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POLICE CRACKED A CASE RELATED TO THE ILLEGAL EXPLOITATION OF MAHJONG, DETAINING FIVE PEOPLE

CE ANTICIPATES FURTHER SECURITY TIES WITH HONG KONG

RIDE-HAILING FIRM GRAB SLASHES 1,000 JOBS IN BIGGEST LAYOFF SINCE PANDEMIC



Israeli military yesterday deployed additional forces across the occupied West Bank and prepared to demolish the homes of two Palestinian gunmen who killed four Israelis in one of the worst attacks in the past year of violence. The families laid to rest the victims in the deadly shooting in the West Bank settlement of Eli, in which two Palestinian militants opened fire at a gas station restaurant. The worsening violence has created a test for Israel's far right government and prompted calls for a widespread military operation in the West Bank.

UN envoy for South Sudan warned the Security Council not to take its eyes off the world's newest nation, saying the conflict in neighboring Sudan shows "how quickly hard-won peace gains can unravel." Nicholas Haysom said the impact of the conflict is "unfurling along multiple fronts," with over 117,000 women, children and men fleeing into South Sudan, where violent clashes also persist, and the government is struggling to implement the most challenging provisions of a fragile 2018 power-sharing agreement and move toward the country's first elections as an independent nation.



Ukraine's allies pledged several billion dollars in non-military aid yesterday to rebuild its war-ravaged infrastructure, fight corruption and help pave the country's road to membership in the European Union. Stressing the vast scale of the task, diplomats and political leaders at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in London urged private-sector companies to invest and revive an economy battered by almost a year and a half of war.

VULNERABLE SECTOR

Lawmaker Ma Io Fong calls for harsher penalties for those who engage in child abuse amid record-high number of cases



TAKEAWAY DELIVERY PLATFORMS FINED OVER DATA PRIVACY



MICE TOURISM EXPO TO SHOWCASE MAINLAND, GBA OFFERINGS

RENATO MARQUES

AL PLENARY

LAWMAKER MA IO FONG WANTS LAW CHANGES TO PROTECT VULNERABLE

LAWMAKER Ma Io Fong wants to amend local laws, establishing harsher penalties for those who engage in sexual harassment or abuse of children or other vulnerable people, he said on Tuesday during the period before the agenda of the Legislative Assembly (AL) session.

Ma resolved to address the topic after the recent publication of the statistics on crime and law enforcement in 2022, where crimes related to the abuse of children were highlighted.

"According to the Macau Children's Database, 27 cases were registered, the highest number in the last 20 years, (since these records began), and almost three-fold the average [for the same period]," he said, adding that there was also a significant increase in the percentage of voluntary sexual intercourse between underage people. For Ma, this "reflects the poor awareness of self-protection of minors, therefore, I call on

society to pay more attention to the sexual education of minors."

Ma did not explain how he expects laws to be amended in relation to penalties for the sexual abuse of children, or how this will contribute to sex education for the underage, but he said that the situation shows an urgent need to reinforce the awareness of minors in terms of sexuality and self-protection.

Ma called for the introduction of a ban on suspended sentences and an increase to the minimum ceiling of the penal framework. He also wants to remove the substitution of any prison sentences for fines.

These measures, he said, will fulfill the goal of creating a "child-friendly city."



Lawmaker Ma Io Fong

AL PLENARY

Lawmakers continue to call for more financial support measures

RENATO MARQUES

SEVERAL lawmakers, including Nick Lei, José Pereira Coutinho, and Song Pek Kei, addressed the plenary of the Legislative Assembly (AL) on Tuesday, calling for the continuation of financial support measures for the population, including the electronic consumption scheme as well as an increase in salary for civil servants.

The lawmakers say that the combined effects of the pandemic and the economic crisis it precipitated, increased inflation, an increase in the prices of essential goods and higher interest rates on mortgages and loans are leaving local families in a very difficult situation.

For this reason, and in light of the positive results achieved by casinos in the first five months of this year, the



lawmakers call on the government to continue to help the population by issuing consumption cards and implementing other measures.

Pereira Coutinho went further in his request and called on the government to increa-

se the salaries of civil servants. He said that this would not only help government workers to recover their purchasing power but would also serve as an incentive for the private sector to follow and lift wages.

TRANSPORT

EVENTS TO CAUSE TRAFFIC CHANGES

PARTS of the neighborhood of Rua de Pedro Nolasco da Silva and the Cotai district will have motor vehicle traffic suspended on or from this Saturday to make way for events.

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) announced in a statement yesterday that certain areas near Rua de Pedro Nolasco da Silva, particularly Calçada das Verdades, will see special traffic arrangements due to events hosted by the Na-tcha Temple Administrative Association.

For example, some motorcycle parking spaces along Calçada das Verdades will be suspended from this Saturday to July 5.

In Cotai this Saturday and Sunday, certain roads in front of MGM Cotai, Grand Lisboa Palace, next to Wynn Palace and behind Kiang Wu Nursing College will see traffic adjustments or suspensions as the Sports Bureau organizes a bicycle race. Some bus services will also be affected.

The DSAT also announced yesterday that

from 7 p.m. tomorrow, there will be a suspension of certain online services as the bureau facilitates the system upgrade conducted by the Legal Affairs Bureau. A reminder will appear on the pages of affected services.

The services to be suspended are e-payments for the application of vehicle data and the registration for text message notifications in the online service area of the DSAT, as well as the cancellation of vehicle registrations on the DSAT's One Account service area. **AL**



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Takeaway delivery platforms fined by data protection office

RENATO MARQUES

THE Office for Personal Data Protection (GPDP) is reported to have fined several online takeaway delivery platforms due to non-compliance with the data protection act.

In a statement to the press, the GPDP said that, in response to complaints from users, it has initiated law enforcement regulatory actions related to the processing of personal data by some online takeaway platforms, revealing that "some platforms have been fined and warned for failing to comply with personal data protection compliance work."

The GPDP noted that these actions are still ongoing, and "details will be announced in due course."

Concurrently, the GPDP called on industrial and commercial institutions from other sectors to ensure they are compliant with the same regulations, including the protection of the personal data of their employees as well as customers.

The GPDP warns that it will continue to conduct inspections and apply sanctions for those breaching the law.

In the last few months, the GPDP is reported to have started coordination measures related to private health service establishments and real estate agencies.



RENATO MARQUES

CE anticipates further security ties with Hong Kong

ANTHONY LAM

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng expressed his anticipation of further cooperation with Hong Kong on security, the government noted in a statement.

On Tuesday, the head of the government re-

ceived Hong Kong's Secretary for Security Tang Ping-keung and a delegation at the government headquarters.

Ho first commended Hong Kong's achievements in several areas, saying that they "were reference points for Macau," and that he looked

forward to continuing the two sides' cooperation and liaison on policing work, combating of cross-boundary criminal activity, intelligence exchange, immigration control and facilitation of cross-boundary movement.

