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INDUSTRY STARTS PETITION AMID GOV'T REMINDER ON APPROPRIATE CONTENTS IN ARTWORKS

ANTHONY LAM

THE local cultural industry has started a petition calling for a meeting with the government to clarify grant guidelines.

Last week, certain industry practitioners claimed via social media that they had received notes from the Cultural Development Fund, which reminded them of the importance of staging "appropriate content." Failure to do so may result in the revocation of approved grants.

Pursuant to the guidelines, the detail of such content includes, but is not limited to, indecency, violence, pornography, obscenity, gambling, foul language, innuendo and the violation of the rights of others.

The note reportedly stated the Fund had reminded grant recipients to "cautiously and reasonably plan and organize subsidized activities or projects."

The guidelines concerned grants for the 2023 fiscal year, the applications for which ended in November 2022. The validity of this year's grants was extended to the end of March next year, in consideration of constraints arising



after post-Covid normalization.

Although the industry assumes this as a reminder after the saga that affected local online platform Manner Culture Enterprises Ltd., the industry was surprised, if not panicked, to see the reminder, fearing the government may have set itself up in a censorship trap.

In response, about 100 practitioners have signed a petition letter, calling for a meeting with the management of the Fund to "better understand the Fund's concerns

over 'inappropriate content,' and to explore how to protect members of the audience while maintaining creative freedom."

In addition, the practitioners said Macau already has an entity for the classification of publicly screened or performed works. They called for the Fund to respect the classification entity.

What the industry also finds important is that the portrayal of "inappropriate content" is not for encouragement purposes. On the

contrary, they are included to explore social phenomena, cultural values and human experience.

Comments on social media have expressed fear humorously that works by Chow Yun Fat, Stephen Chow, Bruce Lee and Ang Lee's Lust, Caution would fail to pass the screening for grants.

AUDIENCE MEMBERS 'FEELING DISTURBED'

On the sidelines of the National Day Reception, Secretary for

Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong was asked about the reminder and the petition. She said the reminder was prompted by some audience members who reported to the Fund they were "feeling disturbed" after viewing some subsidized performances.

Ao Ieong said the reminder was issued solely in response to the audience opinions received by the Fund and that no additional restrictions have been implemented.

In response to questions about how the Fund defines "inappropriate content," the senior official said the Fund does not encourage or desire projects filled entirely with foul language or indecent actions.

She said the Fund has not tightened its restrictions.

"Provided that a piece of proposed work complies with laws, regulations and concerned guidelines, our attitude towards granting subsidies is quite broad," Ao Ieong said.

She also said there is no blacklist, emphasizing that the performances about which some audience members had expressed comments were not blacklisted.

Pursuant to item 21.3.2 of the guidelines, should any subsidized projects violate any restrictions stated therein and have their grants revoked, the beneficiaries will be included in a "frozen list," and will be banned from applying for grants for a year.

TOURISM

Golden Week visitors beat expectations

RENATO MARQUES

THE Golden Week of the National Day holidays, which followed the mid-autumn festival holiday, has so far delivered visitor arrivals surpassing about 27% of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) forecast.

During the first six days (up to 9 p.m. on Oct. 4), 763,501 visitors entered Macau via the different border posts.

The strongest day for visitor influx was recorded on the second day of the holidays (Sept. 30) when 158,633 entered Macau.



During the same period, the average daily figure reached 127,250, 27.2% more than the

100,000 forecasted by the MGTO.

On several occasions over these days, securi-

ty authorities enforced pedestrian traffic crowd control measures around the Ruins of St. Paul's,

which was, as usual, the most crowded area of the city.

Several other measures to control pedestrian traffic in the central district were prepared but were not deployed over this period.

Besides the entry and exit of visitors, the border posts also registered, as expected, a high movement of local residents.

Oct. 2 recorded the most border movements with a total aggregate of arrivals and departures at all Macau checkpoints of 630,589. Of these, 208,073 (33%) were related to entries and exits of local residents.

By far, the Border Gate continued to be top of the list of entry ports with the most arrivals,

seconded by the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge and the Hengqin Port checkpoint.

FOREIGN VISITATION GROWING

Regarding one of Macau's main goals, the total number of foreign visitors to Macau (up to 9 p.m. on Oct. 4) was 38,608, a number that represents 5.2% of all tourist entries.

Although the figure still seems a small percentage compared with the total, it is clear that foreigner visitation is growing as this figure was only 2.1% during the holidays of Ching Ming and Easter in early April and 3.8% of all the visitors to Macau in the first five months of this year.

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Ho Iat Seng finds seeing revitalization as jeopardization 'radical'

ANTHONY LAM

IN response to opinions fearing revitalization plans will destroy old districts, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng finds these comments "radical," local media has reported.

On the sidelines of the National Day Reception, the head of the government was asked whether he was satisfied with the proposals on old district revitalization presented by the six casino operators. He said he was satisfied, adding he was aware that each operator has a team focusing on non-gambling operations.

At the same event, he was also asked about his views on social opinions that fear revitalization projects may ultimately become jeopardization projects, which might damage or even destroy existing qualities or elements.

Ho strongly objected to these opinions, according to local media All About Macau, describing them as "radical." He was cited as suspecting the press of having heard "radical narratives," while the government sees these projects as revitalization.



He said the government is not demanding casino operators overhaul these districts. On the contrary, they are called to attract new leases or retain existing ones, so as to achieve revitalization.

On the matter of residency of Portuguese people in Macau, Ho said Macau and Lisbon have different views on eligibility, and "communications" are ongoing.

He said working visas for Portuguese people are unchanged.

Ho said a new law was enacted last year, facilitating the chan-

ge in eligibility. The core point of discussion is whether all Portuguese people should receive a Macau ID immediately upon arriving in Macau for work and get permanent residency seven years after arrival, he was cited as saying by All About Macau.

CASH HANDOUT LEVEL RETAINED; CIVIL SERVANT PAY RISE PLANNED

All social welfare – including the cash handout – will remain unchanged next year, while civil servants will see a pay raise from

Jan. 1 next year, Ho has disclosed.

The level of the cash handout will remain at MOP10,000.

He said the level of the pay raise for civil servants has not been determined yet, as he was awaiting the report from the civil servant salary review entity.

On the Northbound Travel for Macau Vehicles scheme, the head of the government said discussions are needed with Guangdong Province before making any changes.

With this said, although he has heard suggestions from society, he does not have the authority to implement any of them at his discretion.

On the economy, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong said the city's casinos had attracted about MOP130 billion of gross gambling revenue (GGR) in the first nine months of the year. He hoped that all walks of life can work together to achieve more in the next three months.

