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CONCERNS ABOUT TWO ELECTORAL LAW AMENDMENTS VARIED AMONG LAWMAKERS, THOUGH MOST EXPRESSED STRONG SUPPORT

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MYANMAR BURNS \$446 MILLION WORTH OF SEIZED DRUGS AS ILLICIT TRADE BOOMS

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AP PHOTO



North Korea Tens of thousands marched in anti-U.S. rallies over the weekend, pledging "merciless" revenge against "U.S. imperialists," as the country marked the 73rd anniversary of the start of the Korean War, state media said yesterday. More than 120,000 people participated in Sunday's mass rallies in the nation's capital. The demonstrators mobilized in Pyongyang promoted their government's version of events and accused the United States of provoking the war.

AP PHOTO



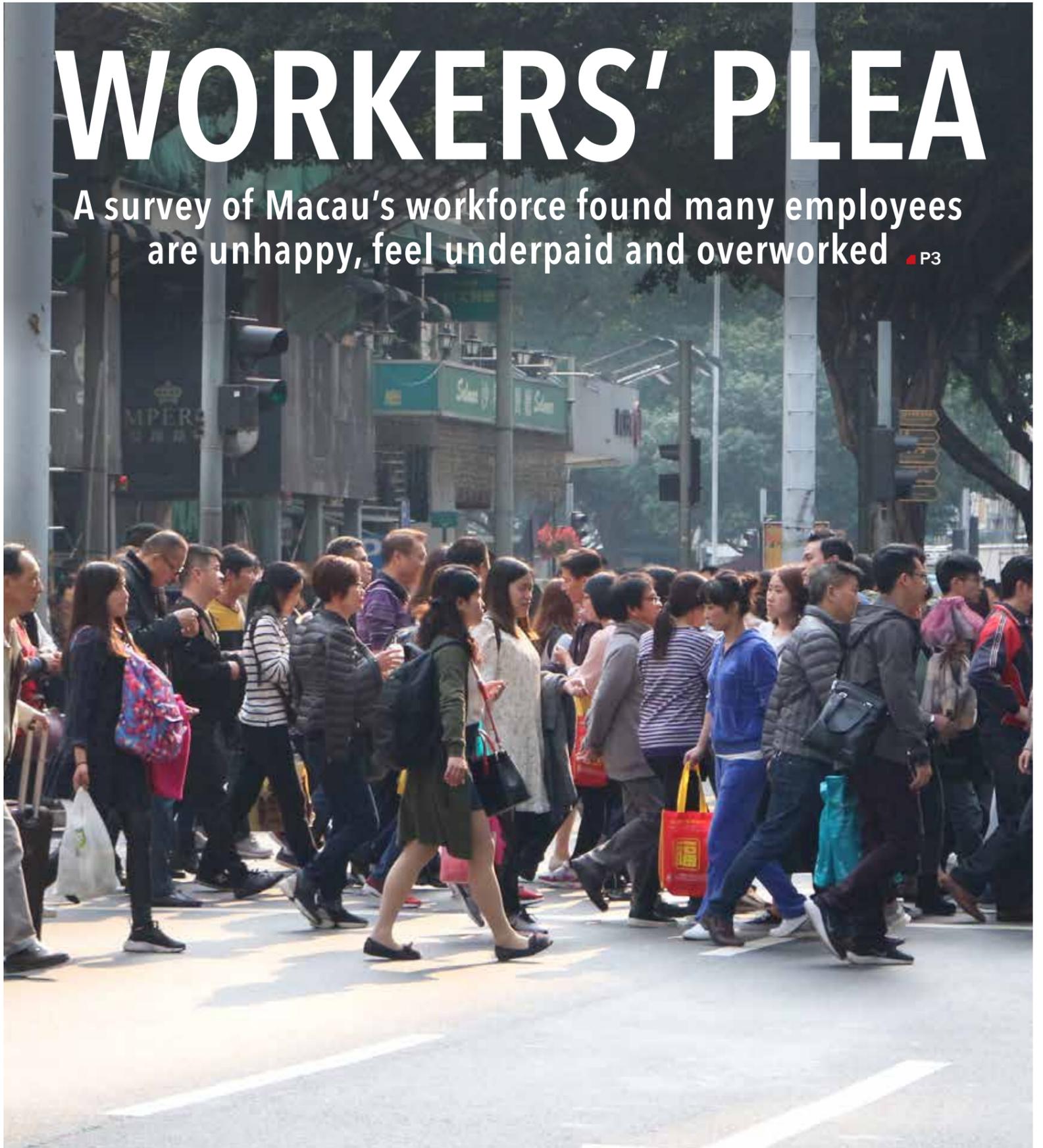
Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi on Sunday bestowed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Egypt's highest honor as the two countries tightened their partnership. El-Sissi welcomed Modi at the presidential palace in Cairo with the Order of the Nile, the Egyptian presidency said in a statement. The leaders signed a declaration elevating Egyptian-Indo ties to a "strategic partnership," which means the two nations agreed to intensify their cooperation and hold periodic talks, the statement said.

AP PHOTO



Denmark's government said yesterday that the training of Ukrainian pilots on F-16 jets has started and the retirement of Scandinavian country's fleet of aging U.S. fighters has been moved up two years. The replacement fighters, F-35s, will be operative by 2025, acting Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said. Initially, the switch was planned for 2027. Lund Poulsen said that NATO-member Denmark "has taken the step of starting a training and further education effort for the Ukrainian pilots."

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WORKERS' PLEA

A survey of Macau's workforce found many employees are unhappy, feel underpaid and overworked

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DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

CITY SEES NEARLY 300K VISITORS

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TOP CHINESE ARTISTIC SWIMMERS PERFORM IN MACAU

Leading Chinese artistic swimmers, including Shi Haoyu and Cheng Wentao, showcased their skills here during a three-day event that wrapped up on Sunday. The event featured performances from the Chinese national team and squads from Beijing and Sichuan Province. Artistic swimmers from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macau also participated in a competition. Lai Pak Leng, president of the China Macao General Swimming Association and co-organizer of the event, said the performances provided an opportunity for the Macau public to gain a deeper understanding of artistic swimming, infusing energy into Macau's sporting circles.



FORUM MACAU TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH ANGOLA

The general secretary of the Permanent Secretariat of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, Ji Xianzheng, said the Macau-based organization is fully committed to strengthening cooperation with economic and business sectors in Angola. Ji made the remarks during a meeting with Angola's Minister of External Relations Tete Antonio last week in the capital Luanda. The general secretary also announced the intention of institutional sponsorship for a sister cities project, with a focus on technical assistance in human resources training.

CHINA ISSUES PRIORITY LIST FOR PILOT FREE TRADE ZONES

The Ministry of Commerce has issued a priority list for pilot free trade zones (FTZs) during the 2023-2025 period as the country marks the 10th anniversary of its pilot FTZ construction. The country's FTZs will push forward 164 priorities from 2023 to 2025, including major institutional innovation, key industries, platform construction, as well as major projects and activities, according to the ministry. The list will support the pilot FTZ in Guangdong to deepen its cooperation with Hong Kong and Macau in fields including trade, investment, finance, legal services, and mutual recognition of professional qualifications, said the commerce ministry.

BLACK BOX THEATER TO OPEN IN EARLY JULY

ANTHONY LAM

THE government has announced the black box theater extension of the Macao Cultural Centre will open in early July.

Over the past six years or so, Macau's performance circle relied mainly on the Old Courthouse Building for small-scale, black box style performances. Several years ago, the government returned the building to the judicial

branch.

