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SANDS CHINA HAS SOLVED THE SHORTAGE OF MANPOWER IN ITS PROPERTIES AND IS NOW ABLE TO PUT ALL 12,000 OF ITS ROOMS INTO OPERATION

P4

FROM JANUARY TO MAY, THE PJ RECORDED 58% FEWER CYBERSECURITY INCIDENTS

P6

FANS OF BRUCE LEE FONDLY REMEMBER HIS LIFE PHILOSOPHY 50 YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH

AP PHOTO



P8

AP PHOTO



US considers building strong economic and security ties with Vietnam a priority. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said yesterday as she met with Vietnamese officials in a visit aimed at fortifying America's relations across Asia. Yellen arrived in Vietnam after visits to Beijing and to India, where she attended financial meetings of the Group of 20 major industrial economies. More on p9

AP PHOTO



New Zealand A man stormed a high-rise construction site in downtown Auckland early yesterday, shooting at terrified workers and killing two people hours before New Zealand planned to host the first game of the FIFA Women's World Cup tournament. The gunman was found dead after a police shootout, during which an officer was shot and wounded. Four civilians were also injured. The shooting happened near hotels where Team Norway and other soccer teams have been staying.

AP PHOTO



Iraq Protesters angered by the planned burning of a copy of the Quran stormed the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad yesterday, breaking into the compound and lighting a small fire. Online videos showed demonstrators at the diplomatic post waving flags and signs showing the influential Iraqi Shiite cleric and political leader Muqtada al-Sadr ahead of a planned burning of the Islamic holy book yesterday in Stockholm by an Iraqi asylum seeker who burned a copy of the Quran in a previous demonstration last month. More on p12

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EYES ON THE PRIZE

Main trade union hopes upgraded former Canidrome helps physical education; Institutions hail gov't for multi-faceted sports complex P3,4



EVENTS

SANDS CHINA CARNIVAL KICKS OFF

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TASTE OF EDESIA



P15

LAWMAKER COUTINHO ASKS GOV'T ABOUT CIVIL SERVANT HEALTHCARE

ANTHONY LAM

THE government should implement measures to uphold the healthcare rights of civil servants amid the intense environment of the past three years, lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho has said in a recent inquiry.

The lawmaker highlighted that in 2007, the government insisted on establishing the Civil Servant Health Check-up Centre, despite the then easy access to similar services at local health centers and private healthcare facilities accredited by the Health Bureau (SSM).

The centre was established to “prevent workplace health problems to improve the welfare and quality of life of civil servants,” according to the lawmaker.



However, the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) stated in reply to a lawmaker's inquiry that “during

the past three years of the Covid-19 pandemic, staff from Civil Servant Health Check-up Centre were assigned to assist

in the anti-Covid mission. Certain doctors have also retired.”

This partly explains the long queue for services. Coutinho ci-

ted the SAFP director as saying that “due to the limited availability for health check-ups [at the center], only civil servants who have not had a [government-run] check-up for two years will be accepted [for bookings].”

Coutinho also expressed his dissatisfaction with what he referred to as bureaucracy – from May 2009, all bookings were made with the SAFP instead of directly with the check-up center. This has led to delayed bookings, “seriously violating civil servants' rights to early inspection, diagnosis and treatment,” the lawmaker said.

He also spoke of the recent passing of a special service police officer who died after running 1,800 meters as part of training.

The lawmaker emphasized that it should be a medical decision how frequently a person received medical checks, taking into account physical, clinical and laboratory observations and data, which is impossible for the SAFP to do.

HENGQIN

Macau New Neighborhood starts sales in September

RENATO MARQUES

PROPERTIES in Macau's new neighborhood in Hengqin will start to go on sale in September this year, representatives from Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) said during a radio program for the Chinese channel of TDM Radio.

According to the officials, the first 4,000 residential units will go on sale in September this year, and local residents are part of the first group of people that can buy these units.

The same MUR officials noted that some final works are underway, and these involve the decoration of the units as well as the surrounding spaces. These works should conclude by the end of August.

Also taking part in the same radio program, the lawmaker Nick Lei said that local residents have not been



showing much interest in the residential units in Hengqin due to the difficulties in commuting between Macau and Hengqin as well as the lack of support infrastructure currently in Hengqin.

Lei also noted that the closing of the border crossing between Macau and

Hengqin during typhoons may also be a factor contributing to the lack of interest. Lei recalled that also, during the pandemic, there were many restrictions applied to the border, a fact that would certainly weigh in the evaluation being made by locals.

LAWMAKERS CONCERNED WITH TIME ALLOWED TO DISCUSS NEW AVIATION BILL

THE lawmakers on the Third Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) are concerned about the short time allowed for the discussion of the details of the new Civil Aviation law that enforces the new system of licenses in place of a concession.

In the meeting held yesterday morning, some expressed concerns over the fact that the three-year concession contract extension, granted to the current solo Macau-flag carrier Air Macau, is set to expire in early November this year.

While the new law established provisions noting that the new law can enter into force as soon as it is ready and bring the concession to a term, the lawmakers are concerned with the fact that there might not be enough time to approve the new law before



the end of this contract, since the AL usually has its summer holidays between mid-August and mid-October.

The topic was mentioned by the Committee president, lawmaker Vong Hin Fai during the media briefing that

followed the meeting. He said that lawmakers still have a series of questions they want to see clarified by the government, having listed those during the meeting for the purposes of submitting them to the government. **RM**

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



MUR, ID show support to new sports and leisure projects

RENATO MARQUES

MACAUI Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) has publicly expressed support for the recently announced citizens' sports park composed of a

multi-faceted sports complex at the former Yat Yuen Canidrome and Lin Fong Sports Centre, as well as the plan to build a youth adventure camp in Hac Sa, MUR said in a press statement.

In the statement, it is said that MUR's chairperson of the Board

of Directors, Peter Lam Kam Seng, "supports and agrees with such plans, believing that such facilities promote mass sport, improve youth training and activity venues, as well as enhance residents' living environment."

The same official added that

"building a liveable city and improving the living environment and quality of life of Macau residents has always been the goal of the SAR Government," noting that, "from the perspective of urban renewal, on the one hand, a citizen sports park increases the

intensity of the land use, as it can gather facilities for multisport, community activities as well as culture and recreation into one plot of land at the former Yat Yuen Canidrome to provide residents with more public activity space. The future youth adventure camp in Hac Sa, on the other hand, can provide Macau youth with large-scale experiential venues that the city currently lacks."

Commenting on the preliminary concept proposed by the government, Lam said that the plan "combines sustainable development concepts such as ecological environment, green construction, and green travel, which also helps build Macau into a liveable city."

Support was also proffered by the Sports Bureau (ID), represented by Pun Weng Kun, who on Wednesday, when questioned about the projects, said that the Bureau will collaborate in the projects that will be used by the whole population, adding that such projects would be "a good place for sports promotion."

Refusing to provide details, for instance, on whether the swimming pool facility in Hac Sa will be suspended or continue to operate during the construction of the park, among others, Pun said that the government has departments that are taking care of such planning aspects, namely the construction.

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THE VENETIAN MACAO



WILFRED WONG: SANDS CHINA'S SHORTAGE OF STAFF SOLVED

SANDS China has solved the shortage of manpower in its properties and is now able to put all 12,000 of its rooms into operation, Sands China president Wilfred Wong told the Times yesterday.

During the first half of the year, the hotel sector was understaffed amid the advertising campaign aiming to boost tourist arrivals in the city following the easing of border restrictions in early January.

The shortage of manpower caused the city's hotels to operate at 60% to 70% capacity due to the lack of staff capable of attending to guests' needs.

For this summer, according to

Wong, "we've solved the manpower problem. Into the summer months, more than 12,000 rooms will come back into operation."

"We averaged 10,700 in the last quarter already. So, in July and August, we believe we'll be able to handle the maximum capacity," he added.

The Times is aware that just last month, several hundred newly hired workers arrived in Macau to work in the hotel sector. The majority of them applied early this year and have only had their working visas processed last month. A significant number of them have gone through a Manila-based agency,

Ikon Solutions Asia.

Back in December, the recruitment agency posted new job alerts for positions in the city's integrated resorts, which signaled the renewed need for staff in the sector following layoffs since 2020 caused by the pandemic.

The listings featured job postings for bartenders, bell attendants, room attendants and welcome ambassadors for the five-star casino resorts in Macau.

The recruitment agency has advertised that it has partnered with all six operators and deployed over 15,000 Filipino workers to Macau. LV

MAIN TRADE UNION HOPES UPGRADED CANIDROME HELPS PHYSICAL EDUCATION

ANTHONY LAM

TRADE unionist Lam Lon Wai has applauded the government's plan to revamp the former Canidrome, and hopes it will help upgrade physical education in nearby schools.

Speaking on behalf of the Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) in a statement, Lam, who is also lawmaker in the indirect election constituency, expressed his recognition of the government's plan to transform the ground into a comprehensive sporting zone.

The vice principal at Lou Hau High School, Lam thinks the upgraded ground will help improve the per-person sporting and leisure needs in the Northern district, adding that with numerous schools in the district, the upgraded facilities are expected to support these schools in physical education.

Lou Hau High School is situated several blocks away from the former Canidrome.

The vice principal has suggested that the sports facilities in the former Canidrome can be allotted for use by nearby schools during school hours, "so that the facilities can be well utilized during non-peak hours, in order to achieve shared resources."