Regarding international tourists, both Ho and Lei said casino operators should do more, adding that lack of flights is the core challenge.

Casinos will get a maximum of 5% tax waiver should they attract enough foreign tourists, but the government has so far not publicized any data. However, Lei said the government has received daily data from casinos.

Recently, the US Department of State has lowered Hong Kong's travel warning to second tier, but maintained that for Macau at the second most severe tier, noting that Macau has "arbitrary enforcement of local laws."

IH RECEIVES OVER 74 APPLICATIONS IN SEVEN DAYS

The Housing Bureau (IH) has so far received 74 applications for the housing units in Zone A, with applicants' age ranging from 23 to 44 years. There are 5,415 housing units in the New Urban Zone A. This round of applications will continue until Dec. 27, offering three kinds of housing units, including 1,657 one-bedroom units, 3,216 two-bedroom units, and 542 three-bedroom units. Under the new guidelines, the monthly income ceiling for a single applicant is now set at MOP35,650, while for a family of two or more people, it is set at MOP71,310.

LOCAL TEAM RANKS SIXTH IN DRAGON BOAT RACE

The Macau team has ranked sixth with a time of 50.801 seconds in the men's 200-meter dragon boat final of the Hangzhou Asian Games. In the women's category, Macau ranked 9th with a time of 1 minute, 0.19 seconds. In both the men's and women's categories, the national teams won gold medals, while Thailand and Indonesia each won one silver and one bronze. The Macau's men's team advanced to the top of the group in the semi-finals.

WEATHER BUREAU WARNS OF HEAT DUE TO TYPHOON KOINU

Tropical Cyclone Koinu will move into the South China Sea and come within 800 kilometers of Macau today. Under the influence of the outer subsidence airflow of Koinu, the daytime weather will remain hot today and tomorrow, the weather bureau has warned. As it is affected by the northeast monsoon, the intensity change and trajectory of Koinu are still uncertain, but its intensity is expected to weaken, and there will be showers and stronger winds later this week.

Sands China to revitalize Iec Long Firecracker Factory and surrounding old streets

STAFF REPORTER

SANDS China has announced its revitalization plan for the old Iec Long Firecracker Factory and its surrounding areas in Taipa, to boost cultural and tourism elements in the areas.

In a press conference, the gaming operator said the sites include the old Iec Long Firecracker Factory, the Pátio da Eterna Felicidade, Rua das Estalagens and surrounding spaces.

The old Iec Long Firecracker Factory, built in 1925, is the only set of buildings from the firecracker industry in Macau that have remained well-preserved to the present day.

The Cultural Affairs Bureau completed the first phase of revitalization in 2022, building a walkway



about 400 meters long and recovering and revitalizing some small buildings, which were opened to the public at the end of 2022.

Sands China's revitalization plan will include an augmented reality (AR) experience detailing the factory's history, as well as food and drink outlets.

The President of Sands China has said they are ai-

ming to launch the AR project, which is currently in design stage, in the first half of next year.

Also, the group plans to transform Taipa Houses into a more pleasant place with Sino-Portuguese characteristics for wedding photographs.

The group aims to revitalize the Pátio da Eterna Felicidade, transforming it

into a place of creation and exchange for contemporary artists, reinforcing the atmosphere of arts appreciation and community connection with adjacent streets such as Rua das Estalagens.

Artistic groups and artists from Macau will be invited to participate in the street beautification project, decorating shops, street signs and sidewalk protections on Rua das Estalagens, and recreating the neighborhood's previous appearance.

At the same time, a business incubation plan will be launched to encourage Macau companies to open typical stores on Rua das Estalagens, thus promoting the entertainment and fashion trends of this ancient street and revitali-

zing the old neighborhood. Sands China Ltd. will also irregularly hold a variety of cultural activities.

The Pátio da Eterna Felicidade is the Chinese-style courtyard in the best state of preservation and the largest in Macau, made up of 13 buildings with a unified architectural style and high continuity. The Pátio, adjacent to historic streets such as the circulating streets of Ruínas de São Paulo, Rua dos Ervanários and Rua das Estalagens, is a place where several neighborhoods connect. In the past, Rua das Estalagens was one of the most prosperous commercial streets in Macau.

The revitalization plan is a government-backed project where gaming operators revitalize sites and areas to boost non-gaming projects.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

TWO CASES OF SERIOUS BACTERIAL INFECTION ON MACAU BEACHES

RENATO MARQUES

THE Health Bureau (SSM) has reported two recent cases of serious bacterial infection on two local beaches, Cheoc Van and Hac Sa.

The infections were caused by the bacterium *Vibrio vulnificus*, a pathogenic bacterium of the genus *Vibrio*, present in marine environments such as estuaries, brackish ponds, or coastal areas and related to *Vibrio cholerae*, a causative agent of cholera.

According to the SSM, the first case was reported on Sept. 11, when a man reported being stung by a fish fin while swimming at Cheoc Van.

The sting occurred on his left index finger and after a few hours, he developed symptoms such as swelling and fever.

After being treated at the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center (CHCSJ), the patient noted the condition had worsened the next day, and the swelling and pain had extended to the palm of the left hand. At the same time, a necrotizing soft tissue infection was diagnosed, with the patient being admitted to the hospital.

After laboratory analysis on Sept. 18, the existence of *Vibrio vulnificus* bacteria in wound secretions was confirmed.

A few days later, on Sept. 26, another Macau resident reported having been stung on his left foot while walking barefoot at Hac Sa beach.

As in the previous case, this second person also developed swelling and fever and on the following day, saw his doctor at



a local clinic.

The physician immediately referred the patient to the CHCSJ where he was diagnosed with a necrotizing soft tissue infection of the left lower limb and was admitted to the hospital for medical treatment.

As in the first case, laboratory analysis confirmed the presence of the same bacteria.

According to SSM, both patients are in a stable condition and recovering.

According to academic studies reviewed by the Times, although the bacteria exists naturally in low concentrations in warm seawaters, high concentrations able to cause severe infections are usually related to discharges of sewage or untreated wastewater.

"*Vibrio vulnificus* is a na-

turally occurring, potentially lethal pathogen found in coastal waters, fish, and shellfish. Sewage spills in coastal waters occur when infrastructure fails due to severe storms or age, and may affect bacterial populations by altering nutrient levels," a study by James W. Conrad and Valerie J. Harwood published in February 2022

concluded, noting that the "addition of 1% sewage to estuarine water caused the density of a pure culture of *V. vulnificus* CMCP6 and a natural *V. vulnificus* population to increase significantly, by two to three orders

of magnitude."

