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STATS SURVEY REVEALS BY END OF JUNE AVERAGE EARNINGS OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES IN THE RETAIL TRADE SECTOR HAD RISEN BY 5.9% YEAR-ON-YEAR TO MOP14,810

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GOV'T TO LAUNCH SUBSIDY SCHEME FOR CULTURAL BUILDINGS' PRESERVATION

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JAPAN ASKS CHINA TO URGE CITIZENS TO 'HALT HARASSMENT' OVER FUKUSHIMA

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AP PHOTO



Palau-US The United States has signed a new agreement with Palau, which gives American ships the authorization to unilaterally enforce maritime regulations in the tiny Pacific island nation's exclusive economic zone, the U.S. Coast Guard said yesterday. The agreement comes as both the U.S. and China are seeking to expand their influence in the Pacific, and follows pleas from Palau's president for Washington's help to deter Beijing's "unwanted activities" in its coastal waters. In the agreement, concluded a week ago, U.S. Coast Guard ships can enforce regulations inside Palau's exclusive economic zone on behalf of the nation without a Palauan officer present, the Coast Guard said in a statement.

ANTHONY LAM

PANSY'S WORD

MGM is ready to invest extra to meet gov't requirement, executive director Pansy Ho said

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AP PHOTO



USA Samuel "Joe" Wurzelbacher, who was thrust into the political spotlight as "Joe the Plumber" after questioning Barack Obama about his economic proposals during the 2008 presidential campaign, and who later forayed into politics himself, has died, his son said Monday. He was 49. His oldest son, Joey Wurzelbacher, said his father died Sunday in Wisconsin after a long illness. His family announced this year on an online fundraising site that he had pancreatic cancer.

Alaska Law enforcement has prepared a first-of-its-kind report detailing missing Alaska Natives and American Indian people in Alaska, a newspaper reported. The Alaska Department of Public Safety last week released the Missing Indigenous Persons Report, which includes the names of 280 people, dates of their last contact and whether police believe the disappearance was suspicious in nature, the Anchorage Daily News reported.

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FSS
FUND RECOVERING LOSSES IN FIRST HALF

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SPORTS BUREAU
MARATHON MAY RUN INTO COTAI

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HOTEL GUESTS AT NEARLY 1.3M IN JULY

A total of 1,279,000 guests checked into the city's hotel establishments in July, leaping 335% year-on-year, albeit from a low base as the city was in a partial lockdown last summer. The latest Statistics and Census Service report showed guests from the mainland and Hong Kong stood at 946,000 and 200,000, respectively. The average occupancy rate of guest rooms in July rose 50.2 percentage points year-on-year to 89%, according to the report. The number of visitors arriving on package tours totaled 110,000 last month. Meanwhile, 42,000 Macau residents purchased outbound services through travel agencies, an uplift of 2,730.4% year-on-year.

ANTHONY LAM



CHINA LIFTS COVID-19 TEST REQUIREMENTS FOR INBOUND TRAVELERS

Mainland China has adjusted its entry measures and passengers are no longer required to undergo pre-entry negative nucleic acid or antigen testing. The Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre said people with a history of living in Taiwan or overseas will not need to show a negative nucleic acid test certificate from today. Officials have resumed visa issuance for business, employment, education, tourism, medical and family purposes. Foreigners holding valid visas issued before March 28, 2020, are permitted entry.

DSEDJ: 80,000 STUDENTS BENEFITING FROM FREE EDUCATION

In the 2023/2024 academic year, there are 10 higher education institutions, 76 non-higher education schools and 116 school units in Macau, according to statistics provided by the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ). Among them, 103 school units are included in the free education system, benefiting about 80,000 students. Meanwhile, the fifth phase of "Continuing Education Development Plan" will start on Sept. 1.

PANSY HO

MGM READY TO INVEST EXTRA TO MEET GOV'T REQUIREMENT

ANTHONY LAM

AMID the new tender's requirement to make additional investments in light of gross gaming revenue (GGR) reaching MOP180 billion, MGM's Pansy Ho said yesterday that the company is ready to invest the additional amounts.

During yesterday's interview session with a handful of selected media outlets, Ho, chairperson and executive director of MGM China Holdings Limited, cited the enterprise's swift recovery from the economic downturn to support her comment. The gambling concessionaire executive revealed that her enterprise had not only recovered from the low point but had in fact started making a profit.

"We have been in touch with banking consortiums discussing additional investments. With our satisfactory performance, there should not be a problem," Ho said, underlining that MGM Cotai has space for future developments and upgrades, with a floor area reaching 100,000 square feet.

Despite admitting to not having the physical capacity to host large-scale exhibitions and commercial fairs, the executive emphasized that her en-

terprise is "completely capable of hosting meetings, incentives and conferences."

Not completely satisfied with the current capacities of MGM properties, she disclosed that 60,000 square feet of space at MGM Macau is currently under transformation into a completely novel multimedia space for meetings, incentives and conferences, capable of hosting performances, fashion shows and art exhibitions, among other events of a similar scale.

"When we launch the new space, you will understand how versatile and multimedia-ready it will be," Ho said. She explained that the walls of the new venue will be fully covered with LED panels - a display mode currently used at MGM Cotai - "so that event organizers will only need a digital file to decorate their space," Ho explained.

The new venue will be ready in the third quarter of 2024.

After normal travel resumed, the enterprise observed that there are more younger customers visiting Macau, and they want to see products that differ from the last time they visited Macau. With that said, all resort operators will need to demonstrate novelty more regularly

than in the past 20 years to cater to new consumer preferences.

This is why, Ho explained, her enterprise will leverage its networks in art and culture circles to renew its offerings more often. Meanwhile, she disclosed that after the current Art Macao exhibition at MGM Theatre, there will be a resident show. Details will be released in due course.

Speaking on her views on the speculated economic downturn in mainland China, based on the performance of her enterprise in the first half of the year, she believed that mainland residents will still travel, but not as far or as frequently as before. They may drop farther destinations from their itineraries and visit Macau more frequently.

"We're trying to entice them to visit Macau every long weekend," Ho said. "For example, China has similar shopping offerings as Europe, so mainland residents don't need to travel that far."

This is also why MGM has picked art as its marketing strategy, because it can be 'instagrammable' - or in China's context, 'Xiaohongshu-able.' "People may encounter an event

at MGM that they will put on social media, and their friends will follow their footsteps," Ho explained.

On community efforts, she revealed that the enterprise's annual lion dance event will incorporate the city's historic background and be staged in front of A-Ma Temple. "So, we're connecting an intangible heritage (lion dance) with a tangible heritage," she said.

It was also disclosed that the resort operator will soon open offices in Osaka, Japan and Manila, the Philippines.

Yesterday also saw MGM Cotai launching its Art Macao collateral exhibition, which showcases the Valkyrie Miss Dior art installation created by Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos. The 24 by 7 meter installation has been created in association with luxury fashion brand Christian Dior and has been shown at the brand's haute couture show in Paris.

It is the artist's second art installation on show at an MGM China property. In 2015, the artist showcased her Valkyrie Octopus at MGM Macau's Grande Praça. The Octopus will tour to Europe this year before returning to China for a country tour.

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FSS investment funds growing this year, MOP4.5b accumulated in 1H

RENATO MARQUES

THE Social Security Fund (FSS) has announced that with the recovery of the global economy, its investments for the first half (1H) of 2023 recorded a return of about 4.5 billion patacas.

