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THE JUDICIARY POLICE ARRESTED FOUR PEOPLE LINKED WITH CROSS-BORDER HUMAN SMUGGLING FROM THE MAINLAND INTO MACAU

CAMBRIDGE TO OFFER LIU SCHOLARSHIPS TO SPONSOR MUST GRADUATES

ANALYSIS: A YEAR OF FIGHTING BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS JUST ESCALATED. IS THIS AN UPRISING?

AP PHOTO



Hong Kong police yesterday arrested four men they accused of providing financial support to people who fled overseas and are involved in activities endangering national security. Police said the four are suspected of using companies, social media and mobile applications to receive funds that they then provided to the people overseas. A police statement did not identify the four suspects or the people they allegedly supported.

AP PHOTO



Malaysia Less than a year after taking office, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (pictured) faces a critical first test in state elections next month that pits his government against a powerful Islamic opposition. Election Commission chief Abdul Ghani Salleh said Wednesday that over 9.7 million voters will head to the ballot box on Aug. 12 to elect 245 assembly members for six states.

AP PHOTO



UN secretary general is hoping that the Security Council will vote later this month to keep a key border crossing from Turkey to Syria's rebel-held northwest open for critical aid deliveries for a period of one year instead of six months, a U.N. official said. Syria's northwestern province of Idlib is home to some 4 million people, many of whom were earlier displaced during the 12-year civil war, which has killed nearly half a million people. Hundreds of thousands live in tent settlements and rely on aid that comes through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing.

ART PAVILION

Art Macao will stage 30 exhibitions, presenting modern and contemporary masterpieces by over 200 artists



MICE SECTOR TO BLOOM IN H2

INFLUENCER PHOTOS 93 TICKETS ISSUED TO JAYWALKERS

PJ RECEIVES MORE FRAUD CASES AMOUNTING TO OVER HKD1.2M

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has received two more fraud cases from the Public Security Police, in which a Macau woman in her 30s reported a loss of HKD1.2 million. According to the PJ, the woman allegedly received a call from a Mandarin-speaking man in March, when he claimed that her mobile phone had sent false messages related to the pandemic and asked her to provide personal information including bank accounts. Between March and May, she transferred a total of HKD1.2 million. In another case, the alleged victim was a Macau man in his 20s who received a call during which the caller claimed to be from a government department in the mainland, alleging that criminal messages were coming from his mobile phone. After the alleged victim provided information to the other party, he found that his bank account had lost HKD56,000.

NO PUBLIC CAR PARKS AT NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has disclosed that there will be no public car parks in the New Central Library as the basement will be used as a "mechanics and storage room." Authorities are currently reviewing the basic plan of the new library for which there is no definite costing at present, and they are trying to invite bids to award the project next year, according to a report by TDM. The government is aiming to deliver the anticipated New Central Library in 2025. The new integrated reading facility will be situated in the building of the former Hotel Estoril, just across Tap Seac Square from the current Central Library and the IC Headquarters.

RESIDENT DEPOSITS RECORD SLIGHT DECREASE

Resident bank deposits decreased 1.3% from the preceding month to MOP692.9 billion while non-resident deposits dropped 4.7% to MOP277.7 billion, according to data from Monetary Authority of Macao. Public sector deposits with the banking sector increased 0.3% to MOP220.3 billion. As a result, total deposits in the banking sector fell 1.8% from a month earlier to MOP1,190.9 billion. Domestic loans to the private sector decreased 1.2% from a month ago to MOP557.6 billion whereas external loans rose 0.1% to MOP650.2 billion.

MPU CALLS FOR PAPERS FOR EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) and the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) will co-organize a conference at MPU from Dec. 11 to 13. "The 15th Higher Education International Conference - Artificial Intelligence and Pedagogical Transformation: Implications for Higher Education Quality Assurance" aims to bring together researchers and practitioners from both artificial intelligence (AI) and teaching and learning quality assurance (QA) to explore the latest developments, challenges and opportunities in the field. The call for papers for the conference is open until Oct. 14.

IPIIM PRESIDENT SAYS THE MICE SECTOR WILL BLOOM IN H2

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIIM) president, Vincent U, has said that the local MICE sector is going to bloom in the second half (2H) of this year, with many events to take place in the second part of the year.

U's unveiling came in the context of the first plenary meeting of the year from the Commission for the Development of Conventions and Exhibitions (CDCE) for which he is also the Secretary-General.

According to the official, during the first quarter of 2023 there were 208 MICE events in Macau, with nearly 200,000 participants, with the 2H of the year being considered the peak season for conventions and exhibitions. U said that he is confident that Macau will reach the end of the year with over 1,000 MICE events held this year.

He also announced that in the bid to diversify the economy, the gaming concessionaires will gradually start developing projects including leisure, culture and sports, as well as



ANTHONY LAM

MICE events, which represent a total investment of over 100 billion patacas.

At the same meeting presided over by the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, he noted that he was pleased by the results so far of the MICE industry which has

been "continuously recovering since the beginning of this year."

Lei also noted that in the first half of the year, several international-level exhibitions were held in Macau which "brought business tourists with higher spending power

to Macau, benefiting the small and medium-sized enterprises in various fields."

For the first time, the CDCE meeting also counted representatives from the Economic Development Bureau of the Hengqin cooperation zone, who participated in the meeting to introduce the first 3-year-plan (2023-2025) for the development of the MICE industry in Hengqin, as well as the planned measures to support the development of this industry in the cooperation zone.

Just last month, the bureau announced that the summer holiday will see 35 MICE events being held in or followed up by Macau.

The aforementioned 35 events - which will include some professional meetings with over 1,000 participants - are expected to draw over 240,000 cumulative participants.

The IPIIM has former emphasized the confidence in more events in the rest of the year, reaching the target of having 1,000 MICE events in this year.

EDUCATION

Cambridge to offer Liu Scholarships to sponsor MUST graduates

AN agreement has been signed between the University of Cambridge and the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) on a scholarship for which MUST graduates can apply.

The scholarship is named after the chancellor of the MUST, Dr Liu Chak Wan. MUST graduates who pursue master's degrees in the British university for the academic year 2024/2025 will be eligible to apply for the scholarship, which will

cover the cost of the recipient's course fees and living expenses at Queens' College.

Founded in 1448, the college is among Cambridge's 31 constituent colleges.

Liu plans to offer more opportunities to MUST students to undertake further studies. He is eager to witness how they could use their multi-faceted intellectual approaches to propose new measures to promote Macau's economic development and to nurture exceptional talents for the country.

The President of Queens' College, Dr. Mohamed A. El-Erian, remarked that he was thrilled that the college is partnering again with MUST to offer the Dr. Liu Chak Wan Scholarship for exceptional students wishing to pursue postgraduate studies at the University. He looks forward to welcoming the three first masters students from MUST joining the intellectual community in October 2024.



