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AP PHOTO



China's foreign minister visited Cambodia over the weekend to reaffirm his country's commitment to the southeast Asian country after its incumbent prime minister handed off the job to his son following a one-sided election last month, officials said. Wang Yi is the first foreign leader to visit Cambodia, days after Hun Sen's announcement that his 45-year-old son and the country's army chief, Hun Manet, is replacing him.

AP PHOTO



Malaysia After a checkered victory in Saturday's state elections that saw strong gains by the Malay-Islamist opposition, analysts say Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim faces a daunting task in uniting an increasingly polarized nation and strengthening his nascent unity government. Anwar's multi-coalition unity government and the opposition Perikatan Nasional (PN) bloc, that includes the conservative Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, retained control of three states each, as widely expected.

AP PHOTO

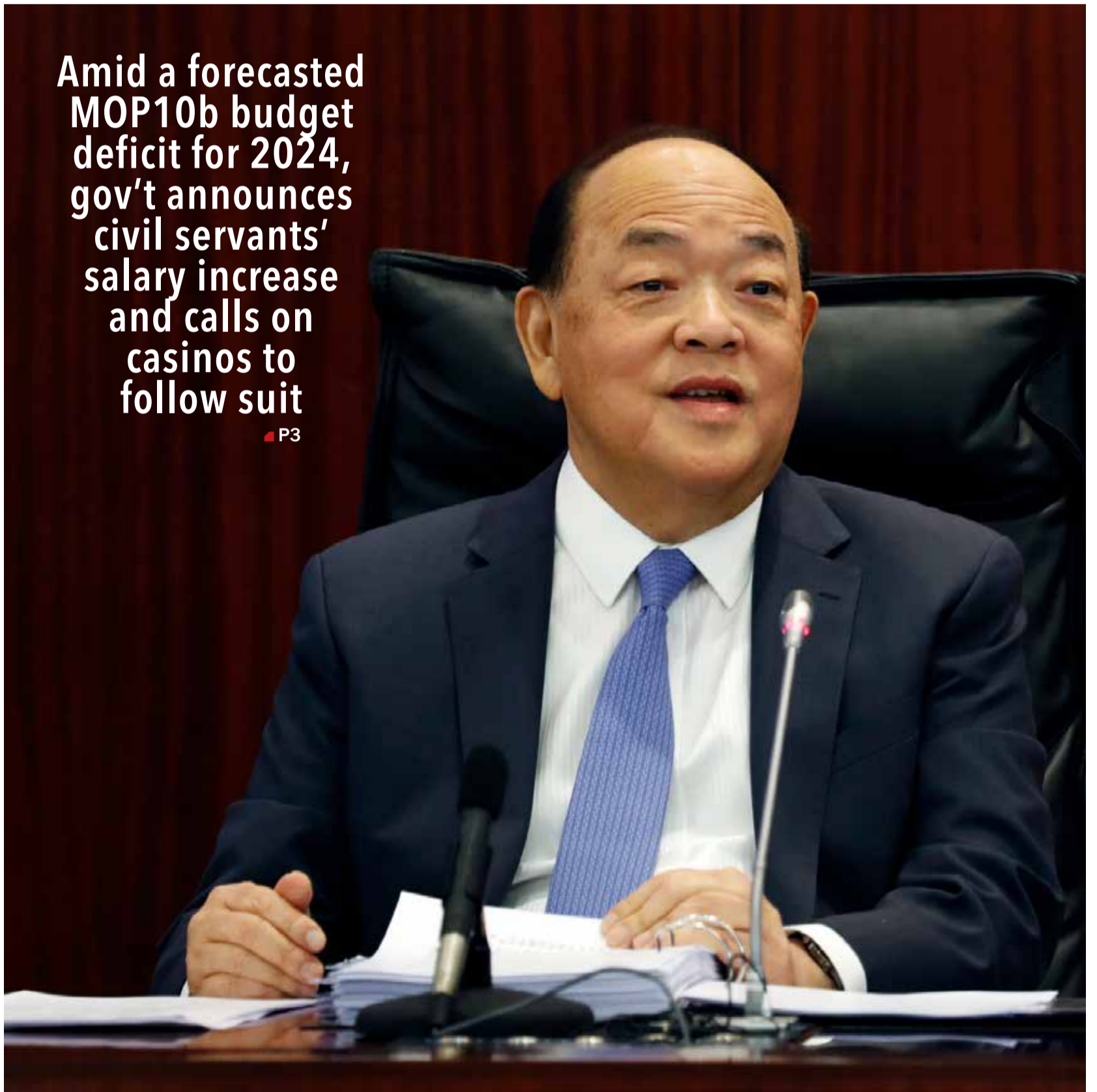


Emirates Western-backed maritime forces in the Middle East on Saturday warned shippers traveling through the strategic Strait of Hormuz to stay as far away from Iranian territorial waters as possible to avoid being seized, a stark advisory amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. A similar warning went out to shippers earlier this year ahead of Iran seizing two tankers traveling near the strait, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of the world's oil passes.

BUDGET DEFICITS

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CE ELECTION LAW

ANDRÉ CHEONG: CANDIDATES' INELIGIBILITY TO FILE FOR APPEAL DO NOT VIOLATE BASIC LAW

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**CIVIL AVIATION
AUTHORITIES STRENGTHEN
AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT**

Mainland, Hong Kong and Macau civil aviation authorities have discussed the latest developments in the air traffic management of the Pearl River Delta Region as well as measures to optimize airspace flow management in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area. According to a statement from the Civil Aviation Authority, the mainland, Hong Kong, and Macau Tripartite Flow Management Technical Working Group Meeting focused on the integration of the Hong Kong and Macau regions into the national traffic management system, a topic which has been under continuous discussion in recent years.

SME LOANS DOWN 15%

In the first half of 2023, Macau banks approved the new SME credit limit totaling MOP6.4 billion, down 15.4% from the second half of 2022, according to data from the Monetary Authority of Macao. Compared to the previous survey period, outstanding SME loans to "manufacturing industries" and "restaurants, hotels and similar" increased 5.2% and 2.6%, respectively, whereas those loans to "construction and public works" and "wholesale and retail trade" sectors both decreased by 1.4%. At end-June 2023, the outstanding balance of delinquent SME loans was MOP1.2 billion.

**MGTO SHOWCASES CITY'S
OFFERINGS IN SINGAPORE**

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) and a Macau trade delegation have showcased Macau's elements of "Tourism+" to Singaporeans at the Singapore Expo Hall. The office held a travel trade networking event concurrently to attract Singaporean visitors to Macau, as part of the effort to tap into international visitor markets for tourism and economic revival. Singapore is already among Macau's top 10 visitor source markets, according to visitor arrivals in June. In 2019, Macau welcomed 115,742 visitors from Singapore.

**PJ WARNS PUBLIC
OF FAKE SMS**

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has detected fake SMS messages whereby swindlers claim victims "missed their court hearing over fraud charges and will be executed by firing squad unless they click the embedded link to download an identified app." In a statement, the PJ advises the public to stay vigilant regarding such messages. It also warned the public to avoid downloading unknown applications.