The statements came in response to the news Monday that the FSS investment funds in 2022 had made a loss of about 8 billion patacas.

The FSS also noted that "In 2022, the world was affected by a series of unfavorable factors such as the Russo-Ukrainian War and the Covid-19 pandemic," which resulted in an unstable and complex macroeconomy.

The government entity explained that due to those factors, "the global stock and bond markets were severely impacted and went down simultaneously. However, entering 2023, with the recovery of investor confidence and global stock and bond markets, the FSS has recorded an overall investment return of about 4.5 billion patacas for the first half of the year." It also



added that the "cumulative overall investment return on the investments made over the past five years is about 15.6 billion patacas."

As the Times reported in November 2022, several government investment funds recorded significant losses over the first half of

2022, a fact noted and reported by the Legislative Assembly Follow-up Committee for Public Finance Affairs.

In the same statement by the FSS, the entity also noted that there is no reason for alarm or speculation, noting that as of the first

half of this year, "the total assets of the FSS were approximately 90 billion patacas, an increase from approximately 86.6 billion patacas at the end of 2022."

Still, the FSS said it will continue to monitor the economic changes and optimize the investment por-

folio based on the fund's income and expenditure to "strive for a reasonable and stable long-term return, ensure financial stability, and enable the FSS to achieve long-term sustainable development."

BIGGER LOSSES ON FINANCIAL RESERVE INVESTMENTS

If the investments made through the FSS had a negative return in 2022 recording a loss of 8 billion patacas, an even worse outcome was seen from the investments made by the Macau Financial Reserve.

According to the figures published by the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) in late February this year, those investments recorded a loss of some 20.75 billion patacas at the end of 2022.

The figure comes without much of a surprise since, as the Times reported in November 2022, the results of the first half of the year were already showing a loss that amounted to some 17.4 billion patacas.

At the end of 2022, the Financial Reserve accounts presented a total balance of 557.97 billion patacas.

According to the latest report on the topic published by the AMCM in the government's official gazette last week, the financial reserve accounts have since, in the first half of 2023, recovered to a total balance of 565.76 billion patacas – that is, 7.79 billion patacas more than at the end of last year.

STATS

Retail workers' wages increased 6% in Q2, Transport & Communication up 5%

RENATO MARQUES

A Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) survey has found that at the end of June, the average earnings of full-time employees in the retail trade sector had risen by 5.9% year-on-year to MOP14,810.

The DSEC explained that this increase is mainly due to the low base of comparison caused by a relatively large number of employees being placed on unpaid leave during the pandemic last year.

Concurrently, the average earnings of full-time employees in transport, storage and communications was up by 5.2% year-on-year to MOP21,250.

Conversely, average earnings of employees in security activities and public sewage and refuse disposal dropped by 2.7% year-on-year to MOP12,410 and 2.3% year-on-year to MOP19,170 respectively.



The survey analyzed the manpower needs and wages for the second quarter (Q2) of 2023.

At the end of Q2 of 2023, the number of persons engaged in wholesale and retail trade increased 3.2% year-on-year to 63,934.

Among them, 40,404 were working in retail trade, up by 1.6%.

In the transport, storage and communications sector, there were more than 3.4% of people working, amounting to a total of 14,391, while the security

activities sector had 12,794 persons engaged, down by 2.3% year-on-year.

The same percentage decrease was reported in the public sewage and refuse disposal activities sector at the end of June, which employed some 945 persons.

In the same quarter, job vacancies in retail trade (2,538), security activities (1,251), and the transport, storage and communications sector (785) increased respectively by 1,157, 67, and 301.

98.3% of the vacancies in security activities required only junior secondary education or lower. Conversely, 36.7% of vacancies in the wholesale trade sector and 20% of those in the transport, storage and communications sector required tertiary education.

The DSEC survey also noted that 38.5% of job posts available required candidates to possess English language skills.

WEATHER

TYPHOON SAOLA TO BRING HEAVY RAIN TO SOUTHERN TAIWAN ON ITS WAY TO CHINA'S COAST

TAIWAN'S weather authorities have warned residents of heavy rain and strong winds starting today as Typhoon Saola skirts the island's southern coast on its way to China's southern coast.

The typhoon is moving northwest with sustained winds of 162 km/h and gusts of up to 198 km/h, according to Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau. The typhoon's eye will not hit Taiwan's mainland, but is expected to graze the island's southern cities with its outer bands.

In Macau, the typhoon is expected to enter within 800 km of Macau tonight. According to the latest forecast of Meteorological

and Geophysics Bureau (SMG), Typhoon Saola will move westwards, generally heading towards the eastern part of Guangdong.

"As Saola might interact with Tropical Cyclone Haikui later this week, there are still uncertainties about the trajectory and the location of Saola," it noted yesterday.

The typhoon is then expected to hit southern Fujian and Guangdong provinces in China's south.

Saola caused flooding in the northern part of the Philippines over the last few days. Hundreds of people have been displaced, but no casualties have been reported. LV

FOOTBALL

MACAU COACH URGES PORTUGUESE PLAYERS TO PREPARE FOR WC26 QUALIFIERS

RENATO MARQUES

THE new Macau national team head coach, Lázaro Oliveira, is calling in reinforcements for the region's team in preparation for two matches against Myanmar as part of the first round for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

According to Jornal Tribuna de Macau (JTM), one of the players who caught the coach's eye is Nuno Pereira, a 25-year-old Macau-born Portuguese currently playing for Imortal Desportivo Clube, a football club from Albufeira playing at the Campeonato de Portugal, which is the fourth level of the Portuguese football league system since 2022.

When he started his de facto work at the helm of the Macau National Team, Oliveira said he would consider all eligible players to form the strongest possible team to maximize the team's chances of passing the first round on the road to the World Cup 2026.

To JTM, Oliveira said the chances of Macau passing this first round



Lazaro Oliveira

are directly tied to the quality of the team. The players currently playing professionally outside Macau could have an important role in such a team.

"There are players who are currently abroad and who can contribute to this team, as long as

the [Macau Football] Association leaders are willing to spend some money to bring them in for the practice sessions [and matches]," Oliveira was quoted saying.

Pereira admitted to JTM that he had received an invitation from the coach and immediately

accepted, noting that he thinks the team is in a condition to play competitively in both matches with Myanmar scheduled for October.

Pereira said he was surprised to have been invited, but is nevertheless happy at the prospect

of playing for Macau, noting that is rare for the team to feature players who are not in Macau.

Admitting that Myanmar is the favorite at the start of this double-header event, Oliveira is still optimistic, as he believes that there is only a small difference between the two teams.

The last time that the Macau team faced Myanmar was two months ago in June, in a friendly match played at Taipa's Olympic Stadium.

In this match, Macau lost 0-2 to Myanmar, with goals from Lwin Moe Aung at the 25-minute mark and Maung Maung Lwin in a penalty kick at 90+4 minutes, sealing the win.

Myanmar currently occupies the 160th position on the FIFA ranking, while Macau is 182nd out of 208.

Before the double-header event scheduled for Oct. 12 in Yangon and Oct. 17 in Macau, the local team is playing with Bhutan at home on Sept. 6, and in Cambodia on Sept. 11.



FOOTBALL

Macau's CPK to play at group stage of AFC Cup

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU'S Chao Pak Kei (CPK) will be playing in this year's group stage of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Cup.

