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2023MIECF: CESL ASIA PRESENTS AN INTELLIGENT MANAGEMENT PLATFORM THAT AIMS TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE WAY COMPANIES MANAGE THEIR ASSETS, PEOPLE

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GRANDE HOTEL REOPENS TODAY AFTER 27 LONG YEARS

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GALAXY POSTED NET REVENUES OF HKD15.7 BILLION IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2023, UP 141% YEAR-ON-YEAR

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AP PHOTO



Thai authorities said yesterday they have seized more than a ton of pangolin scales worth over 50 million baht that are believed to have been headed out of the country through a land border. The scales that cover a type of anteater were found Wednesday night in the northeastern province of Kalasin, and apparently were meant to be transported out through Mukdahan province, which shares a border with Laos, Thai police said at a news conference in Bangkok.

AP PHOTO



India Days of relentless rain in the Himalayan region have killed at least 72 people this week, as a heavy monsoon triggered landslides and flash floods that have submerged roads, washed away buildings and left residents scrambling for safety. Rescuers in the mountainous Himachal Pradesh state have been working through challenging weather conditions to save people trapped under mud and debris from the rains that struck over the weekend. India's weather department has put the state on high alert and expects the downpours to continue over the next few days.

AP PHOTO



Pakistan Police in eastern Pakistan arrested 129 Muslims overnight after a Muslim mob angered over an alleged desecration of the Quran attacked churches and homes of minority Christians, prompting authorities to summon soldiers to restore order. The Christians living in the city of Jaranwala in the Faisalabad district quickly moved to safer places as the mob rampaged, and there were no casualties from what was one of the country's most destructive attacks against Christians.

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XI CALLS FOR 'HISTORIC PATIENCE'

Amid economic woes, China's gov't is trying to reassure jittery homebuyers after a major real estate developer missed a payment on its multibillion-dollar debt

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AP PHOTO



TRANSPORT

GOV'T TO OPEN TENDERS FOR 300 TAXI LICENSES

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TASTE OF EDESIA



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WAR AND PEACE

IS CONFLICT IN UKRAINE A REMINDER TO CHINA OF THE RISKS IN ATTACKING TAIWAN?

PETER RUTLAND,
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

U.S. defense strategists warn that China may use the distraction of the war in Ukraine to launch military action against Taiwan. They believe Chinese President Xi Jinping is determined to gain control over the breakaway province – which has been beyond Beijing's control since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 – before he leaves office.

In response to these concerns, in July 2023, the U.S. announced a US\$345 million military aid package for Taiwan. For the first time, arms are being delivered to Taiwan from U.S. stockpiles under presidential drawdown authority, which does not require congressional approval.

Such fears have been heightened by the fact that China has stepped up its probes of Taiwan's defenses over the past year. Last month saw the release of an eight-part docuseries by state media broadcaster CCTV titled "Chasing Dreams" about the Chinese military's readiness to attack Taiwan.

But opinion remains divided over just how likely it is that Xi will launch a military action to occupy Taiwan, and whether the war in Ukraine makes such action more or less likely.

FACTORS MAKING WAR MORE LIKELY

The main argument that the war in Ukraine makes a Chinese attack on Taiwan more likely centers on the failure of the threat of U.S. sanctions to deter Russia from invading.

Russian President Vladimir Putin believed that U.S. power, weakened by the Trump presidency, was in decline. He also knew – because President Joe Biden said so – that the U.S. was unwilling to commit its own troops in combat against the nuclear-armed foe.

Putin saw the hasty American withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 as a sign that the U.S. has lost its appetite for military intervention overseas. The U.S. relies on economic sanctions to pressure adversaries such as Iran, Russia and China. But Putin was confident that Europe's de-



pendence on Russian oil and gas would prevent it from imposing serious sanctions on Russia. He was also emboldened by the lackluster Western response to Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and annexation of Crimea in 2014.

It turned out that Putin was wrong about Europeans' unwillingness to stop buying Russian energy. But he was right about the U.S. aversion to committing its own forces to defend Ukraine.

As with Ukraine, U.S. policy regarding Taiwan is built around using the threat of economic sanctions to deter China from attacking the province. However, there is also the possibility – absent in Ukraine – that the U.S. would commit its forces to defend Taiwan. The official U.S. policy is one of "strategic ambiguity" on Taiwan. Furthermore, there is the simple geographical fact that Taiwan is an island, and thus easier to defend than Ukraine.

For the people of Taiwan, Putin's invasion shows that an authoritarian leader can wage war at any time, for no good reason. Ukraine has so far managed to prevent a Russian victory, but it is paying a heavy price in terms of lost lives and a shattered economy. According to some Taiwanese observers, the people of Taiwan would be unwilling to pay

such a heavy price to preserve its political autonomy.

There is also the concern that the U.S. is so tied up with the Ukraine crisis that it does not have the political bandwidth to deal with Chinese pressure on Taiwan. Arms that could have been sold to Taiwan have been sent to Ukraine. Xi may see this as an opportunity that he can exploit.

FACTORS THAT MAKE WAR LESS LIKELY

There are, however, several factors that make conflict over Taiwan less probable. Russia's failure to achieve victory in Ukraine makes it less likely that Xi would gamble on the use of military force to occupy Taiwan.

The Wall Street Journal's Yaroslav Trofimov argues that "the Ukrainian war has focused minds in Beijing on the inherent unpredictability of a military conflict." Meanwhile, Bi-khim Hsiao, Taiwan's representative in the U.S., has said that Ukraine's success in defending itself will deter China from attacking Taiwan.

One reason is advances in weaponry. The latest generation of drones and missiles capable of destroying aircraft, ships and tanks favors the defense. This makes invasion of Taiwan more risky for China. Moreover, Russia's weapons seem to be generally less

effective than those of its NATO counterparts – and China's arsenal relies heavily on Russian designs.

Also, the Ukraine war has unified European allies behind U.S. leadership. In 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron was talking about NATO being "brain dead." After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the alliance stepped up defense spending and both Sweden and Finland applied for membership. Finland officially joined NATO in April 2023 while Sweden awaits final ratification.

The European Union was previously reluctant to join the U.S. trade war with China. However, China's support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made Brussels more willing to join the U.S. in pushing back against China's efforts to dominate key sectors of global trade. EU Commission President Ursula van der Leyen said in March 2023 that "China is becoming more repressive at home and more assertive abroad." China is all too aware that overstepping in Taiwan would further unite nations in a trade war against Beijing.

The Ukraine war has also unified core Asian allies behind U.S. leadership. Taiwan, Japan and South Korea joined the sanctions on Russia, and Japan plans to increase defense spending by 60%

by 2027. In March 2022, Russia added Taiwan to its Unfriendly Countries and Territories List, and in August 2022 Taiwan canceled visa-free travel for Russians, which had been introduced in 2018.

It is difficult to assess how sanctions on Russia affect China's decision calculus. The sanctions have seriously hurt Russia's economy, but have not prevented the country from waging the war. Given China's high level of trade with Europe and the U.S., it is likely that sanctions leveled in retaliation for an attack on Taiwan would be severely damaging for the Chinese economy.

In launching the abortive war on Ukraine, Russia has shown itself to be weak and unstable, and therefore less useful as an ally to China. Besides the initial failure to take Kyiv, developments such as the Wagner mutiny illustrate the fragility of the Putin regime and must have rung alarm bells in Beijing. In November 2022, Xi called for an end to threats to use nuclear weapons in an implicit rebuke to Russia.

The peace plan that China released in February 2023, "Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis," insisted on the importance of respecting sovereignty while ignoring Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty. It was arguably more about Taiwan than Ukraine.

China seemingly wants to see an end to the Ukraine war, but on terms acceptable to its ally, Moscow. China has accepted Russia's narrative that NATO is to blame for the war, but still pays lip service to the importance of respecting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Those principles are central to the "One China" policy and Beijing's claim to sovereignty over Taiwan. China's failure to condemn the Russian invasion puts it in a position that is riven with contradictions and makes it hard to play a role as a broker for peace.

There is no simple answer to the question of how the war in Ukraine has impacted Beijing's intentions regarding Taiwan. But it has starkly illustrated to all sides that the stakes are high, and the costs of miscalculation are punitive. **MDT/THE CONVERSATION**

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

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

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR

Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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Gov't to open tenders for 300 taxi licenses

ANTHONY LAM

WITH 300 eight-year taxi licenses to expire this year, the government will open new tenders for the same number of new licenses, complying with the new taxi law, the transport minister said yesterday.

On the sidelines of an environmental protection expo, Secretary

for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, revealed that a new set of Executive Regulations will be issued within the coming few months to supplement the enactment of the new taxi law. It will also help facilitate the tender opening for the refilling taxi licenses. He added that the number of licenses to be issued at the end of the day will depend on the balance between short and long-term de-

mand and supply.

In response to the long-awaited online taxi hiring services, the senior official cited the lack of such provisions in the current law, and said the social demand will not be satisfied for the time being.

Online taxi hiring services have thrived in both the Chinese mainland and around the world. Global app Uber and Chinese app DiDi are operating within comparati-

ve frameworks and modes. It was said that similar apps could ensure improvement and maintenance of the quality of service.

Uber operated briefly in Macau in the middle of the past decade, but opted out after serial fines issued by the police in respect of allegations of illegal vehicle hiring. The fine then was MOP30,000 per apprehension.

The minister has also touched on bus routes and frequency. He dismissed the suggestion to increase frequency on all bus routes, citing "the small size of the city and almost saturated capacity of certain routes." Certain routes will run at higher frequency when necessary, he added.

On the use of EVs, Rosário said that the government will focus on providing normal charging stations rather than fast chargers, as "each fast charger consumes the same amount of electricity as 50 air-conditioners," but he did not explain how much electricity is used to fully charge an EV on a common charger over a timeframe of six to eight hours.

Despite this, the government will still establish some fast chargers for the taxi industry.

The city currently has over 3,000 electric cars and 2,000 motorcycles.