He admitted that although some schools in the Northern district will be relocated to New Urban Zone A, many schools will be retained, and the construction and relocation will take time.

Lam also made suggestions about traffic. He said that future vehicles and pedestrian traffic – should be planned as there will be influx of users during and after reconstruction. Noise is also a foreseeable problem as there are a lot of residences and schools nearby.



EVENTS

Sands Shopping Carnival kicks off with 580 retailers

STAFF REPORTER

SANDS China Ltd. launched its 2023 Sands Shopping Carnival yesterday at The Venetian Macao, featuring some 580 local SMEs.

The carnival provides a free business platform for local SMEs and Sands retailers, in a bid to help create more business opportunities.

It is Sands China's fourth year providing the shopping and leisure hotspot, after total visitation for the last three carnivals exceeded 310,000.

Wilfred Wong, president



of Sands China Ltd., said: "The Sands Shopping Carnival has become a highly-anticipated summer sig-

nature event for residents and tourists from the Greater Bay Area, and events like this play an important

role in enhancing the non-gaming elements of our industry."

Also at the opening ce-

emony yesterday, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of the Macao Government Tourism Office, said that in the first quarter of this year, 57% of tourist spending in Macau went toward shopping, making it the largest segment of tourist expenditure.

"Therefore, providing high-quality shopping services is vital to elevating the travel experience of visitors to Macau. We are pleased to see that Sands China and Macau's retailers have shown strong support for retail fairs like these, which can help accelerate the recovery of the retail indus-

try, enabling residents and tourists to enjoy the pleasures of shopping while promoting the integration of 'tourism + shopping.' The carnival also features an international-cuisine food court area, and family-friendly entertainment, activities and games.

Free parking is available for exhibition-goers, and complimentary shuttle buses are running routes between the carnival Luso International Bank Building at Nam Van, Fai Chi Kei Dai Win Supermarket South Entrance, Border Gate, and Hengqin Port (Macau side).

RENATO MARQUES

GAMING

SANDS China Ltd. (SCL) announced their second quarter (Q2) results yesterday, reporting a net revenues of USD187 million (MOP1.5 billion) for the second quarter of 2023, a note from the company to the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong (HKEX) has revealed.

It is the first time in three-and-a-half years that the company has recorded a profit after a cycle of reported losses related to low generated income during the pandemic.

In the same quarter of last year, SCL posted a loss amounting to USD422 million (MOP3.4 billion).

At the end of the first quarter, the company's results were showing a significant recovery but the company remained in the red by some USD10 million (MOP80.47 million).

According to the company's report, its adjusted property earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) totaled USD541 million (MOP4.35 billion) for the same Q2, compared to an adjusted property EBITDA loss of USD110 million (MOP 885.3 million) for the second quarter of last year.

In the same note to the HKEX, Robert Goldstein, chairman and chief executive officer of parent company Las Vegas Sands, said,

Sands China announces profits of MOP1.5b in Q2



“we were pleased to see robust recovery in travel and tourism spending underway in both Macau and Singapore during the quarter. We remain enthusiastic about the

opportunity to welcome more guests back to our properties throughout the remainder of 2023 and in the years ahead.”

Regarding the results obtai-

ned by the Macau operations, Goldstein added, “we were pleased to see the ongoing recovery now underway in all gaming and nongaming segments’ during the

quarter. We remain deeply enthusiastic about the opportunity to continue our investments to enhance Macau's tourism appeal to travelers from throughout the region, including foreign visitors to Macau. Our decades-long commitment to making

investments that enhance the business and leisure tourism appeal of Macau and support its

development as a world center of business and leisure tourism positions us exceedingly well to deliver strong growth as visitation to the market increases and the recovery in travel and tourism spending proceeds.”

NON-GAMING SHARE GROWING TO 22%

According to SCL's chief operating officer (COO), Grand Chum, who made remarks after the second-quarter earnings announcement of Sands China's parent, Las Vegas Sands Corporation, the non-gaming section of the operations is also contributing to the increase in earnings of the company.

Citing the results and comparing them to 2019 (pre-pandemic), Chum noted that the non-gaming share has risen from 17% in 2019 to 22% in Q2 of 2023.

The COO also added that, at present (half-year), SCL has reached 93% of its 2019 non-gaming revenues.

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STATS

58% LESS CYBERSECURITY BREACHES IN JAN-MAY

ANTHONY LAM

FROM January to May this year, the Judiciary Police (PJ) recorded 58% fewer cybersecurity incidents year-over-year,

PJ director Sit Chong Meng has disclosed at a PJ event.

During the first five months of the year, the PJ logged only eight cybersecurity incidents. Sit further disclosed that the

Cybersecurity Centre of the PJ issued 84 warnings on possible cybersecurity incidents to "key infrastructure operators" during the same period, 20% up year-over-year.

He added that further work and upgrades of equipment would be conducted or concluded in the second half of this year, which will better assist the center's legally established responsibilities.

Meanwhile, he admitted that "contactless" crimes have seen an increase in both number and manner, "posing severe risks to property security and legal rights of the public." Physical crimes were also on the rise amid border normalization and economic recovery.

During the same five months, the police opened 4,585 investigations, 26.2% up year-over-year, but 24% short of the same period in 2019.

So far, three murders have happened in the city this year, with two identified by the PJ as connected to prostitution and illegal currency exchange syndicates, and the remaining case a "domestic tragedy." Sit said serious violent crimes are not intensifying, and that although more crime has been recorded, frequency is lower than the period before Covid-19.

Domestic and regional police cooperation has helped the PJ's investigations into the two "non-domestic" murder cases.

Robbery and thefts have also

risen significantly, Sit further disclosed. During the first five months, there were 14 robberies and 247 cases of theft, increases of 10 and double year-over-year, respectively. A number of these cases took place in hotels, casinos, tourists areas and public transports.

Prevention was conducted in two areas: police patrol and education as well as investigations and crackdown.

Three fewer illicit drug cases year-over-year were recorded during the first five months of this year, bringing the toll down to 19. Regional and international communications have intensified for prevention and crackdown purposes, Sit added. Drug trafficking by mail is a key area, he said.

During the same five months, 330 investigations into casino-related crimes were opened, 84.4% up year-over-year. The main cause of the increment was due to an influx of tourists and the recovery of casino activities. Loan-sharking as well as related abduction and custody have not seen significant increases. The main types of crimes recorded were swindling, theft, violation of orders and appropriation of properties, among other crimes.

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FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN MACAU (2023)



Netflix's subscriber growth surges in a sign that crackdown on password sharing is paying off

MICHAEL LIEDTKE,
SAN FRANCISCO

NETFLIX enjoyed its biggest springtime spurt in subscribers since the early days of the pandemic three years ago, providing the latest sign that a recent crackdown on password sharing and the rollout of a cheaper subscription option are paying off.

The video streaming service added 5.9 million subscribers during the April-June period, according to numbers released Wednesday along with its latest quarterly financial results. The gains easily surpassed the roughly 2.2 million additional subscribers that analysts surveyed by FactSet Research had anticipated. Netflix ended June with 238.4 million worldwide subscribers.

Investors seemed unsatisfied, perhaps rattled by management commentary in a shareholder letter warning that "quite a competitive battle" continues to unfold against the backdrop of ongoing strikes by both the writers and actors union in the U.S. that threaten to clog the pipelines feeding entertainment to streaming services. Netflix's stock price fell 8% in Wednesday's extended trading. The drop could also reflect some investors locking in profits that have accrued while the shares have climbed by more than 50% so far this year.

Money manager Louis Navellier said Netflix now appears



"locked and loaded" again after going through a turbulent stretch that included losing 1.2 million subscribers during the first half of last year. Even though Netflix has bounced back this year, Investing.com analyst Jesse Cohen believes another slowdown may be coming. "It will be a challenge for Netflix to sustain this pace of subscriber growth in the future," Cohen said.

Netflix predicted its subscriber growth during the July-September period will be similar to the numbers posted from April through June.

The second-quarter performance marked Netflix's biggest spring — traditionally the company's slowest stretch of growth — since gaining 10 million sub-

scribers during the same period in 2020 under dramatically different market conditions.

In 2020, people were still largely stuck at home and looking for ways to keep themselves entertained while governments around the world struggled to find a way to contain the spread of pandemic. Now, Netflix finds itself trying to bounce back from a growth slowdown amid stiff video streaming competition and inflationary pressures that have caused many households to clamp down on spending, especially on discretionary items such as entertainment.

As an antidote, Netflix last year introduced a low-priced option that includes commercials and then began to block the rampant

sharing of passwords that has enabled an estimated 100 million people worldwide to watch its TV series and films for free. Free-loading viewers are now being required to open their own accounts unless a subscriber with a standard or premium plan agrees to pay an \$8 monthly surcharge to allow more people living in different households to watch.

In its shareholder letter, management said the crackdown on password sharing is resulting in a "healthy conversion of borrower households into full paying Netflix memberships."

And Netflix still isn't done tinkering. As part of Wednesday's earnings release, Netflix also revealed it's phasing out its cheapest ad-free plan — a service that costs

\$10 in the U.S. Existing subscribers already paying for this basic plan will be allowed to keep it. The shift appears designed to get more people to switch to the \$7 monthly plan that includes commercials in hopes of boosting ad revenue or sign up for its \$15.50 monthly standard plan or \$20 monthly premium plan.

"There is just tons of work ahead of us, tons of opportunity," Netflix Co-CEO Greg Peters said during a Wednesday conference call.

