, the government has recovered many plots of land that were illegally occupied but had left them without proper management.

Lei proposed that recovered



land with no short and medium term plans for use could be used for more community areas, leisure facilities and parks, as well as parking spaces, to improve

community facilities.

Lei noted that in responding to previous inquiries on the topic, the Public Works department had only indicated that

where other public services have specific project plans, they can submit requests to use the vacant plots.

Lei said this showed poor inter-departmental communication and inefficiency in the public service.

Lam noted the government has proposed development of just 180,000 square meters of the 510,000 square meters of land retrieved under expired concession rules and illegally occupied.

This data was revealed in response to an inquiry in March last year.

Considering another 210,000 square meters is to be reclaimed, the government should have around 520,000 square meters of land awaiting future development, Lam noted.

However, these plots remain unused, with overgrown weeds and puddles of water becoming breeding grounds for mosquitoes and posing a risk to public health, Lam said.

Using Singapore as an example, the lawmaker noted these

land plots could be used for people to stroll, play sports or engage in other leisure activities.

Both lawmakers mentioned the 15,000 square meter former "Ocean World" plot in Taipa as a good example of premium space that could be employed for public use.

Lam also mentioned the land at the side of the Nam Va Industrial Building in Taipa that connects with the land of the former Iec Long Firecracker Factory, comprising some 23,000 square meters. Though it has been recovered by the government, the very important area remains abandoned in an area where high-density residential development meets tourism.

Lam also noted that the new public parking law coming into force on August 1 this year also allows the construction of temporary public car parks on idle land.

Lam called on the government to act quickly in making its land resources useful to the population.

CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND

FSS reinstates incentive basic funds

STAFF REPORTER

THE SAR government has reinstated the provision of non-mandatory central provident fund for new account owners.

According to the Social Security Fund (FSS), 9,749 non-mandatory central provident fund account owners eligible for the first time are on the list.

The provision of such funds was suspended during the pandemic.

Those who have already received the funds are not entitled to the funds again.

According to the provisions of Article 39, paragraph

1, of Law No. 7/2017 (Non-Mandatory Central Provident Fund System), account owners who were alive on January 1, 2023, and also satisfied all the requirements in 2022 for the first time, will receive MOP10,000 in their account without the need to go through any formalities.

The local resident must be a permanent SAR resident, having attained 22 years of age and having stayed in Macau for at least 183 days.

Account owners who were in Macau for less than 183 days in 2022 because of the statutory reasons can file an objection statement.

GAMING

CASINO REVENUE HITTING MOP527 MILLION DAILY

THE city's gross gaming revenue (GGR) may have amounted to approximately MOP9.5 billion in the first 18 days of June, according to Citigroup, citing industry data.

The figure implies a daily run-rate of roughly MOP527 million for the past week, up 8% week-on-week.

The broker said industry data reflected a largely flat VIP GGR run-rate on a month-on-month basis over the period, and a month-on-month uptick of about 5-7% for the mass GGR run-rate.

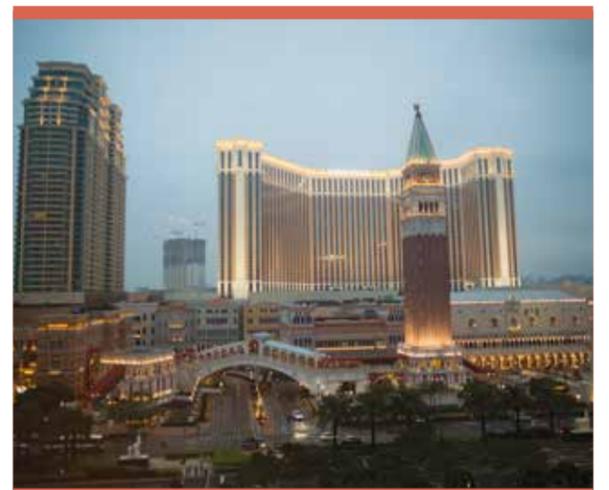
Citigroup also ramped up its June GGR forecast from MOP13.5 billion to MOP15.5 billion, translating into a daily run-rate of about MOP500 million

for the rest of this month.

Also, in a recent note from JP Morgan, the revenue of MOP9.5 billion in the first 18 days of the month was boosted by the large events and shows organized by some of Macau's gaming operators.

Citibank last week noted revenue is believed to be "mainly due to the number of visitors driven by Jacky Cheung's concerts held from June 9 to 11."

Meanwhile, according to JP Morgan, if the same trend in the last two weeks is confirmed, June revenue will total over MOP15 billion, surpassing May's MOP15.6 billion revenue, when the casino sector saw a surge of 366% from a year ago.



Last month's revenue again hit a three-year high following the end of pandemic-related restrictions that led to heavy losses and economic downturn.

In the first four months of this year, casino revenues surpassed the total

amount generated in the entirety of last year, which was MOP42 billion.

For the first five months of 2023, revenue totaled MOP64.93 billion, representing a significant 172.9% year-on-year increase. LV

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RENATO MARQUES



New aviation law passes on first reading amid claims of lack of information

RENATO MARQUES

THE new civil aviation law to open up the Macau market after Air Macau's 25-year-long monopoly passed on its first reading yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Although the bill passed comfortably with 30 votes in favor and just two abstentions (José Pereira Coutinho and Che Sai Wang), discussion was heated.

Many lawmakers claimed the government had not provided enough information on how the new licensing system will operate and what criteria will be applied when deciding to grant or withhold a potential candidate's license.

The Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, said the details are

not being presented as they will depend on further discussion with lawmakers when the bill moves to detailed analysis in one of the AL's Standing Committees.

Rosário did not respond to questions from several lawmakers, including Pereira Coutinho, Ron Lam and Leong Sun Iok, about government policy and Macau's position in the aviation market.

Rosário claimed the issue is beyond the bill's scope. Questions about general policies and Macau's positioning in the aviation market are the responsibility of both the local Chief Executive (CE) and the central government.

Some lawmakers also noted there is a need to ensure that this new law can effectively prevent failures in the approach to the market, such as the former

airline Viva Macau in which the Macau government lost money in the payment of subsidies and financial support to the company that eventually went bankrupt and had insufficient assets to cover these sums.

Rosário responded that there are criteria and rules about the financial capacity of applicants for licenses but that it is "impossible to ensure and guarantee 100% that cases of business plan failure will not happen."

"We can only try our best, but we can never guarantee 100% that there will be no problems in the future," he added.

Lawmaker Leong also raised concerns over the hiring and training of local staff to work with the new license operators. However, Rosário said such matters can be only introduced in the public tender document, which is a separate issue and not currently under discussion.

Several lawmakers raised concerns about the number of licenses to be issued.

Rosário said the law provides that the CE makes such decisions based on the market and potential bidders to the public tender.

Even so, he noted the number should not be high.

"I believe that won't be a high number, we can just see our demography and space. We don't have conditions to have a lot of airlines operating from Macau for sure," the Secretary said.

Responding to questions

about the number of potential bidders the government is anticipating, Rosário said there is no forecast for the time being as "for the moment only Air Macau is a registered company locally and it can fulfill the criteria," leaving the topic for the time that the public tender for the licensing opens.

TENDER DOCUMENT ALMOST COMPLETE

According to the Secretary, the public tender document that sets the rules and criteria for the attribution of passenger air transport licenses is "about 70 to 80% completed," only missing some details which he said would come from the further discussion of this bill.

"After the law is approved, we will reveal the tender details. It's almost done. We just need some details that also need to be integrated from this law," he said. He noted that there are some concerns on the government side about when to launch the public tender.

