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**HEALTH BUREAU REPORTS FIRST CASE OF MONKEYPOX IN THE CITY, URGING PEOPLE AT HIGH RISK TO BE VACCINATED AGAINST THE DISEASE**

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**LAND AUCTION: GOVERNMENT TO EVALUATE MARKET AFTER RECEIVING ONLY ONE BID**

P2

**LAS VEGAS HOSPITALITY WORKERS PERMIT UNION TO CALL STRIKE AGAINST HOTELS, CASINOS**

P5



AP PHOTO



**Filipino** forces would dismantle any floating barrier that China's coast guard may install in the disputed South China Sea, a Philippine admiral said yesterday after Manila infuriated China by removing one such obstruction in a contested shoal. Philippine officials strongly condemned the installation last week of a 300-meter-long barrier by Chinese coast guard vessels at the entrance to the lagoon of Scarborough Shoal as a violation of international law and the country's sovereignty.

# CRAZY-BUSY BORDER

Police expect 500,000 daily entry and exits during seven-day holiday P2

AP PHOTO



**South Korea** A judge yesterday denied an arrest warrant for the country's opposition leader on broad corruption allegations, saying there wasn't a clear risk that he would destroy evidence. Lee Jae-myung, who awaited the decision at a detention facility where he would have been held had the judge approved his arrest, praised the court for "safeguarding constitutional order" and lamented that politics had become a "war about killing and eliminating the opponent."

AP PHOTO



**Australia** A senior Qatar Airways executive told an Australian Senate inquiry yesterday there would be no repeat of an incident at Doha's international airport in 2020 in which female passengers were subjected to invasive gynecological examinations. Australian Transport Minister Catherine King said three weeks ago that the examinations of 13 Australian women who had boarded a Qatar Airways plane to Sydney were a factor in her decision in July to refuse the Qatar government-owned airline additional flights to Australia.

ANTHONY LAM



## BIG SEVEN

# SJM TO REVAMP PONTE 16, PLEDGES TO KEEP CLOCK

**MAN HIT BY  
CAR DIES**

A man hit by a private car died from serious injuries in a traffic accident at the roundabout of Leonel Sousa in Taipa. The Public Security Police said the driver of the private car did not stop in front of the zebra crossing, and knocked the man down. The victim suffered a head injury and had no heart beat when he was sent to the hospital. The male driver, about 50 years old, passed an alcohol breath test. The driver and the deceased were both Macau residents. The police have finished collecting preliminary evidence and are appealing to witnesses to provide further information to authorities.

**PLANS TO PROMOTE  
MACAU IN EU  
UNDERWAY**

The plan to promote Macau in the European market will be launched next year with discounts on the purchase of plane tickets, according to the deputy director of the Macao Government Tourism Office, Cheng Wai Tong. As cited in a TDM report, the official said authorities are concentrating on promoting Macau's tourist attractions in countries with direct flights to the Macau SAR, but that a package should be launched next year for the international market, namely Europe.

**GOV'T FORMS  
ALCOHOL CONTROL  
ALLIANCE**

The Macau Alcohol Control Alliance was launched yesterday with 33 members, to promote awareness of alcohol control in the SAR. Health Bureau (SSM) director Alvis Lo said in his speech at the launch ceremony that the SAR government has always been concerned about the problem of underage drinking. The results of the latest health behavior survey of Macau secondary school students showed that the proportion of minors who have drunk alcohol has risen significantly, and long-term alcohol abuse has caused many kinds of harm.

COURTESY MACAULINK



**DSSCU TO  
EVALUATE MARKET  
AFTER RECEIVING  
ONLY ONE BID**

**T**he government has only received one bid for the BT8 and BT9a lot projects – after it launched a public tender last month for the lease of two land plots located in Taipa to build residential developments.

During the tender for the two pieces of land in Taipa originally planned for a temporary tire park, a bid was only received for the BT9a lot.

Speaking to the press yesterday, director of the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) Lai Weng Leong said

he would not comment on the relevant bidding situation. He said that when the news of the public land bidding came out, there were many reports and information indicating that companies and potential bidders might be interested. Unexpectedly, no bids were received for BT8 lot, but he believed this was the judgment of the market, as cited in a report by TDM.

Asked whether the BT8 lot will be re-opened for bidding, the official said, "Let's take another look and evaluate the situation."

The land plots identified by the codes BT8 and BT9a are two of the group of five land plots that comprise the total area and where the government previously announced it would build a temporary sports and leisure area known as the "tire park" due to the use of old tires in its construction.

The transformation of the area from a leisure area into residential buildings has been debated as many sectors of society, including a good number of lawmakers, have opposed the idea. LV

**GOLDEN WEEK**

**POLICE EXPECT 500,000 DAILY ENTRY AND EXITS DURING SEVEN-DAY HOLIDAY**

**P**OLICE authorities are expecting the daily average number of inbound and outbound trips will exceed 500,000 during the seven-day National Day Holiday, describing it as "more than the May Day holiday."

In a press briefing yesterday, the Public Se-

curity Police Force said additional police officers would be deployed to maintain order, and additional inspection counters would be opened to divert crowds. Also, the Macao Customs said the public security police have made full preparations and can

open all lanes to clear vehicles if necessary.

The lanes of the second phase of the Hengqin Port have also been opened.

Bookings for budget hotels for the upcoming Golden Week are between 60% and 70%, while the general occu-

pancy rate of five-star hotels on weekdays has reached 90%.

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has raised its daily visitor arrival forecast for October's Golden Week by more than 10%, forecasting that Macau will see an average of

over 100,000 visitors daily.

In 2022, the city saw some 182,000 visitors during the holiday period.

Gaming operator MGM previously told the Times that it expects the Golden Week holidays, which commence Sunday, are set to break post-pandemic records as it is the first holiday of its kind in four years where customers can attend without restrictions. LV

**OPERATION THUNDER 2023**

**Joint police operation concludes with nearly 5,000 inspections**

STAFF REPORTER

**T**he joint police operation of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau - "Operation Thunder 2023" - has busted 122 people suspected of prostitution, as well as 182 cases involving fraud, with 228 people involved, including 53 cases involving money exchange fraud.

In a press conference yesterday, authorities announced that 1,140 people suspected of committing criminal offenses were transferred to the judicial authorities, involving 930 criminal cases.

Regarding parallel import smuggling activities, 984 people were administratively prosecuted for smuggling parallel imports, of which 365 were foreign employees.

A total of 2,014 non-Macau residents were repatriated during an operation that

was conducted from Jun. 12 to Sept. 21.

Authorities announced that, during the operation, 2,094 related actions were carried out, and 4,916 inspections were concluded.

During the entire operation, the Macao Customs, Public Security Police, and Judiciary Police deployed 23,175 police personnel to investigate 86,005 people. 4,815 people had to be brought back to the police station for further investigation, involving 930 cases.

Cases uncovered during the entire operation also included 154 cases involving theft, with 172 people involved, as well as 55 cases involving gambling loan sharks, with 76 people arrested; 23 cases involving drug crimes, with 45 people arrested, 18 of which involved trafficking, with 30 people arrested.



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# SJM to revamp Ponte 16, pledges to keep clock tower

ANTHONY LAM

**P**IERS 14 and 16 at Inner Harbour, as well as San Ma Lo, will be revamped as SJM Resorts, S.A.'s participation in the traditional district rejuvenation initiative, the government announced at a press conference yesterday.

