



A SET OF EXECUTIVE REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE POLICY FOR APARTMENTS FOR SENIORS WILL SOON BE SUBMITTED TO EXCO, DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE REVEALED P2

DSEDJ: MORE FOREIGN TERTIARY STUDENTS THAN PRE-COVID IN NEW SCHOOL YEAR P3

MYANMAR WON'T BE ALLOWED TO LEAD ASEAN IN 2026 P7



China High waters swept a fire truck into a river in southeastern China early yesterday, leaving five crew members missing, local authorities said, as the second tropical storm in recent days hit the mainland. Haikui weakened to a tropical storm as it scraped along the coastline of Fujian and Guangdong provinces yesterday morning, bringing up to 600 millimeters of rainfall to some areas as it moves inland, according to China's meteorological agency.



Hong Kong's top court ruled yesterday that the government should provide a framework for recognizing same-sex partnerships in a landmark decision for the city's LGBTQ+ community. The ruling did not grant full marriage rights to same-sex couples but was a partial victory for prominent pro-democracy activist Jimmy Sham, who had fought a five-year legal battle over the recognition of same-sex marriage registered overseas.



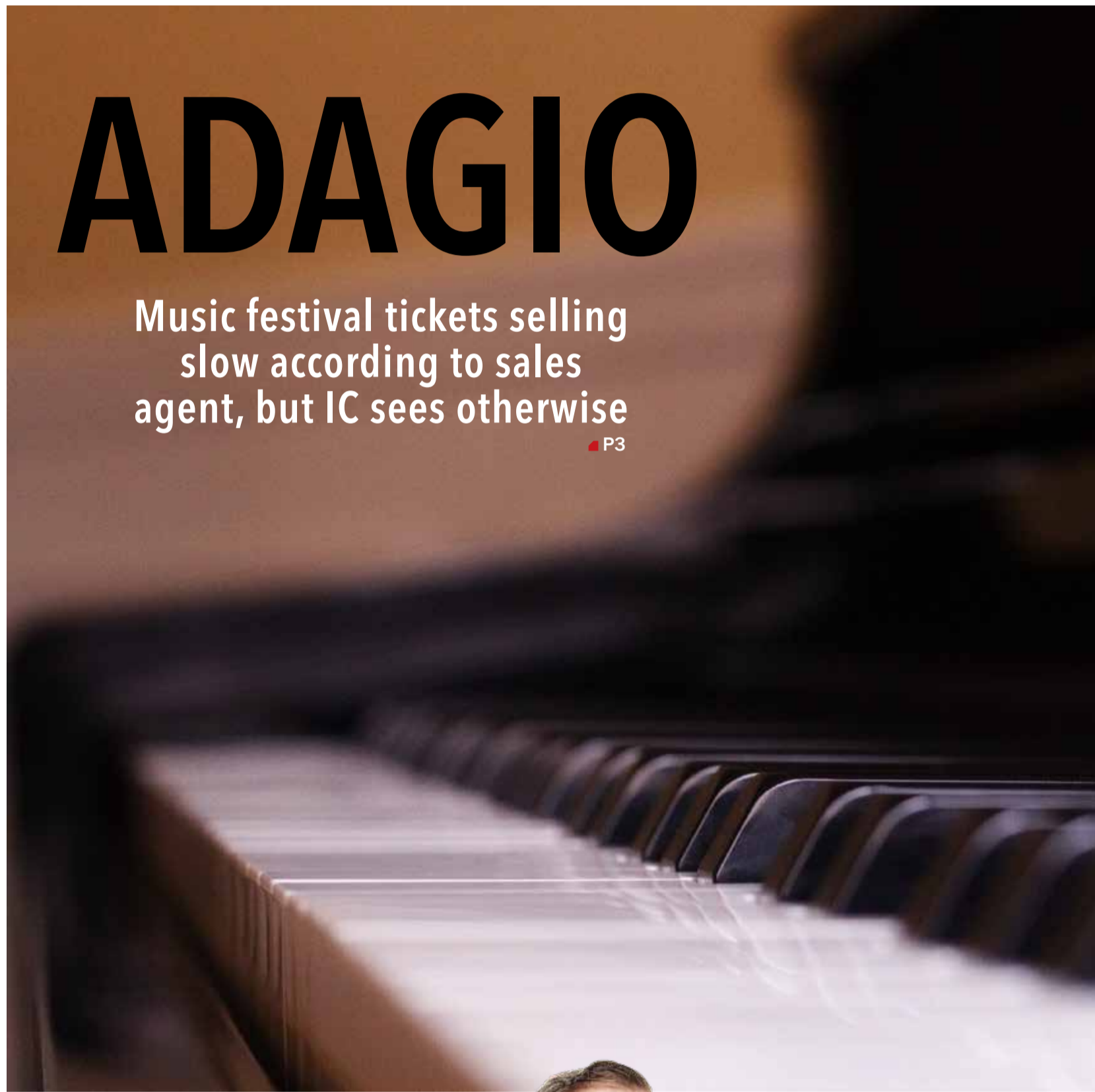
India Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has replaced the name India with a Sanskrit word in dinner invitations sent to guests attending this week's Group of 20 summit, in a move that reflects his Hindu nationalist party's efforts to eliminate what it sees as colonial-era names. Indian President Droupadi Murmu is referred to as "President of Bharat" instead of "President of India" in the invitation sent to G20 attendees.

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Music festival tickets selling slow according to sales agent, but IC sees otherwise

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GAMING
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10 SHORTLISTED DOCUMENTARIES FOR LOCAL VIEW POWER 2023

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has received 76 applications for the Local View Power 2023, which has shortlisted ten documentaries, short dramas and animations for the third round. Organized by the IC, after two rounds of selection, the jury selected ten works for the third round, including three documentaries, five short dramas and two animations. The IC will provide technical support and a production fee of nearly MOP 1.2 million for film production based on the above ten proposals. The films are scheduled to premiere in 2024.

MGTO PROMOTES LOCAL OFFERINGS IN INDONESIA

The 'ASTINDO Travel Fair' in Jakarta, Indonesia, has promoted Macau's offer of "tourism+" experiences among residents to attract more Indonesian travelers to Macau. The Indonesian international travel fair was held at the mega shopping mall Pantai Indah Kapuk (PIK) Avenue in Jakarta, Indonesia, from Aug. 31 to Sept. 3. MGTO partnered with representatives of Macau's gaming operators, travel agencies and Macau International Airport Co. Ltd. for the event.

WOMAN FORGES DOCUMENTS AFTER LOSING MOP28M TO SCAMMERS

A woman has been apprehended for forging remittance documents to scam money from a local medical institution after she was scammed out of MOP28 million. The scam unfolded similarly to many previous cases, in which the woman received calls from people claiming to be police officers from the mainland. The callers claimed she had been involved in crimes on the Chinese mainland and was required to pay money to avoid arrest. After making the payment, she was told to complete a task to secure her release, by forging remittance documents and scamming the medical institution.

SENIORS' RESIDENCE

POLICY CHANGES IMMINENT FOR APARTMENTS FOR OLDER ADULTS

ANTHONY LAM

A set of Executive Regulations concerning policy for apartments for older adults will soon be submitted to the Executive Council (ExCo), director of Social Welfare Hon Wai disclosed yesterday.

The residential units for the Elderly Housing Project have been in construction in the couple of years or so, with topping out announced months ago. Once internal work concludes, the apartments will be ready for residential use.

According to earlier government announcements, the apartments will be equipped with machines and technologies designed to assist with residents' daily lives and ensure their safety. As the name suggests, the apartments will only be available to older adults of Macau who live alone.

Nonetheless, since it is not private property and is not available to everyone, additional criteria and details must be established and clarified for future governance. When asked about the matter, the social welfare official said the drafting of the Executive Regulations is nearing completion. He



also expressed confidence the regulations will be promulgated this year.

After the promulgation, further details such as rental level will be determined, Hon added.

Regarding welfare in care centers with recent waves of SARS-CoV-2 or influenza viruses, Hon said his bureau has been working closely with the Health Bureau

(SSM) on disease control and prevention measures. His bureau has been monitoring the development of this wave of infections since May.

