



THE GOVERNMENT RECEIVED 1,200 APPLICATIONS FOR THE FIRST BATCH AT THE ELDERLY RESIDENCES, SECRETARY AO IEONG SAID AT THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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MACAU-HENGQIN TOURISM INCENTIVES FROM EARLY 2024

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BEIJING POLICE INVESTIGATE MAJOR SHADOW BANK ZHONGZHI

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AP PHOTO



Israel and Hamas appeared open to extending a cease-fire in Gaza that has halted their deadliest and most destructive war but is set to expire after today [Macau time], with a fourth exchange of militant-held hostages for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel planned for later in the day. Israel has said it would extend the cease-fire by one day for every 10 additional hostages released. Hamas has also said it hopes to extend the four-day truce, which came into effect Friday after several weeks of indirect negotiations.

AP PHOTO



Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said he hopes a meeting of Mediterranean officials will help bridge a gap between Arab and European countries in calling for a humanitarian pause in Gaza to become a permanent cease-fire. The fragile pause in hostilities between Israel and the Hamas militant group continued Sunday with a third straight day of hostages and Palestinian prisoners released. It was originally scheduled for four days and neither side has made fully clear what comes after Monday.

Greek police have arrested six people who they say are members of a large human trafficking gang that violently extorted money from migrants to assist them in crossing into neighboring Albania and travel to European Union countries to the north. The six suspects — a Syrian, a Palestinian and four Iraqis — were arrested Saturday at a village less than 10 kilometers from the Albanian border, police said.

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AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Government plans to enhance the English and Portuguese language curricula starting next year



INNER HARBOUR FLOOD RELIEF WORKS TO CAUSE TRAFFIC STRESS

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POLICY ADDRESS 2024 | SOCIAL AFFAIRS & CULTURE

OVER 1,200 APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FOR FIRST BATCH OF ELDERLY RESIDENCES

RENATO MARQUES

THE government has already received some 1,200 applications for the first batch, comprised of 759 apartments, at the elderly residences, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, said at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

The Secretary noted that these applications were made in less than three weeks since the launching of the process on November 6.

This news was revealed at the presentation on Social Affairs and Culture policies for the year 2024 (LAG24) yesterday, with Ao Ieong including it in her initial presentation speech.

According to her speech, such a large number is evidence that the political goals aimed at the creation of this type of public

housing are in line with the needs of the population and results are as expected.

On the measures for senior citizens to be implemented next year, Ao Ieong noted the opening of the residences as well as the previously debated resumption of the injection of 7,000 patacas into personal Providence Fund accounts.

She also added that 200 new beds in elderly homes will be available next year, and that there will be an increase in number of people who will benefit from the services of special day care services.

Ao Ieong also said that in 2024 the government will start preparations for the creation of an Integrated Service Center for disabled people, which will add 225 slots for rehabilitation services.

RENATO MARQUES



Inner Harbour flood relief works detours near San Ma Lo

ANTHONY LAM

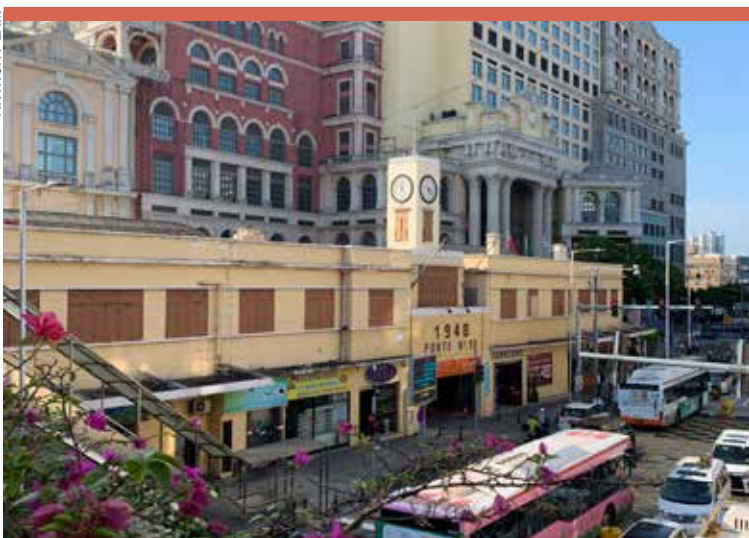
Aseries of traffic detours will be in place to facilitate flood relief works for the Inner Harbour as construction commence at San Ma Lo this weekend.

The construction work at the intersection between Inner Harbour and Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, which is colloquially referred to as San Ma Lo, is expected to last five months.

From the south of San Ma Lo to the intersection of Rua das Lorchas, two lanes will be suspended in the direction of Barra. Traffic towards Barra will be diverted onto a lane generally used for oncoming traffic. Temporary separation bollards will be installed to separate traffic for San Ma Lo and for Fai Chi Kei.

The pedestrian crossing at the intersection between Rua do Visconde Paço de Arcos and San Ma Lo will be suspended during the construction period. Meanwhile, a set of traffic lights will be installed at the zebra crossing near the gas station at on Rua do Visconde Paço de Arcos, in the attempt

ANTHONY LAM



to assist both pedestrian and motor traffic.

Pedestrians are reminded to use either this zebra crossing or the footbridge on Rua das Lorchas to cross the road. Traffic towards Fai Chi Kei will be able to make use of the forecourt of the Ponte 16 Resort.

Bus routes that pass the area will also be affected by the road works. Routes 8A, 18A, 18B, 19 and 26 will not stop at the Ponte 16 bus stop. Moreover, as the

Ponte 14 bus stop will be closed, buses will use substitute stops. Details can be accessed on the websites of the two bus companies.

A social advisor has told local media Macao Daily News that a broader range of notification methods should be used before and during the roadworks. In addition, she encourages the public to rely on public transport during the time the roadworks are conducted.

STATS

MICE SECTOR SHOWS SIGNS OF RECOVERY AS REVENUES SURGE

STAFF REPORTER

RECEIPTS and expenditure of exhibition organizers totaled MOP38.58 million and MOP97.76 million respectively in the third quarter, representing growth of 279.0% and 155.5% year-on-year respectively.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service shows that there were 221 meetings and conferences held in the third quarter, up by 262.3% (or 160) year-on-year; the number of participants soared by 633.1% to 48,000, albeit from a low base. The number of attendees increased by 47.3% to 493,000 as

borders have completely opened, compared to the same period last year.

Exhibitions in the third quarter attracted 2,549 exhibitors and 21,000 professional visitors.

In the first three quarters of 2023, a total of 757 MICE events were held, up by 187.8% (or 494) year-on-year; the total number of participants and attendees rose by 50.3% to 1,220,000. The two indicators recovered to 70.4% and 96.1% of the levels in the same period of 2019. Meetings and conferences surged by 221.0% (or 484) to 703, with the number of participants soaring by 393.6% to 118,000.



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Gov't to emphasize Portuguese and English language education

RENATO MARQUES

IN 2024 the government aims to shift focus and attention to education in the English and Portuguese languages, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong revealed at the Legislative Assembly (AL) while addressing the government's policies for the next year.

The Secretary noted that the "government has always focused on foreign language education," and she said further that with the focus of Macau on internationalization and to cater to more foreign tourists as well as the linking between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries, there is a need to underscore and to train more bilingual and trilingual speakers.

She noted that while teaching English has always been popular in most schools in Macau there is a need to introduce a higher level of education in Portuguese.

On this topic, she also disclo-



sed the intention to develop a new Portuguese school.

"In addition to establishing and improving overall continuing education and employment, and to assist students in better planning their professional careers, a Portuguese school as a one-stop system

will be created. Financial support will be granted to students to continue their studies in higher education in Portugal in order to train qualified professionals fluent in Portuguese and to develop multi-disciplinary knowledge," Ao Ieong said.

Addressing inquiries of lawmakers and particularly Wang Sai Man, Ao also revealed that very soon two new schools will be established with international curricula.

