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HONDURANS SEE LITTLE HOPE FOR NATION'S PRISONS AS DETAILS OF COLD-BLOODED MASSACRE EMERGE

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AP PHOTO



Pakistan's premier Shahbaz Sharif met yesterday with the head of the International Monetary Fund on the sidelines of a global financing meeting in Paris, hoping to unlock a \$6 billion bailout and gain the release of a critical tranche of \$1.1 billion in loans which has been on hold since November. The meeting between Sharif and IMF's Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva at the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact comes a week before the \$6 billion bailout package originally signed between the IMF and the country's former Prime Minister Imran Khan in 2019 expires.

AP PHOTO



Israeli troops yesterday demolished the home of a Palestinian who is suspected of killing an Israeli soldier last year, in the latest military operation in the increasingly volatile occupied West Bank. The demolition came during a week of rising tensions and unrelenting violence in the West Bank and just hours after Israel carried out a rare airstrike that killed three Palestinian militants near the city of Jenin and Israeli settlers attacked Palestinian villages in retaliation for the killing of four Israelis a day earlier.

AP PHOTO



Russia An explosion damaged a bridge that is one of the few links between Crimea and Ukraine's mainland, Russia-backed officials said yesterday, as the early stages of a Ukrainian counteroffensive unfold. Russian forces in Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, use the Chongar bridge to reach southern Ukraine's Kherson province. Russia and Ukraine control different sides of the province, which is a focus of fighting and attacks as Ukrainian troops try to reclaim Russian-occupied territory.

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FAST AND FURIOUS



Dragon Boat races back in full force, exceeding gov't expectations as three-day event sees 16,000 spectators

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NEW LAI CHI VUN CULTURAL SPACE OPENS TOMORROW



P15



The shipyards' value also lies in their role as a carrier of traditional craftsmanship of wooden fishing boat manufacturing, and the form of the combination between the Lai Chi Vun Village with the shipbuilding industry bear witness to Coloane's historical development.

For this first phase, IC has arranged a thematic exhibition titled "Moments in History - The Story of Lai Chi Vun Village", allowing the public to have a better understanding of the history and culture of the Lai Chi Vun Shipyards and the Lai Chi Vun Village.

The exhibition covers three sections, namely "Ships Carrying Tales," "Shipbuilders Practicing Craftsmanship and Techniques" and "Memories Passing Through Generations," presenting the customs of the population and vicissitudes of the Lai Chi Vun area. Guided tours in Cantonese and Mandarin are available at 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. on June 24 and 25, and every Saturday at the same time from July 1.

To facilitate the residents' and tourists' participation in the opening ceremony of the Lai Chi Vun Shipyards, free shuttle buses will be provided on June 24 (Saturday) from Rua do Dr. Pedro José Lobo (departing at 5 p.m.) and from Nova City Building in Taipa, blocks 9-11 (departing at 5:15 p.m.).

Lai Chi Vun Shipyards - Plot X11 is open daily from 10 a.m. to 6p.m., while the Lai Chi Vun Shipyards - Plots X12-X15 are open all day.

NEW LAI CHI VUN CULTURAL SPACE OPENS TO THE PUBLIC TOMORROW

RENATO MARQUES

THE first phase of the new cultural project that aims to revive the old shipyards of Lai Chi Vun in Coloane will open tomorrow, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has said.

The plots classified as X11-X15 will open to the public with the launch scheduled to take place on Saturday at 6:30 p.m.

The precinct will feature a thematic exhibition, a featured market, Buskers' live performances and workshops, in a bid to

showcase the history and culture of the Lai Chi Vun Shipyards and create a cultural landmark with island characteristics that promotes community and cultural tourism development, and enriches cultural experience, the IC added.

The Lai Chi Vun Shipyards were

built in the first half of the 20th century and were mainly used for the manufacturing and repair of wooden vessels. Arranged in a row along the coastline, the shipyards extend partially over the water, creating a landscape that integrates artificial and natural scenery.

SECRETARY for Security Wong Sio Chak on Tuesday met with his Hong Kong counterpart who was visiting Macau to discuss past and future cooperation.

After the meeting, Hong Kong Secretary for Security Tang Peng-keung paid a visit to the Qingmao Border checkpoint to familiarize himself with the implementation of juxtaposed border clearance in Macau.

During the meeting, Wong first thanked his Hong Kong counterpart for the support given in previous years. He pointed out that the two Special Administrative Regions (SARs) had established experience in terms of first aid and rescue missions.

Wong further recalled that after the Typhoon Hato catastrophe, Macau overhauled its civil protection system, hoping to improve efficiency against natural disasters or other public emergencies. He hoped that the

two SARs can further cooperate in future, for Hong Kong has well-established experiences in this area, so that the two SARs can protect the Greater Bay Area together.

Tang also thanked Macau for its support of Hong Kong. He introduced the new Greater Bay Area Emergency Response Operational Plan formulated by Hong Kong to establish a more comprehensive, pragmatic and systematic emergency response mechanism to further enhance the capability of the bay area cities in handling incidents together.

Tang also visited the Civil Protection Operation Centre, the Public Security Police Force and the Judiciary Police. **AL**

HK security chief meets with Macau counterpart, visits Qingmao checkpoint



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Times
DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

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

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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Top court orders former Iek Long land stakeholder to pay outstanding land premium

ANTHONY LAM

THE ex-stakeholder of the land for the former Iek Long Firecracker Factory has been ordered by the Court of Final Appeal (TUI) to pay the outstanding amount of land premium.

According to the statement from the court, the premium amounted to over MOP14 million, and should have been paid by August 18, 1995.

The premium concerned a land plot identified as BT27 in Central Taipa, the court added.

BT27 was first assigned to A, a shareholder of Samtoly Property Development Company Limited, under a land premium of about MOP56 million.

In 1993, A transferred the concession of BT27 to Samtoly without remuneration. An additional land premium of about MOP88 million was charged as the land's plan of use was changed.

Samtoly has paid a first installment of about MOP35.57 million, as well as three subsequent ins-



MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

tallments, before raising concerns over the calculation of the land premium. As such, it withheld the last installment, which was supposed to be paid in 1995.

On the other hand, as the then-stakeholder of the land plot of the former firecracker factory, A proposed that BT27's additional

land premium be resolved as the process for land exchange was triggered.

In July 2000, the then Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) management proposed to the then-Secretary for Transport and Public Works in a report that MOP77 million be

refunded to the land concessionaire, but the final installment of the land premium should be paid. The proposal was agreed to by the then-Secretary.

Upon receiving the Financial Services Bureau's bill for the last installment, the concessionaire filed a lawsuit against the decision.

In 2013, the then DSSOPT management suspended the payment order, citing the land exchange process as reason. The lawsuit was withdrawn as the then-Chief Executive approved the suspension.

On Jul. 25, 2017, the then-Chief Executive terminated the land exchange process. Therefore, BT27's concessionaire ought to pay the last installment of the land premium. Samtoly's management filed a lawsuit at the Court of Second Instance against the decision, but the Court rejected the lawsuit.

This series of events has led the case to the top court, which pointed out that the problem regarding the land premium of BT27 and the land exchange process concerning the former firecracker factory should be dealt with separately.

The court also emphasized that disputes over the interpretation, validity or execution of terms of administrative contracts should not be resolved through judicial channels.

AD



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15 CE ELECTORS EXPRESS SUPPORT AT PUBLIC CONSULTATION SESSION

At Wednesday's public consultation session for the review of the Legislative Assembly Electoral and Chief Executive Electoral Laws, 15 of 160 chief Executive Electoral College electors spoke. All speakers expressed support for the review of the two laws. The session was opened exclusively for the CE electors. Among the speakers was Pansy Ho, top executive of a gambling concessionaire, who expressed support for standardizing patriotism, "so that people will love the country without ambiguity." She also underlined that she could not tolerate those who claim to be patriotic but could not uphold the Chinese Constitution and the Basic Law.

UM CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE HOLDS GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR MANDARIN COURSE STUDENTS

The University of Macau (UM) Confucius Institute has held a graduation ceremony for students in its Mandarin courses in the second semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. During the event, which was held at UM's Student Activity Centre, over 100 students received their graduation certificates. Since 2018, UM's Confucius Institute has produced more than 900 graduates through Mandarin courses and a wide range of cultural exchange activities for non-native speakers of Chinese.