"From my side, there is no problem with the calendar. The [public tender] documents are almost ready, but we are not rushing it. We are evaluating in detail to see when the right time would be. Maybe now is not the best time to have the tender launching, as the market has not yet recovered from the pandemic period. We may need to address this later," he said.

FIVE INJURED IN COTAI TRANSMAC BUS CRASH

Two Transmac buses crashed in Cotai, breaking a glass window on one of the buses and injuring five people. It is believed the two buses became too close at a roundabout, with one edging toward the other's side mirror. Five passengers on the bus with the broken window, aged six to 69 years old, were injured. A six-year-old female tourist suffered a wound on her left calf. A 45-year-old Indonesian woman suffered a head injury and a 15-year-old local boy had scratches on his left elbow. They were sent to the public hospital, while two others were treated at the scene and declined hospital treatment.

TRAFFIC FROM AV. AMIZADE TO PEARL OF THE ORIENT PERMANENTLY CLOSED

The traffic opening from Avenida da Amizade to the Pearl of the Orient roundabout will permanently close from 10 a.m. today. Traffic to the Sewage Treatment Plant, the Total gas station and the Pearl of the Orient should turn left at the back of Bai Yun Garden and drive in front of Choi Kou Middle School. Bus Route No 73 will change route accordingly, but bus stops along the route remain unchanged. The Transport Bureau said past drills have proven the closure effective in smoothing traffic from the Amizade bridge but made no comment on the additional traffic towards Choi Kou Middle School.

YUET WAH COLLEGE TO PROMOTE CHINESE CULTURE

The principal of Yuet Wah College, Fr Chow Pak Fai, has received a delegation from the Centre for Chinese History and Culture of the University of Macau, led by the center's deputy director Cheang Neng Ian. A cooperation agreement was signed with the center, making the secondary school a promotional base for Chinese History and Culture. The two entities will jointly organize events to promote these topics. A seminar was also held, in which Cheang introduced the center's past work and plans to the students.

ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETS FOR SECOND TIME THIS YEAR

Yesterday, the Environment Advisory Committee had its second regular meeting this year. Tam Wai Man, director of the Environmental Protection Bureau and president of the committee, presided. The committee said that in hoping to achieve environmental goals, the government has initiated schemes to subsidize the purchase of electric motorcycles and the disposal of old diesel vehicles. It will also do more to lower carbon emissions and promote electric vehicles. At the meeting, the bureau also heard comments and suggestions from committee members.

AVIATION MARKET FOREIGN ROUTES ONLY 20% RECOVERED

THE number of flights on foreign routes has only recovered to about 20% of pre-pandemic levels, Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário revealed yesterday at the AL. While discussing the bill to transform Air Macau's monopoly into a more open regime based on licensing, the secretary said now might not be the best time to promote a public tender as

the aviation market beyond the mainland is still struggling to reach pre-pandemic levels. "From January until today, flights other than to the mainland have only recovered some 20% of the situation before the pandemic. I don't know how long will take to recover. I also hope we can, but how or when this will be possible will depend on the market," Rosário said.

MULTIPLE STRATEGIES UNDERWAY TO SUPPORT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

ANTHONY LAM

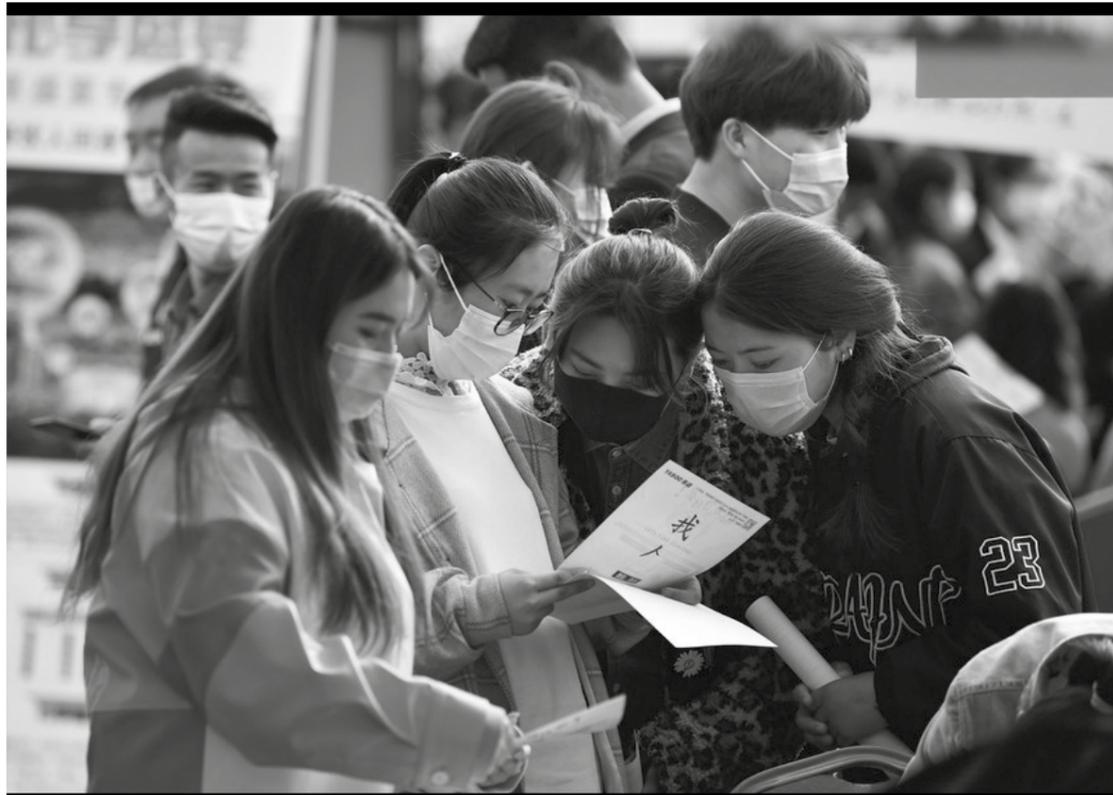
A Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) official has told a Youth Affairs Committee plenary session that multiple strategies have been employed to support youth employment.

The plenary was held yesterday morning, with Iek Wai Chi, acting department head for employment of the DSAL, introducing the bureau's strategies.

Iek said many tactics have been implemented, such as providing local and mainland employment intelligence to young jobseekers, organizing industry seminars, as well as hosting site inspections, career planning training and job application technique workshops.

In addition, she said, her bureau had organized schemes to help youths enter traineeships, occupation-oriented recruitment, as well as internships, so that young people could develop skills and capabilities that fit different professions.

Tam Sio Wa, head of the Youth Development Division of the Education and Youth Development



Bureau (DSEDJ), noted Macau's hosting rights of the ISF World School Basketball Championship 2024 and the agreements signed with Portugal regarding youth de-

velopment, among other topics.

Io Lok Fong, occupational head of the Youth Department of the DSEDJ, said the 2022 Social Survey results will be released at the end

of this month.

The committee also voted for the winners of the Youth Awards 2022.

At another occasion, the DSEDJ

has organized a session on June 19 at the Choi Kou Middle School to brief local secondary school students on the letter that President Xi Jinping wrote in reply to the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) about the Macau Science I satellite launch.

The session was moderated by Chan Hong, president of The Chinese Educators Association of Macau, Fu Teng Long, deputy executive director of the Macao Youth Federation, as well as Sun Zhao-long, a master's research student working on the project at MUST.