"One of them is already ready to start operating and they have already enrolled students, and another will start the process of enrolment of students for the upcoming school year," adding, "The Macau school to start operating in the Macau New Neighborhood in Hengqin will also include an international curriculum."

Addressing some details of the project related to the creation of a Portuguese school, Ao Ieong explained, "We have this project of creating a Portuguese school. We will support students to do a course of four years in Portuguese language and, after that, they will [travel] to Portugal to continue their studies there. These are projects and work that we have for the promotion of [foreign] languages."

POLICY ADDRESS 2024 | SOCIAL AFFAIRS & CULTURE

TIME NOT RIGHT FOR MANDATORY PROVIDENT FUND, AO IEONG SAYS

RENATO MARQUES

IT is not the right timing to turn the Non-Mandatory Central Provident Fund System into a Mandatory one, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong said in reply to an inquiry by lawmaker Lei Chan U.

Ao Ieong's response came during a session at the Legislative Assembly yesterday, dedicated to the

Policy Address for 2024 for Social Affairs and Culture.

Lei noted that at the time of the establishment of the non-mandatory system, the government had established a timeline to turn the system into a universal mandatory one.

The Secretary noted that according to the latest evaluation, it has been recommended to postpone turning the Provident Fund System into a man-

datory one for a few years, taking into account the effects of the pandemic that lasted for about three years.

"We will review it again next year to see if SMEs are in a position to fulfill the requirements of a mandatory system, but at the moment is too early to tell," Ao Ieong said.

In the last review made in 2021 in the middle of the pandemic, the study

ordered by the government from the University of Macau concluded that due to "the emergence of Covid-19 impacts on Macau economy, it is recommended that the SAR government set 2021 to 2023 as the three-year observation period, and depending on the economic recovery, set up two plans with a five-year and a seven-year preparation period, and implement the Mandatory Central Provident Fund System in 2026 or 2028."

Without specifying a potential date for the implementation of a protec-

tion system for all residents with access to pension plans, Ao Ieong left all the revelations for "after the new review report."

Currently, only a few companies (as private funds), as well as the government, offer this type of safety net for their workers, with both the companies and the workers contributing a monthly installment to the fund. Workers from other companies that are not taking part in the system or individuals who are self-employed are allowed to participate but must make personal contributions to the fund.

TRANSPORTATION

LRT BARRA LINE OPENS DAWN DEC. 8



THE inaugural LRT train from the new Barra Station will set off to Taipa at 6:30 a.m. on Dec. 8. In response to the extension of the LRT route, a new fare scheme has also been released by the government.

Each sea crossing section will be counted as two stations when calculating

the number of stations, namely, the section between Barra and Ocean Station.

Under the new fare scheme, each single journey ticket will be priced between MOP6 and MOP12, depending on the number of stations traveled. Discounts will apply to select passenger categories.

Meanwhile, the construction of the section north of the LRT East Line that will connect Pac On in Taipa to Border Gate, passing through the Zone A of the new landfills, is underway.

The government initially said that it hopes the construction can start as early as the second half of this year.

The government expects the East Line of the LRT will be completed and ready to begin operating in 2028. **AL**

POLICE WARN ABOUT WHATSAPP INVESTMENT SCAM

Two residents lost over MOP1 million to fraudsters pretending to be professional investors on WhatsApp chat groups, the Judiciary Police (PJ) revealed. The two residents were added to an investment chatgroup on the messaging platform, and were contacted by people self-identifying as investment managers who persuaded them to invest funds. Other users in the group would declare their own earnings from previous investments. The residents were then directed to wire transfer funds to commence investing, but were not able to withdraw their funds from the investment account when they attempted to do so. The police have reminded people to be vigilant against investment plans claiming to offer high returns.

HEALTH BUREAU CLOSELY MONITORING COVID, FLU CONDITIONS

Currently, both Covid-19 and flu are at a low level in Macau, although an intensifying circulation was recorded in mainland China, the Health Bureau (SSM) has disclosed. In addition, the SSM revealed that positive rates of both flu and Covid-19 have dropped from a double-digit percentage of the population last month to a single digit last week. Infections of flu have also declined. The SSM will continue to monitor the situation and maintain close contact with its mainland counterpart. Moreover, the bureau reminds the public to take appropriate measures should they become ill.

GBA MEDIATION COMMITTEE HOLDS THIRD MEETING

The Greater Bay Area Mediation Committee has recently held its third meeting on-line. Macau, Guangdong and Hong Kong had detailed discussions about details of the criteria for mediator accreditation, when the details will be released, and how to promote mutual recognition and implementation of mediation outcomes. Various views were exchanged during the discussions. The committee will work towards submission for review and approval of the details and related matters to the fifth joint meeting of legal departments of the Greater Bay Area by the end of the year.

MACAU SCHOOL ON HENGQIN TO RUN SECONDARY LEVELS WITHIN TWO YEARS

The school catering to Macau residents on Hengqin's Macao New Neighbourhood will see secondary education starting within two years, director of Education Kong Chi Meng has told local media. It has recently been announced that Hou Kong Middle School will operate on Hengqin. Kong advised that the only application for the right to operate was received from Hou Kong. During the early phase of operations in Hengqin, the school will only offer kindergarten to Primary 2 levels. Kong announced that further levels will be offered thereafter.

RON LAM CALLS FOR IMPROVING USER-FRIENDLINESS OF SAR PASSPORT

In his latest written inquiry, lawmaker Ron Lam called for improved visa-free access for the SAR passport. He pointed out that visa-free access for the passport has remained unchanged in 144 countries since 2019, adding that direct immigration clearance for the passport is only available in five countries. In addition, he questioned why SAR passport holders still do not have visa-free entry to Bahamas and Kazakhstan, while such entry is available to Chinese and Hong Kong SAR passport holders. Moreover, he added that reciprocal visa-free entry is key to attracting visitors, which is a key goal of the government.

Macau-Hengqin tourism incentives from early 2024

ANTHONY LAM

THE expansion of the local tourism incentive scheme to Hengqin will be started early next year, the local director of tourism has confirmed.

The expansion was announced in the Policy Address last week.

Officially referred to as the Travel Stimulation Program, it encourages travelers, institutions and enterprises to choose Macau as an incentive and business destination and to organize events aimed at Incentive Tourism, Wedding Tourism, Student Tourism and Sports Tourism.

The grants can be used for team building events, awards evenings and for local transportation involved in the event. Teams with at least 25 non-Macau participants with a minimum stay of two consecutive nights in Macau may apply for the grants.

Tourism director Maria Hele-



na de Senna Fernandes has recently pointed out that the expansion aims at including Hengqin in the plans, in addition to the currently-operating joint MICE programs.

She further revealed that frameworks had been established with Hengqin authorities and once details are confirmed, the program will be expanded to the island as well. She added that it will likely be ready early next year.

To facilitate its expansion, criteria for access to the program will also be updated. For example, she said, the minimum number of nights required may be equally shared between Macau and Hengqin. She also hoped that other types of tours will be included in the program in the future.

Meanwhile, it was disclosed that some group tourists were taken by their guides to the Golden Lotus Square while the sta-

tue was fully covered for renovation. When asked about the situation, she underlined that the local tourism board does notify travel agencies about suspended or closed tourism attractions. In addition, she suggested agencies could take their guests to the Handover Gifts Museum as an alternative, since there is a smaller replica of the Golden Lotus statue there, as well as gifts from other municipalities and provinces.