CONCRETE TRUCK, SEVEN-SEATER CRASH, CAUSES NO INJURY

A concrete truck collided with a seven-seater car on Wednesday near Wynn Palace in Cotai. There were no injuries. Incorrect details of the crash were initially made to the authorities. At about 4:40 pm Wednesday, the Fire Services Bureau (CB) received an erroneous report that a gasoline truck had collided with a seven-seater vehicle, but this was because the concrete truck resembled a gasoline truck. Preliminary investigations show that the seven-seater stopped before a zebra crossing, but the truck behind it could not stop in time.

41 SUSPECTED ILLEGAL WORKERS CAUGHT IN MAY

A total of 41 people were detained by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) in the course of the last month on suspicion of illegal work in Macau, the PSP said in a release. The 41 people were found during inspections from the police at a total of 319 locations including construction sites, private buildings, and commercial and industrial establishments, among others. The number is identical to the one recorded in April this year, although fewer locations were inspected then (291).

AL COMMITTEE HOLDS MONTH-LONG 'SECTORAL CONSULTATION' ON CIVIL CODE AMENDMENTS

RENATO MARQUES

LEGISLATIVE Assembly (AL) Third Standing Committee members agree that the bill aiming to promote changes in the Macau Civil Code requires the input of those more closely involved, namely the judicial sector, the president of the Committee lawmaker Vong Hin Fai said earlier this week.

The decision comes after the Committee, analyzing the bill in detail after it passed its first reading, realized that no public consultation had been held for this bill that, according to Vong, "promotes significant changes to some procedures."

Among the lawmakers' main concerns is the simplification of divorce procedures, which according to the Committee president, "raises several doubts."

The lawmakers also con-



Vong Hin Fai

sidered the proposal too broad in its approach and "touching too many aspects at the same time."

There are now too many concerns after the bill passed earlier this month with a total of 28 vo-

tes in favor and one abstention from lawmaker Ron Lam.

According to the Committee chairman and president of the Macau Lawyers Association, opinions from the judicial sec-

tor will be collected over one month, with the lawmakers hoping for some clarity on whether the provisions that are already pre-approved should become law.

CRIME

Former PSP superintendent sentenced to jail on probation

A former deputy superintendent of the Public Security Police Force (PSP) has been sentenced to jail with probation for unlawfully viewing two other people's immigration records five years ago.

Another deputy superintendent was fou-

nd innocent.

The convicted man was sentenced to a year in jail, with a probation of two years.

The two people had been accused of viewing two immigration records without approval. The records were of the then-gir-

lfriend of the convicted and her then-boyfriend.

Presiding Judge Lou Ieng Ha held that the convicted had used the username and password of the acquitted to log in to the immigration database, although he had denied

logging in on personal grounds.

According to the convicted, he managed to guess the correct username and password for login. The acquitted individual, meanwhile, denied any knowledge.

Lou found the ex-

planation implausible, but admitted that there was no evidence proving the existence of a syndicate. As a result, the judge acquitted the deputy police superintendent.

In contrast, Lou found the convicted man had violated his professional duties, transgressing authorities in the course of viewing the concerned data. This constituted an abuse of power and was improperly obtaining computer data. **AL**

CRIME

SIX LOCALS CAUGHT UP IN PHONE SCAMS



RENATO MARQUES

SIX new reports of phone scams have been recorded by the Judiciary Police (PJ).

The victims of the crimes were all local residents, a PJ spokesperson said during the regular press conference of the local police forces.

Four women and two men, aged between 33 and 51 years old, fell victim to the same scam.

They told police they received an SMS on their phones claiming there

was a parcel on the way to be delivered to them, but required a delivery fee of 19,20 patacas. The SMS provided a link for them to pay.

Following the link, the victims filled out a form with personal information including credit card information.

None of them were suspicious until a few days later, when they realized their cards had been used for purchases. In at least one case, the amount spent was GBP11,825.50 (121,549

patacas).

In total, and across different currencies, the six victims reported a loss of the equivalent of 164,192 patacas.

Most of the transactions were done in the UK, Malaysia, and other undisclosed countries.

Although the PJ has been warning the public about such scams, cases continue to rise among local residents. According to statistics released by the Secretariat for Security recently and related to the first quarter of this year, police and the banking sector have successfully prevented the loss of some 54 million patacas.

EVENTS

Arraial na Ervanários presents 3D cat videos

THREE-dimensional video which can be seen with the naked eye is making a debut at this year's Arraial na Ervanários fair which opened on Tuesday to promote tourism to the Macau Peninsula's older districts.

The Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED), the organizer of the event, inaugurated a set of two perpendicular LED screens atop a coffee shop on Rua dos Ervanários. The screens depict videos of a cat moving around from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day. The video is intended to create the illusion of crossing the screens' edges to create a 3D effect.

Nonetheless, some people who "previewed" the videos during the testing phase took to social media platforms to complain about the lack of a three-dimensional visual effect. They compared it



with similar videos presented in New York and Tokyo to support their complaints.

Feline video projections into fog and another cat video on the eaves of a building will also be shown from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. each day.

This year's event is the-

med around cats because many shops along the street keep cats as pets. The organizers selected a cat as the mascot for this year's event and have decided to present them through technological means.

In addition, the organizers have also created a

mini computer program for the Chinese social media platform WeChat to draw the attention of visitors. It is hoped that visitors will take more photos and check-in online more to further promote the event.

The event will run for three months. **AL**

GBA

INT'L EDUCATION SUMMIT IN HONG KONG HIGHLIGHTS DEVELOPMENT OF ASIAN UNIVERSITIES

THE Times Higher Education (THE) Asia Universities Summit recently kicked off, gathering academic leaders from around the world to discuss the development and future of Asian universities.

The three-day summit, themed "The Asian University in 2050," was co-organized by the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and Times Higher Education.

Phil Baty, chief global affairs officer of the THE, said at the summit that Asian universities, especially those in the Chinese mainland, have made encouraging progress in the THE rankings in recent years, thanks to policy support and continued investment in education and research.

Baty said that university rankings have become a communication platform for universities in different parts of the world to cooperate with each other and enhance their understanding of each other.

Christine Choi, secretary for education of Hong Kong, said at the summit that in 2023, five of publicly funded universities in Hong Kong are among the top 100 universities in the world according to the THE rankings. This demonstrated the global influence of Hong Kong's higher education.

Choi said that to tie in with the national 14th Five-Year Plan, Hong Kong will strengthen exchanges and cooperation with universities in other cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Rocky Tuan, CUHK's vice-chancellor and president, said universities have a unique convening power to bring together people from different cultures, countries, languages, systems and economies.

"I believe this Summit represents the very best of what we all stand for and who we aspire to be," Tuan said. **XINHUA**

AD

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EVENTS

ICONIC DRAGON BOAT RACES ARE BACK IN FULL FORCE AS THOUSANDS OF SPECTATORS GATHER

THOUSANDS have gathered to watch the iconic dragon boat races, a highlight of the annual Chinese Dragon Boat Festival. The city recorded a total of 16,000 spectators over the past three days.

This year's race was the first time since the pandemic where the competition opened to regions outside mainland China and Hong Kong.

According to Sports Bureau president Pun Weng Kun, more than 200 teams participated this year, whereas the figures of spectators exceeded the expectations of local authorities.

On the last day of the Macau International Dragon Boat Race, China Nanhai Jiujiang was victorious in the Open Category, finishing the race in 1:51.685; while Macao China Selection Team and Thailand National Team finished at 1:52.267 and 1:53.545, winning second and third place, respectively.

In the Women's Category, China Nanhai Jiujiang still topped the race at 2:01.605, followed by Thailand National Team (2:02.587) and Singapore National Team (2:06.891).

The Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, attended the eye-dotting ceremony at Nam Van Lake, and then presided over the award presentation.

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, dragon boat teams range from 8 to 50 people, depending on the size of the boat. A standard boat in Hong Kong typically has a crew of 20 people who race between about 250-500 meters (820-1640 feet).

The Dragon Boat races were back in full force after years of cancellations, postponements and social-distancing restrictions during the pandemic.

The Dragon Boat festival, also known as "Tuen Ng" in Cantonese, is associated with a story of a righteous official in ancient

times who drowned himself after falling out of favor with his leader.

According to the lore, villagers rushed out to the river with boats to try and save him, and threw rice dumplings into the water to prevent fish from eating his body and to ward away evil spirits. Thus the tradition of dragon boating and eating rice dumplings, which are called zongzi in Chinese, was born.

The holiday is celebrated in mainland China and regions like Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as well as in countries like Singapore that have a large Chinese diaspora.