PUBLIC WORKS

CONSTRUCTION OF NORTH OF LRT EAST LINE COMMENCES

STAFF REPORTER

WORKS for the 2.74km northern section of the East Line that forms part of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) network in Macau has commenced.

In February, the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) received six bids for the construction of the section north of the LRT East Line that will connect Pac On in Taipa to Border Gate, passing through the Zone A of the new landfills.

The DSOP has also indicated it hopes the construction can start as early as the second half of this year.

The contract was signed with a joint venture led by China Civil Engineering that also includes Nanguang Real Estate, China Railway 16th Bureau, China Railway Fourth Academy and others.

According to the plan, the



new section has three stations.

The northern part of the

East Line is a section that starts at the Border Gate and goes to the fourth LRT

station located midway into the Zone A of the new landfills with a total length of 2.9 kilometers.

The underground northern section of the East Line will run entirely in a twin-bore tunnel to be excavated using tunnel boring machines (TBMs).

The northern section is expected to relieve congestion at the northern border crossing into mainland China, to the benefit of both tourists and local residents.

The northern section of the East Line is the third LRT project undertaken by China Civil Engineering in Macau.

This is also the contractor's second LRT project to include the construction of an undersea tunnel.

The government expects the East Line of the LRT will be completed and ready to begin operating in 2028.

CE ELECTION LAW

Cheong: Candidates' ineligibility to file for appeal do not violate Basic Law

THE bill to amend the Chief Executive election law will standardize the qualifications of committee members, executive council spokesperson Andre Cheong has said.

If they are judged ineligible for election, they cannot file a statement of objection or judicial appeal, he clarified.

Asked whether the non-appealable practice would violate the Basic Law, Cheong, spokesman and Secretary for Administration and Justice, said it is 100% certain that there is no violation of the Basic Law.

Meanwhile, the 45-

day public consultation process on the revision of the bill has received more than 2,000 suggestions.

More than 90% of the opinions agree with the revision of the election law, and less than 3.5% oppose it. Cheong said that the government respects all opinions, but it needs to make choices based on mainstream opinions, and it will deeply consider opposing opinions so that the law can be improved.

In June, the government announced it would amend the bill to include a provision requiring the city's gaming concessionaires



to maintain neutrality during the election.

The city's next election will take place in

2024. Each term of the Macau CE runs for five years, with members eligible for re-election

for a second five-year term. The CE is elected by a college composed of 400 members. LV

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Gov't forecasts 2024 deficit despite MOP200b on expected gaming revenues

RENATO MARQUES

THE government is preparing to forecast another deficit in 2024, the Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, admitted at the Legislative Assembly (AL) Friday, where he was to participate in the last Q&A session with the lawmakers of this legislative year.

At the session, responding to an inquiry from lawmaker Ella Lei, the CE said next year's budget is still expected to have greater expenses than revenues, hinting the budget could be some MOP10 billion short of being balanced.

This is despite the government's forecast of about MOP200 billion in gaming revenue, which is expected to grow 53.85% compared to 2023.

The CE's statement has a direct consequence upon the residents' Central Provident Fund accounts. The government ended the regular annual transfer of MOP7,000 in 2020 as these fund injections are attached to the government's accounts surplus.

The CE said that despite next year's budget still being in the red, the government is not cut-



ting any population livelihood benefits, which will remain untouched for 2024.

The topic seems to anticipate debate to come later this year when the CE will present the Policy Address for 2024 (LAG24), as several lawmakers have previously called for the resumption of the injection of the money into the provident fund accounts to

support those of an older age (above 65 years old), who can withdraw such funds immediately.

While the policies of Ho's predecessor, Chui Sai On, focused on the accumulation of funds in the government accounts with some of the surplus to be invested and some to be shared among the population via subsidies and providence funds.

Ho's government meanwhile directs the spending of government earnings, especially those from the gaming industry, into building new facilities.

During the Q&A session, the CE took questions from 31 members of the AL.

Other topics discussed included consumer prices, employment, education, and talent de-

velopment policies, preparations for the national games, development of the cultural and tourism industry, population support policies, protection of consumer rights, the wealth partaking scheme, caring for the elderly and for the disadvantaged, public administration reform, e-government, transportation and environmental protection.

LABOR

CE announces salary increase to civil servants, calls on casinos to follow suit

RENATO MARQUES

THE Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, has said a proposal to increase government workers' salaries was sent to the Committee for Evaluation of the Remuneration of Civil Servants two months ago.

Ho was responding to lawmakers' questions about the topic during Friday's Legislative Assembly plenary session dedicated to a question-and-answer session with members.

Although the CE did not state the increase in percentual terms, he said "next year [would] be ... good timing for a salary increase."

"We already presen-

ted a proposal to the Committee for Evaluation of the Remuneration of Civil Servants some two months ago. I believe [2024] is a good year for salary increase but I am not the one deciding over that matter. There is a mechanism to decide on this and the workers are also part of it," the CE said, adding also that a different proposal to raise the minimum wage is also in discussion at the Standing Committee for the Coordination of Social Affairs.

At the same opportunity, the CE also called on the gaming concessionaires, which are the six major employers besides the government,

to follow suit and take this opportunity to increase their workers' salaries.

Although Ho admitted that is not up to the government to push private entities in any way or interfere in their internal decisions, he hopes those major companies can assume their social responsibilities.

"I can only negotiate with the gaming concessionaires and hope that post-pandemic they can assume their social responsibilities. We can and will follow up on this matter, but we cannot order them to do so. This we cannot do, as the government cannot interfere in the market," the CE remarked.

PROJECT HAC SA

CE IN FAVOR OF BUILDING KUN IAM STATUE IN HAC SA RESERVOIR PARK

RENATO MARQUES

THE Chief Executive (CE), Ho Iat Seng, has said he is in favor of construction of the monument dedicated to the Kun Iam goddess that is planned for the Hac Sa Reservoir Park.

Ho was responding to an inquiry from lawmaker Ron Lam during last Friday's question-and-answer session at the Legislative Assembly.

The CE said that, despite the expenditure restraints the government is following, there is enough money to build the project. He said it can have a positive effect, noting that the construction of such a monument could have a positive repercussion on tourism.

"Many people during the pandemic have also called for the construction of the statue of Kun Iam [to allegedly bring peace]," he said.



He said Sanya (Hainan Island) had become famous and can attract many tourists because of its statue of the Kun Iam goddess.

According to several tourism agencies and online promoters consulted by the Times, Sanya is heavily promoted as China's premier beach destination. It has gained popularity due to its white-sand beaches, clear

waters, mountain ranges and tropical climate.

Sanya is also a popular destination for surfers.

Pre-pandemic, Sanya was awarded the 2020 edition of the Asian Beach Games, which due to the pandemic outbreak was postponed to this year. The games will include 16 sports (counting 19 disciplines).

SPORTS

ID: GOV'T PROVIDING BETTER SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ATHLETES COMPARED TO OTHER REGIONS

STAFF REPORTER

THE Sports Bureau (ID) has said the local government is supporting Macau athletes better than other regions.

Pun Weng Kun told state broadcaster TDM full-time athletes in Macau are currently receiving a personal subsidy of at least MOP10,000 per month.