BRAINSTORM DESIGN 2023

Exhibition to explore ways AI shapes design and architecture

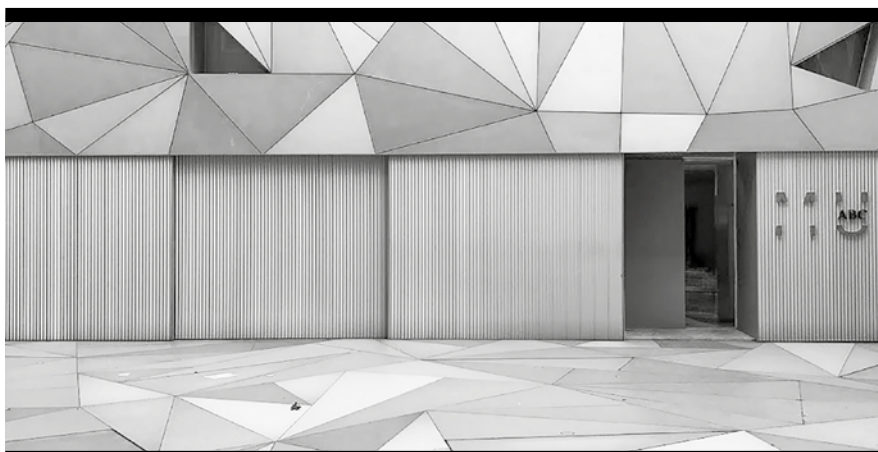
STAFF REPORTER

AN international conference dedicated to exploring the intersection of business and commercial design will be held in Macau for the first time to explore the ways AI shapes commercial design, architecture, art and more.

Brainstorm Design 2023 will be held on Dec. 6 at MGM Cotai under the theme "Empathy in the Age of AI," tackling design challenges related to climate change, sustainability, diversity and other issues.

The conference will also focus on the philosophies and working methods great designers bring to their work and examine how established designers can collaborate with global firms.

Brainstorm Design is the latest addition to Fortune's influential



Brainstorm conference series and will feature Fortune 500 executives and the world's preeminent designers.

Together, the speakers will explore the crucial question of how to achieve business results through design. The event also will welcome experts to share their insights and discuss the latest cutting-edge design tools that are transforming their industries, according to a statement.

"And in a world where more and more decisions are delegated to robots and algorithms, many firms are finding good design more important than ever. At this year's Brainstorm Design, we will explore the ways in which the world's leading companies use the methods and insights of designers to stay close to customers, spur innovation, navigate uncertainty, and identify new sources of growth," said Clay

Chandler, Fortune Executive Editor for Asia and Brainstorm Design editorial chair.

This year's speakers include Tom Dixon, founder and creative director of Tom Dixon; Valerie Casey, SVP and chief design officer at Walmart; Teman Evans, global chief of Design at General Mills; Andrew Lazarow, studio leader at The Lab at Rockwell Group; and Mauro Porcini, chief design officer of PepsiCo., among others.

EDUCATION

IFTM LAUNCHES UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS IN CHINESE

THE Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) will launch two undergraduate programs using Chinese as the language of instruction in the academic year 2024/2025.

The new programs will come into effect after publication in MSAR Gazette, the institute said in a statement.

The two new programs in Chinese offer daytime classes in Bachelor of Science in Tourism Business Management and Bachelor of Science in Cultural and Heritage Management.

"They will follow the same curriculum as the existing English-language versions, overall comply with the same standards, and provide students with the same level of higher education,"

the institute said in a statement.

"IFTM is seeking to make these programs available also in the Chinese language in order to cope with increasing demand for qualified professionals in tourism business management and in cultural and heritage management," it added.

In addition, IFTM is introducing the Bachelor of Science in Marketing and Brand Management in the upcoming academic year, updating the existing Tourism Retail and Marketing Management Bachelor's Degree Program.

The admissions process for IFTM's bachelor's degree programs for the academic year 2024/2025 is open until June 30, 2024. LV



BANKING

Beijing police investigate major shadow bank Zhongzhi after it says it's insolvent

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

POLICE are investigating suspected crimes of a Chinese wealth company owned by Zhongzhi Enterprise Group, according to the Beijing Public Security Bureau, days after the firm told investors it was insolvent.

In a statement published on the social media platform WeChat over the weekend, the police said they had taken "criminal enforcement measures" against several suspects to investigate and had urged affected investors to lodge a complaint.

"Investors are requested to actively cooperate with the police in investigating and collecting evidence and safeguard their rights and interests through legal channels," the statement said.

Authorities did not specify what crimes they were investigating. In the past, defaults or other troubles in the financial sector have prompted protests by aggrieved investors.

Zhongzhi, which is based in Beijing, did not immediately respond to an email for comment and phone calls to a number listed for the company did not connect.

The investigation came



after media reports last week that Zhongzhi had apologized to investors in a letter, saying it was insolvent with up to \$64 billion in liabilities. That far exceeds its total assets of about \$28 billion.

Zhongzhi is one of China's largest shadow banks, companies that provide financial services similar to banks while operating outside of banking regulations. It began showing signs of trouble in August when its subsidiary Zhongrong International Trust missed payments on some of its investment products.

As one of the major Chinese

shadow banks, Zhongzhi has lent billions of yuan for real estate dealings. The property sector is currently embroiled in a debt crisis, with many of China's big developers having either defaulted or remaining at risk of default after the government restricted borrowing beginning in 2021.

To prevent troubles spilling into the economy from the property sector, Chinese regulators have drafted a list of 50 developers eligible for financing support, according to a Bloomberg report last week that cited unnamed people familiar with the matter.

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

Zhongzhi Enterprise Group has investments spanning real estate, mining, semiconductors and vehicle manufacturing. It was founded in 1995 in northeastern China's Heilongjiang province. **MDT/AP**

CYBER MONDAY

STILL LOOKING FOR DEALS ON HOLIDAY GIFTS? RETAILERS ARE OFFERING DISCOUNTS

CONSUMERS are scouring the internet for online deals as they begin to cap off the five-day post-Thanksgiving shopping bonanza with Cyber Monday - which extends to today [Macau time].

Even though e-commerce is now part and parcel of our everyday lives and much of the holiday shopping season, Cyber Monday - a term coined back in 2005 by the National Retail Federation - continues to be the biggest online shopping day of the year, thanks to the deals and the hype the industry has created to fuel it.

For several major retailers, the "Cyber Monday" sale is a days-long event that begins over the weekend. Amazon's, for example, kicked off on Saturday and runs through Monday. Target's two-day event began overnight on Sunday, while Arkansas-based Walmart kicked off its most recent discounts Sunday evening.

Consumer spending for Cyber Week - the five major shopping days between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday - provides a strong indication on how much shoppers are willing to spend during the holiday season.

Shoppers have been resilient this year in the face of stubbornly high inflation, which recently reached its lowest point in more than two years but remains painfully apparent in areas like auto and health insurance and some groceries, like beef and bread.

But consumers are also relying on savings to fuel their shopping and are facing more pressure from credit card debt, which has been on the rise along with delinquencies. They've also been embracing "Buy Now Pay Later" payment plans, which allow shoppers to make payments over time without typically charging interest - a model some analysts believe can make acquiring debt too easy.

The National Retail Federation expects shoppers will spend more this year than last year. But the pace of spending will slow, growing 3% to 4% compared to 5.4% in 2022, the nation's largest retail trade group said earlier this month. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Galaxy launches green initiatives



Galaxy Entertainment Group recently launched a series of activities under its Energy and Environmental Conservation Month (EEC Month) campaign to proactively promote green initiatives to its team members.

Through seminars by the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) and Hong Kong's social enterprise Green Monday, "Green Monday" sustainable eating activity, displays and games, the campaign has helped raise awareness of

and improve knowledge about climate change and the need for environmental protection among team members.

As the first activity of the EEC Month, Galaxy invited Wong Kai Man, acting head of the Division of Environmental Publicity and Education of DSPA, to give a detailed introduction to team members on Macau's environmental protection, energy conservation and emission reduction, as well as waste reduction at source work.

GEG also offered a variety of sustainable food options in its staff restaurants during the "Green Monday" event, and showcased environmental information through display boards and interactive games set up in the back-of-house area.