The President of MUST, Chair Professor Joseph Hun-wei Lee, said that he felt very honored to enter into this pioneering collaboration with the University of Cambridge. AL

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MACAO INTERNATIONAL BIENNALE

Art Macao to return with 30 exhibitions

ANTHONY LAM

BI-ANNUAL Art Macao is set to return from July to October with a line-up of 30 exhibitions across the city, president Leong Wai Man of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) told a press conference yesterday.

Art Macao – Macao International Biennale is seeing its third edition this year. The idea of organizing a major artistic gala has developed to “raise to a new level the cultural and artistic atmosphere of Macao as a famous World Heritage city,” according to the IC.

The 30 art exhibitions will showcase modern and contemporary masterpieces by over 200 artists from more than 20 countries and regions, “to develop a large-scale aesthetic exploration in science and religion through the profound humanistic perspective,” the IC president said.

Themed The Statistics of Fortune, this year's event has Chinese artist Qiu Zhijie, vice president of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in China, as the returning chief curator. He believes that scientific research has been inseparable from religious activities since ancient times.

There are a lot of mysterious elements entangled in the history of science, while they often appear in the form of empirical evidence from religious activities. Therefore, this edition of the event will put special emphasis on the artworks that explore religious traditions from a new perspective and that delve into the history of science from profound



Mirror 6# by sculptor Fu Zhongwang



Mass, 2020 by June Balthazard and Pierre Pauze

cultural perspectives.

The main exhibition will be held from July 28 at the exhibition halls on the first three floors of the Macao Museum of Art, exploring the correlation between science and religion and featuring 118 pieces (sets) of contemporary artworks. In addition, Qiu Zhijie will host three thematic talks related to the main exhibition, introducing the thoughts behind the curation process and updates on the international art scene.

Six public artworks by artists from various countries will be presented successively in various cultural attractions and districts in the city, while four city pavilions will showcase works from four different cities: Kyoto, Shenzhen, London and Vila Nova de

Cerveira.

Six local artists, namely Konstantin Bessmertny, Ung Vai Meng, Lampo Leong, Chan Hin Io, Bunny Lai Suet Weng and Eric Fok Hoi Seng, have been invited to produce new creations for this event.

An exhibition comprising works from eight higher education institutions from Macau and the mainland will be held at the University of Macau.

All the six resort operators will have their input into this year's event too. Galaxy Entertainment

Group will showcase BE@RBRI-CK designed by a dozen of international and local artists and designers led by renowned Japanese artist Tatsuhiko “Ryu” Akashi.

Melco Resorts & Entertainment Limited will present the Macau debut exhibition of famous artist Mr. Doodle. The artist will host an improvisation session in September in Macau.

MGM will showcase masterpieces by the great abstract artist of the post-war period, Hsiao Chin, exploring the relationship between humanity and the universe through a multi-layered multimedia experience.

Sands China Limited has

“Meet the Magic - In Celebration of D100 by Jason Naylor & Philip Colbert”, presenting large-scale Mickey Mouse artworks created for the first time by Jason Naylor and Philip Colbert.

SJM Resorts, S.A will take Chateau des Versailles to its Grand Lisboa Palace Resort using mapping and visual technology, encapsulating the multi-century legacy of the palatial structure.

Wynn Macau Limited will stage immersive experiences in “The Contour of Light: A Re-encounter with Leonardo da Vinci” through a rich variety of videos, music and sounds to highlight the uniqueness of Leonardo and his works.

93 tickets issued to Rua Nova à Guia jaywalkers in H1

ANTHONY LAM

IN the first half of this year, 93 fines were issued to jaywalkers and influencer-style photographers on Rua Nova à Guia, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) confirmed in reply to the Times.

Over 90% of these tickets have been paid, the police further disclosed.

In addition, the police disclosed that inspections have escalated as influencer pictures taken on the street became viral after resumption of normal travel, while fines were issued

pursuant to law.

They specifically mentioned that some pictures depicted people standing in the center of the vehicle lane or atop safety fences. The police emphasized that these postures will not only raise safety concerns for the people themselves, but also for other road users.

Following the resumption of normal travel, tourists have flocked to Rua Nova à Guia to take influencer-style pictures. The reason is that the road is geographically a visual corridor towards the Grand Lis-

boa hotel.

These photographers standing in the center of the vehicle lane, ignoring oncoming vehicles which sometimes even honk at them, have created great frustration for drivers and even pedestrians, who have complained on various social media platforms.

At the same time, lawmakers have also called for law-enforcement authorities to monitor the situation because it could potentially cause safety issues.

Last week, the Times reported that a jaywalker who took influencer

photos on the street had complained on Chinese social media networks about Macau government's lack of warning signs at the location.

“It's ridiculous!” the jaywalker wrote in a post on the Chinese social media, after claiming they were being told by a police officer that “adults should be held accountable for what they have done.”

In addition, the jaywalker demanded the government install signs at the location to remind people that abuse of vehicle lanes is discouraged.



PHASE 2 STALL APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR LAI CHI VUN MARKET

Phase 2 applications for stalls at the Lai Chi Vun Shipyards – Plots X11-X15 is now open until July 12. There will be 15 stalls set up in the shipyards, displaying and selling souvenirs with cultural characteristics of Coloane, original products and special snacks. The market aims to "create cultural and artistic vibe of the shipyards and enrich the exploration experiences of residents and tourists through different themes and activities of the market," according to a statement issued by the IC.

GLOBAL DIGITAL ECONOMY CONFERENCE HELD IN BEIJING

The Global Digital Economy Conference 2023 opened in Beijing on Tuesday night, proposing to build an open innovation network for the digital economy across the world. The three-day event is themed "Data Drives Development, Intelligence Leads the Future." Beijing and 18 partner cities, including Abu Dhabi, London, Macau, San Francisco, Vienna, Vientiane, and Zaragoza, released the global digital economy partnership city cooperation initiative at the opening ceremony. The initiative covers aspects such as accelerating the digital transformation process of cities, green development through digital empowerment, and supporting global digital inclusive cooperation.

CRIME

PJ ARREST FOUR ALLEGEDLY LINKED WITH CROSS-BORDER SMUGGLING

RENATO MARQUES

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) announced yesterday morning that they have arrested four people linked with cross-border human smuggling from the mainland into Macau, a PJ spokesperson said at the special press conference organized by the force.

According to the PJ, the case was reliant on the collaboration of the Guangdong Province police authorities who jointly investigated the group, leading to the detention of four people in an operation carried out Tuesday.

Among the four men arrested (aged between 31 and 66 years old) is one resident of Macau. In the operation, the police also caught one illegal immigrant.

The police explained that the group that was operating for an unknown period was using fishing boats and vehicles (on the Macau side of the border) to assist illegal immigrants to enter Macau without



passing through the border. It was also said that these people had the intention of gambling in the local casinos but it was not explained why they could not enter by legal means.