Following calls from the performance circle, the government will build the theater extension on the eastern side of the cultural center to compensate for the loss of the courthouse.

The extension has an area of 3,110 square meters. Apart from two black box theaters, the extension will also include change and make up rooms, a rehearsal parlor and a multifunction room.

Both theaters will have highly customizable stage and stand setups.

Black Box I features a custom-designed tension wire grid to allow for a wider choice of suspended scenery and lighting and can accommodate 140 patrons.

Black Box II features a flexible rigging system with movable hanging points and incorporates a rear stage with a floor-to-ceiling glass wall facing the outdoor

plaza, which can be covered with shades. It can accommodate 160 patrons.

OLD SHIPYARD IN LAI CHIVUN

Meanwhile, the transformed old shipyard in Coloane's Lai Chi Vun officially opened over the weekend, and started welcoming visitors with a flea market and interactive storytelling.

Officially referred to as Lai Chi Vun Shipyards - Plots X11-X15, the new leisure and cultural location features a thematic exhibition, a flea market with busker performances, as well as regular thematic concerts and workshops.

In addition, a thematic exhibition entitled "Moments in History - The Story of Lai Chi Vun Village" presents the customs of the population and vicissitudes of the Lai Chi Vun area. It features a huge LED panel for visual storytelling. An old fishery ship model is also on display at the location.

The flea market is held in the shipyards from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Friday to Sunday, and on public holidays. There are 15 stalls in the shipyards every week, selling souvenirs with Coloane's cultural characteristics, original products and special snacks.

Meanwhile, the "Call for Design Proposals for Public Art Installations and Public Facilities for Lai Chi Vun Shipyards - Plots X11 to X15" is currently open.

GRAB THEM BY THE STOMACH

MITE with a focus on gastronomy

RENATO MARQUES

BEGINNING Friday, the 11th Macao International Travel (Industry) Expo (MITE) will have a special focus on gastronomy with the presence of chefs from 23 UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy who will demonstrate their culinary skills.

Concurrently, there will be a Gastronomy Pavilion and the newly launched "The Cellar," reinforcing the focus on food and beverages as part of Macau's means of attracting travelers.

The chefs' event, "The



City of Gastronomy Showcase," is the Macao Government Tourism Office's (MGTO) first excursion into a large-scale international gastrono-

mic exchange after the pandemic and will include 24 sessions of culinary showcases at the MITE over three days (until July 2).

Additionally, the chefs from the 23 Creative Cities of Gastronomy will partner with chefs, from local integrated resorts and hotels in an exchange of culinary arts.

In the Gastronomy Pavilion, 18 local catering businesses will serve signature delicacies, some of which were winners of the iFood Award 2022.

At this year's debut - The Cellar - 16 wine sellers from the main-

land, Hong Kong and Macau will feature wine and liquor from Portugal, France, Italy and other countries.

Bartenders from the six integrated resorts will perform mixology displays with cocktails of their creation including one special cocktail dedicated to this year's MITE edition.

Side activities such as the "Introduction to Wine and Winemaking" certificate course, "Wine Tasting" sessions, a "Meet the Macau Beer Master" workshop, and the "Macao Beer Drinking Contest" will also take place.

The MITE will take place at Halls A and B, Cotai Expo of The Venetian Macao from June 30 to July 2.

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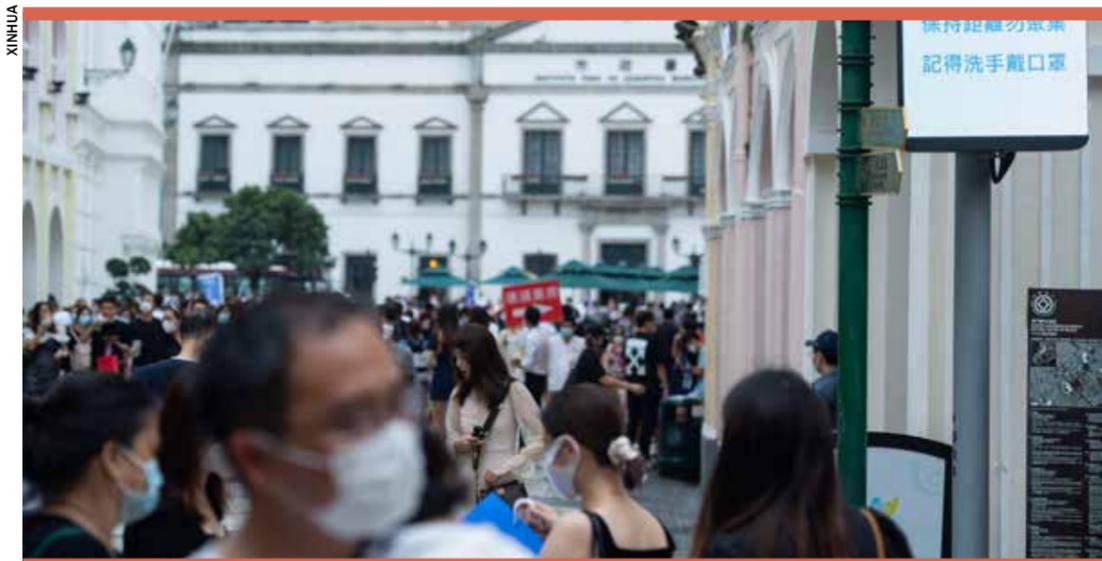
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Survey finds local workers disgruntled

RENATO MARQUES

A survey of Macau's workforce has found many employees are unhappy and feel underpaid and overworked.

The survey, launched in April, was presented last Friday.

It received 435 responses and is the most recent survey from the Macau Federation of Trade Unions and the Commercial Employees' General Association of Macau.

The survey has shown over

90% of respondents said their wage conditions have either remained unchanged or worsened compared with the previous year. Of these, more than 70% had seen no salary or benefits increase for over two years.

Also, 70% of respondents claimed to have been working over eight hours per day, excluding break and mealtimes.

Some 65% feel there is no room for career progression and personal development in their industry.

Some 75% added that, in the

past year, their employers/company did not offer any professional or vocational skills training.

While not expecting the situation to improve soon, 50% of respondents are hoping the government will improve labor-related laws and regulations for an increase in annual leave, maternity leave and other benefits. Fifty percent also hope for an increase in the minimum wage, and the enhancement of imported labor policies.

The organizers summarized the survey by saying it is clear

Macau still needs to improve its regulations on labor protection and guarantees.

Considering the results, the organizers decided to make three recommendations to the government and employers, the improvement of wages and benefits; the protection of labor rights and interests; and cooperation (between the government and the companies) to promote paid training.

The presenters, including lawmaker Leong Sun Iok, noted that since the relaxation of the epidemic prevention measures, Macau's economic recovery has been growing in several economic sectors, including retail, with results gradually improving.

Such improvements are mostly attributable to the employees who deserve to be recognized and compensated, they said.

The organizers noted some companies have not fully recovered from the pandemic period.

They called on the government to help those companies to at least reestablish their employees' previous benefits and find conditions for them to develop professionally.

The organizers said the local workforce is receiving no opportunities to develop skills to fill positions in those companies that are helped by the government.

To meet the current demand for human resources in several sectors, the companies are opting to recruit foreign labor instead and are falling into past "traps".



MOTORSPORT

ANDRÉ COUTO RETURNS TO RACING PODIUM IN TCR CHINA

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL race driver André Couto returned to circuit racing last weekend after almost four years out of the competitions due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

The local racer has joined with the local MacPro Racing Team to enter a new Honda Civic Type R TCR FL5 in the 2023 TCR China Touring Car Championship.