If they need to leave Macau for training, the government will fully cover expenses for training, food, housing and transportation. According to the TDM report, Pun said those admitted to the training center are subsidized as to their daily food and training needs, "a support better than the support provided by other regions."

Pun also explained that authorities will also provide subsidies of MOP1,500 per month to athletes who are not full-time or have limited training time.

The ID has previously disclosed that elite athletes are entitled

RENATO MARQUES



to remuneration ranging from MOP1,500 to MOP25,000 per month, with the highest level received by gold medalists at World Championships or Asian Games. At the recent 31st FISU World University Games, Macau took home seven medals: one gold, three silver and three bronze.

To promote the professional de-

velopment of competition sports, the government has formulated an athlete training subsidization scheme to cultivate elite athletes. The government has published its criteria for talent acquisition, under which world champion athletes and Olympic or Asian Games gold medalists will be eligible to apply for residency in Macau.



GBA

NEW DRUG INTRODUCED UNDER 'MEDICINE AND EQUIPMENT CONNECT' PUT INTO USE

On the morning of Aug. 9, a patient and resident in Hengqin surnamed Luo received the first injection of the imported drug, Inclisiran, at the Hengqin branch of the Zhuhai People's Hospital.

This new drug has been introduced under the "Medicine and Equipment Connect" policy, which enables the import of medicines and equipment that are already on the market and used in public hospitals in Hong Kong and Macau, and are urgently needed for clinical use in the mainland.

Inclisiran, as a prefilled injection, is the world's first small interfering RNA lipid-lowering


drug for cardiovascular disease. It is mostly used in patients with hyperlipidemia, and those who are unable to tolerate statins or those with familial hypercholesterolemia.

In February, the Zhuhai People's Hospital (Hengqin Branch) was listed in the second batch of designated medical institutions in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area for "Medicine and Equipment Connect".

The hospital is expected to introduce more international medicine and devices to serve the local residents, providing clinicians and patients in Hengqin with more choices in treatment.

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Gov't to build park with ice-skating rink in Taipa

THE government plans to build a leisure area in Taipa in front of the two plots of land being auctioned for residential development, the Chief Executive (CE) told the Legislative Assembly Friday.

According to the CE, the park, covering over 15,000 square meters, will include an underground ice-skating rink to allow local youth to engage in this sport.

"There is no such facility in Macau, not even in Zhuhai. Local people need to go all the way to Shenzhen if they want to practice this sport," Ho said, noting that if the city has enough space to allow the construction of this new type of facility, why not do it in Macau.

The facility, dubbed the government's latest idea, will also include an underground parking lot as well as other leisure and entertainment areas,



the CE said.

The CE did not disclose information as to when the government plans to present this project to the population, nor start pre-

parations for its construction.

Officially, the government has not yet disclosed the purpose of the plot of land. **RM**

TECH

Huawei reports sales, profit up despite US sanctions

CHINESE tech giant Huawei on Friday reported its revenue rose 3% over a year earlier in the first half of 2023 and its profit margin widened despite sanctions that block access to U.S. processor chips and other technology.

China's first global tech brand has responded to U.S. curbs that devastated its smartphone brand by increasing emphasis on selling network gear to hospitals, ports, electric car brands and other industrial customers it believes will be less vulnerable to sanctions.

Revenue in the six months ending in June rose 3.1% to 310.9 billion yuan (\$43.1 billion), Huawei Technologies Ltd. said. It gave no profit figure but said its profit margin was 15%, which would be about 45 billion yuan (\$6.5 billion) and an increase over the 4.3% margin in the first quarter of this year.

Sales by its infrastructure unit were 167.2 billion yuan (\$23.2 billion), according to Huawei. Consumer sales were 103.5 billion yuan (\$14.3 billion). Sales by the fledgling automotive unit, which supplies network and other technology for electric cars, were 1 billion yuan (\$138.6 billion).

Huawei struggled after then-President Donald Trump cut off



access to U.S. processor chips and other technology in a feud with Beijing over technology and security. American officials say the company is a security risk and might facilitate Chinese spying, which Huawei denies.

In 2020, then-chairman Eric Xu said the company was "back to business as usual" despite sanctions.

The company is the biggest global maker of network equipment for phone and internet companies. It sold its lower-priced Honor smartphone brand in 2020. It still sells handsets under

its Huawei brand but focuses on the China market while sales abroad have plunged.

Huawei reported earlier 2022 profit fell 70% to 35.6 billion yuan (\$5.2 billion) while sales rose 0.9% to 642.3 billion yuan (\$93.5 billion).

Half of Huawei's 207,000 employees work in research and development. The company says it has been able to develop replacements for U.S. components. Huawei says it has made breakthroughs in developing its own design tools for processor chips. **MDT/AP**



UK

ECONOMY UNEXPECTEDLY GROWS BY 0.2% IN SECOND QUARTER LARGELY BECAUSE OF JUNE WEATHER BOOST

PAN PYLAS, LONDON

THE British economy unexpectedly grew in the second quarter of the year, largely as a result of a strong rebound in June when many businesses particularly in the leisure sector benefited from the warm and settled weather, official figures showed Friday.

The Office for National Statistics said the economy expanded by 0.2% in the April to June period, compared with the previous three-month period. That was higher than the 0.1% recorded in the first quarter and ahead of economists' expectations for no change.

Despite the increase, the British economy is the only Group of Seven leading industrial economy yet to recoup the ground lost during the coronavirus pandemic, with many economists blaming Britain's departure from the European Union, which has hobbled trade and added costs to businesses.

"The big picture is that the U.K. economy has expanded by just 0.4% since the start of 2022, the weakest growth in 65 years outside of a full-blown recession," said James Smith, research director at the Resolution Foundation think tank.

The positive second-quarter outcome was largely due to a 0.5% monthly increase in June when pubs and restaurants were buoyed by the hot weather. June in Britain was the warmest on record.

Given that July was one of the wettest ever, there are widespread expectations that those businesses benefiting in June will see a reverse.

Over the past few months, the British economy has proven slightly more resilient than anticipated in the face of rising interest rates and multiple strikes across many sectors, including doctors in the early stages of their careers in England, who started their latest four-day walkout on Friday. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Artyzen Grand Lapa co-presents 'Interior Landscapes' exhibition



Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau has announced its partnership with Amagao Gallery in introducing the "Interior Landscapes" Exhibition.

This collaborative showcase presents works of Mozambican artist Suzy Bila and aligns with the Art Macao: Macao International

Art Biennale 2023.

Bila stated, "My art reflects life's responses to questions. Each moment carries its unique intensity, unscripted and unforeseen."

"Amid life's hardships, we're transformed; and in absolute silence, we hear the earth's agonizing cries. In this place, I allow myself to feel my senses, where sky meets sea," she added.

Meanwhile, a "Paint Your Fantasy" workshop will be hosted by Bila until today. Designed for children aged 7-14, this workshop will commence at 2:30 p.m. in the hotel's NAAM Garden and is expected to last approximately three hours.