While asked about the impact on the LRT as the waterway on New Urban Zone A will not be reclaimed, the minister stressed that they are two separate matters. In addition, he said that the reclamation for New Urban Zone D would not start in the near future.

The extension to Barra is expected to start operations at the end of the year. Rosário said two tenders have been opened to invite business operations at LRT stations but were not successful. Another tender opening may occur around the end of 2023 or early 2024, he said.

F&B RETAILERS RECORD SALES SURGE

Receipts of the interviewed restaurants & similar establishments surged by 104.5% year-on-year in June, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). All types of interviewed establishments registered a year-on-year rise in receipts, with receipts of Western Restaurants (+164.3%), Chinese Restaurants (+146.7%) and Local Style Cafes, Congee & Noodle Shops (+90.1%) showing notable growth. Additionally, sales of the interviewed retailers rose by 80.6% year-on-year in June. Sales of Department Stores, Watches, Clocks & Jewellery Retailers, Leather Goods Retailers and Adults' Clothing Retailers increased by over 100%. Only sales of Supermarkets (-14.2%) decreased.

RAT ACCESS SCHEME TO END TODAY

The Covid-19 Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) access scheme, run by the Health Bureau, will end today. The bureau justified its decision by disclosing that, in the past two rounds of the scheme, only 200 people collected RAT kits. It also cited the increasing availability of kits across the city. The government began the access scheme last December when it was considering reclassifying the disease as endemic in Macau. At the time there were growing difficulties with accessing the kits.

IC TO HOLD ANOTHER CONCERT IN LAI CHI VUN SHIPYARDS

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) will hold evening concerts at the Lai Chi Vun Shipyards in the second half of each month, between July and November. The concert's "lively and poetic melodies" will be held at 4 p.m. this Saturday. Local singer-songwriter and landscape designer, Willy Tjen, singer and illustrator, YCC, and musical duo, Iron Son, were invited to perform in the concerts. The exhibition space in the Lai Chi Vun Shipyards - Plot X11 is open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., while the Lai Chi Vun Shipyards - Plots X12-X15 are open all day.

Gov't busts sale of undeclared medicines

THE Macao Customs and Pharmaceutical Administration Bureau (ISAF) have jointly discovered the sale of undeclared medicines at two shops near Border Gate Checkpoint.

The keepers of the shops have been arrested and charges were pressed against them. The two suspects are aged 42 and 34.

It was disclosed that a total of 2,648 items of undeclared medicines were found and seized at the shops, of an estimated value amounting to MOP59,000.

The perpetrators may be subject to a maximum fine of MOP100,000. The

seized materials will also be confiscated.

The joint operation was conducted in the afternoon on Monday. The two bureaus conduct regular inspections on shops in the neighborhood for undeclared imports or medicines. Verification of licenses and other documentation were also part of the operation. During the investigation, officials from the two bureaus discovered 2,018 medicines without appropriate documentation at a shop. It was estimated to be worth approximately MOP50,000. Meanwhile, in ano-



ther shop, officials discovered another batch of medicines and heal-

thcare supplements without proper declaration documents. The batch

comprised 630 items and was estimated to be worth MOP9,000. **AL**

DSSCU CALLING ON COMPANIES PROVIDING SERVICE ON BUILDING INFILTRATIONS TO REGISTER

RENATO MARQUES

As the new law to resolve cases of water infiltration in buildings comes into force on Sept. 1, the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) is calling on the companies that will start offering such services to apply now for registration.

Those qualified technicians and companies issuing water infiltration detection reports can register through the DSSCU website so people seeking such services can easily find their contact details and information, the Bureau said in a press statement.

According to the law, entities qualified to issue such reports need

RENATO MARQUES



to be registered under the provisions of Law 1/2015 (regime of qualifications in the fields of urban construction and urban planning) and

have at their service at least one of the authorized types of technicians.

To facilitate consultation, the DSSCU will publish the list of qualified

entities on its website, which contains registration information, professional qualifications (for technicians), and tasks they are certified to provide as well as contact details such as phone numbers.

According to DSSCU, the public listing on the website of DSSCU is not mandatory, so people and entities may opt to see their registration be made public or not.

The new law aims to solve swiftly the numerous conflicts between parties in cases of water infiltration by studying the building using specific equipment, and then issuing a report on the causes of the infiltration so the property owners can easily act on the problem.



TOURISM

JULY VISITORS GROW 25% TO NEARLY 2.8M

Visitor arrivals grew by 24.9% month-on-month to 2,759,544 in July, a figure that represents a surge of 28,176.9% year-on-year, mainly due to an increase in visitors as well as a relatively low base of comparison in July last year. Overnight visitors (1,431,681) and same-day visitors (1,327,863) soared by 55,607.4% and 18,370.8% year-on-year respectively. As regards source of visitors, number of visitors from mainland China jumped by 25,994.4% year-on-year to 1,910,371, with 1,087,315 of them travelling under the Individual Visit Scheme. In the first seven months of 2023, number of visitor arrivals ex-

panded by 314.6% year-on-year to 14,405,421.

Recently, a report published by the China Tourism Academy stated that Macau has been the favorite travel destination for mainland residents in the first six months of this year.

According to the "Big Data Report on Outbound Tourism in the First Half of 2023," Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan were the three top destinations for Chinese outbound tourists, comprising 79.89% of the total number of visits in the first six months of this year. From these, the visits to Macau accounted for nearly 50.9%, followed by Hong Kong at 26.66%, and Taiwan at 2.33%.

AD

CEM NOTICE

Temporary traffic arrangements of traffic lights suspension

Due to the improvement works carried out by Companhia de Electricidade de Macau - CEM, S.A. (CEM), multiple sets of traffic lights will be suspended from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on 18 August (Friday). Please refer to the table below for details.

Date	Estimated suspension time of traffic lights	Traffic light locations
18.August (Friday)	From 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	The intersection between Avenida do Almirante Lacerda and Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga
		The intersection between Avenida do Almirante Lacerda and Avenida do Coronel Mesquita
		The intersection between Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga and Estrada de Coelho do Amaral

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Grande Hotel (Kuok Chai) reopens today after 27 long years

RENATO MARQUES

THE Grande Hotel Macau, better known locally by its Cantonese name “Kuok Chai,” is reopening its doors to guests after 27 long years of closure, which led the space to almost complete ruin.

Once an iconic symbol of Macau, the Grande Hotel Macau hopes to bring back some of the charm to the city center, welcoming new guests to its historical site.

Co-owned by a trio of sisters, Vivian, Jessica, and Veronica Lu, the property is to reopen its doors today after a major revamp in which some 500 million patacas was invested, the co-owners said in an interview to Jornal Tribuna de Macau.

The renewed hotel offers 96 rooms as well as some small commercial spaces, but it does not have any food and beverage venue on the premises.

According to the co-owners, who are experienced in the busi-

MACAU ANTIGO



RENATO MARQUES

ness of co-owning several guesthouses in Macau, the hotel aims to be an affordable option in the heart of the city accessible to a wide range of travelers, particularly those interested in the historical side of Macau.

Designed by the Macau civil engineer João Canavarro Nolasco in 1937, it was built by the contractor Tai Man Hou and named Hotel

Kuok Chai.

The hotel, first opened in 1941, catered mainly to Chinese clients as an alternative to the luxury hotels that attracted most foreigners of that time, Portuguese Architect, and researcher Ana Tostões noted in extensive research conducted over certain iconic Macau buildings. The research is part of the Heritage of Portuguese Influence,

a project from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation undertaken with the support of several Portuguese Universities.

Tostões notes that although it was never considered a luxury hotel, its design and inspiration from the art deco movement were very attractive to the local elite of Chinese origins.

“With modern lines and deco-

rated with a Parisian expression of art deco, it was a place of sophistication and activity for the moneyed elite. When it was inaugurated, it was considered the highest building in the Portuguese colonial empire.”

In its golden days that spanned over the first 20 years of its existence, the Grande Hotel, on the Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, has been visited by many celebrities and local dignitaries, and gained most of its popularity after appearing as a frequent backdrop in many Hong Kong films.

At the time, the hotel was located in an even more privileged area of the city as the old steamer ferry boat, arriving from Hong Kong, would dock at the Inner Harbour area just a few meters away from the hotel.

The number of rooms will stay mostly the same (from 97 in 1941), but the hotel had originally featured a tea room on the top floor that offered an unmatched view over the city at the time.

The building began to deteriorate at the end of the 1980s and was considered obsolete as it “could no longer offer what is ordinarily considered a contemporary hotel,” Tostões added, noting the building was one of the most innovative modern buildings in Macau in the early 20th century until the construction of Hotel Lisboa in 1970.

AD

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GAMING

GALAXY POSTS HKD15B REVENUE, ANNOUNCES OVERSEAS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICES

LYNZY VALLES

GALAXY Entertainment Group posted net revenues of HKD15.7 billion in the first half of the year, up 141% year-on-year, while its adjusted EBITDA was HKD4.4 billion, up 2,193% year-on-year as the city undergoes recovery.

In its financial statement, the gaming operator reported that in Q2 2023, net revenues stood at HKD8.7 billion, up 257% year-on-year and up 23% quarter-on-quarter.

"Our balance sheet continues to be exceptionally liquid and healthy. As of 30 June 2023, cash and liquid investments were HKD24.4 billion and net cash was HKD22.0 billion," said GEG chairman Lui Che Woo.

Giving updates on the group's operations, Woo said that during the second quarter, GEG's primary focus was on operational execution, recruitment and project development.

Following the reopening of Ma-



cau in early January, the group has expanded its offerings including soft opening of GICC and Galaxy Arena in April.

In late June, the gaming operator opened a new promoter room in line with the new gaming re-

gulations, as well as a number of additional F&B outlets during Q2.

In July, as part of Phase 3 development, GEG opened its new Horizon Premium Club and associated non-gaming amenities.

"We are in the process of open-

ing our first overseas business development office in Tokyo and we are planning to open additional offices in Bangkok and Seoul," Woo added.