During her introduction, SJM chairman and executive director Daisy Ho revealed that as part of the rejuvenation project, the building and the clock tower of Pier 16 "will be conserved and revamped."

When asked by the Times if her comment could be understood to mean that the entire structure will remain, the resort operator promised this was the case. However, the interior may be restructured and renewed to cater to the needs of future projects.

"More elements will be added to the inside of the building for revival purposes, in the hope of attracting more visitors," Ho explained.

Asked by the press if that equated to the building having cafés or other types of businesses in the future, Ho said the company is exploring various possibilities. "Cafés are a feasible option, but it's still early to be too certain," Ho said.

Another highlight of the project is that SJM promised to refit the former Macau Palace Casino pontoon and return it to its former location: Pier 14. Following her slightly limited disclosure, Ho was asked if the pontoon would be transformed into a gallery or museum where Macau's gambling history could be encapsulated.

Admitting the nostalgic and reminiscent value of the pontoon to people in Macau, Ho promised

that the marine structure will definitely return to Pier 14. A gallery is among a collection of viable options, she said, adding it is too early to confirm.

Another reason for not disclosing the details of the restoration is that the company is still contemplating what is best for both the pontoon and the use of the entire area, hinting that it will be restored in such a way that it would not conflict with the landscape of the neighborhood.

It was disclosed that mainland experts have already started inspecting the pontoon to determine the scale and methodologies for the restoration. While responding to another question, Ho said that the structure of the pontoon is intact.

## FROM HOTEL LISBOA TO INNER HARBOUR

Ho said that SJM's rejuvenation is conceptualized to start from Hotel Lisboa and Grand Lisboa Hotel and end at Inner Harbour, covering as far as Praça de Ponte e Horta.

In the company's plan, there may be a coastal plaza in the project, which will be opened for public use. Facilities for marine tours will also be built. When asked what she meant by marine tours, the resort executive noted that the facilities would be built so that eventually SJM could operate sea cruises, for example, but emphasized that it was only one of many plans to be implemented.

Kam Pek Community Centre will be revamped and transformed into a creative and cultural hub. Praça de Ponte de Horta and Hong Kung Temple Leisure Area will be transformed as a collection of culinary, cultural and decorative

lighting elements.

More importantly, the main avenue of Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro – the official name of San Ma Lo – will also be revamped. "An international creative firm has been commissioned to work with mainland and local companies to revamp the road," Ho disclosed.

"Efforts will be exerted to promote Macau as a city of cultural heritages and creative gastronomy," Ho pledged. "The neighborhood will also be transformed into a novel hip hub of culture in Macau."

Reiterating that the projects will bring in visitors and achieve economic vitality in the neighborhood, Ho was asked by the Times about her confidence. A decade or so ago, when the Ponte 16 Resort project was announced, similar hopes were also raised but the reality did not turn out as bright. SJM operates the casino in the resort.

To this query, Ho explained that because the project is conducted alongside the government, the enterprise has even stronger determination to realize its goals. Moreover, as a company deeply rooted in Macau, it has strong emotional ties with the Macau Peninsula, "so additional efforts will be exercised for the initiative," she said.

Ho started her presentation by recapping that the first office of SJM – or its predecessor – was located right on San Ma Lo, which is currently the location of the parking lot entrance of BNU.

As Hong Kong Stock Exchange listed company Success Universe Group Ltd. is the owner of Ponte 16 Resort, Ho was asked if the publicly listed company will work shoulder to shoulder with SJM on

the rejuvenation project. Ho was affirmative.

The executive expected the entire project may take two years to realize and hoped it can be opened to the public in 2026 at the latest. For the time being, it is too early to discuss the budget, because administrative procedures are still underway, she said while responding to a media enquiry.

This project will not involve any government investments as the concerned properties are owned by SJM, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong stated at yesterday's press conference.

## FLOATING CASINO TO BE REFURBISHED

The former floating casino Macau Palace will be refurbished – not as a casino but for other purposes, Ho said.

Back in June, Hong Kong newspaper Sing Tao cited sources that the former floating casino will be reopened as a dining destination, retail space and museum of gaming culture.

The Macau Palace opened in 1962 and was featured in the 1974 James Bond movie, *The Man With the Golden Gun*.

## 'REVIVING ALL TRADITIONAL DISTRICTS'

Previously, the government announced that Melco Resorts and Entertainment Ltd. will rejuvenate Piers 23 to 25, MGM China the neighborhood near A-Ma Temple and Wynn Resorts S.A. the pedestrianization of Rua de Felicidade, which will be staged tomorrow.

Ao Ieong was asked at yesterday's press conference by the Times about the logic by which the government divided these nei-

ghborhoods for rejuvenation. For example, given the geographical proximity of San Ma Lo, Piers 14, 16 and 23 to 25, as well as Rua de Felicidade, commonly known in English as Happiness Street, why are they being handled by three different resort operators?

To which, Ao Ieong stressed that there is not a clear cut distinction between these neighborhoods. "Taking Macau Peninsula as example, San Ma Lo, Inner Harbour and A-Ma Temple constitute to a large area, but we don't want pie-sharing. Instead, the government's aim is to attract SMEs through the instillation of concepts from mega-enterprises," she emphasized.

"That's why we're not drawing boundaries [for these neighborhoods], but encouraging these mega-enterprises to radiate their impacts to neighboring districts, in the hopes of ultimately reviving all traditional districts," Ao Ieong elaborated.

Concerns over disturbances from nocturnal events on residents in the neighborhood were raised at the press conference. Admitting that there will be such events, Ao Ieong believed that it will not cause serious disruption to the daily life of residents. She also stressed that the hours of nocturnal events will be closely monitored to ensure minimal impact of residents' rest.

She was also asked if flooding in the neighborhood will impact the feasibility of the initiative, and the senior official said she has seen improvements in the condition, believing that it will continue to improve.

Occasional or intermittent flooding will not halt the project, she guaranteed, adding that if there are any problems, they will be resolved, hinting at the government's determination.

Director of Culture Leong Wai Man explained that the idea to rejuvenate San Ma Lo mainly started with Strolling on Almeida Ribeiro - Pedestrian area pilot project, which was held during Lunar New Year this year.

Concerns on crowd control were raised. Ao Ieong clarified that there will not be any pedestrianized public roads in this project, so crowd control is not a prominent issue. However, when necessary, such measures will be implemented for safety.

Ao Ieong also confirmed that Sands China Ltd. will handle the rejuvenation of the former Iek Long Firecracker Factory site and Galaxy Entertainment Group the shipyard in Lai Chi Vun in Coloane.

Despite the confirmation, the senior official added that it does not mean that the two resort operators will not handle additional rejuvenation projects in the future.

Yesterday, a media invitation showed that a press conference to announce the Galaxy project will be held this afternoon.

HEALTH

# MACAU REPORTS FIRST MONKEYPOX CASE

MACAU has reported the first case of monkeypox in the city, urging people at high risk to be vaccinated against the disease.

The patient is a 29-year-old local male resident, who recently traveled to Hong Kong and Zhuhai, the Health Bureau said late Tuesday.

On Sept. 16, he had a fever, and on Sept. 19, he presented with symptoms such as swollen lymph glands, rashes and blisters on his body. On Sept. 17, 18, and 20 he went to Kiang Wu Hospital, but the symptoms did not improve.