It was disclosed that both the social welfare and health branch of the government would make corresponding adjustments, such as requiring facility visitors to wear masks and conduct online

medical consultations for facility residents.

Meanwhile, Hon's bureau and a social work group co-organized a symposium yesterday, which discussed the role of smart technologies in promoting progress in social services. Hon encourages the social service sector to be open and embrace the use of smart technologies.

PSP claims obscured red light caused police van accident

RENATO MARQUES

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) has issued a press statement to explain an accident involving a police van hitting a scooter at an intersection in the Inner Harbour area.

The accident was filmed by a dashboard camera from another stationary vehicle that had stopped at the same traffic light as the scooter rider. The footage shows the rider attempting to cross the intersection in the direction of Barra at a green light. The scooter was hit in the intersection by a police van that failed to stop



at the red light at the Rua do Almirante Sergio.

In the statement, the PSP claims the driver, an on-duty police officer, could not see the red li-

ght on the left side of the road as it was obscured by a bus. The relevant street has traffic lights on both sides. The dashcam footage shows the light for the

police van was red, and the police van was not using its emergency lights or siren.

According to the same statement, the responsible

officer passed a breathalyzer test and had consumed no alcohol.

The scooter rider was transported to the hospital, with the PSP stating that he had suffered minor injuries.

The police say the case is being addressed as any other traffic incident, which means the officer will be penalized for the serious traffic offense of not stopping at the red traffic light. The offense is aggravated by the fact that it caused an accident resulting in material damage and injury to another road user.

The incident has sparked concerns and many comments from netizens. Some accused the police of not respecting basic traffic rules despite having the power and responsibility of enforcement.

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Music festival tickets going slow, but IC sees opposite

ANTHONY LAM

As the box office opened Sunday for this year's music festival, boasting a true international line up for the first time in three years, tickets do not appear to be selling as fast as the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) claimed in a statement yesterday.

Celebrating its 35th edition this year, the Macao International Music Festival will feature musicians from Japan, Portugal, the US and the UK, among other locations, with the limelight mostly on US jazz singer Stacey Kent, Portuguese Fado singer Gisela João and Japanese maestro Joe Hisaishi.

Furthermore, opera is also making a glamorous return this year, with not just a single title but two, which is uncommon for the festival.

Yesterday, the IC issued a statement attesting that the festival has thus far proved popular among



Screen cap of ticketing sale for The Barber of Seville

audiences. It specifically mentioned that the opera "The Barber of Seville," the concert "Echoes of

Life," the cappella concert "The Movies," the Fado concert "AuRora," the concert "Legacies," and

the Chinese orchestral concert "Song of the Ch'in" are enjoying great popularity, suggesting tick-

ets to these events are selling fast.

However, real-time seating plans on the ticketing channel MacauTicket.com appear to tell a different story.

Taking the example of "The Barber of Seville," which is set to perform in the Grand Auditorium of the Macao Cultural Centre, the IC is not offering seats on the upper floor and with a side view for sale. A few rows of seats in the center-back are also blocked for the control panels, in addition to the four front rows blocked to facilitate the orchestra pit. With a full house equating to 1,080 audience members, this means there are about 800 tickets are on sale per show.

As of yesterday, both the afternoon and evening shows on Oct. 8 of the opera have sold about 20% of available tickets. The evening shows on both Oct. 6 and Oct. 7 saw better box offices yesterday, but many seats on both sides of the theater were still available.

The opera is an opening show for the festival.

The debut shows in Macau of Hisaishi have received over 40,000 registrations for ticket raffles as of yesterday, the IC disclosed. The IC has pledged all tickets for the three shows will be sold by random draw.

EDUCATION

DSEDJ: More foreign tertiary students than pre-Covid in new school year

ANTHONY LAM

This school year has seen more international students in tertiary education than the period before Covid-19, the director of Education and Youth Development, Kong Chi Meng, said in a statement yesterday.

The education bureau held a closed-door meeting with the management of local higher education institutions yesterday morning to discuss plans for this academic year.

Kong sees this scenario as a reflection of Macau-based institutions gaining increased international recognition and appeal. Nonetheless, he did not disclose how many international students are studying at local tertiary education institutions, their proportion compared to the total number of students, their place of origin or the specific disciplines and levels of their study.

He said several local tertiary institutions have achieved improved results in global rankings, global influence indices and global disciplinary rankings. Three local tertiary education



projects have received national awards for pedagogical achievements. Moreover, a number of local teachers and students have received national awards in research or technology, with many achievements in areas such as technology, academics, literature, sports and entrepreneurship.

He also did not miss the chance to emphasize the support provided by national authorities and leaders – in particular President Xi Jinping – for local tertiary education development. He said that Xi's letter in response to Ma-

cau University of Science and Technology's report on the progress of the local artificial satellite was encouraging.

The statement also noted that topics related to mental and physical healthcare were covered at the meeting.

The bureau hopes that institutions will offer understanding and care to students "in all directions and angles," provide them with "appropriate assistance and support," and guide them to establish "correct values." Students should also be reminded of physical and financial safety.

STATS

PUBLIC BUSES CARRIED 3% FEWER PASSENGERS THIS YEAR THAN PRE-PANDEMIC

RENATO MARQUES

The public bus companies have reported transporting a daily average of 610,000 passengers so far this year. The figure is 3% lower than the daily average recorded in 2019, according to a report presented at a recent meeting from the Traffic Advisory Committee.

The report presented to Transport Bureau (DSAT) representatives shows the activity of the public bus companies has returned to almost pre-pandemic levels, officials concluded.

In the same report, it was also mentioned that the two bus operators currently have 666 environmentally-friendly buses, with plans for both companies to soon acquire 200 new electric buses with an extended-range before

the end of this year.

DSAT also said it was planning to add two more diagonal street-crossing systems to be enforced in the Iao Hon and Areia Preta areas.

The same bureau also noted that of the 121 roadwork projects started this summer, 98 were completed before schools resumed. DSAT stated it would follow up the others to improve temporary traffic diversion measures and ensure safety at areas undergoing construction.

The DSAT also said that during the summer holidays, the authorities had renewed some zebra crossings and pedestrian lanes on 47 road sections, located near the surrounding schools. The crosswalk vertical signage has also been replaced with reflective signage.





GAMING

SEPTEMBER GGR LIKELY TO BE DOWN 6%: MORGAN STANLEY

SEPTEMBER'S gross gaming revenue "isn't going to wow anyone, not only due to seasonality (a shoulder season between the summer holidays and October Golden Week), but also due to super Typhoon Saola," said JPMorgan analysts.

Last month, the city recorded its highest GGR in the post-pandemic period, as casino recovery continued to sustain momentum, with gaming revenue in August soaring a staggering 686% year-on-year to the highest levels since January 2020.

However, analysts are cautious

about this month's revenue, noting that the next significant catalyst for Macau GGR is likely to be the start of Golden Week on Oct. 1.

Under normal operating conditions, Golden Week is usually a spark for Macau casinos, but forecasting the intensity of the upside will be difficult until the holiday arrives.

"Many investors ask, 'Is there a way to gauge how good (or bad) the Golden Week will be?' Not really, because of a very short booking window of Chinese travelers (only several days) and an even shorter window for Chinese gamblers,"

concluded the JPMorgan analysts.

For analysts at Morgan Stanley Asia, the institution has forecast that September revenue is likely to be down 6% month-on-month, with the recent Typhoon Saola on Sept. 1 and 2 leading to weaker GGR.

Morgan Stanley analysts Praveen Choudhary and Gareth Leung estimated September GGR would be at MOP16.1 billion, adding that September is normally a weaker month than the August holiday season, "at -9% month-on-month on average," as cited in a report issued by GGR Asia. LV

McDonald's criticized for discontinuing some coffee drinks

RENATO MARQUES

ON Monday, the Macau branch of the American multinational fast food chain, McDonald's, announced it would discontinue ground coffee and premium roast coffee from its drink menu items from Tuesday.

Announced by the chain on their Facebook page, the news caused an immediate outcry from netizens. They expressed confusion regarding the removal of the two popular drink items and voiced concerns about potential price increases for other menu items.