The CPK will be playing at Group I, the only group dedicated to the East Zone of the AFC, battling for a place

in the next stage with Taiwan's Tainan City FC, Mongolia's FC Ulaanbaatar and the last qualified Taichung Futuro FC, also from Taiwan.

Taichung Futuro FC qualified by beating the Macau team Monte Carlo by 1-2 in the pre-qualifiers playoff in a match played in at Tai-

pa's Olympic Stadium last week.

Taichung Futuro FC advanced to the AFC Cup 2023/24 group stage after two early goals, one from Liang Meng-Hsin (minute 7), and the second from Kaoru Takayama (minute 16). They resisted a late comeback from the home side who only managed

to narrow the score to 1-2 at the 77th minute with Brazilian Jackson finishing off a fine counter-attacking move with a powerful header.

It was the first foray for both teams into the AFC Cup with CPK qualifying as the 2022 "Liga de Elite" champions as well as being the Macau Cup winners, while Monte Carlo qualified for the AFC Cup playoff stage by having been the 2022 Liga de Elite runners-up.

The AFC Cup is divided into five zones (West, South, Central, ASEAN and East) with the Macau teams included in the last.

The next stage will see the winners of the ASEAN Zone move on to the inter-zone semi-finals, where they will be joined by the winners of Groups D, E, and I. A Knockout Stage draw will be conducted to determine the two ties for this stage.

The two victors will then play in the Inter-zone Final to earn the right to face the winners of the West Zonal Final in the AFC Cup 2023/24 final on May 5, 2024.

HERITAGE

GOV'T TO LAUNCH SUBSIDY SCHEME FOR CULTURAL SITES' PRESERVATION

STAFF REPORTER

A historical site maintenance subsidy program is expected to be launched in October, subsidizing 50% of each project's expenditure, with an upper limit of MOP2 million, according to the Cultural Heritage Committee.

The Cultural Development Fund will have a budget of MOP20 million on the subsidy program.

According to the Cultural Affairs Bureau president and acting chairman of the committee, Leong Wai Man, the subsidy is for buildings that have been assessed or are yet to be assessed, or the maintenance of real estate with cultural

value. It is initially estimated that more than 600 buildings will be eligible.

Meanwhile, the official also announced that the authorities had earlier launched the Chio Mansion revitalization plan, and successively carried out historical data collection, debris removal works, architectural surveying and mapping and the formulation of restoration plans.

The restoration project will be carried out at a later date.

Located on a narrow alley near the Senado Square, the mansion was purchased by the IC for MOP8 million.

The purchase caused controversies due to the lack disclosure of the purchase.



Chio Mansion



Sports Bureau: Marathon may run into Cotai resort area

ANTHONY LAM

INVESTIGATIONS on extending the annual Macao International Marathon to the resort area in Cotai are underway, Director of Sports Pun Weng Kun has said in response to lawmaker Leong Sun Iok's inquiry.

The lawmaker himself is a recreational runner and is often seen practicing in various locations across the city.

Pun said a review is conducted after every race, taking into account opinions from different sectors in society. Key attributes of the race such as the flow and content of each event are adjusted in response to the feedback to create a better environment and experience for participating runners and to promote sports tourism in Macau.

The official said his bureau "will strive to add new elements into the race route, such as passing through Estrada de Istmo," which is colloquially referred to as the Cotai Strip.

In addition, the sport official said more touristic and cultural elements are being contemplated for inclusion "to further escalate the benefits created by major events."

Pun also said planning for the above proposals is being conducted with relevant bureaus and entities "to constantly enrich and improve routing [and related elements]" to reduce any inconvenience to local residents and road users. The road conditions along the route are also a major concern for the bureau, because maintaining the safety of runners is critical.

Pun said plans are underway to upgrade the chip that records individual finish times for each runner. However, time-counting will still follow international practices to include the time from starting pistol to crossing the finish line.

The lawmaker, meanwhile, told local media outlet Macao Daily News that he hopes the government will work harder to make a run on the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge a reality. Previously, local senior officials have hinted that such a plan may be under consideration, but underlined that it relies on attaining the consensus of three governments.

Hong Kong earlier announced that a run on the Hong Kong section of the bridge would be held at a later date.

ROTARY CLUB OF MACAU TO INVEST IN MENTAL HEALTH PROJECTS UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP

STAFF REPORTER

THE Rotary Club of Macau will invest in mental health following the lingering effects of the pandemic prevention measures among Macau's society fabric.

Joao Pinto, the 77th president of the Rotary Club of Macau, has stressed the importance that mental health projects will be accorded during his tenure.

The club will be sponsoring three different mental health projects during his tenure as president.

One involves a competition to be held among all secondary schools in Macau, while the other will be developed at the University of Macau. The third project takes place in Hong Kong and Macau and will deliver a series of Mental Health First Aid Training courses to provide participants with greater in-depth knowledge and hands-on training to help people with mental health needs.

The announcement was made at the joint inauguration

ceremony of the new club leaders of the Rotary Club of Macau, Rotaract Club of Macau, Rotaract Club of University of Macau Students' Union and Interact Club of St. Paul's School of Macau for the 2023-24 Rotary Year.

Each year, the joint ceremony officiates the passing of the baton from outgoing to incoming club presidents.

Outgoing 76th president of the Rotary Club of Macau, Li Ying, highlighted the projects and achievements of the club, saying, "We had an extraordinary year of serving the local community and the world, with all of the four outgoing presidents, myself included, being female. With the Rotary International President of this last year also being the first female president in Rotary history, we are a true testament to increased diversity in Rotary leadership and vision."

Also during the ceremony, Pinto presented a check of 15,000 MOP to support activities at the Concordia School for Special Education.



CORPORATE BITS

Melco to launch the NORDAQ water filtration system across its global resorts



Melco Resorts & Entertainment has become the world's first hospitality group and integrated resort operator to

launch the NORDAQ water purification and bottling solution across its global property portfolio, including at

its properties in Macau, the Philippines and Cyprus.

Melco's objective is to gradually replace single-use plastic (SUP) bottles with refillable glass bottles across all its operations.

Once fully operational across all Melco's properties in Macau, an estimated 14.8 million plastic bottles will be eliminated annually at ordinary business volumes.

Lawrence Ho, Melco Chairman and CEO, said, "We have been developing and enhancing our 2025 roadmap to address the root causes of plastic pollution within our operations, and as part of this, we are glad to have rolled out the NORDAQ solution across our properties in both Asia and Europe."

MGM holds family carnival



MGM organized its annual community event, MGM Family Carnival, for its team members and members of the community.

Through a series of educational interactive games and

family-friendly workshops, the carnival aims to help strengthen family bonds and bring happiness to the community.

With the theme of Chinese traditional culture, the event

this year included an array of nostalgic games and folk culture experiences.

Kenneth Feng, president and executive director of MGM China, said, "Looking forward, MGM will continue to work closely with the Macau government and other parties in helping to develop a happy, harmonious community for all."

The two-day event attracted approximately 1,500 participants in total. Apart from MGM team members, over 500 participants attended the event from families of six local associations, being Macau Federation of Trade Unions, Macau Federation of Trade Unions, Women's General Association, Caritas Macau, Tung Sin Tong and Sheng Kung Hui.

TRADE

He Lifeng tells the US commerce secretary he's ready to improve cooperation

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

THE top Chinese official in charge of economic relations with Washington told Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo yesterday he was ready to "make new positive efforts" to improve cooperation following an agreement to reduce trade tension by launching groups to discuss export controls and other commercial disputes.