DSEDJ deputy director Wong Ka Ki said the satellite is the first of its kind in terms of mainland-Macau cooperation, which is also a milestone for Macau in terms of research in new and advanced technologies.

He encouraged students to accept challenges and overcome hurdles, while remembering the important spirit of President Xi's reply letter, to live out 'One country, two systems,' diversify Macau's economy and integrate into the national masterplan.

Sun said the team overcame hurdles with an optimistic mindset. He also noted the team's excitement when it received the reply from President Xi, while underlining his commitment to making contributions to the modernization of the country.



TRAVEL

GONGBEI PORT TO SEE 320,000 DAILY PASSENGERS DURING DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

CHINA will see a surge in inbound and outbound passenger flows during the upcoming Dragon Boat Festival holiday, according to the National Immigration Administration (NIA) forecast yesterday.

For exit-entry passengers between Guangdong and Macau and Hong Kong, the ports of Gongbei, Luohu and Futian are expected to handle a daily average of 320,000, 178,000 and 152,000 trips respectively,

according to the NIA.

The daily peak of exits and entries at ports across the country is expected to exceed 1.4 million during the three-day holiday starting Thursday, the NIA said, adding that the daily average figure will hit 1.28 million, more than double that of the same period last year.

Passenger flows at major airports will see a steady recovery. The numbers of inbound and outbound trips at the

Beijing Capital International Airport, the Shanghai Pudong International Airport and the Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport are expected to see a daily average of 28,000, 51,000 and 23,000, respectively.

The administration has asked immigration authorities to open more inspection channels and release information about passenger flows at ports for travelers' reference. **MDT/XINHUA**

EVENTS

SERVICE QUALITY SEMINARS KICK OFF AT THE LONDONER

A series of four seminars discussing quality of service, organized by the government, commenced yesterday at The Londoner resort.

The seminars will be held from now until October, targeting workers in the retail industry as well as in certified shops identified by the Consumer Council. They aim to enhance consumer satisfaction levels by improving quality of service.

Acting director Cheng Wai Tong of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), highlighted in his speech that tourists have higher expectations in quality after the resumption of normal travel. He expressed his satisfaction that local businesses were constantly improving their quality of service, so as to make tourists "feel at home" in Macau.

The four sessions cover different topics, focusing on credibility,

quality, sales and complaints.

The first seminar yesterday had worldwide hot pot venture Haidilao introducing the advantages of quality service to the audience. Past examples were shared to foster better understanding on the topic. The session attracted about 170 people.

The MGTO said it has constantly organized various events to enhance the local tourism industry. **AL**



GAMING

New Jersey casinos, tracks and partners won \$471m in May, up 9.4%, but in-person winnings still lag

WAYNE PARRY,
ATLANTIC CITY

NEW JERSEY'S casinos, horse tracks that take sports bets and the online partners of both types of gambling won nearly \$471 million in May, up 9.4% from a year earlier according to figures released Monday by state gambling regulators.

But the amount of money won from in-person gamblers, which the casinos consider to be their key metric, was down 2.4% from a year ago, to \$227.3 million.

And only three of the nine casinos — Borgata, Hard Rock and Ocean — won more money from in-person gamblers this May than they did in May 2019, before the coronavirus pandemic hit.

Jane Bokunewicz, director of the Lloyd Levenson Institute at Stockton University, which studies the Atlantic City gambling market, said that although overall in-person gambling revenue was down in May, it was still higher than it was in May 2019.

"This is the continuation of a return to pre-pandemic levels, but not the amount of growth



many may have hoped to see from this sector," she said. "Traditional gaming products like slots and table games are not growing as quickly as newer products, for example, online slots and mobile sports betting. This hints at a lasting change in consumer behavior as casino patrons have made these newer products part of their regular casino experience."

James Plousis, chairman of the New Jersey Casino Control Commission, said internet gambling and sports betting helped make up for some of the weakness in on-premises gambling results.

"While most of the casinos won less at the gaming tables and slot machines, it was still Atlantic City's second-best May in nine years," he said.

"This year, Atlantic City's total gaming revenue reached \$2 billion faster than any other year in the past decade."

Casino executives caution that money won from internet gambling and sports betting is not solely theirs to keep; as much as 70% of such winnings must be shared with partners including sports books and technology platforms, they say.

In terms of in-person casino winnings, internet and sports betting winnings, the Borgata won over \$111 million in May, down 1% from a year ago. Golden Nugget won \$56.2 million, up 18.2%; Hard Rock won \$48.1 million, down almost 1%; Ocean won \$33.5 million, up 21.3%; Tropicana won \$33.7 million, up 9.3%; Bally's won \$20.1 million, up nearly 20%;

Harrah's won \$19.1 million, down 10.3%; Caesars won \$18.4, down 9.5%; and Resorts won \$13.6 million, down 2.5%.

In terms of money won from in-person gamblers, Borgata won \$60.5 million, down 4.5% from a year earlier; Hard Rock won \$38.7 million, down 6.5%; Ocean won \$29.7 million, up 17.3%; Tropicana won \$21.6 million, down two-tenths of a percent; Harrah's won just over \$19 million, down 10.3%; Caesars won \$18.3 million, down 9.6%; Resorts won \$13.4 million, down 5%; Bally's won nearly \$13.2 million, up 4.2%, and Golden Nugget won \$12.6 million, down 1%.

Resorts Digital, the online arm of Resorts casino, won \$60.6 million, up nearly 48% from a year ago. The other internet-only entity, Caesars Interactive NJ, won \$8.3 million, down 14%.

The casinos and three horse tracks that accept sports bets took nearly \$779 million worth of sports bets in May. Of that total, \$82.1 million was kept as revenue after winning bets and other expenses were paid out.

Internet gambling brought in \$161.4 million in May, up 18.7% from a year earlier. **MDT/AP**

TECH

INTEL TO BUILD \$33-BILLION CHIP PLANT IN GERMANY AFTER GOVERNMENT PLEDGES TO COVER 1/3 OF COST

INTEL and the German government signed a deal Monday that will see the U.S. company spend more than 30 billion euros (\$32.8 billion) to build a chip manufacturing site in the eastern city of Magdeburg, after Germany pledged to cover a third of the investment required.

Word of the agreement came as German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger in Berlin.

Intel acquired the land for two semiconductor facilities in Magdeburg in November. It says the first one is expected to start production in four or five years.

"The investment in Germany means a significant expansion of Intel's production capacity in Europe and is the biggest investment ever made by a foreign company in Germany," Economy Minister Robert Habeck, who is also the country's vice chancellor, said in a statement.

Before the revised letter of intent was signed Monday plans had foreseen a total investment of at least 17 billion euros. The German government confirmed that it will now provide 9.9 billion euros toward the total.

The plan will need approval by the European Union's executive branch to ensure the deal doesn't give Intel an unfair advantage over its competitors.

The "Silicon Junction" project in Magdeburg adds to Intel's plans for an assembly and test facility near Wroclaw, Poland and an existing chip factory in Ireland. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Sands China honors 2,500 long-serving employees



More than 2,500 Sands China team members are celebrating their 20-year, 15-year or 10-year company anniversaries in 2023, with Sands China honouring them recently at ceremonies at The Venetian Macao and The Londoner Macao in April and May.

24 founding team members who joined the company in 2003 or earlier are celebrating their 20th company anniversaries, more than 300 are marking their 15-year company anniversaries, and over

2,100 are celebrating their 10-year anniversaries.

Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., said, "We are more than pleased to show our deep appreciation for their devoted service and contributions, and we promise to continue providing them with a fulfilling work environment where they can continue to deliver exceptional service on behalf of Sands China."