Sands China and Macao Polytechnic University aims to boost development of smart tourism



Sands China and Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) joined forces last week to accelerate the development of smart tourism in Macau by signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and co-hosting a smart tourism symposium at The Londoner Macao.

The MOU, signed by representatives from Sands China and MPU, aims to strengthen research on smart tourism, technological innovation, and talent development by deepening exchanges between academic and business sectors.

The MOU states Sands China will send senior management personnel as guest lecturers or speakers to MPU with the goal of promoting the development of smart tourism in Macau in line with international standards.

Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., said, "Through a model of industry-academia research cooperation, both entities will leverage our respective resource advantages to drive the development of local higher education."

Participants in the symposium discussed the development of Macau as a smart tourism city and how to nurture smart tourism technology professionals.

HEALTH

China says a surge in respiratory illnesses caused by flu, other known pathogens

A surge in respiratory illnesses across China that has drawn the attention of the World Health Organization is caused by the flu and other known pathogens and not by a novel virus, the country's health ministry said over the weekend.

Recent clusters of respiratory infections are caused by an overlap of common viruses such as the influenza virus, rhinoviruses, the respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, the adenovirus as well as bacteria such as mycoplasma pneumoniae, which is a common culprit for respiratory tract infections, a National Health Commission spokesperson said.

The ministry called on local authorities to open more fever clinics and promote vaccinations among children and the elderly as the country grapples with a wave of respiratory illnesses in its first full winter since the removal of COVID-19 restrictions.

"Efforts should be made to increase the opening of relevant clinics and treatment areas, extend service hours and increase the supply of medicines," said ministry spokesman Mi Feng.

He advised people to wear masks and called on local authori-

ties to focus on preventing the spread of illnesses in crowded places such as schools and nursing homes.

The WHO earlier this week formally requested that China provide information about a potentially worrying spike in respiratory illnesses and clusters of pneumonia in children, as mentioned by several media reports and a global infectious disease monitoring service.

The emergence of new flu strains or other viruses capable of triggering pandemics typically starts with undiagnosed clusters of respiratory illness. Both SARS and COVID-19 were first reported as unusual types of pneumonia.

Chinese authorities earlier this month blamed the increase in respiratory diseases on the lifting of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Other countries also saw a jump in respiratory diseases such as RSV when pandemic restrictions ended.

The WHO said Chinese health officials last week provided the data it requested during a teleconference. Those showed an increase in hospital admissions of children due to diseases including bacterial infection, RSV, influenza and common cold viruses since October.

AP PHOTO



Chinese officials maintained the spike in patients had not overloaded the country's hospitals, according to the WHO.

It is rare for the U.N. health agency to publicly ask for more detailed information from countries, as such requests are typically made internally. WHO said it re-

quested further data from China via an international legal mechanism.

According to internal accounts in China, the outbreaks have swamped some hospitals in northern China, including in Beijing, and health authorities have asked the public to take children with

less severe symptoms to clinics and other facilities.

Both Chinese authorities and WHO have been accused of a lack of transparency in their initial reports on the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019. **MDT/AP**

MH370

Beijing court begins hearings for Chinese relatives of people on Malaysian plane

Beijing court began compensation hearings yesterday morning for Chinese relatives of people who died on a Malaysia Airlines plane that disappeared in 2014 on a flight to Beijing, a case that remains shrouded in mystery after almost a decade.

Security was tight around the Chinese capital's main Chaoyang District Intermediary Court and no detailed information was immediately available. Police checked the identities of journalists onsite and sequestered them in a cordoned-off area. Reporters were able to see relatives enter the court but were unable to speak with them before the hearing began.

There was no immediate comment from the court, and China's Foreign Minis-



try referred questions on the matter to legal authorities.

"The Chinese government pays high attention to the follow-up actions of MH370. We hope the relevant parties will maintain

close communication and handle it properly," ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a daily briefing yesterday.

Various theories have emerged about the fate of the

plane, including mechanical failure, a hijacking attempt, or a deliberate effort to scuttle it by those in the cockpit, but scant evidence has been found to show why the plane diverted from its original route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

The Boeing 777 with 227 passengers and 12 crew aboard is believed to have plunged into the Southern Ocean south of India but months of intense searching found no sign of where it went down and only fragments of the plane have washed up on beaches in the area.

Among the passengers onboard, 153 or 154 by differing accounts were citizens of China, causing the disaster to resonate especially in Beijing, where daily briefings

and vigils were held for those missing. Some relatives refused to believe the plane had disappeared, believing it had been taken to an unknown site and that their loved ones remained alive, and refused to accept relatively small compassionate payments from the airline.

Details of the lawsuit remain cloudy but appear to be based on the contention that the airline failed to take measures to locate the plane after it disappeared from air traffic control about 38 minutes after takeoff over the South China Sea on the night of March 8, 2014.

Relatives have been communicating online and say they expect the hearings to extend to mid-December.

Given the continuing mystery surrounding the

case, it remains unclear what financial obligations the airline may have and no charges have been brought against the flight crew. However, relatives say they wish for some compensation for a disaster that deprived them of their loved ones and placed them in financial difficulty.

China's legal system offers wide latitude for judges to issue legal or financial penalties when criminal penalties cannot be brought.

Similar cases brought in the United States against the airline, its holding company, and insurer have been dismissed on the basis that such matters should be handled by the Malaysian legal system.

China itself says it is still investigating the cause of the crash of a China Eastern Airlines jetliner that killed 132 people on March 21, 2022. The disaster was a rare failure for the Chinese airline industry that dramatically improved safety following deadly crashes in the 1990s. **MDT/AP**

CHINA CALLS FOR A CEASE-FIRE IN MYANMAR FIGHTING

BEIJING called for a cease-fire in Myanmar after a coalition of ethnic fighters seized several crossings along Myanmar's border with China in the past month.

However, China will continue live-firing drills on its side of the frontier aimed at "testing the mobility, border control abilities and firepower capabilities of the military units so that the People's Liberation Army is ready for any emergency," the army newspaper PLA Daily said on Sunday.

Myanmar heavily relies on trade with China, especially for importing manufactured goods and exporting agricultural products. Unrest in Myanmar's border region has been a constant irritant to China, which nevertheless backed the military leaders who seized power in the Southeast Asian nation in 2021 from an elected government.

Yet China is highly wary of conflicts spilling over the shared border that is already rife with drug trafficking and people smuggling. Cybercrime targeting Chinese victims has become a major concern, and China has pushed hard to eliminate the groups based in Myanmar and other countries and to send the perpetrators back to China for prosecution.

"China is highly concerned about the conflicts in Myanmar and has urged all sides to cease fire and start peaceful dialogues to prevent the situation from escalating further," the PLA Daily said. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Canberra commits another \$168 million to monitoring migrants freed from indefinite detention

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

THE Australian government yesterday committed an additional 255 million Australian dollars (\$168 million) in funding for police and other law enforcement officials to monitor 141 migrants freed when a court ruled their indefinite detention was unconstitutional.

The new funding over two years reflects an increase in the workload of law enforcement officials due to government concerns about a heightened community risk posed by those released following a landmark High Court decision on Nov. 8. That ruling said the government could no longer indefinitely detain foreigners who had been refused Australian visas, but could not be deported to their homelands and no third country would accept them.

The migrants released due to the High Court ruling were mostly people with criminal records. The group also included people who failed visa character tests on other grounds and some who were challenging visa refusals through the courts, with some being refugees and stateless people.

Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil said the government's priority was protecting the safety

AP PHOTO



Australian Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil (left), Immigration Minister Andrew Giles (right) and Commissioner of the Australian Border Force Michael Outram during a press conference at Parliament House in Canberra

of the Australian community within the limits of the law.

"This funding will ensure that our agencies are able to dedicate the time and resources that will be required to manage this cohort into the future," O'Neil said.

The Parliament passed a raft of emergency laws on Nov. 16 that imposed restrictions on the newly released migrants including curfews, police reporting conditions and a requirement to wear an electronic ankle bracelet to track their movements at all times.