Following a similar move by the Hong Kong chain, local McDonald's representatives stated via social media that the



two coffee drinks would officially be retired from the market. It was stated the decision was permanent.

Meanwhile, the fast-food giant explained

the measure was part of broader efforts to evolve offerings available to consumers, remarking that other coffee drink options such as Americanos and Lattes would

remain available, and that the prices of existing products would remain unchanged.

In an explanation also provided to Hong Kong media, McDonald's stated its goal was part of efforts to reserve coffee beans for drinks featured at McCafés, which are freshly brewed to order, instead of those usually offered as pre-made coffee pot style drinks.

As reported by news agency Reuters earlier, since June this year, McDonald's had already announced plans to increase prices for most menu items in several locations - including Japan - to cope with rising labor and rental costs. The new pricing system began to take effect from mid-July this year.

FMCC TO SUPPORT NGO ON FOOD SAFETY, ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS PROJECT

STAFF REPORTER

THE Annual Charity Gala Dinner 2023 for the French chamber will this year support the local branch of the Society of Food & Environmental Health (SGEH) in their flagship project, 'Leave No Food Behind.'

This initiative centers on upcycling food trimmings and off-shelf vegetables into healthy pet food by applying various food technologies and food safety experiences.

"This 'circular economy' approach in reducing food waste while also demonstrating compassion for life symbolizes our mutual commitment to promote sustainable practices and strive for a brighter future for our community," the France Macau Chamber of Commerce (FMCC) announced in press conference.

Themed 'Paris Extravaganza,' the gala dinner will be held at MGM Macau on September 15.

Celebrating its 15th anniversary, the gala is expected to be joined by many com-

munity and business leaders in Macau and the Greater Bay Area.

Also, this year, the chamber will launch the inaugural 'FMCC Macau ESG Awards,' a groundbreaking initiative set to recognize outstanding contributions in the areas of Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) within Macau.

The elected winners from three categories (Best Project, Best SME, Best NGO) will be announced during the Gala Dinner.

Last year, the FMCC Charity Gala Dinner raised a total of MOP61,000 to support the city's drug rehabilitation center. Themed 'Around the World in 80 Days,' the proceeds from the event were given to the Association of Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers of Macau (ARTM) to launch its awareness program around the abuse of alcohol and its impacts, including the setting up of a 24-hour hotline.

*Macau Daily Times is a media partner of the event.

TWO ELDERLIES FOUND DEAD AT THEIR HOMES, PJ SAYS NO SIGNS OF CRIME

RENATO MARQUES

WITHIN a period of about six hours, the Judiciary Police (PJ) has reported two separate cases involving local residents found lifeless at their respective homes.

In the first case, the PJ was alerted by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) and the Fire Service Bureau (CB) that a 61-year-old male was found dead at his home in the Seac Pai Van social housing estate.

According to the initial report, the body was found after neighbors complained of a bad smell coming from his apartment. Firefighters broke into the apartment and found the man lying on the floor outside the bedroom door.

According to the preliminary investigation, the man lived alone in the apartment.

The PJ said the body was

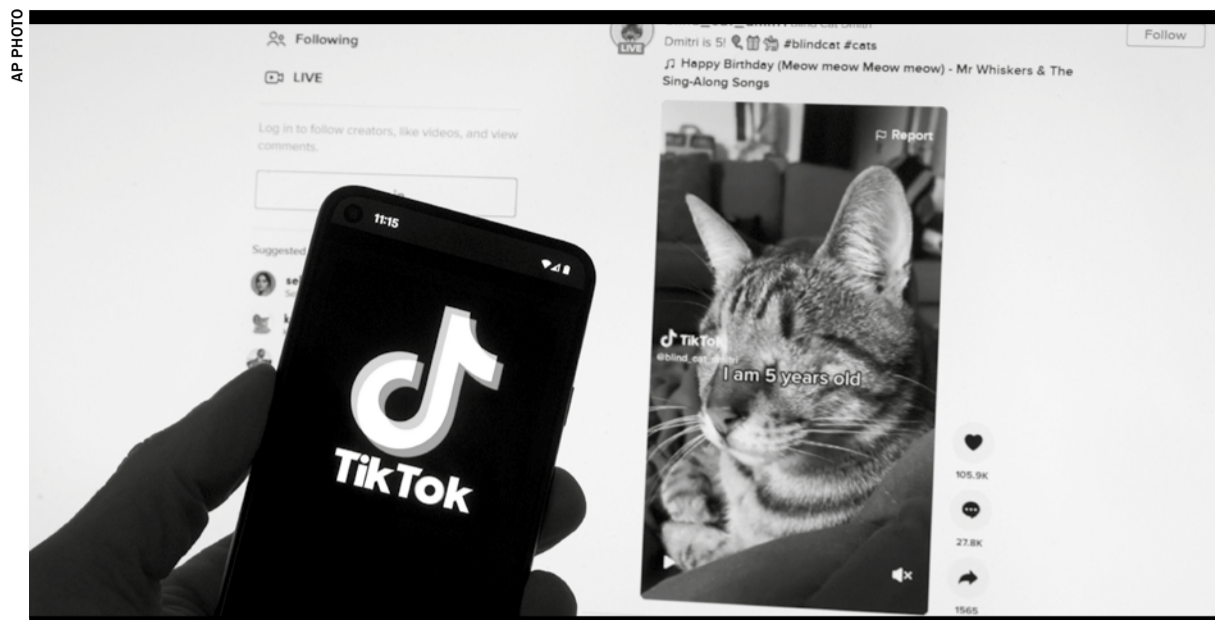
showing signs of decomposition, indicating death had occurred several days earlier. No evidence was found at the scene or on the body to indicate a crime.

In the second case, reported a few hours later, the body of a 75-year-old woman was found at her home in Fai Chi Kei. The building management company called the police after a strong smell was detected emanating from an apartment and when no one answered the door.

The PSP and the CB entered the apartment and found the woman's body in the living room.

As in the first case, the PJ investigators did not find any suspicious evidence to indicate a crime.

In both cases, the cause of death will be determined through forensic examination. Both cases have temporarily been classified as "body findings."



SOCIAL MEDIA

TikTok's Irish data center up and running as European privacy project gets under way

TIKTOK said yesterday that operations are underway at the first of its three European data centers, part of the popular Chinese owned app's effort to ease Western fears about privacy risks.

The video sharing app said it began transferring European user information to a data center in Dublin. Two more data centers, another in Ireland and one in Norway, are under construction, TikTok said in an update on its plan to localize European user data, dubbed Project Clover.

TikTok has been under scrutiny

by European and American regulators over concerns that sensitive user data may end up in China. TikTok is owned by ByteDance, a Chinese company that moved its headquarters to Singapore in 2020.

TikTok unveiled its plan earlier this year to store data in Europe, where there are stringent privacy laws, after a slew of Western governments banned the app from official devices.

NCC Group, a British cybersecurity company, is overseeing the project, TikTok's vice president of public policy for Europe, Theo

Bertram, said in a blog post.

NCC Group will check data traffic to make sure that only approved employees "can access limited data types" and carry out "real-time monitoring" to detect and respond to suspicious access attempts, Bertram said.

"All of these controls and operations are designed to ensure that the data of our European users is safeguarded in a specially-designed protective environment, and can only be accessed by approved employees subject to strict independent oversight and verification," Bertram said. **MDT/AP**

JIM MURREN

Dubai names former MGM CEO as chairman of gaming authority

FORMER head of casino giant MGM Resorts, Jim Murren, takes helm at Dubai gaming authority, state news agency WAM said.

Murren, former chairman and chief executive of MGM Resorts International, was appointed as the chairman of the General Commercial Gaming Regulatory Authority's (GCGRA) board of directors.

The United Arab Emirates has created a federal authority to potentially run a national lottery and what it describes as "commercial gaming," likely a sign that it is on the verge of allowing gambling as major casino operators flock to the Gulf Arab nation.

Murren also worked closely with officials in the Emirates in the past.

The biggest single development on the Las Vegas Strip was the USD9.2 billion CityCenter partnership between MGM Resorts International under

Murren and Dubai World, which opened in 2009. Its Harmon tower never opened due to construction defects and was dismantled.