On Sept. 25th, he went to the Emergency Department of the Conde de São Januário, and was administered the monkeypox virus nucleic acid test using a swab with pustular fluid, which was declared positive, and he was then diagnosed with monkeypox.

The man is currently in a stable condition and receiving treatment in a local hospital, the bureau said.

The bureau warned against a rising risk of transmission of the di-



sease, calling on the public to avoid high-risk sexual behaviors and seek medical treatment as soon as symptoms develop.

Residents who are evaluated by doctors to have a high risk of exposure to the disease can be vaccinated for free. Non-residents of this kind can pay to get vaccinated, it added.

Monkeypox is an infectious disease caused by the monkeypox virus. Most people fully recover, but

some get very sick.

The virus can be transmitted to humans through physical contact with someone who is infectious, and also by contact with contaminated materials, or infected animals.

Monkeypox symptoms include an unexplained acute rash and back pain, swollen lymph nodes, acute onset of fever, headaches, muscle pain and body aches and low energy. **MDT/XINHUA**

STATS

# August hotel guests total 1.31 million amid holidays

STAFF REPORTER

THE number of guests of hotel establishments in August leapt by 234.7% year-on-year to 1.31 million guests. Those from mainland China (968,000), Hong Kong (206,000) and Taiwan (27,000) jumped by 267.3%, 1,200.7% and 1,231.5% respectively.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows that in the first eight months of 2023, the average occupancy rate of guest rooms of hotel establishments went up by 43.4 percentage points year-on-year to 80.9%.

The number of guests soared by 161.2% year-on-year to 8,657,000, while their average length of stay decreased by 0.2 night to

1.7 nights.

The total number of available guest rooms grew by 20% to 45,000.

The hotel sector is positive that casino resorts in the Cotai area are poised to achieve full occupancy during the upcoming Golden Week.

Also, Macau saw 130,000 visitors arriving on package tours in August.

In the first eight months of 2023, the number of visitors arriving on package tours totaled 607,000, and that of Macau residents purchasing outbound services through travel agencies rocketed by 1,001.3% year-on-year to 259,000.

Visitors totaled 3.22 million in August, a rise of 16.7% month-on-month, as tourists flocked to the region amid summer holidays.

AD

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<b>CAM reserves the right to reject any Proposal in whole or in part without stating any reason.</b>	

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GAMING

# Las Vegas hospitality workers permit union to call strike against hotels, casinos

RIO YAMAT, LAS VEGAS

**T**ENS of thousands of Las Vegas hospitality workers fighting for new union contracts voted yesterday [Macau time] to authorize a strike that could impact more than three dozen casinos and hotels, the city's economic backbone.

The Culinary Workers Union hasn't gone on strike in more than three decades.

The union didn't immediately set a deadline for a walkout as it continues bargaining for better pay, benefits and working conditions with the top casino employers on the Las Vegas Strip, including MGM Resorts International, Caesars Entertainment and Wynn Resorts.

A walkout by Nevada's largest labor union would be the latest in a series of high-profile job actions around the country, including



walkouts in Hollywood. The same day the Culinary Workers Union vote took place, President Joe Biden joined United Auto Workers strikers on a picket line in Michigan.

Earlier this year, UPS reached a new deal before a work stoppage that could have significantly disrupted the nation's supply chain.

Workers calling for higher wages, better conditions and job security, especially since the end of the pandemic, have been in-

creasingly willing to walk out on the job as employers face a greater need for workers.

In Nevada, the Culinary Union is the largest labor union, representing about 60,000 hospitality workers statewide. Contracts for 40,000 of those members recently expired.

"We are the glue that keeps these hotels together, and we should be paid what we deserve," Deanna Virgil, a longtime employee at Wynn Las Vegas, told The Associa-

ted Press after casting her vote.

Virgil was among 53,000 housekeepers, cocktail and food servers, porters, cooks, bartenders and other hotel employees in Las Vegas eligible to participate in the vote. The union is scheduled to return to the bargaining table next week with MGM Resorts, Caesars and Wynn Resorts.

In a statement, MGM Resorts said it has a decades-long history of successfully bargaining with the union and believes that "both parties are committed to negotiating a contract that is good for everyone."

Caesars did not respond to emailed requests for comment, and Wynn Resorts said they had no comment.

Virgil, who has worked in the hospitality sector for 38 years, said she is able to make do with her current salary and benefits because she lives with her adult daughter.

"There's no telling where I would be if I didn't have the support of my daughter," Virgil said. "There are a lot of us who have two jobs, but one job should be enough."

Bethany Khan, the union's spokesperson, said all members receive health insurance and currently earn about \$26 hourly, including benefits. Khan declined to say how much the union is seeking in pay raises because "we do not negotiate in public," although the union has said it is asking for "the largest wage increases ever negotiated" in its history.

In 1991, more than 500 workers went on strike at the now-shuttered Frontier hotel and casino in downtown Las Vegas. It became one of the longest strikes in U.S. history, stretching more than six years. The union said all the strikers returned to their jobs afterward, with back pay and benefits. **MDT/AP**

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Provision of Landscaping Maintenance for grass areas in Macau International Airport

<b>1. Company:</b>	CAM – Macau International Airport Co. Ltd.
<b>2. Scope of Services:</b>	Provision of landscaping maintenance for grass areas in Macau International Airport.
<b>3. Request for Tender Document:</b>	The Tender documents and other pertinent information are available on the following website: <a href="http://www.camacau.com">www.camacau.com</a> within the period from 27 <sup>th</sup> Sep 2023 to 12:00 noon, 30 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2023 (Macau Local Time)  <b>Please always check the website <a href="http://www.camacau.com">www.camacau.com</a> for additional information, clarifications or modifications, which may be published from time to time, regarding the Tender related document(s) or any matters in relation to the tender.</b>
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Visiting Australian lawmakers are greeted by Taiwan's leader Tsai Ing-wen in Taipei, this week

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**ESPIONAGE**

# With spying charges behind him, NYPD officer now fighting to be reinstated

A suspended New York City police officer who had been accused -- then later cleared -- of spying for China is fighting to be reinstated, but the department wants him fired for refusing to be interrogated by the bureau of internal affairs exploring possible disciplinary action.

The fate of the officer, Baimadajie Angwang, now rests with an NYPD disciplinary judge who is considering arguments made before her yesterday (Macau time).

The police department argues Angwang should be fired for insubordination, saying he willfully disobeyed orders to submit himself to questioning in June. That came two months after Angwang filed a lawsuit against the city saying he was wrongfully arrested when he was taken into custody in September 2020 by authorities with guns drawn as he prepared to report for duty at his Queens precinct.

The U.S. Attorney's Office announced Jan. 19 that it was dropping all spying charges against the officer, saying prosecutors had uncovered new information warranting their dismissal. That ended a two-year ordeal for Angwang, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Tibet, who had been accused of spying on expatriate Tibetans in New York on behalf of officials at the Chinese consulate in the city.

Despite his long legal ordeal, Angwang said on the stand Tuesday that he still wants to rejoin the force.

"I still want to be a police officer. I still want to serve," he said.

Angwang said he refused to appear at the June 5 questioning because he was advised that the order was unlawful because his new attorneys were denied additional time to confer with him and get up



Baimadajie Angwang (Feb 2023)

to speed with the case. Police also rejected requests for a witness list and other documents ahead of the hearing, which was to focus on any wrongdoing that warranted discipline because of his interaction with Chinese officials in New York.