Yesterday, GEG soft opened the exclusive 450 all-suite Raffles at

Galaxy Macau, which the operator said will create 1,100 additional jobs.

"To support the operation of GICC and Galaxy Arena, we are pleased to announce that we have signed a number of multi-year agreements with well-established entertainment companies who will help to support our events programming," said Woo.

"We have been working closely with the various government departments and we are pleased to advise that we effectively have our full complement of staff and all of our hotel rooms were available towards the end of Q2, except for Broadway Hotel," he added.

Previously, at the beginning of the year, hotels struggled to offer 100% of their rooms to the market due to staff shortages.

This comes after several hundred non-resident workers' contracts were not renewed due to the pandemic. The reopening of the border came as a surprise, with hotels in the city unprepared for the reopening.



2023MIECF

DSPA: GOV'T IN COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL STRATEGY ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEVELOPMENT

THE four-day 2023 Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition (MIECF) officially opened yesterday.

During his opening speech, director Tam Vai Man of Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) highlighted that the Macau government is in proactive compliance with the national strategy on environmental protection development, with its systematic progression on matters of energy conservation,

carbon reduction, waste reduction at the source, development of related industries, as well as building a green Macau, while developing the economy.

As of this year, a total of 15 MIECFs have been organized with satisfactory effectiveness, constructing an international brand for exchange and cooperation within the environmental protection industry. He hoped that this year's expo will bring about new advancements in quality and effectiveness,

fostering Macau's function as a bridge and contributing to environmental protection.

The first day of the expo saw a symposium by keynote speaker and Chinese academic Lan Hong, who highlighted that with the government targeting carbon neutrality, there is still considerable room for investment. She suggested bonds issued in Macau to facilitate capitalization for mainland green and carbon neutrality practitioners. **AL**

EVENTS

MGTO: DRONE SHOW WILL NOT HAPPEN THIS YEAR

ANTHONY LAM

THE annual drone show is not planned for this year, Cheng Wai Tong, acting director of Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), has announced.

He explained that the main reasons for halting the show this year are the weather and the neighborhood. Usually, the show is staged during the city's tropical cyclone season, which creates anxiety

and concern. To compensate, the MGTO plans to expand the scale and length of the light show this year.

Meanwhile, Cheng did not pass up the chance to emphasize the bureau's efforts in attracting foreign visitors but admitted to having received complaints from tourists related to transport in Macau. These complaints have been referred to the Transport Bureau and he believes the bureau is across the situation.

He also highlighted that in the coming months, the city will see a calendar filled with events, such as the on-going Art Macao, the fireworks show in September, the Oct. 1 Golden Week, the Grand Prix in November as well as the light show in December.

In addition, he stressed that the bureau would rely on the market when deciding whether individual tourists or tour groups shall prevail. **AL**



2023MIECF

CESL Asia presents an intelligent management platform to help save resources

RENATO MARQUES

ONE of the novelties presented at this year's edition of the Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition (2023MIECF), which kicked off yesterday and will continue until Sunday, was a new mobile application (app) from local company CESL Asia that aims to revolutionize the way companies manage their assets, people and other resources.

The 'Ortux' is a platform that offers a set of tools that will help companies be more efficient and, at the same time, make better use of the information they collect daily but that often fails to produce results due to quantity, complexity, and difficulties with analysis, as told to the Times in an interview with the president of CESL Asia, António Trindade.

The app was initially developed internally within companies that comprise the CESL Asia universe and for the company's own management and efficiency purposes but is now, after years of development, available to all others who wish to engage in the modern era of management.

As Trindade explained, companies of all sizes have huge quantities of data and information to handle daily. The way this data is managed and processed can help companies be more efficient on several levels, including personnel management, resources allocation and many other ways. Efficiencies will be in the areas of electricity bills, transportation, and many others.



President of CESL Asia, António Trindade

FROM SAMPLING TO REAL DATA USE

As Trindade explained to the Times, the app comes from the company's own experience of over 30 years of operation different fields including consultancy and other services to other companies and government entities.

"From our own use, we are getting very good results [in the use of the platform] with savings of about 20 to 30% on the use of resources, namely turning off usage times more efficiently. We also see a reduction in waste [of some raw materials and commodities] as well as in people [staff] who no longer need to do repeated tasks or waste time checking the status of tasks, etc.," the president of CESL Asia explained.

"We also use several tools

including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other sophisticated tools to process large quantities of data [coming from every staff member or department] that until today was impossible to process. We generate millions of reports annually about the daily activities that previously were impossible to analyze."

He said that in the past the company had to resort to either internal audits to understand what was happening in certain areas or short studies using sampling, a situation that has now been overcome with the use of this technology that uses all real data available and not just a sample of it. Additionally, using the programmed algorithms, the information is presented in a form that is easy to use.

As an example, Trindade explained that through this app it is possible to combine information such as weather reports with the type of user of a given service or the frequency that a certain service is requested. It is also possible to understand the particular needs of a certain group of people according to their characteristics, among many other aspects that historically needed to be observed and analyzed manually.

MACAU AS A LAB

As in other cases, for CESL Asia, as Macau has the same functionality as other countries and regions, and being a small territory it is the "perfect lab size" to experiment with the use of these technological tools.

"Macau is small in area but very complex in terms of functioning. It is a perfect lab to test some of these new technology tools," Trindade said, noting that in the development of this app, the company is counting on the support of another local company - Meta-Archit Software Technology Limited - that over time has allowed over 30 years of data from companies within the CESL Asia universe to be entered into the app. This concurrently facilitates the growth of other Small and Medium Enterprises in the process.

A BIG STEP FORWARD IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR WORKERS

One of the great advantages of the app is also how simple it is for staff members to use, and how it provides them with assistance in their work and personal needs.

Trindade explained that not only does the app help with reminding workers of the time scheduled for certain tasks, as well as itemizing the required tools and materials, but also provides a background and a history of similar tasks or references to those who completed the task previously. It also allows workers to "report incapacity to attend to some job or report sickness, or request leave, change shifts, etc., allowing them to immediately allocate the task to another person without wasting time or jeopardizing completion of the task itself."

The inputs contributed by everyone in the company into the same platform also allows it to predict behaviors and potentially address problems before they occur, avoiding inefficiencies and minimizing the time spent on unnecessary tasks.

PUBLIC WORKS

Management of Peninsula WWTP receives seven bids, six approved

THE public tender for the management of the Macau peninsula wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) has received seven bids, the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) has noted after the ceremony of opening bids.

Only six of the seven bids received were finally approved to run in the ten-

der as one was excluded, although the DSPA has not disclosed the reason for the exclusion of the seventh bidder.

The six approved bids are priced between MOP228.4 million and MOP299.8 million patacas.

The lowest bid (MOP228,426,280.12)

was presented by a consortium led by the Companhia de Construção e Engenharia Kwong Yu, Lda, while the highest (MOP299,790,032.90) was proposed by another consortium composed by Veolia (Macau)-Serviços de Tratamento de Resíduos, Limitada and Veolia China Holding Limited.

The average price for all six bids was around MOP261.54 million.

The tender will award a contract for the operation and maintenance of the WWTP for a five-year period with the winning company required to fulfill the job description requirements presented in the initial tender document. **RM**



ECONOMY

GOVERNMENT TRIES TO DEFUSE ECONOMIC FEARS
AFTER REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER'S DEBT STRUGGLE

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

CHINA'S government is trying to reassure jittery homebuyers after a major real estate developer missed a payment on its multibillion-dollar debt, reviving fears about the industry's shaky finances and their impact on the struggling Chinese economy.

There is no indication Country Garden's problems might spread beyond China, which seals off its financial system from global capital flows, economists say. But they highlight the industry's struggle under pressure from the ruling Communist Party to reduce soaring debt that is seen as an economic threat. That has bankrupted hundreds of small developers and depressed China's economic growth.

The Country Garden episode has echoes of Evergrande Group, which is trying to restructure more than \$340 billion owed to banks and bondholders. Fears of a possible Evergrande default in 2021 rattled global markets, but they eased after the Chinese central bank said its problems were contained and Beijing would keep credit markets functioning. A central bank official said in March financing conditions have "improved significantly."

Financial markets were rattled when Country Garden Holdings Co. missed two payments totaling \$22.5 million due to buyers of dollar-denominated bonds on Aug. 6. It has a 30-day grace period before it would be declared in default.

A government spokesperson tried to reassure the public and financial markets, saying conditions are improving and regulators are getting debt under control.

"The risks of housing enterprises are expected to be gradually resolved," said Fu Linghui of the National Bureau of Statistics.

Policy changes "will help boost market confidence," Fu said at a news conference. "Housing consumption and housing enterprises' willingness to invest are expected to gradually improve."

Yesterday, a half-dozen homebuyers sat outside a Country Garden development under construction in Beijing beside a sign that said they have been "fighting for their rights" for 97 days.

The homebuyers, who sat under a tent in 31 C (89 F) heat, declined to talk to a reporter but a security guard said their complaint stemmed from a Country Garden project in Malaysia.

Country Garden, previously seen as one of China's financially



A car with a sign that reads, "Country Garden homeowners rights protections 97 days," is parked near homeowners camping outside the Country Garden One World City project under construction on the outskirts of Beijing

healthiest developers, suspended trading of its bonds Monday on Chinese exchanges. That followed a warning last week that it might post a loss of as much as 55 billion yuan (\$7.5 billion) for the first half of 2023.

Abroad, the impact "seems likely to be limited," said Jennifer McKeown of Capital Economics in a report.

Foreign investors pulled out of Chinese real estate after earlier defaults and "policymakers should step in to prevent a meltdown in China," McKeown said.

Real estate propelled China's economic boom, but developers borrowed heavily as they turned cities into forests of apartment and office towers. That helped to push total corporate, government and household debt to the equivalent of more than 300% of annual economic output, unusually high for a middle-income country.