The state-run WAM news agency named Kevin Mullally as its CEO. Mullally once served as the executive director of the Missouri Gaming Commission, which oversaw that U.S. state's riverboat casinos.

Murren said: "I am delighted at the appointment of Kevin Mullally. He brings unparalleled category experience and will be invaluable in creating a fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for the UAE."

Casinos long have been rumored to be considered as a way to raise money in the UAE and boost its tourism industry, particularly in Dubai, home to the long-haul airline Emirates. Already, duty-free car raffles bombard those flying through Dubai International Airport. **MDT/AP**



CORPORATE BITS

Conrad Macao's Bodhi Spa introduces new holistic wellness offerings



Conrad Macao's award-winning Bodhi Spa has introduced two wellness experiences, both of which provide benefits: Lapidem

Rituals; and Crystal Sound Therapy Meditation classes.

As the only spa in Macau to offer Lapidem Rituals,

Bodhi Spa combines these treatments to pamper customers with Lapidem's critically-acclaimed products from Japan. The other addition, Crystal Sound Therapy Meditation, also known as singing bowl therapy, brings "inner stillness and a deep sense of peace," according to a statement from the company.

Tracy Lord, director of Spa Operations, Bodhi Spa said, "The Lapidem Rituals are designed holistically to achieve profound results. The crystal sound classes, like the rituals, take a comprehensive approach and are a perfect tool for reducing stress, pressure and worry, while motivating people to slow down."

Melco hosts graduation ceremony for over 200 colleagues



Melco Resorts & Entertainment hosted a dedicated Whole Person Development Graduation Ceremony today at City of Dreams to celebrate the achievements of more than 200 colleagues who graduated from the company's various Whole Person Development

academic programs.

The graduation ceremony commemorated 13 YOU-niversity graduates, 55 Back to School graduates, 14 Culinary Foundation Acceleration Program graduates, 15 Scholarship graduates and 153 Diploma Program gra-

duates.

Lawrence Ho, Chairman and CEO of Melco, said, "The occurrence of Covid-19 prevented us from hosting celebratory graduation ceremonies over the past few years, which makes today's event even more meaningful for our colleagues, especially when it highlights the perseverance and dedication they have shown in the face of the many challenges brought on by the pandemic."

As part of the company's emphasis and commitment to Whole Person Development, Melco's Learning Academy has offered over 500 learning programs per year since its establishment in 2010.

BRI

China touts the benefits of its 'Belt and Road' initiative to Italy, which may end the agreement

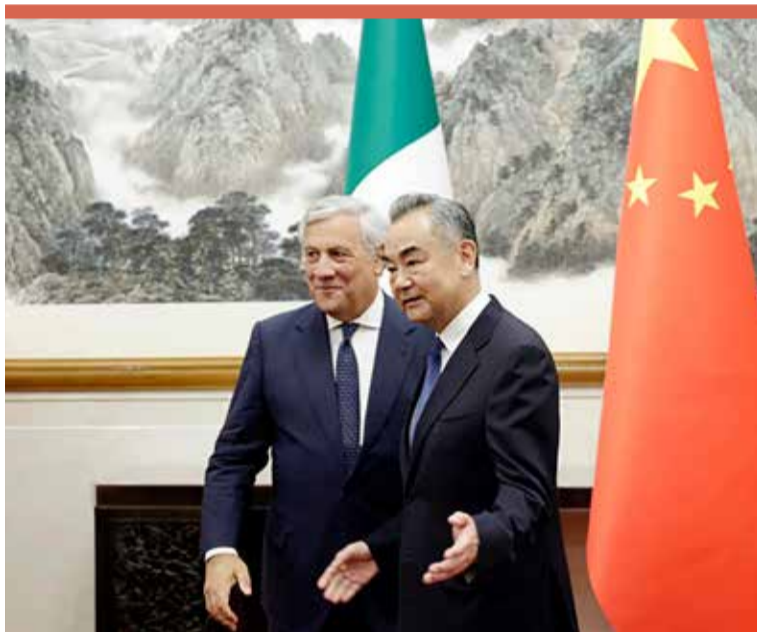
CHINA'S foreign minister is seeking to sell his Italian counterpart on the benefits of leader Xi Jinping's signature "Belt and Road" initiative of Chinese-built and -funded infrastructure projects, as Rome considers whether to renew the agreement.

In a meeting this week, Wang Yi told Antonio Tajani that bilateral trade had grown from \$50 billion to nearly \$80 billion and that Italy's exports to China increased by around 30% over the past five years.

While the figures haven't been corroborated, Italy's conservative government has cast doubt on the benefits of the arrangement.

In 2019, Italy became the only European country to sign on to the initiative under then-premier Giuseppe Conte, and it is not expected to be extended when it comes up for renewal at year's end.

China's official Xinhua News Agency quoted Wang as telling Tajani that "China and Italy should adhere to the right way of getting along with each other" with mutual respect and trust in the face of geopolitical distur-



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right) meets with Italian Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani in Beijing, yesterday

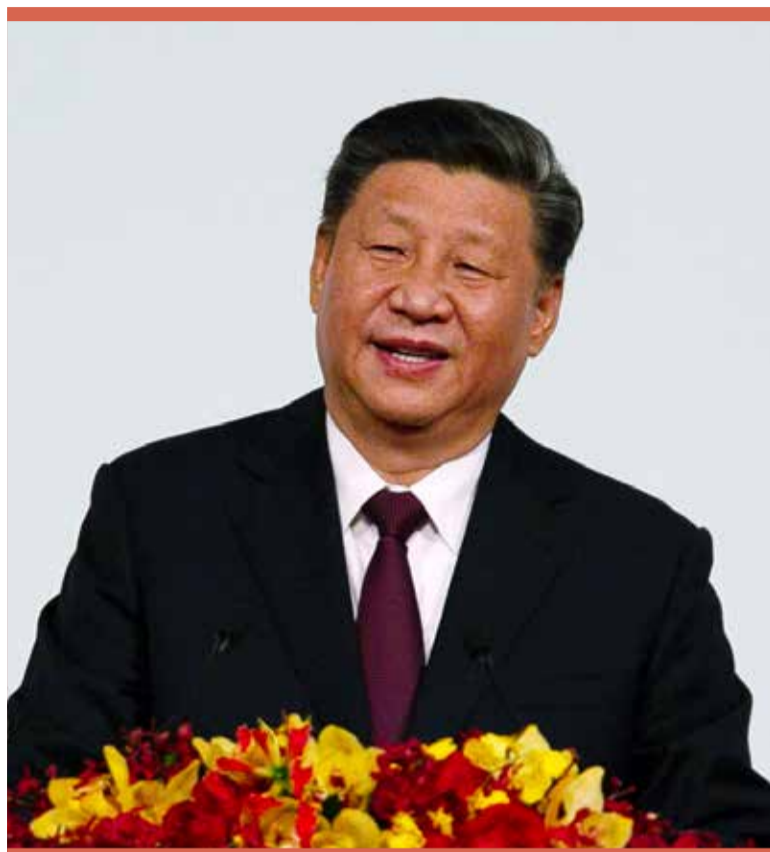
bances and that China was ready to push for steady development of China-Italy relations.

The Italian news agency ANSA quoted Tajani as saying that, "Italy is the supporter of dialogue with Beijing at the European Union level too, and of frank, open dialogue on principles and rights."

China touts the "Belt and

Road" initiative, known as the BRI, as successfully raising infrastructure in underdeveloped nations. Critics say BRI built vanity projects in countries that needed poverty eradication and basic services, while the local governments were left with huge debts owed to Chinese state banks under contracts shrouded in secrecy. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



G20

DESPITE XI'S DECISION NOT TO ATTEND SUMMIT IN INDIA, BILATERAL TIES ARE 'GENERALLY STABLE'

DESPITE Chinese President Xi Jinping's decision not to attend this week's Group of 20 summit in India, Beijing says that relations between the two nuclear-armed Asian giants remain "generally stable."

China announced on Monday that Premier Li Qiang, who took office just this spring, would represent China at the Sept. 9-10 meeting in New Delhi.