The lawyer representing the police department, Penny Bluford-Garrett, argued that "taking orders" was part of the job, and that the department's internal affairs bureau "can investigate you for anything."

The U.S. attorney's office in Brooklyn had initially claimed that Angwang began working as an agent for China in 2018 and was secretly supplying information on Tibetans pushing for their homeland's independence from the communist government. It said he had worked to locate potential intelligence sources and identify potential threats to Chinese interests.

Tibet has been an especially sensitive issue for communist China.

There was no allegation that Angwang compromised national security or New York Police Department operations.

Angwang, 37, was assigned to an NYPD precinct in Queens as a community liaison.

"Does he deserve to lose his job? The answer to both questions is absolutely not," said his lawyer, Michael Bloch.

Instead, he said, the department should say, "Thank you for your service, sir, and welcome back."

Angwang's lawyers, however, contend that the interrogation was a setup to entrap the officer, despite having his federal case dropped by the Justice Department earlier. An internal affairs lieutenant testified that he had prepared a list of 1,700 questions for Angwang.

Angwang was first notified on May 17 to appear five days later for questioning. But his attorney got a postponement until June 5, giving Angwang time to find new attorneys. **MDT/AP**

**DIRE STRAIT**

# China accuses Taipei of using economic and trade issues to seek independence

THE Chinese government yesterday accused Taiwan's ruling party of seeking independence, a day after the self-governing island's president lobbied for Australia's support in joining a regional trade pact.

Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, also said the recent Chinese military drills around Taiwan were held to combat "the arrogance of Taiwan independence separatist forces."

China claims Taiwan, an island about 160 kilometers off its east coast, as its territory. The two split during the civil war that brought the Communists to power in China in 1949, with the losing Nationalists setting up their own government in Taiwan.

Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen, meeting with six visiting Australian lawmakers on Tuesday, sought their country's support for Taiwan's bid to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, an 11-nation free trade agreement.

The Australian parliamentary delegation discussed strengthening economic cooperation with Taiwan, particularly in clean energy, and expressed an interest in Taiwan's semiconductor industry.

Zhu said that any participation by Taiwan in a regional economic grouping should be handled in accordance with the "one-China principle," which holds that the Communist Party is the government of China and Taiwan is a part of the country.

"The Democratic Progressive Party's attempt to seek independence in the name of economy and trade will not succeed," she said, referring to Tsai's political party.

Zhu signaled that China would not ease up on its military activity around Taiwan.

"As long as Taiwan independence's provocations continue, the People's Liberation Army's actions to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity will not stop," she said. **MDT/AP**

## CHINA ALLEGEDLY PUTS EVERGRANDE'S BILLIONAIRE FOUNDER IN POLICE CUSTODY: REPORT

HUI Ka Yan, the billionaire chairman of beleaguered property developer China Evergrande Group, "has been placed

under police control," according to people with knowledge of the matter, cited by Bloomberg.

According to the report

yesterday, Hui was "taken away by Chinese police earlier this month and is being monitored at a designated location," the

people said, asking not to be identified because the matter is private.

It's not clear why Hui is under so-called residential

surveillance, a type of police action that falls short of formal detention or arrest and doesn't mean Hui will be charged with a crime, the economic agency reported.

According to Bloomberg, the measure means he is unable to leave the

location, meet or communicate with others without approval, based on China's Criminal Procedure Law.

Passports and identification cards must be handed to police but the process shouldn't exceed six months, according to the law. **MDT/AGENCIES**

AFGHANISTAN

# As mental health worsens among women, the UN is asked to declare 'gender apartheid'

**T**HE U.N.'s most powerful body must support governments seeking to legally declare the intensifying crackdown by Afghanistan's Taliban rulers on women and girls "gender apartheid," the head of the U.N. agency promoting gender equality said yesterday [Macau time].

AP PHOTO



Sima Bahous, executive director of UN Women, told the Security Council that more than 50 increasingly dire Taliban edicts are being enforced with more severity, including by male family members. That is exacerbating mental health issues and suicidal thoughts especially among young women and is shrinking women's decision-making even in their own homes.

"They tell us that they are prisoners living in darkness, confined to their homes without hope or future," she said.

Under international law, apartheid is defined as a system of legalized racial segregation that originated in South Africa. But a

growing consensus among international experts, officials and activists says apartheid can also apply to gender in cases like that of Afghanistan, where women and girls face systematic discrimination.

"We ask you to lend your full support to an intergovernmental process to explicitly codify gender apartheid in international law," Bahous urged the 15-member council, including its five permanent members: the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France.

There is no existing international law to respond to "mass, sta-

te-sponsored gender oppression," Bahous said. But she said the Taliban's "systemic and planned assault on women's rights ... must be named, defined and proscribed in our global norms so that we can respond appropriately."

The Taliban took power in August 2021 during the final weeks of the U.S. and NATO forces' pullout from Afghanistan after 20 years of war. As they did during their previous rule of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban gradually reimposed their harsh interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia, bar-

ring girls from school beyond the sixth grade and women from almost all jobs, public spaces, gyms and recently closing beauty salons.

The Security Council meeting on U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' latest report on Afghanistan took place on the final day of the annual meeting of world leaders at the 193-member U.N. General Assembly.

Yesterday, Zabihullah Mujahid, the main spokesman for the Taliban government, slammed the council meeting for focusing on domestic Afghan matters of "women's education and their work" instead of issues such as security, peace and stability.


"It was necessary to discuss the end of the blacklist in the United Nations, the removal of sanctions, the release of seized assets," Mujahid said on X, formerly known as Twitter. He said the U.N. gathering should also have discussed "the recognition of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" as the Taliban call their government.

No country has recognized the Taliban, and the assembly's credentials committee hasn't either, primarily over its effort to relegate women to their homes and failure to form an inclusive government. This has left U.N. recognition with the now-ousted previous government led by Ashraf Ghani. For the third year, its representative did not speak at the high-level gathering.

Bahous said that over the past year, UN Women collaborated with the U.N. political mission in Afghanistan known as UNAMA and the U.N. International Office for Migration to interview over 500 Afghan women.

The women interviewed said the dramatic shrinking of their influence on decision-making, not just at the national or provincial level but also in their communities and homes, is driven by increased poverty, decreasing financial contribution and "the Taliban's imposition of hyper-patriarchal gender norms," Bahous said. **MDT/AP**

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INTERVIEW

# Belarus' top diplomat says he can't imagine his nation entering the war in Ukraine alongside Russia

EDITH M. LEDERER,  
UNITED NATIONS

**T**HE foreign minister of Belarus, which has a strategic partnership with Russia, says he cannot envision a situation where his country would enter the war in Ukraine alongside Russian forces.

Sergei Aleinik said in an interview with The Associated Press that he also can't imagine a situation where Russia would order his country to use the tactical nuclear weapons it recently deployed in Belarus.

"I don't see such an option because it is an instrument of defense primarily," he said of the missiles.

But if Belarus was invaded, "I will not exclude any instruments to be used to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country," he said.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who has relied on Russian subsidies and political support to rule the ex-Soviet nation with an iron hand for nearly three decades, allowed the Kremlin to use Belarusian territory to send troops into Ukraine in February 2022 at the start of the invasion. But Lukashenko has opposed joining the fighting.

Aleinik said the stationing of tactical nuclear missiles in Belarus is a response to "the very big militarization" along its western border. The Polish military, for example, is planning to double its armed forces and bring more heavy weapons to the border, backed by a growing presence of U.S. and other NATO forces, he said.