The pricing changes that have already been made helped Netflix boost its second-quarter revenue by 3% from the same time last year to \$8.2 billion, falling below analyst forecasts. Netflix earned \$1.49 billion during the period, compared with \$1.44 billion last year. But earnings per share came in at \$3.29 per share, eclipsing the average analyst estimate of \$2.85 per share, according to FactSet.

Netflix didn't delve into the potential fallout from the current walkout in the U.S. by writers and actors. The dispute revolves largely around the payment system used in video streaming and the rise of artificial intelligence technology threatening to exploit the work of humans and eventually replace them.

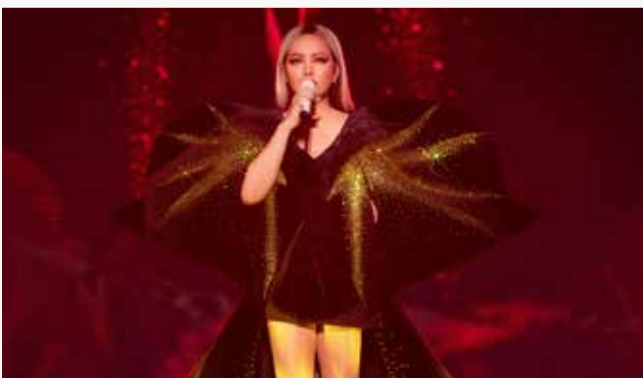
Unlike traditional movie and TV studios in the U.S., Netflix has been able to keep feeding its entertainment pipeline with shows that it has been able to use to keep luring in and retaining subscribers.

Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos deflected a question about how long Netflix could keep releasing new series and films if the strike drags on past Labor Day. "It's beside the point," Sarandos said during the conference call. "The real point is we need to get this strike to a conclusion so we can continue to move forward."

MDT/AP

CORPORATE BITS

A-Mei to bring world tour to Macau



"aMEI ASMR 2023 World Tour - Macau" will be staged at Cotai Arena on Sept. 16, the gaming operator has announced in a statement. Iconic Asian pop powerhouse Chang Hui Mei, also known as A-Mei, will make a return

to The Venetian Macao after seven years for a night of entertainment.

A-Mei's eighth solo concert tour, aMEI ASMR 2023 World Tour has been on the road for over a year now. Previous ASMR concerts in

Taipei and Kaohsiung from 2022 to 2023 set new records for "greatest number of performances, largest audience numbers, and highest grossing concert by a solo singer in Taiwan within one year."

As the most famous Asian pop diva since the mid-90s, A-Mei is an influential figure in the Chinese-language music scene. She has sold approximately 55 million albums and held more than 300 solo concerts and world tours, performing for more than seven million concert-goers, making her the record holder for the most album sales of any Chinese-language female singer.

Wynn participates in tourism roadshow in Korea



Wynn participated in the government's "Experience Macao Unlimited" mega roadshow at Times Square in Seoul, Korea from July 14 - 17, as well as the "Macao-Korea Travel Tra-

de Networking Seminar," which was held prior to the event.

Before the roadshow, Wynn invited many well-known Korean media and KOLs to Macau in an effort

to increase exposure for the event.

"Throughout their time in Macau, Korean media and Key Opinion Leaders visited Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace, enjoyed all of Macau's diverse "tourism+" experiences, and produced reports to encourage Koreans to visit Macau in future," the gaming operator said in a statement.

Wynn pledged to continue to promote Macau in Mainland China and in overseas destinations in collaboration with the SAR government to expand visitor source markets around the world and boost economic recovery.

HONG KONG

FANS OF BRUCE LEE FONDLY REMEMBER HIS LIFE PHILOSOPHY 50 YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

FANS of late martial arts legend Bruce Lee, who broke negative stereotypes around Asian men in films, gathered in Hong Kong this week to commemorate their idol's death half a century ago, remembering his legacy and his life philosophy on persistence.

Lee, who was born in San Francisco but raised in the Asian financial hub, was famous for his martial arts talent and his fight against racist portrayals of Asians on big and small screens in the 1960s and 70s. He died at the height of his fame due to an allergic reaction to painkillers when he was 32.

The 50th anniversary of Lee's death yesterday drew fans to exhibitions in Hong Kong on his life and career. They also laid flowers at his statue at the Avenue of Stars, a tourist attraction modeled on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on the Kowloon shore of Victoria Harbor.

A government-run museum organized a camp for students to learn about Lee's legacy by introducing them to Jeet Kune Do, the



martial arts style that Lee invented and practiced. The museum also screened his films.

Many of Lee's supporters said his philosophy inspired them since they were young, even though many only learned about him and his works after his death.

Sophie Uekawa, a translator, said she was initially attracted to Lee's muscular body and smoo-

th moves on TV. But she was later impressed by his words, including about how unhappy circumstances eventually pass. When Uekawa was bullied by schoolmates in secondary school, Lee's quotes helped her endure feelings of helplessness.

"It can be said that he is my savior," Uekawa said.

Lee began his career as a child

actor in the 1940s and started learning Chinese kung fu when he was 13. He moved back to the U.S. in 1959 and studied philosophy at the University of Washington.

The superstar fought hard against racist stereotypes in the U.S. entertainment industry where Asian men were often portrayed as servants, unskilled workers or evil geniuses in Hollywood.

Lee eventually went back to Hong Kong and made hits like "The Big Boss" and "Fist of Fury." His last film, "Enter the Dragon," was released six days after his death and became his most popular movie. He was one of the first Asian actors to attain Hollywood megastardom and fanned a kung fu craze that swept the world.

On Thursday, W Wong, the chairperson of a Bruce Lee fan club in Hong Kong, was touched to see fans from different countries including Britain and Korea gathering at Lee's statue to pay tribute to him.

But Wong said demographics of the club established nearly three decades ago are changing as members grow older and that it has only one member in his 20s.

"We face problems in passing on our work," Wong said, although the group still has some 600 members.

An instructor at a martial arts institute in Hong Kong's Jordan district says more than half of the studio's Jeet Kune Do students came to learn the martial arts style because of Lee. **MDT/AP**

AD

現在發售 NOW ON SALE

幻覺的藝術 THE ART OF ILLUSION

橫琴引力 THE MAIN ATTRACTION

生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE
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Xi tells Kissinger that China-US ties are at a crossroads and stability is still possible

CHINESE leader Xi Jinping told former top U.S. diplomat Henry Kissinger yesterday that relations between the two countries are at a crossroads and both sides need to “make new decisions” that could result in stable ties and “joint success and prosperity.”

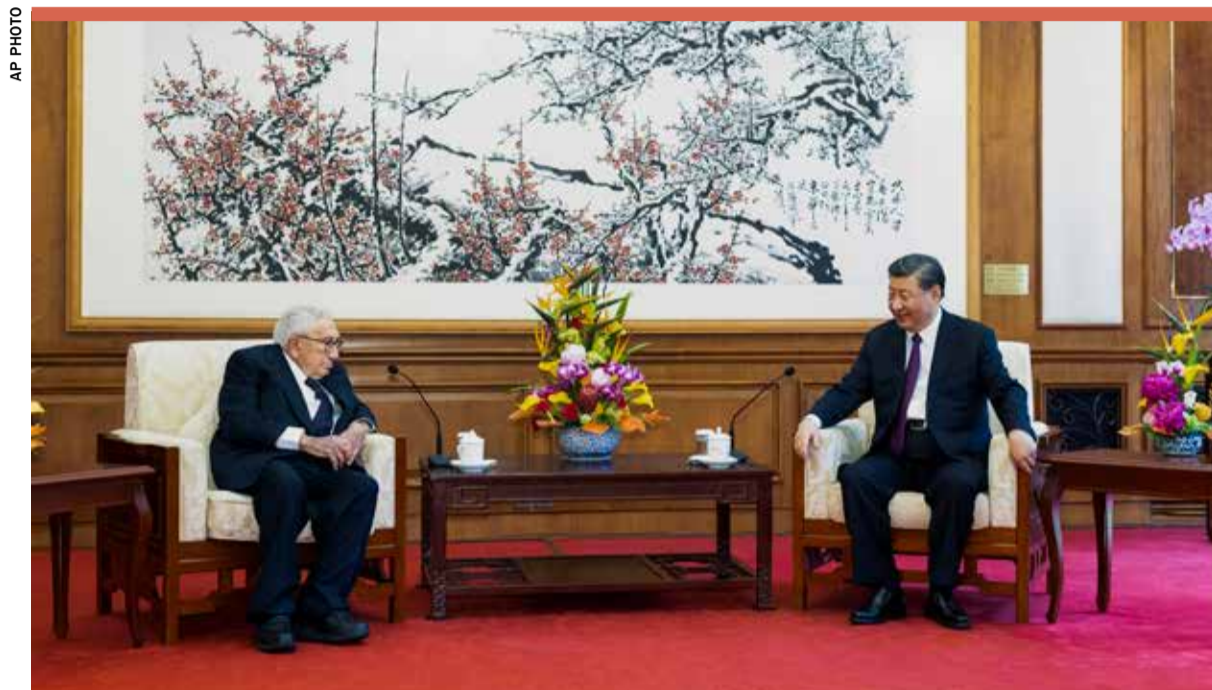
The 100-year-old Kissinger is revered in China for having engineered the opening of relations between the ruling Communist Party and Washington under former President Richard Nixon during the Cold War in the early 1970s.