At the founding team member celebration, they were presented with a 20th anniversary special edition music box, a special edition pin designed by a team member, a commemorative certificate, and a gift certificate for an anniversary meal.

MGM presents Nordic-Japanese inspired cuisine pop-up



Chef Peter Kasamvilas of Koji-delic, a Thai chef who is also the youngest finalist of MasterChef Thailand, has been invited to present his innovative Nordic-Japanese inspired cuisine at a three-day-only pop-up at MGM Cotai from July 7 to 9.

Chef Kasamvilas will join with the beverage team of Bar Patua of MGM Cotai to present a "lineup of East-meets-West-inspired cocktails to complete the dining experience," according to a statement from the gaming operator.

This lineup is one of many to come in support

of Macau's position as a "Creative City of Gastronomy."

Born and raised in Bangkok, Thailand, 21-year-old Chef Peter Kasamvilas studied in Hong Kong and Canada before receiving professional culinary education at Le Cordon Bleu in Bangkok, where his professional career began.

The ingredient-focused 8-course tasting menu served during the three-day event at MGM Cotai is curated "to pay tribute to both innovative Nordic-Japanese cuisine as well as Asian culinary culture with contemporary flair," said the gaming operator.

Alibaba announces new CEO and chairman in major management reshuffle

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

CHINA'S Alibaba Group has announced a major management reshuffle as the e-commerce giant restructures into six different business divisions to adapt to fast-changing technologies.

The moves also are aimed at spurring growth at a time when the Chinese economy is slowing despite an end to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions a half-year ago.

Eddie Wu, chairman of its e-commerce group, will succeed Daniel Zhang as CEO, the company said in a statement yesterday.

Zhang will be CEO and chairman of Alibaba's cloud computing unit, which has been approved to be spun off and is expected to be listed for trading within a year.

Alibaba's current executive vice chairman, Joseph Tsai, is to succeed Zhang as chairman of the Alibaba Group. Tsai, who owns the NBA basketball team Brooklyn Nets and is the chairman of Alibaba-owned Hong Kong newspaper South China Morning Post, is a Taiwan-born Canadian citizen. He helped to found Alibaba in the late 1990s.



Joseph Tsai, executive vice chairman of Alibaba Group, speaks to journalists during Alibaba's 11.11 Global Shopping Festival, also known as Singles Day, in Shanghai, China, on Nov. 11, 2018.

Wu was the company's technology director when the company was founded in 1999. He also served as special assistant to Alibaba's co-founder and former board chairman Jack Ma between 2014 and 2019, and has had stints as CTO of Alibaba's digital wallet business Alipay and as a chairman of Alibaba Health.

Alibaba's reorganization will

allow five of its six business divisions, excluding the core e-commerce business, to raise outside capital and go public.

The changes take effect Sept. 10.

Zhang, became Alibaba Group's CEO in 2015 and succeeded Ma as chairman in 2019. He is known for creating the Singles' Day shopping festival, which

over the years has grown to become the world's largest online shopping extravaganza.

"This is the right time for me to make a transition, given the importance of Alibaba Cloud Intelligence Group as it progresses towards a full spin-off," Zhang said in a statement.

"I look forward to working closely with Joe and Eddie in

the coming months to ensure a seamless transition."

Alibaba's Hong Kong shares were down about 1.5% yesterday afternoon following the news.

Ma, the firm's best known co-founder and once China's richest man, has kept a low profile with few public appearances after he publicly criticized China's regulators and financial systems during a speech in Shanghai in Oct. 2020.

Shortly afterward, the government scuttled a planned initial public offering of Alibaba's financial affiliate Ant Group. It had been set to raise \$34.5 billion in what would have been the world's largest share offering at the time.

Alibaba was later fined \$2.8 billion for breaching antitrust rules.

In March, Ma returned to mainland China after being reportedly being sighted in Europe, Japan, Thailand and Hong Kong over the past few years.

He is currently a visiting professor at the University of Tokyo until Oct. 31, according to a university profile page, which describes his research as "sustainable agriculture and food production. MDT/AP

FINANCE

Move to boost yuan globalization

THE Hong Kong dollar-renminbi Dual Counter Model was launched at a time when the strategic importance of Chinese yuan currency in terms of fund flow, liquidity and popularity is on the ascent.

With the launch of the model on Monday, 24 Hong Kong-listed companies, such as Tencent Holdings, Alibaba Group, Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing and AIA Group, will offer their shares to be traded in both the Hong Kong dollar and renminbi. These are highly sought-after stocks by mainland investors with strong liquidity, accounting for around 40 percent of the average turnover of the Hong Kong bourse.

Shares traded under the model will belong to the same class as before, with the same rights and entitlements, and be fully tradable across counters. There will be nine dual counter market makers under the program



to provide liquidity.

Total trading volume of the 24 firms reached HK\$25 billion and HK\$177 million at Hong Kong dollar and renminbi counters, respectively, on Monday, according to HKex.

Mainland telecom giant China Mobile Communications Group registered a trading volume of 55.2 million

yuan (\$7.71 million) on the first trading day, followed by technology giant Tencent's 36.6 million yuan.

At the opening bell ceremony in Hong Kong, the city's Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po said the model was launched at a time when the strategic importance of the renminbi is increasing.

Chan said that the total amount of cross-border use of the renminbi reached over 36 trillion yuan in 2021 — an increase of nearly 30 percent over the year before. As at the first quarter this year, the proportion of renminbi in cross-border payments and receipts on the mainland has risen to 48 percent, surpassing the US

dollar for the first time.

But he added that there is still ample room for global use of renminbi to grow.

"While our country is the world's second-largest economy, accounting for more than 18 percent of the world's gross domestic product, and is the largest trading economy contributing to about 13.5 percent of global trade, the use of the renminbi in cross-border trade settlement, and as a worldwide reserve currency, constitutes less than 3 percent."

Chan said the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government will expand the channels for cross-boundary renminbi flows, provide more investment and risk management products, and upgrade related infrastructure to build an even more vibrant offshore renminbi ecosystem.

As investors can trade these 24 shares across both Hong Kong dollar and renminbi counters, Xiaomi Corp — one of the 24 Hong Kong-listed shares that offers trading in renminbi — as well as Bank of China (Hong Kong), say the model

helps to reduce exchange costs and risks, as well as increase liquidity of the renminbi counter and narrow the spread between the two counters.

Zhongtai International said that in the medium term, the introduction of the dual counter model will increase the number of offshore investable targets denominated in renminbi, which can enrich utilization of the Chinese currency. Over the long run, the dual counter model may induce Belt and Road markets and ASEAN nations to be more willing to hold the currency, thereby promoting yuan internationalization.

Edward Au, southern region managing partner at Deloitte China, expects market liquidity to be further improved after the dual counter model is included in the Southbound Stock Connect, and he thinks the first new stocks in Hong Kong adopting the dual counter model will be listed before the end of the year, depending on the exchange rate trend of renminbi. CHINADAILY

AUSTRALIA

Senator invites International Criminal Court to probe officers in war crime allegations

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

A senator invited the International Criminal Court to investigate what Australian military commanders knew about war crime allegations in Afghanistan in a bid to pressure Australia into launching its own review.

Sen. Jacqui Lambie, an influential independent legislator, sent an Article 15 Communication to the Hague-based court Tuesday because she argues military commanders have not been held accountable for their soldiers' alleged war crimes.