Hong Kong singer Hacken Lee to kick off Sands China's concert series



Sands China Ltd., in cooperation with Emperor Entertainment Group (EEG), has announced the introduction of residency shows

at the state-of-the-art The Londoner Arena. The concert series will kick off this September featuring Hong Kong's singing sensation,

Hacken Lee. Tickets will go on sale on Aug. 22.

Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., said: "We view this first cooperation as just the beginning in terms of world-class performers being in residence at The Londoner Arena, and we will continue to bring more top-tier performers on board to support the development of the concert economy."

Lee will have four 'Hacken Lee Symphonic Live in Londoner with Macao Orchestra' in-residency concerts in 2023 from Sept. 29 to Oct. 2, and the remainder in 2024. Concertgoers can expect Lee's signature fusion of pop and classical music with the elevated accompaniment of the Macao Orchestra.



CHINA EVACUATES RESIDENTS AND SEARCHES FOR MUDSLIDE VICTIMS AS STORMS LASH PARTS OF THE COUNTRY

TENS of thousands of people have been evacuated from their homes in China's southwest after heavy rain caused hillsides to collapse, while two people died and 16 are missing following a mudslide in the country's west, state media reported this weekend.

Meanwhile, a powerful storm

lashed China's northeast, leading to a breach in a river dike and the cancellation of at least 20 trains.

Parts of China suffer heavy rains and flooding every summer, but this year has been unusually severe in some areas, while other regions struggle with drought that is damaging crops.

Rescuers were searching for

survivors after a mudslide killed at least two people Friday on the outskirts of the city of Xi'an, Xinhua reported. It said roads, bridges and power supplies were damaged.

In the southwest, some 81,000 people were evacuated from high-risk areas of Sichuan province, the China News Service reported. It said heavy rain caused hillsides

to collapse and disrupted traffic, but there was no word of deaths or injuries.

The remnants of storm Khanun, downgraded from typhoon status, were forecast to dump up to 40 millimeters of rain per hour on the northeastern city of Changchun and surrounding Jilin province, the Xinhua News

Agency reported.

State TV showed a 500-member military construction brigade working in the dark Friday night to close a 90-meter-long (300-foot-long) breach in a river dike in Fuyu, a city in Jilin. They drove steel rods into the ground and piled up hundreds of sandbags to fill the gap.

More than 20 trains were canceled in Shenyang, the biggest city in the northeast, and surrounding Liaoning province, according to state TV. Xinhua said the port city of Dalian in Liaoning forecast winds up to 88 kph.

Also in the northeast, six rivers and reservoirs in Heilongjiang province were above warning levels, according to Xinhua.

Khanun pummeled parts of Japan as a typhoon before weakening over the Korean Peninsula on its way to China.

A total of 142 people nationwide were killed by flooding, landslides and mountain torrents in July, according to the Ministry of Emergency Management.

The capital, Beijing, and neighboring Hebei province last week suffered their heaviest rainfall in at least 140 years, according to the government.

On Friday, the Hebei government raised the death toll in floods this month caused by Typhoon Doksuri to at least 29.

The official death toll from floods in Beijing rose to 33 this week. The government said it could take up to three years for power and other services to be completely restored. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

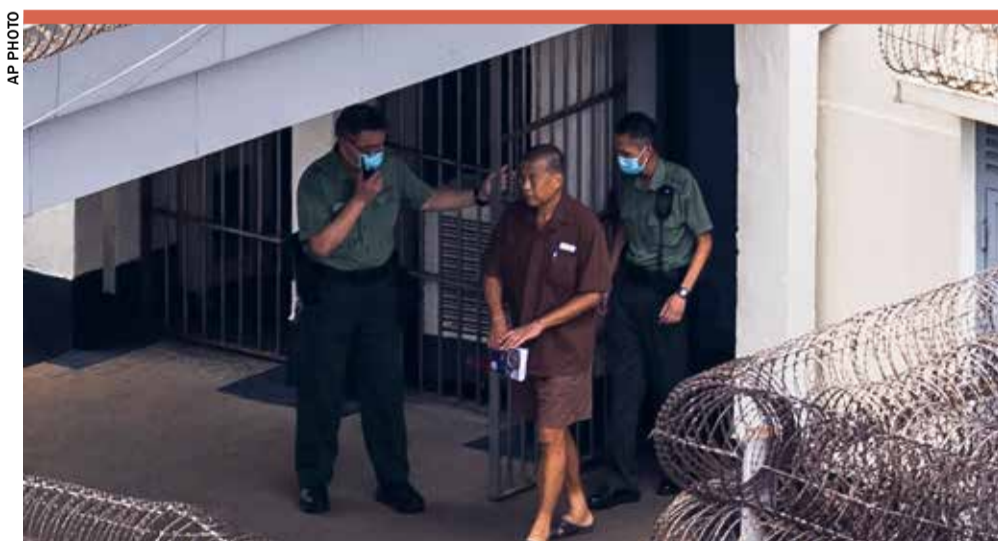
A rare glimpse of jailed pro-democracy publisher Lai

LOUISE DELMOTTE,
HONG KONG

JIMMY Lai, a former newspaper publisher and one of Hong Kong's most prominent pro-democracy activists, spends around 23 hours a day in solitary confinement in a maximum-security facility while he awaits a trial that could send him to prison for life.

In exclusive photos taken by The Associated Press in recent weeks, the 75-year-old Lai can be seen with a book in his hands wearing shorts and sandals and accompanied by two guards at Stanley Prison. He looks thinner than when he was last photographed in February 2021.

Lai is allowed out for 50 minutes a day to exercise. Unlike most other inmates, who play football or exercise in groups, Lai walks alone in what appears to be a 5-by-10-meter en-



Jimmy Lai walks through the Stanley prison in Hong Kong (July 28)

sure surrounded by barbed wire under Hong Kong's punishing summer sun before returning to his unairconditioned cell in the prison.

The publisher of the now-defunct Apple Daily newspaper, Lai disappeared from public view in December 2020 following his arrest under a security law imposed by Beijing to crush

a massive pro-democracy movement that started in 2019 and brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets. More than 250 activists have been arrested under the security law and vanished into the Hong Kong legal system.

Photographers used to be able to catch a glimpse of activists in remand at

another detention center in Lai Chi Kok as they were taken to and from court. Authorities started blocking this view in 2021 by making the detainees walk through a covered pathway.

In a separate case, an appeals court is due to rule Monday on a challenge that Lai and six other activists have had filed against their

conviction and sentencing on charges of organizing and taking part in an unauthorized assembly nearly four years ago. The others are Lee Cheuk-yan, Margaret Ng, Leung Kwok-hung, Cyd Ho, Albert Ho and Martin Lee.

Lai, a British national, is accused of colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiring to call for sanctions or blockades against Hong Kong or China. He also faces a charge of conspiracy to print seditious publications under a colonial-era law increasingly used to crush dissent.

He was scheduled to go on trial last December, but it was postponed to September while the Hong Kong government appealed to Beijing to block his attempt to hire a British defense lawyer.

"My father is in prison because he spoke truth to

power for decades," Lai's son, Sebastien, said in a May statement to a U.S. government panel, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China.