Xi, who is head of state, party general secretary and commander of the world's largest standing military, met with Kissinger in the relatively informal setting of Beijing's park-like Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, with Chinese senior diplomat Wang Yi also in attendance.

“China and the United States are once again at the crossroads of where to go, and the two sides need to make new decisions,” Xi said, according to a statement released by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

“Looking into the future, China and the United States can achieve joint success and prosperity,” Xi said.

Kissinger's visit coincided with one by Biden's top climate envoy, John Kerry, the third senior Biden administration official in recent weeks to travel to China for mee-



Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, talks to former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger during a meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, yesterday

tings following Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. The flurry of diplomacy aims to restore dialogue suspended by Beijing, mainly over U.S. support for the self-governing island democracy of Taiwan that China claims as its own territory.

Referring to Kissinger's role in initiating China-U.S. relations while serving as national security adviser during the Nixon administration, Wang said he had played an “irreplaceable role in enhancing mutual understanding between the two countries.”

“The U.S. policy toward China

requires the diplomatic wisdom like that of Kissinger and political courage like Nixon's,” Wang said, according to the Foreign Ministry. Kissinger also served as secretary of state under Nixon.

The ministry said the two sides also discussed the war in Ukraine, in which China has largely sided with Moscow, as well as artificial intelligence and other economic issues. Wang told Kissinger that it was “impossible” to transform, encircle or contain China, which Chinese leaders say the U.S. is trying to do in disputes over trade, technology and Taiwan.

On Tuesday, Kissinger held

talks with Defense Minister Li Shangfu, who is barred from visiting the U.S. over arms sales he oversaw with Russia.

China's Defense Ministry quoted Li as praising the role Kissinger played in opening up China-U.S. relations in the early 1970s, but said bilateral ties had hit a low point because of “some people on the American side who are not willing to meet China halfway.”

U.S. leaders say they have no such intentions and only seek frank dialogue and fair competition.

China broke off many contacts with the Biden administration last

August, including over climate issues, to show its anger with then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan. China claims the island as its own territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary, threatening to draw the U.S. into a major conflict in a region crucial to the global economy.

Contacts have only slowly been restored and China continues to refuse to restart dialogue between the People's Liberation Army, the party's military branch, and the U.S. Department of Defense. Even before Pelosi's visit, the U.S. says China declined or failed to respond to over a dozen requests from the Department of Defense for top-level dialogues since 2021.

The wave of U.S. diplomacy has yet to be reciprocated by China, which has its own list of concessions it wants from Washington. U.S. officials, including Kerry, have said they will not offer Beijing any such deals.

Kissinger did not meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang, who has been out of public sight for more than three weeks. Despite speculation about political rivalries and personal scandals, the ministry has provided no information about his status in keeping with the party's standard approach to personnel matters in a highly opaque political system in which the media and free speech are severely restricted. **MDT/AP**

Yellen visits Vietnam, seeking to build US ties and supply chains, and offset tensions with China

ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL,
HANOI

THE U.S. considers building strong economic and security ties with Vietnam a priority, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said yesterday as she met with Vietnamese officials in a visit aimed at fortifying America's relations across Asia.

Yellen arrived in Vietnam after visits to Beijing and to India, where she attended financial meetings of the Group of 20 major industrial economies.

“The United States considers Vietnam a key partner in advancing a free and



open Indo-Pacific,” Yellen told Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, according to remarks provided by the U.S. Treasury Department.

A “free and open Indo-

-Pacific” refers to the latest iteration of broad U.S. diplomacy aimed at cultivating stronger ties with other countries in the region to counter China's growing sway among its neighbors.

“Vietnam is also a close economic partner, with our two-way trade reaching record highs last year and the United States serving as Vietnam's largest export market,” Yellen said. “It is a priority for our administration to deepen our economic and security ties with Vietnam in the months and years to come.”

Yellen briefly sat atop a bright red electric scooter during a visit to a factory in Hanoi's lush green suburbs, where Selex Motors, a five-year-old Vietnamese startup, makes EV scooters and batteries.

Climate change poses

an existential threat to the world but also provides a “key economic opportunity” and way to build “greater resilience into our economies,” she said, describing the facility as “impressive.”

Yellen said the U.S. recognized the importance of diversifying supply chains after experiencing the disruptions brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. “And then, when Russia invaded Ukraine, many countries saw what the implications could be of being overly dependent — in Europe's case for natural gas and oil — on a country that could use it

for geopolitical ends,” she said.

She said the U.S. was actively trying to promote green resilience in supply chains. That doesn't mean ending trading relationships with China, she said, reiterating comments she has voiced before. “But we do partner with more countries. And we see Vietnam as an excellent partner,” she said.

Yellen said the U.S. is committed to mobilizing \$15 billion to support Vietnam's adoption of renewable energy as a part of the Just Energy Transition Partnership or JETP — a financial promise made by the Group of Seven advanced economies to help the country phase out its reliance on fossil fuels. Such projects have offered similar incentives to South Africa and Indonesia. **MDT/AP**

INDIA

Modi breaks silence over ethnic violence in Manipur after video shows mob molesting women

SHEIKH SAALIQ

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi broke more than two months of public silence over deadly ethnic clashes in India's northeast, saying yesterday that the assaults of two women as they were being paraded naked by a mob in Manipur state were unforgivable.

A video showing the assaults triggered massive outrage and was widely shared on social media late Wednesday despite the internet being largely blocked and journalists being locked out in the remote state. It shows two naked women surrounded by scores of young men who grope their genitals and drag them to a field.

"The guilty will not be spared. What has happened to the daughters of Manipur can never be forgiven," Modi told reporters ahead of a parliamentary session in his first public comments related to the Manipur conflict.

Without making any direct references to the violence in Manipur, Modi urged heads of state governments to ensure the safety of women and said the incident is "shameful for any civilized nation."

"My heart is filled with pain and anger," he said.

The violence depicted in the video was emblematic of the near-civil war in Manipur that has left more than 130 people



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (center)

dead since May, as mobs rampage through villages killing people and torching houses. The ethnic violence was sparked by an affirmative action controversy in which Christian Kukis protested a demand from the mostly Hindu Meiteis for a special status that would let them buy land in the hills populated by Kukis and other tribal groups and get a share of government jobs.

The clashes have persisted despite the army's presence in

Manipur, a state of 3.7 million people tucked in the mountains on India's border with Myanmar that is now divided in two ethnic zones. The two warring factions have also formed armed militias, and isolated villages are still raked with gunfire. More than 60,000 people have fled to packed relief camps.

Police said the assault on the two women happened May 4, a day after the violence started in the state. According to a police

complaint filed May 18, the two women were part of a family attacked by a mob that killed its two male members. The complaint alleges rape and murder by "unknown miscreants."

The state police have made the first arrest in the case, Manipur's Chief Minister Biren Singh said on Twitter, without specifying the number of people who were apprehended.

"A thorough investigation is currently underway and we

will ensure strict action is taken against all the perpetrators, including considering the possibility of capital punishment. Let it be known, there is absolutely no place for such heinous acts in our society," Singh said.

India's Supreme Court, meanwhile, expressed its concern over the assault and asked the government to inform the court about the steps it has taken to apprehend the accused.

"In a constitutional democracy it is unacceptable. If the government does not act, we will," Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said.

The two women are now safe in a refugee camp.

They are from the Kuki-Zo community, according to the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum, a tribal organization in Manipur.

India's Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani called the incident "condemnable and downright inhuman." She said Thursday that investigations were underway and that "no effort will be spared to bring perpetrators to justice."

India's main opposition Congress party president Mallikarjun Kharge, however, accused the ruling Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party of "turning democracy and the rule of law into mobocracy."

Kharge said Modi should speak about Manipur in Parliament, a demand that has been made by other opposition parties and rights activists.

"India will never forgive your silence," he wrote on Twitter.

Last week the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on Indian authorities to take action to stop the violence in Manipur and protect religious minorities, especially Christians. India's foreign ministry condemned the resolution, describing it as "interference" in its internal affairs. **MDT/AP**

SPORTS

Women's World Cup opening ceremony focused on First Nations

ZACH ALLEN, AUCKLAND

THE Women's World Cup opened yesterday with an elaborate greeting from the Maori people of New Zealand and the First Nations people of Australia.

In a moment intended by FIFA to stress the cultural roots of tournament co-hosts New Zealand and Australia, along with international unity, the roughly 10-minute ceremony focused on groups of people meeting peacefully at the center of Eden Park.

For New Zealand, volunteers held aloft an artistic representation of a giant stingray, which in traditional beliefs is said to have been caught by the demi-god Maui and turned into what has become the country's North Island. A giant rainbow serpent, representing Australia, was likewise held up by the cast and joined the stingray.

Monique Maihi-Piema, a descendant of the Ngati Whatua Orakei tribe that has the historical rights over Eden Park, whe-

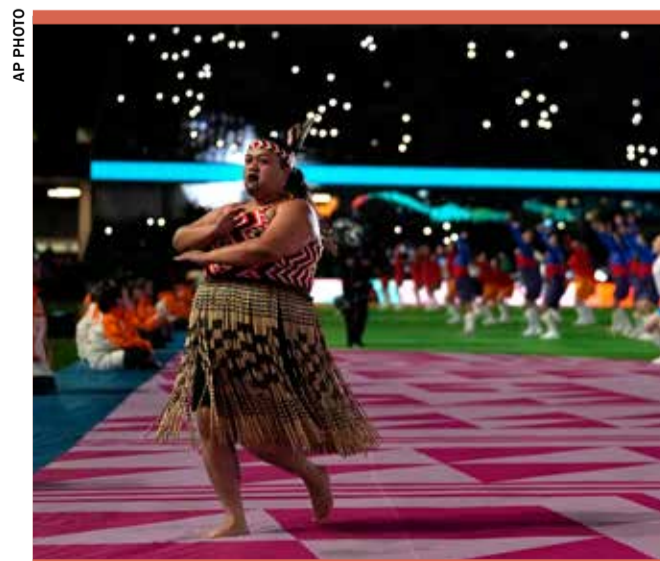
re the opening match between New Zealand and Norway took place, sang a traditional calling to welcome the Australians.