Relations between China and India remain frosty over their border dispute that led to a clash three years ago in which 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers were killed. It has turned into a long-running standoff in the rugged mountainous area, where each side has stationed tens of thousands of military personnel backed by artillery, tanks and fighter jets.

Without mentioning the dispute, or the reason for Xi's decision not to attend, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Chinese leaders have "always supported India's hosting of this year's summit and are ready to work with all parties to make the G20 summit a success."

"At present, China-India relations remain generally stable, and dialogue and communica-

tion have been maintained at all levels," Mao told reporters at a daily briefing yesterday.

"We are willing to work with the Indian side to promote greater and continuous development of China-India relations," she said.

Frictions between the two have also arisen over trade, technology and investment and India's growing strategic ties with China's main rival, the United States. Both India and China have expelled the other's journalists and once-plentiful educational exchanges have all but dried up.

India recently overtook China as the world's most populous nation and the two are rivals in computers, steel-making, space exploration and other high-tech fields.

Seeking to tamp down the possibility of future clashes, Chinese and Indian military commanders met last month and pledged to "maintain the peace and tranquility" along the Line of Actual Control that separates Chinese- and Indian-held territories from Ladakh in the west to India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims in its entirety. **MDT/AP**

TAIWAN

Tsai begins visit to remaining ally Eswatini in southern Africa

TAIWAN'S leader Tsai Ing-wen yesterday began a four-day trip to Eswatini, one of the island's 13 remaining allies.

Tsai, who is serving her last year as cabinet leader, is visiting the country of 1.1 million people in southern Africa to "celebrate the friendship between the two countries," she said, as she departed Taiwan.

Since Tsai took office in 2016, China has started putting pressure on countries that have a diplomatic relationship with Taiwan to switch their formal recognition from Taiwan to China. Beijing has successfully poached 9 countries, leaving Taiwan with just 13 countries that ack-

nowledge its statehood.

Taiwan's most recent diplomatic loss was Honduras, which switched recognition to Beijing in March.

Taiwan is a self-ruled island claimed by China. The two sides have been at odds since 1949 when the Communist Party won in the civil war against the Nationalists. The Nationalists fled to Taiwan and set up government on the island.

China today demands its allies agree to its One China principle, which claims that Taiwan is a part of the People's Republic of China.

Tsai belongs to a political party that states "Taiwan is already

independent."

"Diplomacy is the accumulation of step by step. Taiwan's steps onto the globe not only will not stop," she said. "We will continue forward more resolutely, with self-confidence, to let the world see Taiwan's steady and good power."

Tsai is also accompanied by the mayor of the port city of Kaohsiung in Taiwan's south.

Eswatini is an absolute monarchy, and most of the country's population live below the poverty line. It was rocked by pro-democracy protests in 2021, but those protests were put down violently, per reports. **MDT/AP**

ASEAN

Myanmar won't be allowed to lead association in 2026, in blow to generals

NINTEK KARMINI
& JIM GOMEZ, JAKARTA

SOUTHEAST Asian leaders decided that Myanmar won't take over the rotating leadership of their regional bloc as scheduled in 2026, Asian diplomats and a leader said yesterday, in the latest blow to efforts by its ruling generals to gain international recognition after violently seizing power in 2021.

Western governments led by the United States have condemned the Myanmar army's ouster of Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected government in 2021 and have demanded her immediate release from yearslong detention along with other officials.

The Philippines agreed to take over the regional bloc's chairmanship in 2026 at an ASEAN summit hosted by Indonesia, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said in a statement, citing what he told fellow leaders in the closed-door meetings.



"It is my pleasure to announce that the Philippines is ready to take the helm and chair ASEAN in 2026," Marcos told his ASEAN counterparts in Jakarta, the statement said.

Marcos did not explain why Myanmar lost the prestigious year-long ASEAN chairmanship, but two ASEAN diplomats told The Associated Press that it was related to the civil strife in the country and fears that the bloc's relations with the United States and the European Union, among others, might be undermined because of their non-recognition of the military-led govern-

ment in Myanmar.

The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the delicate issue publicly.

Continuing deadly civil strife in Myanmar and new flare-ups in long-simmering territorial disputes in the South China Sea were high in the agenda of the 10-nation bloc's talks yesterday.

Thorny issues including the U.S.-China rivalry in the region have set off divisions within ASEAN, and Indonesian President Joko Widodo renewed his call for unity.

"All of us are aware of the magnitude of the world's challenges today, where the main key to facing them is the unity and centrality of ASEAN," Widodo told fellow leaders.

He likened the regional group to a big ship carrying Southeast Asia's people. "ASEAN leaders must ensure that this ship is able to keep going, able to keep sailing," Widodo said. "We must be captains of our own ships to bring about peace, to bring about stability, to bring about shared prosperity."

In a punitive step for their failure to comply with a five-point domestic peace plan crafted by ASEAN leaders in 2021, Myanmar's top generals and their appointed officials were again barred from attending this year's summit in Jakarta despite suggestions by some member states that they be allowed back because their ejection had failed to resolve the country's crisis.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said ASEAN leaders decided to stick with the peace plan

despite an assessment that it has not led to any progress in easing the crisis. They designated three nations — the bloc's previous, current and next chairs — to deal directly with Myanmar's civil unrest, she told reporters.

Myanmar's generals will continue to be barred from attending high-level ASEAN meetings, Marsudi said.

Myanmar security forces have killed about 4,000 civilians and arrested 24,410 others since the army takeover.

After their summit, the regional group's leaders will meet with Asian and Western counterparts today and tomorrow, including U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, who is attending in lieu of President Joe Biden, Chinese Premier Li Qiang, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

Asked about the possibility of a meeting with Chinese Premier Li in Jakarta, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said there had been no decision made on that. **MDT/AP**

AD

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EXPLAINER

What do North Korea and Russia need from each other?

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un may travel to Russia for a summit with President Vladimir Putin, a U.S. official said, in a trip that would underscore deepening cooperation as the two isolated leaders are locked in separate confrontations with the U.S.

U.S. officials also said that Russia is seeking to buy ammunition from North Korea to refill reserves drained by its war in Ukraine. In return, experts said, North Korea will likely want food and energy shipments and transfers of sophisticated weapons technologies.

A meeting with Putin would be Kim's first summit with a foreign leader since North Korea closed its borders in January 2020. They met for the first time in April 2019, two months after Kim's high-stakes nuclear diplomacy with then-U.S. President Donald Trump collapsed.

It's unclear how far Kim and Putin's military cooperation could go, but any sign of warming relations will worry rivals like the U.S. and South Korea.

WHAT DOES PUTIN WANT FROM KIM?

Since last year, U.S. officials have suspected that North Korea is providing Russia with artillery shells, rockets and other ammunition, many of which are likely copies of Soviet-era munitions.

"Russia is in urgent need of (war supplies). If not, how could the defense minister of a powerful country at war come to a small country like North Korea?" said Kim Taewoo, former head of Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification. He said Shoigu was the first Russian defense minister to visit North Korea since the 1991 disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Buying munitions from North Korea would be a violation of U.N. resolutions, supported by Russia, that ban all arms trade with the isolated country. But now that it faces international sanctions and export controls over its war in Ukraine, Russia has been seeking weapons from other sanc-



tioned countries like North Korea and Iran.

North Korea has vast stores of munitions, but Du Hyeogn Cha, an analyst at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, doubted whether it could swiftly send significant amounts to Russia, because the narrow land link between the countries can handle only a limited amount of rail traffic.

WHAT DOES KIM WANT IN RETURN?

Kim's priorities would be aid shipments, prestige and military technology, experts said.

"It would be a 'win-win' deal for both, as Putin is cornered over his exhausted weapons inventory while Kim faces pressure from the South Korea-U.S.-Japan trilateral cooperation," said Nam Sung-wook, a former director of the Institute for National Security Strategy, a think tank run by South Korea's spy agency. "Their needs are matched perfectly now."

Pandemic-era border closures have left North Korea with severe economic difficulties, and Kim is likely to seek supplies of food and energy to address shortfalls.