The Dragon Boat race at Hong Kong's southern fishing port of Aberdeen is famous for having local fishermen join the race with traditional dragon boats they make themselves.

"Wherever there's fishermen, there's dragon boats," said Cheng Man-Tat, a second-generation fisherman from a local fishing family. "There have been dragon boat competitions in every fishing port during the Tuen Ng Festival every year."

Some 45 teams — made up of fishermen, secondary school students, mixed-gender and all-men and all-women teams — joined 28 races this year at Aberdeen.

Participants compete in either traditional wooden boats or standard glass-fiber dragon boats.

Shelly Chan, a paddler who joined the race for the 10th year, said the hardest part of the races is how tiring it gets. Races often last two to three minutes, but can go to 10 minutes or longer depending on the course.

"You can't stop, once the competition starts, you will need to keep it going," she said. "If it's a long-distance race, it relies on your stamina."

Races were also held at five other areas across Hong Kong's shores. **MDT/AP**



DRAGON BOAT

City sees nearly 100,000 tourists on first day of long weekend

THE city has recorded 96,305 tourist arrivals as of 9 p.m. last night, the first day of the Dragon Boat Festival holiday.

The National Immigration Administration (NIA) has forecasted that China will see a surge in inbound and outbound passenger flows during the long

weekend.

For exit-entry passengers between Guangdong and Macao and Hong Kong, the port of Gongbei was expected to handle a daily average of 320,000, according to the NIA.

Provisional data released by the Public Security Police shows that majority of

the tourists, 37,524 arrivals were from the Border Gate, while 20,604 arrived from the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge.

Yesterday, integrated resorts in Cotai and public transportation were packed with tourists.

In the morning, the Border Gate was already busy

with people, and there was a long queue in the waiting area of the hotel coaches.

The police deployed additional manpower to maintain order.

In China, more people hit the road on the first day of the Dragon Boat Festival holiday, official data showed.

Some 30.95 million road trips were made yesterday, up 66.3% year on year. The country's number of waterway trips is expected to soar 164.82% from a year earlier to 1 million, the Ministry of Transport said.

China's railways likely handled 16.2 million trips, according to China State

Railway Group Co., Ltd.

Some 13.86 million railway trips were made on Wednesday, up 11.8% from the same period of 2019.

The Dragon Boat Festival, also called Duanwu Festival, is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar. **LV**

TECH

Microsoft, US regulators head to court over \$69 billion deal that could reshape video gaming

MICHAEL LIEDTKE, SAN FRANCISCO

MICROSOFT will today (Macau time) try to gain clearance to complete a \$69 billion takeover of video game maker Activision Blizzard in a legal showdown with U.S. regulators that will reshape a pastime that's bigger than the movie and music industries combined.

The battle will pit Microsoft's ambition to expand its video game imprint beyond its Xbox console against the U.S. Federal Trade Commission's bid to block a deal that it contends will stifle competition and innovation to the detriment of consumers.

It's the latest twist in a deal that was announced 17 months ago. Both Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and Activision Blizzard CEO Bobby Kotick are expected to testify at some point during five days of hearings in San Francisco before U.S. District Judge Jacqueline Scott Corley that will conclude June 29.

FTC lawyers will call upon experts and a top executive for Sony, the maker of the industry-leading PlayStation video game console, to show why Microsoft will gain an unfair advantage if it is allowed to blend its Xbox franchise with an Activision acquisition that will give it ownership of popular video game titles such as Call of Duty, World of Warcraft and Candy Crush.

After all the evidence and arguments are presented, Corley will decide whether or not to grant the FTC's request for a court order that would keep the deal in a hol-



AP PHOTO

ding pattern until a more exhaustive administrative trial that's scheduled to begin in Washington D.C. on August 2. The judge isn't expected to rule until after the Fourth of July holiday.

If Corley declines to issue an injunction, Microsoft could move to close the deal ahead of a July 18 deadline and avert a \$3 billion breakup fee.

The wrangling over the deal has cast a spotlight on the growing importance of video gaming, a pursuit that has already garnered an estimated audience of about 3 billion people worldwide who play at least some of the time

on a console, personal computer or, increasingly, smartphone. The market is expected to swell to 4.5 billion people by 2030.

All those gamers are willing to pay upwards of \$70 to own marquee titles like Call of Duty or fork over a steady stream of recurring subscriptions to services such as Microsoft's Xbox Game Pass, Amazon's Luna and Nvidia's GeForce.

Microsoft is framing the proposed Activision deal as a way to make inroads against Sony's PlayStation, which has a far larger market share, while providing new benefits for video game

players. Among other things, Microsoft cites a 10-year commitment to make Call of Duty available on Nintendo's Switch console and a willingness to make a similar decade-long deal with PlayStation, and also argues video gamers will gain more access to even more games on its Xbox subscription service.

The FTC has countered the deal will give too much power to Microsoft, already one of the world's richest companies because of a personal computer software empire that the U.S. Justice Department tried to break up in landmark antitrust case more

than 20 years ago. Regulators also allege Microsoft can't be trusted not to gradually make the most popular video games exclusive to its own Xbox console and subscription services, based on its handling of titles after buying video game maker ZeniMax Media in 2021.

The hearings will also be another test of the FTC's amped-up oversight of Big Tech under Chairperson Lina Khan, who has been outspoken about her belief that U.S. regulators were too lenient in past deals that helped increase the power of companies such as Amazon, Google and Facebook. The courtroom tussle with Microsoft comes six months after the FTC took Facebook owner Meta Platforms to court in Silicon Valley to try to stop a takeover of a virtual reality fitness company only to be rebuffed by the judge in that case.

The FTC could face challenges convincing Corley to block the Activision deal. The judge previously showed skepticism about the need to prevent the takeover in March when she dismissed a lawsuit brought by a group of gamers who sued to stop the acquisition.

Like regulators are now, the gamers argued that Microsoft's takeover of Activision would stifle competition and reduce consumer choice. They later brought an amended lawsuit, but Corley in May denied their request for an injunction to block the deal.

Another major regulator, the U.K.'s Competition and Markets Authority, also has taken action to thwart Microsoft's takeover.

But European regulators representing the 27-nation bloc approved the deal last month on condition that Microsoft make some promises meant to boost competition in the cloud-based gaming market. A number of other countries, including China, Japan, Brazil and South Korea, have also approved it.

Microsoft has lashed back against the British regulators standing in its way with an appeal of their decision, as well as voicing strong opposition to U.K. government officials. **MDT/AP**

Norway raises key interest rate to fight inflation and expects further hikes ahead

NORWAY'S central bank said yesterday that it has raised its key interest rate by half a percentage point in an effort to "bring inflation down to target."

Norges Bank said higher wage growth and a weaker-than-projected krone will raise inflation and that "international interest rates

have risen more than anticipated."

The Scandinavian country, which is not part of the European Union, had an inflation rate in May of 6.7%. That's far above the central bank's target of 2%.

"If we do not raise the policy rate, prices and wages could continue to rise rapidly and inflation become

entrenched. It may then become more costly to bring inflation down again," bank Gov. Ida Wolden Bache said in a statement.

However, the bank said, "pressures in the Norwegian economy are easing." Following Thursday's hike to 3.75%, the policy rate will most likely be raised further in August, Norges

Bank said.

It comes on a busy day for central bank action in Europe, including rate decisions from the United Kingdom, Turkey and Switzerland. Central banks around the world have rapidly raised interest rates to combat high inflation that is squeezing households and businesses. **MDT/AP**



FRANCE, CHINA SHOULD DEEPEN COOPERATION TO TACKLE GLOBAL CHALLENGES, SAYS EXPERT

AHEAD of the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact to be held until today, French international affairs expert Bruno Guigue expected that France and China could take advantage of this opportunity to deepen cooperation to tackle global challenges.

In a recent interview with Xinhua, Guigue said that China and France have a long history of working together on important issues like climate change, industrial development and public health.

"Today, we must not only build on these achievements but also step up a gear by deepening cooperation between the two countries with renewed trust. China and France have nothing to lose and everything to gain by working together," Guigue noted.

The Summit for a New Global Financing Pact, initiated by French President Emmanuel Macron, is an opportunity to put into perspective fundamental global issues such as the fight against poverty, climate change and biodiversity, he said.

"It is now a question of changing software, of rethinking the architecture of the global financial system in order to meet the challenges of sustainable development," Guigue said, adding that given its economic significance, China has a particular responsibility in this respect.