The ceremony ended with the official match ball being presented to the United States, the 2019 and 2015 World Cup champions, and 2011 champion Japan, at midfield to represent the Maori koha, a gift to the other 30 competing teams.

The 32 countries were then introduced on the stadium's video screens, while

dancers performed a unity routine in costumes inspired by the 32 jerseys that each country will wear. BENEE performed the official song of the tournament, "Do It Again," as the ceremony came to a close.

Just before kickoff, a moment of silence was observed for the victims of a deadly shooting that occurred earlier yesterday in downtown Auckland. The shootings were unrelated to the tournament but happened near team hotels. **MDT/AP**



MERCENARIES from Russia's military company Wagner yesterday launched joint drills with the Belarusian military near the border with Poland following their relocation to Belarus after their short-lived rebellion, a move that prompted Warsaw to redeploy its troops.

The Belarusian Defense Ministry said that the weeklong maneuvers will be conducted at a firing range near the border city of Brest and will involve Belarusian special forces. The ministry added that Wagner's combat experience will help modernize the Belarusian military.

A video released Wednesday appeared to show Wagner's chief Yevgeny Prigozhin for the first time since he led last month's rebellion. In the video, Prigozhin was seen telling his troops they would spend some time in Belarus training its military to help "make the Belarusian army the second strongest army in the world" before deploying to Africa.

In addition to their involvement in Ukraine, Wagner mercenaries have been sent to Syria and several African countries since the private army was created in 2014.

The U.K. government on Thursday imposed asset freezes and travel bans on 13 Wagner mercenaries over alleged attacks on civilians and other human rights abuses in Africa. Britain has already sanctioned Prigozhin and several other Wagner commanders over the group's role in Russia's invasion

RUSSIA

Wagner mercenaries launch joint training with Belarusian military near Polish border



This image from video appears to show Russian mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, left, for the first time since he led a short-lived rebellion in June

of Ukraine.

In his revolt that began on June 23 and lasted less than 24 hours, Prigozhin's mercenaries captured the military headquarters in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don without firing a shot and then moved as close as 200 kilometers to Moscow. The mutiny faced little resistance.

The mercenaries downed at least six military helicopters and a command post aircraft, killing at least 10 airmen.

Prigozhin had called it a "march of justice" to oust Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and General Staff chief Gen. Valery Gerasimov, who demanded that Wagner forces sign contracts with the

Defense Ministry. He ordered his troops back to their camps after Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko brokered a deal to end the rebellion in exchange for an amnesty for Prigozhin and his fighters and a permission to relocate to Belarus.

The revolt posed the most serious threat to Russian President

Vladimir Putin's 23-year rule, eroding his authority and exposing the government's weakness.

Belaruski Hajun, a Belarusian activist group that monitors troops movements in Belarus, said that nine convoys with more than 2,000 Wagner mercenaries already have rolled into the country. A Wagner commander said in a statement posted on a messaging app channel linked to the company that about 10,000 Wagner troops are set to deploy to Belarus.

Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC which were analyzed by The Associated Press showed a convoy of vehicles at the base near Tsel in the Asipovichy region of Belarus, about 90 kilometers southeast of Minsk, which the Belarusian authorities offered to Wagner.

Belarus' opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who was forced to leave the country after challenging Lukashenko in a 2020 election that the opposition and the West denounced as fraudulent, said that Wagner's deployment to Belarus will destabilize the country and threaten its neighbors. **MDT/AP**

Japanese, US, and South Korean officials condemn the North's weapons plans but urge dialogue

MARI YAMAGUCHI,
TOKYO

SENIOR officials from Japan, the U.S. and South Korea condemned North Korea over its recent ICBM-class ballistic missile launches and vowed to step up their trilateral cooperation to strengthen deterrence and sanctions against the North, while stressing the need for dialogue with Pyongyang.

Their meeting yesterday in the central Japanese city of Karuizawa comes days after North Korea's solid-fuel ICBM launch last week, which landed in the water off the western coast of Japan's northern main island of Hokkaido and one day after the launch of two missiles on Wednesday.



The U.S. special representative for North Korea, Sung Kim, also said that the United States was "working hard" to gather information about an American soldier who fled to the North earlier this month. The U.S. was seeking to ensure his safety and return him home, Kim said.

Private 2nd Class Travis King, 23, had been held in South Korea on assault charges and was released on July 10 after serving his time. He was taken to the airport Monday but did not board his flight home. Instead, he joined a tourist trip to the border and bolted to the North Korean side.

Kim said he and his Japanese counterpart, Takehiro Funakoshi, director general of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau at the Foreign Ministry, and South Korea's Kim Gunn, Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs, were to also discuss their leaders' sum-

mit planned for next month in the United States.

In his opening remarks, Japan's Funakoshi said Tokyo seeks to further strengthen the three-way security cooperation to enhance deterrence and implement sanctions against the North over its missile advancement in violation to the United Nations' Security Council resolutions. However, he also stressed the need for dialogue with the North.

He reiterated that Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was willing to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "without any preconditions" to resolve the decades-old issue of North Korea's abductions of Japanese nationals.

Sung Kim said the Uni-

ted States had "no hostile intent" and that "we are willing and ready to sit down at the negotiating table to work through our differences."

South Korea's Kim said the three officials were to affirm their intent for dialogue with North Korea, while discussing ways to strengthen "close communication to bring North Korea back to the path to denuclearization and to encourage China's constructive role."

He noted the start of this week's launch of a nuclear consultation between Seoul and Washington, saying North Korea "undermined its own security", while its attempt to intimidate the two allies only upgraded their cooperation on nuclear deterrence. **MDT/AP**

IRAQ

PROTESTERS STORM SWEDISH EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD AHEAD OF PLANNED QURAN BURNING IN STOCKHOLM

ALI JABAR &
ABBY SEWELL, BAGHDAD

PROTESTERS angered by the planned burning of a copy of the Quran stormed the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad yesterday, breaking into the compound and lighting a small fire and setting off a diplomatic furor.

Online videos showed demonstrators at the diplomatic post waving flags and signs showing the influential Iraqi Shiite cleric and political leader Muqtada al-Sadr ahead of a planned burning of the Islamic holy book yesterday in Stockholm by an Iraqi asylum-seeker who burned a copy of the Quran in a previous demonstration last month.

Following the incident, the Swedish Embassy announced it had closed to visitors without specifying when it would reopen. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani convened a meeting with security officials and said in a statement afterwards that Iraqi authorities will prosecute those responsible for the arson as well referring "negligent security officials" for investigation.

However, the statement also said that the Iraqi government had informed its Swedish counterpart on Wednesday that Iraq would cut off diplomatic relations should the Quran burning go forward.

The videos showed dozens of men climbing over the fence at the complex, with the sound of them trying to break down a front door. Another showed what appeared to be a small fire being set. Other footage showed men, some shirtless in the summer heat, inside what appeared to be a room at the embassy, an alarm audible in the background.

Others later performed pre-dawn prayers outside of the embassy.

As dawn broke, police and other security officials gathered at the embassy as small plumes of smoke still rose. Firefighters tried to douse the flames from the ladder of a fire truck. Some demonstrators still stood at the site,



holding placards showing al-Sadr's face, apparently left alone by police.

The Swedish Foreign Ministry said in a statement that "our embassy staff are in safety," without elaborating. In a statement posted on its website Thursday, the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad said it is closed to visitors, but didn't specify how long the closure would last.

"We condemn all attacks on diplomats and staff from international organizations," the ministry said. "Attacks on embassies and diplomats constitute a serious violation of the Vienna Convention. Iraqi authorities have the responsibility to protect diplomatic missions and diplomatic staff."

Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström called the attacks "completely unacceptable" in a statement and said the ministry will summon Iraq's charge d'affaires in Stockholm, slamming Iraqi authorities for "seriously failing" in their responsibility to protect the embassy and its personnel.

The Finnish embassy in Baghdad is adjacent to the Swedish embassy, in an area enclosed by blast walls. Finland's ambassador to Iraq, Matti Lassila, told the Finnish public broadcaster YLE that the staff of the Swedish and Finnish embassies were

proactively evacuated Wednesday and were uninjured.

Iraq's Foreign Ministry also issued a statement condemning the attack, without explaining how it allowed the breach to happen or identifying who carried out the assault.

"The Iraqi government has instructed the competent security authorities to conduct an urgent investigation and take the necessary security measures in order to uncover the circumstances of the incident and identify the perpetrators of this act and hold them accountable according to the law," the Foreign Ministry said.

Iraqi police did not immediately acknowledge the attack.

Stockholm police spokesman Mats Eriksson confirmed that police had granted permission for a demonstration involving two people outside the Iraqi Embassy in Stockholm on Thursday. He could not say whether the protesters were planning to burn the Quran.