## ARE BELARUS' LINKS TO RUSSIA ISOLATING IT?

The foreign minister disputed the assertions by some opponents that Belarus' ties to Russia were isolating the country. Just the opposite, he said.

During his five days in New York for the annual high-level meeting of the U.N. General Assembly, Aleinik said he held 40 meetings with countries,



Belarus Foreign Minister Sergei Aleinik addresses the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly

many from the global South, who are interested in building economic and trade relations, especially focused on food security.

Belarus is among the top five exporters globally of butter, cheese and powdered milk, he said, and it produces 10% of the world's tractors, 8% of the harvesting equipment and a range of other agricultural machinery.

There is growing demand for Belarus' products from African countries, a number of Asian countries, the Middle East and Latin America, Aleinik said, and the country is increasing its production of food and other agricultural products. Belarus is also building a relationship with China, he said.

The foreign minister criticized neighboring Lithuania, which landlocked Belarus used to ship potash fertilizer to the Global South, for blocking transit through the country, saying he raised the issue repeatedly this week including with U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "Lithuania simply unilaterally imposed a ban for the transit of our fertilizers to the global South," he said.

Lithuania, a Baltic nation, declared its independence from the Soviet Union 33 years ago. It is a democracy that belongs to NATO and the European Union. It has been

a strong backer of Ukraine and a place of refuge in recent years for many who have fled Lukashenko's authoritarian crackdown in Belarus and increased repression in Russia.

Aleinik said Belarus is now shipping fertilizer from Russian ports and sending its products to China by rail, but "these shipments are more costly."

Western countries imposed sanctions on Belarus after its crackdown on protests against Lukashenko's claim of victory in the 2020 presidential election which opponents claimed he fraudulently won. Additional sanctions were added over the forced diversion of a commercial jetliner traveling between in May 2021 two EU countries to Belarus' capital Minsk, where authorities took a prominent opposition leader who was a passenger into custody.

## BUILDING COOPERATION IN 'ALMOST ALL AREAS'

Aleinik said Belarus' union with Moscow covering almost all areas and is building technological cooperation with Moscow to counter Western sanctions and make the country self-sufficient in producing products previously imported from Western nations.

In his address to the General Assembly on Saturday, Aleinik briefly addressed the war in Ukraine, saying it was

"very painful to see" how Ukrainians who are so close to Belarusians have been suffering for a year and a half.

"Unfortunately, Ukraine and its people have become a pawn in the great game of the West to preserve its own global hegemony," he said. "It's clear that by increasing weapons deliveries to this country, the West is determined to continue the war down to the last Ukrainian."

Could he see a situation where Belarus could support the war in Ukraine alongside Russia? "My answer is no," he told AP.

The foreign minister said he didn't think Ukrainians want or need "this war of attrition," stressing that Belarus has always supported peace in its neighboring country and will continue "to do everything in our power" to achieve it.

In the AP interview, Aleinik said he doesn't think anyone at the United Nations for the high-level meeting knows how long the war will last, but "we all understand that there is no alternative to the political and diplomatic solution for this conflict." He recalled that last year Belarus hosted three rounds of negotiations between Russian and Ukrainian delegations "and they started to draft some elements of a potential peace accord."

Aleinik blamed Ukraine and perhaps others indirectly involved in the conflict for the failure of those negotiations. But he said Belarus will keep pursuing peace efforts.

Lukashenko's government has come under sharp criticism for its crackdown and jailing of political opponents and human rights activists. The Viasna Human Rights Center recorded 1,496 political prisoners in Belarus at the end of August, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Ales Bialiatski.

Asked about the political prisoners, Aleinik said: "We don't have political prisoners."

"All the people who are detained are detained for criminal charges which have been proved in the courts. And so that's it." MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1985 RIOTS IN BRIXTON AFTER POLICE SHOOTING



Riots have broken out on the streets of south London after a woman was shot and seriously injured in a house search.

Armed officers raided a house in Brixton early this morning looking for a man in connection with a robbery.

Crowds began to gather outside the district's police station when news broke the police had accidentally shot the man's mother, Cherry Groce, in her bed with apparently no warning.

Local people had already been very critical of police tactics in Brixton and a mood of tension exploded into violence as night fell.

Dozens of officers dressed in riot gear were injured as they were attacked by groups of mainly black youths with bricks and wooden stakes.

The rioters also set alight a barricade of cars across the Brixton Road with petrol bombs and some looted shops in nearby streets.

The suspected armed robber was not home when the police raided his address and Scotland Yard described the shooting of his mother as a "tragic accident".

One of Mrs Groce's daughters told the BBC everything happened very quickly.

"It was a loud noise that made me run down the stairs - by the time I got down there were three police dogs, police rushing everywhere and one of them had a gun," she said.

Mrs Groce is being treated at St Thomas' Hospital in central London and her family say the mother-of-six may never walk again.

"She is just in a state of shock - she cannot recall with any great accuracy because it all happened so fast," said her brother Tony Young.

A spokesman for the Metropolitan Police said it did all it could to prevent mistakes like this, but it had to recognise the increased use of firearms by criminals made errors more likely.

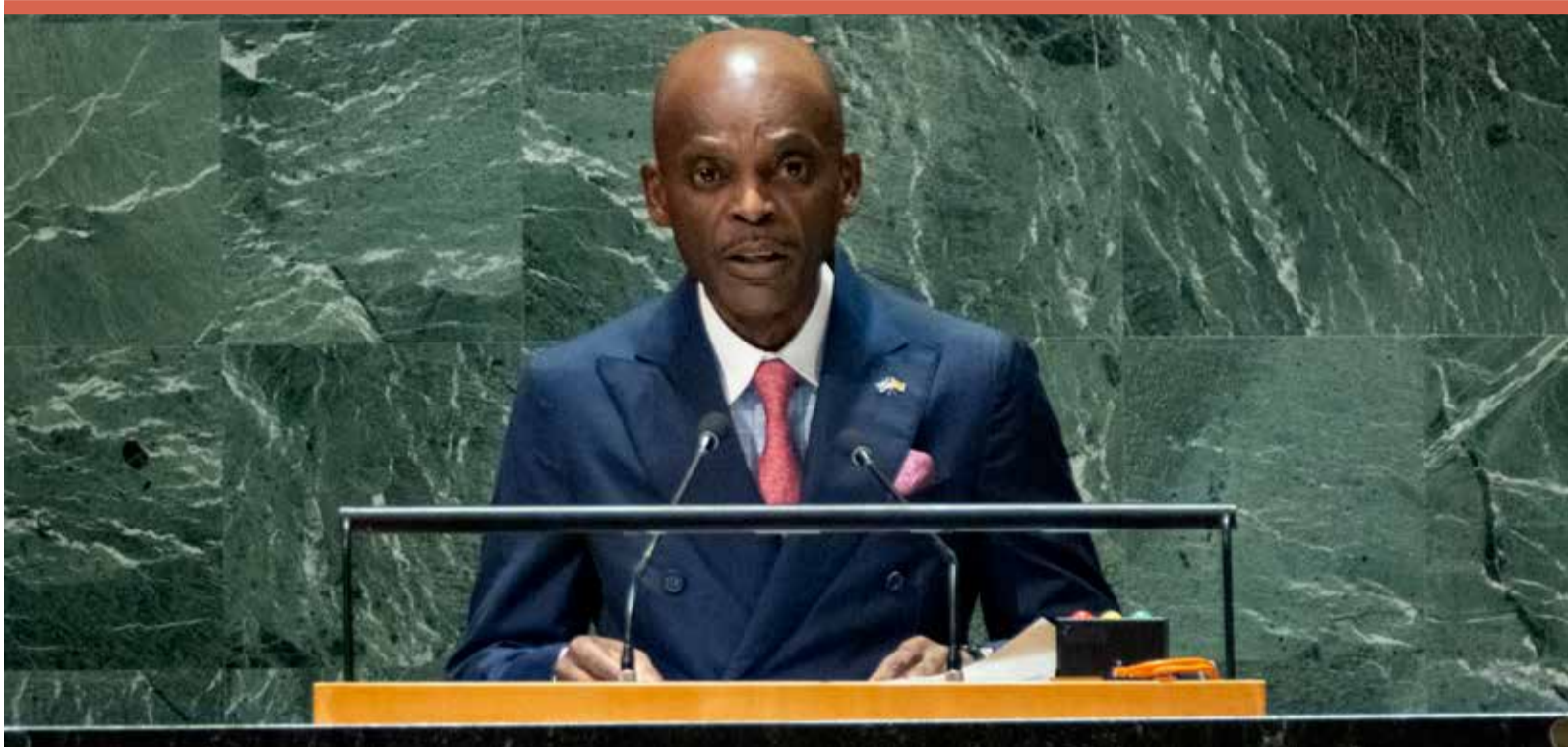
Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