In his first race of the season, Couto achieved his best score finishing second in Race 1 on a very difficult weekend at Ningbo International Circuit, in Zhejiang Province, where the rain took the main role, falling all weekend long.

Still, after the great result, the Macau racer expressed his feelings through his official channels saying, "Very happy with the result (P2) in my first race of the season. It was under very difficult conditions, aquaplaning and visibility was an issue [particularly] when cars were running close [to each other on track]."

Races 1 and 2 were won respectively by Shell Teamwork Lynk & Co Racing's Jason Zhang and Hyundai N's Martin Cao, Couto and Jack Young finished second in both races.

Finishing third in Race 1 was Zhang Zhen Dong in another Team Hyundai N, Hyundai Elantra N, while the Race 2 third-place finisher was David Zhu who currently leads the championship with 71 points, seven more than Zhang and nine ahead of Cao.

Couto finished ninth in Race 2. The next event is at the Zhuzhou International Circuit, in the Province of Hunan in mid-July.

DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

MGTO pleased with holiday tourism

ANTHONY LAM

THE head of the local tourism board has expressed satisfaction with the nearly 300,000 tourists visiting Macau during the Tuen Ng Festival holiday.

Over 200,000 tourists visited Macau in two of the past three days, which were public holidays in mainland China, said the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, on the sidelines of a tourism event.

She hoped to take the opportunities presented by different festivals or holidays to attract more tourists.

The official pledged the mainland market would not be the MGTO's sole target. Besides



tourists from Hong Kong, the MGTO will also work harder to attract tourists from other markets.

Plans exist to promote Macau in Korea, Singapore and Malaysia in

July, Senna Fernandes revealed.

She added said Singaporean and Malaysian travel agencies have suggested the bureau organize smaller community

level events. The bureau is also contemplating inviting Indonesian delegations.

Transport subsidies for tourists will be adjusted to focus more on

those from foreign source markets, the director added.

Meanwhile, in China, the country logged 3.96 million entry and exit trips during the three-day Dragon Boat Festival holiday that ended Saturday, an increase of 2.3 times compared with the same period of the previous year, data from the National Immigration Administration (NIA) showed Sunday.

The number was 64.6% of the Dragon Boat Festival holiday in 2019, according to the NIA.

Among the visits, about 2.05 million were inbound arrivals and nearly 1.92 million were outbound departures.

The data also showed that 1.97 million entry and exit trips were made by Chinese mainland residents, 1.67 million by residents from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, and 323,000 by foreign nationals.

VARIED CONCERNS ON ELECTORAL LAWS AMENDMENTS

ANTHONY LAM

CONCERNS about two electoral law amendments varied among lawmakers, though most expressed strong support.

Over the weekend, the executive branch held two consultation sessions on the law review. One was for lawmakers and one for the public, which was also the first of only two public consultation sessions.

Not only will it affect the number of candidates from which the public will be allowed to choose, but it will also affect candidates' eligibility to run in a future election as well as their use of social media.

For example, besides the proposal to criminalize the lobbying of not voting, blank or invalid votes, the government has also proposed to extend the campaigning black-out period, and this may lead to the obligation to hiding or deleting existing social media posts that might be construed as having a campaigning nature.

This was also one of the points for discussion at the lawmakers' consultation session, according



to local media All About Macau.

In this respect, the women's federation's Wong Kit Cheng suggested the government clarify the legal requirements.

She said some candidates closely linked with community associations may be affected during election periods as their faces are frequently seen in public. She also feared that, as certain demands extend beyond election periods, candidates might need to avoid discussing such

demands.

Wong's election partner and school teacher Stanley Ma said the government's proposal to move the black-out period to the date when nomination forms are submitted might lead to prospective candidates delaying their nomination form submissions.

Directly elected Ron Lam expects this proposal will be also affect the public. It will be difficult for the public to look back on prospective candidates' ba-

ckgrounds and work histories, he said.

Directly elected Pereira Coutinho criticized the government for discouraging the younger generation from running in elections.

In the last election, "certain candidates failed to hide their Facebook accounts before the commencement of the campaigning cool-down period, and eventually got listed as suspects," he said.

André Cheong, secretary for Administration and Justice, replied that the current laws have stipulations on campaigning and black-out periods, adding that future electoral affairs commissions will release guidelines on the definitions of campaigning activities.

He said the attempt to last-minute submission of nominations was within the government's expectation, which will "foster fairness and is the intention of the government."

Leong Weng In, director of the Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ), cited the current law to support her comment that the daily operations of community associations would not constitute campaign activities.

The government has also proposed that The Committee for Safeguarding National Security should examine whether a candidate is "aptly patriotic" to run in an election.

The committee's decision is final, and no judicial review can be sought.

The government has also proposed that, after being disqualified, candidates will face a prohibition period during which they will not be accepted as election candidates.

Lam hoped that the prohibition period can be as short as possible, "because it will encourage people to fit themselves in the standards." He has also called for the restoration of an appeal mechanism for disqualified candidates.

Cheong, in response, remained firm on a longer prohibition period saying it will become "meaningless" otherwise.

Vu Ka Vai, advisor to Cheong's Office, affirmed the committee's authority, professionalism and rigor to support the absence of rights to appeal.

At the public consultation session, 15 participants spoke, all in support of the amendments. Some voiced concerns over expressing preference by emojis, while some were concerned over the mini-survey function on social media platforms.

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



H&M workers strike for higher pay across Spain, shutting down stores

JENNIFER O'MAHONY,
MADRID

HUNDREDS of retail workers yesterday walked off the job across Spain in a new round of strikes against the fashion giant H&M Group, extending a series of store closures in the middle of the summer sales season.

More than 4,000 Spanish employees at the Swedish multinational's brands including H&M, Other Stories and Cos are seeking pay rises in line with the higher cost of living and are protesting increased workloads linked to layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yesterday's walkout was the third day of strikes by H&M Group employees this month. Flagship stores in Madrid have closed, with hundreds of workers gathering in front of the city's largest H&M location to demand better conditions as online sales increasingly fracture the retail industry.

Union leader Ángeles Rodríguez Bonillo told The Associated Press that workers had lived with "salaries that have been frozen for many, many years" but now have found their situation untenable "with the economic situation and the high cost of living."

Inflation is high in Europe and around the world following the global economy's rebound from the pandemic and Russia's



war in Ukraine, forcing people to spend more on food, utility bills and other purchases. Consumer prices rose 7.1% in the European Union in May from a year earlier, though Spain's inflation rate is one of the lowest in the 27-nation bloc, at 2.9%.

The price pinch has led to months of disruptive strikes and protests by workers across Europe who are pressing for wages that keep pace with inflation.

In Spain, monthslong negotiations between the main UGT and CCOO unions and H&M Group broke down on June 19, leading to a series of strikes that began on June 20 and have now been extended into the first two Saturdays of July.

Mediation efforts would begin this week, Rodríguez Bonillo said.

A 24-hour strike on Thursday was observed by 80% of H&M Group's workforce in Spain, the unions said in a statement, leading to the closure of 100 stores.

European service workers union UNI Europa said the strikes reflected a "problematic change of attitude at H&M" toward more precarious, part-time contracts in larger stores that also receive online orders.

"This move by management in Spain is not an isolated example. Even in the company's home country of Sweden, workers are being pushed into the precarity of zero-hour contracts," said Oliver Roethig, regional secretary of UNI Europa.

H&M Group did not immediately respond to a request for comment. **MDT/AP**

AUTOMOBILE

THE US GOVERNMENT IS AWARDING \$1.7 BILLION TO BUY ELECTRIC AND LOW-EMISSION BUSES

JOSH BOAK, WASHINGTON

The U.S. Department of Transportation is awarding almost \$1.7 billion in grants for buying zero- and low-emission buses, with the money going to transit projects in 46 states and territories.