Kim will likely also trumpet expanding relations

with Moscow as a sign that the country is overcoming its years of isolation. North Korean leaders have long valued face-to-face meetings with world leaders as signs of international importance and for domestic propaganda purposes.

Kim is likely also seeking Russian technology to support his plans to build high-tech weapons systems such as powerful long-range missiles, hypersonic ballistic submarines and a spy satellite, said Hong Min, an analyst at Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification.

It's unclear whether Russia would be willing to provide North Korea advanced technologies related to nuclear weapons and ICBMs, Cha said. Russia has always tightly guarded its most important weapons technologies, even from key partners like China, he said.

HOW CLOSE CAN THEY GET?

Shoigu told reporters Monday that Russia and North Korea were pondering the possibility of bilateral military exercise. Earlier, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers that Shoigu appeared to have proposed a trilateral training exercise

involving China.

Either way, it would be the North's first joint military drills with a foreign country since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. The country has avoided training with a foreign military in line with its official "juche," or "self-reliance," philosophy.

Kim Taewoo, the former institute director, said expanding South Korea-U.S.-Japan security cooperation could prompt Kim Jong Un to break that taboo and hold drills with Russia and China for the first time.

But Nam, who is now a professor at Korea University, said North Korea won't likely accept the offer, as it could leave North Korea even more dependent on China and Russia.

Park Won Gon, a professor at Seoul's Ewha Womans University, said it's too early to predict what Kim's diplomacy could yield beyond making a show of defiance toward the United States.

"In any case, North Korea and Russia need to show that they're working together, that they're stepping up this cooperation," Park said. "There clearly are practical areas of cooperation, and also some symbolic aspects they want to show the United States." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1997 DIANA'S FUNERAL WATCHED BY MILLIONS



Britain and the world have said farewell to Diana, Princess of Wales, at the end of an unprecedented week of mourning.

A four mile procession brought her coffin to Westminster Abbey, where politicians and celebrities joined the Royal Family in a subdued congregation.

Over a million people lined the route of the funeral cortege to the abbey and along her final journey to the Spencer family home in Northamptonshire.

The day began at 0908 BST, when the coffin left Kensington Palace on a gun carriage.

Some of the crowd wept, some applauded quietly, but most watched in silence.

On top of the coffin was a poignant reminder that this woman loved by millions was also a mother - a card to "Mummy" from one of her sons.

The two princes, William and Harry, joined their father, grandfather and the princess's brother walking behind the coffin.

Other members of the Royal Family watched the funeral cortege pass from the gates of Buckingham Palace.

The union jack on top of the palace was lowered to half mast for the first time ever.

Both Diana's sisters read tributes to her at the funeral service and Elton John played his re-worked version of Candle in the Wind.

Her brother, Lord Spencer, made a funeral address in which he described as Diana the "very essence of compassion, of duty, of style, of beauty".

He used the speech to blame the media for her death, calling her the "most hunted person of the modern age".

The grieving earl also pledged to protect William and Harry and prevent them suffering a similar fate.

The sometimes controversial oration was greeted with spontaneous applause.

A very public day of mourning ended with a private ceremony when Diana was finally buried on an island in the heart of her family estate at Althorp.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Diana's death resulted in an outpouring of grief never before seen in the UK. It was estimated that a total of 2.5 billion people watched the princess's funeral, a testament to her global celebrity. Her image remained as iconic in death as it had been in life, and within weeks of her funeral there was worldwide demand for memorabilia of the princess. The French authorities concluded their investigation into the crash two years later. It found the driver, Henri Paul, to be three times over the drink-drive limit and breaking the speed limit. The photographers chasing the car were severely criticised for their behaviour, but no criminal action was taken against them. An inquest into the princess's death was opened in the UK in 2004. It has been adjourned while the Metropolitan police carry out an investigation into the crash.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It might be best not to spend your money on luxuries today. You can gain distinction; however, it may be for the wrong reasons. You can make money if you are careful not to let it trickle through your fingers.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You're in the mood to do things such as competitive sports, or perhaps a night on the town. You could experience unusual circumstances and meet eccentric individuals.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

It might be best to work on your own; if possible, do your job out of your home today. Secret affairs may be brought out in the open. Your outgoing nature might work against you today.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Take care that arrangements to spend quality time together are made in advance. Take a look at your legal position. Don't let other people meddle in your private affairs.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You must use discretion when it comes to lending money or making donations. You can make career changes that may put you in a much higher earning bracket.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You will need to do a lot of research if you wish to get to the bottom of things. Take time to deal with legal documents and the affairs of people who you may be indebted to.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Self-deception about relationships is a problem. Children may be difficult to handle. You will have some problems with children, but if you are patient you will win their favor.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

It may not be the best day to confront employers or to present your ideas. Try not to skirt issues if you think you'll hurt someone's feelings. Try to address the real issues in order to turn things around.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Your high energy should be spent pleasing your mate. Your ideas can be put into action. You need to make your environment a better place, with more comforts and a better entertainment center.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Your high energy and discipline will enable you to complete any seemingly insurmountable tasks. Look at your options before making commitments that could jeopardize your financial position.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Don't hesitate to enlist the aid of friends or family if you have a big project to finish in your domestic environment. You will be extremely receptive to new and progressive methods at work.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Romance will come through involvement with fundraising organizations. You can convince others to follow suit. Arguments will flare up if you get backed into an emotional corner.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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			7	3				

HARD

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					4			
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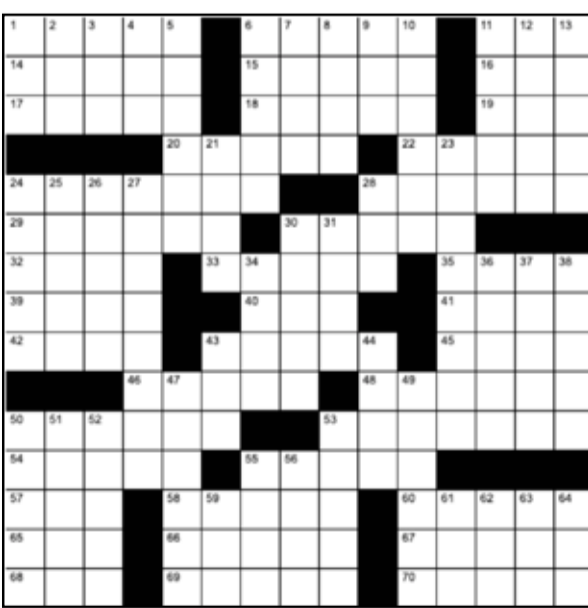
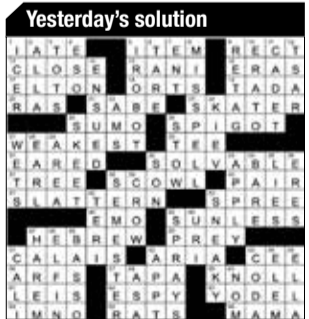
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	23	32	fine
Changchun	14	28	fine
Chengdu	22	31	cloudy
Chongqing	27	36	fine
Fuzhou	24	29	rain
Guangzhou	25	30	thunderstorms
Guiyang	17	28	cloudy
Haikou	26	32	cloudy
Hangzhou	24	31	rain
Harbin	15	26	cloudy
Hefei	22	31	fine
Nanjing	23	30	cloudy
Shanghai	25	31	overcast
Taipei	25	29	rain
Wuhan	23	33	rain
Hong Kong	28	31	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	9	21	overcast
Frankfurt	14	30	fine
Paris	17	35	overcast
London	18	34	overcast
New York	24	34	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Cordillera of South America; 6- Norwegian dramatist; 11- Sun, talk; 14- Fowl pole; 15- Din; 16- Handled tool, terminate; 17- One of the Muses; 18- Politico Kefauver; 19- Genealogy word; 20- Piece of poetry; 22- Former Russian rulers; 24- Most moist; 28- Soap ingredient; 29- Potemkin setting; 30- Do-nothing; 32- Boxer Oscar ___ Hoya; 33- Unwarranted; 35- French 101 infinitive; 39- Scottish Celt; 40- No longer young; 41- In the neighborhood; 42- K-6; 43- Farm birds; 45- Pond organism; 46- Adored ones; 48- Soup spoons; 50- Washed lightly; 53- Skill; 54- Patti LuPone role; 55- Like some vbs; 57- Future fish; 58- Actress Taylor; 60- Dogie catcher; 65- Joan of ___; French heroine; 66- Govt. security; 67- One of the Allens; 68- TV's "Science Guy"; 69- Sharpens; 70- Staggers;