Tang said that the two

cities are similar in relation to politics, economics, society, and people's livelihoods, and have been enjoying expanding cooperation in those fields. He added that he hoped his visit would help strengthen ties in emergency response operations, cooperation

in combating crime, and in relation to cross-boundary traffic.

Local Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak was due to meet with Tang to discuss steps to strengthen policing cooperation between Macau and Hong Kong, how to optimize immigration control, and to facilitate cross-boundary movement.

Several officials from security branches in Macau and Hong Kong also attended the meeting, the government added.

MICE

TOURISM EXPO TO SHOWCASE MAINLAND, GBA OFFERINGS

STAFF REPORTER

THE 11th Macao International Travel (Industry) Expo (MITE) will be staged from June 30 to July 2, under the theme "MITE connects the World."

The expo is set to present six major highlights, including new elements such as the "1+4" Pavilion, The Cellar, Macao Creative Pavilion and Macao Educational Tour Development Forum.

The exhibition floor covers about 23,000 square meters and accommodates about 870 booths this year. Gathering members of the trade from different parts of the world,

the expo has by far 489 exhibitors and about 500 buyers confirmed for participation.

PAVILION PROMOTES GROWING INDUSTRIES

The 11th MITE will feature the new "1 + 4" Pavilion, where close to 20 enterprises from the four major industries including health and wellness, modern financial services, high technology, conferences and exhibitions, commerce and trade, and culture and sports in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and Macau will promote their business as exhibitors.

Meanwhile, the expo



will encompass international, mainland and Hong Kong-Macao-Taiwan Region exhibition zones.

The Ministry of Cul-

ture and Tourism will lead tourism offices and travel trade delegations from 24 provinces and municipalities to promote tourism resour-

ces in the mainland at the expo. National tourism authorities and enterprises from different countries will set up customized booths. Portugal Tourism Board will run the first Portugal Pavilion at MITE with the participation of 13 tourism businesses.

VARIOUS ACTIVITIES AT THE CELLAR

While the Gastronomy Pavilion will show up once again, The Cellar will debut at MITE this year. Designed after the outlook of a wine cellar, The Cellar will bring together wine and related products for sale by 16 mainland, Hong Kong and Macau wine sellers.

TENDER FOR FIVE PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS IN ZONE A OPENS

The government announced yesterday via the Official Gazette that land plots B5, B7, B8, B11 and B12 in New Urban Zone A will have tenders opened for the design and construction of public housing buildings. Bids are due between September 26 and October 16, with closing dates varying by building. Located in the center of the zone, the five plots of land have a combined area totaling 51,000 square meters and are expected to hold 5,415 residential apartments. Each building will have public parking lots, as well as commercial and community facilities. Plot B5 will also be home to a public transit hub.

FORUM MACAU VISITS PORTUGAL

The China-Lusophone countries forum in Macau visited Portugal from June 14 to 16. The delegation was led by the Secretariat's secretary-general Ji Xianzheng, and visited several public, private and research entities in the country. Summarizing the visit, the forum highlighted its mission connecting China and Portuguese-speaking countries over the past two decades. It also discussed further improvements to business pitching. According to the forum, both the delegation and the home entities agreed that Macau should be used further as a platform for the two sides to promote technological, financial, healthcare, economic and human advancements.

DSAJ ARRANGES LEGAL SEMINAR FOR LOCAL TEACHERS

The Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ) organized two seminars on June 3 and 10 for local teachers on laws concerning Macau. Law professor Wai Kin Lok from the University of Macau's law faculty spoke to 88 teachers from 41 local primary, secondary and tertiary schools. Lok presented the background and main points of the Chinese Constitution. He suggested that the Constitution is not only the foundation of the country, but also the source of legislation of the local Basic Law. He described the two laws as parent and child. Lok also discussed national emblems and national security, while the DSAJ discussed local criminal and delinquent systems.

MACAO FOUNDATION'S TWO HEADS EXTENDED

The government announced yesterday in the Official Gazette that Wu Zhiliang and Zhong Yi have had their appointments to the Macao Foundation (FM) extended. The extension will take effect on July 11. Wu had his full-time presidency and Zhong her vice-presidency of the Executive Committee of the FM extended for a year. Wu will be remunerated with about MOP101,000 per month and Zhong about MOP88,000 per month during the appointment. The FM is a public legal entity that enjoys a certain level of autonomy and regularly sponsors events in areas such as culture, community, economy, education and science.

ALIPAY, MASTERCARD OFFER NEW CASHLESS PAYMENT OPTION

Mastercard and Alipay yesterday launched a new payment option that provides visitors to mainland China with another way to go cashless as travel and tourism resumes. Cardholders can link an existing Mastercard credit or debit card to the Alipay digital wallet to use cashless payments. According to the Mastercard Economics Institute's fourth annual travel report, Travel Industry Trends 2023, the global sector is rebounding, with leisure travel bookings up roughly 31% in March 2023 compared to the same period in 2019, a rise driven by high-income consumers.

IFTM OPENS POSTGRADUATE SPACE

The Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) announced the opening of its new Postgraduate Space earlier this week. The dedicated area in the East Asia Hall Annex Building is "designed to provide a quality environment for postgraduate students to work on their academic research and theses," according to the institute. Since 2019, IFTM has been offering postgraduate programs, including the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Master of Science (MSc) and Postgraduate Diploma (PgD) to meet the needs of students seeking to advance their knowledge and skills in the tourism and hospitality industry. In the upcoming 2023/2024 academic year, IFTM will be launching three new programs.

CRIME

PSP CRACKS ILLEGAL MAHJONG RING, ARRESTS FIVE

RENATO MARQUES

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) revealed it has cracked a case related to the illegal exploitation of the mahjong game, a force spokesperson said yesterday during the regular press conference of the Macau police forces.

According to the spokesperson, a total of five people were detained in the operation including the "ring leader," a man in his fifties said to be the owner of an engineering company in whose office the illegal gambling activity was taking place.

The PSP said it acted on a tipoff that informed the force that in this company office, located at the Avenida do General Castelo Branco, illegal gambling activities were taking place.

When arriving on the scene, the officers found 10 people in the attic of the commercial space. Four of them were playing mahjong, the other six were six playing chess and chatting.

Further investigation revealed the suspect who is the alleged ring leader started to



operate illegal gambling activity in 2021 when he acquired two automatic mahjong tables and began to charge a fee of 10 patacas per player to join the games.

According to his testimony to the police, he earned about 3,000 patacas from the activity.

The PSP said that the man was sent to the Public Prosecutions Office to be charged under the provisions of Article 12 of Law 8/96/M which states, "Anyone who, in a commercial establishment, residence or other premises, exploits the game of «mahjong», with lu-

crative intentions, is punished with imprisonment for up to 1 year or with a fine."

As for the other four suspects caught while playing, the PSP said that the case has been transferred to the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau for follow-up.

Men charged over blue card employment scam

RENATO MARQUES

A local man and a mainland resident have been charged over conspiring to produce and submit a false employment contract to government departments to secure a non-resident worker permit ('blue card') for the mainland man, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) revealed yesterday during the regular police forces press conference.