The right to hold public demonstrations is strong in Sweden and protected by the constitution. Blasphemy laws were abandoned in the 1970s. Police generally give permission based on whether they believe a public gathering can be held without major disruptions or risks to

public safety.

However, for Muslims, the burning of the Quran represents a blasphemous desecration of their religion's holy text. Quran burnings in the past have sparked protests across the Muslim world, some turning violent. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have suspended all the activities of Swedish organizations in the country in response to the recent Quran burning.

An Iraqi Christian immigrant last month burned a Quran outside a Stockholm mosque during the major Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, triggering widespread condemnation in the Islamic world. According to Swedish news agency TT, the same man was one of those who planned to burn the Quran on Thursday.

A similar protest by a far-right activist was held outside Turkey's Embassy earlier this year, complicating Sweden's efforts to convince Turkey to let it join NATO.

In June, protesters who support al-Sadr stormed the embassy in Baghdad during daylight hours over that Quran burning. Another day of protests saw thousands of demonstrators on the streets in the country. Protesters then, as well as early yesterday, called on Iraqi officials to expel Sweden's ambassador to Iraq. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1969 MAN TAKES FIRST STEPS ON THE MOON



American Neil Armstrong has become the first man to walk on the Moon.

The astronaut stepped onto the Moon's surface, in the Sea of Tranquility, at 0256 GMT, nearly 20 minutes after first opening the hatch on the Eagle landing craft.

Armstrong had earlier reported the lunar module's safe landing at 2017 GMT with the words: "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed."

As he put his left foot down first Armstrong declared: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

He described the surface as being like powdered charcoal and the landing craft left a crater about a foot deep.

The historic moments were captured on television cameras installed on the Eagle and turned on by Armstrong.

Armstrong spent his first few minutes on the Moon taking photographs and soil samples in case the mission had to be aborted suddenly.

He was joined by colleague Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin at 0315 GMT and the two collected data and performed various exercises - including jumping across the landscape - before planting the Stars and Stripes flag at 0341 GMT.

They also unveiled a plaque bearing President Nixon's signature and an inscription reading: "Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon July 1969 AD. We came in peace for all mankind."

After filming their experience with a portable television camera the astronauts received a message from the US President.

President Nixon, in the White House, spoke of the pride of the American people and said: "This certainly has to be the most historic telephone call ever made."

Many other nations - including the UK - sent messages of congratulation.

Moscow Radio announced the news solemnly in its 1030 GMT broadcast.

As Aldrin and Armstrong collected samples, Michael Collins told mission control in Houston he had successfully orbited the Moon in the mother ship Columbia, and take-off was on schedule for 1750 GMT this evening.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin spent a total of 21 hours on the Moon, two-and-a-half of them outside the landing module.

After re-joining the Columbia mothership the astronauts - including Collins - left the Moon's orbit on 22 July and returned to Earth on 24 July. The three men spent the next 21 days in quarantine at an American military base - a procedure dropped in subsequent missions since no alien organisms were found.

The Moon landing marked the pinnacle of the space race and American investment in the space programme declined accordingly. A further 10 astronauts travelled to the Moon in another six missions with the final manned lunar landing, Apollo 17, completed in December 1972.

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Don't trust coworkers with important or personal information. If you can work at home, do so. Do things that involve children.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Do not get involved in joint financial ventures. Entertainment could cost you more than you expect. Don't get upset. Lowered vitality could affect your work.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Your hard work and dedication will payoff, so stick to your guns and do your job well. Don't be critical or overly opinionated with dislikes.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Past partners may try to come back into your life. Don't let others know about your private affairs. You could be blind to the defects of those you love.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Your sensitivity toward those you love will capture their hearts. Real estate ventures will be to your advantage. They didn't fully understand what was expected.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You will have a tendency to exaggerate, which will lead to major confrontations with loved ones. Don't overspend to impress others. Put your thoughts on paper.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Turn your present relationship around or start a new one. New romantic partners will evolve through group endeavors; however, the association may not be likely to last.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Don't confide in any relatives whom you know have a tendency to meddle in other people's affairs. You will find that valuable knowledge can be gained if you are willing to listen.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You are best to avoid confrontations. Limitations at work might set you back. You will have an interest in foreigners and their cultures.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Romance appears. Don't be afraid to confront situations concerning loved ones in order to solve any problems that may exist. Someone left a real mess for you to sift through.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
New romantic partners may attend a function that puts you in the limelight. You'll find travel or involvement in large groups gratifying.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Help children complete projects they're having difficulty with. You will upset your partner if you have spent money on things that aren't necessary.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	26	rain
Changchun	21	31	cloudy
Chengdu	23	35	cloudy
Chongqing	25	32	rain
Fuzhou	26	35	rain
Guangzhou	26	34	cloudy
Guiyang	20	29	cloudy
Haikou	26	32	cloudy
Hangzhou	26	31	thunderstorms
Harbin	19	30	cloudy
Hefei	24	30	rain
Nanjing	24	30	rain
Shanghai	26	31	rain
Taipei	26	30	overcast
Wuhan	25	31	rain
Hong Hong	28	32	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	13	22	overcast
Frankfurt	12	22	rain
Paris	13	25	overcast
London	13	21	overcast
New York	21	26	thunderstorms

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Catch a view of; 5- Equipped; 10- Rescue; 14- Regan's dad; 15- Skedaddle; 16- Draft classification; 17- Winds up; 18- Taken in; 19- Hostleries; 20- Fish and chips fish; 21- Dominance; 23- Audition; 25- Dextrous, lively; 26- Capital of Poland; 29- Edible pale-bluish mushroom; 33- Sash; 35- Merrily; 37- Exclamation of relief; 38- Frat party purchases; 39- Photo finish; 40- Writer Bombeck; 41- "Evil Woman" band; 42- Skin openings; 43- Disney deer; 44- Pacific weather phenomenon; 46- Revolve; 48- Actress Merrill; 50- Head garland; 53- Capital of Illinois; 58- Lyric tribute; 59- Ersatz butter; 60- Make amends; 61- Say for sure; 62- Mailed; 63- Camp sights; 64- Actress Moore; 65- Cereal grain; 66- Clear the boards; 67- Fiddlesticks!

DOWN 1- Give a seat?; 2- Spanish Mister; 3- Prisoner transport; 4- Decade divs.; 5- Native Alaskans; 6- Harvest; 7- Spouse; 8- Partner of each; 9- Liable to be contradicted; 10- Evening party; 11- Years in old Rome; 12- Outlet; 13- Like duck soup; 21- Board on water; 22- Air France destination; 24- Long objects used to row a boat; 27- Lab culture; 28- Faucet stuff; 30- Reheated; 31- Metrical foot; 32- Pad ___; 33- ___-Ball; 34- Prison room; 36- Wishing won't make ___; 39- Circular gateway; 40- I could ___ horse!; 42- Nabokov novel; 43- Musical group; 45- Foolish persons; 47- "Honor Thy Father" author; 49- In search of; 51- Plant problem; 52- Worth; 53- Just okay; 54- This can be guilty or not guilty; 55- Hire; 56- New Rochelle college; 57- Tolkien tree creatures; 61- Append;

Yesterday's solution

R	O	B	E	S	A	C	H	E	S	M	A	R	
S	H	A	K	I	G	O	O	S	E	A	S	I	
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Cillian Murphy in a scene from "Oppenheimer."

DRIVE IN

A BOMB AND ITS FALLOUT IN CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S 'OPPENHEIMER'

JAKE COYLE,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

CHRISTOPHER Nolan's "Oppenheimer" is a kinetic thing of dark, imposing beauty that quakes with the disquieting tremors of a forever rupture in the course of human history.

"Oppenheimer," a feverish three-hour immersion in the life of Manhattan Project mastermind J. Robert Oppenheimer (Cillian Murphy), is poised between the shock and aftershock of the terrible revelation, as one character calls it, of a divine power.

There are times in Nolan's latest opus that flames fill the frame and visions of subatomic particles flutter across the screen — montages of Oppenheimer's own churning visions. But for all the immensity of "Oppenheimer," this is Nolan's most human-scaled film — and one of his greatest achievements.

It's told principally in close-ups, which, even in the towering detail of IMAX 70mm, can't resolve the vast paradoxes of Oppenheimer. He was said to be a magnetic man with piercing blue eyes (Murphy has those in spades) who became the father of the atomic bomb but, in speaking against nuclear proliferation and the hydrogen bomb, emerged as America's postwar conscience.

Nolan, writing his own adaptation of Martin J. Sherwin and Kai Bird's Pulitzer Prize-winning

2005 book "American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer," layers the build-up to the Manhattan Project with two moments from years later.

In 1954, a probing inquiry into Oppenheimer's leftist politics by a McCarthy-era Atomic Energy Commission stripped him of his security clearance. This provides the frame of "Oppenheimer," along with a Senate confirmation hearing for Lewis Strauss (Robert Downey Jr.), who chaired the Atomic Energy Commission and was a stealthy nemesis to Oppenheimer.

The grubby, political machinations of these hearings — the Strauss section is captured in black and white — act like a stark X-ray of Oppenheimer's life. It's an often brutal, unfair interrogation that weighs Oppenheimer's decisions and accomplishment, inevitably, in moral terms. "Who'd want to justify their whole life?" someone wonders. For the maker of the world's most lethal weapon, it's an especially complicated question.

These separate timelines give "Oppenheimer" — dimly lit and shadowy even in the desert — a noirish quality (Nolan has said all his films are ultimately noirs) in reckoning with a physicist who spent the first half of his life in headlong pursuit of a new science and the second half wrestling with the consequences of his colossal, world-altering invention.