Using fishing boats, the immigrants arrived in Macau, disembarking at the Inner Harbour area in the surround-

ings of pier number 6. After that, a 7-seater car driven by the local resident would pick them up and drive them to Cotai where they were lodged in hotels.

The PJ said that during the operation three men from the group including the boatman, the driver, and another member of the group escorting the

illegal person were caught, while a fourth man was detained later in Cotai.

The PJ said the last man was responsible for registering the hotel room where the illegals would stay.

It is believed the group would charge about RMB60,000 per trip to assist the illegals to enter Macau.

DSI

110,000 already used e-ID for the border, 2,500 for public services

RENATO MARQUES

OVER 110,000 people have already used their Macao One Account electronic identification (e-ID) accounts to cross the borders of Macau, the director of the Identification Services Bureau (DSI), Chao Wai Ieng, said in an interview with TDM Radio.

Chao noted that the service, available for less than one week, which dispenses with the use of the Macau Identification Cards in their physical form for a QR code generated on the Macao One Account mobile application, have been widely used over the first few days of operation of the system.

The same official also noted that approximately another 2,500 people have made use of the same digital system to apply for



services at the different government public services in just three days (Monday, July 3 to Wednesday, July 5).

Chao also said that the creation of the e-ID service and its convenience, namely for border crossings, has also led to an increase in the number of new people registering in the Macao One Account platform, which, since the measures

were announced last June 30, has been receiving more new registrations.

Questioned on any reported difficulties by senior citizens on the use and adherence to the e-ID, Chao said that the number of users of the Macao One Account 65 years old or older is over 87,000, which represents more than 80% of all residents of this age group.

TRADE

20 YEARS ON, CEPA BEARS FRUIT FOR HK, MACAU AND MAINLAND

HONG Kong and Macau have been on a path of complementary and shared development with the mainland since the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangements (CEPAs) were signed 20 years ago, an official with the Ministry of Commerce said recently.

Trade liberalization has been fully realized in trade in goods and basically achieved in service trade between Hong Kong, Macau and the mainland, the official said, adding that a system of diverse institutions has also been built for the protection of investments.

CEPAs have boosted economic and trade cooperation, with better flow of goods and capital seen between Hong Kong, Macau and the mainland, according to the official.

From 2004 to 2022, the mainland's trade volume with Hong Kong and



Macau increased from 114.51 billion U.S. dollars to 309.74 billion dollars, an increase of 1.7 times, according to the General Administration of Customs.

Hong Kong and Macau continued to be the mainland's biggest source and destination for inbound and outbound investment, respectively.

The CEPAs have also facilitated the high-level opening-up of the mainland, bringing the interna-

tional business models of service providers in Hong Kong and Macau to the mainland. They have also enhanced the real economy, service sector and business environment of Hong Kong and Macau, the official said.

The Chinese mainland and Hong Kong signed the CEPA on June 29, 2003, followed by the CEPA between the mainland and Macau signed later that year on October 17. XINHUA

CLIMATE

UAE announces plans to invest \$54B in energy and triple renewable sources

THE United Arab Emirates plans to triple its supply of renewable energy and invest up to \$54 billion over the next seven years to meet its growing energy demands.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the UAE's vice president and ruler of Dubai, announced the plans on Monday following a Cabinet meeting. They also include investments in low-emission hydrogen fuel and developing infrastructure for electric vehicles.

He said the updated national energy strategy "aims to triple the contribution of renewable energy over the next seven years and invest 150 billion to 200 billion dirhams (\$40 billion to \$54 billion) during the same period to meet the country's growing demand for energy."

The major oil-producing nation has pledged to be carbon-neutral by 2050, without fully explaining how, and is hosting the COP28 climate summit later this year.

The latest announcement included the formation of an Investment Ministry to be led by Mohamed Hassan Alsuwaidi. He currently serves as the deputy chairman of Masdar, a clean energy firm that has committed tens of billions of dollars to worldwide projects.

Sultan al-Jaber, the chairman of Masdar and CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Co – a state-owned firm producing millions of barrels of crude oil daily – was appointed as president of the upcoming cli-



Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai, center

mate summit, which will be held in Dubai.

His appointment drew criticism from environmentalists, who fear the UAE will resist efforts to reduce fossil fuel sales. Organizers of the summit say they are hoping for big results but that oil producers must have a seat at the table.

The UAE's oil wealth powered its transformation into a major hub for business and tourism, known for the futuristic cities of Dubai

and Abu Dhabi. The country requires vast amounts of energy to power the desalination plants that irrigate its desert golf courses, air conditioners that cool its sprawling malls, and heavy industries such as aluminum smelters.

The UAE has a nuclear power plant, as well as a large solar park in Dubai that met 15% of the city's needs last year, leaving it mostly reliant on natural gas imported from Qatar. **MDT/AP**



UK

MORTGAGE RATES SPIKE TO HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE TRUSS TAX PLAN SPOOKED MARKETS

PAN PYLAS

HOMEOWNERS and renters in the U.K. faced further grim news yesterday (Macau time) as mortgage rates hit levels not seen since unfunded tax cuts announced by the government last fall spooked investors.

With the Bank of England raising interest rates to a 15-year high of 5% to battle high inflation, it's natural for lenders to increase the cost of borrowing to consumers and businesses. But inflation is proving more stubborn than expected, and the bank is expected to keep hiking rates, potentially to 6%, a level not seen since 2001.

That prospect is having a knock-on effect in the cost of mortgages. According to financial information company Moneyfacts, the average rate for a five-year fixed rate mortgage in the U.K. hit 6.01% yesterday from 5.97% the pre-

vious day.

That's the highest since the aftermath of last fall's tax plan from Liz Truss' short-lived government, which caused investors to lose faith in the state of Britain's public finances.

The worry is that mortgage rates could surpass those levels if the central bank keeps hiking, creating another pain point amid a cost-of-living crisis that has fueled strikes by workers seeking higher pay.

"It gives me no pleasure to say that we could realistically see some fixed rates reach 7% before the summer is out," said Paul Welch, CEO at London-based mortgage broker LargeMortgageLoans.com.

Rishi Sunak, Truss' replacement as prime minister, made halving consumer price inflation in 2023 to around 5% his central pledge. However, with inflation running at 8.7% in the year to May, there are real doubts as to whether that ambition will be achieved. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Raffles at Galaxy Macau to soft open Aug. 16



Raffles at Galaxy Macau is set to hold its soft opening to the public on Aug. 16. A grand opening, cele-

brating the addition of the remaining signature restaurants, bar and a spa, is expected towards the end

of the year.

Looking ahead to the opening later this year, Chef and Sushi Master Masaaki Miyakawa, one of the only 5 Three-Star Michelin Sushi Chefs in Japan, will helm a new signature Sushi-Kappo concept, and is also developing a Teppan restaurant for Raffles at Galaxy Macau.