"The government is, no doubt, hoping this will all just go away. They're hoping that Australians will forget that when alleged war crimes in Afghanistan were investigated, our senior commanders got a free pass, while our Diggers were thrown under the bus," Lambie told Senate. "Digger" is a colloquialism for Australian soldier.

"There is a culture of cover-up at the highest levels of the Australian Defense Force. It is the ultimate boys club," added Lambie, a former army corporal.

The ICC has an obligation to prosecute war crimes committed by Rome Statute signatories, including Australia, when such a state is "unwilling or unable" to prosecute, according to the Australian government.

Australia has avoided ICC in-

AP PHOTO



Senator Jacqui Lambie, left, and lawyer Glenn Kolomeitz speak to the media at Parliament House in Canberra, Australia, yesterday

volvement so far by launching its own war crime investigation under Maj. Gen. Paul Brereton, a judge and army reservist.

Brereton's report, released in 2020 after a four-year investigation, found evidence that Australian troops unlawfully killed 39 Afghan prisoners, farmers and civilians. The report recommended 19 current and former elite soldiers face criminal investigation.

The first criminal charge for an alleged illegal killing in Afghanistan was laid in March. Former Special Air Service Regiment trooper Oliver Schulz, 41, was charged with the war crime of murder in the death of an Afghan who was

shot in 2012 in a wheat field in Uruzgan province.

Ben Roberts-Smith, Australia's most highly decorated member of the armed services when he left the SAS in 2013, is also under police investigation.

The 44-year-old former corporal, who was awarded the Victoria Cross and the Medal for Gallantry for his service in Afghanistan, lost a defamation case June 1 when the Federal Court found war crime allegations against him published in newspapers, including four unlawful killings, were true.

Lambie's lawyer, Glenn Kolomeitz, said there was a place for an ICC investigation because

Brereton had not investigated the role of commanding officers in the alleged war crimes.

The ICC could find that commanding officers "knew or should have known" of illegal conduct, Kolomeitz said.

Kolomeitz hoped the ICC involvement would prompt Australia to extend its own war crime investigation to commanders.

"The onus will then be on the Australian government to give some serious consideration as to why Australia has not investigated command responsibility aspects of the Afghanistan allegations and what we're going to do about it," Kolomeitz told reporters.

He said Australian officers being tried in The Hague was an unlikely outcome, unless the government prolonged its inaction and the ICC found it necessary.

"Our intent is to get us, Australia, to properly investigate ... allegations of criminality," he added.

Defense Minister Richard Marles said whether the ICC launched its own investigation was a question for the ICC.

"Ultimately that's a matter for the ICC. What I can tell you is what the Australian government is doing. We regard this very seriously. We will seek to implement the Brereton report to the fullest possible extent," Marles told reporters

Brereton made several recommendations about command accountability in his report. Defense Force Chief Angus Campbell also made recommendations about officer accountability, which reached Marles' desk.

Marles said he was seeking advice before implementing those recommendations.

"Allegations that are at the heart of this are very serious and very grave, but through the recommendations of the Brereton report our government will ensure that we make this right," Marles said.

More than 39,000 Australian military personnel served in Afghanistan during the 20 years until the 2021 withdrawal, and 41 were killed there. **MDT/AP**

HEAT WAVE

Days of sweltering heat, power cuts in northern India overwhelm hospitals as death toll climbs

AP PHOTO



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH, PIYUSH NAGPAL & SIBI ARASU, BALLIA

A scorching heat wave in two of India's most populous states has overwhelmed hospitals, filled a morgue to capacity and disrupted power, forcing staff to use books to cool patients, as officials investigate a death toll that has reached nearly 170.

In the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, 119 people have died from heat-related illnesses over the last several days while neighboring Bihar state re-

ported 47 fatalities, according to local news reports and health officials.

"So many people are dying from the heat that we are not getting a minute's time to rest. On Sunday, I carried 26 dead bodies," Jitendra Kumar Yadav, a hearse driver in Deoria town, 110 kilometers (68 miles) from Ballia, told The Associated Press.

Other residents said they were scared of going outside after midmorning.

The largest hospital in Ballia district in Uttar Pradesh is unable to accommodate more patients. Of-

ficials said the morgue was full after 54 people, all of whom were elderly suffering from various health issues, died during the heat wave. Some families were asked to take the bodies of their relatives home.

On Sunday, the state health minister, Brajesh Pathak, said a two-member team will look into what caused the large number of deaths and investigate how many of them are directly related to heat.

While northern regions of India are known for sweltering heat during the

summer months, temperatures have been consistently above normal, according to the Indian Meteorological Department, with highs reaching 43.5 degrees Celsius. A heat wave is declared in India if temperatures are at least 4.5 C above normal, or if the temperature is above 45 C (113 F).

"We have been issuing heat wave warnings for the past few days," said Atul Kumar Singh, a scientist at the IMD.

Despite the warnings, government officials did not ask people to brace for the heat until Sunday, when the death toll began to increase.

Adding to the heat stress are consistent power outages across the region, leaving people with no running water, fans or air conditioners. **MDT/AP**

POLITICS

UK lawmakers back scathing report that slammed Boris Johnson over 'partygate'

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

BRTAIN'S House of Commons on Monday resoundingly endorsed a report that found Boris Johnson lied to lawmakers about lockdown-flouting parties in his office, a humiliating censure that strips the former prime minister of his lifetime access to Parliament.

Lawmakers backed the finding that Johnson was in contempt of Parliament by 354 votes to 7, after a debate in which many argued it was crucial to show voters that politicians are obliged to follow the rules and tell the truth.

"It is important to show the public that there is not one rule for them and another for us," said Conservative Party lawmaker Theresa May, Johnson's predecessor as prime minister.

Opening the five-hour debate, House of Commons Leader Penny Mordaunt urged lawmakers to "do what they think is right." Mordaunt, a Conservative like Johnson, said she would vote to endorse the report by the Commons' Privileges Committee.

"This matters because the integrity of our institutions matter. The respect and trust afforded to them matters," she said. "This has real-world consequences for the accountability of members of Parliament to each other and the members of the public they represent."



AP PHOTO

A handful of Johnson allies spoke up to defend the former leader. Legislator Lia Nici said that "I cannot see where the evidence is where Boris Johnson misled Parliament knowingly, intentionally or recklessly."

But more Conservatives, and all opposition lawmakers who spoke, said they would back the report. Many Conservative lawmakers were absent from the debate — including Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. Wary of riling Johnson's remaining supporters, he stayed away.

Max Blain, Sunak's spokesman, said the prime minister had "a number of commitments," including a meeting with Sweden's leader.

Monday's debate was the latest aftershock from the

"partygate" scandal over gatherings in the prime minister's Downing Street headquarters and other government buildings in 2020 and 2021.

The revelation that political staffers held birthday gatherings, garden parties and "wine time Fridays" during the pandemic sparked anger among Britons who had followed rules imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus, unable to visit friends and family or even say goodbye to dying relatives in hospitals.

Labour Party lawmaker Chris Bryant said "there is visceral anger" among voters about partygate.

Memories were revived this week by the Sunday Mirror newspaper's publication

of video showing staffers drinking and dancing at an event at Conservative Party headquarters in December 2020, when people from different households were banned from mixing indoors.

London's Metropolitan Police force said that it was examining footage of the event, which the BBC reported was billed as a "jingle and mingle" Christmas party.

Johnson initially denied that any parties took place at the prime minister's office, and then repeatedly assured lawmakers that pandemic rules and guidance were followed at all times. The committee concluded that those assurances were misleading and that Johnson failed to correct the record when asked to do so.