The grants will enable transit agencies and state and local governments to buy 1,700 U.S.-built buses, nearly half of which will have zero carbon emissions. Funding for the grants comes from the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure bill signed into law by President Joe Biden. The Democratic president has made it a priority to put more electric vehicles on the road — especially for schools and public transit — in an effort to contain the damage from climate change.

"Every day, millions of Americans climb aboard over 60,000 buses to get to work, to

school, doctor's appointments, everywhere they need to be," Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said in a call with reporters. "These are unprecedented levels of investment when it comes to putting modern cleaner buses on the road."

Monday's announcement covers the second round of grants for buses and supporting infrastructure. All told, the U.S. has invested a total of \$3.3 billion in the projects so far. Government officials expect to award roughly \$5 billion more over the next three years.

The Biden administration said that the new buses will improve public health as diesel exhaust will no longer be going into the air and that the new buses will be easier to maintain.

The government received 475 project proposals for the grants that totaled roughly \$8.7 billion, a sign of the demand for the funding. **MDT/AP**



CORPORATE BITS

Sands China delivers 1,500 emergency response kits to community



Sands China recently ran its 2023 Sands Cares Disaster Preparation & Emergency Response Kit Program in collaboration with Macau Red

Cross and with the support of the Social Affairs Bureau.

It is the fifth consecutive year that Sands China has worked with the Macau Red

Cross on this meaningful program, benefiting a total of 4,400 households in need to date.

This year's initiative consisted of packing and distributing the kits, a social media campaign, and parent-child workshops.

Sands China Ltd. president Wilfred Wong said: "The more the community is prepared for disasters and emergencies, the better we are able to protect ourselves and our loved ones during those difficult times."

Each kit contains a variety of items inside a multi-functional waterproof bag, including a first aid pack, disinfectant wipes, whistle, flashlight, raincoat, and KN95 face-masks among others.

MGM co-launches youth culinary program



MGM joined hands with Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) and Macau Cuisine Association to launch the new "MGM Youth Development Series: Youth Culinary Experiential Program and Culinary

Arts Community Outreach eLearning Program".

Under the theme of culinary art and Macau's legacy of "Creative City of Gastronomy", the program offers both online and offline experiential learning opportunities

for local youth, benefitting an estimated of over 1,000 local secondary school students annually.

In addition, MGM also hosted the "MGM Parent & Children Culinary Experience", where parents and children teamed up to learn the art of Macanese cooking.

Wong Ka Ki, deputy director of DSEDJ, said, "The MGM Youth Development Series provides a precious opportunity for culinary exchange and learning, which is conducive to the cultivation of applied technical talents. The bureau will continue to cope with the needs of social development for the nurturing of applied technology talents."

AP PHOTO



CHINA-US

Packages from China are surging into the United States. Some say \$800 duty-free limit was a mistake

KEVIN FREKING,
WASHINGTON

CONSERVATIVES anxious to counter America's leading economic adversary have set their sights on a top trade priority for labor unions and progressives: cracking down on the deluge of duty-free packages coming in from China.

The changing political dynamic could have major ramifications for e-commerce businesses and consumers importing products from China valued at less than \$800. It also could add to the growing tensions between the countries.

Under current U.S. law, most imports valued at less than \$800 enter duty-free into the United States as long as they are packaged and addressed to individual buyers. It's referred to as the de minimis rule. Efforts to lower the threshold amount or exclude certain countries altogether from duty-free treatment are set to become a major trade fight in this Congress.

"De minimis has become a proxy for all sorts of anxieties as it relates to China and other trade-related challenges," said John Drake, a vice president at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who argues that the current U.S. law should be preserved.

The rule speeds the pace of commerce and lowers costs for consumers. It also allows U.S. Customs and Border Protection to focus its resources on the bigger-ticket items that generate more tariff revenue for the federal government.

The volume of products coming into the U.S. that benefit from the de minimis rule has soared in recent years. Congress raised the U.S. government's threshold for expedited, duty-free treatment from \$200 to \$800 in 2016.

The volume of such imports has since risen from about 220 million packages that year to 771 million in 2021 — with China accounting for about 60%, according to the government — and 685 million last year.

"I think everybody's got to kind of wrap their head around what kind of mistake this was," Robert Lighthizer, the former U.S. trade representative during the Trump administration, told a House panel last month. "Nobody dreamt this would ever happen. Now we have packages coming in, 2 million packages a day, almost all from China. We have no idea what's in them. We don't really know what the value is."

Lighthizer urged Congress to get rid of the de minimis rule altogether, or take it to a much lower

amount, say \$50 or \$100. He said foreign companies are taking advantage of the "loophole" and "putting people out of work in stores, they're putting people out of work in manufacturing."

Last year, House Democrats pushed to prohibit Chinese-made goods from benefiting from the special treatment for lower-cost goods. That move was part of a larger measure that boosted investments in semiconductor manufacturing and research.

In the rush to get a bill passed before the 2022 elections, the Biden administration and Democratic leaders jettisoned provisions without bipartisan buy-in. The trade provision was opposed by important U.S. business groups and key Republican members of Congress, so it didn't make the final bill.

Fast forward just a few months and it's clear the political dynamic has shifted — and quickly.

In its first set of recommendations, a new House committee focused exclusively on China called for legislation that would reduce the threshold for duty-free shipments into the U.S. with a particular focus on "foreign adversaries, including the (People's Republic of China.)"

The Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party said that exploiting the \$800 threshold

may be a major avenue through which Chinese companies selling directly to American consumers can circumvent U.S. law designed to prevent the sale of goods made with forced labor. The committee also said Customs and Border Protection "could not reasonably scrutinize" goods sent under the \$800 threshold for forced labor concerns because of the sheer amount of products coming in.

The committee is most concerned about retailers Temu and Shein, which ship directly to consumers in the U.S. In a report released last week, it said the two companies alone are likely responsible for more than 30% of all de minimis shipments entering the U.S. each day, or nearly 600,000 a day last year.

The committee also has competitiveness concerns. It points out that U.S. retailers such as Gap and H&M paid \$700 million and \$205 million in import duties, respectively, in 2022. In contrast, virtually all of the goods sold by Temu and Shein are shipped using the de minimis exception in which the importer pays no duty.

Committees with jurisdiction over trade are also signaling a new mindset. Last year, the top Republican on the House Ways and Means Committee, Texas Rep. Kevin Brady, since retired, warned against what he called "hasty

changes in reasonable de minimis limits."

But the Republican now leading the House Ways and Means Committee, Rep. Jason Smith of Missouri, said he wants to "have a lot of conversations" about the \$800 threshold.

"Basically, when you're looking at \$800 or less, that's a free-trade agreement with anyone. And you're looking at millions of products that come in per day. We need to look at it," Smith said.

Meanwhile, the Senate has some bills on the issue, which were just introduced this month.

One, from Sens. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, and Marco Rubio, R-Fla., would prevent the expedited, tariff-free treatment of imports from certain countries, most notably China and Russia.

The other, from Sens. Bill Cassidy, R-La., and Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., not only similarly targets China and Russia, but would affect other trade partners. It would do so by reducing the threshold for duty-free treatment to the amount that other nations use.

For example, if another country, say Belgium, which uses the European Union threshold of 150 euros, or about \$165 currently, then the U.S. would reciprocate and use that same amount when determining whether goods coming in from Belgium get duty-free and expedited treatment.