China's contribution will make it possible to underline the urgency of a new paradigm of international economic relations, greater equity, solidarity and stability, the



Chinese Premier Li Qiang arrives at the Paris Orly Airport in Paris, France, June 21

French expert said, adding that France and China must continue to strengthen their economic relations by striving to build more efficient supply chains.

"In business matters, it is normal for everyone to defend their interests, but everything should be done to enhance mutual benefit and promote win-win cooperation," Guigue said.

In a joint statement issued during Macron's state visit to China in April, the two countries pledged to provide a good environment for business cooperation, to improve business access to each

others' markets, to improve the business climate, and to ensure compliance with intellectual property rights of all companies of the two countries.

Concerning the digital economy, for example, France is committed to processing 5G license applications from Chinese companies without any discrimination and in compliance with international laws and regulations. "This is a very positive point," Guigue noted.

Noting that both countries also agreed to continue their cooperation in the fields of cli-

mate change and energy transition, Guigue said that China and France can play a leading role in the multilateral policy in favor of energy transition.

With regard to carbon neutrality objectives, Guigue said that France is committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, while China has set ambitious goals of achieving carbon peak by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060.

These goals bode well for bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and China's weight in the area is having a real knock-on effect, he said.

For Guigue, the foundation of France-China relations is the recognition of the People's Republic of China by France in 1964, the first major Western country to do so.

"It's a very far-reaching political choice," he said.

"The real driving force behind cooperation between the two countries is mutual respect, mutual trust, and the recognition of the other as a true partner," he stressed. "This is why it is absolutely necessary to continue and enrich this cooperation, and to give it a new momentum." XINHUA

US Coast Guard ship sailed through Taiwan Strait a day after Blinken's China visit



AU.S. Coast Guard ship sailed through the Taiwan Strait a day after U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken completed a trip to Beijing during which he met with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, in a move that Chinese authorities called "public hype."

The U.S. Coast Guard cutter Stratton conducted a "routine Taiwan Strait transit" on June 20 through waters where "high-seas freedoms of navigation and overflight apply in accordance with international law," the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet said in a statement yesterday.

"The ship transited through a corridor in the Strait that is beyond the territorial sea of any coastal State," it added.

China often maintains that the strait, which separates Taiwan and mainland China, is part of its exclusive economic zone, while the U.S. and its allies regularly sail through and fly over the passage to emphasize their contention that the waters are international.

"Stratton's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. The United States military flies,

sails and operates anywhere international law allows," the Navy's statement said.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said the ship sailed through the strait from south to north and that the military had monitored the surrounding waters and airspace and concluded that the situation was "normal."

China's coast guard described the Stratton's transit through the Taiwan Strait as "public hype" and said Chinese coast guard ships tailed the ship the entire way.

"The Chinese coast guard will strengthen patrol law enforcement in waters under China's jurisdiction, and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and maritime rights and interests," a Chinese coast guard statement said. MDT/AP

Cooking gas explosion kills 31 people at a barbecue restaurant in northwestern China

COOKING gas caused a massive explosion at a barbecue restaurant in northwestern China, killing 31 people and injuring seven others during national celebrations on the eve of a long holiday weekend, authorities said yesterday.

The blast tore through the restaurant at around 8:40 p.m. Wednesday on a busy street in Yinchuan, the capital of the traditionally Muslim Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, as people gathered ahead of the Dragon Boat Festival, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The explosion left many people unconscious and they needed to be carried out of the shop, according to the online news site The Paper, which quoted a member of the search and rescue team. Victims included elderly people and high school students, it added.

An hour before the explosion, employees noticed the smell of cooking gas and discovered that a gas tank valve was broken, according to Xinhua. The blast occurred while an employee was replac-



cing the valve.

Chinese President Xi Jinping demanded urgent medical care for the injured and a safety overhaul after the explosion, Xinhua said. He urged efforts to quickly determine the cause of the accident and hold people accountable under the law.

Xi also said all regions and related departments should address "all types of risks and hidden dan-

gers" and launch campaigns to promote workplace safety.

Nine people have been detained by authorities, including the owner of the restaurant, shareholders and employees.

Their assets have also been frozen, according to Xinhua.

The blast happened at an outlet of Fuyang Barbecue, a chain restaurant in Yinchuan popular for its grilled skewers and stir-fried

dishes, The Paper said. The two-floor restaurant could seat 20 people on the ground floor and offered private dining rooms on the second floor where customers could also sing karaoke.

The Paper cited a woman identified only by her surname Chen saying she had been about 50 meters from the restaurant when she heard the explosion. She described seeing two waiters emerge

from the restaurant afterward, one of whom collapsed immediately, while thick smoke billowed from the restaurant and a strong smell of cooking gas permeated the area.

The central government's Ministry of Emergency Management said on social media that search and rescue work at the restaurant was completed early yesterday morning and investigators were working to determine the cause of the blast.

The Dragon Boat Festival is a holiday devoted to eating rice dumplings and racing boats manned by teams of paddlers. While the majority of Yinchuan's population is Han Chinese, a third are Hui people, or Chinese Muslims.

The central government has pledged stronger safety measures since an explosion in 2015 at a chemical warehouse in the northern port city of Tianjin killed 173 people, most of them firefighters and police officers. In that case, a number of local officials were accused of having taken bribes to ignore safety violations. MDT/AP

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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER
"DEIGNAN AWARD"
FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN MACAU (2023)



New Zealand debates whether ethnicity should be a factor for surgery waitlists

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

NEW Zealanders this week were debating a thorny health care issue — whether ethnicity should be a factor in determining when patients get surgery.

It turns out that in some parts of Auckland, the country's largest city at 1.4 million people, clinicians have been using an algorithm to adjust where patients sit on elective surgery waitlists. Clinical need remains the top factor, but the algorithm also takes into account how long patients have been on the waitlist, where they live, their financial circumstances, and their ethnicity.

Indigenous Mori and Pacific Island patients are given a higher priority on the list, pushing down white New Zealanders and other ethnicities. The idea is to balance out longstanding inequities in the publicly funded health system.

"At the moment, there is clear evidence Mori, Pacific, rural and low-income communities have been discriminated against by the health system," Prime Minister Chris Hipkins told reporters.

The algorithm has been used in Auckland since February and

AP PHOTO



similar policies have been in place there since 2020. But most people weren't aware of the algorithm until Monday, when radio station Newstalk ZB reported on it, saying some surgeons were ethically opposed to using ethnicity as a factor.

In an election year, the issue has quickly become a hot political topic, with conservative opposition parties coming out strongly against it.

"It's pretty simple," Opposition Leader Christopher Luxon told reporters Monday. "Race shouldn't play any part in determining surgical need."

The libertarian ACT Party has started a petition against what it describes as "race-based waitlists."

Following the backlash, Hipkins quickly put on ice plans to use the algorithm more broadly across New Zealand's health care

system.

Hipkins said he asked Health Minister Ayesha Verrall to take a closer look at the tool to ensure "we're not replacing one form of discrimination with another."

Verrall said yesterday she had been disappointed in some aspects of this week's debate.

"I think it is important that we address the inequalities that we have in life expectancy and health services for Mori," she said. "I

think it's disappointing the tone that it's taken."

She said one example of existing bias in the health care system was that Mori with the same heart conditions as white people get prescribed fewer medications.

Professional health care organizations have expressed mixed reactions to the tool. Groups representing nurses have backed it, while a group representing surgeons said it's too simplistic.

About 10% of New Zealand's 5 million people are among those currently covered by the algorithm. Patients affected include those attending two large hospitals: Auckland City Hospital and Greenlane Clinical Centre.

Jo Gibbs, who directs hospital system delivery at Health New Zealand, said those who are sickest or most in need of care are treated first. Beyond that, she said, the algorithm was helping reduce barriers and inequities in the health system.

"We will evaluate the tool to check it is achieving its purpose," she wrote in a statement to The Associated Press. "It has not been rolled out nationally." **MDT/AP**

SOCIAL MEDIA

Australia's online safety watchdog demands answers from Twitter on how it tackles online hate

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

AUSTRALIA'S online safety watchdog has issued a legal notice to Twitter demanding an explanation of what the social media giant is doing to tackle a surge in online hate since Tesla CEO Elon Musk bought the platform.

Australia's eSafety Commission describes itself as the world's first government agency dedicated to keeping people safer online. The agency said yesterday that it received more complaints about online hate on Twitter in the past 12 months than any other platform and had received an increasing number of reports of serious online abuse since Musk took over the company in October.