The brand's historic Long Bar is set to take on the 108-year-old heritage gin bar, and is being designed by the luminary Joyce Wang, with a cocktail curation, including an official Macau Sling, to be created by a collaboration with noted 50 Best Bars legend, Antonio Lai.

Visa partners with HK Tram, New World Development in rewards program



Visa has joined with Hong Kong Tramways to provide special discounts on fares paid with the brand's payment cards.

From July 6 to Dec. 31 this year, passengers who tap to

pay for their tram fare with Visa contactless using credit, debit and prepaid cards, or via their mobile wallet provisioned with a Visa card, may enjoy a discount of HKD1 for every single ride

priced at HKD3. Visa said it is a strategy to conserve the special mode of transport.

Meanwhile, the payment card brand has also announced a strategic partnership with Hong Kong's New World Development (NWD), to launch the K Dollar Visa rewards program. Shoppers at NWD's malls, including K11 MUSEA, K11 Art Mall and the imminent 11 SKIES, will be rewarded when paying with Visa.

When 11 SKIES, the 3.8-million-square-foot complex adjacent to the Hong Kong International Airport opens, additional perks will be offered, Visa announced.

A troubled new power plant leaves Jordan in debt to China

ISABEL DEBRE, ATTARAT

JORDAN'S Attarat power plant was envisioned as a landmark project promising to provide the desert kingdom with a major source of energy while solidifying its relations with China.

But weeks after its official opening, the site, a sea of black, crumbly rock in the barren desert south of Jordan's capital, is instead a source of heated controversy. Deals surrounding the plant put Jordan on the hook for billions of dollars in debt to China — all for a plant that is no longer needed for its energy, because of other agreements made since the project's conception.

The result is fueling tensions between China and Jordan and causing grief for the Jordanian government as it tries to contest the deal in an international legal battle. As Chinese influence grows in the Middle East and America withdraws, the \$2.1 billion shale oil station has come to characterize China's wider model that has burdened many Asian and African states with crippling debt and served as a cautionary tale for the region.

"Attarat is a representation of what the Belt and Road Initiative was and has become," said Jesse Marks, a nonresident fellow at the Washington-based Stimson Cen-



Attarat power plant is seen yesterday, some 100 kilometers south of Amman, Jordan

ter, referring to China's scheme to build global infrastructure and boost Beijing's political sway.

"Jordan evolves as an interesting case study not for China's success in the region but for how China engages in middle-income countries," he said.

First conceived some 15 years ago as a way to fulfill national ambitions of energy independence,

the Attarat shale oil plant is now causing anger in Jordan because of its enormous price tag. If the original agreement holds, Jordan would have to pay China a staggering \$8.4 billion over 30 years to buy the electricity generated by the plant.

Laborers flown from rural China toil in the shadow of the giant station, some 100 kilometers (60

miles) south of Amman.

When Shi Changqing arrived in the Jordanian desert earlier this year from the Jilin province in China's northeast, fears were mounting in the workers' dormitories that the project could grind to a halt, leaving everyone in the lurch, the 36-year-old welder said.

"It's very strange to feel that, being from China, you are not

wanted here," he said.

With its meager natural resources in a region awash with oil and gas, Jordan seemed to have drawn a losing ticket. Then in the 2000s, it struck shale oil trapped in the black rock that underlies the country. With the fourth-largest concentration of shale oil in the world, Jordan had high hopes for a big pay-off.

In 2012, the Jordanian Attarat Power Company proposed to the government to extract shale oil from the desert and build a plant using it to provide 15% of the country's electricity supply. The proposal fit the government's intensifying desire for energy self-sufficiency amid the turmoil of the 2011 Arab uprisings, company officials say.

But extraction proved expensive, risky and technologically challenging. As the project lagged, Jordan struck a \$15 billion agreement to import vast amounts of natural gas at competitive prices from Israel in 2014.

Attarat Power Co. CEO Mohammed Maaitah said he pitched the project the world over — from the United States and Europe to Japan and South Korea. No one bit, he said.

To Jordan's surprise, Chinese banks offered Jordan over \$1.6 billion in loans to finance the plant in 2017. A Chinese state-owned firm, Guangdong Energy Group, bought a 45% stake in the Attarat Power Co., turning the white elephant into the largest private enterprise to come out of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative outside China, according to the company. **MDT/AP**

Gov't accuses US of turning Taiwan into a powder keg with its latest sales

CHINA'S Defense Ministry accused the United States of turning Taiwan into a powder keg yesterday with its latest sales of military equipment to the self-governing island democracy worth a total of \$440.2 million.

The U.S. State Department approved of the sale of 30 mm ammunition and related equipment, along with spare parts for Taiwan's vehicles, small arms, combat weapon systems, and logistical support items. Defense Ministry spokesperson Col. Tan Kefei responded that "the U.S. ignores China's core concerns, crudely interferes in China's internal affairs, and deliberately escalates tensions across the Taiwan Strait."

China claims Taiwan as

its own territory to be conquered by force if necessary and Tan said "stern representations" had been lodged with the U.S.

"This is tantamount to accelerating the transformation of Taiwan into a 'powder keg' and pushing the Taiwanese people into the abyss of disaster," he said in a statement carried on the ministry's website.

Using force to seek independence is wishful thinking and is doomed to failure, he said, using standard Chinese terminology, adding that the People's Liberation Army was always ready and would maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

The U.S. maintains a "One China" policy under which it does not recognize

Taiwan's formal independence and has no formal diplomatic relations with the island in deference to Beijing. Nonetheless, U.S. law requires a credible defense for Taiwan and for the U.S. to treat all threats to the island as matters of "grave concern."

China regularly sends warships and planes across the center line in the Taiwan Strait that provides a buffer between the sides, as well as into Taiwan's air defense identification zone, in an effort to intimidate the island's 23 million people and wear down its military capabilities.

During a transit stop in the U.S. by Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen in April, during which she met with U.S. House Speaker Kevin

McCarthy, China staged three days of large-scale drills around the island, simulating a blockade. China opposes any exchanges at the official level between Taiwan and other governments.

Yesterday, 26 PLA aircraft and 4 Chinese navy ships were detected around Taiwan, the Taiwanese Defense Ministry said. Aircraft, navy vessels and land-based missile systems were monitoring the situation, it said.

In its announcement of the sale, the State Department said it "serves U.S. national, economic, and security interests by supporting the recipient's continuing efforts to modernize its armed forces and to maintain a credible



defensive capability."

"The proposed sale will help improve the security of the recipient and assist in maintaining political stability, military balance, and economic progress in the region," it said. The ammunition and associated equipment will maintain the effectiveness of Taiwan's CM34 Armored Vehicles while "further enhancing interoperability with the

United States."

