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AP PHOTO



Gaza Strip International mediators worked yesterday to extend the truce in Gaza, hoping Hamas rulers will keep freeing hostages in return for the release of Palestinian prisoners and further respite from Israel's air and ground offensive. It will otherwise expire today [Macau time]. Israel has welcomed the release of dozens of hostages in recent days and says it will maintain the truce if Hamas keeps freeing captives.

Gaza Strip Among images of the bombed out homes and ravaged streets of Gaza, some stood out for the utter horror: Bloodied, abandoned infants. Viewed millions of times online since the war began, these images are deepfakes created using artificial intelligence. If you look closely you can see clues: fingers that curl oddly, or eyes that shimmer with an unnatural light — all telltale signs of digital deception. The outrage the images were created to provoke, however, is all too real. More on macaudailytimes.com.mo

AP PHOTO



Vatican Pope Francis presided at his weekly audience with the public at the Vatican, but he said that he's still unwell and asked an aide to read his remarks for him yesterday, a day after canceling an overseas trip. Francis, who will turn 87 on Dec. 17 and had part of one lung removed as a young man, coughed near the end of the hourlong audience in a Vatican auditorium as he made some final comments, then stood up from his chair on the stage to give his blessing.

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BET ON NBA

Adelson family to buy Dallas Mavericks, inside sources say P5



POLICY ADDRESS WIDER STREETS

Secretary Raimundo do Rosario wants fewer parking lots on streets to make room for traffic of pedestrians and cars; while admitting taxis in circulation are limited

RENATO MARQUES



P2



POLICY ADDRESS 2024 | TRANSPORT & PUBLIC WORKS

GOV'T TO REDUCE STREET PARKING SPOTS

RENATO MARQUES

THE government will reduce the number of street parking spots to widen streets and sidewalks, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, told the Legislative Assembly yesterday.

Rosario announced the proposal after lawmakers Leong Sun Iok, Ella Lei and Zheng Anting asked about parking lots, fees, and the possibility of enlarging some street parking spots.

"We are not going to increase the number of street parking spots, it's the opposite. The trend is to

reduce the number of car parks to allow us to widen the sidewalks for pedestrian circulation and the circulation space [for cars]," said Rosário.

Kelvin Lam, the director of the Transport Bureau (DSAT), also noted, in response to Zheng, that street parking spots are a minimum of about five meters long, which suits the parking needs of most Macau vehicles.

Zheng had previously suggested the government enlarge the street parking spots so residents could park larger vehicles, as most people in Macau prefer SUVs and 7-seater vans to city cars.

Zheng has also proposed the government modify the parking lot fare system to make it "fairer."

He noted that with the current hourly charge, drivers who stay for 1 hour and 1 minute in a parking lot must pay for a full MOP2 fare. Zheng wants the government to charge the first hour as a minimum fee and, after that, to charge in 15 minute periods.

Rosário said this could be done in a future revision of the public parking regulations, but warned that such a system, which exists in other countries and regions, could cause a parking fee increase. He said that before

being implemented such a proposal needs to consider society's opinions.

GOV'T WANTS POINT SYSTEM FOR TRAFFIC INFRINGEMENTS

Yesterday's AL also learned the government wants to introduce a new "demerit point system," similar to that which exists in other countries and regions, among other changes.

The system subtracts points from a driver according to his record of traffic infringements, the accumulation of which may lead to additional penalties and/or loss of driving privileges.

Many countries use the system although there are variations and different penalties.

TO LINK LRT PAYMENT WITH BUSES 'NOT AN EASY TASK'

Responding to lawmakers, Secretary Rosário said linking the payment of bus tickets (via Macau Pass) with the LRT for potential discounts on the complementary use of both systems in a journey is "not an easy task."

Rosário said the two systems

are very different and the methods of operation of the companies, one being public and the other private, also creates complexity.

The idea was to link the use of both public transport systems in the same journey, enabling travelers to benefit from discounts, an idea the Secretary said is unlikely to happen.

In the neighboring region of Hong Kong using the equivalent of the Macau Pass (Octopus Card) it is possible to link several transportation methods including the MTR, buses and the railway with the payment being calculated according to the station or point of entry and exit.

Another proposal, raised by lawmaker Leong Sun Iok, was to add to the LRT payment methods some of the major online payment platforms from the mainland so that tourists could easily use the system.