DOWN 1- 100 square meters; 2- And not; 3- 1950 film noir classic; 4- Body shop fig.; 5- Cooking devices; 6- Lifeless; 7- Manager; 8- Web locale; 9- Compass pt.; 10- Snuggle; 11- Capital of Yemen; 12- Apply, as pressure; 13- Actress Witherspoon; 21- Biblical birthright seller; 23- Sing for; 24- Evade; 25- Let's Make ___; 26- Fight, disturbance; 27- Writer of Hebrew prayers; 28- Good ___ boy; 30- Runs without moving; 31- Clothes; 34- Christmas song; 36- Informs; 37- Fads; 38- Rub out or remove from memory; 43- Deity; 44- Peace Nobelists Wiesel; 47- Paucity; 49- Fisherman; 50- Aired again; 51- Creamy white; 52- Family tree member; 53- Unties; 55- Get ___ the ground floor; 56- Network of nerves; 59- Brian of Roxy Music; 61- Supped; 62- Seagoing pronoun; 63- Gal of song; 64- Switch positions;



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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HKD 22,000/mth 1 4 beds 1 cp

Coloane Village
HKD 10,500/mth 1 bed 1 bath

AP PHOTO



Childhood friends Sydney Allbritton, 18, (left) and Emma Kirk, 19, both of Grenada, Mississippi, pose in their decorated dorm room at the University of Mississippi, in Oxford

INTERIOR DESIGN

STUDENTS TRANSFORM THEIR DRAB DORM ROOMS INTO COMFY LIVING SPACES

ANNE D'INNOCENZIO, NEW YORK

FROM \$300 studded headboards and \$100 coffee table books to custom-made cabinets to disguise your mini-fridge, students are spending big bucks to decorate their dorm rooms, adding yet another layer to the soaring costs of college.

Some are even going so far as to hire interior designers to beautify their 12 feet by 20 feet of space.

Lesley Lachman, 18, planned her furnishings for her dorm room with her roommate immediately after deciding to attend the University of Mississippi back in May. The Rye, New York resident scoured websites like Pinterest and designed her room herself — with hues of pink, purple and green culled from a mix of pricey brands like Essentials with Eden as well as less expensive items from Ikea and Facebook Marketplace. Total cost for the design? About \$3,000, covered by her parents.

"There's so much work that had to be done because it felt lackluster. It didn't feel homey," said Lachman, who posted a "before" and "after" video of her room on TikTok.

The "before" video shows stark yellow cinderblock walls, a mustard-colored built-in desk and an open closet. The "after" video shows a complete makeover, with lacey curtains

to cover the closet, embroidered pillows and a cushy white headboard to dress up her bed, and customized framed art of hearts.

"I'm so in love with the room," Lachman said after her redesign. "I want to leave the door open and want everyone to stop by and admire it."

HIGHER EDUCATION, HIGHER COSTS

Overall, the back-to-college season is big business, with U.S. families expected to spend an average of about \$1,367 per person, up 14% from a year ago, according to an annual survey conducted this summer by the National Retail Federation and market researcher Prosper Insights & Analytics. Spending on big-ticket items such as electronics and dorm furnishings as well as necessities like food accounted for more than half of the increase, NRF said.

Meanwhile, the total cost of college — including tuition, fees, room and board — almost doubled between 1992 and 2022, rising from an inflation-adjusted average of \$14,441 per year to \$26,903 across all types of universities, according to National Center for Education Statistics, the statistical branch of the Education Department. Dorm costs saw a similar spike over the same time span, rising from \$3,824 to \$7,097.

Sara Hunt, 19, a sopho-

re at New York University from Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, wanted her dorm room to look cozy but her budget was \$100. That's because she's footing 30% — or nearly \$30,000 a year — of NYU's annual college bill. Financial aid picks up the rest.

"I definitely try to work on being positive and not comparing myself to other people because I'm so lucky for what I have. But it is really stressful," said Hunt, who worked more than 60 hours per week last school year and took a job as a pastry chef this summer to help pay for her college expenses.

For her dorm décor, Hunt scoured Goodwill stores, Dollar Tree, T.J. Maxx and Five Below for deals on neon lights, wall paper decals and beddings. She also rummaged through bins of returned items from major retailers at a discount bazaar in her hometown.

DÉCOR AND INEQUALITY

Jamel Donnor, a professor at William & Mary College in Williamsburg, Virginia, and a leading expert on inequity in education, said the big divide in dorm furnishings marks an "unspoken reality of the have and have nots." He noted that the stark differences in dorm decorating between those who have money and those who don't can make some students wonder if they should even be at their college.

"There's this imposter syn-

drome," he said.

Dorm supplies e-tailer Dormify is playing to both ends of the budget. For the first time this fall, it's offering various bundles of essentials including a pack of 19 items for \$159 that includes bath towels and a comforter for those who are more price conscious. For the big spenders, Dormify unveiled an interior designer service for \$450 with interior decorator Jen Abrams; it plans to roll out the offering with other designers next year.

Amanda Zuckerman, co-founder and president of Dormify,

noted TikTok has raised the bar in dorm furnishings, creating "the ability to become TikTok famous or go viral because of how well decorated your room is." Average orders are up 15% this fall, she said.

Dawn Thomas launched an interior design service — After Five Designs — in Jackson, Mississippi 20 years ago for college students after designing dorm rooms for her own children who were going away to school. She said in the past few years, she has seen plenty of other designers now working with students. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Sara Hunt, 19 (right) a sophomore at New York University from Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, talks in her dorm room with visiting freshmen in New York

BASKETBALL

USA rolls past Italy 100-63 to reach World Cup semifinals

TIM REYNOLDS, MANILA

THE United States is headed to the medal round of the Basketball World Cup, bouncing back from its first loss of the tournament in emphatic fashion.

Mikal Bridges scored 14 of his 24 points in the first half, Tyrese Haliburton added 18 and the U.S. was airtight for long stretches defensively on the way to easily beating Italy 100-63 yesterday night in the quarterfinals of the World Cup.

The win ensures the 15th top-four finish for the Americans (5-1) in 19 World Cups. They will play either Germany (5-0) or Latvia (4-1) in Friday's semifinals; those two teams play their quarterfinal game in Manila today.

"We just felt that energy from the jump," Bridges said. "Everybody felt it."

That would include the Ita-



U.S. forward Paolo Banchero (8) dunks the ball during the Basketball World Cup quarterfinal game against Italy

lians. They might have felt it more than anyone. It was 46-24 USA by halftime, with Austin Reaves providing the exclamation point with a follow-slam that had teammates out of their seats. The margin was that big despite Anthony Edwards —

the team's leading scorer entering Tuesday, averaging just over 20 points in the first five games of the World Cup — not even getting on the scoresheet until the first possession of the third quarter.

His heroics weren't needed.

Not much on the offensive end was. The defense — which was shredded for 110 points in a six-point loss to Lithuania on Sunday — held Italy to 6-of-31 shooting over the final 15 minutes of the first half. Lithuania started 9 for 9 from 3-point range vs. the U.S.; Italy started 2 for 21 yesterday, finished 7 for 38 from beyond the arc and wound up shooting only 31%.

"Everything stayed the same," U.S. point guard Jalen Brunson said. "It's just, our approach had to be a little better."

Reaves finished with 12 for the Americans, who improved to 10-1 overall this summer. Simone Fontecchio led Italy (4-2) with 18 points.

It was the quarterfinal round where it all went wrong for the U.S. at the World Cup four years ago in China. A loss to France in the Round of 8 eliminated the Americans from medal contention and started a

free-fall all the way to seventh place, the worst finish ever by a U.S. team in a major men's international event.

That won't happen this time. Win Friday, and the U.S. is assured of a medal. Win Friday and Sunday, and the Americans will be flying home with gold.