Cassidy said it was former President Donald Trump who "really reframed the argument" for Republicans when it comes to trade with China.

"He pointed out that, through a variety of mechanisms, they are taking jobs, not because they are out-competing us, but because they are subsidizing, because they are using forced labor, that sort of thing," Cassidy said.

In early 2022, when Congress was considering putting the de minimis trade provision in the semiconductor bill, several business groups led by the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers wrote congressional leaders urging them to keep it out. They said the changes would "impose sweeping costs on American businesses, workers and consumers, add new inflationary pressures on the U.S. economy, and exacerbate ongoing supply chain disruptions at U.S. ports."

Drake said that cutting back the threshold not only would represent a big tax increase for many U.S. small businesses, but many would have to hire a customs broker to process their shipments.

"There's a reason Congress raised the level back in 2016," Drake said. "They knew in addition to it being a competitive advantage for the U.S. business community, they also recognized that collecting duties on these low-value shipments, you know, really wasn't worth the trouble." **MDT/AP**

Australia's High Court dismisses Russia's bid for injunction to halt its embassy's eviction

ROD MCGUIRK

AUSTRALIA'S highest court yesterday dismissed Russia's request for an injunction that would have halted the eviction of its embassy from a site in the capital, Canberra. A man who had been occupying the block in a portable cabin for more than a week in an apparent act of Russian defiance left soon after.

High Court Justice Jayne Jagot described Russia's challenge of a law terminating the lease as weak. "I do not perceive (Russia's) case ... to be a strong one. Indeed, it is difficult to identify a serious question to be tried," Jagot said.

Parliament passed emergency legislation on June 15 that terminated Russia's lease on the largely empty block on security grounds because the new embassy would have been too close to Parliament House.

Government lawyer Tim Begbie said Russia appeared to be applying for the injunction to protect its own security and intelligence interests.

"It's not just that they haven't made a compelling case for constitutional invalidity in this application, they've made absolutely no case for it," Begbie said.

Russia's lawyer, Elliot Hyde, had argued that Ambassador Alexey Pavlovsky would not have confidence in the integrity and security of a consular building already on the site if the embassy is not allowed to maintain possession until the challenge to the lease's termination is decided.

Hyde said a man who had been living on the site since at least last week was a security guard protecting the compound. The man had been described in the media as a Russian diplomat.

Prime Minister An-



thon Albanese said he welcomed the High Court's decision and expected the Russians to leave the site.

"The court has made clear that there is no legal basis for a Russian presence to continue on the site at this time, and we expect the Russian Federation to act in accordance with the court's ruling," Albanese told reporters.

"Australia supports the law. Russia has not been real good at upholding the law in recent times," Albanese added, referring to the invasion of Ukraine.

The security guard left the fenced compound after the decision and did not say anything to reporters as he walked out the gate. He was carrying bags and was collected by a car with diplomatic license plates.

The Russian Embassy did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Russia had accused Australia of "Russophobic hysteria" for canceling the lease of the site in Canberra's diplomatic quarter where Moscow wanted to build a new embassy. The current Russian Embassy is in the Canberra suburb of Griffith and its opera-

tions are unaffected.

Australian National University international law expert Don Rothwell said an examination of the published list of accredited Russian diplomats in Australia revealed there were only three male diplomats who could be the man guarding the embassy site.

Given Hyde's description of the squatter as a guard, Rothwell doubted the man had diplomatic immunity, which could have prevented Australian authorities from removing him from the site.

With him gone, police could avoid any further legal challenge by securing the site and preventing any Russian diplomat from taking his place, Rothwell said.

Australian Federal Police declined last week to explain why the man had not been removed from the contested site as a trespasser.

The legal wrangle over the site is a new low point in strained relations between Russia and one of Ukraine's most generous supporters outside NATO.

Albanese yesterday announced an additional 110 million Australian

dollars (\$74 million) in aid to Ukraine that includes 70 military vehicles and features 28 M113 tracked armored personnel carriers. The aid also includes ammunition and AU\$10 million (\$6.7 million) in humanitarian help for shelters, health services, clean water and sanitation.

The new aid package brings Australia's total Ukraine aid to AU\$790 million (\$528 million) since Russia invaded last year.

During the court hearing, Australia's lawyer suggested the Kremlin has been distracted from the case by the short-lived rebellion in Russia by Wagner Group mercenaries.

Tim Begbie said Hyde has not replied to a letter sent Saturday in which the government tried to head off the injunction request by offering not to damage the consular building or lease the site to anyone else while the Russian challenge is before the court.

"I don't criticize my learned friend for not having responded to this letter," said Begbie, referring to Hyde. "Russia has had other things on its mind over the weekend." MDT/AP

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

A Gastronomic Journey with the Master Chef: Nordic-Japanese Degustation Menu

THE Thai culinary scene has been seeing a wave of new generation chefs rising in recent years. One of the most sought-after rising stars, Chef Peter Kasamvilas, is debuting an exclusive degustation menu in Macau this July at MGM COTAI, featuring his signature specialties.



Being the youngest finalist in the renowned TV show MasterChef Thailand, Chef Peter Kasamvilas is known for his innovative Nordic-Japanese approach and advocacy for natural and healthy eating. His ingredient-focused culinary philosophy captures the essence of fresh, seasonal and sustainable produce from the origin with impeccable craftsmanship and refined simplicity. With the use of Koji, a fungus used for fermentation and various culinary purposes, which he calls it the "magic mold", raw ingredients are transformed into new forms with new flavors. It is like a secondary ingredient that elevates the natural taste, creating more sophisticated flavors from fresh produce.



The eight-course degustation menu features the master chef's signature creations, and the Giant Trevally is one of the highlights. Freshly caught in Phuket, the fish is prepared using a Japanese method called "ikejime" that preserves the flavors and texture, leaving the flesh with a delicate, firm texture and a clean taste. The Giant Trevally Tartare is paired with pickled apple, kombu cream and dill oil as a perfect starter. The gastronomic journey continues with a few exquisite specialties featuring prawn, cod, lamb, wagyu and more.

The menu is available for three days only, from July 7 to 9, with limited seats for lunch and dinner. Don't miss the chance to experience the contemporary cuisine concept of the master chef. Call (853) 8806 2308 or email to aji@mgm.mo to book now.

Belarus deal to take in leader of Russian rebellion puts him in an even more repressive nation

RUSSIAN mercenary boss Yevgeny Prigozhin was notorious for unbridled and profane challenges to authority even before the attempted rebellion that he mounted Saturday. The reported agreement for him to go into exile in Belarus would place him in a country where such behavior is even less acceptable than in his homeland.

Prigozhin on Sunday was uncharacteristically silent as his Wagner private army forces pulled back from Russian cities after a Kremlin announcement that he had agreed to depart for Belarus; it remains unclear whether he's actually there.

What will Prigozhin find in Belarus?

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko reportedly negotiated the deal, and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Saturday that Lukashenko "has been acquainted with Mr. Prigozhin for a long time, at least 20 years."

But Prigozhin's maverick ways are at odds with Lukashenko's harsh repression of dissent and independent media.

In power since 1994, the leader who is often called "Europe's last dictator" launched a brutal crackdown on 2020 protests against his rule. Hundreds were sentenced to lengthy prison terms, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski.



Yevgeny Prigozhin

Under Lukashenko, Belarus became almost umbilically tied to neighboring Russia, agreeing to form a still-in-progress "union state." Although Belarus' army is not known to have taken part in Russia's war on Ukraine, the country allows Russia to base troops there that have fought in Ukraine and made a deal this year for deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons. Lukashenko is a vehement ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Prigozhin's stance toward the Kremlin leader is murkier. Even as his fighters moved swiftly toward Moscow on Saturday, Prigozhin

did not criticize Putin directly and instead claimed his aim was to oust the Russian defense establishment, which he has denounced as corrupt and incompetent, complaining that it undermined his forces fighting in Ukraine.