The idea also seems far from implementation with Rosário noting that it "was already hard enabling payment using the Macau Pass that is now possible."

LITTLE INTEREST IN URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAM SO FAR

THE public has so far shown little interest in the government's program to revitalize the old districts by rebuilding old buildings. The government plans to make the old buildings more habitable and, in some cases, exchanging the land plot where some old buildings are located for others in a different area, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do

Rosário, admitted to inquiries from lawmakers. According to Rosário, only about 10 proposals have reached the government and not all of them were feasible. He noted there is little the government can do on this aspect. "This depends ultimately on the private unit owners. The government cannot force them in any way to accept this program," he remarked.

RENATO MARQUES

POLICY ADDRESS 2024 | TRANSPORT & PUBLIC WORKS

700 taxis may be insufficient, Secretary admits

THE Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, discussed at yesterday's Legislative Assembly (AL) the difficulty of catching a taxi and the fact that the government has launched a new tender for up to 500 operating permits.

Responding to lawmaker Ella Lei, Rosário said the 500 new taxis that might become operational over the eight years may not meet demand.

"You ask me if the 500 taxis will be enough. Well,

I think maybe not, and maybe not even some additional 700 [taxis] would be enough," Rosário said.

"But with 500 more taxis we can improve and meet the public's needs. We need to do this work step-by-step and according to the situation. We cannot suddenly exponentially increase the number of taxis from one day to another. It does not work that way."

Rosário said that a year ago, the number of taxis operating was "way too much" for the needs at that time. He said the matter needs to be managed reasonably and progressively.

He also said it is necessary to see how the market reacts and how many drivers are effectively operational or how many new people are interested in this job.



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Airport expansion and conclusion of 4th Bridge, major 2024 highlights

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macau International Airport expansion and the conclusion of the 4th Bridge between Macau and Taipa are the Transport and Public Works sector's major 2024 highlights, Secretary Raimundo do Rosário noted, while listing a series of other works already started that will continue throughout next year.

Without giving much detail about the Airport works, the Secretary noted only that it will be a significant project as it will allow the expansion of the air transport sector, opening the possibility of more and different routes.

He also said the additional capacity will favor the so-called phased liberalization of air transport following the government's plans and the new law on this area.

Rosário said the 4th Bridge will make urban transportation more convenient and bring benefits at several levels, enabling faster con-



nections between the Macau Port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the Pac On and Cotai areas.

Questioned by the lawmaker Leong Sun Iok, particularly about use of the bridge during typhoons, the Secretary refuted the idea that the 4th Bridge will allow regular traffic even during typhoon signal 8, claiming the bridge can only be used for urgent and emergency services.

"The principle is simple, if stu-

dents don't need to attend school and most people don't need to go to work, we will not want to encourage people to travel without a serious purpose. The bridge will be able to be used [according to its capabilities to resist strong wind] for emergencies."

Lawmaker Lei rejected the Secretary's statement saying, "I have to disagree with what you said. Even during typhoon signal 8 many people still need to go to work particularly those engaged in the ga-

ming and hospitality industry and who handle our tourists," Lei said.

"I believe this matter needs to be further discussed and addressed according to reality," Lei added.

Noting the experience gathered from traffic on the lower deck of the Sai Van Bridge during typhoon signal 8, Rosário said "most of the people are just riding around seeing what is going on and they are not using it for the right purpose."

IFTM INTRODUCES CHINESE LANGUAGE MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS

The Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) will add Chinese language as the medium of instruction to its repertoire of postgraduate programs in academic year 2024/2025. The new arrangements will take effect after being published in MSAR Gazette. With these changes, all MSc programs at IFTM will provide Chinese and English options as the mediums of instruction. The programs include International Hospitality Management, International Tourism Management, International Food and Beverage Management and International Gastronomy Management. The IFTM also added Smart Technologies in Hospitality and Tourism, Digital Marketing and Analytics and International Events Management (new program) in the Chinese language.

EXPORTS TOTAL MOP1.34B IN OCTOBER

Total merchandise exports amounted to MOP1.34 billion in October, up 16% year-on-year, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows. The value of re-exports (MOP1.21 billion) grew 17.9%, of which re-exports of Articles for casino and Diamond & diamond jewelry surged 207.5% and 163.2% respectively, while those of Wine and Watches declined 68.9% and 26.5% respectively. From January to October this year, the total value of merchandise exports dropped 3.8% year-on-year to MOP10.86 billion, of which the value of re-exports (MOP9.56 billion) and domestic exports (MOP1.30 billion) fell 0.8% and 21.5% respectively.