After years of warnings that led to global rating agencies cutting the Chinese government's credit rating in 2017, the ruling party cracked down on real estate debt in 2020. It imposed controls known as "three red lines" that prohibit heavily indebted developers from borrowing more to pay off bonds and bank loans as they matured.

A weak real estate industry complicates efforts by Chinese

leader Xi Jinping's government to reverse a deepening economic slump after a rebound following the end of anti-virus controls fizzled out sooner than expected.

The economy grew by a robust 2.2% over the previous quarter in the January-March period. But that fell to just 0.8% in the three months ending in June. That is equal to a 3.2% annual rate, which would be among China's weakest in decades – still atop of most world's economies.

Revving up real estate spending was the ruling party's solution for previous downturns. Xi's government has eased restrictions on borrowing by developers and told banks to lend to homebuyers. But it appears to be trying to stick to its overall debt-reduction goal.

Real estate accounts for some 20% of China's economy. When spending on steel and copper for construction, furniture and other related purchases is added in, estimates of its share of the economy rises as high as 35%.

Real estate's troubles are causing a vicious cycle by prompting jittery households to put off housing, auto and other big purchases, which in turn depresses economic activity further. Auto sales shrank 2.6% in July from last year's already depressed level under anti-virus curbs.

Country Garden's debt struggle might "drive potential ho-

mebuyers away from privately owned developers," Moody's Investors Service said in a report. That would "weaken effects of any potential supportive measures by the government to stabilize property sales."

The industry also might be squeezed as investors and banks shy away from lending to smaller developers, Moody's said.

In a sign of weak demand, prices paid for new homes fell for a second month in July, according to the statistics bureau. Prices in 35 smaller cities declined 0.3% from June. Prices in 31 bigger cities edged down 0.2%.

Sales of land use rights are down, adding to the strain on local governments that are trying to manage debt burdens that swelled with the expense of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Country Garden was founded in 1992 by Yang Guoqiang, a former farmer and construction worker. Yang handed over his shares in 2005 to his 25-year-old daughter, Yang Huiyan. She was ranked the richest woman in Asia by Forbes magazine with a net worth of \$11 billion.

Yang Huiyan's fortune rose to \$33.1 billion in 2020, making her the 11th-richest private individual in China, according to Hurun Report, which follows the country's wealthy. Forbes estimated this week that plunged almost 90% to

\$4.3 billion as Country Garden's share price tumbled.

Country Garden's possible losses are a sliver of those of Evergrande, headquartered in Shenzhen, adjacent to Hong Kong, which reported in June that it lost \$81 billion in 2021-22.

But both ran into the same problem: They have more assets than debt but can't turn slow-selling real estate into cash fast enough to repay lenders.

Country Garden reported 1.7 trillion yuan (\$233 billion) versus 1.4 trillion yuan (\$193 billion) of liabilities at the end of 2022. The business news magazine Caixin cited an unidentified source who said the developer might have an additional 200 billion yuan (\$27 billion) in debt.

The developer had only 147.6 billion yuan (\$20 billion) of cash. Some 60 billion yuan (\$8 billion) was buyer deposits and other money that couldn't be freely used.

Country Garden, headquartered in Shunde, near Hong Kong, said Aug. 10 sales this year through July fell 35% from the same period of 2022 to 140.8 billion yuan (\$19.3 billion). It said July sales fell 60%.

"The company has encountered the biggest difficulties since its establishment," its president, Mo Bin, said in a statement.

Country Garden had outstanding bonds and asset-backed securities of 104 billion yuan (\$14.25 billion), including 78 billion yuan (\$10.7 billion) of bonds sold abroad, according to Caixin. It said bonds worth 7.3 billion yuan (\$1 billion) will mature in September.

The company also owes 162.5 billion yuan (\$22.3 billion) to banks and other financial institutions, according to Moody's.

Evergrande, the global industry's most heavily indebted company, was big enough that regulators stepped in to supervise its debt restructuring, which has yet to be completed. But they avoided bailing out the company or its creditors to avoid sending the wrong message about the need to reduce debt.

Local authorities took control of stalled Evergrande building projects to make sure buyers got apartments that already were paid for.

Country Garden said in a July 31 statement it would "seek guidance and support from the government and regulatory authorities."

Authorities have yet to say whether the company is a big enough risk for regulators to get involved in its restructuring or take over building projects. **MDT/AP**

ECONOMY

Xi calls for patience as Communist Party tries to reverse economic woes

CHINESE leader Xi Jinping has called for patience in a speech released as the ruling Communist Party tries to reverse a deepening economic slump and said Western countries are “increasingly in trouble” because of their materialism and “spiritual poverty.”

Xi's speech was published by Qiushi, the party's top theoretical journal, hours after data Tuesday showed consumer and factory activity weakened further in July despite official promises to support struggling entrepreneurs.

The government suspended giving an update on a politically sensitive spike in unemployment among young people.

Xi, the country's most powerful leader in decades, called for China to “build a socialist ideology with strong cohesion” and to focus on long-term goals of improving education, health care and food supplies for China's 1.4 billion people instead of only pursuing short-term material wealth.



Since taking power in 2012, Xi has called for restoring the ruling party's role as an economic and social leader and has tightened control over business and society since taking power in 2012.

Some changes come at a rising cost as successful Chinese companies are pressured to divert money into political initiatives inclu-

ding processor chip development.

The party tightened control over tech industries by launching data security and anti-monopoly crackdowns that wiped out billions of dollars of their stock market value.

“We must maintain historic patience and insist on making steady, step-by-step progress,” Xi said

in the speech. Qiushi said it was delivered in February in the southwestern city of Chongqing. It is common for Qiushi journal to publish speeches months after they are delivered.

“ We must maintain historic patience and insist on making steady, step-by-step progress.

XI JINPING

Economic growth slid to 0.8% in the three months ending in June compared with the previous month, down from 2.2% in January-March. That is equivalent to a 3.2% annual rate, which would be among China's weakest in

decades – still, atop most world's economies.

A survey in June found unemployment among urban workers aged 16 to 24 spiked to a record 21.3%.

The government also has expanded anti-spying rules and tightened controls on information, leaving foreign and private companies uncertain about what activities might be allowed.

Xi stressed “common prosperity,” a 1950s party slogan he has revived.

He called for narrowing China's yawning wealth gap between a tiny elite and the poor majority and to “regulate the healthy development of capital” but announced no new initiatives.

“Common prosperity for all people” is an “essential feature of Chinese-style modernization and distinguishes it from Western modernization,” Xi said.

Western-style modernization “pursues the maximization of capital interests instead of serving the interests of the vast majority of people,” Xi said.

“Today, Western countries are increasingly in trouble,” Xi said. “They cannot curb the greedy nature of capital and cannot solve chronic diseases such as materialism and spiritual poverty.” **MDT/AP**

AD

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Main Activities		
18 August 2023 (Friday)		
09:00 - 18:00	Green Showcase and Green Matching	Expo Hall A
09:30 - 12:00	Green Forum Session 2 Green Innovation Drives High-Quality Development	Sicity Meeting Room
15:00 - 17:00	Green Forum Session 3 Finding Innovative Solutions for Air Pollution, Waste and Wastewater Management	Sicity Meeting Room
16:00 - 18:00	Green Forum Session 4 Pan-Pearl River Delta Environmental Protection Industry Conference for Co-operation and Exchange	Green Conference Zone, Expo Hall A
15:30 - 18:30	2023MIECF Community Tour (By Registration)	
19 August 2023 (Saturday)		
09:00 - 18:00	Green Showcase and Green Matching	Expo Hall A
14:00 - 18:00	PPRD Environmental Tour (By Registration)	
20 August 2023 (Sunday)		
09:00 - 17:00	Green Showcase and Green Matching	Expo Hall A
10:00 - 17:00	Green Public Day	Green Conference Zone, Expo Hall A
10:00 - 11:00	Technical Visit (By Registration) (1) Macao Electronic and Electrical Equipment Recycling Treatment Facility (2) Odebi Ecological Zones	

Seven Zones
Pan-Pearl River Delta Region Pavilion
Mainland China Environmental Protection Industries Exhibition Area
International Environmental Protection Industries Exhibition Area
Macao Environmental Protection Industries Exhibition Area
Premium Exhibitor Zone
Green Living Zone (New)
Green And Low-Carbon Project Zone (New)

Concurrent Events
18 August 2023 (Friday)
Development of Green MICE and Carbon Neutral Seminar
2023 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Green Finance Alliance (GBA-GFA) Annual Meeting (Internal meeting) (By invitation)
19 August 2023 (Saturday)
GBA Green Finance Summit
"Connecting Green Capital to Green Tech Deal Flow" Matching Session
The Contribution of China Artificial Solar Fusion Technology to Decarbonization Seminar
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The Data Science and Artificial Intelligence Forum under the Dual Carbon Goals

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MIECF Official Website

AP PHOTO



Homes consumed in recent wildfires are seen in Lahaina

HAWAII

FIRES AND OTHER DISASTERS ARE INCREASING IN HAWAII: AP DATA ANALYSIS

SETH BORENSTEIN,
 MARY KATHERINE WILDEMAN
 & BOBBY CAINA CALVAN, KIHEI

HURRICANE-FUELED flash floods and mudslides. Lava that creeps into neighborhoods. Fierce drought that materializes in a flash and lingers. Earthquakes. And now, deadly fires that burn block after historic block.

Hawaii is increasingly under siege from disasters, and what is escalating most is wildfire, according to an Associated Press analysis of Federal Emergency Management Agency records. That reality can clash with the vision of Hawaii as paradise. It is, in fact, one of the riskiest states in the country.

"Hawaii is at risk of the whole panoply of climate and geological disasters," said Debarati Guha-Sapir, director of the international disasters database kept at the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. She listed storms, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanoes.

Hawaii has been in more danger lately. This month alone, the federal government declared six different fire disasters in Hawaii — the same number recorded in the state from 1953 to 2003.