Lawyers for a Chinese refugee last week lodged a High Court challenge to the new measures, arguing their client was being punished through his curfew and

being forced to wear an electronic bracelet.

The seven High Court judges will on Tuesday release the reasons for their test case decision made three weeks ago to free a stateless Rohingya man convicted of raping a 10-year-old boy.

The reasons will shed light on the legality of the government's legislative responses and whether more migrants need to be released. Some recently freed migrants could potentially be detained again.

Hannah Dickinson, the principal lawyer at the Melbourne-based Asylum Seeker Resource Center, said the additional spending on law enforcement would result in increased policing that was "entirely unnecessary, un-

justified and ... damaging to the community."

O'Neil also announced she would soon introduce draft legislation in response to a recent High Court decision that found a government minister could not strip citizenship from a man convicted of terrorism.

Under the proposed new laws, a judge rather than a minister would decide whether the Australian citizenship of a dual national would be stripped during a sentencing hearing.

The crimes for which citizenship could be removed would be extended beyond terrorism to include espionage and covert foreign interference in Australian politics on behalf of a foreign government. **MDT/AP**

NEW ZEALAND

Luxon sworn in as prime minister, says priority is to improve economy

NICK PERRY,
WELLINGTON

CHRISTOPHER Luxon was sworn in as New Zealand's prime minister yesterday and said his top priority was to improve the economy.

The 53-year-old former businessman leads a conservative coalition after his National Party struck a deal Friday with two smaller parties following a general election last month.

After the swearing-in ceremony, which was presided over by Governor-

-General Cindy Kiro, Luxon told reporters the job was an "awesome responsibility."

He said he would hold his first Cabinet meeting Tuesday and look to quickly finalize a 100-day plan. He said he also planned a visit to Australia before Christmas Day.

Luxon said he needed to get a Treasury briefing on the state of the government's finances.

"We are concerned and worried that it's been a deteriorating picture for a number of months now,"

Luxon said.

Under the coalition agreement, Luxon has promised to deliver tax cuts and train 500 more police officers within two years.

He has also promised less government bureaucracy, including a 6.5% cut to the public service.

Luxon said it would be up to ministry chief executives to figure out how to make the cuts, whether by stopping programs, not filling vacancies or laying off some workers.

The new government also plans to repeal tobac-

co restrictions approved last year by the previous government, including requirements for low nicotine levels in cigarettes, fewer retailers and a lifetime ban for youth.

Luxon said his government disagreed with parts of the policy, including concentrating distribution. He said smoking rates had been coming down for 30 years.

"We will continue to make sure we have good education programs and encourage people to take up vapes as a cessation

AP PHOTO



New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, center, talks with Governor-General Dame Cindy Kiro during the swearing-in ceremony at Government House in Wellington, yesterday

tool," Luxon said.

But critics said the plan was a setback for public health and a win for the tobacco industry.

Chris Hipkins, who officially resigned as the nation's 41st prime minister early yesterday, said he wished Luxon and his coalition partners well. He

said the country had been through tough times but the economy was turning a corner.

Hipkins, who held the top job for 10 months after Jacinda Ardern unexpectedly resigned in January, plans to remain in Parliament as opposition leader. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



In an undated photo released by Zodiac Maritime, the tanker Central Park is seen

this day in history

1990 TEARFUL FAREWELL FROM IRON LADY



Britain has a new prime minister for the first time in more than 11 years.

Margaret Thatcher formally tendered her resignation to the Queen early this morning after leaving Downing Street for the last time.

John Major was elected her successor yesterday by Conservative Party members.

The woman dubbed as the Iron Lady during her premiership made her last tearful speech as the leader of the country from the doorstep of Number 10.

Mrs Thatcher told reporters the country had become a much improved place in which to live since she took office in 1979.

"We're leaving Downing Street for the last time after eleven-and-a-half wonderful years and we're happy to leave the UK in a very much better state than when we came here," she said.

She also gave her support to her successor. "Now it's time for a new chapter to open and I wish John Major all the luck in the world," she said.

After the speech she and her husband, Denis, were driven to Buckingham Palace, watched by a small crowd keen to witness this significant moment.

"It's part of history and we'd just like to say good bye and wish her well," said one onlooker outside the gates of the palace.

Mrs Thatcher had a half-hour meeting with the Queen before returning to her private home in Dulwich, south London.

Fifteen minutes later Mr Major arrived at the palace and was formally invited by the Queen to form a new administration.

The premiership of Britain's first female leader - and the longest since 1827 - was at an end.

Courtesy BBC News

MIDDLE EAST

US Navy seizes attackers of Israel-linked tanker; missiles from Yemen follow

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI,

ARMED assailants seized and later let go of a tanker linked to Israel off the coast of Yemen yesterday [Macau time] before being apprehended by the United States Navy, officials said. Two ballistic missiles fired from Houthi-controlled Yemen then landed near a U.S. warship aiding the tanker in the Gulf of Aden, raising the stakes amid a series of ship attacks linked to the Israel-Hamas war.

Yemen's internationally recognized government blamed the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels for the attack, though the rebels in control of the capital, Sanaa, did not acknowledge either the seizure or the missile attack.

The attackers seized the Liberian-flagged Central Park, managed by Zodiac Maritime, in the Gulf of Aden, the company, the U.S. and British militaries and private intelligence firm Ambrey said.

The U.S. military's Central Command said in a statement yesterday that its forces and allies, including the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Mason, responded to the seizure and demanded the armed assailants release the tanker.

"Subsequently, five armed individuals debarked the ship and attempted to flee via their small boat," Central Command said. "The Mason

pursued the attackers resulting in their eventual surrender."

The Central Command did not identify the attackers, but said a missile launch from Houthi-controlled Yemen followed early morning.

"The missiles landed in the Gulf of Aden approximately 10 nautical miles (18.5 kilometers) from the ships," the statement said. "The USS Mason ... was concluding its response to the M/V Central Park distress call at the time of the missile launches. There was no damage or reported injuries from either vessel during this incident."

Early yesterday, Zodiac said the vessel carrying phosphoric acid and its crew of 22 sailors from Bulgaria, Georgia, India, the Philippines, Russia, Turkey and Vietnam were unharmed.

"We would like to thank the coalition forces who responded quickly, protecting assets in the area and upholding international maritime law," the company said.

Zodiac described the vessel as being owned by Clumvez Shipping Inc., though other records directly linked Zodiac as the owner. London-based Zodiac Maritime is part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer's Zodiac Group. British corporate records listed two men with the last name Ofer as a current and former director of Clumvez Shipping, including Daniel Guy Ofer, who is also a director at Zodiac Maritime.

Yemen's internationally recognized government, which is based out of nearby Aden, blamed the rebels for the seizure in a statement carried by their state-run news agency.

"The Yemeni government has renewed its denunciation of the acts of maritime piracy carried out by the terrorist Houthi militias with the support of the Iranian regime, the most recent of which was the hijacking of the Central Park," the statement read.

The attack happened in a part of the Gulf of Aden that is in theory under the control of that government's forces and is fairly distant from Houthi-controlled territory in the country. Somali pirates are not known to operate in that area.

Zodiac Maritime has been targeted previously amid a wider yearslong shadow war between Iran and Israel. In 2021, a drone attack assessed by the U.S. and other Western nations to have been carried out by Iran killed two crew members aboard Zodiac's oil tanker Mercer Street off the coast of Oman.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which provides warnings to sailors in the Middle East, had earlier issued a warning to sailors that "two black-and-white craft carrying eight persons in military-style clothing" had been seen in the area.

The UKMTO put the Cen-

tral Park's location over 60 kilometers south of Yemen's coast, some 80 kilometers east of Djibouti and around 110 kilometers northeast of Somalia in the Gulf of Aden, a key shipping route.