"He is still speaking truth to power and refusing to be silenced, even though he has lost everything and he may die in prison," Sebastien Lai said. "I am very proud to be his son."

Lai is allowed two 30-minute visits by relatives or friends each month. They are separated by glass and communicate by phone.

In a separate case, he was sentenced in December to almost six years in prison on fraud charges.

Lai, who suffers from diabetes and was diagnosed with high blood pressure in 2021 while in detention, is treated as a Category A prisoner, a status for inmates who have committed the most serious crimes such as murder. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

New embassy planed near the Tower of London stall amid local opposition

DANICA KIRKA, LONDON

CHINA'S plans to build a new embassy near the Tower of London have stalled following local opposition to what would be the biggest diplomatic compound in Britain.

The borough of Tower Hamlets, the local government council in London responsible for the area, blocked the project in February, citing concerns about the increased risk of terror attacks, protests and traffic in an area visited by millions of tourists each year.

Chinese authorities had until last week Thursday to appeal the decision to the U.K. government but did not, Tower Hamlets said.

"If the applicant wanted to appeal through the public inquiry procedure then they would have already needed to have given notice to us as the local planning authority," Tower Hamlets said in a statement. "We haven't received any such notification from the applicant."



The Tower of London with the backdrop of the City of London

China's plans called for comprehensive redevelopment of a 5.2-acre site that was home to the Royal Mint from 1811 to 1968, demolishing some of the existing buildings and restoring others. The new embassy compound would include some 57,000 square meters of floor space, including offices, a cultural exchange building and 225 apartments.

That's about 18% bigger than the new U.S. embassy in London,

which opened in 2018 with 48,000 square meters of space.

While Tower Hamlets planning officials recommended authorizing the project, the borough council voted on Feb. 10 to refuse planning permission.

The Chinese Embassy in London called on the British government to intervene.

"It is the international obligation of the host country to provide facilitations and support for the

construction of diplomatic premises," the embassy in a statement. "We urge the U.K. side to fulfill its relevant international obligations."

British authorities did not comment on the Chinese Embassy proposal, which in theory could come before the central government, where the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities oversees the planning system.

But the government said it takes

its "obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations extremely seriously and we will continue to do so," and stressed that planning decisions are made by local councils, which give applicants the opportunity to appeal.

There is growing concern in the U.K. about Chinese investments in critical infrastructure, as well as allegations that it has attempted to influence British politicians and university researchers.

The Tower Hamlets council said the proposed embassy compound would strain local police resources, increase road congestion and have a negative impact on the area surrounding Tower of London.

"The proposed embassy would result in adverse impacts on local tourism, due to concerns over the effect of potential protests, acts of terrorism and related security mitigation measures on the sensitive backdrop of nationally significant tourist attractions," the council said in announcing its decision.

MDT/AP

TAIWAN

NO 2 LEAVES ON PARAGUAY TRIP AMID CHINESE EFFORTS TO ISOLATE THE ISLAND

TAIJING WU, TAIPEI

TAIWAN'S no. 2 left this weekend on a trip to Paraguay to reinforce relations with his government's last diplomatic partner in South America at a time when China is stepping up efforts to isolate the self-ruled island democracy.

William Lai's trip includes stops in San Francisco and New York City, which Beijing criticized Washington for allowing. Taiwan is part of China's territory and Beijing says it has no right to conduct foreign relations.

Lai was due to attend the inauguration of Paraguayan President-elect Santiago Peña tomorrow.

Lai said he would meet officials of other governments "so that the international society understands Taiwan is a country that persists in its democracy, human rights and freedom and actively takes part in international affairs."

Paraguay is part of a dwin-

dling group of 12 governments that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. They are mostly small, poor countries in Africa and the Caribbean. Taiwan lost a partner this year when Honduras switched official recognition to Beijing.

China's vastly larger economy and population mean most governments have official relations with Beijing, though many, including the United States, maintain informal relations with Taiwan.

Peña visited Taiwan in July and told leader Tsai Ing-wen his country would "stand with the people of Taiwan" during his five-year term.

President Xi Jinping's government has stepped up efforts to intimidate Taiwan by flying fighter jets and bombers near the island and firing missiles into the sea. Some American and European politicians have responded by flying to Taiwan in a show of support.

Taiwanese officials

usually stop in the United States en route to and from Latin America and meet with U.S. officials, which irritates Beijing.

The Taiwanese government gave no indication Lai was due to meet American officials.

Lai was scheduled to have lunch Sunday [early today, Macau time] in New York City with Taiwanese living there before leaving for Paraguay. En route home, he planned to stop in San Francisco for a dinner with Taiwanese there.

The Chinese foreign ministry said earlier it would "monitor developments" and was ready to take "resolute and forceful measures to defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

China launched war games around Taiwan in April after Tsai met House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in Los Angeles while traveling home from Central America. MDT/AP

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NIGER COUP

Junta gains upper hand over regional bloc threatening military force, analysts say

SAM MEDNICK, NIAMEY

ONE week after a deadline passed for mutinous soldiers in Niger to reinstate the country's ousted president or face military intervention, the junta has not acquiesced. No military action has been taken and the coup leaders appear to have gained the upper hand over the regional group that issued the threat, analysts say.

The West African regional bloc ECOWAS had given the soldiers that overthrew Niger's democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum until last Sunday to release and reinstate him or they threatened military action. On Thursday, the bloc ordered the deployment of a "standby" force to restore constitutional rule in Niger, with Nigeria, Benin, Senegal and Ivory Coast saying they would contribute troops.

But it's unclear when, how or if the troops will deploy. The move could take weeks or months to set into motion, and while the bloc decides what to do the junta is gaining power, some say.

"It looks the putschists have won and will stay ... The putschists are holding all the cards and have cemented their rule," said Ulf Laessing, head of the Sahel program at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

ECOWAS is unlikely to intervene militarily and risk dragging Niger into civil war, he said, adding that ECOWAS and Western countries would instead likely press the junta to agree to a short transition period.

Europe and the United States will have little choice but to recognize the junta in order to continue the security cooperation in the region, Laessing said.

The July 26 coup is seen as a major blow to many Western nations, which saw Niger as one of the last partners in the conflict-riddled Sahel region south of the Sahara Desert that they could work with to beat back a growing jihadi insurgency



linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. The U.S. and France have more than 2,500 military personnel in the region and together with other European countries have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in military assistance and training Niger's forces.

There was still little clarity about what would happen days after ECOWAS announced the "standby" force deployment.

A meeting of the region's defense chiefs was postponed indefinitely. The African Union is expected to hold a meeting on Monday to discuss Niger's crisis. The group's Peace and Security Council could overrule the decision if it felt that wider peace and security on the continent was threatened by an intervention.

The delay of the defense chiefs' meeting to discuss the "standby" force shows that ECOWAS views the use of force as a last resort, said Nate Allen, an associate professor at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

"Given the likely challenges an intervention would face, (the use of force would) require a high degree of consensus and coordination not just within ECOWAS, but within the African Union and international community writ large," he said.

But those with ties to the junta say they are preparing for a fight, especially since

the soldiers are unwilling to negotiate unless ECOWAS acknowledges its leader, Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, who overthrew the president, as the new ruler.