What's next for Prigozhin?

"It is not yet clear what Lukashenko is going to do with Prigozhin. I think they don't have an understanding themselves," exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya told The Associated Press.

"Lukashenko once again has made Belarus a hostage to other people's games and

wars. He is by no means a peacemaker," Tsikhanouskaya said.

"Prigozhin leaving for Belarus does not mean that Prigozhin will stay there. There's nothing for him to do in Belarus — arrive, exhale, use the corridor and move on," said Artem Shraibman, a Belarusian political analyst now in exile in Poland.

What's next for Wagner?

The Belarus deal removes Prigozhin's control of Wagner, but it's unclear whether any of his fighters would follow him to Belarus, either out of a sense of loyalty or due to dismay with being absorbed into the Russian military as contract soldiers.

"These personnel could potentially sign contracts with the MoD on an individual basis, demobilize in Russia ... (or) travel to Belarus in some capacity," the Institute for the Study of War think tank said in its report on the failed rebellion.

If in Belarus, there would be concerns about whether they could get access to the Russian battlefield nuclear weapons. Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's security council, was worried about them gaining control of Russian weapons as the uprising roiled on Saturday.

"The world will be put on the brink of destruction" if Wagnerites obtain nuclear weapons, Medvedev warned. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

2000 IRA WEAPONS DUMP INSPECTED



International inspectors say they have seen a large number of IRA weapons "safely and adequately stored" in bunkers.

After the first inspection of its kind, former president of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, and former ANC general secretary, Cyril Ramaphosa, said they were satisfied the guns and explosives could not be used.

The two men met Prime Minister Tony Blair in Downing Street to update him on what they had seen.

After their meeting Mr Blair said the inspections represented "a very substantial further step along the road to a lasting peace".

He added that although there was still a long way to go in the political process, Northern Ireland "has never had a better prospect than it has today".

The IRA agreed in May to allow the two international inspectors to verify that some of their arms dumps were secure as part of the package of proposals to reinstate Northern Ireland devolution and the power-sharing executive.

The inspectors plan to re-inspect the arms dumps on a regular basis to ensure the weapons remain secure.

In a statement, the men said they believed the move was "a genuine effort by the IRA to advance the peace process."

It is believed three dumps were inspected.

But the main unionist party opposed to the Good Friday Agreement remains deeply sceptical about the arrangement.

Democratic Unionist assembly member Peter Robinson said the IRA's move was nothing of substance.

He said: "It's an attempt by the IRA to give the pretence that they are doing something."

Courtesy BBC News

MASSACRE OF 11 IN POOL HALL IN HONDURAS PROMPTS PRESIDENT TO IMPOSE SECURITY MEASURES

GUNMEN burst into a pool hall in northern Honduras and opened fire, killing 11 people and prompting President Xiomara Castro to announce security measures including curfews in the area amid a wave of drug trafficking-linked violence.

The attack occurred in the city of Choloma in Cortes province late Saturday night. It left 10 men and one woman dead.

The massacre followed the killing of three people Thursday in a bakery in the city of San Pedro Sula. Among the victims was Ericka Julissa Bandy García, wife of an alleged associate of former President Juan Orlando Hernández, who is imprisoned in the U.S. awaiting trial for drug trafficking-related charges.

In central Honduras, 46 inmates were killed Tuesday by Barrio 18 gang members

in a women's prison in Tamará, north of Tegucigalpa.

"SPS (San Pedro Sula) and Choloma: I have taken measures to give you security in the face of the brutal and ruthless terrorist attack you face by hired thugs trained and directed by the drug lords who operate with impunity in the Sula valley drug corridor," the president said on Sunday.

The security measures

announced by Castro include "raids, captures and checkpoints 24 hours a day," along with curfews for Choloma and San Pedro Sula. The curfew in Choloma will run from 9 p.m. until 4 a.m. The curfew in San Pedro Sula will begin on July 4.

National Police spokesman Edgardo Barahona confirmed the attack in the pool hall.

The brutal slaughter of the female prisoners led Castro to announce measures to take control of the prisons and stop the entry of weapons and drugs into the lockups. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

The successful inspection followed the IRA's offer, made in May 2000, to begin a process that would "completely and verifiably" put its arms beyond use.

Further inspections took place in October 2000 and May 2001, both verifying the weapons remained out of use.

In October 2001 the Independent International Decommissioning Commission confirmed that it had witnessed the IRA disposing of arms, and in April 2002 the IRA put a second tranche of its arsenal "beyond use".

But doubts remained and the issue of decommissioning was one of the major stumbling blocks in talks between all parties seeking to restore devolution after the Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended in October 2002.

Five years of direct rule ended in May 2007 when DUP leader Ian Paisley became first minister and Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness took office as his deputy for the return of devolution.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 You should make sure that your personal papers are in order. Be diplomatic but stem. Use your charm to get your own way. Help elders with their concerns.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Try to enlist the help of those you trust in order to fulfill the demands being made of you. Don't allow your personal problems to interfere with your professionalism.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Let your lover know what your personal intentions are. You are best to get out of the house today. Your emotional attitude with respect to your status and direction in society may be unrealistic.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Your bankbook will suffer and your restrictions will put a damper on your relationship. Don't be too eager to buy things for those who really don't deserve it.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Try not to get into disputes that will lead to estrangements. Your attitude could be up and down like a yo-yo. You will make new friends through physical activities.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 New interests are preoccupying your time. Romance can develop; however, it will most probably be short-lived. Your best efforts will come through hard work.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Underhandedness regarding legal matters or contracts must be counteracted. You may have a hidden adversary who would love to prove you wrong.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Opportunities to go out with clients or colleagues will be in your best interest. You may find that you can be the recipient of valuable information if you're willing to be a good listener.

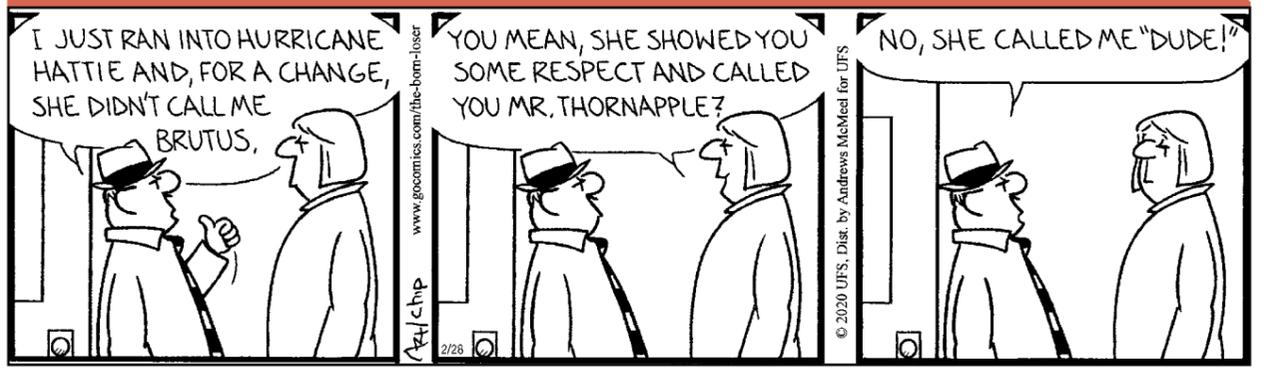
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Socializing will be more than just entertaining. Your partner may not understand your mood swings but if you are willing to communicate, a lot of grief can be avoided.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Secret activity is evident. A residential move may be necessary to get a better job. Don't rely on others to handle the workload. Overexertion and negligence will be your worst enemies.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 You will need a little competition today. Get involved in activities that will stretch your stamina. Travel opportunities must be taken advantage of.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Sign up for tours or courses that will enlighten you. You can surprise members of your family, which in turn will bring you a pat on the back.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	39	cloudy
Changchun	20	26	thunderstorms
Chengdu	24	34	thunderstorms
Chongqing	25	37	fine
Fuzhou	26	35	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	34	cloudy
Guiyang	20	29	cloudy
Haikou	26	33	cloudy
Hangzhou	23	33	rain
Harbin	24	28	thunderstorms
Hefei	21	33	fine
Nanjing	23	32	thunderstorms
Shanghai	25	31	rain
Taipei	24	30	cloudy
Wuhan	24	34	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	31	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	14	23	cloudy
Frankfurt	13	16	cloudy
Paris	15	26	cloudy
London	17	23	cloudy
New York	20	25	thunderstorms