According to a PSP spokesperson, the case started to become apparent after the force found the suspicious border-crossing activity, with the blue card holder who was allegedly working for a trading company as a repairman having stayed very few days in Macau and exhibiting random border-crossing activity not consistent with the man's alleged job.

Further investigation revealed that the 42-year-old from the mainland, who



has held a blue card since 2020, has never performed any work for his employer and has never received any wages over a period of three years.

It was also found that he and the company owner had agreed, through the help of a third person, to have a false employment contract signed so that

the mainland man could obtain a blue card and easily cross the border into Macau. The owner of the company said that his motivation was to secure his imported labor quota.

Both have been sent to the Public Prosecutions Office to be charged with the crime related to document forgery.

FOUR NON-LOCAL WORKERS APPREHENDED FOR ALLEGED FRAUD

ANTHONY LAM

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) has announced the apprehension of four non-resident workers on allegations of fraud.

The Judiciary Police (PJ) referred the case to the PSP.

A local eatery in the ZAPE district is suspected of fraudulently hiring people from mainland China, according to local media outlet Macao Daily News.

An employee of the eatery from mainland China, surnamed Wang and aged around 40 years old, has been accused of employment fraud. She works as an administrative officer at the eatery.

In mid-April this year, the PJ detected a woman conducting illegal currency exchange. It was discovered that the woman was registered as a worker with the eatery, but her clock-in



and clock-out times were in conflict with the times that she was recorded crossing the border.

The case was referred to the PSP, which commenced irregular site inspections at the eatery and discovered "bizarre" clock-in and clock-out times related to three other registered non-resident workers, who were later summoned for in-

vestigation.

The police discovered that the eatery's owner had taken RMB75,000 to RMB105,000 from each person to help arrange non-resident worker registrations, with fake employment spanning April to November last year. The false registrations were conducted so they could conduct illegal currency exchange in Macau.

AUTOMOBILE

Tesla technology inches closer to becoming industry standard as Rivian joins its charging network

TOM KRISHER, DETROIT

ELECTRIC vehicle maker Rivian says it will follow General Motors and Ford and join Tesla's charging network next year.

The startup truck, SUV and delivery van maker says Tuesday that like GM and Ford, it also will adopt Tesla's charging connector, another step toward making it the industry standard.

Existing Rivian vehicles will need an adapter to link to a Tesla charger. But Rivian says vehicles manufactured in 2025 and beyond will come standard with a Tesla charging port.

It is another domino to fall as the auto industry considers switching to Tesla's connector, which it calls the North American Charging Standard. At present, nearly all automakers other than Tesla use what is called a CCS connector developed with the Society of Automotive Engineers.

Tesla's Superchargers are covered by other automakers because it has more direct current fast-charging plugs in the U.S. than any other network, and its stations are in prime locations along freeway travel corridors.

Other automakers also are



looking into the switch. On Monday, Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares said his company's U.S. teams are studying the change and will make a decision in a few weeks.

"We right now are evaluating that possibility," Tavares said in a brief interview with The Associated Press. "It can have good things

and bad things."

He said the good things are being evaluated, and the bad things include dependence on Tesla.

Currently Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler, has no fully electric vehicles on sale in the U.S., but it does sell three plug-in gas-electric hybrids that can go short distances

on battery power. The company plans to sell an electric commercial van this year, followed by an electric Ram pickup and other vehicles.

Rivian is a relatively small player in the U.S. automotive market, selling just under 30,000 vehicles from 2021 through the

first quarter of this year. But the Irvine, California, company is viewed as a key Tesla competitor.

Like GM and Ford, Rivian owners will get access to more than 12,000 Tesla Supercharger plugs. In the U.S., Tesla has 1,797 Supercharger stations and more than 19,000 plugs, according to the Department of Energy.

Since the stations are direct current fast-chargers, they can charge EVs relatively quickly as people travel.

ChargePoint has the biggest charging network in the U.S. with more than 32,000 stations and 55,000 plugs, but most of them are Level 2 chargers that can take up to eight hours to get a battery up to a full charge.

The Energy Department says there are about 54,000 public charging stations nationwide with more than 136,000 plugs. While most are slower Level 2 chargers, the network of DC fast chargers is growing.

Still, industry analysts say there is growing momentum to switch to Tesla's connector to become the standard in the U.S., although vehicles likely will need to be able to use both connectors for a while.

GM and Ford say they're not paying Tesla anything for access to the network, but owners will pay Tesla to charge just like any other charging system.

Rivian said in a statement that in addition to joining Tesla's network, it will continue to expand its own charging system, where it will incorporate Tesla's connector.

Shares of Tesla closed Tuesday up 5.3%. They're up about 40% since Ford first announced it would join the charging network on May 25. **MDT/AP**

Singapore ride-hailing firm Grab slashes 1,000 jobs in biggest layoff since pandemic

ZEN SOO,
HONG KONG

SINGAPORE ride-hailing firm Grab Holdings said it is cutting over 1,000 jobs or 11% of its workforce to cut costs and keep the company competitive, in its biggest round of job cuts since the pandemic.

Grab CEO Anthony Tan said in a letter sent to employees late Tuesday that the job cuts were not a "shortcut to profitability" but part of a fundamental restructuring of its operating model and costs.

"The primary goal of this exercise is to strategically reorganize our-

selves, so that we can move faster, work smarter, and rebalance our resources across our portfolio in line with our longer term strategies," Tan said, describing the restructure as a "painful but necessary step" for the longer term.

Grab's shares on NASDAQ were up more than 5% in premarket trading, but declined nearly 1.5% midday.

The Singapore-based company started out as a taxi-hailing service in Malaysia in 2012, before later expanding to ride-hailing, food delivery and financial services across eight countries in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malay-

sia and the Philippines. In 2018, it acquired rival Uber's Southeast Asian operations after years of price wars to carve out market share.

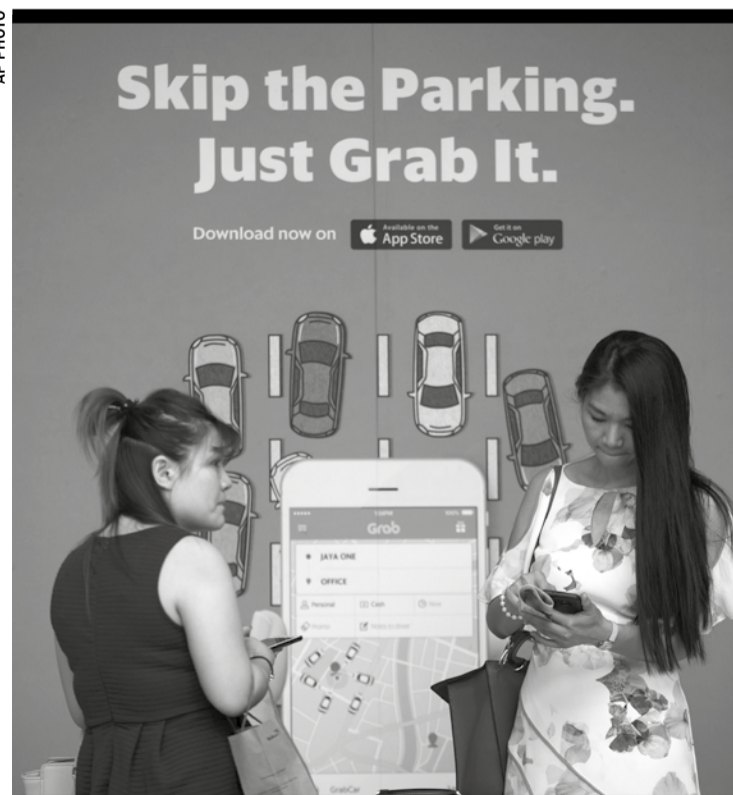
Grab has been slower than other technology firms in the region in slashing jobs. The company initially said last September that it had no plans for massive job cuts.