It said Johnson "misled the House on an issue of the greatest importance to the House and to the public, and did so repeatedly."

The panel — made up of four Conservatives and three opposition legislators — said Johnson compounded the offense with his attacks on the committee, which he called a "kangaroo court" engaged in a "witch hunt."

It concluded that Johnson's actions were such a flagrant violation of the rules that they warranted a 90-day suspension from Parliament, one of the longest ever imposed. A suspension of 10 days or more would have allowed his constituents to remove him from his seat in the House of Commons. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1982 PRINCESS DIANA GIVES BIRTH TO BOY



Diana, Princess of Wales, has given birth to a boy sixteen hours after checking in to St Mary's Hospital, in London.

The boy, who has been named William, was born at 21:03 BST, weighing 7lb 1½oz.

He is second in line to the British throne after his father the Prince of Wales, who accompanied Princess Diana to the hospital at 0500BST this morning and stayed with her throughout the day.

Outside the hospital crowds had gathered to wait for news of the birth, with some saying they would wait through the night if necessary. Flowers arrived all day long and were taken into the hospital.

Thousands also gathered outside Buckingham Palace, where the birth was formally announced.

The Queen had continued with her scheduled programme, inspecting the RAF regiment on their 40th anniversary at Wittering in Cambridgeshire.

A Palace official said she had looked "absolutely delighted" on hearing that the Princess had gone into labour.

The Princess went into labour earlier than expected, but only by a few days.

Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at St George's Hospital Medical School in London, Geoffrey Chamberlain, told BBC News the long labour period should not present cause for concern.

He said: "Just over half of women expecting their first baby deliver inside 12 hours but another fifth go onto about 18 hours, and another fifth go even longer.

"There is nothing abnormal with a labour going into 24 hours."

The Queen's own surgeon gynaecologist, George Pinker, who has looked after the Princess throughout her pregnancy, was in charge of the delivery.

Courtesy BBC News

FRENCH INVESTIGATORS SEARCH OFFICES OF PARIS OLYMPIC ORGANIZERS IN SUSPECTED CORRUPTION PROBE

INVESTIGATORS searched the headquarters of Paris Olympic organizers yesterday in a probe into suspected corruption, according to the national prosecutor's office.

The Paris organizing committee said in a statement that a search was under way at their headquar-

ters in the suburb of Saint-Denis, and that "Paris 2024 is cooperating with the investigators to facilitate their investigations." It would not comment further.

An official with the financial prosecutor's office said the searches are linked to two preliminary investigations related to the Paris

Olympics that had not previously been made public. The official was not authorized to be publicly named according to prosecutor's office policy.

One of the probes was opened in 2017 into suspected embezzlement of public funds and favoritism, and concerns about an un-

specified contract reached by Paris organizers, the prosecutor's office said.

The other was opened in 2022 following an audit by the French Anti-corruption Agency. The prosecutor's office said that case targets suspected conflict of interest and favoritism involving several contracts reached by the organizing committee and Solideo, the company in charge of Olympic facilities.

The Paris Olympics are scheduled for July 26-Aug. 11, 2024. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

Prince William was the first heir to the British throne to be born in a hospital.

His brother, Prince Harry, was born on 15 September 1984.

Aged eight, William was sent to school in Wokingham, Berkshire, and at 13, he went to Eton, where he gained 12 GCSEs and excelled at a variety of sports.

After attaining A-Levels at grades A, B and C, he began a History of Art degree at Scotland's oldest university, St Andrews. He switched to Geography and achieved a 2:1 honours in his MA degree.

In 2006 the Prince joined the army, entering the officer training academy at Sandhurst.

The prince has had to endure the break up of his parents' marriage and the sudden death of his mother in August 1997.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Don't exhaust yourself or minor health problems will set in. You have made an accurate assessment of the situation and have come up with ideas that will save money.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Travel in pursuit of pleasure and knowledge. Your interest in helping others may take you back to school. Financial investments that deal with joint money can be extremely prosperous.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
You may be confused regarding your love life. You will find good buys and you will lift your spirits. You need time to rejuvenate.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Trips will be enjoyable, and communication with your lover will clear up any misconceptions. This will not be the best day to make changes or renovations to your residence.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You can expect to feel confused about your personal prospects. Opportunities to get ahead are evident. Travel and family gatherings should be in order.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Try to spend time with those having similar interests. Don't exaggerate. Spend a quiet day with the one you love. Your concern with family members will only add to your attractiveness.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Your charm will attract members of the opposite sex. Travel will enhance romance and adventure. Don't overspend on luxury items.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Be quiet about your intentions or ideas that might bring added cash. Equilibrium in your romantic life is likely if you treat your partner well.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Bring work home if it will help you get caught up. Travel and learning should be on your agenda today. Don't press your luck with your loved ones.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You can certainly gain popularity; however, don't do it by paying for everyone else. Your communication skills will bring you popularity and increased self esteem.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Look into intellectual and physical games that will test your abilities. Do not let the reactions of others get you going. Don't overspend on items for your home.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Try to make arrangements with close friends or relatives to spend a few days away. Don't take your frustrations out on the ones you love.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	19	37	fine
Changchun	18	25	rain
Chengdu	19	27	cloudy
Chongqing	23	28	rain
Fuzhou	26	33	rain
Guangzhou	26	34	thunderstorms
Guiyang	19	24	rain
Haikou	27	35	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	24	31	rain
Harbin	18	27	thunderstorms
Hefei	22	32	overcast
Nanjing	23	32	cloudy
Shanghai	24	32	fine
Taipei	24	31	overcast
Wuhan	24	34	cloudy
Hong Kong	29	31	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	11	22	overcast
Frankfurt	19	29	cloudy
Paris	17	28	overcast
London	14	26	overcast
New York	16	23	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Alleviated; 6- Impersonator; 10- Actor Julia; 14- Duplicity; 15- Able was...; 16- Otherwise; 17- Allow to enter; 18- Quantity of paper; 19- Monetary unit of Thailand; 20- Immerse; 21- Movie critic Roger; 23- Gets under control; 24- Tied; 26- Copter part; 27- Midday nap; 29- Immerse; 31- Excited about; 32- Top story; 33- Fell; 36- Make a trade?; 40- Capitol Hill abbr.; 41- "Forbidden" fruit; 42- Mogul capital until 1658; 43- Rub out or remove from memory; 44- Besides; 46- Nice days, usually; 48- Discussion group; 49- Watering hole; 50- Collect; 52- Can ___ now?; 55- Garden pest; 56- Wedding cake feature; 57- Large cat; 59- Close with force; 60- "Garfield" canine; 61- A Musketeer; 62- "The Clan of the Cave Bear" heroine; 63- Young salmon; 64- Release;

DOWN 1- Mild oath; 2- Autobahn auto; 3- Ignorant person; 4- Yale student; 5- Sense; 6- Ventilated; 7- Noble; 8- Quod ___ demonstrandum; 9- "Losing My Religion" band; 10- Allow as a discount; 11- 1836 siege site; 12- Member of the wedding; 13- Permits; 22- Actress Arthur; 23- Scarpa's killer; 25- Starting from; 26- Undoing; 27- Drinks slowly; 28- Concerning; 29- Subway turner; 30- Oklahoma Native; 32- Venomous snakes; 33- Make prominent; 34- Book before Nehemiah; 35- Well-being; 37- Merits; 38- Neuter; 39- Overdue; 43- Riddle; 44- Used to be; 45- Position, in Britain; 46- Sudden rushing forth; 47- Customary; 48- Kitchen gadget; 49- Greek peak; 50- Opera set in Egypt; 51- Golda of Israel; 53- An earth sci.; 54- Estimator's phrase; 56- Summit; 58- Suffix with meteor;



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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Nam Long
HKD3,988,000 2 beds 1 bath

AD

LIVING LA VIDA YOGA

INDIA'S MODI WILL BEND LEADERS INTO SHAPE ON INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

SHEIKH SAALIQ & KRUTIKA PATHI, NEW DELHI

INDIA'S prime minister has a reputation of casting himself as an ascetic. So when Narendra Modi leads foreign dignitaries and bureaucrats in a session for International Yoga Day yesterday at the United Nations' Secretariat in New York, millions of Indians will take note.