"ECOWAS is demanding that (the junta) immediately release president Bazoum and restore him as head of state. Is this a joke?" said Insa Garba Saidou, a local activist who assists Niger's new military rulers with their communications and says he is in direct contact with them. "Whether Bazoum resigns or not, he will never be Niger's president again."

As time drags on, there is mounting concern for Bazoum's safety, who has been under house arrest with his wife and son since the coup. Those close to him say his situation is deteriorating with no water, electricity and a lack of food. Niger's junta told a top U.S. diplomat that they would kill the deposed president if neighboring countries attempted any military intervention to restore his rule, two Western officials told The Associated Press.

Most Nigeriens are trying to go about their lives as the standoff continues between the coup leaders and regional countries.

For the most part, the streets in the capital, Niamey, are calm with sporadic pockets of pro-junta demonstrations. On Friday

hundreds of people marched toward France's military base demanding the French leave while waving Russian flags.

Mercenaries from the Russian-linked Wagner group already operate in a handful of other African countries and are accused of committing human rights abuses. Earlier this month during a trip to neighboring Mali, which is also run by a military regime and cooperates with Wagner, the junta reportedly asked the mercenaries for help.

But many Nigeriens don't have time for protests and are more focused on feeding their families.

The country of some 25 million people is one of the poorest in the world and the harsh travel and economic sanctions imposed by ECOWAS are taking a toll.

Moussa Ahmed, a food seller in Niamey, said the prices of food items such as cooking oil and rice have increased by 20% since the coup and there isn't enough electricity to power the fridges in his shop. Niger gets up to 90% of its power from neighboring Nigeria, which has cut off some of its supply.

Aid groups operating in the country that were grappling with the challenges of helping more than 4 million people who need humanitarian assistance say the crisis will exacerbate an already dire situation. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1980 SHIPYARD POLES STRIKE FOR THEIR RIGHTS



Shipyards workers in Gdansk, Poland, have staged a successful strike in protest over the dismissal of militant crane driver Anna Walentynowicz.

The strike at the Lenin shipyard is seen as part of a growing campaign to gain political freedoms and to improve economic conditions for Poland's labour force.

Numbering some 16,000, the workers secured Miss Walentynowicz's swift reinstatement and then elected her to the workers' committee, which negotiates with the Polish authorities and shipyard management.

Today the committee won a number of political and economic concessions, including the promise of more accurate media coverage of the industrial unrest that has beset the country over the summer.

Workers are also demanding the right to form their own genuine representative bodies instead of subscribing to official trade unions.

The Gdansk region has a history of strike action to secure greater freedoms. In 1970, rioting shipyard workers forced the incumbent Communist Party leader, Wladyslaw Gomulka, out of office.

Today the shipyard workers have persuaded the authorities to erect a monument in memory of those who died during the 1970 police brutality.

The workers' key economic demands include a pay rise of 40% and family allowances equal to those enjoyed by members of Poland's security forces.

There have been reports that the current party leader, Edward Gierek, was recently blamed for the unrest by a Warsaw party committee. Mr Gierek has yet to return from a holiday in the Soviet Union.

Tonight Polish television appealed for calm and "level-headedness" in its first mention of "work stoppages" since the strikes began in June.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Edward Gierek, like his predecessor, had his political reputation ruined by the Gdansk-led labour unrest, and subsequently resigned. Poland's bid for political and social freedom grew out of strong co-operation between workers, intellectuals and its Roman Catholic Church, who worked together to spread information and resist the communist regime.

The reinstatement of Anna Walentynowicz brought only a temporary halt to the unrest. Stoppages continued until the government finally caved in and agreed to recognise the right of independent trade unions with a deal signed on 31 August.

In September 1980 Solidarity (Solidarnosc) was formed, the workers' first independent trade union, led by shipyard electrician Lech Walesa.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 You can make excellent career moves if you are open to the opportunities that exist. New relationships could evolve through group activities.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Difficulties relating to children will be stressful. Good day for romance. You are best to sit back and think it through, rather than add to the ranting and raving.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Don't overreact if your partner has a poor attitude. Children may be demanding, and entertainment could cost a lot more than you can really afford.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Relatives will want to get together. You may have a problem dealing with elders. New relationships could evolve through group activities.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Make career changes that may increase your income. You could have a need to make some changes today. Short trips will prove to be more fruitful than you imagined.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Your romantic inclination should lead to a committed relationship. Check into art objects or precious stones. You can do well in group endeavors.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Plan to get together with someone special later in the day. Risky ventures may turn in your favor. You could have a need to make some changes today.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Loved ones may be annoyed if they feel restricted. Your emotional life may be up in the air if your mate has been going through a change of heart.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Be sure to question any detail that you feel could leave you in a precarious position at a later date. Work quietly at your own goals and forget about situations that you can do little about.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Take the whole family and make it an enjoyable outing. Your creative talent may well be recognized by others today. You may have some difficulties with someone you live with.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Go out shopping today. Don't lend or borrow money or belongings. Emotional upset may prevail on the domestic scene if you have neglected your duties or your mate.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Don't hesitate to go ahead with any plans for entertainment. Club memberships or donations could be expensive and prove unnecessary.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

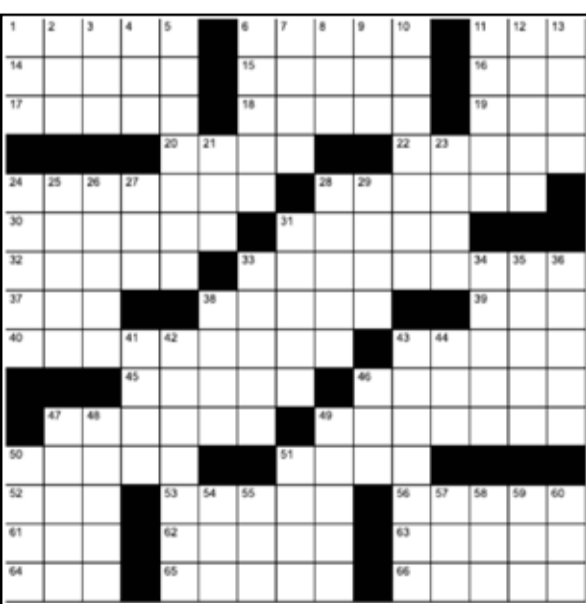
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	30	cloudy
Changchun	18	27	cloudy
Chengdu	24	32	showers
Chongqing	29	35	cloudy
Fuzhou	26	32	rain
Guangzhou	26	33	thunderstorms
Guiyang	20	29	showers
Haikou	27	34	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	26	35	cloudy
Harbin	16	27	cloudy
Hefei	24	33	overcast
Nanjing	25	33	cloudy
Shanghai	27	34	fine
Taipei	26	30	rain
Wuhan	24	36	fine
Hong Kong	29	33	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	16	26	fine
Frankfurt	11	24	fine
Paris	18	28	overcast
London	17	26	overcast
New York	19	27	thunderstorms