The same authors and others have concluded the effects of environmentally relevant levels of sewage on *V. vulnificus* populations and gene transcription

So far, the authorities in charge of local coastal waters have not issued any statements or warnings to the population

suggest that sewage spills that impact warm coastal waters could lead to an increased risk of *V. vulnificus* infections.

While the cause of the current outbreak is unclear, experts have warned that the pre-

sence of significant quantities of this bacteria could be extremely concerning not only for beachgoers but potentially for everyone, especially now while Macau is being affected by several weather phenomena like typhoons and astronomical tides which often cause flooding in the low-lying areas.

In the report, the SSM also noted that "if a wound comes into contact with seawater containing *V. vulnificus* or, a person eats contaminated seafood, it can cause infection."

"Infections caused by *V. Vulnificus* through wounds can be mild, but can also cause necrotic fasciitis, with extreme pain, redness, swelling and rapid tissue necrosis," it said.

The same health authority noted that statistics show that people with necrotic fasciitis may need limb amputation to save their lives, with about 20 to 30% of cases revealed to be fatal.

The consumption of shellfish contaminated by the bacteria can cause diarrhea, vomiting and abdominal pain, with generally no serious consequences.

However, if the infected person has other chronic illnesses, especially liver-related disease and diabetes, sepsis can occur, with symptoms including fever, chills, decreased blood pressure, the appearance of blisters on the skin, and, in the most serious cases, can result in death.

So far, the authorities in charge of local coastal waters have not issued any statements or warnings to the population regarding this case, with the beaches being completely open to the population.

GAMING

Casino revenues slip as September storm rattles city

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU'S casino gaming revenue growth slowed in September, falling to a five-month low as revenues fell slightly to MOP14.9 billion.

Data from the Gaming Inspection, and Coordination Bureau shows gross gaming revenue soared 404.2% year-on-year, albeit from a low base. The numbers fell 13% from the previous month. Revenues were 68% of 2019 pre-Covid levels.

Last month, the gover-

nement ordered the shutdown of casinos for nine hours due to Typhoon Saola - a rare shutdown as the city braced for the storm when it hoisted its highest storm signal, No. 10.

Along with amended travel plans for some would-be visitors, Typhoon Saola disrupted transportation and temporarily closed border entry points. Heavy rainfall in the week following the storm also kept bookings light.

Meanwhile, the sector expected to get a boost this month from China's Gol-

den Week holiday.

Analysts are expecting growth to accelerate in October, buoyed by China's eight-day holiday that started Friday and typically sees a pick-up in travel.

According to a Bloomberg report, analysts predict gaming revenue could return to 72% of pre-pandemic levels, the highest percentage since the onset of Covid.

Citigroup Inc. analysts forecast a boost in revenue as Macau will see a major roster of events in the fourth quarter of the year, inclu-

ding high-profile concerts and a poolside dance party featuring former NBA all-star player Shaquille O'Neal.

Analysts expect October will record the highest post-Covid revenues, forecasting as high as MOP19 billion, driven by the National Day Golden Week.

Speaking on the sidelines of the National Day commemoration, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong acknowledged the 2023 forecast has already exceeded the government's expectation of MOP130 billion.



THE SCRIPT ROAD

Literary Festival returns with writers from Lusophone countries

LYNZY VALLES

THE 12th Macau Literary Festival is slated to feature writers from the Greater Bay Area and the Portuguese-speaking community after three editions of only featuring local writers due to the border restrictions.

To be held from October 6 to 15, the festival will be based, initially, at the Portuguese Bookshop, from October 6 to 8, and then at Casa Garden, the headquarters of the Orient Foundation, over the weekend of October 13 to 15.

The centenary of the birth of Henrique de Senna Fernandes marks the festival's opening session through the launch of the first book of essays on the writings of the celebrated Macanese storyteller.

Meanwhile, Portuguese authors Francisco José Viegas will return to The Script Road, after his first participation in 2015 in the festival. He returns to talk about his most recent crime novels, *Melancholia* and *Light in Beijing*, and also to present two works from the Quetzal publishing house he runs: *The Game of Hide and Seek*, a posthumous novel by Fernando Sobral previously published in fascicles by *Hoje Macau* newspaper; and *Journeys Around the World*, by the Count of Arnoso, which portrays Macau and China at the



Valério Romão (left)

end of the 19th century.

Also coming from Portugal are Valério Romão and Patrícia Portela, two young writers who have in common the originality of their works and a substantial knowledge of Macau.

António Caeiro, another guest, is a veteran of journalism having worked for many years in China. At the festival he will present his latest work, *The Refugees of Shanghai*.

Coming from the Greater Bay Area will include Deng Yiguang, an ethnic Mongolian writer born in Chongqing and now based in Shenzhen, is an author who has already been awarded the Lu Xun Literary Prize, one of the most important in China.

His novels have been translated into several foreign languages

and have often been adapted into films.

Fu Zhen, a native of Nanchang, Jiangxi, now based in Hong Kong, will come to Macau to talk about her first novel, *Zebra*, as well as the various travel books she has published.

Wang Weilian, who was awarded the Mao Dun Literary Prize for Newcomers and the gold medal in China's most important literary competition for science fiction; and Zhu Shanbo, author of several historical novels and short story collections will also be part of the festival.

Alongside contemporary literature, tributes will be paid to great names of the past including: Camões, Shakespeare, W.H. Auden, J.R.R. Tolkien.



RENATO MARQUES

TRANSPORTATION

Single-plate cars can travel northbound no more than thrice per month

UNDER new arrangements, each single-plate vehicle from Macau will only be accepted for northbound travel at most three times per month, the government announced.

The new arrangements took effect Oct. 1. Current successful applications will follow existing regulations.

From the same date, all applications must be submitted on the Northbound Travel for Macau Vehicles app, which can be downloaded from iOS App Store and Google Play.

Applications will be accepted on first-come-first-served basis, between 30 days and 10 p.m. the day before departure date. As there are quotas, applications will stop being accepted once quotas are met. Residual quotas will be released afterwards.

The remaining new requirement is that new applications for departures in the same month will only be accepted after the departure of the most imminent booking within the same calendar month.

However, bookings for subsequent months will be accepted, despite complying with this "use before new booking" requirement.

The ban on applications due to dishonored bookings will also be tightened. Also, any unused successful booking will equate to the ban on application for departures within the same month. For example, an unused booking on Nov. 1 will mean the suspension of applications for that particular applicant for departures within the rest of November. **AL**

CORPORATE BITS

MGM's cultural ambassador Valkyrie Octopus sets sail to Europe



Valkyrie Octopus, a monumental art installation co-created by MGM and Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos in 2015, has once again appeared on the international art scene.