Across the United States, the number of acres burned by wildfires about tripled from the 1980s to now, with a drier climate from global warming a factor, according to the federal government's National Climate Assessment and the National Interagency Fire Center. In Hawaii, the burned area increased more than five ti-

mes from the 1980s to now, according to figures from the University of Hawaii Manoa.

Longtime residents — like Victoria Martocci, who arrived on Maui about 25 years ago — know this all too well.

"Fire happened maybe once a year or once every two years. Over the last 10 years, it has been more frequent," said Martocci, who lost a boat and her business, Extended Horizons Scuba, to the fire that swept through Lahaina.

From 1953 to 2003, Hawaii averaged one federally declared disaster of any type every two years, according to the analysis of FEMA records. But now it averages more than two a year, about a four-fold increase, the data analysis shows.

It's even worse for wildfires. Hawaii went from averaging one federally declared fire disaster every nine years or so to one a year on average since 2004.

Watching the fires on Maui, Native Hawaiian Micah Kamohoali'i's mind drifted to 2021, when the state's largest ever wildfire burned through his family's Big Island home and scorched a massive swath of land on the slopes of Mauna Kea.

Linda Hunt, who works at a horse stable in Waikoloa Village on the Big Island, had to evacuate in that fire. Given the abundance of dry grass on the islands from drought and worsening fires, Hunt said fire agencies need to "double or triple" spending on fire gear and personnel.

"They are stretched thin. They ran out of water on Maui and had to leave the truck," she said. "Money should be spent on preven-

tion and preparedness."

FEMA assesses an overall risk index for each county in America and the risk index in Maui County is higher than nearly 88% of the counties in the nation. The federal disaster agency considers that a "relatively moderate" risk.

Hawaii's Big Island has a risk index higher than 98% of U.S. counties.

A 2022 state emergency management report listed tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods,

From 1953 to 2003, Hawaii averaged one federally declared disaster of any type every two years

health risks and cyber threats as high risk to people, but categorized wildfire as a "low" risk, along with drought, climate change and sea level rise.

Yet fire is the No. 1 cause of Hawaii's federally declared disasters, equaling the next three types of disaster combined: floods, severe storms and hurricanes. Hawaii by far has more federally declared fire disasters per square mile than any other state.

For most of the 20th century, Hawaii averaged about 5000 acres (about 20 square kilometers) burned per year, but that's now up to 15,000 to 20,000 acres, said University of Hawaii Manoa fire scientist Clay Trauernicht.

"We've been getting these large events for the last 20 to 30 years," he said from Oahu.

What's happening is mostly because of changes in land use and the plants that catch fire, said Trauernicht. From the 1990s on, there has been a "big decline in plantation agriculture and a big decline in ranching," he said. Millions of acres of crops have been replaced with grasslands that burn easily and fast.

He called it "explosive fire behavior."

"This is much more a fuels problem," Trauernicht said. "Climate

change is going to make this stuff harder."

Stanford University climate scientist Chris Field said "these grasses can just dry out in a few weeks and it doesn't take extreme conditions to make them flammable."

That's what happened this year. For the first four weeks of May, Maui County had absolutely no drought, according to the U.S. drought monitor. By July 11, 83% of Maui was either abnormally dry or in moderate or severe drought. Scientists call that a flash drought.

Flash droughts are becoming more common because of human-caused climate change, an April study said.

Another factor that made the fires worse was Hurricane Dora, 700 miles (1,100 kilometers) to the

south, which helped create storm-like winds that fanned the flames and spread the fires. Experts said it shows that the "synergy" between wildfire and other weather extremes, like storms.

Stanford's Field and others said it's difficult to isolate the effects of climate change from other factors on Hawaii's increasing disasters, but weather catastrophes are increasing worldwide. The nation has experienced a jump in federally declared disasters, and Hawaii has been hit harder.

Because Hawaii is so isolated, the state is often more self-sufficient and resilient after disasters, so when FEMA calculates risks for states and counties, Hawaii does well in recovery, said Susan Cutter, director of the Hazards Vulnerability and Resilience Institute at the University of South Carolina. Still, it shocks people to think of disasters in places they associate with paradise.

"Those are places of fantasy and nothing bad is supposed to happen there. You go there to escape reality, to leave pain behind, not face it head on," said University of Albany emergency preparedness professor Jeannette Sutton. "Our perceptions of risk are certainly challenged when we have to think about the dangers associated with paradise, not just its exotic beauty."

Maui resident Martocci said, "it is paradise 99% of the time."

"We've always felt secure about living in paradise, and that everything will be OK," she said. "But this has been a reality check for West Maui. A significant reality check." **MDT/AP**

KOREAS

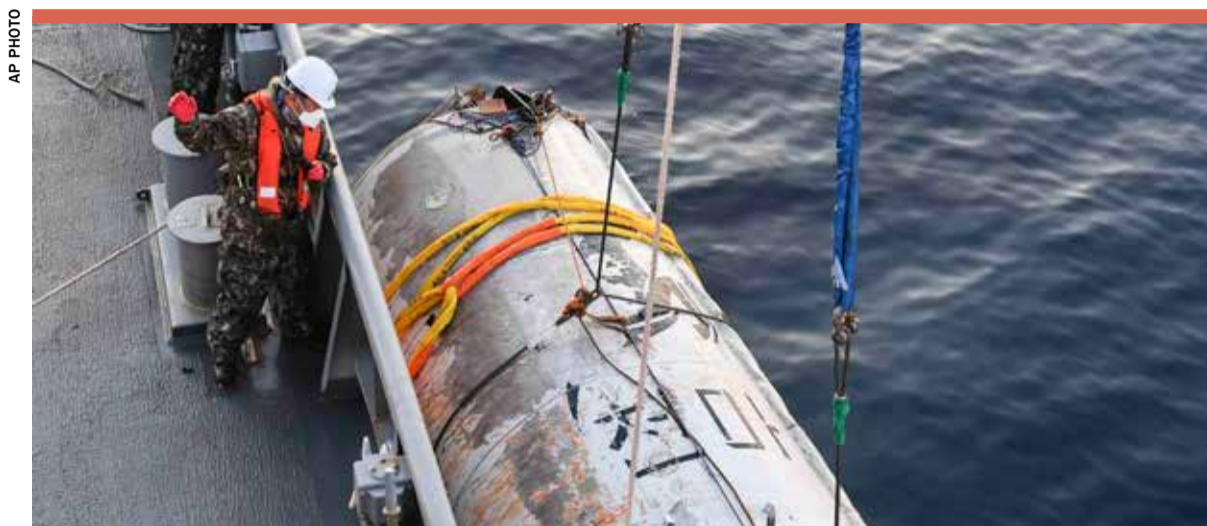
South's agency says North is preparing ICBM tests, spy satellite launch

NORTH Korea is preparing its second attempt to put a spy satellite into orbit as well as tests of long-range missiles to mark a key national anniversary and protest efforts by the United States to strengthen its regional alliances, South Korea's intelligence service told lawmakers yesterday.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been expected to conduct weapons tests in response to major U.S.-South Korean military drills that begin next week and a trilateral U.S.-South Korea-Japan summit at Camp David in the United States today (see p12).

The National Intelligence Service told lawmakers in a closed-door meeting that North Korea may try to launch a spy satellite in late August or early September ahead of the country's 75th anniversary on Sept. 9, according to Yoo Sang-bum, one of the lawmakers who attended the briefing.

The NIS said North Korea has been testing an engine for the



This photo provided by South Korea's Defense Ministry shows an object salvaged by South's military that is presumed to be part of the North Korean space-launch vehicle that crashed into sea following a launch failure in June

rocket to be used for the satellite launch and has installed an additional land antenna to receive satellite data, Yoo said.

Kim has vowed to produce a number of high-tech weapons systems including a military reconnaissance satellite. North Korea attempted a satellite launch in late May, but the rocket crashed

into the ocean soon after liftoff. North Korean state media said it lost thrust following the separation of its first and second stages.

South Korea's military has said that debris from the satellite indicated it wasn't advanced enough to conduct military reconnaissance as claimed.

The NIS said it also has detec-

ted unusually heavy activities at a North Korean facility that produces solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missiles and at another site related to liquid-fueled ICBMs, Yoo said in a televised briefing.

The NIS said the launch preparations are intended to protest the Camp David summit or the

U.S.-South Korean military drills that begin next Monday, Yoo said.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to U.S. efforts to bolster its alliances with South Korea and Japan. Since the start of 2022, it has conducted more than 100 missile tests, saying it needs to strengthen its own military capabilities in response to expanding U.S.-South Korean exercises, which have included a U.S. aircraft carrier, nuclear-capable bombers and nuclear-armed submarines.

North Korea has demonstrated that its ICBMs have the potential range to reach the U.S. mainland, but many analysts believe it still needs to master some remaining technological challenges. Its shorter-range missiles are capable of targeting South Korea and Japan.

Three of North Korea's four known types of ICBMs use liquid fuels and the fourth employs solid fuel. Solid-fueled missiles are easier to move and fire quickly, making them more difficult to detect before launch. **MDT/AP**

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USA

Biden will use Camp David backdrop hoping to broker a breakthrough in Japan-S.Korea relations

DARLENE SUPERVILLE,
WASHINGTON

CAMP David, the rustic presidential retreat in the mountains of Maryland, has been a backdrop for signal moments in U.S. foreign policy, perhaps none more notable than the peace accord President Jimmy Carter brokered between Egypt and Israel in 1978.

Today, President Joe Biden will reach for his own place in Camp David lore, hoping that walks on leafy trails and necktie-free talks with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korea President Yoon Suk Yeol will encourage the U.S. allies, who have been thawing their frosty relationship, to cooperate more given their shared concerns about aggression from China and North Korea.

It will be the first time that Biden has hosted world leaders at the secluded retreat nestled in Maryland's Catoctin Mountains, about an hour's drive northwest of the White House.

Run by the Navy, guarded by Marines and less imposing than the White House, Camp David was a deliberate choice by a president who puts a premium on face-to-face interactions with his foreign counterparts, Biden aides

said.