Yoga, an ancient discipline first practiced by Hindu sages, is now one of India's most successful cultural exports after Bollywood. And it's become a piece of India's diplomacy. Surinder Goel, a 61-year-old yoga instructor in the capital, New Delhi, practices daily. He says the activity is "India's contribution to the world."

"Our prime minister has done a great job in spreading yoga to the world," Goel said. "Today, even the Muslim countries learn and follow it, only because of the PM."

Goel says yoga should be a daily practice worldwide, no matter how busy a person is, citing the prime minister's devotion to the practice.

Nine years ago, the Hindu nationalist leader successfully lobbied the U.N. to designate June 21

AP PHOTO



as International Yoga Day. Since then, Modi has harnessed yoga as a cultural soft power to stretch his nation's diplomatic reach and flex his country's rising place in the world.

Modi has promoted yoga so much that even foreign diplomats have been seen stretching themselves in gardens and their embassy offices. Government bureaucrats and officers have taken to social media to show themself-

ves folding in different poses and sometimes tiredly grabbing their backs after mass outdoor yoga sessions. The Indian military has done downward dog with trained K-9 units, boat pose atop an aircraft carrier and mountain pose in the high-altitude Himalayas in bone-chilling temperatures.

Modi has also been living la vida yoga, flexing his own hardcore devotion to the practice.

In 2018 he posted a two-minu-

te video on Twitter that showed him doing a range of yoga poses in a garden, including stretching and leaning backward on a rock in a spread-armed savasana that birthed many memes.

In 2019, after the final day of national polling, he retreated to a Himalayan mountain cave to meditate and seek isolation — with a camera crew that relayed live visuals to the entire nation.

A year later, Modi went the ex-

tra mile, tweeting videos showing an animated version of him doing yoga poses.

Now, Modi is guiding leaders from around the world in the practice of yoga to promote its benefits as part of his three-day visit to the U.S.

With over 1.42 billion people, which recently surpassed China as the most populous, India has become fragmented largely along religious lines. Despite its religious roots, Modi has used yoga to try and boost his image in the diverse nation.

Modi's ministers, following their leader in practicing yoga, have sometimes marked it with religious connotations by doing sun salutations and chanting Sanskrit verses considered holy in Hinduism. Government employees and students have been asked to practice the same, and some state administrations ruled by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party have sought to make it mandatory in schools.

This has angered some of the prime minister's critics. In particular, some Muslims — India's largest minority, which has faced rising violence under Modi by Hindu nationalists — say they should not be forced to perform sun salutations or chant Hindu hymns.

Government ministers tried to address these concerns by guaranteeing that sun salutations would be optional, though some dissenters are not assured. MDT/AP

AD

Macau International Short Film Festival advertisement. Includes text: 'Macau International Short Film Festival', 'SH RTS Short Film International Competition', 'NOW CALLING FOR SUBMISSIONS', 'VOLUME Music Video International Competition', and various logos at the bottom.

Doce Vida advertisement. Includes text: 'Doce VIDA ENJOY THE SWEET LIFE', 'Crafted by Artisans Especially For You', and an image of a box of assorted pastries. Includes a QR code and the logo for ARTYZEN GRAND L'AZURA MACAU.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

F1's predictable races risk turning off new American fanbase

JENNA FRYER

IT'S OK to feel duped by Formula One and the splashy Netflix show that sucked you into the globetrotting racing series at the height of the pandemic.

The behind-the-scenes "Drive to Survive" docudrama packaged F1 as sexy and sophisticated, a highbrow alternative to beer-soaked NASCAR and its crash-cheering fans. The epic 2021 championship fight between Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton made for must-watch racing, with Americans setting their alarms for ungodly hours to watch one of the fiercest battles in series history.

F1 had finally captured the elusive American audience and Liberty Media, the rights holder, added stops in Miami and Las Vegas to the schedule to give the United States three races this year. With Canada and Mexico City, that's five stops total in North America on a 22-race calendar.

But here's F1's dirty little secret:



Team Red Bull, including drivers Max Verstappen, front left, of the Netherlands; Sergio Perez, second from front right, of Mexico; and team principle Christian Horner, right

the racing has never been great and 2021 was an anomaly of a season.

Since Verstappen controversially beat Hamilton in the Abu Dhabi season finale, only five drivers have won races in the 31 races since.

It's been nothing but a Verstappen rout since he snagged his first title and the two-time reigning world champion has won 21 races since Abu Dhabi. He's won six of eight races in this snoozer of a season — teammate Sergio Perez won the other two to make

Red Bull a perfect 8 for 8 on the year — and Verstappen is on a four-race winning streak.

His win Sunday at the Canadian Grand Prix tied Verstappen with the late Ayrton Senna with 41 career victories, fifth on the all-time list. A high achievement, no doubt, but one that was never in doubt.

When asked ahead of the race about Verstappen's win pace, Hamilton conceded the 25-year-old will likely eventually pass Hamilton's all-time mark of 103 victories.

"He's got a very long career ahead of him, so absolutely. Ultimately, records are there to be broken. And he's got an amazing team," Hamilton said. "We've got to work harder to try and continue to extend (Hamilton's win record). I hope we get to have some, at least within the last period of time in my career, I hope we get to have some more close racing."

The one saving grace from the Verstappen parade in Montreal is that it was a close race: his mar-

gin of victory over resurgent Fernando Alonso was 9.5 seconds.

That's close, you ask? Well, yes, considering Verstappen has been winning races by double-digit margins all season and Canada marked the closest finish of the season to date.

"It's probably not been our best race, but still, to win by nine seconds, I think shows that we have a great car," Verstappen said of his Montreal dominance.

And that's a problem in the United States, where NASCAR is king and its crowds tune in for action-packed racing, the chance to see unique winners and spectacular crashes. F1 has just two winners this season in Verstappen and Perez, while NASCAR has counted 10 winners through 16 races.

IndyCar, which has become both a landing spot for drivers who can't get an F1 seat and, as points leader Alex Palou hopes, a launching pad to get him onto the F1 grid, has celebrated five different winners through its eight races.

Americans are a fickle fanbase and this new love affair with F1 will be a short one if the on-track action doesn't improve. F1 excels at drama, cutthroat politics and backstabbing, but when it doesn't translate into an exciting product, the attention span will be tested. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

The Conversation

Andrew Gardner, Baylor University

**SOUTHERN BAPTISTS
 EXPEL CHURCHES WITH
 WOMEN PASTORS - BUT
 THE DEBATE'S NOT JUST
 ABOUT GENDER**

The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant group in the United States, overwhelmingly voted to expel two congregations with women pastors on June 14, 2023, during their annual convention.

SBC messengers, as convention delegates are called, also put forward an amendment to make churches' membership within the denomination contingent upon prohibiting women pastors, which will be voted on next year.