The agreement Monday was the most substantial result to date out of a string of visits by American officials to Beijing over the last three months to revive relations that are at their lowest level in decades. They express optimism about better communication, but neither side has given a sign it is ready to compromise on disputes about technology, security, human rights and other irritants.

Vice Premier He Lifeng sounded an optimistic note, referring to "in-depth exchanges" in July



U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo (left) is greeted by Premier Li Qiang at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday

with his American counterpart, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen.

"I'm ready to work based on that with you, to make new positive efforts to deepen our consensus and extend our cooperation," He

told Raimondo during a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing.

The two governments would launch an "information exchange" about U.S. controls on techno-

logy exports that irritate Beijing, though she defended the curbs as necessary for national security and gave no indication they might be relaxed.

"I'm looking forward to finding ways that we can more effectively engage on commercial issues that impact our relationship," Raimondo told He. She said President Joe Biden "asked me to reiterate to you our desire to have more open engagement."

Meeting later with Raimondo, China's No. 2 leader, Li Qiang, expressed hope for "concrete actions" by Washington — a reference to Beijing's desire for policy changes on Taiwan, access to technology and other issues.

"We do hope the U.S. side will work in the same direction as China, show sincerity and take concrete actions to maintain and further develop bilateral relations," Li told Raimondo.

"While we will never of course compromise in protecting our na-

tional security I want to be clear that we do not seek to decouple or to hold China's economy back," Raimondo told He.

Also yesterday, Raimondo met with the Chinese minister of culture and tourism, Hu Heping. She said they agreed to "advance our people to people ties through increased tourism and educational and student exchange."

China is gradually reviving foreign tourism after lifting anti-virus controls that blocked most travel into and out of the country for three years. The number of foreign students in China fell close to zero during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The visits take place under an agreement made by Xi and Biden during a meeting last November in Indonesia. The Chinese state press has given them positive coverage, but Beijing has given no indication it might change trade, strategic, market access and other policies that irk Washington and its Asian neighbors. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

Britain's foreign secretary visits China in an attempt to shore up ties, reduce tensions

BRTAIN'S top diplomat, James Cleverly, is set to visit China today, as the two countries attempt to shore up frayed ties.

It will be the first trip by a U.K. foreign secretary to China in more than five years. Both countries confirmed the long-awaited trip yesterday.

"The two sides will have in-depth communication on Sino-British relations and international and regional issues of common concern," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said. "We hope the British side will work with us to uphold the spirit of mutual respect, deepen exchanges, enhance mutual understanding and promote the stable development of Sino-British relations."

Cleverly's visit is an attempt to stabilize China-Britain ties, which have sunk to their lowest level in



Britain's Foreign Secretary James Cleverly

decades.

The countries disagree over issues such as Beijing's curbing of civil freedoms in Hong Kong, a former British colony, alleged human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region, China's support for Russia and Britain's close security ties with the United States.

In 2021, China sanctioned five British members of Parliament who are critical of Beijing. They are barred from entering mainland China, Hong Kong

and Macau and from doing business with Chinese citizens.

Cleverly was initially scheduled to travel to Beijing in July, but his trip was postponed, and his then-counterpart, Qin Gang, was later replaced with veteran diplomat Wang Yi.

The U.K. government said Cleverly's trip was aimed at strengthening channels of communication and protecting British interests. He will meet with Wang and Vice President

Han Zheng, the Foreign Office said.

"It is important we manage our relationship with China across a range of issues," Cleverly said in a statement. "No significant global problem — from climate change to pandemic prevention, from economic instability to nuclear proliferation — can be solved without China."

He said that China's size, history and global significance means they cannot be ignored, but that comes with a responsibility on the global stage. "That responsibility means China fulfilling its international commitments and obligations."

Britain's governing Conservative party is split over how tough a line to take with Beijing. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has described China as a growing "systemic challenge" to Britain's values and interests, but he has also stressed the need to maintain a relationship with the Asian superpower.

Besides highlighting human rights and security concerns, Cleverly is expected to explore potential areas of cooperation with China, such as climate change and trade. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

POLICE ARREST TWO MEN ACCUSED OF FOREIGN COLLUSION OVER LINKS WITH PROTEST FUND

HONG Kong police yesterday detained two men on suspicion of violating the city's national security law through links with a now-defunct fund that aimed to help people arrested in the pro-democracy protests in 2019.

The two men were suspected of conspiring to collude with the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund to receive overseas donations and provide financial support to people who fled Hong Kong or organizations that called for sanctions against the city, police said in a statement. They did not identify the suspects or those alleged to have been aided by them.

Last year, the fund's former trustees, including Roman Catholic Cardinal Joseph Zen and singer Denise Ho, were also arres-

ted under the tough law. Zen's arrest sent shockwaves through the Catholic community.

The ex-trustees have not yet been charged with national security-related crimes, but they were fined in a separate case in November for failing to register the fund, which ceased operation in 2021.

Police said the pair arrested yesterday were suspected of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces to endanger national security and inciting others to commit riots. Officers searched their homes and the residence of another suspect with court warrants, they said. Some computers and electronic communication devices were seized.

The operation was ongoing and police did not rule out further arrests, they added. **MDT/AP**

FUKUSHIMA

Japan asks China to urge citizens to 'halt harassment'

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida asked China yesterday "to urge its citizens to halt acts of harassment," including crank calls and stone throwing at Japanese diplomatic facilities and schools, in response to Japan's release of treated radioactive wastewater from the damaged Fukushima nuclear power plant.

"I must say it is regrettable," Kishida said.

He said Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Masataka Okano summoned China's ambassador, Wu Jianguo, to ask that Chinese people act calmly and responsibly.

The release of the treated wastewater into the ocean, which began Thursday and is expected to continue for decades, has been strongly opposed by fishing groups and by neighboring countries.

China immediately banned all imports of Japanese seafood in response.



Thousands of South Korean protesters shout slogans during a rally to demand the stop of the Japan's release of treated radioactive water into the sea

In South Korea, thousands of people joined rallies over the weekend to condemn the discharge.

Acts of harassment including crank phone calls and stone throwing have targeted Japan's embassy and consulates and Ja-

panese schools in China, while China's government has not responded to requests from Japan for a joint scientific discussion of the release by experts, Kishida said. He said the Japanese plan is seen by many countries as scientific and transparent.

Japanese public broadcaster NHK said thousands of crank calls from China have targeted Fukushima government offices and the nuclear plant's operator. It said many of the callers shouted in Chinese, and some yelled "stupid" and other swear words.

Japan's government and the plant operator say treated radioactive wastewater that has accumulated since the March 2011 accident at the nuclear plant, now totaling 134 million tons and stored in about 1,000 tanks, is taking up much of the plant area and must be removed to free up space to build facilities for the plant's cleanup and decommissioning, which are also expected to take decades.

Kishida also pledged yesterday to do his utmost to protect

Japan's fisheries industry from the impact of China's import ban and said he will announce support measures later this week.

Japan's Foreign Ministry issued a travel advisory on Sunday urging Japanese citizens to use extra caution in China, citing an escalation of harassment and violent protests, and not talk loudly in Japanese to avoid attention.

At home, the release plan has faced fierce opposition from Japanese fishing groups which fear it will further hurt the reputation of seafood from the Fukushima area. The groups are still striving to repair the damage to their businesses caused by the meltdowns of three reactors at the power plant caused by a massive earthquake and tsunami.