In addition to purchasing military hardware from the U.S. — with an estimated \$19 billion of F-16 fighter jets and other items on backorder — Taiwan has been revitalizing its domestic defense industries, overhauling training and extending compulsory national service for all men from four months to one year. **MDT/AP**

KOREAS

North Korean satellite wasn't advanced enough to conduct reconnaissance from space: Seoul

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

THE satellite North Korea failed to put into orbit wasn't advanced enough to conduct military reconnaissance from space as it claimed, South Korea's military said yesterday after retrieving and studying the wreckage.

North Korea had tried to launch its first spy satellite in late May, but the long-range rocket carrying it plunged into the waters off the Korean Peninsula's west coast soon after liftoff. The satellite was to be part of a space-based reconnaissance system North Korea says it needs to counter escalating security threats from South Korea and the United States.

South Korea mobilized navy ships, aircraft and divers to recover debris from the rocket and satellite in a 36-day operation that ended yesterday, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

"Numerous" and "key" parts of the rocket and the satellite were recovered and the South Korean and U.S. experts who jointly examined them concluded the satellite wasn't capable of conducting military reconnaissance works at



all, the statement said.

North Korea didn't immediately respond to the South Korean

announcement.

The day the launch failed, North Korea's state media said the

rocket lost thrust following the separation of its first and second stages, then crashed into the sea.

At a ruling party meeting last month, North Korea called the failed launch "the most serious" shortcoming this year and harshly criticized those responsible.

Top North Korean officials have repeatedly vowed to attempt a second launch after learning what went wrong with the failed launch.

North Korea leader Kim Jong Un has said acquiring a military spy satellite is crucial to beef up his country's defense capability. He's said North Korea also needs to introduce other high-tech weapons systems such as multi-warhead nuclear missiles, solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear-powered submarines.

Months before its failed satellite launch, North Korea launched a test satellite and publicized photos showing South Korean cities as viewed from space. Some civilian experts said at the time the photos were too crude for a surveillance purpose and that they were likely capable of only recognizing big targets like warships at sea or military installations on the ground.

North Korea had responded to that skepticism by saying there was no reason to use a sophisticated camera for one test.

The U.S., South Korea and others denounced North Korea's rocket launch as a security risk and a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban the country's use of ballistic missile technology. But further sanctions are unlikely since permanent council members Russia and China oppose new action. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Leader criticizes Hong Kong's attempt to arrest 2 activists who now live in Australia



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese speaks in Sydney, yesterday

AUSTRALIAN Prime Minister Anthony Albanese yesterday criticized Hong Kong authorities over their pursuit of two pro-democracy activists who live in Australia.

Hong Kong's leader said Tuesday that eight pro-democracy activists who now live in the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia will be pursued for life for alleged national security offenses.

Albanese said his government was concerned and disappointed by Hong Kong authorities issuing arrest warrants for Australian citizen Kevin Yam and Australian permanent resident Ted Hui.

"I am of course disappointed. I've said we'll cooperate with China where we can. But we will disagree where we must. And we do disagree with China with these actions," Albanese told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

The U.S. and British governments also criticized the move, taking issue with the extraterritorial application of Hong Kong's National Security Law. The U.S. said it marked a dangerous precedent that threatened human rights, and Britain said it will not tolerate attempts by China to intimidate people overseas.

Hong Kong's leader John

Lee insisted that extraterritorial power exists in the security laws of many countries and his government will not be swayed by comments by overseas officials and politicians.

Albanese also said he disagreed with China on the detention of Australian journalist Cheng Lei who has yet to learn of a verdict after standing trial in March last year on national security charges.

He said Cheng was being held "without proper process."

"We continue to advocate for the interests of Australia. We'll continue to do so. We will disagree where we must. We will engage in our national interest. And this decision overnight is an example of where Australia and China do have different approaches to these issues. And we'll stand up for our values," Albanese said. **MDT/AP**

ANALYSIS

A year of fighting between Israel and the Palestinians just escalated. Is this an uprising?

TIA GOLDENBERG, TEL AVIV

AIRSTRIKES targeting Palestinian militants in a crowded residential area. Armored bulldozers plowing through narrow streets, crushing cars and piling up debris. Protesters burning tires. A mounting death toll.

Israel's large-scale military raid into the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank this week had undeniable similarities with the second Palestinian uprising of the early 2000s — a period that claimed thousands of lives.

But the current fighting — including the Jenin raid, which ended after two days on Wednesday — is also different from those intense years of violence. It's more limited in scope, with Israeli military operations focused on several strongholds of Palestinian militants.

It's also a symptom of a conflict with no foreseeable end. The Palestinian leadership is weakened, and the Israeli government has been accelerating the expansion of settlements that have eroded any chance of Palestinian statehood.

WHAT IS AN INTIFADA?

The word that means "shaking off" in Arabic was coined to describe an uprising against Israel's military occupation that erupted in 1987. It ended in 1993 with an agreement of mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

What became known as the first intifada was marked by widespread Palestinian protests and a fierce Israeli response. In the second uprising, which began in 2000, Palestinian militants carried out deadly suicide bombings on buses and at restaurants and hotels, eliciting crushing Israeli military reprisals.

The second uprising pitted Palestinian militant groups against a far more powerful Israeli military. Over 4,000 people died, including vast numbers of civilians. Roughly three times as many Palestinians as Israelis were killed.



Israeli crackdowns upended Palestinian lives, including placing tight restrictions on movement that choked the fledgling economy. For Israelis, especially during the frequent bombings of the second intifada, stepping onto a bus or going out to a restaurant was terrifying.

Those events were initially fueled by widespread participation. Many Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem — areas captured by Israel in 1967 and claimed by the Palestinians for their state — joined in the protests.

The protests were also driven by the Palestinian leaders, including President Yasser Arafat, whom Israel accused of encouraging and abetting militants. The intifada petered out after Arafat died in 2004 and the current Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, took power.

WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?

In the spring of 2022, a spate of Palestinian attacks against Israelis prompted Israel to launch near-nightly raids into Palestinian areas of the West Bank.

Israel said the raids were meant to stamp out militant networks. But Palestinian attacks have continued, and the death toll on both sides has risen, making last year one of the deadliest for Pal-

estinians in the West Bank since the second intifada.

The violence has only intensified since Israel's current far-right government, which is made up of hard-line ultranationalist settlement supporters, took power late last year.

The Palestinian death toll this year in the West Bank and east Jerusalem stands at more than 135, according to a tally by The Associated Press, nearly matching the death toll for all of 2022. Hundreds of Palestinians have been arrested. Some 24 people have been killed in Palestinian attacks against Israelis.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The region has not seen such a sustained cycle of violence since the second uprising, which lasted about five years. More recent periods of bloodshed have not lasted this long or involved such a strong show of force by the military.

The tactics seen Monday, with airstrikes, armored bulldozers and a brigade of troops, were a mainstay of the second uprising.

But analysts say that's where the similarities end.