Last year, Singapore-based gaming and online retail firm Sea Ltd., axed 7000 jobs or about 10% of its workforce. Grab's rival, Indonesian ride-hailing firm GoTo, had cut 12% of its workforce last year and cut another 600 jobs in March.

Although Grab reported a 130% rise in revenue to \$525 million for its quarter ended March, it also clocked a loss of \$250 million from the same time last year.

Grab is potentially grappling with slowing growth, amid higher inflation rates and costs of living, as well as stiff competition from rivals such as GoTo. Its gross merchandise value - which calculates the total dollar value of transactions by Grab users - rose just 3% for the quarter. Spending per user was down 4% compared to the same time last year.

In February, Grab brought forward its profitability goal, expecting to break even in the final quarter of 2023. It previously expected to turn profitable in the second half of 2024. **MDT/AP**



Foreign companies are shifting investment out of China as confidence wanes, business group says

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

FOREIGN companies are shifting investments and their Asian headquarters out of China as confidence plunges following the expansion of an anti-spying law and other challenges, a business group said yesterday.

The report by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China adds is one of many signs of growing pessimism despite its efforts to revive interest in the world's No. 2 economy following the end of anti-virus controls.

Companies are uneasy about security controls, government protection of their Chinese rivals and a lack of action on reform promises, according to the European Chamber. They also are being squeezed by slowing Chinese economic growth and rising costs.

Business confidence in China is "pretty much the lowest we have on record," the European Chamber president, Jens Eskelund, told reporters ahead of the report's release.

"There's no expectation that the regulatory environment is really going to improve over the next five years," Eskelund said.

President Xi Jinping's government, trying to shore up economic growth that sank to 3% last year, is trying to encourage foreign companies to invest and bring in technology.



AP PHOTO

But they are uneasy about security rules and plans to create competitors to global suppliers of computer chips, commercial jetliners and other technology. That often involves subsidies and market barriers that Washington and the European Union say violate Beijing's free-trade commitments.

Two-thirds of the 570 companies that responded to the European Chamber's survey said doing business in China has become more difficult, up from less than half before the pandemic.

Three out of five said the business environment is "more political," up from half the pre-

vious year.

Companies are on edge after police raided offices of two consultancies, Bain & Co. and Capvision, and a due diligence firm, Mintz Group, without public explanation. Authorities say companies are obliged to obey the law but have given no indication of possible violations.

Companies also are uneasy about the promotion of national self-reliance. Xi's government is pressing manufacturers, hospitals and others to use Chinese suppliers even if that raises their costs. Foreign companies worry they might be shut out of their markets.

Last month, the government banned using products from the biggest U.S. maker of memory chips, Micron Technology Inc., in computers that handle sensitive information. It said Micron had unspecified security flaws but gave no explanation.

One in 10 companies in the European Chamber survey said they have shifted investments out of China. Another 1 in 5 are delaying or considering shifting investments. In aviation and aerospace, 1 in 5 companies plan no future investment in China.

China has long been a top investment destination due to its huge and growing consumer

market, but companies complain about market access restrictions, pressure to hand over technology and other irritants.

The European Chamber noted it wasn't just foreign companies that are moving: 2 out of 5 in its survey reported Chinese customers or suppliers are shifting investments out of the country.

A separate group, the British Chamber of Commerce in China, said last month its members were waiting for "greater clarity" about anti-spying, data security and other rules before making new investments.

The biggest concern is the ruling party's expansion of its definition of national security to include the economy, food, energy and politics, Eskelund said.

In the European Chamber survey, the top destination for companies moving their Asian headquarters out of China was Singapore, with 43% of companies that moved, followed by Malaysia. Only 9% went or plan to go to Hong Kong.

Leaders including Premier Li Qiang, China's top economic official, have promised to improve operating conditions, but businesses say they see few concrete changes.

"Our members are not really convinced that we are going to see tangible results," Eskelund said. **MDT/AP**

TECH

Cooperation or competition? Security industry sees the US, not AI, as the bigger competitor

DAKE KANG, BEIJING

AFTER years of breakneck growth, China's security and surveillance industry is now focused on shoring up its vulnerabilities to the United States and other outside actors, worried about risks posed by hackers, advances in artificial intelligence and pressure from rival governments.

The renewed emphasis on self-reliance, combating fraud and hardening systems against hacking was on display at the recent Se-

curity China exhibition in Beijing.

Looming over the four-day meet: China's biggest geopolitical rival, the United States. American-developed AI chatbot ChatGPT was a frequent topic of conversation, as were U.S. efforts to prevent China's access to cutting-edge technology.

"This new technology contains a great potential danger," said Fan Weicheng, Director of Tsinghua University's Center for Public Safety Research.

He clicked through a presentation featuring an AI-generated figure of Barack Obama speaking, illustrating the risks of deceptive images and video that can now be digitally created.

"The United States has a 21st century national security strategy. Russia has a national security strategy. Germany has a strategy. So does Japan," Fan said. "We in China are also working on this."

Chinese academics, Fan says, are working on an "early warning system" to

identify and manage potentially disruptive technology, creating indexes and formulas to measure the impact emerging technology could have on China's national security.

In the past decade, China's AI technology has made rapid advances, fueled in part through cooperation with American research institutes and tech firms. As in the U.S., Chinese leaders are worried about advances in artificial intelligence.

But there's an additional challenge. As geopolitical

tensions have reached a fever pitch in recent years, Washington has moved to cut China's access to American technology — pushing Chinese tech firms towards self-reliance.

Remarks from a meeting chaired by Chinese leader Xi Jinping last month urged a renewed focus on potential risks from new technologies.

"The complexity and severity of national security problems faced by our country have increased dramatically," said a rea-

dout of the meeting by the official Xinhua news agency. "We must be prepared for worst-case and extreme scenarios."

"It's the AI era. The future has arrived," said Liu Cai-xia, a director at a Chinese policing research institute. "Those in the academic community are feeling fear."