One person was killed, 50 injured and over 200 arrested during the riots which followed Cherry Groce's shooting. Mrs Groce was crippled in the incident and was in hospital for two years. The officer who shot her, Inspector Douglas Lovelock, was cleared of all criminal charges in January 1987 and was reinstated. But a major review of Metropolitan Police gun policy after the incident led to a ban on CID detectives carrying firearms. The new guidelines said only centrally controlled specialist squads - like Special Branch - would be armed.







Togo Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Dussey addresses the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

# MANY POWERFUL LEADERS SKIPPED UNGA, CREATING SPACE FOR EMERGING VOICES TO RISE

TED ANTHONY,  
UNITED NATIONS

**T**OGO'S foreign minister wasn't having any of it. He talked of an accelerating "African awakening," of a resolve to "fight our own battles," of a refusal to be banished to the children's table while the musclebound great powers of the 20th century moved chess pieces around the board.

"Nobody is at the center of the world," Robert Dussey said in French, his voice emphatic. "We don't want to be relegated to the background as the world develops."

Africa was Dussey's subject. But he might have been one of any number of leaders speaking at the United Nations this past week — the voices of smaller nations that typically command less attention. They come, they air grievances and concerns, and then the oxygen is gobbled up by others — often the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council.

This year, though, Volodymyr Zelenskyy's high-profile presence notwithstanding, things felt different. Top leaders of four of the five permanent member nations didn't attend. Climate change helped amplify the concerns of smaller nations — not coincidentally, those most affected by it. And speech by speech, speaker by speaker, it became clear: On the international stage, other voices are beginning to rise — and to be heard.

"The voice of the Global South is growing louder," said Terrance Michael Drew, prime minister of

the Caribbean island nation of Saint Kitts and Nevis. "The voices and experiences of the Pacific matter," said Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong. "Our appetite for transformative change has never been higher," said Xavier Esport, prime minister of the small European country of Andorra.

"The General Assembly is always the biggest platform for countries that don't get a spotlight," says Anjali Dayal, an associate professor of international politics at Fordham University and an expert on the United Nations and other international organizations.

"But I think this year, we saw that more leaders were paying attention to the biggest constituency of U.N. countries — countries that are not big powers but that suffer the biggest consequences and very seldom get to cast the decisive vote," she said.

Where is the momentum coming from? As with so many matters of import these days, there's no single answer.

This year, one development helped clear space for some of the voices: the shallow attendance of major nations' leaders. Of the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members, only the United States, in the personage of President Joe Biden, spoke. The others — Russia, China, France and Britain — chose to send underlings, as did India and Canada.

U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed called that "disappointing." But it did mean that smaller nations and coalitions had more oxygen. They used some of it to advocate for a broader-ba-

sed permanent membership of Security Council, the only U.N. body with the power to take military action and impose sanctions. Only its permanent members can veto resolutions, and frustration about that runs long and deep.

"The global governance architecture has not delivered the equity and inclusion that is required," said Tandi Dorji, foreign minister of the Asian nation of Bhutan. He insisted representation on the council — which lacks a permanent member from Africa or Latin America — be broadened. "The increasing fragmentation, polarization, and growing inequity we witness in the world today only serve as an urgent cry for strengthening multilateralism."

The structure of the United Nations, most countries agree, doesn't fit the current global configuration. An organization built in the postwar mid-20th century to, in essence, prevent the nations who could destroy the world from doing so is not equipped to tackle the fragmentation afoot as the mid-21st century steams toward us with a rapidly evolving global power structure, speaker after speaker said.

Other factors, too, are helping softer voices grow louder. Exhibit A: climate change, which has hit the world's poorest countries hardest — in particular, island nations whose very existence is threatened by rising waters. When the president of the island nation of Kirabati, Taneti Maamau, says his country is "experiencing intensifying severe drought and coastal inundation," it's not a secondhand

account — and people are starting to listen.

"They're banding together and saying, 'We are the front line of world's biggest problems, and the only way we get attention is if we band together.' That has been remarkably effective in terms of voice," Dayal said. "They're saying, 'Today it's us. Tomorrow it's going to be you.'"

The pandemic and the gradual recognition — finally — of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' yearslong insistence that a multilateral planet is the only way forward also are helping matters.

Much like climate change, the vaccine inequity that the pandemic produced is a pressing topic; smaller nations, as the most affected constituencies, have natural roles driving that as well. "As we rebuild from the pandemic, we must do so with an unwavering commitment to inclusivity," said Seychelles President Wavel Ramkalawan.

And coalitions are strengthening beyond usual suspects like the G20 and the European Union. There is the Global South in general, with its malleable membership but its commitment to developing countries with unique common needs. There is SIDS, or small island developing states, which tell firsthand stories about climate change. And Africa's voice is stronger than ever as it pushes for equity, buoyed by a new permanent G20 seat for the African Union.

Then there's sheer population. Africa's alone is expected to double from its current 1.3 billion by 2050 and make up a quarter of the planet's people. This year, India surpassed China to become the world's most populous nation; its leader, Narendra Modi, may have skipped the U.N. meeting, but he hosted the G20 two weeks ago and used it as a forum to trumpet India's suitability as a leader of the Global South.

China, too, used the General Assembly last week to cast itself as a member of the Global South and the community of developing nations. While that's a matter of some debate — China also wants to be perceived as a key global power — its oomph carries along other less-heard nations' priorities in its wake, while bigger nations are distracted with other things.

"It seems that the Global North, under the U.S. leadership, is busy resisting China's growing power and weakening Putin's Russia," Zhiqun Zhu, a professor of political science and international relations at Bucknell University, said in an email. "No wonder China is seeking support in the developing world."

Even Biden focused his U.N. speech not on the big powers whose leaders didn't show, but on leaders in the room. "The United States is working across the board to make global institutions more effective and more inclusive," he said, adding that in the 21st century, "21st-century results are badly needed."