All seawater and fish sampling data since the release have been way below set safety limits.

Economy and Industry Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura visited Fukushima yesterday to help with damage control. He joined officials from a supermarket chain and sampled locally caught surf clams and flounder.

"I hope to promote delicious Fukushima seafood to as many people in and outside Japan as possible," Nishimura said. "While safely carrying out the release, we will be transparent in disclosing all data. That's the best way to fight reputational damage." MDT/AP

藝術氣息
ARTISTIC VIBES

MACAUCLOSER

JÁ À VENDA

生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE
MACAUCLOSER

Breakfast Briefing

How to stay Hack-Proof

What it means and how to make your life and business hack-proof

britcham **How to stay Hack-Proof**

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Venue: St Regis - Silk Room
Time: 07:30 - 09:00
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AP PHOTO

GUATEMALA

Progressive's presidential victory certified, but his party is suspended



President-elect Bernardo Arevalo

SONIA PÉREZ D. & MEGAN JANETSKY, GUATEMALA CITY

PROGRESSIVE candidate Bernardo Arevalo was confirmed the winner of Guatemala's presidential election by the country's Supreme Electoral Tribunal yesterday [Macau time], but the same day another government body ordered his political party suspended.

Arevalo has faced a slew of legal challenges and allegations of irregularities since his unexpected victory over a candidate favored by the country's conservative elite.

Arevalo appears certain to take office as president on Jan. 14, but it was not clear whether his Seed Movement lawmakers would be able to take their seats in the country's Congress.

Arevalo called the suspension ruling legally void and said his party would appeal it.

"As of this moment, no one can stop me from taking office on Jan. 14," he told a news conference.

The electoral registry's ruling arose from an investigation into the Seed Movement by Guatemala's attorney general's office for alleged irregularities in the gathering of

signatures for its formation as a party.

If the Seed Party appeals the ruling, as promised, the case will be taken to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.

The Tribunal outranks the electoral registry, so the victory by Arevalo and the seats won in parliament by Seed Movement lawmakers in the first round elections appear confirmed. But the impact of the suspension of their party would have is unclear.

The announcements come after one of the most tumultuous elections in the Central American nation's recent history, which has put to test Guatemala's democracy.

At a time when Guatemalans, hungry for change, have grown disillusioned with endemic corruption, Arevalo and other opponents of the country's elite faced waves of judicial attacks in an attempt to knock them out of the race.

Arevalo, the little-known son of a former president, shocked much of the country by emerging as a top contender in the first round of presidential voting. He failed to get enough support to win outright and headed to a runoff vote against former first lady Sandra Torres. His rise had come after a handful of

other candidates were disqualified.

Arevalo rapidly gained support, campaigning on social progress and railing against corruption.

"This message generated, aroused hope, mobilized people who were fed up with corruption," he told the AP in a June interview.

Arevalo easily beat Torres in the Aug. 20 presidential runoff. According to the official count, the progressive candidate obtained 60.9% of the valid votes cast, against 37.2% for the right-wing Torres. The party also won 23 seats in the 160-seat Congress.

His win has been the source of a legal back-and-forth between various governmental entities and courts, some staffed with officials who have been sanctioned by the United States on charges of corruption. He has faced allegations of voter fraud by Torres, legal challenges and more.

Eight days after the runoff, Torres still hasn't conceded defeat and outgoing President Alejandro Giammattei hasn't said anything about the latest developments.

"It's obviously another attempt to subvert Semilla's (the Seed Movement's) path to power," said Alex Papado-

vassilakis, a Guatemala-based investigator for InSight Crime focused on crime and corruption. "I think we're entering uncharted waters."

Arrest warrants for electoral officials and raids to the party's headquarters have also caused concern in the international community and among Guatemalans.

Earlier this week, the Organization of American States' human rights commission asked that Guatemala provide protection for Arevalo after reports emerged of a possible plot to kill him.

Arevalo's victory has left much of the country's political establishment reeling, while his supporters have held protests against attempts to thwart his taking office.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres expressed concern about the attempts to undermine the results of Guatemala's presidential election, a U.N. spokeswoman said earlier.

The 64-year-old son of former President Juan José Arevalo was born in Uruguay, where his father was in exile following the ouster in a 1954 CIA-backed coup of his successor President Jacobo Árbenz, whom the U.S. saw as a threat during the Cold War. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1997 PRINCESS DIANA DIES IN PARIS CRASH



Diana, Princess of Wales, has died after a car crash in Paris.

She was taken to hospital in the early hours of Sunday morning where surgeons tried for two hours to save her life but she died at 0300 BST.

In a statement Buckingham Palace said the Queen and the Prince of Wales were "deeply shocked and distressed".

Prince Charles broke the news of their mother's death to Princes William and Harry at Balmoral Castle in Scotland where the royal family had been spending the summer.

The accident happened after the princess left the Ritz Hotel in the French capital with her companion, Dodi Al Fayed - son of Harrods owner, Mohammed Al Fayed.

Dodi Al Fayed and the vehicle's driver were also killed in the collision in a tunnel under the Place de l'Alma in the centre of the city.

The princess' Mercedes car was apparently being pursued at high speed by photographers on motorbikes when it hit a pillar and smashed into a wall.

Mr Al Fayed and the chauffeur died at the scene but the princess and her bodyguard were cut from the wreckage and rushed to hospital.

The French authorities have begun a criminal investigation and are questioning seven photographers.

Tributes to the princess have been pouring in from around the world.

Speaking from his home in South Africa, the princess' brother, Lord Charles Spencer, said his sister had been "unique".

While it was not the time for recriminations there was no doubt the press had played a part in her death, the earl added.

Hundreds of mourners have gathered at the princess' London home, Kensington Palace and many have laid flowers at the gates.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Only Princess Diana's bodyguard, Trevor Rees-Jones, survived the crash.

Blood tests showed the driver, Henri Paul, had taken both drugs and a large amount of alcohol before the accident.

The royal family was criticised for its reserve during a time when there was an unprecedented national outpouring of grief.

Around one million people lined the streets to see the princess' funeral cortege as it made its way to Westminster Abbey in early September.

No charges were brought against the paparazzi who had been pursuing the princess' car.

But the behaviour of the press came under close scrutiny, the code governing the British media was tightened in December 1997.

An inquest into the princess' death was opened in the UK in 2004. It has been adjourned while the Metropolitan police, led by Lord Stevens, carry out an investigation into the crash. Retired judge Lady Elizabeth Butler-Sloss will conduct preliminary hearings into the inquests in early 2007.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You will gain new friends if you get involved in environmental issues. You can stabilize your financial situation if you make property investments.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You will be full of energy and you need to find something constructive to do. You may find yourself in an opportune position if you are willing to take a bit of a risk.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
New relationships could evolve through group activities. You must be extremely careful not to let relatives or friends interfere in your personal life.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You may be upset if someone has borrowed something that belongs to you. You'll be able to discuss your ambitions with your mate. You could come into extra cash.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You can enhance your reputation by making contributions to worthwhile causes. Opportunities to learn important information will surface through discussions with peers or seminars you attend.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Visitors may drop by unexpectedly, resulting in tension with your lover. Social activity should be on your agenda. You will find that superiors may not see situations as you do.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Your sensitive nature will allow others to read you well. Don't divulge secret information. Travel will result in new romantic attractions.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Don't make those you live with feel unloved or unworthy. Don't make those you live with feel unloved or unworthy. Try to include friends and relatives in your activities.