PJ REPORTS DOZENS RECEIVE FRAUD REPORTS

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has reported that from Nov. 24 to Nov. 27, its anti-fraud inquiry hotline received 48 reports of telecommunications network fraud crimes. Among them, 39 people received fraudulent calls from fake government agency personnel, six received fraudulent phone calls from fake company customer service personnel, one person received phishing scam text messages pretending to be from a telecommunications company, and two people received online scams involving nude chatting and extortion. No one was deceived or suffered any loss.

POLICY ADDRESS 2024 | TRANSPORT & PUBLIC WORKS

BUDGETARY SLIPPAGE AND PUBLIC WORKS DELAYS SOLVED

RENATO MARQUES

THE budgetary slippage and public works delays so often seen have been solved, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, has told the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Rosário was attending yesterday's plenary session to discuss the Policy Address for 2024 about areas related to his sector.

"The budgetary slippage and delays in [the completion of] public works has been structu-



rally solved," the Secretary said in his opening speech to the LAG24, a statement lawmakers did not challenge.

Only lawmaker Wong Kit

Cheng, who had been presiding over the AL's Follow-up Committee for Public Finance Affairs, commented, noting the differences in the budget particularly

for the works related to the new LRT lines.

According to Wong, there is spending amounting to 9.3 billion patacas for the construction of the North and South sections of the LRT's East Line.

In response, Rosário said there is no overrun on this work. He said long-term projects have a multiyear budget divided into different sections, and the annual budget can vary due to the different progress of the works in a given year. But at the end, the difference

should be irrelevant in percentage terms.

"All current public works projects exceeding 50 billion patacas have budget overruns of less than 0.5%," Rosário noted, reaffirming that structurally, the issue has been tackled.

As often happens during the LAG presentation, the work of the Secretary and his team again received praise from lawmakers who highlighted the high percentage of accomplishments and fulfillment of promises in the past year.

TELECOM

CTM CONTRACT WILL BE EXTENDED FOR A 'SHORT PERIOD'

THE current telecommunications sector reform and liberalization will not be concluded by the end of this year, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, has said.

Rosário said the work requires a "couple months

more," which will require extending the current contract with the concessionaire, CTM.

"For the reform of the telecommunications sector, we will need a few months more to conclude these works. This means the contract with the cur-

rent concessionaire will have to be extended for a short term. However, be assured that before the end of this [government] term, Macau will have a new policy for the sector that will deliver a more balanced market and a fairer operation," the Secretary

said in his presentation speech.

Questioned by lawmakers, Rosário declined to comment further saying that at present, the government is negotiating with CTM and it is not expedient to reveal details.

He said the current contract with public operator CTM will end at the end of this year, which is why this matter has to be resolved urgently.

He promised to reveal all details to the public, once the contract extension is signed. **RM**



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

NEW ROUTES TO LINK ZAPE, BORDER GATE, BARRA

ANTHONY LAM

The government will open new bus routes to connect Barra with ZAPE and borders with Zhuhai respectively.

This was revealed following a recent Transport Advisory Committee meeting, local media has reported.

One plan is to open route No 61, an express route, although without the "X" sign, which will run between the Barra transport hub and the Border Gate checkpoint.

Both bus companies will operate this planned route. It will run between the Inner Harbour and Far Chi Kei.

Two existing bus routes will be

rebranded and rerouted to deal with the changing situation.

The existing route No 10A will be renamed as No 60. The updated route will skip Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro - San Ma Lo - and connect Barra with ZAPE. It will also become a cyclical route with the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal as its terminus.

Route No 5AX will be renamed to No 65, which will skip Avenida do Doutor Rodrigo Rodrigues on the way to Barra. Instead, it will take ZAPE District. While on the way to Border Gate, the renamed route will take Avenida do Ouvridor Arriaga. The terminus station will be relocated to Rua dos Currais.

The Transport Bureau (DSAT)

said the changes are aimed at taking less congested routes, to increase the turnover rate of these routes. The existing routes are usually not very full, so impacts on existing passengers should not be significant. It suggested passengers take routes 3A and 10 to substitute for the altered route 10A, as well as routes 1, 3 and 3X for 5AX.