The artwork has set sail to Europe for Joana's latest solo exhibition *Plug-in* at the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT) in Lisbon, Portugal, after tracing the

route of the Maritime Silk Road to the Venice Biennale in 2019. The artwork is currently housed in the grand exhibition hall of the Oval Gallery at the MAA.

"This collaboration with MGM has been a great pleasure. Not only does it celebrate my traditions and culture, but also the relationship between China and Portugal. It is the best example of how MGM endorses tourism together with arts and culture and helps artists to bring to the world better things," said Joana Vasconcelos.

Upon completion of its exhibition at the MAAT in March 2024, *Valkyrie Octopus* will return to MGM Macau by the end of 2024.

Asian Film Awards Academy launches camp to empower young filmmakers



The Asian Film Awards Academy has announced the launch of the International Film Camp (IFC), an initiative to nurture and empower the next generation of Asian filmmakers.

Scheduled from April 9 to 13, 2024, at the integrated resorts operated by Sands China, the IFC promises to be a transformative experience for aspiring filmmakers.

Open to talented individuals aged 21 to 40 from Hong Kong, Macau, Greater China and the wider Asian region, the camp will offer a "comprehensive curriculum designed to enhance their skills and knowledge."

During the camp, participants will benefit from the guidance and mentorship of renowned industry professionals, who will share their expertise and provide valuable insights into filmmaking.

At the end of the camp, the 16 filmmakers will pitch their short film projects to a panel which will then award eight filmmakers a production grant of HKD300,000 each to make their short film.

POLITICS

Taiwan indicts two communist party members accused of colluding with China to influence elections

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, TAIPEI

PROSECUTORS in Taiwan have indicted two leaders of the island's tiny Taiwan People's Communist Party on accusations they colluded with China in an effort to influence next year's elections for executive leader and members of the legislative assembly.

Party Chairman Lin Te-wang and Vice Chairman Chen Chien-hsin were accused this week of violating the Anti-Infiltration Act and the Civil Servants Election and Recall Act after having accepted funds and other benefits from China's ruling Communist Party, the official Central News Agency said.

It wasn't clear whether the two men were in Taiwan when the indictments were issued.

Taiwan will elect a new executive leader and legislators in January, and Beijing is suspected of seeking to boost the chances of politicians favoring political unification between the sides through social media and the free press and by "bankrolling candidates it favors."

DPP's William Lai, whose party strongly backs maintaining Taiwan's current status of de-facto independence from China, is lea-



Chairman of Taiwan People's Communist Party Lin Te-wang (center)

ding in most polls.

A one-time ranking member of the pro-unification opposition Nationalist Party, Lin founded the Taiwan People's Communist Party in 2017 and has maintained close ties with China's Taiwan Affairs Office, a Cabinet-level agency dedicated to pursuing China's unification agenda.

Lin failed twice in bids for lo-

cal government council seats and staged protests against a visit by then-speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi last year, all allegedly funded by China, CNA reported. He also allegedly worked as an adviser to the local Taiwan Affairs Office in China's Shandong province, CNA said.

No word of the indictments appeared on the party's Facebook

page and calls to its listed phone number in the southern city of Taiwan said it had been disconnected.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office condemned the indictments on Tuesday, accusing the ruling DPP of "making unjustified moves against those who advocate peaceful reunification across the Taiwan Strait," and saying the ac-

tions were "made with malicious intentions," China's official Xinhua News Agency reported.

In their pursuit of Taiwan's formal independence, the DPP and unidentified "separatist forces" have abused the law to suppress those advocating unification with China, office spokesperson Zhu Fenglian said.

"Such despicable acts will surely be strongly condemned and resolutely opposed by people on both sides of the Strait," Zhu was quoted as saying.

Despite close cultural and economic ties between the two sides, surveys show the vast majority of Taiwanese oppose accepting rule under China's authoritarian one-party system, which crushes all opposition and any form of criticism while maintaining an aggressive foreign policy toward the United States and other key Taiwanese allies.

The DPP and the Nationalists, also known as the KMT, dominate politics in Taiwan, and the local Communist Party has a minuscule influence on elections and public opinion in general, despite staging attention-getting demonstrations during polls or surrounding visits by foreign supporters of Taipei, such as Pelosi. MDT/AP

THREE Filipino fishermen died in the disputed South China Sea after their boat was accidentally hit by a passing commercial vessel, the Philippine coast guard said yesterday.

The fishermen's boat, F/B Dearyn, was moored in a fishing area in the high seas off the northwestern Philippines when it was hit before dawn on Monday by the passing vessel and capsized, killing its skipper and two crew members. Three other fishermen survived, the coast guard said without elaborating.

The three fishermen died due to "possible head trauma" from the collision and their bodies were brought back to shore by the surviving fishermen, a separate police report said.

There was no indication that the deadly accident was related to the long-simmering territorial disputes in the busy waterway.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. expressed sadness over the deaths of the fishermen and said a coast

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Three Filipino fishermen die in disputed waters, boat hit by a passing commercial vessel

guard investigation was underway.

"We assure the victims, their families, and everyone that we will exert every effort to hold accountable those who are responsible for this unfortunate maritime incident," Marcos said in a statement.

An initial assessment based on the surviving fishermen's account and sea traffic at the time of the accident indicated that a crude oil tanker under the flag of the Marshall Islands may have hit the Filipino fishing boat, the coast guard said in a statement.

The Philippine coast guard said it would try to locate the oil tanker and its crew as part of the investigation. MDT/AP



In this photo provided by the Philippine Coast Guard, rescuers carry the body of one of the victims as it arrives at a port in Infanta, Pangasinan province

THAILAND

Shooting at major Bangkok shopping mall kills two people, and a teen suspect is arrested

JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI & TIAN MACLEOD JI, BANGKOK

A teenage boy with a handgun opened fire inside a major shopping mall in the center of Thailand's capital Tuesday evening, killing two people before being apprehended, authorities said.

Police said a suspect was taken into custody less than an hour after the first reported gunshots at the Siam Paragon Mall, one of Bangkok's biggest and most upscale shopping destinations.

Video uploaded to social media and broadcast on television showed a long-haired teenage boy in the custody of police. Major Thai media said he was 14 years old, though recently appointed police chief Torsak Sukvimol confirmed only that he is a minor and that he had a record of being treated for mental illness. He said police had not yet learned where the suspect obtained his gun.

Torsak said two people had been killed, a visitor from China and a Myanmar national, and five people hurt. Earlier, Yutthana Sretthanan, director of Bangkok's Erawan Emergency Medical Center, had said three people were killed and six were injured. There was no explanation of the discrepancy, though Yutthana later supported the police numbers.