The Central Park seizure comes after a container ship, CMA CGM Symi, owned by another Israeli billionaire, came under attack Friday by a suspected Iranian drone in the Indian Ocean. Iran has not acknowledged carrying out the attack, nor did it respond to questions from The Associated Press about that assault.

Both the Symi and the Central Park had been behaving as if they faced a threat in recent days.

The ships had switched off their Automatic Identification System trackers, according to data from MarineTraffic.com analyzed by the AP. Ships are supposed to keep their AIS active for safety reasons, but crews will turn them off if it appears they might be targeted. In the Central Park's case, the vessel had last transmitted four days ago after it left the Suez Canal heading south into the Red Sea.

Global shipping had increasingly been targeted as the Israel-Hamas war threatens to become a wider regional conflict — even as a truce has halted fighting and Hamas exchanges hostages for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. **MDT/AP**

IN CONTEXT

Margaret Thatcher remained MP for Finchley until 1992.

But even after leaving Westminster she continued to be a formidable force in British politics.

Her appearances at Conservative Party conferences overshadowed successive Tory leaders years after her resignation, and she frequently spoke out to lend her support to the Euro sceptics.

Ill health forced the Iron Lady to abandon many of her public engagements in 2002. John Major was prime minister until May 1997 when the Tories were ousted from power after a Labour landslide victory. He stepped down as leader of the Conservatives shortly after losing the general election.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Don't evade important issues; you may find yourself backed into a corner. Sports, physical fitness programs, exercise in general will make you feel better and show some pretty quick results.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Plan some family outings. Make those phone calls and pay your bills. Emotional matters may not be easy for you to handle. Be on your best behavior.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Work hard on improving your living quarters. You may meet that special person if you attend fundraising functions. Your emotional state will vacillate.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 You can ferret out secret information if you just listen to what others have to say. You will find that social activities will be enjoyable and will promote new connections.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Don't let yourself get rundown. Don't overdo it. You need to enjoy yourself. Discord may arise with someone you're close to. Romantic encounters will be full of excitement.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Home improvement projects will go well if you delegate work to all your family members. You may want to make plans to take a vacation together.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Sit back and observe, regardless of how hard that might be. You will need to take a look at the renovations that are necessary and try to find the cheapest way to get things done.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Don't let your boss get the better of you. You can meet interesting new friends if you join worthwhile groups. Stabilize your own position by locking up your savings.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Don't overspend on entertainment, on children, or make poor investments. You could be quite erratic regarding your personal relationship.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 You will have to do a lot of running around, so be prepared to fall short of your expectations. You will need to spend extra time sorting through your work.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Do not force your opinions on others the connections will be short lived. Travel and communications will not run as smoothly as you had hoped.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 They may cost you dearly. Deal with the needs of children. If they want help that's great, but if they try to take credit for your work, you will have to set them straight.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

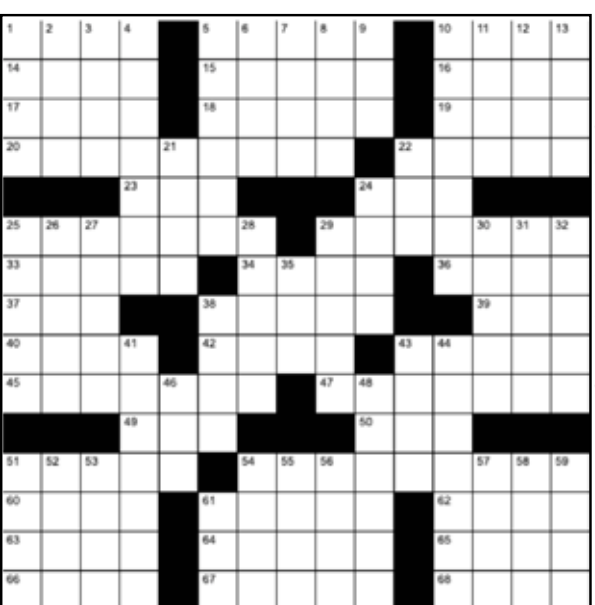
	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	3	overcast
Changchun	-14	-10	fine
Chengdu	7	19	cloudy
Chongqing	12	21	cloudy
Fuzhou	13	24	fine
Guangzhou	14	26	fine
Guiyang	7	19	cloudy
Haikou	18	25	cloudy
Hangzhou	7	18	fine
Harbin	-23	-15	cloudy
Hefei	2	15	fine
Nanjing	5	14	fine
Shanghai	8	15	fine
Taipei	17	22	fine
Wuhan	4	19	fine
Hong Kong	21	25	fine
WORLD			
Moscow	-12	-4	snow
Frankfurt	-4	3	snow
Paris	2	7	overcast
London	1	7	cloudy
New York	-1	4	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Hide; 5- Stench; 10- Require; 14- Gen. Robert ___; 15- Uruguayan friend; 16- Spicy stew; 17- Brio; 18- Silvery fish; 19- Manipulator; 20- Reducing enzyme; 22- Trail; 23- Mined mineral; 24- Hit the slopes; 25- Following; 29- Peter or Paul, but not Mary; 33- Bring about; 34- Woody's son; 36- Frozen rain; 37- Faulkner's "___ Lay Dying"; 38- Horse race venue in England; 39- "Silent" prez; 40- Spool; 42- Mormon state of western USA; 43- Designer Geoffrey; 45- Tidal river; 47- Premier player; 49- Peeples or Long; 50- Sot's sound; 51- Bottom line; 54- Similarity of sounds; 60- ___ the crack of dawn; 61- Pay for; 62- Wanting; 63- ___ Ha'; 64- Singes; 65- Collar type; 66- A Baldwin brother; 67- Actor Davis; 68- Electric fish;

DOWN 1- Jury member; 2- Fashion mag; 3- Be in front; 4- Unsubstantial; 5- Attach firmly; 6- Austen novel; 7- Connections; 8- Eyeball; 9- Spoil; 10- Sustain with food; 11- Socialite Maxwell; 12- Util. bill; 13- Like some chocolate; 21- Manitoba native; 22- Ref's decision; 24- Predicament; 25- Frighten; 26- Alleviates; 27- Silent; 28- Delicious; 29- Wahine's welcome; 30- Be silent, musically; 31- Woody vine; 32- "Oklahoma!" aunt; 35- Nipper's co.; 38- Charisma, atmosphere; 41- Insane person; 43- Russian pancake; 44- One on the run; 46- Feel unwell; 48- Fourth highest peak in the world; 51- Big brass; 52- Iridescent gemstone; 53- Story, often rooted in folklore; 54- Greek war god; 55- Mariners can sail on seven of these; 56- Dress often worn by Hindu women; 57- Brief letter, paper money; 58- Moderately cold; 59- Sea eagles; 61- General on Chinese menus;

Yesterday's solution



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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	

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HOW DID HUMANS GET TO THE BRINK OF CRASHING CLIMATE?

A LONG PUSH FOR PROGRESS AND ENERGY TO FUEL IT

DANA BELTAJI

AMID record-high temperatures, deluges, droughts and wildfires, leaders are convening for another round of United Nations climate talks later this month that seek to curb a centuries-long trend of humans spewing ever more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

For hundreds of years, people have shaped the world around them for their benefit: They drained lakes, deforested lands and mined for metals and minerals to grow wealth and economies. They dug up billions of tons of coal, and then oil and gas, to fuel empires and economies. The allure of exploiting nature and burning fossil fuels as a path to prosperity hopped from nation to nation, each eager to secure their own cheap energy. Over hundreds of years, that impulse has remade the planet's climate, too — and brought its inhabitants to the brink of catastrophe.

Anya Zilberstein, a historian of climate science at Concordia University in Montreal, highlighted Europeans colonizing the Americas in the 16th and 17th centuries as major factor of today's climate and environmental crises.

"They bring with them this idea that conquest and then the development of the cultivation of landscapes, like taking down trees, opening up lands to European-style agriculture, that the draining of swamps ... will also change the climate, usually for the better," Zilberstein said.