"We've seen in some sci-fi blockbusters, there's only intelligent machines left in the world, and human beings are kept like pets," said Liu. "What kind of attitude should we adopt to deal with it?"

Liu's answer was clear and in line with China's determination to lead in cutting edge technologies: Push forward, and deploy AI in new fields. **MDT/AP**

UN expert urges a different approach to resolve the crisis in Myanmar

EDNA TARIGAN, JAKARTA

AN independent expert working with the United Nations on the issue of human rights in Myanmar urged the international community yesterday to find a different approach to resolve the crisis in the Southeast Asian country, saying the current course of action is not working.

Tom Andrews, a special rapporteur working with the U.N. human rights office, told a news conference in Jakarta the world is looking to Indonesia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for leadership on the situation in Myanmar.

"I came to Indonesia because the human rights situation in Myanmar is dire and getting worse, and because I believe that Indonesia is positioned to play a critical role in the resolution of this crisis," Andrews said after meeting with Indonesian and ASEAN officials.

Myanmar's crisis began after its military in February 2021 seized



The U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews gestures as he speaks to the media during a press conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday

power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The takeover prompted widespread public protests, whose violent suppression by security forces triggered an armed resistance that now spans much of the country.

Andrews, a former U.S. con-

gressman, said the situation in Myanmar is also losing visibility outside of the country.

He said the Myanmar military has killed more than 3,600 civilians since the crisis began, while more than 19,000 people have been jailed as political prisoners.

ASEAN, of which Myanmar is a member, two years ago agreed on a five-point plan that includes a call for an immediate stop to killings and other violence and the start of a national dialogue. The military rulers in Myanmar initially accepting the plan, but

have made little effort to implement it.

Andrews said the 10-member regional bloc should not invite the junta to any of its meetings and should not allow Myanmar military personnel to participate in defense meetings.

"I cannot help but have the impression that there are two different time zones when it comes to ASEAN and the crisis in Myanmar: one being the reality of the people of Myanmar who face daily attacks by junta forces and rapidly deteriorating conditions. The other is the world of ASEAN officials who caution that progress could take years, even decades," he said.

"The people of Myanmar do not have decades. They need a strong international response to the crisis that is carried out in the same 'time zone' as the brutal attacks that they are suffering," he said.

Special rapporteurs work with the U.N. human rights office in Geneva based on mandates handed out by the U.N.-backed Human Rights Council. **MDT/AP**

AD

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Italians pursuing parenthood via surrogates abroad could face prosecution under proposed law

FRANCES D'EMILIO, ROME

ITALY's lawmakers are debating a bill that would make it a crime for Italian citizens to try to become parents through a surrogate's pregnancy abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal.

A 2004 law already banned surrogacy within Italy. The proposed law, which would make it illegal in Italy for citizens to engage a surrogate mother in another country, would authorize prison terms of up to three years and fines of up to 1 million euros (\$1.15 million) for convictions.

"We strenuously say no to the sale of children. Surrogate maternity is the most extreme form of commercialization of the body," lawmaker Maurizio Lupi, who heads a tiny centrist party that is a partner in Italy's coalition government, said.

Protests erupted inside the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the Italian Parliament, and outside in a square during the debate that began Monday and continued Tuesday. A vote on the bill has not been scheduled.

Lawmakers opposed to the law held up placards that read, "Parents, not criminals." Some members of the political opposition have joined the government's side, contending that surrogacy violates



+ Europa's lawmakers Riccardo Magi, left, and Benedetto Della Vedova hold placards reading in Italian: "Parents not criminals" in the low Chamber in Rome during a debate on a bill promoted by the right-wing government

the dignity of women if they are paid to carry someone else's child.

The government of Italy's far-right premier, Giorgia Meloni, is heavily promoting the legislation. Meloni's coalition has a comfortable majority both in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate, which would take up the bill next.

Although the so-called "universal ban" would apply equally to same-sex and opposite-sex couples, opponents see the law as part of an effort by Meloni's government to penalize what it deems "non-traditional" families.

"With this law, we're looking at a very heavy attack on 'rainbow' families and on the

LGBT community," lawmaker Alessandro Zan, who is gay, said.

Same-sex marriages also are banned in Italy. LGBTQ+ couples have been fighting to obtain parental rights for the partner who is not the biological parent of their children, including the ability to make medical decisions and to pick a child up from school without needing a permission note.

A top court ruled last year that non-biological parents cannot automatically be listed on children's birth records. Some mayors had done that when certifying birth records from abroad. The court said non-biological parents instead needed to petition for adop-

tion, a long legal process.

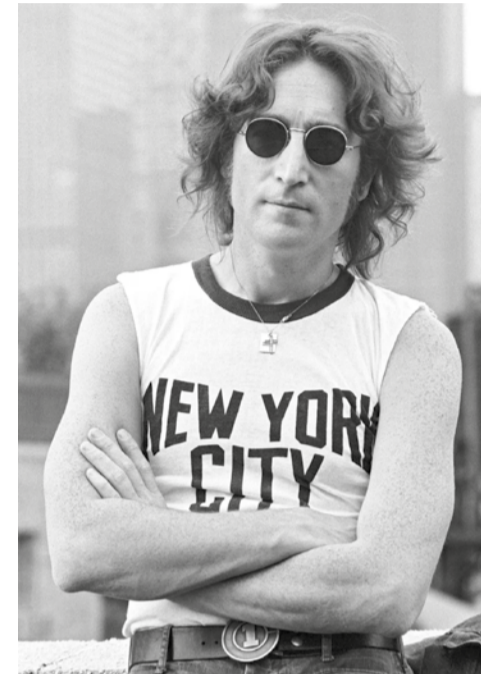
The prosecutors' office in the northern city of Padua this week ordered non-biological parents removed from the birth certificates of 33 children registered since 2017. Under the change, the children also can no longer legally use their non-biological parent's surname.

Lawmaker Chiara Appendino, who registered non-biological parents on birth certificates when she served as mayor of Turin, said the crackdown ignores the rights of children.

"While the government is blathering about absurd universal crimes, the consequences are being paid by children," Appendino tweeted. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1981 CHAPMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO LENNON MURDER



A man has pleaded guilty to shooting dead former Beatle John Lennon in New York.

The court heard Mark Chapman dramatically change his plea to admit responsibility for the murder, saying God had told him to do so.

Even his own defence team were taken by surprise by the decision, and his lawyer has asked the judge to examine his client to ensure he is mentally fit to stand trial.

Appearing at a pre-trial hearing, Chapman said nothing in open court.

The drifter now faces a minimum of 15 years imprisonment, although the judge has indicated it will be more like 20.

Lennon, 40, was shot several times as he entered his luxury apartment building, the Dakota on Manhattan's Upper West Side, opposite Central Park, in December 1980.

The musician was rushed in a police car to St Luke's Roosevelt Hospital Center, where he died.

Explaining that Chapman had decided to plead guilty after "God told him" to do so on June 8, his lawyer revealed he had "serious questions" over his client's sanity.