Police spokesman Archayon Kraithong told reporters the situation was under control at the mall, which sells high-end fashions and luxury cars, and includes a cinema, an aquarium and the attached five-star Siam Kempinski Hotel.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin told reporters that he was informed by police that one of the dead was a Chinese tourist about 30 years old.

"I would like to express my deepest condolences to the family of the deceased



Visitors evacuate from a shopping mall in Bangkok

following the shooting inside Siam Paragon," Srettha, who took office in August, said in an earlier statement. "I would like to give my moral support to the families of all who died and were injured."

Gun violence is not uncommon in Thailand, though mass shootings are rare.

The incident happened days before Thais were planning to mark the anniversary of the country's biggest mass killing by an individual, a grisly gun and knife attack at a rural day care center in a northeastern province that killed 36 people, most of them preschoolers, on Oct. 6, 2022.

Tuesday's shooting prompted authorities to temporarily shut access to the nearby Siam Square elevated train stop, preventing commuters from exiting as the evening rush hour began and intense rain pounded the city. First responders could be seen entering the mall as sirens wailed outside.

Witnesses said crowds of people scrambled to leave the building, one of several shopping centers in the area popular with tourists and well-heeled Thais alike.

Chinese tourist Liu Shiyong told the AP that she saw people running and saying someone had opened fire. She said she heard

gunshots and an alarm ringing, and that the lights in the mall went out.

"We're temporarily hiding. Who dares to go out?" she said while taking cover. She was later able to leave.

Gautam Vora, 45, an Indian national who works in finance in Bangkok, was at the mall with his wife and child. He said it was "quite scary," even though he was initially unsure whether he had heard gunshots or "somebody playing a hoax with some firecrackers."

"Everybody was screaming and running," he said. "There was a lot of chaos and that was almost like a stampede."

"I don't think they were well prepared for this," he added. "I think most of the staff inside the shopping mall were confused and they were running helter-skelter, too."

Multiple videos uploaded to social media showed people running out of the building, and several showed a person dressed in a baseball cap, dark shirt and camouflage pants inside the mall, holding a handgun. A video believed to be of the shooter after his arrest showed a long-haired boy wearing glasses dressed like that, with an American flag on his cap. Videos and photos also showed the pistol he was said to have been carrying before he was disarmed.

In 2020, a disgruntled soldier opened fire in and around a mall in the northeastern city of Nakhon Ratchasima, killing 29 peo-

ple and holding off security forces for some 16 hours before eventually being killed by them.

Gun laws in Thailand are

relatively restrictive, but the country nonetheless has one of the highest levels of gun ownership in Asia, according to GunPolicy.org, a research project at Australia's University of Sydney.

There are about 10 guns per 100 people in Thailand when including those owned illegally, as compared with less than one per 100 in the country's peaceful Southeast Asian neighbor Malaysia, the project said. Penalties for unlawful possession in Thailand include prison terms from 1 to 10 years and fines up to 20,000 baht (\$539).

Critics in Thailand say the registration process for firearms isn't nearly tough enough.

"The shockingly high rate of gun ownership in Thailand is due to the convenient process of gun permit issuance. It is easy to apply for and get gun permits in Thailand," Boonwara Sumano, a senior research fellow at Thailand Development Research Institute wrote after last year's day care center killings.

"Relaxed laws and policies towards guns suggest a high tolerance for gun violence in Thai society," he added. MDT/AP

AD

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BUSINESS LUNCH

Unleashing the Fun: How to Apply AI to Your Business

Date: 18th October 2023
Venue: Artyzen Grand Lapa Hotel Club Lounge 17/F
Time: 12:00 - 14:00
Price: \$330 Members/\$450 Non Members
Bento Box (Vegetarian/Vegan by request)
Non-refundable within 3 business days prior to event. AI Workshop Included

Advance booking is required.
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AP PHOTO



INDIA

Police arrest publisher of independent news site after conducting raids

SHEIKH SAALIQ
NEW DELHI

POLICE in New Delhi have arrested the editor of a news website and one of its administrators after raiding the homes of journalists working for the site, which has been critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist-led government.

The arrests were made yesterday [Macau time] after some journalists associated with NewsClick were detained and their digital devices seized during extensive raids that were part of an investigation into whether it had received funds from China. NewsClick denied any financial misconduct.

Suman Nalwa, a police spokesperson, said the arrests were made under a wide-ranging anti-terrorism law. The government has used the law to stifle dissent and jail activists, journalists and critics of Modi, with some spending years in jail before going to trial. Those arrested are NewsClick's founder and editor, Prabir Purkayastha, and its human resources chief, Amit Chakravarty.

Nalwa said at least 46 people were questioned during the raids and their devices, including laptops and ce-

lphones, and documents were taken away for examination.

They included current and former employees, freelance contributors and cartoonists.

NewsClick was founded in 2009 and is seen as a rare Indian news outlet willing to criticize Modi. It was also raided by Indian financial enforcement officials in 2021, after which a court blocked the authorities from taking any "coercive measures" against the website.

Indian authorities brought a case against the site and its journalists on Aug. 17, weeks after a New York Times report alleged that it had received funds from an American millionaire who had funded the spread of "Chinese propaganda."

That same month, India's junior minister for information and broadcasting, Anurag Thakur, accused NewsClick of spreading an "anti-India agenda," citing the New York Times report, and of working with the opposition Indian National Congress party. Both NewsClick and the Congress party denied the accusations.

Media watchdogs including the Committee to Protect Journalists denounced the arrests and raids and said they were part of an

intensifying crackdown on independent media under Modi.

"This is the latest attack on press freedom in India. We urge the Indian government to immediately cease these actions, as journalists must be allowed to work without fear of intimidation or reprisal," Beh Lih Yi, CPJ's Asia program coordinator, said in a statement.

The Editors Guild of India said it was worried that the intention of raids was to "create a general atmosphere of intimidation under the shadow of draconian laws."

In February, authorities searched the BBC's New Delhi and Mumbai offices over accusations of tax evasion a few days after it broadcast a documentary in Britain that examined Modi's role in anti-Muslim riots in 2002.

A number of other news organizations have also been investigated for financial impropriety under Modi's government. Independent media in India battle censorship and harassment and often face arrests while doing their work.

India's anti-terrorism law has stringent requirements for bail, which mean individuals often spend months, sometimes years, in custody without being found guilty. Successive Indian govern-

ments have invoked the law, but it has been used with increasing frequency in recent years.

Reporters Without Borders, an advocacy group for journalists, ranked India 161st in its press freedom rankings this year, writing that the situation has deteriorated from "problematic" to "very bad."