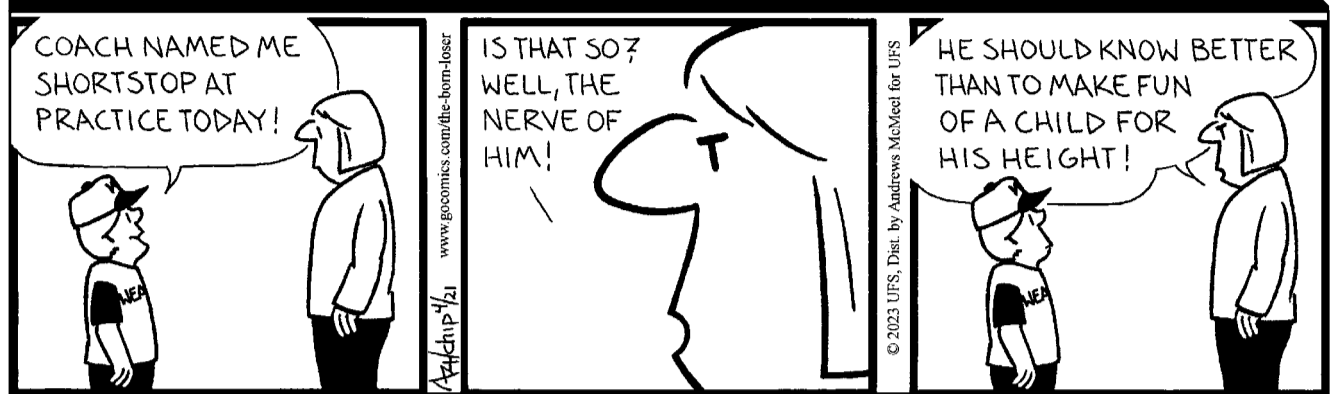
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Delve into worthwhile causes that will show results if you put in the effort. Entertainment should include the whole family or a lot of your friends.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Take part in stimulating debates that will allow you to show off your intelligence. You should consider getting your whole family involved in a project at home.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Try to curb your bad habits. You can win if you're open and up front with your boss. You might just as well let others do their own thing.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You need time to make things better. Don't be too hard on your mate. Deal with the needs of children and get into groups that deal with self awareness.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

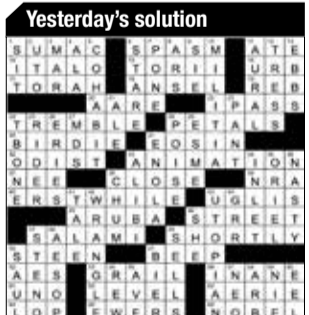
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	18	29	cloudy
Changchun	15	21	rain
Chengdu	21	28	cloudy
Chongqing	23	32	fine
Fuzhou	27	32	rain
Guangzhou	24	34	cloudy
Guiyang	16	25	cloudy
Haikou	25	32	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	21	25	rain
Harbin	15	20	showers
Hefei	19	28	cloudy
Nanjing	23	24	showers
Shanghai	22	26	rain
Taipei	26	30	rain
Wuhan	19	30	fine
Hong Kong	27	32	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	12	21	overcast
Frankfurt	11	22	showers
Paris	12	22	showers
London	11	20	overcast
New York	18	29	thunderstorms

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Joe; 5- Perched on; 9- After John in the NT; 13- Follows orders; 15- Electronics giant; 16- Skater Lipinski; 17- Norwegian dramatist; 18- Just okay; 19- Legal claim; 20- Writer Hentoff; 21- Trompe l'...; 23- Polish seaport; 25- Electronic music pioneer; 26- Tantalizes; 27- Civilian; 30- Even one; 31- Make amends; 32- Living; 37- Constituent; 38- Funnel-shaped; 40- HOMES part; 41- Companion of a child; 43- Tremble; 44- Big-league; 45- Matured; 47- Revolve; 50- Dull pain, often in the head or back; 51- Outcast; 52- Manitoba Indigenous People; 53- How was ___ know?; 56- Token; 57- Jai ___; 59- Pine sap; 61- Impediment; 62- Goldfinger portrayer Frobe; 63- Get around; 64- Actress Daly; 65- Whirlpool; 66- Stares at;

DOWN 1- Connect; 2- "Dancing Queen" quartet; 3- Sleeveless garment; 4- Affirmative vote; 5- Allot; 6- Kit item; 7- Switch positions; 8- Generating pus; 9- Geographical reference; 10- Queeg's command; 11- Long lock of hair; 12- Subsidized; 14- Doze; 22- Fair-hiring abbr.; 24- 24 hour periods; 25- Like some mouthwashes; 26- Prepare for takeoff; 27- Andy of the comics; 28- Romance lang.; 29- When said three times, a 1970 war movie; 32- Hydrocarbon ending; 33- Titter; 34- Ayatollah's land; 35- Greek goddess of victory; 36- Turned right; 38- Ancient city-state in N Africa; 39- Oklahoma Native; 42- Movie-rating org.; 43- Round body; 45- A chicken's tooth?; 46- Bump off; 47- Coming down; 48- Church instrument; 49- Hint; 51- Attention-getting sound; 52- Part of a hand; 53- ___ old chap!; 54- It may turn; 55- Singles; 58- Spearheaded; 60- Time of anticipation;



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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NATHAN ELLGREN,
WASHINGTON

HUMAN RIGHTS

SON STOLEN AT BIRTH HUGS CHILEAN MOTHER FOR FIRST TIME IN 42 YEARS

HOLA, mamá.” What seems like an unremarkable greeting between mother and son was in this case anything but.

Forty-two years ago, hospital workers took María Angélica González's son from her arms right after birth and later told her he had died. Now, she was meeting him face-to-face at her home in Valdivia, Chile.

“I love you very much,” Jimmy Lippert Thyden told his mother in Spanish as they embraced amid tears.

“It knocked the wind out of me. ... I was suffocated by the gravity of this moment,” Thyden told The Associated Press in a video call after the reunion. “How do you hug someone in a way that makes up for 42 years of hugs?”

His journey to find the birth family he never knew began in April after he read news stories about Chilean-born adoptees who had been reunited with their birth relatives with the help of a Chilean nonprofit Nos Buscamos.

COUNTERFEIT ADOPTION

The organization found that Thyden had been born prematurely at a hospital in Santiago, Chile's capital, and placed in an incubator. González was told to leave the hospital, but when she returned to get her baby, she was told he had died and his body had been disposed of, according to the case file, which Thyden summarized to the AP.

“The paperwork I have for my adoption tells me I have no living relatives. And I learned in the last few months that I have a mama and I have four brothers and a sister,” Thyden said in the interview from Ashburn, Virginia, where he works as a criminal defense attorney representing “people who look like me” who cannot afford a lawyer.

He said his was a case of “counterfeit adoption.”

Nos Buscamos estimates tens of thousands of babies were taken from Chilean families in the 1970s and 1980s, based on a report from the Investigations Police of Chile which reviewed the paper passports of Chilean children who left the country and never came back.

“The real story was these kids were stolen from poor families, poor women that didn't know. They didn't know how to defend themselves,” said Constanza del Río, founder and director and Nos Buscamos.