"Oppenheimer" moves too fast to come to any neat conclusions. Nolan, as if reaching to match the electron, dives into the story at a blistering pace. From start to finish, "Oppenheimer" buzzes with a heady frequency, tracking Oppenheimer as a promising student in the then-unfolding field of quantum mechanics. "Can you hear the music, Robert?" asks the elder Danish physicist Niels Bohr (Kenneth Branagh). He can, absolutely, but that doesn't mean finding harmony.

Nolan, whose last film was the time-traveling, palindrome-rich "Tenet," may be the only filmmaker for whom delving into quantum mechanics could be considered a step down in complexity. But "Oppenheimer" is less interested in equations than the chemistry of an expanding mind. Oppenheimer reads "The Waste Land" and looks at modernist painting. He dabbles in the communist thinking of the day. (His mistress, Jean Tatlock, played arrestingly, tragically by Florence Pugh, is a party member.) But he aligns with no single cause. "I like a little wiggle room," says Oppenheimer.

For a filmmaker synonymous with grand architectures — psychologies mapped onto subconscious worlds ("Inception") and cosmic reaches ("Interstellar") — "Oppenheimer" resides more simply in its subject's fertile imagination and anguished

psyche. (The script was written in first person.) Nolan and cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema render Oppenheimer's interiority with flashes of images that stretch across the heavens. His brilliance comes from his limitlessness of thought.

Just how much "wiggle room" Oppenheimer is permitted, though, becomes a more acute point when war breaks out and he's tasked by Lt. Gen. Leslie Groves Jr. (Matt Damon) to lead the race to beat the Nazis to an atomic bomb. The rapid building of Los Alamos on the white-sand mesas of New Mexico — a site chosen by and with personal meaning to Oppenheimer — might not be so different than the erecting of movie sets for Nolan's massive films, which likewise tend to culminate with a spectacular explosion.

There is something inherently queasy about a big-screen spectacle dramatizing the creation — justified or not — of a weapon of mass destruction. Oppenheimer once called the atomic bomb "a weapon for aggressors" wherein "the elements of surprise and terror are as intrinsic to it as are the fissionable nuclei." Surely a less imperial, leviathan filmmaker than Nolan — a British director making an American epic — might have approached the subject differently.

But the responsibility of power has long been one of Nolan's chief subjects (think of the

all-powerful surveillance machine of "The Dark Knight"). And "Oppenheimer" is consumed with not just the ethical quandary of the Manhattan Project but every ethical quandary that Oppenheimer encounters. Big or small, they could all lead to valor or damnation. What makes "Oppenheimer" so unnerving is how indistinguishable one is from the other.

"Oppenheimer" sticks almost entirely to its protagonist's point of view yet also populates its three-hour film with an incredible array of faces, all in exquisite detail. Some of the best are Benny Safdie as the hydrogen bomb designer Edward Teller; Jason Clarke as gruff special counsel Roger Robb; Gary Oldman as President Harry Truman; Alden Ehrenreich as an aide to Strauss; Macon Blair as Oppenheimer's attorney; and Emily Blunt as Kitty Oppenheimer, the physicist's wife.

The greatest of all of them, though, is Murphy. The actor, a Nolan regular, has always been able to communicate something more disturbing underneath his angular, angelic features. But here, his Oppenheimer is a fascinating coil of contradictions: determined and aloof, present and far-away, brilliant but blind.

Dread hangs over him, and over the film, with the inevitable. The future, post-Hiroshima, is sounded most by the wail of children who will grow up in that world; the Oppenheimers' babies do nothing but cry.

When the Trinity test comes at Los Alamos after the toil of some 4,000 people and the expense of \$2 billion, there's a palpable, shuddering sense of history changing inexorably. How Nolan captures these sequences — the quiet before the sound of the explosion; the disquieting, thunderous, flag-waving applause that greets Oppenheimer after — are masterful, unforgettable fusions of sound and image, horror and awe.

"Oppenheimer" has much more to go. Government encroaches on science, with plenty of lessons for today's threats of annihilation. Downey, in his best performance in years, strides toward the center of the film. You could say the film gets bogged down here, relegating a global story to a drab backroom hearing, preferring to vindicate Oppenheimer's legacy rather than wrestle with harder questions of fallout. But "Oppenheimer" is never not balanced, uncomfortably, with wonder at what humans are capable of, and fear that we don't know what to do with it.

"Oppenheimer," a Universal Pictures release is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for some sexuality, nudity and language.
Running time: 180 minutes.



TASTE OF EDESIA

Sparkling Summer

IRENE SAM, MDT

LAI Heen, the Michelin-starred restaurant at **The Ritz-Carlton**, Macau, is unveiling its latest Exclusive Sparkling Tea Pairing Lunch, featuring Chinese Executive Chef, Jackie Ho Hon-sing's signature dishes paired with Saicho's premium single-origin sparkling tea. This collaboration marks Saicho's launch in Macau with an exclusive partnership with The Ritz-Carlton, Macau.

Saicho is an award-winning single-origin sparkling tea brand launched in London in 2019. The luxurious British-Hong Kong brand is redefining the art of tea-making by creating unique and refreshing sparkling teas that are crafted using a low-temperature steeping process. Saicho sources the highest quality teas from the gardens around the world, selecting only the most unique and flavorful varieties. Saicho's three tea flavors – Darjeeling, Hojicha, and Jasmine – showcase a wide range of bold and distinctive tastes that complement the refined Cantonese cuisine in Lai Heen perfectly.

The Exclusive Sparkling Tea Pairing Lunch at Lai Heen is a

culinary journey that reveals the restaurant's finest Cantonese cuisine expertly paired with Saicho's sparkling teas. The menu features a sumptuous selection of dim sum, signature appetizers, nourishing soup, a main course, and a delightful dessert. Each dish is paired perfectly with Saicho's selected single-origin sparkling tea, enhancing the flavors of the premium ingredients. The Crispy Bean Curd with Iberico Ham and the signature Roasted 3-Layer Pork Belly are paired with Saicho's Darjeeling Tea, known for its unique Darjeeling muscatel flavor from the Himalayan highlands in India. After the Stirred-fried Iberico Pork and Fried Rice with Walnuts, guests can savor Saicho's Hojicha, a full-bodied tea from Shizuoka Prefecture in Japan, with a refreshing toasted aroma and a lingering follow through flavor. For dessert, the Chilled Pandan Leaves Milk with Nostoc and Honey is paired with Saicho's Jasmine Tea, a delicate green tea from Fujian Province in China, adding the floral bouquet of Jasmine to the dining experience and enriching the dessert's flavor with notes of apple sherbet, lychee, and vanilla.



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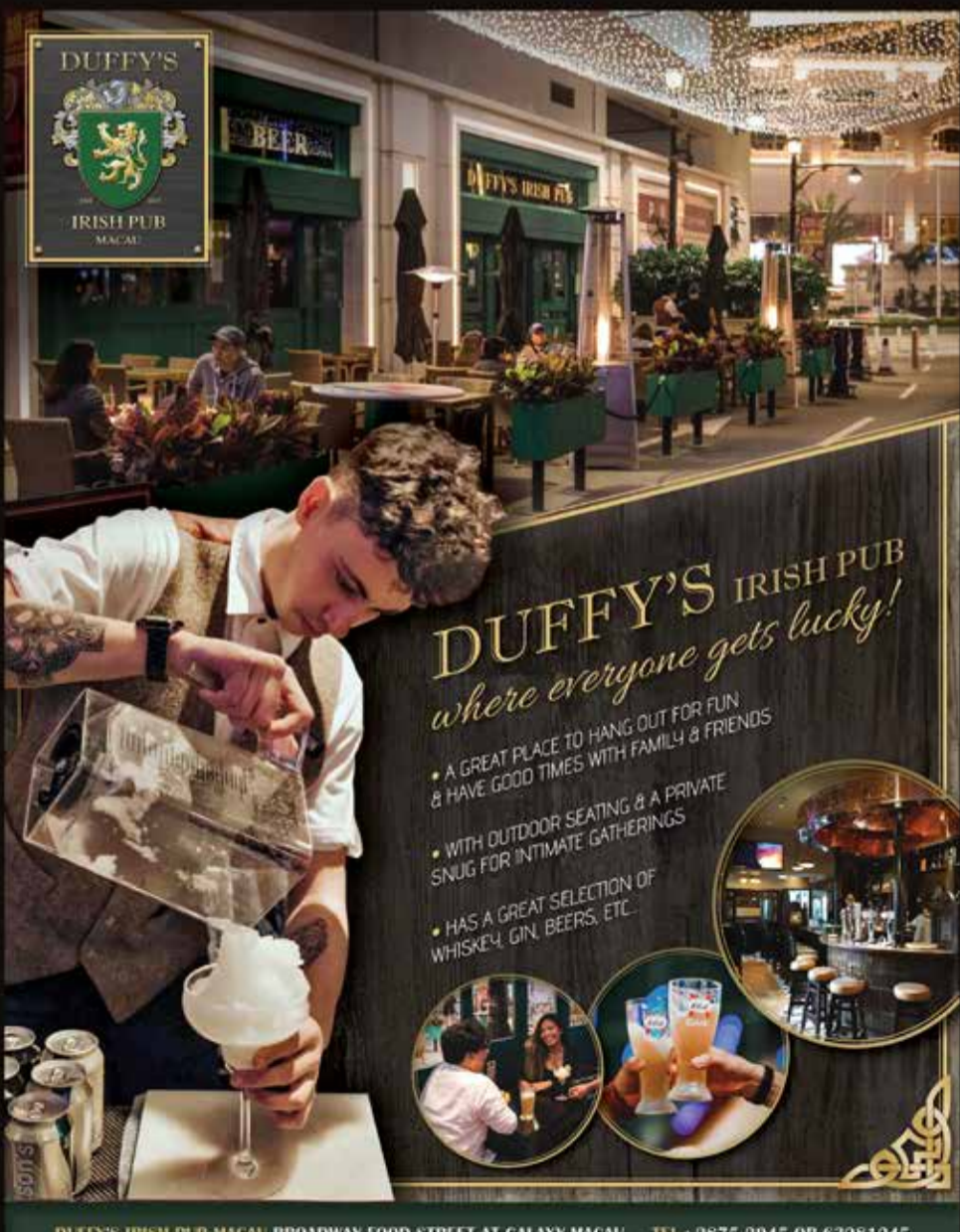
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OPINION