The Australian agency's boss, eSafety Commission

AP PHOTO



ner Julie Inman Grant, said she sent a notice to the San Francisco-based company Wednesday with 36 detailed questions on how Twitter's policies about hateful conduct are enforced.

If Twitter does not respond with factual and truthful responses to all questions within 28 days, an Australian judge could fine the company up to 700,000 Australian dollars

(\$476,000) for every day of delay, Inman Grant said.

"The whole idea of the basic online safety expectations is that global companies like Twitter are enforcing their own policies ... and that they've got people and technology to keep their platforms safe," Inman Grant said.

"They have a Hateful Conduct policy that says you may not directly attack other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, etc., and I want to know if fundamentally they are enforcing this policy and how effectively they are doing so," she added.

Twitter did not immediately respond to a request for comment yesterday.

The eSafety notice followed Musk's announcement in November that he was granting "amnesty"

for suspended accounts. This led to 62,000 banned or suspended users being reinstated to the platform, including 75 accounts with more than 1 million followers each, eSafety said in a statement.

Twitter's global workforce had been slashed under Musk from 8,000 employees to 1,500, with trust and safety teams shed. Twitter had removed all public policy staff from Australia.

Inman Grant said Indigenous Australians, disabled people and those who identify as LGBTQ+ experience online hate at double the rate of other Australians.

"A third of all reports into our office of online hate are coming from Twitter. It's been a huge surge since October '22 when Elon Musk took over," Inman Grant told Australian Broad-

casting Corp. "Twitter has always been fiery in terms of discourse, but it's turned into an absolute bin fire."

"A lot of the changes to the algorithms have made people feel like you see more toxicity, much more coarse discourse. But without lifting the hood and using these transparency powers, we really don't know what's happening and this is where we're trying to get to the bottom of things," she added.

Australians are not alone in their increasingly hostile experience with Twitter. American advocacy group GLAAD said last week that all major social media platforms do poorly at protecting LGBTQ+ users from hate speech and harassment. But Twitter was the worst.

In its annual Social Media Safety Index, GLAAD gave Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter low or failing scores, saying the platforms don't do enough to keep their users safe. That said, most improved from a year ago. **MDT/AP**

FRANCE

Macron calls for massive investment to respond to climate emergency and poverty at Paris summit

SYLVIE CORBET
& SAMUEL PETREQUIN, PARIS

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron called yesterday for concrete solutions and massive investment for developing countries at the start of a two-day summit aimed at seeking better responses to tackle poverty and climate change issues by reshaping the global financial system.

Speaking in Paris, Macron said no country should have to choose between “reducing poverty or protecting the planet.”

The summit, hosted by France, is bringing together more than 50 heads of state, world finance officials and activists. They will discuss ways of reforming the global financial system and address the debt, climate change, and poverty crises.

Macron called for a “financing jolt,” insisting on the need for more investment from both the public and private sectors, and the crucial role played by international institutions.

“Faced with these challenges at the same time — poverty, climate and biodiversity — we must invest way more, and we are not up to the task,” he said.

Macron praised the International Monetary Fund’s initiative to allocate more funds to low-income countries through Special Drawing Rights, which are an IMF international reserve asset that can be exchanged for hard currency.

The Paris talks also come as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and a global debt crisis have led to a drop in life expectancy and an increase in poverty in most countries around the world, the United Nations Development Program reported.

Developing nations point to an outdated system where the United States, Europe, China and other big economies that have caused most climate damage are leaving the poorest countries to deal with the consequences.

The Paris summit comes in the wake of a plan championed by Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley to ease access to financing for climate-vulnerable countries. Mottley and other proponents have argued that developing countries are forced to pay such high interest rates that they struggle to finance adaptation projects, like sea walls, or

AP PHOTO



green energy initiatives, like large solar farms, or simply make payments on outstanding loans when climate-infused disasters strike.

Activists fear the talks won’t meet expectations.

“The current financial system does not just need a bandage, it needs an intensive surgical intervention,” said Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy at Climate Action Network International.

“There are some good ideas on the table,” he noted, “but I must mention that they don’t really go far enough.”

The Paris summit has no mandate to make formal decisions, French organizers stressed, but it aims to give a strong political impetus to key issues to be discussed in upcoming climate conferences and other international meetings. Macron, however, stressed that the summit should offer “very concrete solutions,” pledging to draw a list of proposals that should be accompanied by a progress-tracking tool.

“We demand cancellation of debt. We demand public finance for climate action, particularly

adaptation. And addressing the loss and damage,” Singh said, referring to the issue of polluters paying for their climate impacts.

Climate activists and developing nations also urge rich countries to deliver on their existing commitments.

Experts are expected to announce that the pledge to provide poor nations with \$100 billion in aid each year to tackle global change is estimated to be met for the first time this year. First made in 2009 and reaffirmed at the 2015 Paris climate summit, the promise had never been fulfilled.

Amid key topics to be discussed are changes needed in the way the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are lending and granting money to the most vulnerable countries. Both institutions have been criticized for not factoring climate change into lending decisions and being dominated by wealthy countries like the U.S.

Summit participants are expected to back a tax on the greenhouse gas emissions produced from international shipping, with the aim to enable its adoption at a July meeting of the Internatio-

nal Maritime Organization.

To bring more money in, activists are pushing for a tax on the fossil fuel industry and another one on financial transactions — two proposals that appear to have little support from wealthier nations.

Debt restructuring and cancellation are also to be debated, as a growing number of countries are struggling with unsustainable debt aggravated by climate change issues.

Participants are to discuss a debt suspension clause for countries hit by extreme climatic events. Yet it would have no impact on existing debt, activists note.

Cécile Duflot, Oxfam France general director, said there’s a “historic, political responsibility” from wealthy nations and a “duty of solidarity” towards poorest countries.

“We advocate for radical measures ... because they are the only ones that are in line with the extent of the problem,” she said.

Climate activists staged a demonstration Wednesday near the Eiffel Tower with a banner saying “End fossil finance” and “Make polluters pay.”

Filipino climate justice activist Mitzi Jonelle Tan said “my country is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world and we are experiencing this climate impact every single day. And yet we are expected, our generation and our countries, to go into debt ... because most of climate finance is in the form of loans. We are saying: enough!”

Forty heads of state and government are slated to attend the summit, many from poor and climate-vulnerable nations. Only two are members of the Group of Seven most developed countries — Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. The U.S. is represented by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and climate envoy John Kerry.

Attendees include China’s Prime Minister Li Qiang, Brazil’s President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, World Bank head Ajay Banga and IMF President Kristalina Georgieva.

Climate activists Greta Thunberg and Vanessa Nakate also are set to attend. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



HONDURANS SEE LITTLE HOPE FOR NATION'S PRISONS AS DETAILS OF COLD-BLOODED MASSACRE EMERGE

MARLON GONZÁLEZ
& TEGUCIGALPA

AUTHORITIES in Honduras began to hand over to relatives the hacked, burned corpses of 46 women killed in the worst riot at a women's prison in recent memory.

Some of the bodies were so badly burned they need genetic testing or dental studies to identify, said Yuri Mora, the spokesman for Honduras' national police investigation agency.

The picture that began to emerge of Tuesday's violence at the women's prison in Tamara, Honduras was one of a carefully planned massacre of supposed rival gang members by inmates belonging to the notorious Barrio 18 street gang.

The carnage has led to calls for change to the country's prison system and even talk of whether Honduras should emulate the drastic zero-tolerance, no-privileges prisons set up in neighboring El Salvador by President Nayib Bukele.

While El Salvador's crackdown on gangs has given rise to rights violations, it has also proved immensely popular in a country long terrorized by street gangs.

"One of the dangers is the Bukele-ization of security problem in this country, with everything that would imply," said Honduran human rights expert Joaquin Mejia.

Nobody debates that Honduras' prisons are in a shameful state. In Tuesday's riot, incarcerated members of the notorious Barrio 18 gang slaughtered 46 other women inmates by spraying them with gunfire, hacking them with machetes and then locking survivors in their cells and dousing them with flammable liquid.

Chillingly, the gang members were able to arm themselves with pistols and machetes, brush past guards and attack. They even carried locks to shut their victims inside, apparently to burn them to death.

Jessica Sánchez, an activist with the Civil Society Group, a human rights organization, said "we believe that this massacre was carried out on orders from a criminal network, and I am sure it was known beforehand, and nothing was done."

Miguel Martínez, a security ministry spokesman, said the attack was taped by security cameras up to the moment the gang members destroyed them in what he called a planned attack.