PINOCHET YEARS

The child-trafficking coincided with many other human rights violations that took place



Jimmy Thyden (right) hugs Maria Angelica Gonzalez, his Chilean birth mother, as they meet for the first time in Valdivia, Chile on Thursday, Aug. 17

during the 17-year reign of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, who on Sept. 11, 1973, led a Chilean coup to overthrow Marxist President Salvador Allende. During the dictatorship, at least 3,095 people were killed, according to government figures, and tens of thousands more were tortured or jailed for political reasons.

Over the past nine years, Nos Buscamos has orchestrated more than 450 reunions between adoptees and their birth families, del Río said.

Other nonprofit organizations are doing similar work, including Hijos y Madres del Silencio in Chile and Connecting Roots in the United States.

Nos Buscamos has been partnering for two years with genealogy platform MyHeritage, which provides free at-home DNA testing kits for distribution to Chilean adoptees and suspected victims of child trafficking in Chile.

Thyden's DNA test confirmed that he was 100% Chilean and matched him to a first cousin who also uses the MyHeritage platform.

Thyden sent the cousin his adoption papers, which included an address for his birth mother and a very common name in Chile: María Angélica González.

It turns out his cousin had a María Angélica González on their mother's side and helped him make the connection.

But González wouldn't take his phone calls until he texted her a photo of his wife and daughters.

“Then just the dam broke,” said Thyden, who sent more photos of the American family who adopted him, his time in the U.S. Marines, his wedding, and many other memorable life moments.

“I was trying to bookend 42 years of a life taken from her. Taken from us both,” he said.

He traveled to Chile with his

wife, Johannah, and their two daughters, Ebba Joy, 8, and Betty Grace, 5, to meet his newly discovered family.

Stepping into his mother's home, Thyden was greeted with 42 colorful balloons, each one signifying a year of lost time with his Chilean family.

“There is an empowerment in popping those balloons, empowerment in being there with your family to take inventory of all that was lost,” he said.

Thyden recalls his birth mother's response to hearing from him: “Mijo (son) you have no idea the oceans I've cried for you. How many nights I've laid awake praying that God let me live long enough to learn what happened to you.”

González declined to be interviewed for this story.

Thyden, along with his wife and daughters visited the Santiago zoo where his American family first took him after the adoption. This time their tour guide was his biological sister.

Back at González's home, Thyden realized that he and his mother share a love of cooking.

“My hands are in the same dough as my mama,” he said as they made fried empanadas together. He pledged to keep using the family recipe to stay connected with his family and his culture.

ADOPTIVE PARENTS SUPPORTIVE

Thyden said his adoptive parents are supportive of his journey to reunite with his lost relatives, but were “unwitting victims” of a far-reaching illegal adoption network and are wrestling with the realities of the situation.

“My parents wanted a family but they never wanted it like this,” he said. “Not at the extortion of another, the rob-

bing of another.”

Through a spokesperson, his parents declined comment.

While Thyden was successfully reunited with his birth family, he recognizes that reunification might not go as well for other adoptees.

“It could have been a much worse story,” he said. “There are people who find out some really unfortunate details about their origin.”

While in Chile, Thyden and del Río met with one of seven investigators working to address thousands of counterfeit adoption cases like his own.

“We don't want money, we just want the human recognition that this horrible thing happened in Chile and the compromise that this is not going to continue happening in the future,” del Río said. “We are trying to make a difference. Not only with Jimmy and his family but we want to do it, the change, in the country.”

Thyden also met with Juan Gabriel Valdés, the Chilean ambassador to the United States, to seek government recognition of the pervasiveness of the adoption scheme.

He said there was no mechanism, financial or otherwise, to assist Chilean adoptees in their efforts to visit their home country. He said he sold a truck to pay for his family's plane tickets and other expenses.

“People need to be able to decide ... what their name is going to be, where their citizenship is going to be. They should have access to both,” he said. “They should have all the rights and privileges of a Chilean citizen because this is a thing that happened to them, not that they chose.”

The Chilean Embassy in Washington did not return a request for comment. **MDT/AP**



Jimmy as a child, and his cat Rusty

BASKETBALL

Historic day for African basketball, with South Sudan and Cape Verde getting WC wins

TIM REYNOLDS, MANILA

SOUTH Sudan is the world's youngest nation, gaining its independence only 12 years ago. Cape Verde is one of the world's least-populated nations, with fewer residents than any country that qualified for the Basketball World Cup.

They stood tall yesterday at the World Cup — both nations winning games at FIBA's biggest tournament for the first time.

It was a double-dose of history for African basketball: South Sudan beat China 89-69 at Manila and Cape Verde beat Venezuela 81-75 at Okinawa, Japan. The wins kept both teams in contention for berths in the second round of the World Cup, and they remain very much in the race to become Africa's automatic qualifier for next summer's Paris Olympics.



Cape Verde team members celebrate after defeating Venezuela

"I'm still speechless," said Cape Verde's Will Tavares, a Rhode Island-born forward who scored 20 points in yesterday's win. "I feel like I'm in a dream right now, but the win was so big for us and our country and our families. We

made a statement. Even though we're the smallest country, we have so much heart."

They were the two lowest-ranked nations in the 32-team field to begin the tournament, both countries getting to the Wor-

ld Cup for the first time. South Sudan is ranked 62nd worldwide by FIBA, the sport's global governing body; Cape Verde is ranked 64th.

And they both have a chance to be among the 16 teams still standing when the second round starts Friday.

"I'm just blessed and honored to be a part of this," South Sudan's Nuni Omot said. "This journey so far, it's just been an emotional and amazing feeling for me. And I know everyone else on the team feels the same way as well."

South Sudan's basketball program was essentially started a few years ago by former NBA player Luol Deng, who was born in the country and raised in London after his father — a former Sudanese government official and former political prisoner — was granted asylum by Britain. Deng learned to play basketball in Lon-

don, a scout noticed him when he was about 14 and his life forever changed.

When Deng's playing days were over, he became president of South Sudan's fledgling basketball federation. If there is an indoor court anywhere in that country, Deng doesn't know where it is. He believes the country doesn't have a single regulation-sized floor.

Yet here its players are, undaunted by doubt, unfazed by massive challenges.

"Luol Deng is the heart and soul of all of this," said South Sudan coach Royal Ivey, an assistant with the NBA's Houston Rockets. "He's the president. Without Luol I wouldn't be sitting here right now. He had a great vision. I entrusted in his vision and it all came together. I'm in awe that I'm sitting here at the World Cup. I'm forever indebted to Luol for giving me an opportunity to coach this team."

Africa has long been considered the sleeping giant in global basketball, and big strides have been made in recent years through investment — such as academies that the NBA has built there to identify and develop promising young players, the NBA-backed Basketball Africa League and the Giants of Africa initiative led by Toronto Raptors President Masai Ujiri, a native of Nigeria. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

The Conversation

Danica Jenkins, University of Sydney



HOW RUSSIAN HISTORY SHEDS LIGHT ON PUTIN AND PRIGOZHIN - AND THE DANGERS OF DISSENT

In Russia, failed coups portend turmoil and collapse. They also herald greater repression, and a tightening of centralised control. This is because Russian history has swung back and forth between chaos and autocracy, which have become mutually reinforcing symptoms of the same historical condition.

Russians have a word for the periods of turmoil: smuta.

Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin has come to symbolise a new cycle of this history taking place in Russia today. While the fallout from his aborted mutiny in June and recent death remains uncertain, it is possible to see these events as the reverberations of a centuries-old power system grinding forward into new terrain.