The Conversation

Anna Nagurney, UMass Amherst

**WHY RUSSIA PULLED OUT
 OF ITS GRAIN DEAL WITH
 UKRAINE - AND WHAT
 THAT MEANS FOR THE
 GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM**

The Russia-Ukraine grain deal that has been critical to keeping global food prices stable and preventing famine is currently in tatters. On July 17, 2023, Russia said it was pulling out of the year-old deal, which allowed shipments of grains and other foodstuffs to travel past the Russian naval blockade in the Black Sea. And to make matters worse, over the next two days Russia bombed the Ukrainian grain port of Odesa, destroying over 60,000 tons of grain.

As a result, food prices have surged, with the cost of wheat, corn and soybeans in Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere all skyrocketing.

So, what is the grain deal, and why is it so important to the global food supply chain?

Anna Nagurney is an expert on supply chains, including those involving perishable products like food, and is co-chair of the board of directors overseeing the Kyiv School of Economics in Ukraine. She explains how important Ukrainian grain is to feeding the world – and why the Black Sea is a vital route to getting it to people who need it.

What makes Ukraine such an important part of the global food supply chain?

Ukraine has been called the breadbasket of Europe and is a major supplier of wheat, barley, sunflower products and corn to Europe as well as to developing countries such as in the Middle East, Northern Africa and China.

More than 400 million people relied on foodstuffs from Ukraine before Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

One key reason for that is Ukraine has approximately one-third of the world's most fertile soil, which is known as chernozem, or black soil. And before the war, Ukraine was able to rely on its year-round access to ice-free harbors in the Black Sea to ship grains to nearby markets in the Middle East and Africa.

What happened when war broke out?

Even before the war, famine was increasing across the globe. Russia's invasion made it a lot worse.

From 2019 to 2022, more than 122 million people were driven into hunger by a combination of the impacts of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the United Nations said in a recent report. Other researchers have suggested global hunger is the highest it's been since at least the early 2000s.

From February to June 2022, at least 25 million tons of Ukrainian grain intended for global markets got trapped in Ukraine because of Russia's naval blockade, causing food prices to jump.

How did the grain deal come about?

The U.N. and Turkey brokered what is officially known as the Black Sea Grain Deal with Ukraine and Russia on July 22, 2022.

The agreement allowed for the secure passage of agricultural products from Ukraine from three ports on the Black Sea, including its largest port, Odesa. While the original agreement was to last 120 days, it has been extended several times since.

Ukraine has exported more than 32 million tons of food products through the Black Sea since August 2022. The World Food Program, the world's largest humanitarian agency, purchased 80% of its wheat from Ukraine. Ethiopia, Yemen, Afghanistan and Turkey have been the biggest recipients of humanitarian shipments.

The U.N. has estimated that the grain deal has reduced food prices by more than 23% since March 2022.

[Abridged]

German authorities warned people in Berlin's southern suburbs yesterday to watch out for a potentially dangerous animal, suspected to be a lioness, that was on the loose.

Police in Brandenburg state, which surrounds the capital, issued a warning in the early morning hours of an "escaped wild animal" and asked people in and around Kleinmachnow, Teltow and Stahnsdorf — just outside Berlin's city limits — not to leave their houses and to bring their pets indoors.

The warning was later extended to southern areas of Berlin and an alert was sent on an official warning app that the animal was suspected to be a lioness. A vet and two hunters were participating

in a search for the creature, which also involved helicopters. Police had no immediate information on who owned it.

Two men reported seeing a big cat running after a wild boar, the latter common in and around Berlin, police spokesperson Daniel Keip told local public broadcaster rbb.

Neither of Berlin's two zoos nor any circuses or animal shelters in the area were missing a lioness.

The local council said that child daycare centers were open, but children weren't being allowed into their outside yards, and the town hall remained open. Traders at the town's market were recommended not to set up stalls.

**FLOODED WITH SIGHTSEERS,
 EUROPE'S ICONIC
 CHURCHES STRUGGLE TO
 ACCOMMODATE BOTH
 WORSHIP AND TOURISM**

GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO,
 BARCELONA

A recent Saturday evening Mass at Sagrada Familia parish had all the hallmarks of a neighborhood worship service, from prayers for ill and deceased members to name-day wishes for two congregants in the pews.

But it also featured security checks to get in and curious tourists peering down to take photos of the worshippers from above. The regular Mass is held in the crypt of modernist architect Antoni Gaudí's masterpiece church, one of Europe's most visited monuments.

With tourism reaching or surpassing pre-pandemic records in Barcelona and across southern Europe, iconic sacred sites are struggling to accommodate the faithful who come to pray and the millions of visitors who often pay to view the art and architecture.

"We're working to get ahead of this, so that we don't get to a collapse," said the Rev. Josep Maria Turull, rector at Sagrada Familia and the Barcelona archdiocese's director for tourism, pilgrimage and sanctuaries.

An increasingly popular strategy is to have visitors and the faithful go separate ways — with services held in discrete places, visits barred at worship times, or altogether different entry queues.

This spring, the Vatican opened a separate "pathway" starting outside St. Peter's Basilica for those who want to enter to pray or attend Mass, so they wouldn't be discouraged by sometimes hours-long lines for the average of 55,000 daily visitors, said Basilica spokesperson Ro-



AP PHOTO

berta Leone.

But the challenge remains: how to balance the churches' competing roles amid the tourism surge without sacrificing their spiritual purpose.

"It's just really hard because you also want people to experience your faith," said Daniel Olsen, a Brigham Young University professor who researches religious tourism. With an estimated 330 million people visiting religious sites yearly around the world, it's one of the tourism market's largest segments.

Worshippers, who often come because celebrated churches tend to have more services than regular parishes, need free access even as tourists often pay fees that are crucial to maintaining the sites.

"The temple needs to be a place for services and not a theme park," said Joan Albaiges after Mass in the Sagrada Familia crypt, which he's attended regularly for six decades.

He praised the move in recent years to celebrate one multilingual Sunday Mass at the main altar in the soaring, color-filled basilica. There's such demand for the 800 free tickets, however, that several hundred people queuing routinely don't get in, Turull said.

Lay and religious leaders say the histories of the sacred sites should be presented to visitors, who are increasingly unfamiliar with faith traditions in rapidly secularizing countries where lesser-known churches are emptying out or being repurposed.

"Some people go to the cathedral, and they don't realize they're in a church. It's a situation that's developing in nations that were majority Christian, and now faith is cooling off," said José Fernández Lago, rector of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

Filled with masterpieces from Romanesque sculpture to lavish Baroque decorations, Santiago's cathedral attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists and pilgrims who since the Middle Ages have traveled along the Camino routes to venerate St. James's tomb.

To preserve its role as a revered pilgrims' church, Lago said, the cathedral doesn't charge entry fees, cap visitor numbers or require a dress code. On a hot early summer morning, a steady stream of pilgrims ducked each other's selfie sticks in front of the jewel-encrusted St. James statue, some still in tight cycling shorts or sweat-stained hiking shirts. MDT/AP



AP PHOTO

Ukraine A third night of Russian air attacks pounded Ukraine's southern cities, including the port of Odesa, and wounded at least 21 people, Ukrainian officials said yesterday. At least 19 people were injured overnight in Mykolaiv, a southern city close to the Black Sea, the region's Governor Vitalii Kim said in a statement on Telegram.



AP PHOTO

Turkey and the United Arab Emirates have signed deals worth \$50.7 billion as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan rounded off a three-country tour of the Gulf. "Today we have witnessed the signings of several strategic agreements worth a total of \$50.7 billion to further cement ties between the UAE and Turkey," Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek tweeted. The agreements involve export financing, earthquake bonds, energy, defense and other sectors.



AP PHOTO

Greece Firefighting aircraft and ground crews from other countries headed to Greece yesterday to help battle wildfires that have intensified as a heat wave baked much of southern Europe in temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius. New evacuations were ordered Wednesday as wildfires raged near Athens. In a round-the-clock battle to preserve forests, industrial facilities and vacation homes, evacuations continued for a third day yesterday along a highway connecting the capital to the southern city of Corinth.

Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met with top officials after the longshore union renewed a 72-hour strike notice. The notice was later rescinded by the union which shut down ports on Canada's west coast earlier this month for nearly two weeks. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada said late Wednesday in a brief note to its locals in British Columbia that the strike notice set for July 22 at 9 a.m. "has now been removed."