Some independent Indian think tanks and international groups such as Amnesty International and Oxfam India have also been raided and had their access to funding blocked in recent years.

Journalist Abhisar Sharma, whose house was raided and his electronic devices seized, said he won't back down from doing his job.

"Nothing to fear," Sharma wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. "And I will keep questioning people in power and particularly those who are afraid of simple questions."

The raids against NewsClick also drew criticism from India's political opposition.

"These are not the actions of a 'mother of democracy' but of an insecure and autocratic state," opposition lawmaker Shashi Tharoor wrote on X. "The government has disgraced itself and our democracy today." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1974 FOUR DEAD IN GUILDFORD BOMB BLASTS



At least four people have been killed and more than 50 injured in two explosions in southern England this evening.

Bombs went off in two pubs packed with Saturday night revellers in the town of Guildford. Many of the victims were soldiers back from duty in Northern Ireland.

The first bomb exploded in the Horse and Groom pub just before 2030 BST, destroying the front of the building and shattering the windows of neighbouring shops.

A second bomb exploded half an hour later in the nearby Seven Stars. Most of the casualties were the result of the initial bomb, which went off without warning.

All pubs and two cinemas in the Surrey town have been shut down for fear of further attacks and police have sealed off the area.

David Howell, former Minister for Northern Ireland described his horror at the injuries caused by the bombs.

"I'm afraid I thought I'd seen the last of this in Belfast. It's quite clear that we must hunt down the maniacs and the animals who would do this kind of thing," he said.

The most seriously injured have been transferred to St. Luke's Hospital in Guildford which is receiving blood plasma from London hospitals to treat casualties.

Surrey Ambulance Service is said to be stretched as crews struggle to cope with the large numbers of wounded.

Guildford is situated close to a number of garrison towns. Its night life is popular with soldiers who are part of the 6000 military personnel in the area.

Senior police officers say given the severity of the explosions and choice of targets, the attacks are likely to be the work of Irish terrorists, but no official confirmation has yet been given.

Special Branch are currently interviewing witnesses.

The republican bombing campaign has intensified on mainland Britain in the last two years. In March 1973 a bomb exploded at the Old Bailey killing one man and injuring 230.

This year 12 people died in February when a bomb exploded on a bus carrying servicemen and their families on the M62. In July, a woman was killed and 41 people hurt by a bomb at the Tower of London.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The final death toll was five: Four soldiers, and a civilian. Sixty-five were injured.

In 1975 three men and a young woman were convicted of the bombings and given life sentences. An appeal in 1977 was launched but rejected but in 1987 their case was reopened, after new evidence was presented.

On 18 October 1989 the convictions of the so-called "Guildford Four" were declared a gross miscarriage of justice and quashed by the Court of Appeal. They had spent 14 years in jail.

Three police officers were later charged with fabricating evidence in their investigation into the Guildford bombings, but the charges were dismissed.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Don't push your luck with your boss. You'll stay out of trouble if you pick projects that will benefit the whole family. You should avoid getting involved in the personal problems of colleagues.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Restrictions may be difficult for you to live with, but try to do things by the book. Don't donate more than you can afford in order to impress others. You can learn from those who have had similar experiences.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You can have quite the romantic adventure if you take time to get to know your mate all over again. This is a great day to beautify your living quarters or to entertain at home.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Travel for business will be advantageous. Avoid getting involved with married individuals. You may have the opportunity to get involved in some interesting conversations.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Don't evade issues or twist the truth around. Make sure that you make reservations early. Social activities that involve the whole family will be enjoyable.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Don't vacillate about asking for assistance if you need it. If possible, rely on coworkers to back your objectives, and talk to superiors in order to get approval.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Talk about your intentions and confirm that you both feel the same way. You will be able to get your own way if you use your intellectual charm and know how.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Don't be angry, but be on your guard. You could come into extra cash. Try to slow down, and take another look. Your partner could also use some time alone with you.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Children's needs could be more costly than you anticipated. Concentrate on spending quality time with children and friends. Your lover probably won't put up with your behavior.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Don't be too eager to start any debates. You can enjoy entertainment if you join in and follow the crowd for a change. Go to the top if you're being harassed or held back.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You will find good buys and you will lift your spirits. Delve a little deeper if you really want to know the score. Your high energy, original ideas, and excellent memory will aid your accomplishments.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You'll find you're detail oriented today. You can make progress if you deal with the right individuals. Your mate will be pushing you to do things that you really don't want to do.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	9	22	fine
Changchun	4	16	fine
Chengdu	17	21	overcast
Chongqing	20	22	rain
Fuzhou	24	28	overcast
Guangzhou	26	35	cloudy
Guiyang	21	26	overcast
Haikou	25	31	cloudy
Hangzhou	18	26	rain
Harbin	4	14	fine
Hefei	19	24	cloudy
Nanjing	19	23	cloudy
Shanghai	21	24	fine
Taipei	25	27	rain
Wuhan	18	23	cloudy
Hong Kong	27	33	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	9	14	overcast
Frankfurt	7	19	cloudy
Paris	9	20	cloudy
London	13	18	cloudy
New York	18	24	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Kitchen gadget; 6- Goodwill; 11- Spearheaded; 14- Old; 15- ___ of Two Cities; 16- Corrida cry; 17- Greek epic poem; 18- Light purple; 19- Motor City gp.; 20- Flying stinger; 22- Coming down; 24- Unconscious; 28- Intoxicated; 30- Comment; 31- On the up-and-up, briefly; 32- Salt water; 33- No problem!; 37- Student's stat.; 38- Great grade; 39- Her partner would be a buck; 40- Rare-earth metallic element; 43- Entire; 45- Debris; 46- Imperfections; 47- Cedex; 49- Prophecy; 50- Elbow; 51- Equal; 52- Barely make, with "out"; 53- "See ya!"; 56- Deduce; 61- Mayday!; 62- Musical drama; 63- Corpulent; 64- Explosive stuff; 65- Chalice; 66- Radioactive gas;

DOWN 1- Trident-shaped letter; 2- City in GA; 3- Thor Heyerdahl craft; 4- Guido's high note; 5- Brown seaweed; 6- Wrong; 7- Take ___ from me; 8- Actor Kilmer; 9- Pay stub?; 10- New member; 11- Nephew of Donald Duck; 12- Gnu cousin; 13- Like grass in the morning; 21- Vessel built by Noah; 23- Pituitary hormone; 24- Living in a city; 25- Pluck; 26- Uruguayan friend; 27- Pallid; 28- cholesterol; 29- Aeons; 31- Dillies; 33- Rotates; 34- Adored ones; 35- Nick of "Lorenzo's Oil"; 36- Honkers; 38- Among; 41- Remnant; 42- Christmas item; 43- Soldier; 44- Color; 46- Adversary; 47- Klondike territory; 48- That is, in Latin; 49- Untamed; 50- Fit snugly; 51- Gilpin of "Frasier"; 54- Spring mo.; 55- Leaves in a bag; 57- Jazz org.; 58- Gave grub; 59- That, in Tijuana; 60- Cartoon Chihuahua;