Should there be a strong need for more frequent departures, the bureau pledged that corresponding coordination will be conducted.

The meeting also covered the Inner Harbour flood-relief road works and the digitization of vehicle drivers' health certificates.

Gov't receives over 800 applications under non-local talent regime

STAFF REPORTER

SINCE August this year, the government has received over 800 applications under the city's program to attract highly qualified professionals, secretary-general of the Talents Development Committee (CDQQ), Chao Chong Hang said yesterday.

Chao said most of the applications received are from the second category of outstanding applicants, accounting for more than 500.

He said that although outstanding applicants may not be internationally renowned, they do not need to be hired by local employers, so the



number of applications is relatively high.

Speaking on TDM's radio show yesterday, the official said the government plans to introduce leaders and senior profes-

sionals needed for the development of various key industries in an orderly manner.

Currently, the big health and high-tech projects that were launched first

have more applications. He expects the cultural and sports talent plan launched in the middle of this month will have the most applications.

In July, the government said it is aiming to attract around 1,000 non-local applicants to Macau annually.

A task force was established to oversee the evaluation criteria and specific requirements to attract different types of qualified applicants.

This new regime replaces the former system of granting residency to people based on their qualifications and or investments in Macau, which was managed by the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM).

The focus aims to promote Macau's four key industries, although some other areas are also being considered, depending on the quality of the candidates and the work they propose to do.

MACAU NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD

DSEDJ: HENGQIN SCHOOL TO BE CONSISTENT WITH LOCAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

STAFF REPORTER

The Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) has reiterated the local students' school in the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) was initially designed to be consistent with Macau's education system.

Director Kong Chi Meng said students who enroll or transfer can also connect with Macau schools.

Speaking on TDM's radio show yesterday, Kong said parents have requested that some international courses be added, and school buses will also be provided. In terms of integrated education, Kong said there is no special funding in the mainland, but the school will accept Macau children with different edu-

cational needs.

Over the weekend, it was announced Hou Kong Middle School will oversee operations of the school in the MNN on Hengqin, which is now open for enrollments.

The school will cater to Macau ID holders before mainland students and will adopt the Macau curricula and qualifications.

Despite this, mainland Chinese textbooks, educational tools and curricula have been prevalent in Hou Kong schools in Macau.

The future school will be integrated into Macau's free education system.

The campus is designed to accommodate 1,050 students, distributed across 18 primary classes and 12 kindergarten classes.

STATS

HOTEL STAFF GROWS 22% IN SECTOR REBOUND

The numbers of full-time employees in Hotels (53,802), Restaurants (22,914) and Elderly Care (1,383) rose 21.7%, 1.1% and 5.3% respectively year-on-year at the end of the third quarter of 2023.

In September, average earnings of full-time employees in some industries increased, attributable to a rise in the number of working hours of employees and a decrease in the number of relatively low-paid employees.

Data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows that average earnings of those in Hotels (MOP19,640) and Restaurants (MOP10,240) both

grew 5.6% year-on-year, and earnings of those in Manufacturing (MOP12,980) and Elderly Care (MOP16,820) increased 9.8% and 4.7% respectively.

With the economy's gradual recovery, the demand for manpower increased. At the end of the third quarter, job vacancies in Hotels (1,882) and Restaurants (1,542) rose by 1,460 and 514 respectively year-on-year, while those in Manufacturing (245) decreased by 162.

In the third quarter, the job vacancy rate (3.4%) and the employee recruitment rate (12.8%) of Hotels rose by 2.5 and 11.0 percentage points respectively year-on-year. LV



GAMING

Mark Cuban working on \$3.5B sale of Dallas Mavericks to Sands casino family: source

DALLAS Mavericks owner Mark Cuban is working on a deal to sell a majority stake in the NBA franchise to the family that runs the Las Vegas Sands casino company, a person with knowledge of the talks said yesterday [Macau time].

The agreement would be in the valuation range of \$3.5 billion and take weeks for the league to process, according to the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because details weren't being made public.

Cuban would retain control of basketball operations in the deal. NBA reporter Marc Stein was the first to report the potential sale.

The company controlled by Miriam Adelson, widow of casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, announced Tuesday it was selling \$2 billion of her shares to buy an unspecified professional



Dallas Mavericks team owner Mark Cuban

sports team.