For one, a monthlong Israeli operation in 2002 that was seen as the peak of the fighting during the second intifada involved an intense clampdown on most cities in

the West Bank. Israel's raids over the last year have been smaller in scale. Israel's targets are also more limited to local armed groups and militant cells.

Other differences, analysts say, include the weakened Palestinian leadership and the lack of popular participation. While protests have erupted in response to the raids, they have not engulfed the entire West Bank.

"Intifada is a people's uprising. It's a society that fights," said Amir Avivi, president and founder of Israel Defense and Security Forum, a hawkish group of former military commanders. Avivi, who served as a battalion commander in the northern West Bank during the 2002 operation, claimed that the current fighting is dominated by militant groups that are funded by Israel's archenemy, Iran.

Ziyad Abu Zayad, a Palestinian analyst and former Cabinet minister, said the fighting is best described as "waves" of Palestinian anger, not an uprising.

"The problem is not security, but rather political. And as long as there is no political solution, these waves will continue," he said. "People, mainly young people, want to live in freedom and dignity. They see no future for themselves, and they only see oppression from the occupation." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1978 ELEVEN DIE IN SLEEPER TRAIN INFERNO



Eleven people have been killed and seventeen injured in a blaze on the Penzance-to-Paddington sleeper train.

Early reports suggest that the fire was started by a discarded cigarette or an electrical fault near one of the top bunks in a second-class compartment.

An attendant pulled the emergency cord on the 2130 from Penzance and the train stopped, half a mile from its next scheduled halt at Taunton, Somerset at 0248 BST (0148 GMT).

It is the worst accident on Britain's railways since November 1967, when 49 people died in a derailment at Hither Green, south London.

Fire-fighters arrived within four minutes, but their efforts were hampered by internal and external locked doors.

Speaking in a BBC radio interview, British Rail's chief operating manager, William Bradshaw, has confirmed that it is company policy to lock doors connecting carriages, but not external doors while the train is in motion.

He said many passengers choose to lock the doors on their compartments for security whilst they are asleep.

Local residents from Fairwater Close in Taunton went to help survivors from the train and provided tea, blankets and comfort in their homes.

The injured were transferred to hospitals in Taunton.

All of the 31 dead or injured were in the front two carriages of the 12 coach train.

Most of the bodies were found in the sleeping compartments and all but one was from the UK.

Forensic scientists state that the likely cause of death was asphyxiation rather than burns.

Accident investigators will examine safety procedures and materials used by British Rail.

They currently operate 350 sleeper carriages - none of which is less than 18 years old.

MPs have already called for an immediate end to the practice of locking external doors.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Five days later the inquest at the coroners' court in Taunton found that nine of the deaths were caused by asphyxiation, one by a heart attack and one by heart failure and smoke inhalation. In August a Belgian passenger died in hospital from pneumonia without regaining consciousness after the fire.

In February 1980 the final report into the blaze was published by Railway Inspector Major Tony King.

It stated the cause of the accident as burning linen stacked too close to a heater. It also suggested better training of carriage attendants and better safety features.

It found that although some of the train doors were locked this was not the main cause of death.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Romance will unfold through business trips. Your suggestions for fund raising events will be well received. You may need help with your financial situation.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Secret enemies will be eager to spread rumors about you. Children will be of major concern if you haven't kept the lines of communication open.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Try to get every one involved; it will help bring you closer together. Your creative talent will prove to be lucrative if put to proper use. Emotional matters may not be easy for you to handle.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Tempers could boil if someone you work with has not been pulling their weight. Put all your energy into moneymaking ventures. Accommodate others but not before you do your own thing.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Do not force your opinions on others the connections will be short lived. You'll find it easy to deal with government agencies or large institutions.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Attend trade shows that will allow you to look at new products. Invite friends or relatives into your home. You can make sound financial investments if you act fast.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Having your own business is a good idea. Emotional relationships will be plentiful if you attend group activities. Lovers may no be truthful.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Close deals that have been up in the air and move on to new ones that appear to be profitable. Try to make amends by planning a nice dinner for two.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Take advantage of your attributes and lure the mate of your choice. Sign up for tours or courses that will enlighten you. Join humanitarian groups and let your leadership ability take over.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Organize your house and be sure to include the whole family in the projects you have set out to do. Do not overspend on entertainment. You could find that children will be a handful.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Your support and concern will help. You may have difficulties while traveling or problems dealing with close friends or relatives. Do not get into uncertain financial deals.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Your ability to get the job done will result in added responsibility and possible promotion. Close deals that have been up in the air and move on to new ones that appear to be profitable.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

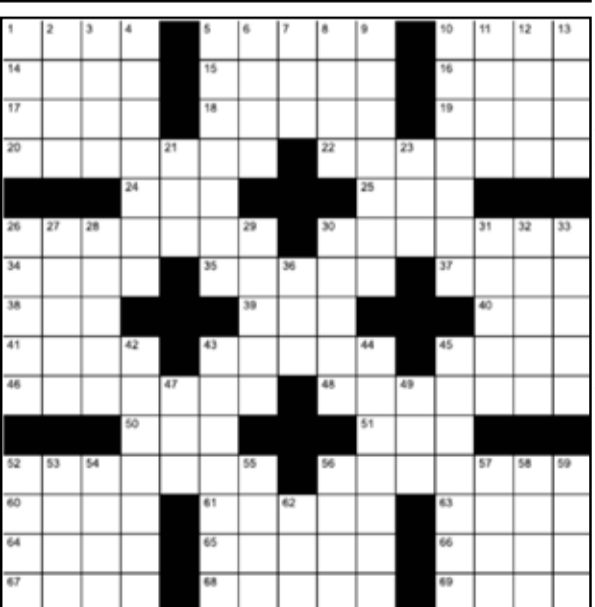
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	23	38	fine
Changchun	18	29	rain
Chengdu	21	34	overcast
Chongqing	23	34	rain
Fuzhou	28	37	cloudy
Guangzhou	26	35	cloudy
Guiyang	17	30	cloudy
Haikou	27	36	cloudy
Hangzhou	24	36	cloudy
Harbin	18	27	thunderstorms
Hefei	24	33	rain
Nanjing	25	32	rain
Shanghai	24	33	rain
Taipei	26	33	overcast
Wuhan	23	35	rain
Hong Kong	27	30	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	19	29	cloudy
Frankfurt	12	26	overcast
Paris	17	27	overcast
London	12	22	cloudy
New York	23	31	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Not pro; 5- According to; 10- Big lugs; 14- Former name of Thailand; 15- Elbow; 16- Aloe ____; 17- Take ____ from me; 18- Icon; 19- Historical periods; 20- Capital of Sicily; 22- Aromatic; 24- Found it!; 25- Marker; 26- Small flute; 30- Loss of the sense of smell; 34- Beehive State; 35- Move to and fro; 37- British nobleman; 38- Where some vets served; 39- Neither Rep. nor Dem.; 40- After taxes; 41- Jazz singer Laine; 43- Signed; 45- Lacoste of tennis; 46- Legally owned property; 48- Knitted jacket; 50- AMA members; 51- Cartesian conclusion; 52- Related by birth; 56- Slighted; 60- HOMES part; 61- One way to think; 63- Molten rock; 64- Minus; 65- Horizontal; 66- Hgt.; 67- A great deal; 68- Buy alternative; 69- Withered;