Prigozhin's mutiny had similarities with other failed uprisings in Russian history, from the Decembrist revolt in 1825, to Lavr Kornilov's march on St Petersburg in 1917, to the attempted coup against Mikhail Gorbachev by Communist Party hardliners in 1991.

These comparisons led some to warn of growing political instability in Russia, on the grounds that Prigozhin was less a threat to Putin's rule than a manifestation of its essential fragility. Others have argued, in the aftermath of Prigozhin's death, that the rebellion has provided Putin with an opportunity to consolidate his authority.

Whether or not Prigozhin may have exposed Putin's vulnerabilities, history suggests that what is to come could well be worse. "As Russians know only too well," Russian author Mikhail Shishkin warns, "one should not wish death on a bad tsar. For who knows what the next one will be like?"

To understand this maxim, one needs to understand Russia's history and its underlying power dynamics. On the morning of Prigozhin's rebellion, Putin referred to the smuta in a national address. Prigozhin, he said, was attempting to "create internal turmoil" and "split and weaken the country, which is now confronting a colossal external threat, unprecedented pressure from outside".

There was not a single Russian who wouldn't have understood the fearsome double meaning of "turmoil" (the literal translation of smuta) and the existential threat to the Russian nation it evoked.

The origins of this historical syndrome can be traced back to Ivan IV, better known as Ivan the Terrible, who in the 16th century transformed Russia from a loosely connected group of medieval states into the foundations of a modern empire.

Autocratic culture reproduces itself in the socio-political structures of the modern Russian state, but also in the mentality of its people. The truth is that the Russian ruler's prerogative as tsar-batiushka or "Father Tsar" can only hold sway over an acquiescent, even infantilised realm.

Prigozhin's mutiny will only cement Putin's - or his successor's - autocratic prerogative. As Hannah Arendt argued, authoritarian regimes hold out the carrot of stability, while constantly manufacturing the threat of instability. It is a self-perpetuating system. Chaos provides the impetus for autocratically imposed unity.

We don't know who might eventually succeed Putin, but history suggests the next leader is unlikely to be liberal or democratic.

An old question arises: will the Russian people remain silent?

[Abridged]

UN WARNS HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA ROPED INTO ONLINE SCAMS

THE BUZZ

The U.N. human rights office says criminal gangs have forced hundreds of thousands of people in Southeast Asia into participating in unlawful online scam operations, including false romantic ploys, bogus investment pitches, and illegal gambling schemes.

The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a new report, cites "credible sources" that at least 120,000 people in strife-torn Myanmar and roughly 100,000 in Cambodia "may be held in situations where they are forced to carry out online scams."

The report sheds new light on cybercrime scams that have become a major issue in Asia, with many of the workers trapped in

virtual slavery and forced to participate in scams targeting people over the internet.

Laos, the Philippines and Thailand were also cited among the main countries of destination or transit for tens of thousands of people.

Criminal gangs have increasingly targeted migrants, and lure some victims by false recruitment - suggesting they are destined for real jobs.

Some victims have been subjected to torture, cruel punishments, sexual violence and arbitrary detention, among other crimes, it said.



SURPRISE, SURPRISE!

PUTIN NOT PLANNING TO ATTEND FUNERAL FOR PRIGOZHIN, THE KREMLIN SAYS

PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin is not planning to attend the funeral for Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Kremlin said, following reports that the mercenary chief who challenged the Russian leader's authority would be buried today [Macau time].

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov wouldn't say where or when the chief of the Wagner Group military company would be buried, adding that he couldn't comment on a private family ceremony.

St. Petersburg's Fontanka news outlet and some other media said the 62-year-old Prigozhin could be laid to rest as early as today at the city's Serafimovskoye cemetery, which has been used for high-profile military burials. Heavy police cordons encircled the cemetery, where Putin's parents are also buried, but no service was immediately held and increased police patrols also were seen at some other city cemeteries.

Later in the day, a funeral was held at St. Petersburg's Northern Cemetery for Wagner's logistics chief Valery Chekalov, who died in the Aug. 23 crash alongside Prigozhin. Several hearses were seen driving from a central hall used for memorial ceremonies to Belosrovskoye cemetery on the city's outskirts, but they later drove away.

The tight secrecy and confusion surrounding the funeral of Prigozhin and his top lieutenants reflected a dilemma faced by the Kremlin amid swirling speculation that the crash was likely a vendetta for his mutiny.

While it tried to avoid any pomp-filled ceremony for the man branded by Putin as a traitor for his rebellion, the Kremlin couldn't afford to denigrate Prigozhin, who was given Russia's highest award for leading Wagner forces in Ukraine and was idolized by many of the country's hawks.

Putin's comments on Prigozhin's death reflected that careful stand. He noted last week that Wagner leaders "made a significant contribution" to the fighting in Ukraine and described Prigozhin as a "talented businessman" and "a man of difficult fate" who had "made serious mistakes in life" but "achieved the results he needed - both for himself and, when I asked him about it, for the common cause, as in these last months."

Although both were from St. Petersburg, Prigozhin and the Russian leader were not known to be particularly close.

Prigozhin, an ex-convict who earned millions and his nickname "Putin's chef" from lucrative government

catering contracts, served Kremlin political interests and helped expand Russia's clout by sending his mercenaries to Syria, Libya, the Central African Republic and other countries. Wagner, one of the most capable elements of Moscow's forces, played a key role in Ukraine where it captured the Ukrainian eastern stronghold of Bakhmut in late May.

Sergei Markov, a pro-Kremlin political analyst, noted that Prigozhin has become a legendary figure for his supporters who are increasingly critical of the authorities.

"Prigozhin's funeral raises an issue of communication between the bureaucratic Russian government system that doesn't have much political potential and politically active patriotic segment of the Russian public," Markov said.

The country's top criminal investigation agency, the Investigative Committee, officially confirmed Prigozhin's death on Sunday.

The committee didn't say what might have caused Prigozhin's business jet to plummet from the sky minutes after taking off from Moscow for St. Petersburg. Just before the crash, Prigozhin had returned from a trip to Africa, where he sought to expand Wagner Group's activities. MDT/AP



Spain Leading officials within the Spanish Football Federation asked suspended president Luis Rubiales (pictured) to resign because of his behavior at the Women's World Cup, including kissing a player on the lips after Spain won the championship match. The heads of the regional bodies that make up the federation made the request in a collective statement. "After the latest developments and the unacceptable behavior that has caused great damage to the image of Spanish soccer, the presidents request that Luis Rubiales resign immediately as president of the RFEF," the statement said.



Venice Sitting alone before a grand piano in a stark studio, Ryuichi Sakamoto takes the listener on a journey of his life, playing 20 of his compositions. Shot entirely in black and white, on three 4K cameras, the film "Opus," directed by Neo Sora, is the Japanese composer's farewell, poetic yet bold, and deeply heartfelt. Its world premiere is set for the Venice International Film Festival next month. The filming took place over several days, just a half year before his death on March 28 at 71.



Notting Hill Hundreds of thousands of revelers packed the streets of west London for the climax of the Notting Hill Carnival, one of the world's biggest celebrations of Caribbean music and culture. Organizers say up to 2 million people are expected to take in the music, parades, dancing and food over the two days of Europe's largest street party, which began Sunday with a children's parade. The carnival traces its history back to 1958, when Trinidadian human rights activist Claudia Jones began organizing a gathering to unify the community after a series of racist attacks on Black people in the Notting Hill neighborhood.