That, like so many other remarks that followed in coming days, was an acknowledgment of something crucial: Both the community of nations and the U.N. itself need to address a world that might not have been recognizable to the architects of the post-World War II order and the global organization that rose from its ashes.

Which brings us back to Togo. Dussey surely voiced the concerns of myriad smaller nations when he said, flatly, that it is time to be heard and listened to — individually or as a group, but in a way that befits a 21st-century civilization where some of the most difficult circumstances are visited upon those with the least resources to cope.

"We are wearied by paternalism," Dussey said. "We are weary at your condescension. We are weary of your arrogance. We are weary. We are weary. We are weary." **MDT/AP**

## TYPE OF SPEAKERS

<b>PRESIDENTS:</b> 85
<b>PRIME MINISTERS:</b> 41
<b>KINGS:</b> 2
<b>PRINCES:</b> 2
<b>EMIRS:</b> 1
<b>MINISTERS, OF SOME SORT:</b> 47
<b>VICE PRESIDENTS:</b> 6
<b>TRANSITIONAL OR INTERIM LEADERS:</b> 2
<b>PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES:</b> 6

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

MOTORSPORT

# IndyCar's return marks major comeback for 120-year-old Milwaukee Mile

STEVE MEGARGEE,  
WEST ALLIS (WIS.)

ONCE a fixture on the IndyCar racing circuit, the Milwaukee Mile lost its spot on the schedule and was in danger of closing altogether on multiple occasions.

Now the 120-year-old facility is making a comeback as remarkable as any that drivers have staged on this 1-mile oval track over the years. IndyCar is returning to the Milwaukee Mile next year as part of a Labor Day weekend doubleheader just before the final race of the season.

Roger Penske, owner of both IndyCar and Indianapolis Motor Speedway, hopes this time it's back for good and rattled off a list of motorsports greats who raced at the historic track.

"You think of Rex Mays and (Tony) Bettenhausen and some of the greatest drivers -- Roger

AP PHOTO



Ward racing up here," Penske said Monday. "These are the great names in the sport. Always right after Indy they used to come, obviously would come here to Milwaukee and run. To me, it was just part of the DNA of the series. And we kind of lost that."

The track is located at the Wisconsin State Fair Park and

bills itself as the oldest operating motor speedway since it has hosted at least one auto race every year since 1903, aside from World War II. It began as a dirt track before it was paved in 1954. The facility also includes an infield that hosted selected Green Bay Packers home games from 1934-51.

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers

noted that the state's Executive Residence where he lives includes a poster from 1939, when the Milwaukee Mile held its first IndyCar event.

But the track struggled to remain on IndyCar's schedule due in part to attendance issues. IndyCar left Milwaukee, briefly returned from 2012 to 2015 and hadn't been back since. Milwaukee Mile hosted its first major national event since IndyCar's departure when the NASCAR Truck Series visited last month.

State and IndyCar officials are confident they can make it work this time.

"Anytime you have a chance to redo history and take this into a whole different level, you have to take advantage of that," Evers said.

Mark Miles, the president and CEO of Penske Entertainment Co., said Penske officials met with Evers more than a year ago to discuss the possi-

bility of bringing IndyCar back to Milwaukee. Miles also noted that "the State Fair Board welcomed the opportunity and is really embracing it, and I don't know that that was that true last time around in Milwaukee."

Fan response also will be critical. The Milwaukee Mile features grandstands that hold up to 30,000 fans, but previous races here rarely approached that attendance.

Having the Milwaukee Mile back on the calendar means Wisconsin will host three of the 17 events on IndyCar's 2024 schedule. IndyCar will maintain its annual stop at Road America, a road course located about 60 miles north of the Milwaukee Mile in the town of Elkhart Lake.

IndyCar's return to Milwaukee exemplifies the series' commitment to getting more races on oval tracks. Penske believes those tracks provide the type of competitive racing preferred by fans. MDT/AP

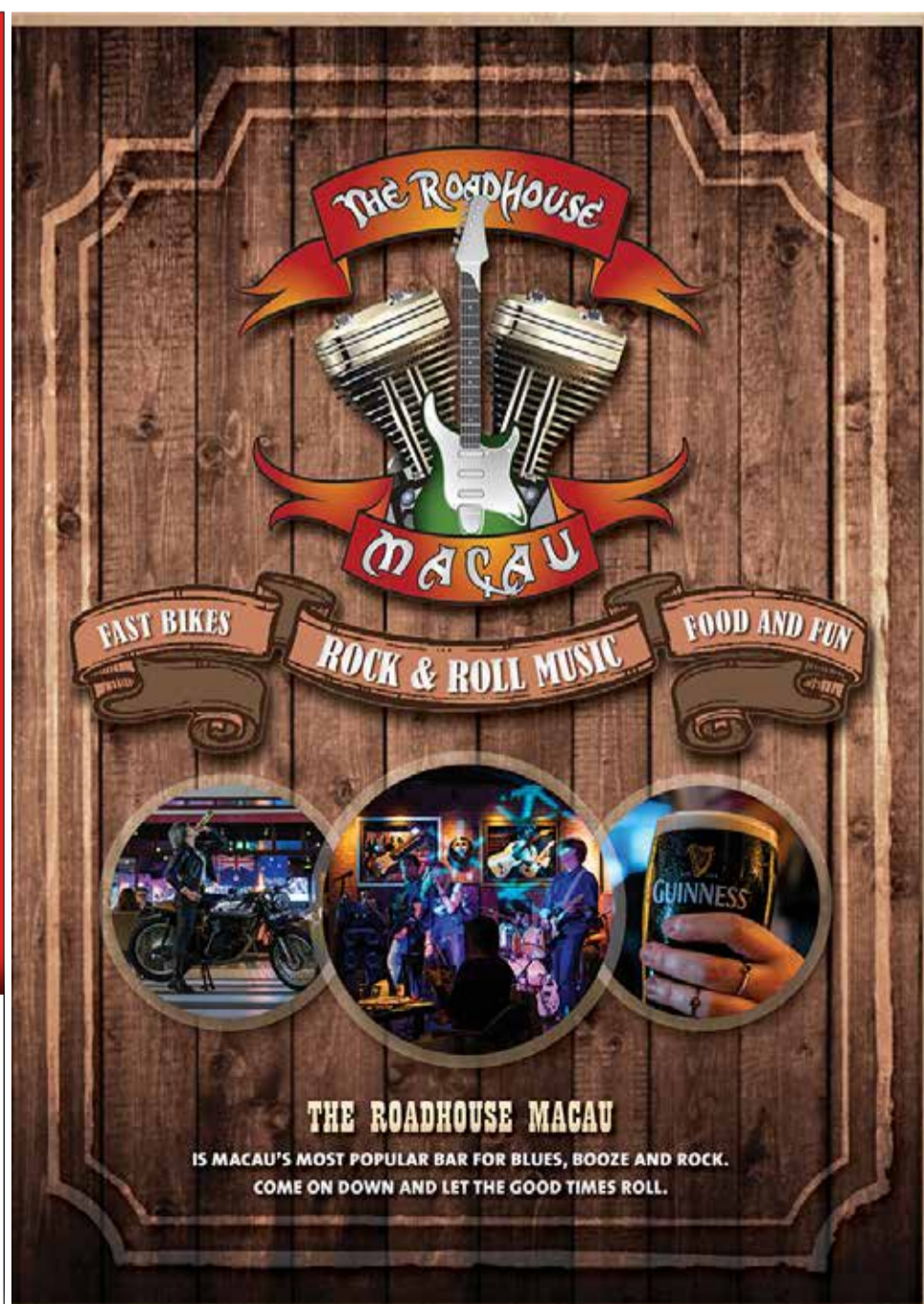
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OPINION

China Daily

Zheng Bofei, Xinhua

CHINA'S VISION OF GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF SHARED FUTURE MATERIALIZES INTO CONCRETE ACTIONS

Facing an array of unprecedented crises and challenges, humanity today needs wisdom and action to surmount them for better lives.