"I have asked that he be examined to determine whether or not he is fit to go to trial or to change his plea," he said.

The judge will receive a full report on the defendant before passing sentence in August.

Courtesy BBC News

ECONOMY

UK BORROWERS BRACE FOR MORE EXPENSIVE LOANS AS INFLATION FAILS TO FALL AS ANTICIPATED

PAN PYLAS, LONDON

BORROWERS in the U.K. will be bracing themselves for further increases in lending costs after official figures yesterday showed inflation failing to fall as anticipated in May.

The Office for National Statistics said inflation, as measured by the consumer prices index, held steady at 8.7% in the year to May against expectations for a modest decline to 8.4%, a development that is likely to see the Bank of

England raise the cost of borrowing again on Thursday.

The agency said rising prices for flights, recreational and cultural goods and services, and second-hand cars boosted the inflation rate, while gas prices at the pump provided the biggest downward pressure.

"After last month's fall, annual inflation was little changed in May and remains at a historically high level," the agency's chief economist Grant Fitzner said.

Financial markets think

news of the unchanged rate will mean the Bank of England will increase its benchmark interest rate on Thursday from the current 15-year high of 4.5% by a quarter-point to 4.7%. Some economists think the bank, which is tasked with keeping inflation at around 2%, may decide to go further and raise it to 5%. Higher interest rates help lower inflation by making it more expensive for households and businesses to borrow, meaning they potentially spend less, thereby reducing upside demand

pressure on prices.

"This makes a rate rise by the Bank of England this week near certain and materially increases the likelihood of further rises well into autumn," said Debapratim De, senior economist at Deloitte.

The anticipated increase will pile further pressure on financial institutions to increase their own lending rates for loans and mortgages.

Many homeowners will be cushioned from the recent increases as they fixed their mortgages when interest rates were ultra-low during the coronavirus pandemic. However, those whose fixed rate terms expire over the coming months will face much higher borrowing rates when they look to lock in new deals. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

Mark Chapman is serving 20 years to life in Attica prison near New York after he was deemed competent to plead guilty. He said he had heard voices in his head telling him to kill the world-famous musician. In 2000 the killer had his appeal for early release turned down, the same happened in October 2002 when he made another appeal for early release. A third appeal was rejected in October 2004. Lennon's widow, Yoko Ono, has said she would not feel safe if Chapman were released, and experts believe it is quite possible he will stay behind bars for the rest of his life.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You may find that family members may not be too easy to get along with. You need to reevaluate your situation. Acknowledge your lover's needs.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Join a choir or a drama club. You may be considering moving to larger quarters. Catch up on any correspondence you've neglected.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Uncertainty about your relationship is prevalent. You are best to sit back and think it through, rather than add to the ranting and raving.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Opportunities for romance may develop through dealing with groups that have a purpose. Don't push your luck with authority figures.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You may find out that someone has not been completely honest with you. Be sure to take care of the needs of your immediate loved ones first.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You can make money if you are careful not to let it trickle through your fingers. Financial affairs do not look too favorable today.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Self improvement projects should be your key concern. Face any emotional problems head-on to avoid situations getting out of hand.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You have a real need to be vocal. Do a little investigating if there is someone at work you don't trust. Try to be understanding. Unexpected bills may set you back.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You will meet new friends and enjoy a multitude of new activities. You will find that you are able to clear up a number of small but important details.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You are best to ask questions if you aren't certain about issues that are confronting you. You may jump from the frying pan into the fire if you make a move today.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Concentrate on getting ahead financially and let your personal life settle down for a while. Make sure that all your legal papers are in proper order.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Your need to be in a leadership position will help you surpass any rivals you might encounter. Set aside any decisions regarding your personal life today.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	20	32	cloudy
Changchun	20	27	thunderstorms
Chengdu	21	30	overcast
Chongqing	23	33	cloudy
Fuzhou	25	35	rain
Guangzhou	26	33	thunderstorms
Guiyang	18	25	overcast
Haikou	27	34	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	24	30	rain
Harbin	21	27	thunderstorms
Hefei	22	31	overcast
Nanjing	23	30	cloudy
Shanghai	23	30	overcast
Taipei	25	30	overcast
Wuhan	23	32	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	33	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	9	24	overcast
Frankfurt	19	33	overcast
Paris	18	26	thunderstorms
London	14	24	rain
New York	17	24	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Yes, ___; 5- Break out; 10- Gospel singer Winans; 14- Canadian gas brand; 15- Brit's bottle measure; 16- River to the Caspian Sea; 17- Whirl; 18- Rest atop; 19- Small rivulet; 20- To the extent that; 22- Glitter; 24- Male sheep who may play football for St Louis; 25- Frozen water; 26- Devotees to the god of revelry; 30- Solidarity; 34- Nope; 35- 2, 4, 6, 8, etc.; 37- Lacking slack; 38- Toothpaste type; 39- Yale student; 40- Nipper's co.; 41- Swimmer's regimen; 43- Knight's suit; 45- Longfellow's bell town; 46- Appetite; 48- Nor's partner; 50- Nonsense; 51- Slangy denial; 52- Georgia neighbor; 56- Anthropoid; 60- Opinion; 61- Brit's half-note; 63- French summers; 64- Creamy-beige color; 65- Clear the boards; 66- Playthings; 67- Ooze; 68- Church council; 69- Limerick language;

DOWN 1- Small plateau; 2- Venomous snakes; 3- In your dreams!; 4- Sovereign; 5- "Cow Cow Boogie" singer Morse; 6- Journalist Jacob; 7- Salt Lake City athlete; 8- Career golfers; 9- Form of bowling; 10- Present; 11- Actor Estrada; 12- Equal a bet; 13- Fashion mag; 21- College cheer; 23- Good hole card; 26- Brass wind instrument; 27- In the future; 28- Mea ___; 29- Partner of each; 30- Pungent bulb; 31- Soil; 32- Cafe additive; 33- Flight segment; 36- Spreading tree; 42- Foul-up; 43- Occasionally; 44- Gave a new title; 45- Jock; 47- Euripides drama; 49- Singer Janis; 52- St. crossers; 53- Starchy staple; 54- Nothing more than; 55- Breezy; 56- Japanese soup; 57- Like ___ not; 58- Lock openers; 59- Being, to Brutus; 62- Photographer Goldin;



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- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
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AD

SUMMER SOLSTICE BRINGS DRUIDS, PAGANS AND THOUSANDS OF CURIOUS PEOPLE TO STONEHENGE

PAN PYLAS, LONDON

ALL hail the rising sun. A seemingly curious alliance of druids, pagans, hippies, local residents and tourists gathered around a prehistoric stone circle on a plain in southern England to express their devotion to the sun, or to have some communal fun.

They stayed and celebrated at Stonehenge for the night and greeted sunrise yesterday, which was the longest day in the Northern Hemisphere.