Jan Golinski, a professor of history at the University of New Hampshire, said Europeans of the time thought that their changes — cutting down forests, draining swamps, plowing land — would change the climate as well, to something closer to their homelands. He said they saw this engineering as positive.

"They believed that their society was making progress," Golinski said.

That early modern period solidified notions of industry, progress, productivity and growth that make it harder to tackle the current climate crisis, Zilberstein said.

Then, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the balance tipped dramatically in coal's favor as an energy source, through technological advances like steam power, new transportation routes like canals and later railroads, and a desire to

better control how, when and where energy was used.

Steam power made it easier for factory owners to control labor and nature than an economy based on water power, for example, because they could be set up anywhere and weren't vulnerable to floods or droughts said Andreas Malm, an associate professor of human ecology at Lund University in Sweden.

The British then "forcibly exported this model and integrated other countries such as India or Egypt or what became Nigeria into a kind of an economy that was dependent on fossil fuel," said Malm.

Other nations then began "searching for fossil fuels in various places in the Ottoman Empire, in the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere," said On Barak, a historian at Tel Aviv University and co-founder of the Laboratory for the History of Climate Change.

Then came oil. Oil use grew in the late 19th century because it wasn't as labor-intensive as coal, whose workers now had strong unions in some Western nations, historians say.

Like coal, oil was easy to store, it's more ener-

gy-rich than coal, and it's easier to move; as a liquid it can be shipped through pipes, as well as by trucks, tankers

and railcars, said J.R. McNeill, a historian at Georgetown University.

By the 20th century, the growth in oil helped fuel technologies like cars and air travel that became more affordable in many global north countries. Other nations such as China, Japan and India began assembling their own energy regimes based on fossil fuels.

As Europe, the U.S. and Japan built their energy systems around internal combustion engines, it made the global investment in an oil-dominated fossil fuel regime "gigantic and harder, but not impossible, to reverse or replace," McNeill said.

Meanwhile, coal kept its place in the global economy.

In China and Japan, growing consumption was a signal and barometer of developing economies, said Victor Seow, a historian of science at Harvard University. After the Communist Revolution in 1949, the Chinese government measured growth by its produc-

tion of items like cloth, electricity, wheat, iron, steel — and coal, too. Japan studied Western mining to develop their own coal fields.

China is now the world's current largest greenhouse gas emitter, although the United States still trumps it historically. India has also become a major coal-burning nation.

Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, a historian at the University of Chicago, said humans can decide what kind of world they want to live in, and tailor their development within nature's boundaries.

"There are two kinds of boundaries to this economy," said Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, a historian at the University of Chicago. "One is a sort of upper boundary of planetary limits" of what our natural world can withstand, "and then there's a lower boundary, that would guarantee minimum social needs, entitlements, the right to education, the right to clean water, the right to a steady income." MDT/AP

AD



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Verstappen's record-extending 19th win underlines his relentless drive

JEROME PUGMIRE,
RACING WRITER

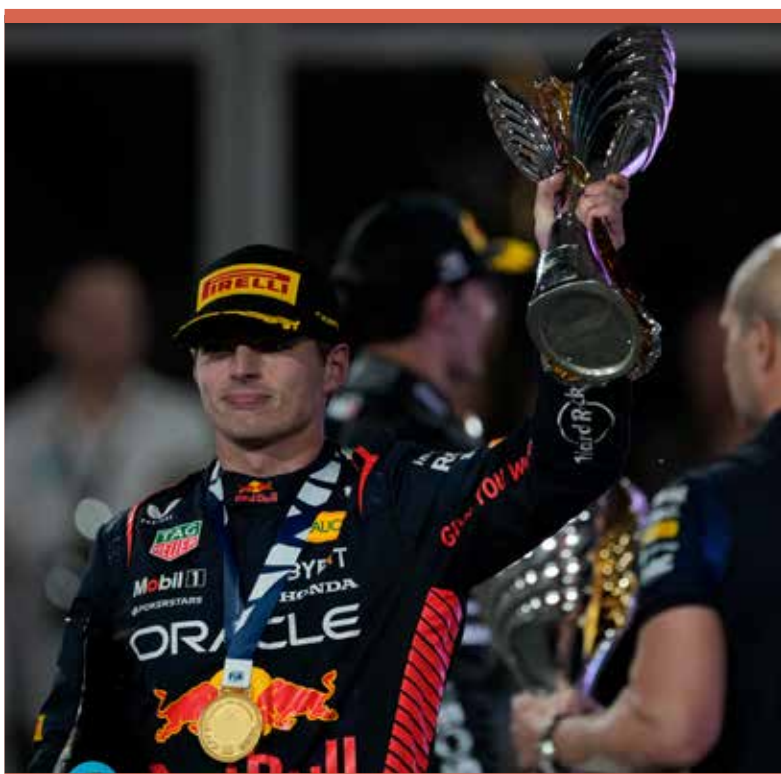
ALTHOUGH Max Verstappen clinched his third straight Formula One title almost two months ago at the Qatar GP there was never any chance of him easing up.

He's won every race since and capped off an outstanding year with a record-extending 19th victory of the season at the Abu Dhabi GP yesterday [Macau time].

"I think that is just something how I grew up, I just can't come into a race weekend not giving my all," Verstappen said. "I would just get annoyed with myself and then I know people around me get annoyed with me. My mindset didn't change after winning the championship. I come to the race weekends and always try to do the best I can, and winning is great. Why would I not want to win?"

To round off a remarkable season, he also passed the land-

AP PHOTO



mark of 1,000 laps led in a season.

"I knew it was on the cards going into the race," said Verstappen, who moved onto 54 wins overall and into third on the all-

-time list.

Verstappen finished ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Mercedes driver George Russell in Abu Dhabi and also collected a bonus point for the fastest lap.

The win moved him one ahead of former Red Bull great Sebastian Vettel, with only Michael Schumacher (91) and Lewis Hamilton (103) ahead of him.

"What an incredible year," Verstappen said after crossing the line. "It was a bit emotional on the in-lap."

Red Bull won 21 of 22 races this season, with Sergio Perez claiming two wins.

"It will be very hard to have another season like this, we know that," Verstappen said. "We will see, we are working hard for next year to have a very competitive car."

After winning two of the first four races, Perez fell quickly behind his star teammate.

"You've smashed it out of the park this year," Red Bull team principal Christian Horner told Verstappen on the radio. "We're all incredibly proud of you."

Perez crossed the line in second place but dropped to fourth because of a five-second time penalty following an incident with McLaren's Lando Norris

late on.

Leclerc let Perez go past him on the final lap in the hope that Perez would finish more than five seconds ahead of Russell, with Mercedes and Ferrari both fighting for second place in the constructors' championship.

With Russell's teammate Hamilton finishing ninth for two points and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz Jr. out of the points, Mercedes clinched second behind Red Bull in the constructors' table.

Mercedes beat Ferrari by just three points, and while Sainz is the only other driver to win a race this season — in Singapore — his failure to score in Abu Dhabi proved costly for Ferrari.

At the end, it was Russell who delivered.

"It means a huge amount, there's so many people back at the factory who have worked so hard to achieve this, it's been a really challenging season," Russell said after only his second podium this season. "I've let the side down a couple of times this year so I'm pleased to have brought it across the line today."

Hamilton placed third in the standings but the seven-time F1 champion finished without a victory for a second straight year.

Verstappen started from pole position for the 12th time this season. **MDT/AP**

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C&C RECEIVED THE 1ST SILVER
"DEIGNAN AWARD"
FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN MACAU (2023)



OPINION

China Daily

Qiao Xinsheng,* China Daily



PART-TIME JOBS, NOT SUBSIDIES, CAN BETTER HELP NEEDY STUDENTS

Recent posts in Zhongshan University's online forum — revealing that a financially struggling student was reportedly using a full set of Apple products and even buying expensive concert tickets — have sparked a controversy.