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Relaxes; 6- Spring up; 11- Acorn dropper; 14- Speed skater ___ Anton Ohno; 15- Early evening; 16- Palm Pilot, e.g.; 17- Outdo; 18- Hot spots; 19- Freight weight; 20- Coop group; 22- France's longest river; 24- Debating; 28- Republic in W Europe; 30- ___-tung; 31- Still in the game; 32- Girder; 33- Count; 37- Gangster's gun; 38- Hackneyed; 39- Poivre's partner; 40- Or else; 43- "Cheers" waitress; 45- Thaw before takeoff; 46- Sight; 47- Richards of "Jurassic Park"; 49- Restaurant in Greece; 50- Fiddled; 51- Stir up; 52- Old California fort; 53- Dostoyevsky novel, with "The"; 56- Chopper topper; 61- Road with a no.; 62- Sherpa's home; 63- Glossy; 64- Implement used when rowing a boat; 65- Garden figure; 66- Host;

DOWN 1- Polish off; 2- Spring mo.; 3- Former coin of France; 4- "Slippery" tree; 5- False argument; 6- For ___ (cheap); 7- Guns; 8- "___ had it!"; 9- D.C. VIP; 10- Shackle; 11- Sight-related; 12- Love deeply; 13- Welles role; 21- Hydrocarbon suffix; 23- Doozy; 24- Uruguayan friend; 25- Capital of Morocco; 26- Pride ___ before...; 27- Tony-winning Hagen; 28- Wind instrument; 29- Hoar; 31- Licorice-like flavor; 33- "All My Children" vixen; 34- Light ___; 35- Mortise insert; 36- Actress Verdugo; 38- Matching; 41- Singer Adams; 42- Passage in a particular text; 43- Varied; 44- British verb ending; 46- Batman after Michael; 47- Trunk line; 48- U-Haul competitor; 49- Name; 50- Mower brand; 51- Travel aimlessly; 54- Lair; 55- Wall St. debut; 57- Unit of resistance; 58- Mannerism; 59- Half and half?; 60- Cereal grass;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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1,663 ft² | HKD11,800/mth



NAM LONG
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890 ft² | HKD3,988,000



VA FAT
2 bed 1 bath
830 ft² | HKD3,980,000



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FOOTBALL

Messi scores again, Inter Miami tops Charlotte 4-0 to make Leagues Cup semifinals

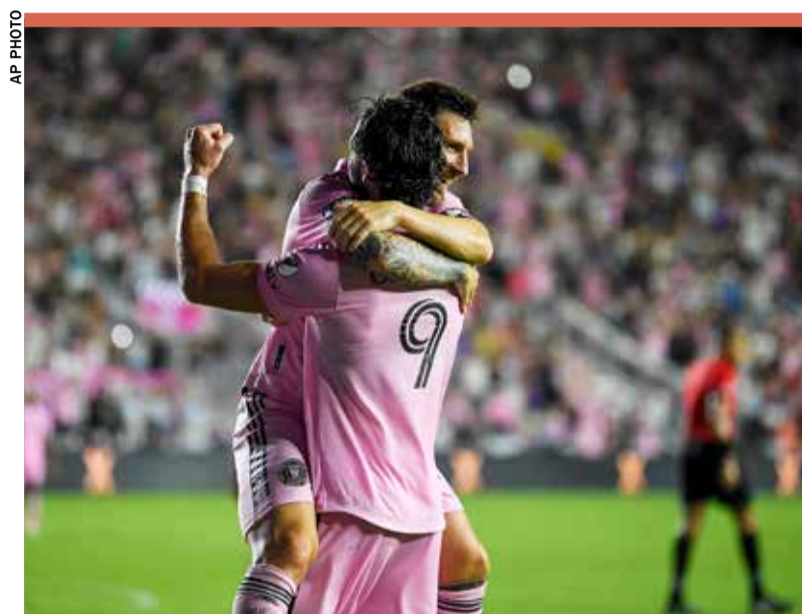
TIM REYNOLDS, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.

LIONEL Messi's goal-scoring streak lives on, as does Inter Miami's winning streak.

Messi scored in the 86th minute, his eighth goal in five matches with his new club, and Inter Miami rolled past Charlotte 4-0 in a Leagues Cup quarterfinal on Friday night.

The goal was set up by Leonardo Campana, who split two defenders with a pass from the low left of the penalty area. Messi redirected the pass by another defender into the wide-open net, then trotted toward Campana and leaped into his arms with a broad smile.

"When you have Messi, you know he just needs a chance. He just needs one second," Charlotte coach Christian Lattanzio said. "You have to be very sharp to stop him from producing the magic he's been producing since he went



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi celebrates his goal against Charlotte FC with Leonardo Campana (9) during the second half of a Leagues Cup soccer match Friday, Fort Lauderdale, FL

to Barcelona when he was 16."

Messi has scored in all five of his appearances with Miami. The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner who led Argentina to the World Cup crown last year has yet to lose

a match with Miami, walking off winners in all five matchups so far in the Leagues Cup, a 47-team event composed of clubs from MLS and Mexico's top league.

Next up for Messi and his new

club: a semifinal Tuesday at Philadelphia, which topped Queretaro 2-1.

Messi passed Minnesota's Bongokuhle Hlongwane for the lead in Leagues Cup goals; each entered Friday with seven in four matches. Minnesota was eliminated with a 5-0 loss at Nashville.

Josef Martinez and Robert Thomas also had goals for Miami, an own goal set up by some serious Messi pressure late in the second half resulted in another score, and then Messi provided the perfect clincher in the final moments.

It was the second consecutive game and third time in four outings in which Miami scored four goals, part of the massive turnaround of team that is in last place in Major League Soccer's Eastern Conference.

"It's beautiful to play with each other again," said midfielder Sergio Busquets, a former Messi teammate with Barcelona.

The team appeared to have close to just about another sellout

at 22,000-seat DRV PNK Stadium, even on a night where the South Florida sports landscape was loaded. The Miami Dolphins were playing their preseason opener at home, the Miami Marlins played host to the New York Yankees, and Miami Heat guard Tyler Herro was headlining a pro-am league championship game inside a packed high school gym.

But Messi-mania lived on, as would be expected. And the fans in those new pink No. 10 jerseys left happy once again, a far cry from what life was like for Inter Miami backers before the Messi era started.

Before Messi: Inter Miami had won five of 22 MLS matches this season.

With Messi: Inter Miami has won all five of its Leagues Cup matches, and now is just two wins from a trophy with a team that looks nothing like a last-place MLS club since Messi, Busquets, Jordi Alba and coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino arrived. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

World Views

Hillel Italie, MDT/AP



FICTION WRITERS FEAR THE RISE OF AI, BUT ALSO SEE IT AS A STORY TO TELL

For a vast number of book writers, artificial intelligence is a threat to their livelihood and the very idea of creativity. More than 10,000 of them endorsed an open letter from the Authors Guild this summer, urging AI companies not to use copyrighted work without permission or compensation.

At the same time, AI is a story to tell, and no longer just in science fiction.

As present in the imagination as politics, the pandemic or climate change, AI has become part of the narrative for a growing number of novelists and short story writers who only need to follow the news to imagine a world upended.