A decade after Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed building a community with a shared future for humanity, this concept has garnered increasing recognition and has been translated into solid actions. It lights the path forward as the world fumbles for ways to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.

This vision aligns with the prevailing global trends, resonating with the call for international cooperation and contributing to a more just and equitable global order. Most importantly, this vision transcends the mindset of exclusive bloc politics and the notion of "might makes right." It reflects the common aspiration of people from all countries to pursue peace, development and stability, and has become the overall goal of China's major-country diplomacy in the new era.

This does not mean that the international system should be dismantled or started afresh. Rather, it means promoting greater democracy in international relations and making global governance more just and equitable. Humanity must engage in comprehensive global cooperation. Only when nations work collectively, aligning individual interests with the common good, can we navigate the crises that loom before us and sail toward a brighter future.

Over the past decade, China has contributed its strength to building a global community of shared future with firm conviction and solid actions, such as promoting high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, implementing the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, and proposing a range of regional and bilateral initiatives on building communities of shared future.

By July 2023, more than three-quarters of countries in the world and over 30 international organizations had signed agreements on Belt and Road cooperation with China.

Together, participants in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have jointly advanced infrastructure connectivity, trade connectivity, and people-to-people connectivity.

According to Belt and Road Economics, a report released by the World Bank, the BRI, when fully implemented, will increase intra-BRI trade by 4.1 percent. By 2030, the BRI will generate 1.6 trillion U.S. dollars in annual global revenues.

At the bilateral and multilateral level, China has built communities of shared future with an increasing number of partners, in different forms. The Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative have gained support from over 100 countries and the Global Civilization Initiative has also received positive feedback.

Building a global community of shared future requires collective efforts, and it will certainly bring benefits to all involved in this endeavor.

TAYLOR SWIFT IS A FAN OF TRAVIS KELCE AND SUDDENLY, SO IS EVERYONE ELSE

THE BUZZ

Taylor Swift's trip to watch the Kansas City Chiefs' Travis Kelce play football on Sunday didn't just have the internet talking nonstop.

Following the 12-time Grammy Award winner's appearance at Arrowhead Stadium, jersey sales for the All-Pro tight-end seemingly skyrocketed.

According to sportswear and fan merchandise company Fanatics, Kelce was one of the top 5 selling NFL players Sunday. He "saw a nearly 400% spike in sales throughout the Fanatics network of sites, including NFLShop.com," a spokesperson told The Associated Press via email.

Sales spiked on the same day that Swift was spotted in Kansas

City, watching the Chiefs play the Chicago Bears alongside Kelce's mother, Donna, from one of the football stadium's glass-enclosed suites.

Kelce did not speak to reporters afterward, but he was spotted leaving Arrowhead with Swift by his side.

Still, just about everyone in the Kansas City locker room was buzzing about the news after Sunday's game, including coach Andy Reid, who joked that "I set them up."

Swift has always been reluctant to discuss her personal life in public, but rumors have been flying about the popstar and the pro football player in recent months.



A FIRE AT A WEDDING HALL IN NORTHERN IRAQ HAS KILLED AROUND 100 PEOPLE AND INJURED 150

A raging fire seemingly caused by fireworks set off to celebrate a Christian wedding consumed a hall packed with guests in northern Iraq, killing around 100 people and injuring 150 others as authorities warned yesterday the death toll could still rise.

Authorities said that flammable building materials also contributed to the latest disaster to hit Iraq's dwindling Christian minority. In the fire's chaotic aftermath, officials offered conflicting death tolls and security officials said they had detained staff at the wedding hall as part of their investigation.

The fire happened in the Hamdaniya area of Iraq's Nineveh province, authorities said. That's a predominantly Christian area just outside of the city of Mosul, some 335 kilometers northwest of Baghdad.

There was no official word on the cause of the blaze, but the Kurdish television news channel Rudaw aired footage showing pyrotechnics shooting flames up from the floor of the event and setting a chandelier aflame.

Multiple witnesses, including 50-year-old wed-

ding attendee Faten Youssef, said the fire started as the bride and groom began their slow dance. The flames raced through plastic decorations and the ceiling started collapsing, she said.

"Flames started falling on us," Youssef told The Associated Press. "Things were falling down and blocked the way to the exit."

She said her family found their way out through a kitchen, after the family struggled through smoke and flames and her son failed to kick through a jammed exit door.

It wasn't immediately clear if the bride and groom were among those hurt.

Survivors arrived at local hospitals in bandages, receiving oxygen, as their families milled through hallways and outside as workers organized more oxygen cylinders. Some of those burned included children. Ambulance sirens wailed for hours after the fire as paramedics brought out the injured.

Extravagant wedding ceremonies are common in Iraq, like many countries in the Middle East. Families often invite hundreds

of relatives and members of the broader community, spending heavily on spectacular ceremonies with elaborately decorated halls, music and entertainers, often including pyrotechnics.

Casualty figures fluctuated in the hours after the incident, which is common in Iraq.

An initial Health Ministry statement, carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency, said the blaze killed over 100 people and injured 150. Health officials in Nineveh province put the death toll at 114, while Iraqi Interior Minister Abdul Amir al-Shammari later put the death toll at 93.

A Health Ministry official, speaking to the AP at midday yesterday on condition of anonymity as he did not have authorization to talk to journalists, said that 30 bodies have been identified by their relatives, but the rest are so badly burned that will require DNA identification.

He put the death toll at 94, with around 100 people still receiving medical treatment. "The death toll is expected to rise as some are in critical condition," he said. MDT/AP



France Six young people argued that governments across Europe aren't doing enough to protect people from climate change at the European Court of Human Rights yesterday in the latest and largest instance of activists taking governments to court to force climate action. Legal teams for the 32 nations questioned the admissibility of the case as well as the claim that the plaintiffs are victims of climate change harm.



German government yesterday banned a far-right, racist group known for its indoctrination of children as police raided dozens of homes of its members and other buildings early in the morning. A statement from the German interior ministry said it banned the Artgemeinschaft group, an anti-democratic association with around 150 members. All of its sub-organizations, including the Gefaehrtschaften, Gilden, Freundeskreise, and Familienwerk e.V., were also banned, the ministry said.

British regulators yesterday approved new oil and gas drilling at a site in the North Sea, a move environmentalists say will hurt the country's attempt to meet its climate goals. The U.K.'s North Sea Transition Authority said it had approved the Rosebank Field Development Plan, "which allows the owners to proceed with their project." Britain's Conservative government argues that drilling in the Rosebank field will create jobs and bolster the U.K.'s energy security.

Greece's minister for migration said that the government is planning a major regularization program for migrants to meet pressing demands in the labor market despite a recent increase in illegal arrivals. Dimitris Kairidis told state-run radio that the program would target an estimated 300,000 migrants who are undocumented or whose residence permits have expired to help address acute labor shortages in agriculture, construction and tourism.