DOWN 1- Quickly, quickly; 2- Actress Talbot; 3- Follow; 4- Bring an accusation against; 5- Creatures; 6- Japanese wrestling; 7- Palm Pilot, e.g.; 8- Breakfast brand; 9- Convex fluting; 10- Employ too often; 11- Prefix with -drome; 12- German Mrs.; 13- Lip; 21- 17th letter of the Greek alphabet; 23- "Hollywood Squares" win; 26- Blow with the fist; 27- Author Calvino; 28- Humped ruminant; 29- Due (to); 30- Aconcagua's range; 31- French Impressionist; 32- Peace goddess; 33- Transform; 36- Cuttlefish excretion; 42- Eccentricity; 43- Place in position; 44- Diminish; 45- Walks for pleasure; 47- Nest egg letters; 49- Seine contents; 52- Type of phone; 53- Nabisco cookie; 54- Essential point; 55- Gen. Robert ____; 56- Takes to court; 57- Bundle; 58- At all; 59- Brubeck of jazz; 62- Female gametes;



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
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MUSIC

GRAMMYS CEO ON NEW AI GUIDELINES: MUSIC THAT CONTAINS AI-CREATED ELEMENTS IS ELIGIBLE. 'PERIOD.'

MARIA SHERMAN,
LOS ANGELES

LAST month, the Recording Academy announced a series of changes to the Grammy Awards to better reflect an evolving music industry. Of those newly instituted guidelines, protocols involving technological advancements in machine learning sparked headlines: "Only human creators" could win the music industry's highest honor in a decision aimed at the use of artificial intelligence in popular music.

"A work that contains no human authorship is not eligible in any category," the rules read in part.

As the music industry continues to come to terms with this new technology, so too will the Grammys, says Recording Academy CEO and President Harvey Mason jr.

"Here's the super easy, headline statement: AI, or music that

AP PHOTO



Harvey Mason jr., CEO of The Recording Academy

contains AI-created elements is absolutely eligible for entry and for consideration for Grammy nomination. Period," Mason told The Associated Press. "What's not going to happen is we are not going to give a Grammy or Grammy nomination to the AI portion."

If an AI or voice modeling program performs the lead vocal on a song, the track would be eligible in a songwriting category, for

example, but not a performance category, because "what is performing is not human creation," he explains. "Conversely, if a song was sung by an actual human in the studio, and they did all the performing, but AI wrote the lyric or the track, the song would not be eligible in a composition or a songwriting category."

"As long as the human is contributing in a more than de minimis amount, which to us means a

meaningful way, they are and will always be considered for a nomination or a win," he continued. "We don't want to see technology replace human creativity. We want to make sure technology is enhancing, embellishing, or additive to human creativity. So that's why we took this particular stand in this award cycle."

The Recording Academy has long considered setting rules related to AI following the popularity of new songs created alongside AI technology: David Guetta's "Emin-AI-em", the AI -compositions of TikTok user @ghostwriter977, Grimes' voice modeling AI software.

In order to establish their AI guidelines, the Recording Academy engaged in extensive research, including holding tech summits.

"I've met with the copyright office. We've talked about the future and what that looks like on a federal level and the legislative level,"

Mason said, adding that AI conversations "really came to a head in the last six months."

The new Grammy AI protocols were announced three days after Paul McCartney shared that "the last Beatles record" had been composed using artificial intelligence to extract John Lennon's voice from an old demo. Without knowing the extent of the technology, Mason couldn't confirm or deny whether the song would be eligible for a Grammy nomination.

"We'll see what it turns out to be," he said. "But I would imagine from the early descriptions that I've heard there would be components of the creation that would be absolutely eligible."

So, can Grammy viewers expect to see work at least partially created with AI nominated for an award as early as next year?

It's impossible to predict what is submitted. But as Mason affirms, "people are using the technology. I'm imagining it's going to be involved in a lot of records a lot of songs this year, so we'll see if some of them get nominated or not, but I'm sure there'll be some that will be submitted."

The 2024 Grammy Awards will return to Los Angeles' Crypto.com Arena on Sunday, Feb. 4, 2024, airing live on CBS and livestreamed on Paramount+. **MDT/AP**

AD

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Crowdfunding sites help raise money for Jamaica ahead of the World Cup

ANNE M. PETERSON

FUNDING for Jamaica's preparations for the Women's World Cup has seemed so uncertain that a player's mom took it upon herself to fundraise for the team.

A GoFundMe, "Reggae Girlz Rise Up," was set up by Sandra Phillips-Brower, the mother of midfielder Havana Solaun. It has raised more than \$45,000.

Another crowdraising campaign set up by the Reggae Girlz Foundation also raised more than \$45,000 as of Tuesday.

Both sites aim to help Jamaica's women with the costs associated with the World Cup, including a training camp, travel, food, and staff support. Even compensation. The team currently is training in Amsterdam.

"If I can somehow make this journey smoother for them — and let them focus on what they'd love to do is play soccer — they shouldn't be worried about the politics or getting a flight or getting accommodation," Phillips-Brower

said. "They should be able to go there and do what we they qualified to do, just play soccer."

Cheyne Matthews and Khadija "Bunny" Shaw were among players who posted a lengthy statement last month about pay issues and other problems that they hoped would be addressed by the Jamaican Football Federation.

"On multiple occasions, we have sat down with the federation to respectfully express concerns resulting from subpar planning, transportation, accommodations, training conditions, compensation, communication, nutrition and accessibility to proper resources," the statement said. "We have also showed up repeatedly without receiving contractually agreed upon compensation."

The statement said players were told their concerns would be addressed in a timely manner but weren't. The Jamaican federation did not respond to emails from The Associated Press seeking comment.

FIFA gives all 32 teams participating in the event preparation funds and a percentage of the prize pool, with the money going to the federations.

Phillips-Brower said she is looking into the best way to distribute the money, and where it's needed most.

Jamaica, playing in just its second World Cup, opens tournament play on July 23 against France. The Reggae Girlz also have Brazil and Panama in their group at the tournament cohosted by Australia and New Zealand.

The Reggae Girlz have long struggled with funding, turning in the past to Cedella Marley, daughter of reggae legend Bob Marley, who has tirelessly fundraised and procured sponsors.