Cuban said almost a year ago he was interested in partnering with Sands. He has been a proponent of legalizing gambling in Texas, an issue that didn't make it out of the state Legislature in a

biennial session that ended earlier this year.

The 65-year-old Cuban, who just announced he was leaving the popular business TV program "Shark Tank" after a 16th season next year, rose to fame quickly af-

ter buying the Mavericks in 2000.

Dallas was one of the worst franchises in pro sports in the 1990s, but turned into one of the best under Cuban, with a lot of help from star forward Dirk Nowitzki.

Miriam Adelson is the controlling shareholder of Las Vegas Sands Corp., a publicly traded Las Vegas company that built the Venetian and Palazzo resorts but now only has casino operations in Macau and Singapore. Sheldon Adelson, the billionaire founder and owner of Las Vegas Sands, died in 2021 at 87.

The company revealed the sale of \$2 billion in stock in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The filing identified Adelson and the Miriam Adelson Trust as sellers but didn't specify a team, league or location.

If the entirety of the \$2 billion goes toward the purchase, it wou-

ld mean Adelson could be acquiring at least 57% of the NBA team — based on the \$3.5 billion valuation.

The 78-year-old Adelson, who is a medical doctor, will retain 51.3% of company shares following the sale, according to the filing. The family also owns Nevada's largest newspaper, the Las Vegas Review-Journal.


"We have been advised by the selling stockholders that they currently intend to use the net proceeds from this offering, along with additional cash on hand, to fund the purchase of a majority interest in a professional sports franchise ... subject to customary league approvals," the company said in the SEC filing.

The vetting process for new owners in the NBA typically takes at least several weeks, and then approval must be granted by the league's Board of Governors.

Cuban also said late last year he wanted to build a new arena in downtown Dallas that would also be a casino resort, if Texas does legalize gambling.

Supporters of legalized gambling in Texas hoped to get a constitutional amendment to voters during the most recent session, but the measure didn't get far in the legislative process. The Republican-controlled Legislature doesn't meet in regular session again until 2025. **MDT/AP**

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CEM NOTICE

Temporary traffic arrangements for cable laying on Beco do Gonçalo and Rua Central

Due to the cable laying works carried out by Companhia de Electricidade de Macau - CEM, S.A. (CEM), Beco do Gonçalo will be closed to traffic from 11:00 p.m. every night to 5:00 the next morning from 4 December (Monday) to 5 December (Tuesday). In addition, limited access will be applied to a section of Rua Central between Beco do Gonçalo and Edf. Long Van from 9:00 p.m. every night to 5:00 the next morning from 4 December (Monday) to 6 December (Wednesday). Bus services will not be affected during the period.

WAR GAMES

China, Myanmar conduct naval drills together as fighting surges in border area

MYANMAR and China are conducting naval drills together as the military government in the Southeast Asian nation loses ground in its northeast border region to a coalition of militias that also has strong ties to Beijing.

State-run Myanmar Alinn newspaper said yesterday that three Chinese vessels were anchored in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, and that officials from both nations met Tuesday to discuss the maritime security exercises.

The Chinese vessels – the destroyer Zibo, frigate Jing Zhou and supply ship Qian Dao Hu – carry about 700 sailors and arrived at the Myanmar port Monday. The report didn't give more details on the drills.

Myanmar's military seized power from an elected government in 2021 and since has been in armed conflict with pro-democracy forces and ethnic militias.

The visit of the Chinese vessels comes during an upsurge in vio-



In this photo released from Myanmar Military True News Information Team, Chinese destroyer Zibo (156) is seen upon arrival at Thilawa port in Yangon

lence on Myanmar's border with China by the Three Brotherhood Alliance, a group of militias that launched a coordinated offensive against the ruling military on Oct. 27.

China is Myanmar's biggest trading partner and maintains good relations with the ruling generals. The groups in the alliance also have good relations with China and have vowed to protect foreign investments such as Chinese-ba-

cked projects in territory they control.

The alliance has claimed widespread victories including four border crossings in the northern part of Shan state, and the military government acknowledged soon after fighting began that it had lost three towns.

The alliance's offensive has energized the nationwide armed struggle to overthrow the military regime that was installed after the

army seized power, and fighting has spread to many parts of the country.