Media coverage of this debate has focused on gender. However, as a scholar of Baptists in the U.S., I believe an underlying conversation about sexuality has also shaped the church's opposition to women preaching.

A denomination's decisions about one social issue often influence its position on others, as I have written about with sociologist Gerardo Marti. We argue that the SBC's stance on issues of gender and sexuality have not always been just about fidelity to their interpretation of scripture. Rather, the SBC uses these issues to differentiate itself from other, more progressive denominations.

My recent book, "Binkley: A Congregational History," examines the history of one of the first congregations to be expelled from the SBC over the issue of sexuality, in 1992.

Gay and called

In 1990, a Duke Divinity School student named John Blevins, who was openly gay, began attending the Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. After his first year of Divinity School, he approached the church about the possibility of being ordained.

Blevins was drawn to Binkley for its progressive theology. Founded in 1958, the church became an interracial congregation and supported the Civil Rights Movement at a time when many Southern Baptist churches prohibited Black worshippers from becoming members or even attending Sunday services. Later, the congregation called women to serve as associate pastors and, ultimately, senior pastor as well.

Blevins' request for ordination raised questions among some of Binkley's leaders and members. Between 1976 and 1991, the SBC had passed six resolutions on homosexuality. The first encouraged congregations "not to afford the practice of homosexuality any degree of approval through ordination, employment, or other designations of normal life-style." Subsequent resolutions grew increasingly harsh. In 1988, the SBC passed a resolution that declared homosexuality an "abomination in the sight of God."

Convention resolutions are not binding on individual congregations, however, and many members of Binkley thought about sexuality differently. Senior pastor Linda Jordan thought that since Blevins was still completing his divinity degree, the church should license him to preach, but wait to formally ordain — meaning he could not preside over communion or weddings, nor hold the title of Reverend.

The church went through a yearlong process of studying faith and sexuality as members wrestled with Blevins' request. In April 1992, the congregation voted to license Blevins to preach the Gospel.

Removal from the SBC

That same year, in Raleigh, North Carolina, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church held a ceremony to honor a same-sex union. As Pullen's pastor Mahan Siler reflected in 2022, it was a first: "there wasn't a congregation we knew out there who we could learn from."

Both congregations' decisions drew the ire of the North Carolina Baptist Convention, as well as the national convention of the SBC, where messengers voted to expel both churches. Minutes from the meeting note that the crowd burst into the "appearance of elation" at the decision.

Messengers proceeded to propose an amendment that congregations "which act to affirm, approve or endorse homosexual behavior" would not be "in friendly cooperation with the Convention." It was adopted the following year.

[Abridged]

Large numbers of refugees from Ukraine fleeing Russia's war fueled a 1.3% rise in Germany's population last year, helping push up the number of inhabitants in the European Union's most populous country to more than 84.4 million, official statistics showed yesterday.

Germany's population expanded by 1.12 million in 2022, the Federal Statistical Office said. That compared with an increase of just 0.1%, or 82,000 people, the previous year.

All of Germany's 16 states saw their populations increase. The largest proportional increases were in the country's two biggest cities,

Berlin and Hamburg, which both saw rises of 2.1%.

At the end of last year, Germany was home to 12.3 million people with only foreign citizenship, the statistics office said. Of those, 1.34 million Turkish citizens — a substantial minority in the country for decades — made up the biggest single group.

There were also 1.05 million Ukrainians, an increase of 915,000 compared with 2021; and 883,000 Syrians, an increase of 48,000.

Overall, the number of foreign citizens living in Germany was up 1.4 million, while the number of German nationals declined by 309,000, largely because there were more deaths than births.

AP PHOTO



The Sutlej River flows in the valley below the tall snowy peaks in the Kinnaur district of the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh, India

GLOBAL WARMING

**HIMALAYAN GLACIERS
 COULD LOSE 80% OF THEIR
 VOLUME, STUDY FINDS**

SIBI ARASU, BENGALURU

GLACIERS are melting at unprecedented rates across the Hindu Kush Himalayan mountain ranges and could lose up to 80% of their volume this century if greenhouse gas emissions aren't sharply reduced, according to a report.

The report Tuesday from Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development warned that flash floods and avalanches would grow more likely in coming years, and that the availability of fresh water would be affected for nearly 2 billion people who live downstream of 12 rivers that originate in the mountains.

Ice and snow in the Hindu Kush Himalayan ranges is an important source of water for those rivers, which flow through 16 countries in Asia and provide fresh water to 240 million people in the mountains and another 1.65 billion downstream.

"The people living in these mountains who have contributed next to nothing to global warming are at high risk due to climate change," said Amina Maharjan, a migration specialist and one of the report's authors. "Current adaptation efforts are

wholly insufficient, and we are extremely concerned that without greater support, these communities will be unable to cope."

Various earlier reports have found that the cryosphere — regions on Earth covered by snow and ice — are among the worst affected by climate change. Recent research found that Mount Everest's glaciers, for example, have lost 2,000 years of ice in just the past 30 years.

"We map out for the first time the linkages between cryosphere change with water, ecosystems and society in this mountain region," Maharjan said.

Among the key findings from Tuesday's report are that the Himalayan glaciers disappeared 65% faster since 2010 than in the previous decade and reducing snow cover due to global warming will result in reduced fresh water for people living downstream. The study found that 200 glacier lakes across these mountains are deemed dangerous, and the region could see a significant spike in glacial lake outburst floods by the end of the century.

The study found that communities in the mountain regions are being affected by climate change far more than many other parts of the world. It says

changes to the glaciers, snow and permafrost of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region driven by global warming are "unprecedented and largely irreversible."

Effects of climate change are already felt by Himalayan communities sometimes acutely. Earlier this year the Indian mountain town of Joshimath began sinking and residents had to be relocated within days.

"Once ice melts in these regions, it's very difficult to put it back to its frozen form," said Pam Pearson, director of the International Cryosphere Climate Initiative, who was not involved with the report.

She added, "It's like a big ship in the ocean. Once the ice starts going, it's very hard to stop. So, with glaciers, especially the big glaciers in the Himalayas, once they start losing mass, that's going to continue for a really long time before it can stabilize."

Pearson said it is extremely important for Earth's snow, permafrost and ice to limit warming to the 1.5 degrees Celsius agreed to at the 2015 Paris climate conference.

"I get the sense that most policymakers don't take the goal seriously but, in the cryosphere, irreversible changes are already happening," she said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Ukrainian air defenses downed 32 of 35 Shahed exploding drones launched by Russia early yesterday, most of them in the Kyiv region, officials said, in a bombardment that exposed gaps in the country's air protection after almost 16 months of war. Russian forces mostly targeted the region around the Ukrainian capital in a nighttime drone attack lasting around three hours, officials said, but Ukrainian air defenses in the area shot down about two dozen of them.

AP PHOTO



Germany The head of the domestic intelligence agency warned yesterday of a growing threat of extremism, particularly from the far right, with the number of politically motivated crimes carried out by extremists reaching a record high last year. Thomas Haldenwang (pictured), who heads the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, or BfV, said that his agency had come to the "sad conclusion" that extremism of all shades is on the rise.

AP PHOTO



Italy With the help of funding from Bulgari, the luxury jeweler, four temples from ancient Rome, dating back as far as the 3rd century B.C. can now be visited by the public. For decades, the curious had to gaze down from the bustling sidewalks rimming Largo Argentina (Argentina Square) to admire the temples below. That's because, over the centuries, the city had been built up, layer by layer, to levels several meters above the area where Caesar masterminded his political strategies and was later fatally stabbed in 44 B.C.