Observing the student's spending habits and lack of frugality in daily life, the university decided to discontinue the grants the student was getting.

Such grants and subsidies play a crucial role in China's higher education system, providing essential financial support to those facing difficulties in financing their education. Yet there is room for improvement in the subsidy system.

Just by examining the existing student aid system, it becomes apparent that there are certain flaws. Linking financial aid to the living conditions and academic performance of university students inevitably heightens their mental stress. Those facing economic challenges and also relatively lower academic achievements find themselves under dual pressure.

Furthermore, by predominantly focusing on the family's economic status, the authorities setting the criteria for distributing student aid neglect the individual efforts of college students. This approach could result in some students lacking the motivation to improve their life situations on their own. College students are adults and should take responsibility for their own lives. Family financial trouble does not equate to student poverty; some students, despite coming from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, overcome obstacles through part-time work or utilize their skills to engage in various business activities, achieving financial independence ahead of time.

Financial aid should only be provided when students are unable to generate sufficient income through their own labor to address living difficulties.

Third, regarding the procedure for distributing student aid, there is room for improvement. Currently, higher education institutions mainly use a competitive evaluation approach to select and provide financial aid to the most financially challenged students among those facing difficulties. This practice not only compromises the personal privacy of students, but also fosters a sense of rivalry, undermining cooperation and unity among them. The distribution of financial aid should involve a self-application process, where students declare their individual circumstances, and the aid is then allocated by the funding committee based on urgency and severity. It's crucial to note that financial aid is distinct from student loans; it does not require repayment. Therefore, when distributing financial aid, thorough tracking and investigation must be conducted to ensure that the aid genuinely supports students in need.

Fourth, part-time work-study programs can effectively address the practical difficulties faced by college students. For those encountering financial challenges, offering part-time work opportunities allows them to earn income and cover their living expenses through labor. This form of support not only cultivates a strong work ethic in students, encouraging them to resolve their own financial difficulties, but also helps reduce the operational costs of higher education institutions.

In the ongoing reform of China's higher education student aid system, two key points must be emphasized.

First, distinguishing between financially challenged students and those from impoverished families by shifting from family investigations to making inquiries about students' living conditions. This approach would help prevent the occurrence of perceived family discrimination. Second, immediately ceasing activities related to selecting so-called impoverished college students and establishing a highly organized and disciplined funding committee to conduct confidential investigations into students' personal situations. This would ensure the protection of students' privacy and guarantee that students receive assistance with dignity.

The educational administrative authorities can establish student aid contracts, mandating that students must truthfully declare their personal income situation. In the event of a false declaration or if a student alters his living conditions himself, the aid distribution can be terminated prematurely in accordance with the terms of the contract. [Abridged]

*The author is a professor of law at the Zhongnan University of Economics and Law.

WHAT'S MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S WORD OF THE YEAR FOR 2023? HINT: BE TRUE TO YOURSELF

THE BUZZ

In an age of deepfakes and post-truth, as artificial intelligence rose and Elon Musk turned Twitter into X, the Merriam-Webster word of the year for 2023 is "authentic."

Authentic cuisine. Authentic voice. Authentic self. Authenticity as artifice. Lookups for the word are routinely heavy on the dictionary company's site but were boosted to new heights throughout the year, editor at large Peter Sokolowski told AP in an exclusive interview.

"We see in 2023 a kind of crisis of authenticity," he said ahead of yesterday's announcement of this year's word. "What we realize is that when we question authenticity, we value it even more."

Sokolowski and his team don't delve into the reasons people head for dictionaries and websites in search of specific words. Rather, they chase the data on lookup spikes and world events that correlate. This time around, there was no particularly huge boost at any given time but a constancy to the increased interest in "authentic."

This was the year of artificial intelligence, for sure, but also a moment when ChatGPT-maker OpenAI suffered a leadership crisis.

Merriam-Webster's entry for "authentic" is busy with meaning.

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Paul Lynch, Winner of the 2023 Booker Prize

BOOKER PRIZE

IRISH WRITER PAUL LYNCH WINS ACCOLADE WITH DYSTOPIAN NOVEL 'PROPHET SONG'

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

IRISH writer Paul Lynch won the Booker Prize for fiction yesterday [Macau time] with what judges called a "soul-shattering" novel about a woman's struggle to protect her family as Ireland collapses into totalitarianism and war.

"Prophet Song," set in a dystopian fictional version of Dublin, was awarded the 50,000-pound (\$63,000) literary prize at a ceremony in London. Canadian writer Esi Edugyan, who chaired the judging panel, said the book is "a triumph of emotional storytelling, bracing and brave" in which Lynch "pulls off feats of language that are stunning to witness."

Lynch, 46, had been the bookies' favorite to win the prestigious prize, which usually brings a big boost in sales. His book beat five other finalists from Ireland, the U.K., the U.S. and Canada, chosen from 163 novels submitted by publishers.

"This was not an easy book to write," Lynch said after being handed the Booker trophy. "The rational part of me believed I was dooming my career by writing this novel, though I had to write the book

anyway. We do not have a choice in such matters."

Lynch has called "Prophet Song," his fifth novel, an attempt at "radical empathy" that tries to plunge readers into the experience of living in a collapsing society.

"I was trying to see into the modern chaos," he told the Booker website. "The unrest in Western democracies. The problem of Syria — the implosion of an entire nation, the scale of its refugee crisis and the West's indifference. ... I wanted to deepen the reader's immersion to such a degree that by the end of the book, they would not just know, but feel this problem for themselves."

He said "Prophet Song" — written over four years starting in 2018 — "is a counterfactual novel. It's not a prophetic statement."

"I wrote the book to articulate the message that the things that are happening in this book are occurring timelessly throughout the ages and maybe we need to deepen our own responses to that," he told reporters.

The other finalists were Irish writer Paul Murray's "The Bee Sting;" American novelist Paul Harding's "This Other Eden;" Cana-

dian author Sarah Bernstein's "Study for Obedience;" U.S. writer Jonathan Escoffery's "If I Survive You;" and British author Chetna Maroo's "Western Lane."

Edugyan said the choice of winner wasn't unanimous, but the six-hour judges' meeting wasn't acrimonious.

"We all ultimately felt that this was the book that we wanted to present to the world and that this was truly a masterful work of fiction," she said.

Founded in 1969, the Booker Prize is open to English-language novels from any country published in the U.K. and Ireland. and has a reputation for transforming writers' careers. Previous winners include Ian McEwan, Margaret Atwood, Salman Rushdie and Hilary Mantel.

Four Irish novelists and one from Northern Ireland have previously won the prize.

"It is with immense pleasure that I bring the Booker home to Ireland," Lynch said. Asked what he planned to do with the prize money, he said it would help him make payments on his tracker mortgage, which have soared along with inflation. MDT/AP



Czechia Labor unions staged a day of protests and strikes across the Czech Republic yesterday voice their opposition to the government's package of cuts and austerity measures meant to keep the ballooning deficit under control. Prime Minister Petr Fiala (pictured) said his government was not ready to give in because the measures are "absolutely necessary."

Mexico Greenpeace activists have boarded a deep-sea mining ship in the Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and Mexico and said yesterday [Macau time] they'll stay to protest exploration the ship is conducting to support activity that would destroy marine life. Canada-based The Metals Company, whose subsidiary runs the ship, accused the protesters of endangering the crew and breaking international law.



UK Tens of thousands of people including former U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson gathered in London on Sunday for a march against antisemitism, a day after large crowds turned out for a pro-Palestinian rally. Johnson was joined by U.K. Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and other senior government officials at the march to express solidarity with the Jewish community.



Internet Facebook parent Meta Platforms deliberately engineered its social platforms to hook kids and knew — but never disclosed — it had received millions of complaints about underage users on Instagram but only disabled a fraction of those accounts, according to reports from The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times. The complaint, originally made public in redacted form, was the opening salvo in a lawsuit filed in late October by the attorneys