"You can see the moment in which the women overcome the guards, leaving them helpless, and take their keys," Martínez said.

President Xiomara Castro said the riot at the prison in Tamara northwest of Tegucigalpa was "planned by maras (street gangs) with the knowledge and acquiescence of

security authorities."

Castro fired Security Minister Ramón Sabillón, and replaced him with Gustavo Sánchez, who had been serving as head of the National Police.

She ordered that all of the country's 21 prisons be placed for one year under the control of the military police, who will be asked to train 2,000 new guards.

But she didn't announce any immediate plan to improve the conditions in prison, which are characterized by overcrowding, crumbling facilities and poorly trained guards. Security is so lax that inmates often run their own cellblocks, selling prohibited goods and extorting money from other inmates.

Many doubted the answer lies in adopting the kind of brutally regimented prisons that El Salvador has built.

"Building more prisons in Honduras isn't necessary. Why? Why build more prisons that turn into slaughterhouses for people, when the government has no control over them?" said Roberto Cruz, 54, who runs a small retail outlet in the capital.

"What is needed are professional people to run the prisons," Cruz said, acknowledging that "it is a big, complex problem that needs an urgent solution."

Most don't trust the government to get it right.

"We demand an international investigation that can really look at the issue of pri-

sons and women" in prison, said Sánchez.

For now, the cold facts of Tuesday's massacre are emerging: 18 pistols, an assault rifle, two machine pistols and two grenades were found in the prison after the riot. All were smuggled into the facility.

Then there was the shocking fact that — as in many Latin American jails — some of the inmates' children were living with their mothers in the prison at the time of the attack.

"Some of the women were living with their children in detention. These children are now left behind and highly vulnerable. I am deeply concerned about their well-being and safety," said Garry Conille, the regional director for UNICEF, the U.N. children's fund.

It was not known whether any children witnessed the attack.

The riot's death toll surpassed that of a fire at a female detention center in Guatemala in 2017, when girls at a shelter for troubled youths set fire to mattresses to protest rapes and other mistreatment. The smoke and fire killed 41 girls.

The worst prison disaster in a century also occurred in Honduras, in 2012, at the Comayagua men's penitentiary, where 361 male inmates died in a fire possibly caused by a match, cigarette or some other open flame. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1985 AIR INDIA JET CRASHES KILLING 329



A passenger jet has disintegrated in mid-air off the coast of Ireland, killing all 329 people on board.

The Air India flight was only 45 minutes from London Heathrow when it suddenly disappeared from radar screens at 0816 BST.

Airline officials said they do not know the cause of the crash, but suspected it was caused by a bomb planted by Sikh extremists.

The Boeing 747 plunged into the sea from 30,000 ft (9,144 m) and rescue officials said they did not expect to find survivors. The pilot had no time to issue a mayday message, according to the coastguard.

Flight AI 182 was flying from Toronto to London with a stopover at Montreal. Most of the passengers were of Indian origin and intending to fly on to Bombay or Delhi.

The plane had already been delayed at Mirabel Airport, Montreal, where Canadian Mounties removed three suspicious packages.

The rescue operation is being co-ordinated by the coastguard in Plymouth and Falmouth, and four RAF helicopters are being used to search for bodies.

"There is a large slick of fuel about 4.5 miles [7.2km] long and a lot of wreckage on the surface," pilot Paul Redfern said.

He confirmed some bodies had been recovered and taken to a temporary mortuary at Cork Airport.

A coastguard spokesman told the BBC he thought it very unlikely there would be any survivors.

"I think we have to face the facts. The chances can't be very good - nevertheless if there is a possibility then we will explore it as far as we can," he said.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Five months later, Talwinder Singh Parmar and Inderjit Singh Reyat were arrested on weapons, explosives and conspiracy charges connected with the bombing.

Reyat was fined on a minor explosive charge, but the case against Mr Parmar was dropped - though Canadian police believed him to be the leader of the Air India conspiracy. He was killed by police in India in 1992.

In 1991, Reyat was sentenced to 10 years in prison for making a bomb destined for another Air India flight, but which exploded at Tokyo's Narita airport, killing two baggage handlers.

Two years after his release, the Sikh electrician pleaded guilty to manslaughter in connection with the Air India bombing and was sentenced to five years.

Two further suspects - Vancouver businessman Ripudaman Singh Malik and millworker Ajaib Singh Bagri - were acquitted of involvement with the attack in March 2005.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You may be admired by colleagues and employers for your diplomatic way of handling your work and those you work with. Go out with friends or family. Avoid letting children and friends borrow.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Don't be too quick to sign documents. Not everything you hear will be legitimate. Things will be hectic and family members will be erratic.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Your practical approach to life may charm someone who has been observing you. Keep your cash in your pocket and offer them sound advice rather than your financial assistance.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
The stamina you possess will be apparent in your approach to your hobbies and creative projects. You could be attracting individuals who are anything but good for you.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Hard work will payoff if you refrain from expressing your opinion to superiors. You may not be able to help, but your support will be favorable. Be careful when dealing with investments.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Keep important information to yourself. Don't let your boss make you feel guilty enough to take work home with you. Travel opportunities must be taken advantage of.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Seminars will provide you with knowledge and amusement. Do not jump to conclusions concerning your romantic partner. Your emotions are soaring and if you don't get your way, look out world.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Avoid letting family get involved in your personal life. Ask a close friend for advice. Enlist the aid of family members and consider the feelings of your mate.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Compromise if you have to, to avoid verbal battles. You need to lie back and enjoy a little rest. You can ask for favors or run your ideas by those who will be able to support your objectives.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Focus on using your creative abilities in other ways. Nagging has never been something that you could tolerate, and it's once again driving you into a lonely state of affairs.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Your fight for those less fortunate is not likely to end in sweet victory. Reciprocate by offering helpful hints. Romantic encounters are evident through travel or educational pursuits.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Your diplomatic approach and rather outgoing nature will enhance your reputation and bring you the support you need. Social get-together will bring you in contact with intelligent new friends.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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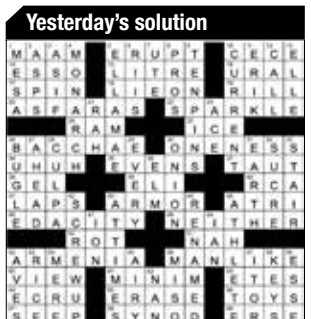
WEATHER

	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- "Cats" monogram; 4- ___-garde; 9- According to; 14- Frozen Wasser; 15- Strictness; 16- Places; 17- Off-the-cuff; 19- Really bother; 20- Food and water; 21- Anticipate; 23- Neck of the woods; 24- Because of; 27- Ready for plucking; 30- Clad; 32- Able to; 33- Nares; 37- Fowl pole; 39- Assign; 40- See-through material; 42- Glass bottle; 43- Deep-fryer's concern; 44- Shoebox letters; 45- Soft metallic element; 48- Lacking; 50- Titter; 51- Tennis great Arthur; 55- Fortune-telling cards; 57- John of England; 58- Emerge; 60- Extremely funny; 64- Beethoven's "___ Solemnis"; 65- Actress Verdugo; 66- Buckeyes' sch.; 67- Lustful deity; 68- Reposes; 69- Actress Ruby;

DOWN 1- "Lovergirl" singer ___ Marie; 2- Philly hoopster; 3- Rival of Helena; 4- Weaponry; 5- Big shot; 6- Of old; 7- Hide-hair link; 8- Picks up the check; 9- Between ports; 10- Flight segment; 11- Underskirt; 12- Clean air org.; 13- Queue after Q; 18- Writer LeShan; 22- Grievous distress; 24- Bit; 25- River to the Ubangi; 26- Pothook shape; 28- Sticky stuff; 29- Go into; 30- Hand tool; 31- Night vision?; 33- Scruffs; 34- Milo of "Barbarella"; 35- Fahrenheit or Faraday; 36- Musical syllable; 38- Slugger Mel; 40- ...baked in ___; 41- What confused people don't have; 43- Pipe down!; 46- How was ___ know?; 47- Hoppie; 49- Impudent; 51- Clay today; 52- Lost a lap; 53- Residence; 54- Result; 56- Back; 57- Historical chapters; 58- Mornings, for short; 59- Inlet; 61- Land in la mer; 62- Bandleader Brown; 63- Colony member;