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Coal-rich region; 5- Israeli submachine gun; 8- Derrick; 12- Luminous; 14- Bric-a-brac; 15- Hungary's Nagy; 16- Old French expression meaning "goodbye"; 17- Ready to eat; 18- Spare; 19- Cure-alls; 21- Perfumes; 23- Caesar of comedy; 24- Zeta follower; 25- Large body of water; 26- Falls-jumping fish; 30- Chew the scenery; 32- Unsoiled; 33- Oppressively; 37- Banned apple spray; 38- Render weaponless; 39- Grazing sites; 40- Tact; 42- European capital; 43- Regular course; 44- Device for holding up a stocking; 45- IV units; 48- Flub; 49- Large bowl-shaped pan; 50- Child's toy; 52- Revolted; 57- Black-and-white cookie; 58- Sci-fi princess; 60- Steal, ransack; 61- National symbol; 62- Lecherous look; 63- Approvals; 64- List heading; 65- Tie-score word; 66- Polo of "Meet the Parents";

DOWN 1- Hit with an open hand; 2- Opera set in Egypt; 3- Not "fer"; 4- Ostrichlike bird; 5- "Trinity" author; 6- Microwave; 7- Freezing rain squall; 8- Ill humor; 9- Portents; 10- Emulate Cicero; 11- Brainy bunch; 13- City in S Arizona; 14- Small fastener; 20- Ich bin ___ Berliner; 22- Roman censor; 24- Very hard mineral; 26- Great quantity; 27- ___ want for Christmas...; 28- Jump; 29- Danny's daughter; 30- Make into a statute; 31- Swiss mathematician; 33- Broadcasting; 34- Spanish muralist; 35- Alley; 36- Belgian river; 38- Portable weather protection; 41- Hurler Hershiser; 42- Croissant emporium, e.g.; 44- Lump; 45- Lara of "Tomb Raider"; 46- Monte ___; 47- Lieu; 49- Put on; 51- Fast-food option; 52- Monetary unit of Cambodia; 53- Internet writing system that popularized "pwn3d" and "n00b"; 54- Emit coherent light; 55- At all; 56- He played Ricky; 59- It's a moray;

Yesterday's solution

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PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300	
IAM 28 387 333	
Tourism 28 333 000	
Airport 59 888 88	

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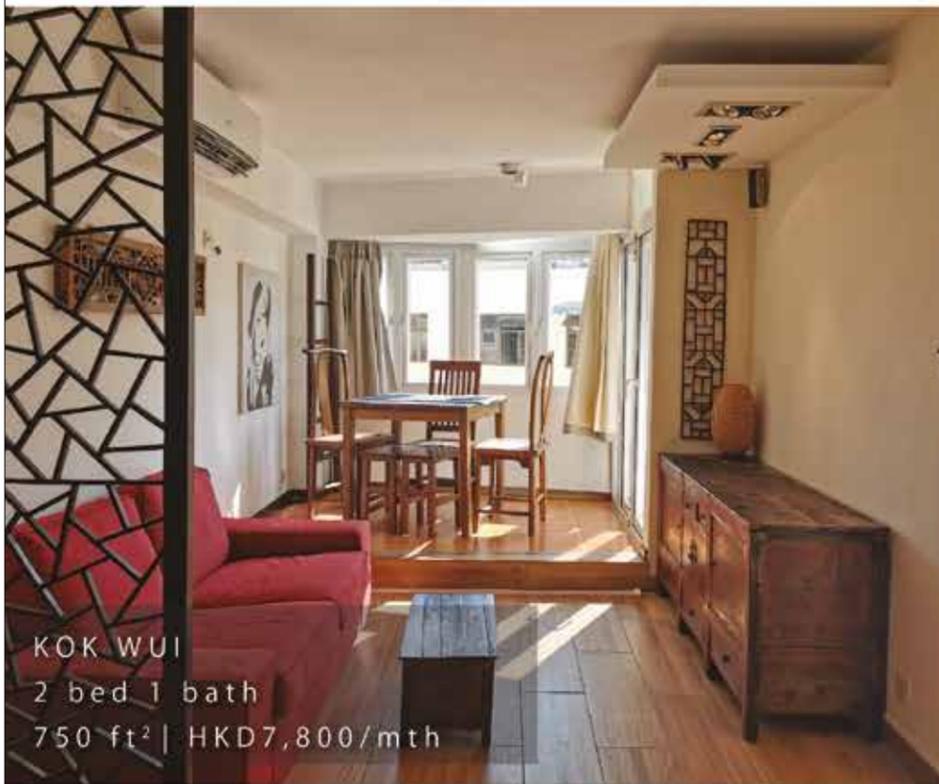
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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

FOOTBALL

FIFA says Saudi city Jeddah will stage next Club World Cup



Real Madrid's Karim Benzema holds up the FIFA Club World Cup trophy prior to a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Elche CF at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, Spain, Feb. 15, 2023

THE 2023 Club World Cup will be played in Jeddah, the home city of Saudi Arabian champion Al-Ittihad that has signed Karim Benzema, FIFA said yesterday.

Al-Ittihad will be joined by the six continental club champions — including Champions League winner Manchester City — for the Dec. 12-22 tournament. It will be the last edition in that format before the 32-team version launches in 2025 in the United States.

FIFA said the 2023 tournament will be played in the King Abdullah Sport City Stadium and Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Stadium. They hold about 62,000 and 27,000 spectators, respectively.

Benzema will be trying to retain the trophy he helped Real Madrid win in February, beating Saudi club Al-Hilal in the final hosted by Morocco.

Al-Ittihad will open the next tournament in a first-round game against Auckland City, the Oceania champion. The winner advances to the second round, joining León of Mexico, Al-Ahly of Egypt and Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan.

Man City and the South American champion enter at the semifinal stage. The Copa Libertadores final is played on Nov. 4.

Each continental champion from 2021 through 2024, except in Oceania, also qualifies directly for the expanded tournament in 2025.

FIFA picked Saudi Arabia in February to host the 2023 Club World Cup, giving the kingdom its latest international soccer event in an aggressive push to make a bigger impact in world sports.

Saudi Arabia also will host the 2027 Asian Cup and is expected to be a strong contender bidding to host the men's 2034 World Cup. **MDT/AP**

HOLLYWOOD STAR RYAN REYNOLDS AMONG NEW INVESTORS BACKING F1 TEAM ALPINE IN \$218 MILLION DEAL

AFTER soccer, Hollywood stars Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney are setting their sights on Formula One.