Friday's solution

A	R	E	A	A	L	P	H	A	B	O	I	L		
T	E	R	P		B	A	R	O	N		A	N	N	O
A	P	O	P	A	D	E	P	T		N	O	T	A	
D	O	O	R	S	T	E	P			C	D	R	O	M
					O	M	E	N		B	R	A	E	
S	E	T	A	E		S	L	A	P	D	A	S	H	
P	L	A	C	E		S	T	U	M	P		W	O	
E	A	C	H		A	P	R	E	S		D	A	R	T
A	T	E		A	T	R	A	S		S	U	I	T	E
R	E	T	O	R	T	E	D			T	O	T	A	L
					T	C	I	N	E		C	O	E	D
Y	E	S	L	A		T	A	M	P	E	R	E	D	
E	C	H	O		A	T	A	R	I		N	A	T	O
E	R	I	C		R	E	L	E	T		U	R	A	L
D	U	N	K		B	L	E	S	S		W	E	L	T

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
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Old Taipa Village (Nam Long)
2 bed 1 bath
645 ft² | HKD10,200/mth



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RUGBY WORLD CUP

All Blacks hoping for right balance in last pool outing against Uruguay

A total of nine changes suggests New Zealand wants a snatch-and-grab game against Uruguay today [Friday, 03:00], the main prize a Rugby World Cup quarterfinal.

Qualifying for the quarters is the All Blacks' priority, true. But they say there's a lot more riding on their final Pool A match.

Coach Ian Foster was at pains on Tuesday to point out how hard it was to pick his side — he said he wasn't focused on the quarterfinals though he still had an eye on them and beyond.

Recently injured players have been given more game time: Captain Sam Cane and prop Tyrel Lomax make their first starts in the tournament, and Shannon Frizell and Jordie Barrett start their second straight matches.

Some fringe players have been given another chance to shine: Backs Cam Roigard, Leicester Fainga'anuku and Damian McKenzie.

Some guys have been rested: Brodie Retallick, Ardie Savea, Aaron Smith, Rieko Ioane and Mark Telea.

And some front-liners have stuck around to en-



New Zealand's Damian McKenzie (center) is tackled by Italy's Manuel Zuliani (left)

sure nothing goes haywire: Beauden and Scott Barrett are in the reserves, and a 150th cap has been given to lock Sam Whitelock, who will take the Rugby World Cup appearance record outright. His 23rd match will surpass England's Jason Leonard and New Zealand's Richie McCaw.

The All Blacks also don't want to mess up the confidence they got from thrashing Italy 96-17 last Friday. Aesthetics matter

to them. In evidence, Foster saying he'd have rather watched a 96-17 clinic in running rugby than the Ireland-South Africa edge-of-your-seat epic.

"For us, we are at our best when we are on edge," Foster said. "Sometimes our opponent puts us on edge, sometimes the situation puts you on edge, but at all times your own internal standards have to be the edge that really matters the most."

The All Blacks will have to go internal for an edge because nobody expects them to lose to Uruguay.

Foster talked up the Uruguayans. He loved their attitude, passion and ambition and complimented Manuel Ardao, who has a tournament-leading six turnovers. Los Teros have had an eye-catching tournament: They beat Namibia

36-26 last week for their fourth ever Rugby World Cup win, gave France's

second string a big scare, and led Italy at halftime before running out of steam.

To get into quarterfinal contention, Uruguay must beat the All Blacks by at least 80 points.

That's what made Foster's matchday picks a decent think: Knowing they

should register a big score while also trying to max out their last pool match to fine-tune their quarterfinal preparations.

"You are making decisions now to make sure that we are building the continuity and not taking the step back in the areas we feel we need to grow," Foster said.

"But we also have to make smart decisions because, let's face it, we want to do well on Thursday and then we want three more games (quarterfinal, semifinal, final). We want to make sure we've got the energy in the tank to do that." MDT/AP

LINEUPS

NEW ZEALAND: Damian McKenzie, Will Jordan, Anton Lienert-Brown, Jordie Barrett, Leicester Fainga'anuku, Richie Mo'unga, Cam Roigard; Luke Jacobson, Sam Cane (captain), Shannon Frizell, Tupou Vaa'i, Sam Whitelock, Tyrel Lomax, Codie Taylor, Ofa Tu'ungafasi. Reserves: Samisoni Taukei'aho, Tamaiti Williams, Fletcher Newell, Scott Barrett, Ethan Blackadder, Finlay Christie, Beauden Barrett, Caleb Clarke.

URUGUAY: Rodrigo Silva, Gaston Mieres, Tomas Inciarte, Andres Vilaseca (captain), Nicolas Freitas, Felipe Etcheverry, Santiago Arata; Manuel Diana, Lucas Bianchi, Manuel Ardao, Manuel Leindekar, Ignacio Dotti, Diego Arbelo, German Kessler, Mateo Sanguinetti. Reserves: Guillermo Pujadas, Matias Benitez, Igancio Peculo, Juan Manuel Rodriguez, Santiago Civetta, Agustin Ormaechea, Felipe Berchesi, Juan Manuel Alonso.

SCOREBOARD

Uruguay	36	26	Namibia
Japan	28	22	Samoa
New Zealand	96	17	Italy
Argentina	59	5	Chille
Fiji	17	12	Georgia
Scotland	84	0	Romania
Australia	34	14	Portugal
South Africa	49	18	Tonga

WEEKEND MATCHES

	Date	Time	Home	Away	ODDS
Fri	Oct 06	03:00	New Zealand	Uruguay	H 1.01, D 251, A 201
Sat	Oct 07	03:00	France	Italy	H 1.03, D 101, A 34
		21:00	Wales	Georgia	H 1.09, D 46, A 13
		23:45	England	Samoa	H 1.08, D 51, A 15
Sun	Oct 08	3:00	Ireland	Scotland	H 1.22, D 34, A 6
		19:00	Japan	Argentina	H 6.5, D 36, A 1.2
		23:45	Tonga	Romania	H 1.01, D 101, A 71
Mon	Oct 09	3:00	Fiji	Portugal	H 1.06, D 81, A 21

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OPINION

China Daily
Xinhua Commentary

UNENDING GOV'T SHUTDOWN SAGA EXPOSES DEEP-ROOTED FLAW IN US POLITICAL SYSTEM

In the riveting soap opera of U.S. politics, an ongoing plotline is almost too dramatic to ignore.