"One of the interesting things about Camp David is that it provides a less formal venue for presidents and their visitors to really get to know each other on a one-to-one basis," said Sarah Fling, a historian at the White House Historical Association.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and Margaret Thatcher, a successor to Churchill, are just a few of the storied world figures who have spent time at Camp David at the invitation of U.S. presidents.

President Barack Obama assembled leaders of the world's largest economies for a Group of Eight summit in 2012, the biggest foreign contingent to ever gather there.

President Donald Trump tweeted in September 2019 that he had canceled a secret meeting planned for Camp David with Taliban and Afghanistan leaders after an American soldier was among those killed in a bombing in Kabul.

To produce the Camp David Accords, Carter sought an intimate location, a place away from the press where he thought Egypt's Anwar Sadat and Israel's Menachem Begin would be encouraged to talk to one another. Unlike at the White House, where journa-

lists come and go, the news media are barred from Camp David, unless they are invited to cover an event, like today's summit.

Three days were set aside for the talks, but the summit lasted nearly two weeks. The Camp David Accords were signed at the White House in March 1979.

Camp David was established in 1942 during Franklin Roosevelt's presidency and has been used by every president since.

Roosevelt had liked to relax on a presidential yacht, but the military and Secret Service started to worry about his safety on the open water during World War II. Roosevelt asked the National Park Service to identify sites within 100 miles of the White House that he could use for rest.

He chose what is now known as Camp David. He gave it the original name of Shangri-La, from James Hilton's novel "Lost Horizon." President Dwight Eisenhower renamed it Camp David, after his grandson and father.

Roosevelt also set the precedent for hosting foreign leaders at Camp David, inviting Churchill to the retreat twice. In 1943, they discussed the Normandy invasion; Roosevelt also took the prime minister along on a fishing trip.

Eisenhower hosted

Khrushchev for two days in 1959, the first time a Soviet leader had come to the United States. They watched American Western movies, among other activities.

Bill Clinton hoped to replicate Carter's feat by inviting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to Camp David for a fresh round of Mideast peace talks in 2000. But after two weeks of talks, the summit ended without an agreement.

George W. Bush visited often, hosting an array of foreign leaders and spending Christmases with his family. Britain's Tony Blair was first to visit the newly elected Bush there in 2001.

When reporters asked the president to describe something that he and Blair found they had in common, Bush quipped, "We both use Colgate toothpaste."

"They're gonna wonder how you know that, George," Blair responded.

In addition to the G-8 summit, Obama hosted a group of Persian Gulf leaders in 2015.

But Camp David is more than just a place for presidents to hold sensitive diplomatic talks with foreign leaders or ponder issues of war and peace. Its primary function is as a place for presidents, and their families, to escape Washington, a place where they can be themselves and where they can rest, relax and recharge as much as a 24/7 president is allowed to.

The 180-acre (73-hectare) retreat has a cabin, named Aspen by first lady Mamie Eisenhower, that's reserved for the president, plus about a dozen other cabins for guests. There's a main lodge with conference rooms, a dining room and an office for the president.

Guests have a range of indoor and outdoor amenities at their disposal, including a fitness center, bowling alley, movie theater, heated swimming pool, and tennis and basketball courts. There's also a chapel for religious services.

Carter liked to run on the trails. Ronald Reagan liked to ride horses and is the president who spent the most time at Camp David, said Fling, the historian.

"Reagan really enjoyed visiting Camp David," she said. "He and first lady Nancy Reagan enjoyed just going and spending time together there as a couple."

Susan Ford, President Gerald Ford's daughter, once described it as a place where "you could go and have fun and be silly and not end up in the press." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1989 MAN U SOLD IN RECORD TAKEOVER DEAL



Manchester United Football Club has been sold for £20m in the biggest takeover deal in the history of British football.

The new owner is Isle of Man-based property tycoon and former footballer, Michael Knighton.

Manchester United chairman Martin Edwards is to receive more than £10m for his majority share in the club and will stay on as chief executive.

There had been rumours for some time that Mr Edwards was planning to sell his stake but the deal was shrouded in secrecy.

The sale of his shares ends 25 years of Edwards family control of what has been dubbed "the world's most famous football team".

At the press conference to announce the sale he defended what he called his "sad" decision.

"I believe that under new direction and with new financial backing this club can go even further," Mr Edwards said.

Since taking over at Manchester United in 1980 after the death of his father, Louis, Mr Edwards' large annual salary and his sacking of a popular manager have alienated many fans.

Manchester United gained its worldwide reputation after a golden era in the 50s under Sir Matt Busby and his "Busby Babes".

Players who followed them like Bobby Charlton, Dennis Law and George Best also helped enhance the club's reputation and its trophy cabinet.

But in recent years Manchester United has been - by its standards - in the footballing doldrums and attendance at matches has dropped off.

It is badly in need of a cash injection for both new players and facilities. The new owner has promised to spend £10m refurbishing Manchester United's Old Trafford ground - England's largest stadium apart from Wembley.

"Manchester United is a legend. It is undoubtedly in my view the greatest football club in the world," Mr Knighton told reporters.

"I consider myself to be a football enthusiast first and a businessman second," he added.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The deal with Michael Knighton collapsed after his financial backers backed out. He went on to buy Carlisle United instead. Mr Edwards had already rejected a bid of £10m from newspaper magnate, Robert Maxwell in 1984. Between 1991 and his resignation as chief executive in 2000 Martin Edwards is believed to have earned millions by gradually selling off his shares.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Attempt to face key issues with lovers or problems could escalate. You're best to channel your energy into work. Your doubt could lead to insecurity.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Get involved in competitive sports. Friends will appreciate your attention and playful nature. Put your time and energy into travel, philosophy, and soul-searching.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Your interest in helping others may take you back to school. Either way, you're up for a passionate encounter with someone special.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You can complete any projects efficiently, especially if you put the effort in yourself. You can make changes that will enhance your appearance.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You can make it up to them later. You can get ahead if you present your ideas to superiors. Strong willpower will come to your rescue.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Plan a trip to the country or take a drive to the beach. Your main concern will be to spend as little as possible of your own cash in the process.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Expect problems with settlements that you are trying to resolve. Take a close look at any contracts you've signed in order to be sure exactly where you stand.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You can pick up information that will give you an edge. You should be raising your self-esteem and confidence in order to promote your work.

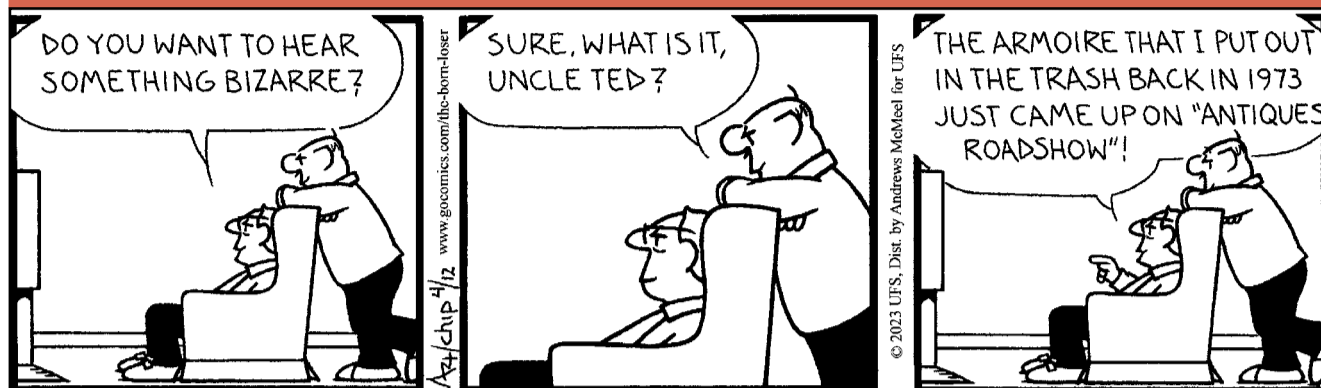
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Get busy on projects that improve your own image; you'll have the discipline to succeed. You will impress new friends and acquaintances with your intellectual wit.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You will be able to make financial gains. Don't overspend on items for your home. Get the red tape and the unwanted paperwork out of the way.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Equilibrium in your romantic life is likely if you treat your partner well. Opportunities for new friendships are apparent. You must use discretion when talking to others.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Don't cause a scene, but when you get home let your partner know how you feel and why. It's a good time to make changes to your living quarters that will give you more space.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

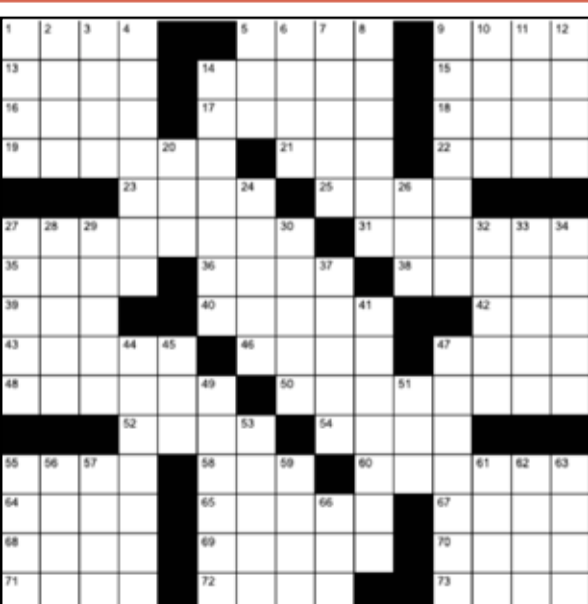
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	25	33	fine
Changchun	22	30	thunderstorms
Chengdu	24	32	cloudy
Chongqing	29	39	fine
Fuzhou	26	32	rain
Guangzhou	25	32	rain
Guiyang	22	29	thunderstorms
Haikou	26	34	cloudy
Hangzhou	24	31	rain
Harbin	22	29	thunderstorms
Hefei	24	35	cloudy
Nanjing	25	33	cloudy
Shanghai	27	32	rain
Taipei	25	28	rain
Wuhan	26	35	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	31	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	17	30	thunderstorms
Frankfurt	20	32	overcast
Paris	22	32	overcast
London	18	23	rain
New York	18	29	thunderstorms