"We hope that by using our platforms to express the reality of our situation, our efforts will be reciprocated," the players' statement said. "We hope there will be immediate and systematic change within our federation and those in charge of protecting the integrity of women's football." MDT/AP



Australia's Sam Kerr, left, jumps for the ball with Jamaica's Khadija Shaw at Stade des Alpes stadium in Grenoble, France, June 18, 2019



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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**IAEA'S REPORT
 GOOD FOR TOKYO,
 BAD FOR WORLD**

Tokyo should by no means consider the so-called final safety review that the International Atomic Energy Agency submitted to the Japanese government on Tuesday as a green light given by the world to its plan to dispose of the contaminated water at the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean.

The IAEA has made several trips to Japan since early 2022 — regretfully only to dance with Tokyo at the ball the latter has staged for it — and it acknowledges that it can't make decisions for the Japanese government. That means even though the IAEA concludes, on the basis of the water it sampled, that discharging the contaminated water into the ocean is in accordance with its safety standards and its environmental influence will be “negligible”, it is still not willing to endorse the Japanese plan, and thus passes the buck to Tokyo. The agency is well aware of its inability to identify the possible long-term environmental influences of this practice that will last decades.

The IAEA's “it is not in the position to decide” report, which has not fully reflected the points of views of all participating parties, has only intensified the international community's concerns. Disregarding these, Tokyo has tried to portray the IAEA report as go-ahead approval of its plan, which directly violates the London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, to which Japan is a signatory.

The verbal back-patting engaged in by visiting IAEA chief Rafael Mariano Grossi and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Tokyo on Tuesday on the release of the report was in stark contrast with their studied silence over earlier reports of Japan's underhand dealings with the agency in exchange for the latter to remove certain content in the report that Tokyo was unhappy with.

Interestingly, although the IAEA has been trying to avoid being seen as an endorser of Tokyo, Grossi is expected to visit the Republic of Korea, New Zealand and the Cook Islands after his visit to Japan to “ease their concerns”. That is something that should be done by Japanese officials with the IAEA report under their arms. It is not yet known whether Tokyo is reimbursing the costs of the trips. Notable by its absence from that list of destinations is China, the Pacific country with the largest population and one of the most vocal doubters of the Japanese plan.

Japan has set up special funds and subsidies to ease the opposition of its own fishers, if not compensate them for their losses. If the environmental influence of the contaminated water will really be “negligible” as the IAEA claimed in its report, these indemnity funds would not have been necessary, and Japan, a country thirsty for freshwater resources, should have every reason to make use of the water, instead of forcing it into the stomachs of the rest of the world.

The discernable exhilaration of the Kishida government on obtaining the IAEA's “approval” is an alarming sign of it treating the endeavor as a diplomatic success rather than a scientific matter. But then Tokyo has forgone prudence and transparency and seriousness since the very beginning in its haste to be rid of the toxic water.

**HONG KONG-BORN SINGER-SONGWRITER
 COCO LEE PASSES AWAY AT 48**

Famous Hong Kong-born singer-songwriter Coco Lee Man died at the age of 48 yesterday after committing suicide and remaining in a coma in hospital for three days.

Lee's sister broke the news on social media last night, saying that the 48-year-old had a long battle with depression in recent years and committed suicide on Sunday at her residence.

As cited in a report by The Standard, she

was sent to the Queen Mary Hospital in unconscious state and was pronounced yesterday.

The report added that the family added that Lee's condition deteriorated drastically over the last few months.

“Although, CoCo sought professional help and did her best to fight depression, sadly that demon inside of her took the better of her,” her family said.

**THE
 BUZZ**



AP PHOTO



Ground staff remove pieces of confetti from Court 18 after being released by a Just Stop Oil protester on day three of the Wimbledon tennis championships in London, yesterday

WIMBLEDON

**ENVIRONMENTAL
 ACTIVISTS ARRESTED FOR
 THROWING CONFETTI AND
 PUZZLE PIECES ON COURT**

Two environmental activists were arrested at Wimbledon yesterday after getting on court and disrupting a match by scattering orange confetti and puzzle pieces on the grass.

A woman and a man wearing T-shirts from Just Stop Oil — a protest group that wants the British government to stop new oil, gas and coal projects — made it onto the field of play at Court 18 before being taken away by security.

The interruption happened as three-time Grand Slam semifinalist Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria, who is seeded 21st in the men's bracket, was about to hit a serve in the second set of a first-round match against Sho Shimabukuro of Japan.

Before the debris could be cleared from the court to allow the players to continue, action was halted by a rain delay.

“Following an incident on Court 18, two indivi-

duals have been arrested on suspicion of aggravated trespass and criminal damage and these individuals have now been removed from the grounds,” an All England Club spokesperson said in a statement. “Play on the court was temporarily paused and, following a suspension in play due to a rain delay, play (resumed).”

One of the activists sat down on the court before being removed.

The All England Club coordinated with London police and other agencies to increase security for this year's tournament, in part as a result of protests at other major sports venues in Britain this year.

“Based on what has happened at other sporting events, and on the advice from our key partners, we have reviewed our security plans, which have now been uplifted for The Championships accordingly,” All England Club operations director Michelle

Dite said last week.

“We have plans in place to mitigate the risks working in partnership with specialist agencies and the Metropolitan Police and should an incident occur, the appropriate specialist teams will respond,” Dite said.

Her comments came a day after people representing Just Stop Oil briefly disrupted play about five minutes after the start of a cricket match between England and Australia in London. Players from both teams intervened when the protesters attempted to spread orange powder on the field.

Earlier in June, protesters held up the England cricket team bus briefly during the test against Ireland in London. Activists also have targeted Premier League soccer matches, the Premiership rugby final at Twickenham, and the world snooker championship in Sheffield this year. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Turkey's foreign minister said yesterday that Swedish authorities' failure to prevent Quran-burning protests in their country is raising security concerns and questions about Sweden's credentials for possible NATO membership. But Hakan Fidan said Turkey would still approve Sweden's membership in the military alliance if Stockholm “completes its homework” and presses ahead with efforts to address Turkey's concerns.

AP PHOTO



Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya said yesterday that she had received an anonymous message alleging that her imprisoned husband, also an opposition figure, died behind bars. Siarhei Tsikhanouski, 44, a popular blogger and opposition activist, was arrested in 2020 after announcing plans to run against Belarus' authoritarian leader, Alexander Lukashenko, in presidential elections that year. His wife ran against Lukashenko in his stead after the arrest, rallying large crowds of people in her support across the country.

AP PHOTO



Scotland Two months after the lavish coronation of King Charles III at Westminster Abbey in London, Scotland is set to host its own event to mark the new monarch's accession to the throne. While Charles and Queen Camilla won't be crowned a second time in Edinburgh, the festivities will include a crown, horse-drawn carriages, mounted cavalry and a flyover by the Red Arrows, the Royal Air Force's aerobatic display team, as Scotland celebrates its unique relationship with the monarchy.