"I'm frightened by artificial intelligence, but also fascinated by it. There's a hope for divine understanding, for the accumulation of all knowledge, but at the same time there's an inherent terror in being replaced by non-human intelligence," said Helen Phillips, whose upcoming novel "Hum" tells of a wife and mother who loses her job to AI.

"We've been seeing more and more about AI in book proposals," said Ryan Doherty, vice president and editorial director at Celadon Books, which recently signed Fred Lunzker's novel "Sike," featuring an AI psychiatrist.

"It's the zeitgeist right now. And whatever is in the cultural zeitgeist seeps into fiction," Doherty said.

Other AI-themed novels expected in the next two years include Sean Michaels' "Do You Remember Being Born?", in which a poet agrees to collaborate with an AI poetry company; Bryan Van Dyke's "In Our Likeness," about a bureaucrat and a fact-checking program with the power to change facts; and A.E. Osworth's "Awakened," about a gay witch and her titanic clash with AI.

Authors are invoking AI to address the most human questions.

In Sierra Greer's "Annie Bot," the title name is an AI mate designed for a human male. For Greer, the novel was a way to explore her character's "urgent desire to please," adding that a robot girlfriend enabled her "to explore desire, respect, and longing in ways that felt very new and strange to me."

Some authors aren't just writing about AI, but openly working with it.

Sean Michaels centers his new novel on a poet named Marian, in homage to poet Marianne Moore, and an AI program called Charlotte. He said the novel is about parenthood, labor, community, and also "this technology's implications for art, language and our sense of identity."

Believing the spirit of "Do You Remember Being Born?" called for the presence of actual AI text, he devised a program that would generate prose and poetry, and uses an alternate format in the novel so readers know when he's using AI.

In one passage, Marian is reviewing some of her collaboration with Charlotte.

"The preceding day's work was a collection of glass cathedrals. I reread it with alarm. Turns of phrase I had mistaken for beautiful, which I now found unintelligible," Michaels writes. "Charlotte had simply surprised me: I would propose a line, a portion of a line, and what the system spat back upended my expectations. I had been seduced by this surprise."

And now AI speaks: "I had mistaken a fit of algorithmic exuberance for the truth."

[Abridged]

KUWAIT AND LEBANON MOVE TO BAN 'BARBIE' AHEAD OF FILM'S MIDEAST RELEASE

THE BUZZ

"Barbie" is set to open across the Middle East last week, but moves by Kuwait and Lebanon to ban the film for allegedly threatening conservative values have raised questions over how widely it will be released. The film centered upon the anatomically improbable American dolls contains no overt sexuality or references to LGBTQ+ rights.

But it seems to have drawn fire because of its sheer flamboyance and broad message of inclusion and gender equality in a region where homosexuality is widely seen as taboo. Kuwait announced

its ban, saying the film promotes "ideas and beliefs that are alien to the Kuwaiti society and public order," without elaborating, according to a statement published by the state-run KUNA news agency.

In Lebanon, Culture Minister Mohammad Mortada said the film was found to "contradict values of faith and morality" and to "promote homosexuality and sexual transformation." His request to ban the film was forwarded to Lebanon's General Security agency, which falls under the Interior Ministry and traditionally handles censorship decisions.

AP PHOTO



HAWAII

AS DEATH TOLL FROM MAUI FIRE REACHES 93, AUTHORITIES SAY EFFORT TO COUNT THE LOSSES IS JUST STARTING

CLAIRE RUSH, JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER & BEATRICE DUPUY, LAHAINA

As the death toll from a wildfire that razed a historic Maui town reached 93, authorities warned Saturday that the effort to find and identify the dead was still in its early stages. It's already the deadliest U.S. wildfire for over a century.

Crews with cadaver dogs have covered just 3% of the search area, Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said.

"We've got an area that we have to contain that is at least 5 square miles and it is full of our loved ones," noting that the death toll is likely to grow and "none of us really know the size of it yet."

He spoke as federal emergency workers picked through the ashen moonscape left by the fire that razed the centuries-old town of Lahaina. Teams marked the ruins of homes with a bright orange X to record an initial search, and HR when they found human remains.

Pelletier said identifying the dead is extremely challenging because "we pick up the remains and they fall apart ... When we

find our family and our friends, the remains that we're finding is through a fire that melted metal." Two people have been identified so far, he said.

Dogs worked the rubble, and their occasional bark — used to alert their handlers to a possible corpse — echoed over the hot and colorless landscape.

"It will certainly be the worst natural disaster that Hawaii ever faced," Gov. Josh Green remarked Saturday as he toured the devastation on historic Front Street. "We can only wait and support those who are living. Our focus now is to reunite people when we can and get them housing and get them health care, and then turn to rebuilding."

At least 2,200 buildings were damaged or destroyed in West Maui, Green said, of which 86% were residential. Across the island, he added, damage was estimated at close to \$6 billion. He said it would take "an incredible amount of time" to recover.

The confirmed death toll was later raised to 93 from the total of 89 announced in a press conference with Green and other officials.

At least two other fires

have been burning on Maui, with no fatalities reported thus far: in south Maui's Kihei area and in the mountainous, inland communities known as Upcountry. A fourth broke out Friday evening in Kaanapali, a coastal community north of Lahaina, but crews were able to extinguish it, authorities said.

Green said the Upcountry fire had affected 544 structures, of which 96% were residential.

Emergency managers in Maui were searching for places to house people displaced from their homes. As many as 4,500 people are in need of shelter, county officials said on Facebook early Saturday, citing figures from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Pacific Disaster Center.

He encouraged those with missing family members to go to the family assistance center.

"We need you to do the DNA test. We need to identify your loved ones," Pelletier said.

Those who escaped counted their blessings, thankful to be alive as they mourned those who didn't make it. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Russia thwarted an attack by 20 Ukrainian drones targeting Moscow-annexed Crimea overnight, the Russian Defense Ministry said Saturday. Fourteen drones were shot down by Russian air defenses and a further six were jammed electronically, the ministry said in a Telegram post. No casualties or damage were reported. Kyiv officials neither confirmed nor denied Ukraine's involvement in the attacks. Videos circulated on Russian social media Saturday appearing to show smoke rising above a bridge linking Russia to Crimea.

AP PHOTO



Poland's defense minister said Saturday that the country has increased the number of troops protecting its border with Belarus as a deterrent amid "destabilizing" actions by its pro-Russian neighbor. Mariusz Blaszczak met in Jarylowka, in eastern Poland, with some of the troops recently deployed close to the Belarus border. He insisted that the increased military presence is purely a deterrent move, not a hostile act, as Minsk and Moscow are claiming.

AP PHOTO



Ecuador Authorities moved the leader of one of Ecuador's most powerful gangs into a maximum-security prison Saturday, three days after the assassination of a presidential candidate who had denounced threats from the feared criminal. President Guillermo Lasso said the relocation of Los Choneros leader Adolfo Macias, alias "Fito," was meant "for the safety of citizens and detainees." The gang boss was moved out of a jail with lighter security into a maximum-security prison in the same large complex of detention facilities in the port city of Guayaquil.