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Fulda tributary; 5- Gillette brand; 9- Graph prefix; 13- Bern's river; 14- Pale; 15- Ticks off; 16- Tatum's dad; 17- Loose coil of yarn; 18- Auto pioneer; 19- Edible tuber; 21- Bambi's aunt; 22- High time?; 23- Soft shoes; 25- "Twittering Machine" artist; 27- Outside; 31- Veer; 35- Dreg; 36- Capital city of Western Samoa; 38- Great Lakes tribesmen; 39- Human limb; 40- Clear; 42- Singer Garfunkel; 43- Theme; 46- Gilpin of "Frasier"; 47- Different; 48- Second book of the Bible; 50- Hermits; 52- Raw materials; 54- Discontinue; 55- Son of Adam and Eve; 58- ___ Moines; 60- More sore; 64- Monetary unit of Lesotho; 65- Welcome; 67- Killer whale; 68- Fool; 69- Rub out or remove from memory; 70- Greek temple; 71- To ___ (perfectly); 72- Match up; 73- Quick sharp bark;

DOWN 1- Tombstone lawman; 2- Belafonte bellow; 3- Quod ___ demonstrandum; 4- Christens anew; 5- Invite; 6- For whom the bell tolls; 7- Freshen, as a stamp pad; 8- Historical records; 9- Explorer; 10- Woody's boy; 11- Fix up; 12- Org.; 14- Reclusive; 20- Rocky hilltop; 24- Absorb; 26- She's a she; 27- Delight; 28- Copy; 29- Beat; 30- Kitchen gadget; 32- Iranian money; 33- Piece of poetry; 34- Adlai's running mate; 37- Buenos ___; 41- Prescribe; 44- Worship as a god; 45- Cad or heel; 47- Agreeableness of sound; 49- Marsh plants; 51- Rapper Tone ___; 53- Crowd together; 55- Code word for A; 56- Period; 57- Kitchen addition; 59- Actor Connery; 61- Dies ___; 62- Environmental sci.; 63- Coarse file, angry tone of voice; 66- Corner key;



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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DRIVE IN

THE MOVIE VERSION OF A BEACH READ ARRIVES IN AMAZON'S 'RED, WHITE & ROYAL BLUE'

LINDSEY BAHR,
MDT/AP FILM WRITER

RED, White & Royal Blue “ is a harmless enjoyable fantasy rom-com. It's not Nora Ephron or Nancy Meyers, nor is it really trying to be. It's more in line, aesthetically, tonally, emotionally (in other words not really emotional at all), with one of those early aughts trifles where a normal American girl discovers she's actual royalty or a not-normal American girl (usually the president's kid) starts dating. This is “What a Girl Wants” meets “First Daughter” except this time the romantic partners are men.

The movie, directed by Matthew López, the Tony-winning playwright of “The Inheritance,” who co-wrote the script with Ted Malawer, is based on a popular novel by Casey McQuiston that quickly became a New York Times bestseller upon its debut in 2019 and got the attention of Amazon Studios. McQuiston's story dealt a hate-turns-to-love story between the son of the American president (a woman) and a senator who begins a secret romantic affair with a British prin-

AP PHOTO



Taylor Zakhar Perez (left) and Nicholas Galitzine in a scene from “Red, White & Royal Blue”

ce. Prince Henry is gay. Alex Claremont-Diaz isn't quite sure how he identifies. But both are certainly closeted. Other characters are trans and pansexual, though not solely defined by that. The president is a woman, married to a man of Latino heritage. The LA Review of Books described it as “propulsive” and “pulp” and “fantastical.”

López keeps “Red, White & Royal Blue” in a solidly fantastical

space. You don't ever quite believe anything you're seeing — from Prince Henry's ability to go undercover at a Texas bar by simply putting on a baseball hat, to the horrendously fake snow adorning a pivotal New Year's Eve scene. And yet, like a beach read, it goes down easy and has enough surprising wit and edge that makes it a cut above a lot of mediocre rom-coms. Plus, this has Stephen Fry as the

King, Uma Thurman as the U.S. president and an ethically dubious Politico reporter.

Taylor Zakhar Perez (of “The Kissing Booth”) and Nicholas Galitzine (of “Cinderella”) star as Alex and Henry, who met once years before in an unseen “Pride and Prejudice”-style misunderstanding that have our two strapping leads hating one another from the start.

“Red, White & Royal Blue” tries to keep things modern and cool, with its best approximations of CW-style “West Wing”-meets-“Veep” White House and campaign staffers who say things like “you're yucking my yum.” Sometimes they work.

There's no “Call Me By Your Name” or “Passages”-level passion here, but López and his actors do go well beyond what their prudish predecessors ever attempted, which is not nothing. We even get a cheeky cutaway to the Washington Monument.

And yet these characters also leave a lot to be desired.

Ultimately, it's not earth shattering but it's also perfectly pleasant for what it is and what it knows it isn't. “Red, White & Royal Blue” is a beach read in movie form and one that can and should be watched with friends.

“Red, White & Royal Blue,” an Amazon Studios release streaming Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for “language, some sexual content and partial nudity.” Running time: 118 minutes. ★★★★★

AD

律師事務所



C&C
LAWYERS
& NOTARIES
SINCE 1996



合夥人 PARTNERS:

官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha ◦ 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues ◦ 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata ◦ 趙魯 Zhao Lu ◦* 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

大律師 ASSOCIATES:

高文軒 Adelino Correia ◦
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo
白穎怡 Icília Berenguel
冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins
飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira ◦
莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura
安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos
巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
陳芷喬 Joana Chan

大律師 ASSOCIATES:

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諾瑪莉 Maria Noras
康靜雅 Viviana Hong
梁淑嵐 Ana Leon
黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong
斐彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo
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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER
“DEIGNAN AWARD”
FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN MACAU (2023)



TASTE OF EDESIA

Share the joy

IRENE SAM, MDT

MID-AUTUMN Festival is the perfect occasion to celebrate while indulging in delectable mooncakes. This year, **JW Marriott Hotel Macau and The Ritz-Carlton, Macau** have each prepared their highly anticipated mooncake gift boxes, filled with an array of delicious flavors to elevate your Mid-Autumn celebrations.

JW Marriott Hotel Macau's exclusive mooncake gift box features eight delectable mooncakes, each exquisitely crafted with traditional and contemporary flavors. The Lava Egg Custard mooncake is a classic favorite with a rich, creamy custard filling. The Red Lotus Seed Paste mooncake features a sweet and nutty flavor profile, while the Lava Egg Custard with Pumpkin Paste mooncake offers a unique twist on a traditional flavor with a smooth and creamy blend of

egg custard and pumpkin paste. The Multigrain Paste mooncake is a modern and healthier option that combines various grains for a nutritious and satisfying taste.

Featuring an imaginative illustration of a rabbit and the harvest moon set against an elegant tone of white and lavender color, the design of the mooncake gift box adds a festive touch and makes it an ideal gift to share with loved ones.

The Ritz-Carlton, Macau's Mooncake Treasure Box features eight Mini Egg Custard Mooncakes, each meticulously handcrafted with the finest ingredients to create a velvety and smooth texture that will leave you longing for another.

The design of the Mooncake Treasure Box is adorned with beautiful flowers, symbolizing good fortune and wealth. The intricate design adds a touch of elegance to the gift box, making it a heartfelt present for your loved ones.



BOOK IT

SMALL-TOWN POLITICS AND BIG FAMILY DRAMA DRIVE CRIME THRILLER

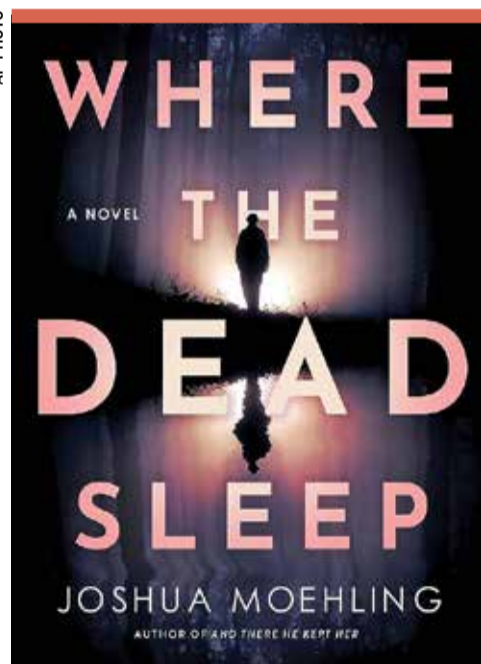
WHERE the Dead Sleep" begins pleasantly enough: Detective Ben Packard is back, becoming more comfortable with Sandy Lake, making his rounds as acting sheriff at the small Minnesota town's Labor Day weekend celebration.

But we can't have a murder mystery without a murder, and before he can even remember the name of the drummer he hooked up with after the celebrations, Packard gets called out to the crime that will take center stage in Joshua Moehling's anticipated sequel to the Ben Packard series: Bill is found dead in his bed with two bullets in him and a wife who heard only one shot and didn't see anything. It's a strange case from the start, as it's quickly revealed that Bill's wife, Carrie, is the sister of his ex-wife, Sherri. And the family drama doesn't end there.

Beyond the ongoing investigation, there's the matter of Packard's future. As acting sheriff, he could be taking on a lot more bureaucracy when the current sheriff, sick with cancer, dies. But Packard doesn't want to give up detective work and, frankly, the readers don't either.

If Packard becomes sheriff, how's he going to keep doing detective work that makes for interesting stories? But it's also unfathomable that he would lose — he's the hero of the story and the only qualified candidate for the job.