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- 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
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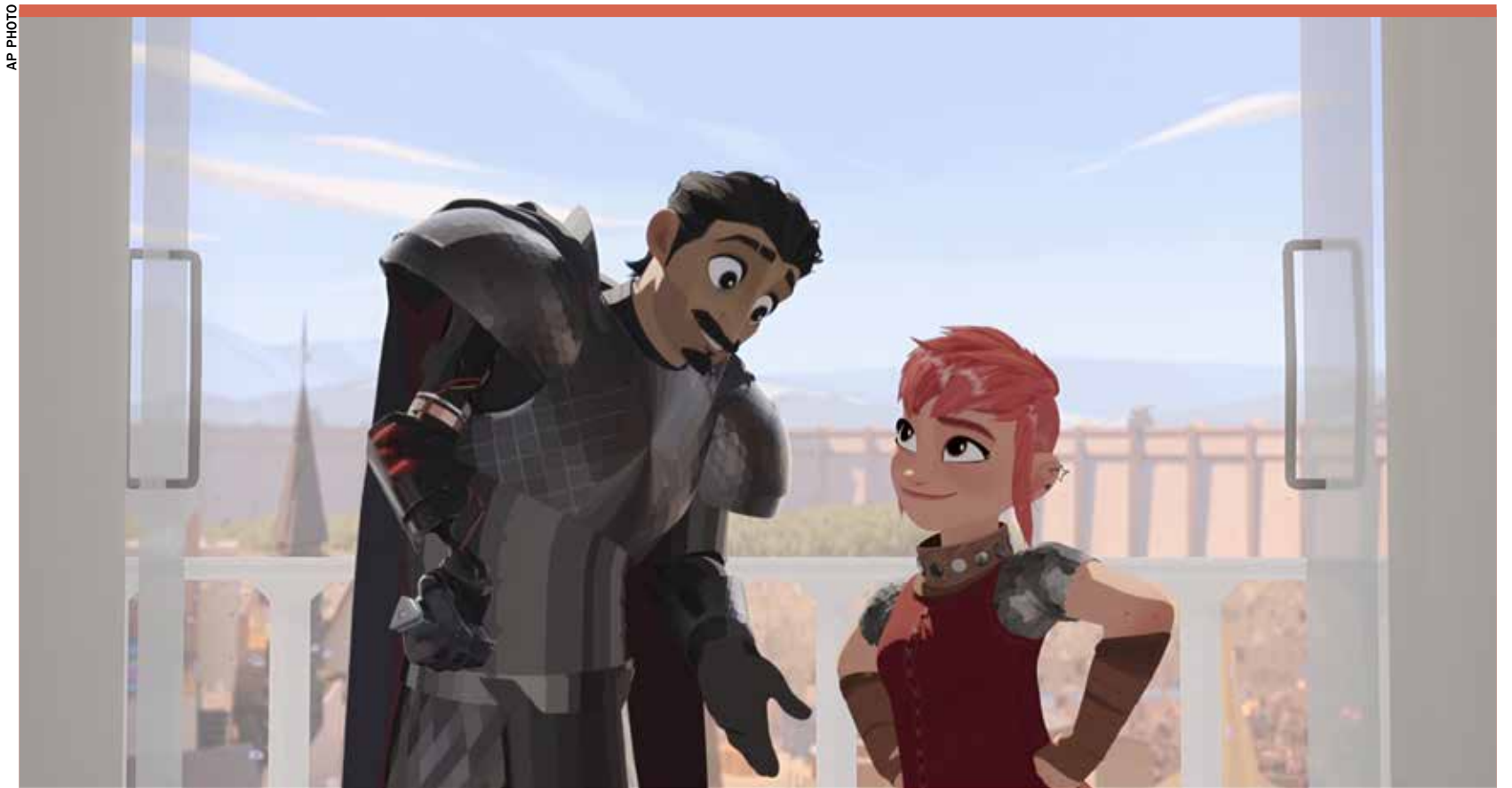
DRIVE IN

MOVIE REVIEW: A FANTASY ADVENTURE WITH RIOT-GRRRL ENERGY IN 'NIMONA'

LINDSEY BAHR,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

A powerful, shapeshifting teenage girl and a disgraced knight-in-training suspected of killing a beloved queen are at the heart of "Nimona," a vibrant and irreverent animated adventure set in a futuristic fantasy kingdom.

It is a familiar story — a society governed by ancient rules and a crippling fear of outsiders — even by recent Netflix animation standards (see "The Sea Beast"). But "Nimona" is wrapped in new, exciting packaging with a wildly fun soundtrack featuring the likes of Metric, Dope Saint Jude and Judas Priest, LGBTQ+ themes that aren't clumsily subtle, and charismatic lead voice actors in Chloë Grace Moretz and Riz Ahmed. There's also a supporting



Ballister Boldheart, voiced by Riz Ahmed, left, and Nimona, voiced by Chloë Grace Moretz, in a scene from the animated film "Nimona."

character named Ambrosius Goldenloin. Ambrosius Goldenloin. Ambrosius Goldenloin.

and is voiced by Eugene Lee Yang of The Try Guys.

The fraught saga of getting "Nimona" to audiences could be its own epic movie. ND Stevenson's popular graphic novel first went into development in 2015 at Blue Sky Studios and was inherited by Disney in 2019 as part of the Fox acquisition. Despite seismic shifts and leadership changes, work continued. Then in 2021, when the film was reported to be 75% complete, Disney announced that Blue Sky Studios was shuttering and "Nimona" was to be shelved. In addition to the economic hardships of the pandemic, Business Insider reported that Disney leadership took issue with a same-gender kiss. Then Annapurna and Netflix stepped in, with new directors (Nick Bruno, Troy Quane), and got "Nimona" to the finish line (though also without a kiss).

Ballister is reluctant to team up with Nimona — he wants to prove his innocence and she doesn't seem like the best way back into society. But she also has some very useful skills, namely being able to morph into anyone and anything — an adult,

a position traditionally reserved for members of a certain class or descendants of an ancient, revered warrior named Gloreth, who 1,000 years ago saved the kingdom from a monster. Despite the odds, and prejudices, he rose the ranks and almost made it. On the "Night to Knight Knights" a big, televised event with futuristic Super Bowl halftime show-meets-"Blade Runner"/"Hunger Games" production levels, the public still isn't convinced about Ballister — they sneer that he doesn't deserve it and won't keep them safe. The only people on his side are his boyfriend, the aforementioned Ambrosius Goldenloin, and the queen. But things go south quickly at the ceremony: The sword he's given kills his most public champion, the queen, in front of everyone and no one gives him the benefit of the doubt. He's a queen killer and that's that.

Certainly the release has been plotted to coincide with Pride, but it happens that LGBTQ+ rights are also once again under seige in the country. This may not push the envelope much further than recent animated forays into more blatant depictions of same sex relationships, but it's another tiny step in the right direction which is always helped when the movie is good, too.

Netflix might not have initiated "Nimona," but it won by getting it out in the end.

"Nimona," a Netflix release in limited release Friday and streaming June 30, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for, "violence/action, rude humor, thematic elements and some language." Running time: 101 minutes.★★★★★

AD

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Macau Arts Festival

TASTE OF EDESIA

Star Chefs Discovery Journey

IRENE SAM, MDT

THIS week, MGM joins hands with sister group in mainland China, Diaoyutai MGM Hospitality to present the third "Star Chefs Discovery Journey" gastronomic event in Macau. A lineup of seven chefs from the two brands were invited to flaunt their culinary artistry across several cities, including masters of Chengdu, Shanghai, and Sanya. Together they integrated characteristics from their regional cuisines with art, creating a sensational extravaganza that celebrates both traditions and innovations.

The extraordinary dinner took place in **The Mansion** of MGM Cotai, an ultra exclusive resort within a resort available only to the most privileged guests. Inside the Moorish-inspired architectural style conservatory, an assimilation of both Portuguese and North African cultures, lush greenery, sparkling fountains, and immaculate landscape led

to an escape into a magical world, a scene that echoes historical gems in Macau, enabling guest to truly immerse into the allure of East-meets-West culture. The seven chefs tailor-made a 10 course dinner. Each dish was designed and created into a piece of exquisite edible art that integrated the tradition and specialities of different regional Chinese cuisine, showcasing the diversity of Chinese culture.

With over three decades of experience, Chef Tam Yim Chan, Executive Sous Chef helming Chún at MGM Cotai, is best known for his creation injected with "Wok Chi (wok energy)," the essence of Cantonese cuisine. During the event, he came up with Pan-fried Fish Maw with Convoy, Bean Sprout and Egg, a hand-crafted dish with a contemporary twist. Best demonstrating his impeccable skill, Chef Tam quickly stirs fried egg and fish maw on the sizzling wok to fuse the heavenly aroma of both worlds, giving the dish a piquant yet delicate taste to savour.