All over the U.K., optimism will reign supreme as summer officially starts. It's no coincidence that the nearby Glastonbury Festival, one of the world's biggest music events, opens its doors on Wednesday, too. Both Stonehenge and Glastonbury supposedly lie on ley lines — mystical energy connections across the U.K.

For the thousands making the pilgrimage to Stonehenge, approximately 80 miles southwest of London, it is more than looking forward to Elton John at Glastonbury or a few ciders in the sun.

For druids, modern-day spiritualists linked to the ancient Celtic religious order, Stonehenge has a



AP PHOTO

centuries-long importance, and they will be there to perform dawn rituals around the solstice in their traditional white robes. It's effectively all about the cycle of life, of death and rebirth.

This year, the summer solstice at Stonehenge started at 7 p.m. Tuesday and ran through 8 a.m. Wednesday. For this one night, worshippers are allowed to spend time inside the stone circle. Others chant or play their acoustic guitars. Alcohol is prohibited, as are

sound systems. Bring a blanket, but no sleeping bags, please. And definitely, no climbing on the stones.

The rules have been tightened over the decades, certainly during the coronavirus pandemic. Back in the less-restrained past, tens of thousands would travel by foot, car, bus or motorcycle to worship at the solar temple, or just have a bit of fun.

It's a symbol of British culture and history and remains one

of the country's biggest tourist draws, despite the seemingly permanent traffic jams on the nearby A303 highway, a popular route for motorists traveling to and from the southwest of England.

Stonehenge, one of the world's most famous prehistoric monuments and a World Heritage Site, was built on the flat lands of Salisbury Plain in stages starting 5,000 years ago, with the unique stone circle erected in the late Neolithic period about 2,500 B.C. Some of

the stones, the so-called blues-tones, are known to have come from the Preseli Hills in southwest Wales, nearly 150 miles (240 kilometers) away, but the origins of others remain a mystery.

The site's meaning has been the subject of vigorous debate, with some theories seemingly more outlandish, if not alien, than others.

English Heritage, a charity that manages hundreds of historic sites, notes several explanations — from Stonehenge being a coronation place for Danish kings, a druid temple, a cult center for healing, or an astronomical computer for predicting eclipses and solar events.

The charity said the most generally accepted interpretation "is that of a prehistoric temple aligned with the movements of the sun."

After all, the stones match perfectly with the sun at both the summer and winter solstices. On the summer solstice, the sun rises behind the Heel Stone in the northeast part of the horizon and its first rays shine into the heart of the stone circle. When the sky is clear, those rays are a triumphant spectacle to behold. MDT/AP

AD

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FMCC masters the Breakfast Talk Rendez-Vous in town with key speakers sharing their views on current business affairs. Our monthly events take place every last Wednesday of the month at Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16. Open to all!

Navigating the Path to Sustainable Tourism Diversification in Macau
Speaker: Prof. Glenn McCartney MBE, Associate Dean, Faculty of Business Administration, University of Macau

The FMCC Breakfast Talk Rendez-Vous
Wednesday, 28 Jun 2023

Introduction:
Macau's 1+4 diversification plan represents an effort to consolidate the city's tourism and leisure industry and encourage the growth of four new sectors—big health, modern finance, high-tech, conventions and exhibitions alongside culture and sports, as part of broader, ongoing initiatives to diversify the economy. Join us and hear Prof. Glenn McCartney MBE's insights on the process factors of diversification such as policies, destination marketing innovations, talent development and data, and discuss how to contribute to the vibrant future of sustainable tourism in Macau.

Date: Wednesday, 28 June, 2023
Time: 9:00a.m. - 10:30a.m.
Venue: Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16
Baccara Ballroom, 6th floor

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STEVE DOUGLAS

FOOTBALL

SAUDI Arabian soccer champion Al-Ittihad has another high-profile French player to accompany Karim Benzema at the team next season.

N'Golo Kante completed his move on a three-year deal on Wednesday after leaving Chelsea, with Al-Ittihad welcoming the 32-year-old midfielder with a series of tweets containing the hashtag "WelcomeBox2Box" — referring to his hard-running style of play.

He will reportedly earn more than \$100 million across the length of the deal at a club based in Jeddah and coached by former Tottenham and Wolverhampton manager Nuno Espirito Santo. It recently won the Saudi league ahead of Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr.

Kante, who won the World Cup with France in 2018, the Champions League with Chelsea in 2021 and has been one of the best players in the Premier League in recent years as a back-to-back champion with Leicester and Chelsea, has struggled with injuries

over the past two seasons.

That hasn't put off Al-Ittihad from apparently spending big on Kante, a few weeks after bringing in Benzema after the expiry of the reigning world player of the year's contract at Real Madrid.

"It is part of the club's efforts to establish itself as a top choice for world-class players in the Saudi Professional League," Al-Ittihad said.

The big names — albeit players nearing the end of their careers — are being enticed to the Saudi league, where spending is being fueled by a move by the kingdom's sovereign wealth Public Investment Fund to take a majority ownership stake in four of the coun-

try's top clubs, including Al-Ittihad and Al-Nassr. The move is part of a nationalization project that encourages public sector organizations to invest in sports, with soccer teams a priority under the initiative backed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Another of those four teams, Al-Hilal, tried to buy Lionel Messi but Argentina's World Cup winner decided to join Inter Miami in the United States.

A slew of leading players are being linked with moves to Saudi Arabia in this European offseason, including Manchester City winger Riyad Mahrez, Chelsea goalkeeper Edouard Mendy and Wolverhampton midfielder Ruben Neves. MDT/AP

Kante joins Benzema at Al-Ittihad on 3-year deal as Saudi Arabia entices another star player



Newcastle's Bruno Guimaraes, left, and Chelsea's N'Golo Kante vie for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Chelsea and Newcastle United at Stamford Bridge stadium in London, on March 13, 2022

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OPINION

The Conversation

Bruce Schneier, Harvard Kennedy School
 and Nathan Sanders, Harvard University

AI COULD SHORE UP DEMOCRACY - HERE'S ONE WAY

It's become fashionable to think of artificial intelligence as an inherently dehumanizing technology, a ruthless force of automation that has unleashed legions of virtual skilled laborers in faceless form. But what if AI turns out to be the one tool able to identify what makes your ideas special, recognizing your unique perspective and potential on the issues where it matters most?

You'd be forgiven if you're distraught about society's ability to grapple with this new technology. So far, there's no lack of prognostications about the democratic doom that AI may wreak on the U.S. system of government. There are legitimate reasons to be concerned that AI could spread misinformation, break public comment processes on regulations, inundate legislators with artificial constituent outreach, help to automate corporate lobbying, or even generate laws in a way tailored to benefit narrow interests.

But there are reasons to feel more sanguine as well. Many groups have started demonstrating the potential beneficial uses of AI for governance. A key constructive-use case for AI in democratic processes is to serve as discussion moderator and consensus builder.

To help democracy scale better in the face of growing, increasingly interconnected populations – as well as the wide availability of AI language tools that can generate reams of text at the click of a button – the U.S. will need to leverage AI's capability to rapidly digest, interpret and summarize this content.