"We're just ready for the moment," Bridges said.

Italy had beaten the U.S. only twice in 14 previous tries at the senior men's national level, both times at the world championships — which FIBA now calls the World Cup. The first was in 1970 on the way to a fifth-place finish for the U.S. The second was in 1978, in Manila no less, a defeat that helped relegate the Americans to a fifth-place finish that year as well.

The Italians hung around, for a few minutes. The U.S. didn't get into an early hole — as has been the case multiple times in this World Cup — but the lead was only 10-8 when the Americans went to the second unit, which has been a strength all summer.

UP NEXT

USA: Face Germany or Latvia in semifinals Friday.

Italy: Face Germany or Latvia in consolation playoffs Thursday. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

World Views

Karishma Vaswani, Bloomberg



WHY BIDEN SKIPPING THE ASEAN SUMMIT IS A MISTAKE

Delhi, Hanoi, but not Jakarta. US President Biden is skipping the Asean meeting this week, and sending Vice President Kamala Harris instead. The optics aren't great, especially as Biden is going to be in the region: He's travelling to Delhi for the Group of 20 summit and Hanoi right after.

No matter what anyone says, getting the consolation prize is never fun. And that's what it must feel like for Indonesia, the host of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations gathering. Not only is Biden not attending, he's snubbing a major regional power — and given that the US has consistently said it wants to build a stronger relationship with Asia, it feels a little like an own goal.

Ultimately, though, actions speak louder than words. And when someone shows you who they are in a relationship, believe them. The harsh reality is that some Asian countries are simply more important to the US than others.

"It is a cold, calculated decision to reinforce the ongoing stress on consolidating individual allies and partners like Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and now Vietnam," says Michael Vatikiotis, author of several books on Asia. "It's all about spooking China — and picking each of these countries off one by one is easier, rather than in a multilateral forum where Beijing will be present."

The deliberate cherry picking of allies and partners is the brainchild, insiders tell me, of Biden's key Asia policy czar, Kurt Campbell.

The strategy is to create a network around China — a carefully strung together geographic necklace of countries that all see Beijing as a mutual threat.

The recently convened Camp David meeting between the US, South Korea and Japan is an example of that. So are Aukus, the multibillion-dollar partnership the US unveiled with Australia and the UK, and the Quad grouping made up of India, Australia, Japan and the US, all ostensibly designed to combat China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea and around Taiwan.

It's not so simple. Not everyone sees the world with the same black-and-white, us-and-them polarized prism that the US has begun to point at Beijing. For a lot of countries, China has been a lifeline and will continue to be economically, despite the current slowdown. And that includes some of those the US is trying to court.

Indonesia should, in theory, be a natural partner for Washington. It is a large, vibrant democracy with historically strong military ties to the US. But in recent years, under President Joko Widodo, the archipelago has been receptive to the economic overtures from Beijing.

It's clear that multilateralism has become far less important to both the US and China. The US sees its strategy of going after countries one by one in the region as successful and efficient. And if the attempt is to counter its chief competitor's role in Asia, then signing a major upgrade in the partnership with Vietnam is far more useful than spending a day in Jakarta.

Still, Biden's snub is shortsighted.

Relationships — good ones at least — take time, effort and work. Building trust means being sincere and genuine in those attempts. A Jakarta stopover would have been an easy win for Biden at a time of an economically weaker China. Skipping it makes the US look like it just wants a marriage of convenience with Asia, rather than a partnership of any real substance.

[Abridged]

THE ROLLING STONES WILL RELEASE THEIR FIRST STUDIO ALBUM IN 18 YEARS, 'HACKNEY DIAMONDS' **THE BUZZ**

The wait is over: The Rolling Stones will soon release new music. This week, the band announced they are preparing to release their first album of original material in 18 years — since 2005's "A Bigger Bang."

Titled "Hackney Diamonds," the band will share details of the release at an event in East London's Hackney district today, where Mick Jagger, Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood will be interviewed live by "The Tonight Show" host Jimmy Fallon.

The event will be livestreamed exclusively on YouTube today at 2:30 p.m. BST, 9:30 a.m. EST and 6:30 a.m. PST.

"Hackney may be at the heart of Hackney Diamonds, but this is a truly global moment we want to share with fans around the world via YouTube," the Rolling Stones shared in a statement.

The announcement of "Hackney Diamonds" follows a cryptic teaser campaign, in which the band's iconic mouth and tongue logo was projected onto the façade of major landmarks in cities around the world, including New York, London and Paris.

The album is also the Stones' first since the death of drummer Charlie Watts in 2021.

AP PHOTO



Junya Hiramoto, head of Johnny's Sexual Assault Victims Association

ACCUSERS IN JAPAN'S BOY BAND PRODUCER'S SEX ABUSE SCANDAL HOPE FOR APOLOGY, COMPENSATION

YURI KAGEYAMA, TOKYO

A group of men who say they were sexually abused by a Japanese boy band producer have expressed hope the company will provide financial compensation and introduce measures to prevent a recurrence.

They say producer Johnny Kitagawa sexually preyed on young dancers and singers for decades, having them stay at his luxury home, handing them cash and leveraging promises of potential fame. The company, Johnny & Associates, is a powerful force in Japan's entertainment industry.

The men said at a news conference this week that they have been ignored for decades by the company, Japanese society and mainstream media.

Company Chief Executive Julie Keiko Fujishima released a brief statement on YouTube in May about the accusations but has not appeared before reporters. The company has set a news conference for Thursday.

"We want Julie to apolo-

gize, as the chief executive and company owner," said Shimon Ishimaru, one of nine men who have formed a group demanding an apology and compensation from the company. "For a company behind this big a crime to do nothing is unimaginable."

Johnny's, as the company is known, is family-run and not publicly listed. Kitagawa, Fujishima's uncle, died in 2019 and was never charged.

A special investigative team set up by the Tokyo-based company recently spoke to 23 accusers, but has said the total will likely balloon to at least several hundred people. The team also recommended Fujishima resign.

Junya Hiramoto, another member of Ishimaru's group, said they hope to set an example for others who have suffered.

"Our wounds never fade," Hiramoto said. "Do you think we aren't still hurting? Do you think we can forget? Do you know what it's like for us to come forward like this, filled with shame?"

Over the years, persistent allegations against Kitagawa have generally been dismissed as malicious rumors. Mainstream media stayed silent.

The U.N. Working Group on Business and Human Rights has urged the Japanese government to act to make sure that Johnny's provides an apology and compensation and that government oversight of businesses be improved.

It was only after a BBC documentary about Kitagawa aired this year that the scandal again became a topic of scrutiny.

Another accuser, Kauan Okamoto, spoke at the Foreign Correspondents Club in April, saying he trusted foreign media more than Japanese media. Okamoto, like many others who have come forward, was part of a backup boys' group called Johnny's Jr.

The Associated Press does not usually identify people who say they were sexually assaulted, but Kitagawa's recent accusers decided to be named publicly in news accounts. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



UN food agency said yesterday it must drop another 2 million hungry people from food assistance in Afghanistan this month due to a massive funding shortfall. The action means that 10 million people will be cut off from the agency's support this year in the country, the World Food Programme said in a statement. The new cuts mean the agency will be able to provide food assistance to about a fifth of the 15 million people who need it in Afghanistan, the agency said.

AP PHOTO



Ukraine Backers of an international agreement that bans cluster munitions are striving to prevent erosion in support for the deal after what one leading human rights group calls an "unconscionable" U.S. decision to ship such weapons to Ukraine for its fight against Russia. Advocacy groups in the Cluster Munitions Coalition released their latest annual report yesterday. The treaty prohibits the explosives and calls for clearing areas where they litter the ground because they harm and kill many more civilians than combatants.

AP PHOTO



Greece Police ordered vehicles off the streets of three regions in Greece yesterday as a severe storm hammered the center of the country and some of its islands, turning streets into flooded torrents. Traffic was banned in the central town of Volos, the nearby mountain region of Pilion and on the island of Skiathos until the storm subsides. The fire department said one man was killed in, while another man was reported missing, believed to have been swept away by floodwaters.