It features Washington elites who deftly choreograph real-life government shutdowns through manipulation of budget talks for political advantage.

Though the potential fifth government shutdown in the past decade was averted late Saturday just hours before the funding deadline, this seemingly unending and tumultuous shutdown saga remains far from over.

The nation is now poised on the precipice of another cliffhanger, as this familiar plotline is set to replay itself once again in mid-November, when another deadline ominously approaches.

As the world is watching, a familiar pattern is playing out in Washington, with elected officials acting more interested in political brinkmanship and rhetorical gymnastics than in governing responsibly and efficiently.

Perhaps those U.S. politicians are convinced that the government runs on the sheer force of rhetoric and not on money. Passing a budget, the cornerstone of responsible governance and the basic responsibility of the Congress, is a Herculean task for those who cannot resist the allure of partisan grandstanding.

At the heart of this issue is the inability of lawmakers from across the aisle to come to a consensus on essential matters such as the federal budget. One of the primary culprits behind this recurring problem is the hyper-partisanship that has taken root in Washington.

This stark partisan division makes it increasingly challenging to pass comprehensive legislation, including budgets, without resorting to stopgap measures and short-term fixes.

According to a Pew Research Center study, just four times in over five decades has Congress enacted all its required appropriations measures on time.

No wonder the approval rate of the Congress is dismally low. Americans and the world have long been witnessing the show of miserable dysfunction, with budgetary disputes and partisan squabbles taking center stage while essential legislation languishes in limbo.

It is almost as if those politicians enjoy pushing the boundaries of political theater while leaving the American people to bear the brunt of their inability to get the job done. After all, it is not those elites in Capitol Hill whose salaries will be affected by a government shutdown.

In the hallowed halls of Washington, Democrats and Republicans are doing nothing other than trading barbs and pointing fingers at each other. It is a classic case of the pot calling the kettle black, except both the pot and the kettle seem to suffer from severe memory lapses regarding their core and basic responsibilities.

A unique 2030 World Cup is set to be played in Europe and Africa with the surprising addition of South America in a deal to allow the men's soccer tournament to start with a 100th birthday party in Uruguay.

FIFA reached an agreement last night between soccer's continental leaders to accept only one candidate for hosting the 2030 tournament, the sport's governing body said.

The Spain-Portugal bid grew to add Morocco this year and now also includes long-time bid rivals Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

A key lure of the unprecedented three-continent project is

being able to open in the Uruguayan capital of Montevideo, where the Centenario Stadium hosted the inaugural 1930 World Cup final.

"The centennial World Cup could not be far from South America, where everything began," said Alejandro Dominguez, the president of South American soccer body CONMEBOL. "The 2030 World Cup will be played in three continents."

The consensus reached by once-rival soccer continents also let FIFA fast-track the opening of the 2034 World Cup bidding contest, limited to member federations from Asia and Oceania.

AP PHOTO



Japan's Kaito Sugimoto competes on the rings during the Artistic Gymnastics World Championships in Antwerp

SPORTS

JAPAN EDGES RIVAL CHINA TO WIN MEN'S WORLD GYMNASTICS TITLE WHILE US CLAIMS FIRST MEDAL SINCE 2014

JAPAN is back on top in men's gymnastics.

The five-man group led by reigning world and Olympic champion Daiki Hashimoto edged rival China in the team finals at the 2023 world championships yesterday [Macau time] to earn Japan's first major international gold medal since 2015.

The Japanese posted a team total of 255.594 points, nearly two points clear of China at 253.794. China, which finished eighth during a sloppy performance in qualifications to barely make the final, bounced back with a medal on the line but couldn't quite catch Japan.

The U.S. men's program took a significant step forward by earning its first bronze at a world championships or Olympics since 2014. The five-man team of Asher Hong, Paul Juda, Khoi Young, Yul Moldauer and Fred Richard finished at 252.428.

The Americans avoided major mistakes early and then showed considerable growth late. Needing to put together a solid set on high bar in the final event, Young, Juda and Richard came through with nifty performances.

Richard, a 19-year-old

sophomore at Michigan, celebrated when he stuck his dismount while his teammates broke out in chants of "USA!"

"I'm so pumped, this is crazy," Richard said. "Is this reality?"

The U.S. finished second behind Japan in qualifying, though the issue with the men's program in recent years has been falling short during the finals. That didn't happen on Tuesday.

While the Americans were far from perfect, they maintained their composure to hold off Great Britain, which has eclipsed the U.S. of late as the top team in the world not named Japan, China or Russia.

With the Russian team

not allowed to participate as part of the political fallout of the country's war with Ukraine, there was an open spot on the podium. The Americans took advantage to give the program a jolt with less than a year to go to the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

All five members plus alternate Colt Walker figure to be in the mix to make the Olympic team, a group that should include two-time national champion and 2020 Olympian Brody Malone, who is recovering from a leg injury but is expected to return to training this winter.

"I know we have so much potential to go," Richard said. "I think it's only up from here." MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



China's Sun Wei competes on the horizontal bar during the Men's team final

Pakistan's government announced a major crackdown on migrants in the country illegally, saying it would expel them starting next month and raising alarm among foreigners without documentation who include an estimated 1.7 million Afghans. The country's caretaker Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti said the crackdown was not aimed at Afghans and would apply to all nationalities, though the vast majority of migrants in the country are Afghans.

AP PHOTO



Swedish media say the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences may have announced the winners of this year's Nobel Prize in chemistry prematurely. Public broadcaster SVT said the academy sent a press release by mistake yesterday that contained the names of the winners. The press release said the prize went to three U.S.-based scientists for the "discovery and synthesis of quantum dots," according to SVT.

AP PHOTO



Vatican Pope Francis opened a big meeting on the future of the Catholic Church yesterday by saying it was in need of repair to make it a place of welcome for "everyone, everyone, everyone," not a rigid barricade riven by fears and ideology. Francis presided over a solemn Mass in St. Peter's Square to formally open the meeting, which progressives are hoping will lead to more women in leadership roles and conservatives are warning could split the church.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will be out of a job next year unless he can persuade his Conservative party and his country that he represents change. Sunak made his first -- and possibly last -- speech as leader to the party's annual conference yesterday, with the governing Conservatives trailing in opinion polls and an election due in 2024. His message: He's not afraid to make tough choices and big decisions that will deliver "long-term success" rather than "short-term advantage."