An old problem

There are two different ways to approach the use of generative AI to improve civic participation and governance. Each is likely to lead to drastically different experience for public policy advocates and other people trying to have their voice heard in a future system where AI chatbots are both the dominant readers and writers of public comment.

For example, consider individual letters to a representative, or comments as part of a regulatory rulemaking process. In both cases, we the people are telling the government what we think and want.

For more than half a century, agencies have been using human power to read through all the comments received, and to generate summaries and responses of their major themes. To be sure, digital technology has helped.

In 2021, the Council of Federal Chief Data Officers recommended modernizing the comment review process by implementing natural language processing tools for removing duplicates and clustering similar comments in processes governmentwide. These tools are simplistic by the standards of 2023 AI. They work by assessing the semantic similarity of comments based on metrics like word frequency (How often did you say "personhood"?) and clustering similar comments and giving reviewers a sense of what topic they relate to.

Getting the gist

Think of this approach as collapsing public opinion. They take a big, hairy mass of comments from thousands of people and condense them into a tidy set of essential reading that generally suffices to represent the broad themes of community feedback. This is far easier for a small agency staff or legislative office to handle than it would be for staffers to actually read through that many individual perspectives.

But what's lost in this collapsing is individuality, personality and relationships. The reviewer of the condensed comments may miss the personal circumstances that led so many commenters to write in with a common point of view, and may overlook the arguments and anecdotes that might be the most persuasive content of the testimony.

Most importantly, the reviewers may miss out on the opportunity to recognize committed and knowledgeable advocates, whether interest groups or individuals, who could have long-term, productive relationships with the agency.

[Abridged]

41 WOMEN DIE IN GRISLY RIOT IN HONDURAN PRISON THAT PRESIDENT BLAMES ON 'MARA' GANGS **THE BUZZ**

A grisly riot at a women's prison in Honduras Tuesday left at least 41 women dead, most burned to death, in violence the country's president blamed on "mara" street gangs that often wield broad power inside penitentiaries.

Twenty-six of the victims were burned to death and the remainder shot or stabbed at the prison in Tamara, about 30 miles northwest of the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa, said Yuri Mora, the spokesman for Honduras' national police investigation agency. At least seven inmates were being treated at a Tegucigalpa hospital.

"The forensic teams that are removing bodies confirm they have counted 41," said Mora.

Video clips shown by the government from inside the prison showed several pistols and a heap of machetes and other bladed weapons that were found after the riot.

Honduran President Xiomara Castro said the riot was "planned by maras with the knowledge and acquiescence of security authorities."

"I am going to take drastic measures!" Castro wrote in her social media accounts.



AP PHOTO

ONCE STARVED BY WAR, MILLIONS OF ETHIOPIANS GO HUNGRY AGAIN AS US, UN PAUSE AID AFTER MASSIVE THEFT

ELLEN KNICKMEYER & CARA ANNA, NAIROBI

AN Orthodox Christian priest, Tesfa Kiros Meresfa begs door-to-door for food along with countless others recovering from a two-year war in northern Ethiopia that starved his people. To his dismay, urgently needed grain and oil have disappeared again for millions caught in a standoff between Ethiopia's government, the United States and United Nations over what U.S. officials say may be the biggest theft of food aid on record.

"I have no words to describe our suffering," Tesfa said.

As the U.S. and U.N. demand that Ethiopia's government yield its control over the vast aid delivery system supporting one-sixth of the country's population, they have taken the dramatic step of suspending their food aid to Africa's second-most populous nation until they can be sure it won't be stolen by Ethiopian officials and fighters.

Almost three months have passed since the aid suspension in parts of the country, and reports are emerging of the first deaths from starvation during the pause. At the earliest, aid to the northern Tigray region will return in July,

the U.S. and U.N. say, and to the rest of the country at some point after that when reforms in aid distribution allow.

Tesfa, who lives in a school compound with hundreds of others displaced by the war in Tigray, laughed when asked how many meals he eats a day. "The question is a joke," he said. "We often go to sleep without food."

In interviews with The Associated Press, which first reported the massive theft of food aid, officials with U.S. and U.N. aid agencies, humanitarian organizations and diplomats offered new findings on the countrywide diversion of aid to military units and markets. That included allegations that some senior Ethiopian officials were extensively involved.

The discovery in March of enough stolen food aid to feed 134,000 people for a month in a single Tigray town is just a glimpse of the scale of the theft that the U.S., Ethiopia's largest humanitarian donor, is trying to grasp. The food meant for needy families was found instead for sale in markets or stacked at commercial flour mills, still marked with the U.S. flag.

The implications for the U.S. are global. Proving it can detect and stop the

theft of aid paid for by U.S. taxpayers is vital at a time when the Biden administration is fighting to maintain public support for aid to corruption-plagued Ukraine.

At a private meeting last week in Ethiopia, U.S. aid officials told international partners that this could be the largest-ever diversion of food aid in any country, aid workers said. In an interview with the AP, a senior official with the U.S. Agency for International Development said the exact amount of food aid stolen may never be known.

Donated medical supplies also were stolen, according to a Western diplomat and U.N. official who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

With USAID giving Ethiopia's government \$1.8 billion in humanitarian assistance since 2022, a delay in providing food aid causes widespread pain. Millions of people went hungry during the war while food stocks were looted, burned and withheld by combatants, and U.N. investigators have warned of possible starvation-linked war crimes.

Now the hunger is being traced to corruption. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

Cuba said Tuesday it is reaffirming its alliance with Russia through a series of agreements considered key for the island nation, including on the supply of oil, the sale of wheat and the resumption of flights between both countries that were halted by the war in Ukraine. The agreements between two longtime allies facing economic sanctions from the United States were the result of a recent visit by Cuban Prime Minister Manuel Marrero to Russia and were by Gerardo Peñalver, Cuba's vice minister of foreign affairs.



AP PHOTO

Germany has appointed a senior lawmaker with one of the country's governing parties as its new ambassador to Russia, handing him the delicate diplomatic post as tensions spiral over Moscow's war in Ukraine. The Foreign Ministry said yesterday that Russia has given its formal approval for Alexander Lambsdorff to become ambassador, a necessary step before he can take the post. It said that he is expected to start work this summer.

Poland's powerful conservative ruling party leader, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, is reentering the government as the only deputy prime minister in the Cabinet, a move that gives him an enhanced position as the country heads toward a general election this fall. Kaczynski is the head of Law and Justice, the party that has governed Poland since 2015. It is widely believed in Poland that he decides most of the government's policies and appointments, guiding the country in his position as party leader.

Norway said yesterday it wants to open parts of the Norwegian continental shelf for commercial deep sea mining in line with the country's strategy to seek new economic opportunities and reduce its reliance on the oil and gas industry. Terje Aasland, Norway's minister for petroleum and energy, said in a statement the country needs minerals to help transition to a more green economy. The Norwegian seabed is reportedly rich with minerals including copper, zinc, manganese and cobalt.