ITUNES

Jason Isbell's writing flair sings in latest with 400 Unit, 'Weathervanes'

FURTHER cementing his credentials as a songwriting force, Jason Isbell and his band have created another Alabama-accented earworm of an album that flaunts the power of his voice, guitar and lyrics.

"Weathervanes," Isbell's eighth record with the 400 Unit, is a familiar and predictable amble within the wide expanse of Americana with this 13-track canvas painted by country, folk, gospel and hard southern rock. While this album stays inside his usual musical guardrails without much

adventure into new sounds, it has its twists and turns.

In "Cast Iron Skillet," a soft and wistful warning against bigotry veiled behind old-fashioned views, Isbell strums a sweet tune thickened by the hum of an accordion and his wife, Amanda Shires, on the fiddle. Then comes "When We Were Close," electric from start to finish with angry chords and all-star rhymes: "Got a picture of us playing in a bar, and your shirt cost more than your guitar."

Sober for 11-plus

years, Isbell continues to tell stories beyond his own trying-to-stay-clean lens. "Weathervanes" further reflects the forever process of learning oneself and how to live and love complex people in a broken world.

The opener, "Death Wish," tries to care for a loved one with mental illness. In "Save the World," his voice as a father of a 7-year-old daughter resonates clearly as he sings of being spooked by school shootings, "Can we keep her here at home instead?"

Shires joins her hus-

band on five different songs, including backup vocals on "Volunteer" and "This Ain't It." The couple laid bare their life, love and struggle in a recent documentary film.

In "Middle of the Morning," Isbell explores the dark corners of relationships in what sounds like post-pandemic wincing about all that extra time stuck at home. He wails, "I'm tired of stepping on your shadow and feeling in the way." The angst is brilliantly masked by a soulfully bright melody. **DAVE CAMPBELL, MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



"Weathervanes" by Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit. (Southeastern Records)

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

NATO DIVISIONS CAST INTO STARK RELIEF

NATO member countries are expected to inaugurate a new leader at the organization's July 11-12 summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, to succeed its current Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, whose term has already been extended twice since it expired last year.

But a third extension seems unavoidable as the 31 members of the military alliance are apparently unable to agree on who should succeed him. Despite his repeated claim that he would not pursue another extension, the incumbent NATO chief has also left the option open.

A former prime minister of Norway, Stoltenberg has been instrumental in maneuvering a unified, forceful NATO approach to the Russian special military operation in Ukraine. His continued presence at the NATO helm would therefore be conducive to both policy continuity and the transatlantic alliance's image of unity, as he has been a faithful repeater of Washington's line.

However, Stoltenberg won't stay forever, and NATO cannot get around the internal divisions undermining its functionality.

The failure to build a consensus on his successor is the tip of that huge iceberg pestering NATO. Media in the United Kingdom have reported French President Emmanuel Macron is trying to prevent Ben Wallace, the UK defense minister, from getting Stoltenberg's job, on the grounds that someone from an EU member, which the UK no longer is, should assume the role. Although this might just be the UK media's typical anti-EU stance. There are reports elsewhere that some countries are cool to the idea of a third NATO chief in a row from a Nordic country, though Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, whom many favor as a possible candidate, has ruled it out.

When it comes to membership expansion, that Turkiye has so far refused to ratify Sweden's admission after finally giving the green light to Finland is another sign of discord among NATO members. Turkiye has accused Sweden of harboring "terrorists" from the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party.

Even on imperative security concerns, which have been significantly amplified by the conflict in Ukraine, NATO members are at odds, with some calling for European autonomy in security affairs.

In a follow-up to his recent appeal for the EU to not act as a pawn of the United States, President Macron on Monday urged European countries to seek more independence on airspace defense and reduce their reliance on the United States. His government believes the German-led European air defense integration program is overly dependent on US and Israeli technologies.

And, in spite of the general consensus on a greater NATO presence in the "Indo-Pacific", it may be even more difficult for its members to agree on exactly how far NATO should go in expanding its reach into the region. This will be another important subject of discussion at its July summit.

COLOMBIAN MILITARY SEARCHES FOR HEROIC DOG WHO HELPED FIND CHILDREN IN THE JUNGLE

THE BUZZ

With his powerful snout and his pointy ears, Wilson became a national hero in Colombia when he helped the military find four Indigenous children who survived a plane crash and were lost in the Amazon jungle for 40 days.

Pawprints from the military-trained search dog led trackers to the children earlier this month. But the Belgian Shepherd went missing during the search and is now himself the target of a sophisticated rescue operation that started soon after the four young survivors were flown on a helicopter to Bogota.

The Colombian military says it has left 70 soldiers in the dense swath of jungle around the crash site to look for its beloved search dog. And commanders have vowed not to leave the remote area until soldiers return home with the star pup.

It's been a month since Wilson got lost in the rainforest, and it's hard to know if the two-year-old dog is still alive. But the sniffer dog's rescue would lift the spirits of many Colombians, and add a heartwarming exclamation point to a survival story that already has captivated the world.



AP PHOTO



CLIMATE CHANGE LEADS TO GROWING RISK OF MOSQUITO-BORNE VIRAL DISEASES, EU AGENCY SAYS

JAN M. OLSEN, COPENHAGEN

EU officials warned yesterday there is a growing risk of mosquito-borne viral diseases such as dengue and chikungunya in Europe due to climate change.

The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control said that because Europe is experiencing a warming trend, with heat waves and flooding becoming more frequent and severe, and summers getting longer and warmer, the conditions are more favorable for invasive mosquito species such as *Aedes albopictus* and *Aedes aegypti*.

The Stockholm-based agency said in a report that *Aedes albopictus* is a known vector of chikungunya and dengue viruses and has been establishing itself farther north and west in Europe. The other mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*, known to transmit dengue, yellow fever, chikungunya, zika and West Nile viruses, has been established in Cyprus since 2022 and may spread to other European countries.

A decade ago, the *Aedes albopictus* mosquito was established in eight European countries, with 114 regions affected. This year, the mosquito is established in 13 countries and 337 regions, the ECDC said.

"If this continues, we can expect to see more cases and possibly deaths from diseases such as dengue, chikungunya and West Nile fever," ECDC director Andrea Ammon said. "Efforts need to focus on ways to control mosquito populations, enhancing surveillance and enforcing personal protective measures."

Before, the diseases were imported from abroad, but "now we have domestically acquired cases," Ammon said in an online news conference.

The agency said ways to control mosquito populations include eliminating standing water where mosquitoes breed, using eco-friendly larvicides and promoting community awareness about mosquito control.

To protect themselves, people can use mosquito bed nets, sleep or rest in screened or air-conditioned

rooms, wear clothes that cover most of the body and use mosquito repellent, the ECDC said.

It said that raising awareness about diseases transmitted by mosquitoes is essential.

There is no specific treatment for dengue. While about 80% of infections are mild, severe cases can lead to internal bleeding, organ damage and death.

Chikungunya fever, a debilitating disease that is suspected of afflicting tens of thousands, was first identified in Africa in 1953. It causes severe pain in the joints but is rarely fatal. There is no vaccine and it is mainly treated with pain medication.

Ammon said 1,339 locally acquired cases of West Nile infections, including 104 deaths, were reported in Europe in 2022, the highest number since an epidemic in 2018.

West Nile fever symptoms can include headache, fever, muscle and joint aches, nausea and fatigue. People with West Nile fever typically recover on their own, although symptoms may last for weeks to months. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Russia A Moscow court yesterday rejected an appeal by Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gerhskovich and upheld an earlier ruling that he should remain in jail on espionage charges until late August. The 31-year-old U.S. citizen was arrested in late March while on a reporting trip. A Moscow court agreed last month to keep him in custody until Aug. 30. Defense lawyers had challenged the decision.

AP PHOTO



EU yesterday summoned the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo for emergency talks to try to bring an end to a series of violent clashes near their border that is fueling fears of a return to open conflict. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that he would hold "urgent meetings" with Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti and Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic in Brussels. It was unclear whether the two would meet face-to-face, or only hold separate talks with Borrell.

AP PHOTO



French rescue workers searched yesterday for a person feared missing after a powerful blast brought down a building on Paris' Left Bank, injuring more than 30 people, four of them critically. Investigators were working to determine the cause of the explosion. A possible gas leak was one of the potential causes under investigation.

HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Tuesday June 27. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.