F1 team Alpine has secured a 200 million euro (\$218 million) investment from a group of investors that includes the actors.

French automotive company Renault Group — Alpine's parent company — said Monday that the group has acquired a 24% stake in the team. It includes Otro Capital, RedBird Capital Partners and Maximum Effort Investments, which is led by Reynolds.

"The transaction values

Alpine Racing Ltd. around \$900 million following this investment," the team said in a statement. "It will accelerate Alpine's growth plans and sporting ambitions in F1."

Other investors include actor Michael B. Jordan.

Reynolds and McElhenney completed a \$2.5 million takeover of Welsh soccer team Wrexham in November 2020. The club was thrust into the global spotlight because of its A-list owners and secured promotion to the fourth tier of English soccer this season.

MDT/AP



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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

INCIDENT IN MOSCOW SHOULD SPUR EFFORTS TO ACCELERATE THE UKRAINE PEACE PROCESS

The world has had attentive eyes on Moscow, as Wagner Group mercenaries advanced on the Russian capital before their leader Yevgeny Prigozhin ordered them to turn back to “avoid bloodshed”.

Having seemingly ended as abruptly as it started, there has been little time to take stock of the situation. Nonetheless, the incident should serve to accelerate efforts to secure a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis, which has been a contributory cause of the dramatic event.

If the United States-led pro-Ukraine camp regards the incident in Moscow as a sign that it should intensify its military support to Kyiv in a bid to bring the Russian regime to its knees, it will only worsen the situation.

Since the one-year anniversary of the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February, various members of the international community, including China, Brazil, Indonesia, India and a group of African countries, have all made proposals aimed at promoting talks to secure a political settlement.

However, for some time, these voices for peace and related pro-peace efforts have been muffled and compromised by war-mongering cries that there can only be a final victory for Ukraine, if not the US. The incident in Russia should not embolden those making those cries to act rashly in pursuit of that aim.

Instead it should spur countries to further strengthen their coordination and cooperation to advance the peace agenda to prevent either side of the conflict from throwing the helve after the hatchet.

If the conflict is allowed to escalate in a dangerous direction, it could lead to the nightmare scenario of nuclear war.

It is to be hoped that both parties to the conflict can remain calm and exercise restraint. Other parties should refrain from escalating tensions. In particular, everything should be done to avert any possibility of nuclear weapons being used.

Now is the time for all peace-loving countries in the world to rally to the cause of persuading the two belligerents to sit down and talk.

The key to prevent the Ukraine crisis from happening again is to form a lasting, effective and balanced security mechanism in Europe rather than force either of the two belligerents off the map.

No country is in a position to savor the experience of schadenfreude while witnessing the Moscow drama as if it is safely watching a deadly fire from across a river.

China is willing to work with all parties in pursuit of a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis, and it will do all it can to facilitate the process of diplomatic negotiations, and create and accumulate the conditions for the final settlement of the crisis.

AMSTERDAM'S HERMITAGE MUSEUM IS RENAMED AFTER CUTTING TIES WITH RUSSIA

THE BUZZ

An Amsterdam museum that severed ties with St. Petersburg's Hermitage collection after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last year has been renamed and on Monday announced partnerships with renowned galleries in London, Paris and Washington, D.C.

Starting in September, the Hermitage Amsterdam will be called H'ART Museum. It has established partnerships with the British Museum, Centre Pompidou and the Smithsonian American Art Museum to bring art to the historic building on the banks of the Dutch capital's Amstel River.

“It's an exciting new step for us, a contemporary and future-proof model,” museum director Annabelle Birnie said in a statement.

She said the museum's program will be “multi-voiced reflecting the times we live in” and will range from major art exhibitions to smaller presentations.

The first major show — scheduled to open midway through 2024 — will be a partnership with Paris' Centre Pompidou focused on Wassily Kandinsky, the Russian-born artist who became a French citizen and died in France in 1944.

AP PHOTO



AP PHOTO



Ukraine The armed rebellion against the Russian military may have been over in less than 24 hours, but the disarray within the enemy's ranks was an unexpected gift and timely morale booster for Ukrainian troops. The spectacle of Yevgeny Prigozhin's mutiny in the critical military command and control hub in the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don, and later Russia's scramble to fortify Moscow as troops marched to upend the country's military leadership was greeted “with applause” by commanders of Ukraine's Eastern Group of Forces, said its spokesperson, Serhii Cherevaty.

MYANMAR

\$446 MILLION WORTH OF SEIZED DRUGS BURNED AS ILLICIT TRADE BOOMS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

THE authorities in Myanmar destroyed more than \$446 million worth of illegal drugs seized from around the country to mark an annual international anti-drug trafficking day yesterday, police said.

The drug burn came as U.N. experts warned of increases in the production of opium, heroin and methamphetamine in Myanmar, with exports threatening to expand markets in South and Southeast Asia.

Myanmar has a long history of drug production linked to political and economic insecurity caused by decades of armed conflict. The country is a major producer and exporter of methamphetamine and the world's second-largest opium and heroin producer after Afghanistan, despite repeated attempts to promote alternative legal crops among poor farmers.

In the country's largest city, Yangon, a pile of seized drugs and precursor chemicals worth \$207 million was incinerated. The destroyed drugs included opium, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, kratom, ketamine and

crystal meth, also known as ice.

The burn coincided with the UN's International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

Authorities also destroyed drugs in the central city of Mandalay and in Taunggyi, the capital of eastern Shan state, both closer to the main drug production and distribution areas.

Last year, authorities burned a total of more than \$642 million worth of seized drugs.

Experts have warned that violent political unrest in Myanmar following the military takeover two years ago — which is now akin to a civil war between the military government and its pro-democracy opponents — has caused an increase in drug production.

The production of opium in Myanmar has flourished since the military's seizure of power, with the cultivation of poppies up by a third in the past year as eradication efforts have dropped off and the faltering economy has pushed more people toward the drug trade, according to a report by the U.N. Office on Drugs and

Crime earlier this year.

Estimates of opium production were 400 metric tons (440 tons) in 2020, rising slightly in 2021, and then spiking in 2022 to an estimated 790 metric tons (870 tons), according to the report.

The U.N. agency has also warned of a huge increase in recent years in the production of methamphetamine, driving down prices and reaching markets through new smuggling routes.

The military government says some ethnic armed organizations that control large swaths of remote territory produce illicit drugs to fund their insurgencies and do not cooperate in the country's peace process as they do not wish to relinquish the benefits they gain from the drug trade. Historically, some rebel ethnic groups have also used drug profits to fund their struggle for greater autonomy from the central government.

Most of the opium and heroin exported by Myanmar, along with methamphetamine, goes to other countries in Southeast Asia and China. **MDT/AP**

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UK Prince William is launching a five-year project to end long-term homelessness, saying he wants to make sure that instances of people being left without a roof over their heads are “rare, brief and unrepeatable.” The heir to the throne will announce details of the program over the next two days as he visits six pilot projects around the country that have received grants of up to 500,000 pounds each from the Royal Foundation, the charity that supports the work of William and his wife.

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Nigeria A new oil spill at a Shell facility in Nigeria has contaminated farmland and a river, upending livelihoods in the fishing and farming communities in part of the Niger Delta, which has long endured environmental pollution caused by the oil industry. The National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, or NOSDRA, told The Associated Press that the spill came from the Trans-Niger Pipeline operated by Shell that crosses through communities in the Eleme area of Ogoniland, a region where the London-based energy giant has faced decadeslong local pushback to its oil exploration.