"Where the Dead Sleep" sticks the landing after a pattering start. Any doubts I had going in were quelled by a twist halfway through that was so surprising and darkly comical I snorted. This is where



"Where the Dead Sleep" by Joshua Moehling (Poisoned Pen Press)

things really pick up.

It's a cat-and-mouse game as the clues start to emerge, slowly at first, then quickly as the truth begins to materialize. As an added layer, the series through-line of Packard's missing brother, Nick — the cold case from almost 30 years ago that was eventually closed with no body — finally takes the spotlight. After spending half the novel wondering "what's in the box?!" it ends with a huge cliffhanger that's only slightly remedied by Moehling's promise that "all will be revealed in the third book."

DONNA EDWARDS, MDT/AP

tTUNES

ON 'MY LOVE OF COUNTRY,' TEDDY THOMPSON SHOWS AFFECTION FOR NASHVILLE CLASSICS

TEDDY Thompson began a recent concert by singing George Jones' 1972 hit "A Picture of Me (Without You)," and smiled as the crowd applauded.

"That's a new song I just wrote," he joked.

Well, no. But Thompson puts his stamp on that tune and nine other classics on his latest project, an album of covers: "My Love of Country."

Country music is in Thompson's DNA, even though he was born in London. His parents, Richard and Linda Thompson, are revered British folk rockers who found room for such Nashville standards as "Together Again" and "Honky Tonk Blues" in their 1970s stage shows.

Their son has long been partial to classic country, and his zeal for the peal of a pedal steel — and mandolin, and fiddle — is evident on "My Love of Country." Thompson's disciplined, almost reverent interpretations shun



"My Love of Country," Teddy Thompson (Chalky Sounds)

showboating in the vocals or arrangements; his vibrant tenor is more than enough to make the songs shimmer.

Most are weepers. They range from Patsy Cline tunes and the Charlie Louvin hit "I Don't Love You Anymore" to more unpredictable selections, including "I'll Regret It All in the Morning," a drinking song written by Teddy's dad.

Among those contributing backing vocals are Vince Gill, Rodney Crowell and Aoife O'Donovan. Producer David Mansfield provides subtle

support on multiple instruments while keeping the focus on the lead singer.

Thompson finds a Scottish lilt in Buck Owens' "Crying Time," makes octave leaps seem effortless on "I Fall to Pieces," and elsewhere evokes Roy Orbison.

He saves his best for last: a lovely version of "You Don't Know Me." On the final verse, Thompson climbs the scale but resists any temptation to let loose, his artful restraint somehow making the moment more moving. STEVEN WINE, MDT/AP

OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

CALLS WILL NOT BE ANSWERED TILL SINCERITY SHOWN

In an interview on the sidelines of the Australian American Leadership Dialogue in Canberra on Sunday, one of the United States' senior military officials claimed that China's military was becoming dangerously arrogant.

Lieutenant General Stephen Sklenka, deputy commander of the US "Indo-Pacific" Command, said that the People's Liberation Army was fueling the risk of military clash with the US by refusing to communicate with US commanders in the "Indo-Pacific".

It seems that the US' top brass have a unique understanding of what "dialogue" entails. Dialogue doesn't mean someone in the US military picking up a phone and making a call to China to issue orders to the Chinese military. In the words of Tan Kefei, spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of National Defense, dialogue cannot be without principles, while communication cannot be without a bottom line.

Washington lacks sincerity in claiming it is reaching out for communication between the two militaries. Beijing has made it clear that the US should lift the illegal unilateral sanctions it has imposed on Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu to create a favorable atmosphere and conditions for dialogue and communication between the two militaries.

In 2018, the then Donald Trump administration sanctioned Li and China's Equipment Development Department - which he was in charge of at the time - for acquisitions of military aircraft and missile system equipment from Russia.

Given the communication channels between the PLA and the US' allies are operating smoothly, the US side feels there is no need for direct communication with the Chinese military and that it can exploit China's principled position to its own advantage.

While claiming to believe in the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with China in order to responsibly manage the relationship, the US side is trying to portray China as acting irresponsibly and dangerously by claiming that it is the Chinese side that is refusing to talk. In this way, it is trying to justify the aggressive deployment of military assets around China's periphery.

Sklenka made that clear the next day when he said that he saw value in Chairperson of the House of Representatives China Select Committee Mike Gallagher's idea of positioning US hypersonic missiles in Australia and other key locations across the Pacific.

Even under such circumstances, China has left the door open for dialogue with the US. On July 12, Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng met with US Assistant Secretary of Defense Ely Ratner, and urged the US side to remove the obstacles to bring military-to-military relations back to the right track.

It behooves the US to act responsibly to ensure the communication channels between the two militaries are reopened, if it really thinks, as it claims, communication is essential to reduce the chances of miscalculation and inadvertent escalation, and lowering the risk of a clash.

China has established the world's largest language resource repository, consisting of over 120 languages and dialects that are being used in the world's most populous country, the Chinese Ministry of Education said, as cited by the China News Service (CNS).

Speaking at a news conference held in Anyang, Central China's Henan Province, Tian Lixin, director of the Language and Information Management Department under the Ministry of Education, said that the ministry has successfully conducted investigations at more than 1,700 sites in 34 provinces, regions and municipalities, including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

Among the most significant outcomes of the first phase of the pro-

ject - officially named the Chinese Language Resource Protection Project - are three publications: Chinese Language and Culture Collection, Endangered Languages in China, and Chinese Language Resources Collection.

The Ministry of Education has also collaborated with 36 countries and regions along the Belt and Road initiative, engaging in international copyright cooperation for 38 products.

According to CNS, Chang Huiqin, deputy mayor of Anyang - known in China as the home of oracle bone script - said the local authority will cultivate around 100 core teachers in oracle bone script to support its integration into classrooms.

AP PHOTO



Iranian director Saeed Roustayi

IRANIAN FILMMAKER AND HIS PRODUCER FACE PRISON FOR SHOWING FILM AT CANNES WITHOUT STATE PERMISSION

AN Iranian filmmaker and his producer reportedly face prison time and being barred from filmmaking after they showcased a movie at the Cannes Film Festival without government approval, drawing immediate criticism internationally from leading American director Martin Scorsese and others.

Director Saeed Roustayi and producer Javad Norouzebeigi traveled to Cannes last year to show "Leila's Brothers," competing for the festival's grand Palme d'Or prize. The film focuses on a family struggling to make ends meet as Iran faces international sanctions and includes sequences showing protests in the Islamic Republic as a series of nationwide demonstrations shook the nation.

The film also depicts security forces beating demonstrators protesting Iran's ailing economy, which has already sparked mass protests and bloody security force crackdowns killing hundreds. The family in it loses all its savings over the rapid depreciation of Iran's rial currency, something Iranians across the country have lived with for years.

Additionally, the aging patriarch, hoarding his family's wealth and forcing them into squalor for a chance at personal glory, can be seen as an allegory

to Iran's theocracy.

"Leila's Brothers" didn't take the coveted Palme d'Or but ended up winning two other awards at Cannes. However, authorities in Tehran did not nominate the film for the Oscars despite its success at the renowned French film festival, something Roustayi later criticized in published remarks.

On Tuesday, Etemad newspaper reported that Tehran's Revolutionary Court sentenced the two men to six months in prison over creating "propaganda against the system."

The men showcased the film "in line with the counterrevolutionary movement ... with the aim of fame-seeking in order to prepare fodder and intensify the media battle against Iran's religious sovereignty," the court decision read, according to Etemad, a Tehran-based newspaper run by reformists.

The judge suspended all but 10-odd days of the prison sentence for the next five years, the newspaper said. However, the men will also be banned from filmmaking and communicating with those in the field during that period, as well as must attend a mandatory filmmaking course while "maintaining national and moral interests." The sentence is appealable.

No other major media

outlet in Iran reported the sentencing and Etemad did not explain how it came about its information. Iran's Revolutionary Courts conduct closed-door hearings over alleged threats to Iran's government, taking nearly every case involving a suspect with Western ties or facing accusations of espionage.

The international reaction against the sentence was swift. Scorsese, known for his films "Goodfellas," "Casino" and the upcoming "Killers of the Flower Moon," asked people online to sign a petition to protest the men's sentence "so they can continue to be a force of good in the world."

The Biarritz International Film Festival, at which Roustayi chaired the jury this year, immediately criticized the sentence as well and asked it be quashed by Iran's judiciary.

"His only crime is being a free-spirited filmmaker," the festival said. "Although he's not even 35, his sharp take on society makes him one of today's major international filmmakers."

Even inside Iran, there's been anger over the sentencing. The Iranian Cinema Directors Association issued an online statement, saying that "the race to issue insulting verdicts, which at the same time undermines the judiciary itself, has entered a new stage." **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Israel's Defense Ministry said yesterday it has secured its largest-ever defense deal selling a sophisticated missile defense system to Germany for \$3.5 billion after the United States approved the deal. Although Israel has long had close economic and military links with western European countries, the deal with Germany could draw the attention of Russia, which Israel has maintained working relations with throughout the war on Ukraine. Israel has repeatedly rebuffed requests to sell arms to Ukraine for fear of antagonizing Russia.

AP PHOTO



Spain's newly elected Parliament voted yesterday by a majority to elect a Socialist candidate as chamber speaker, breathing some life into acting Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's aspirations of forming another leftist government. The crucial vote was won by Francina Armengol with 178 votes in the 350-lower house of parliament, against 139 for the main conservative Popular Party's candidate.

AP PHOTO



Haiti An ex-police officer considered by many to be Haiti's most powerful gang leader warned that he would fight any international armed force deployed to the Caribbean country if it committed any abuses. Jimmy Chérizier, best known as "Barbecue," also urged Haitians to mobilize against the government. "We are asking the population to rise up," he said at a news conference. Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who has led Haiti since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, has been pushing for the deployment of a foreign armed force to help fight powerful gangs that are estimated to now control 80% of the capital of Port-au-Prince.