Yesterday, the resistance forces in the northwestern Chin state seized a small town in Matupi township bordering India, according to Salai Danny, a spokesperson of the Chinland Defense Force-Zotung militia group.

Beijing has called for a cease-fire and has said the warring parties should try and resolve their dif-

ferences through dialogue. It has not, however, used its influence with the militia groups to pressure them to put an end to the fighting.

Before the offensive, China had been growingly discontented with the military government's inattention to large-scale criminality in Myanmar near the border, including drug trafficking and cyberscam centers.

As the Three Brotherhood Alliance has gained ground, thousands of Chinese nationals involved in such operations have been repatriated into police custody in China.

Supporters of Myanmar's ruling generals have held several demonstrations in major cities accusing China of aiding the militia alliance.

Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, spokesperson of the ruling military council, was quoted in state media yesterday as saying that Myanmar and China remain strategic partners and have close and friendly communications. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

Court hears final arguments in subversion trial of pro-democracy activists

KANIS LEUNG, HONG KONG

AHong Kong court started hearing the final arguments yesterday of some of the city's best-known pro-democracy activists tried under the security law.

The activists' subversion trial is the biggest prosecution yet under such law. They may face up to life in prison if convicted.

The defendants were among 47 activists arrested in 2021 under the sweeping national security law imposed following massive anti-government protests four years ago. They were charged in connection to an informal 2020 primary election to pick candidates who could win the territory's Legis-



An activist known as "Grandma Wong," (center), is escorted by police outside the West Kowloon courts, yesterday

lative Council.

Prosecutors accuse the activists of trying to paralyze Hong Kong's government and topple the city's leader by securing a majority to veto budgets.

In court, yesterday, Prosecutor Jonathan Man argued that unlawful means to subvert sta-

te power didn't necessarily imply the use of force or physical violence.

"(In) the 21st century, social media, communications to the public is much easier and convenient," he said, adding that it was easy to "manipulate" those channels for some "to endanger national security."

After the introduction of the law — which critics say is eroding the autonomy promised when Hong Kong returned to China in 1997 — many pro-democracy politicians and activists were jailed, went into self-exile, or disappeared from the city's political scene.

A large number of

young professionals and middle-class families also emigrated due to the erosion of Western-style civil liberties with the government's crackdown on dissent.

The subversion trial involves many of the city's most prominent activists, including legal scholar Benny Tai, former student leader Joshua Wong and former opposition party leaders Wu Chi-wai and Alvin Yeung.

Most of the 47 activists have been detained without bail for more than two years. Others were granted bail based on strict conditions. Thirty-one, including Tai, Wong, Wu and Yeung, entered guilty pleas in court, while 16 others pled not guilty in February.

The national security law criminalizes secession, subversion, and collusion with foreign forces to intervene in the city's affairs as well as terrorism. Apart from the activists, pro-democracy publisher Jimmy Lai is also facing collusion charges under the law. **MDT/AP**

HEILONGJIANG

11 DIE IN COAL MINE ACCIDENT

A violent rock burst in a coal mine killed 11 people in China's northeastern Heilongjiang province on Tuesday, Chinese state broadcaster yesterday CCTV reported.

Mining work can release pressure from surrounding formations and trigger a literal explosion of rocks. An initial assessment determined that is what caused the fatalities in Heilongjiang province, CCTV said.

The Shuangyashan Coal Company, which operates the mine, was fined in the past for violating several safety regulations, according to local media reports.

This year alone, it was fined 10 times, according to a report from Shangyou News, a state-backed media outlet.

China has been working on improving mine safety to combat accidents that happen with some frequency. In August, another coal mine explosion also killed 11 people in northern China's Shaanxi province. A coal mine fire in southern Guizhou province killed 16 people in September.

Just a few weeks ago, a major fire at a coal mining company building in northern China killed 26 and injured dozens, though the blaze was not in the mine itself. **MDT/AP**

PHILIPPINES

Government and communist rebels agree to resume talks on ending conflict

JAN M. OLSEN, COPENHAGEN

THE Philippine government and the country's communist rebels have agreed to resume talks aimed at ending decades of armed conflict, one of Asia's longest, Norwegian mediators announced yesterday [Macau time].

High-ranking delegations from both sides met in the Norwegian capital of Oslo last week and agreed to a "common vision for peace" that sought to address key obstacles, according to Norway's foreign ministry.

Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide said the deal was signed at "an important signing ceremony" last week but was only made public yesterday.

Since 1969, the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, have fought successive Philippine governments. The rebellion, which opposes the Philippines' close ties with the United States and wants left-wing parties to be part of the government, has left about 40,000 combatants and civilians dead.

The fighting has also stunted economic development in the impoverished countryside. The military says a few thousand Maoist insurgents continue to wage the insurgency to this day.

Past administrations had en-

AP PHOTO



Special Adviser to the President, Minister Antonio Lagdameo (center) and Luis Jalandoni of the NDFP shake hands after signing their joint vision for peace, at Oslo City Hall, last Thursday

gaged in intermittent peace negotiations with the rebels. Former President Rodrigo Duterte ended peace talks in March 2019, accusing the rebels of attacks on police and military outposts. The U.S., the European Union and the Philippine government consider the New People's Army a terrorist organization because of its attacks targeting civilians.

Last year, Ferdinand Marcos Jr. took office as the new president and appeared more open to peace talks. He granted amnesty last week to several former rebels, including those from NPA,

for offenses including rebellion, sedition and illegal assembly, but not those suspected of kidnapping, killing, terrorism or similar serious crimes.

Marcos' namesake father declared martial law in the Philippines in 1972, imprisoning thousands of suspected rebels and communist supporters, until he was ousted in a 1986 popular uprising.

The Philippine government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, the umbrella group representing the rebels, said in their joint statement

that they "recognize the need to unite as a nation in order to urgently address these challenges and resolve the reasons for the armed conflict."

They "agree to a principled and peaceful resolution of the armed conflict."

"We envision and look forward to a country where a united people can live in peace and prosperity," the statement said. The text was the result of several informal discussions between the sides held in the Netherlands and Norway since the beginning of 2022.

"I was happy to hear the parties' decision to finally end the more than 50-year-long conflict in the Philippines," said Barth Eide, who witnessed the signing. He said that "extensive work" remained and that Norway "looks forward to continuing to assist the parties towards a final peace agreement."

Rebel negotiator Julieta De Lima did not say when formal talks will start. She said issues to be addressed include the detention of rebel "peace consultants," safety guarantees and immunity from arrest for negotiators, release of what the rebels refer to as political prisoners, and the removal of the terrorist designation for the communist movement.

The previous rounds of talks had collapsed over such demands.

In Manila, Presidential Adviser Carlito Galvez Jr. told reporters that despite the agreement, the government's anti-insurgency operations will continue.

Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro said it would be up to local officials to decide if they will declare a local, Christmas cease-fire. The head of the Philippine Armed Forces, Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr., said it meant the military could shift its focus to external defenses, referring to territorial tensions with China in the South China Sea. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

New laws proposed to detain potentially dangerous migrants

ROD MCGUIRK,
CANNBERRA

THE Australian government yesterday proposed new laws that would place behind bars some of the 141 migrants who have been set free in the three weeks since the High Court ruled their indefinite detention was unconstitutional.

Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil said Parliament would not end sittings for the year as scheduled next week unless new laws were enacted to allow potentially dangerous migrants to be detained.

"We are moving quickly to implement a preventive detention regime," O'Neil told Parliament.

AP FILE PHOTO



In 2021, the High Court upheld a law that can keep extremists in prison for three years after they have served their sentences if they continue to pose a

danger.

O'Neil said the government intended to extend the preventative detention concept beyond terrorism to crimes including pedophilia.

"What we will do is build the toughest and most robust regime that we can because our sole focus here is protecting the Australian community," O'Neil said.

O'Neil said she would prefer that all 141 had remained in prison-like migrant detention. She declined to say how many would be detained again under the proposed laws.

Human rights lawyers argue the government is imposing greater punishment on criminals simply because

they are not Australian citizens.

The government decided on the new legislative direction after the High Court on Tuesday released its reasons for its Nov. 8 decision to free a stateless Myanmar Rohingya man who had been convicted of raping a 10-year-old boy.

Government lawyers say the seven judges' reasons leave open the option for such migrants to remain in detention if they pose a public risk. That decision would be made by a judge rather than a government minister.

The 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. Some were refugees.

Most are required to wear electronic ankle bracelets to track their every move and stay home during curfews.

Opposition lawmaker James Paterson gave in-principle support to preventative detention, although he has yet to see the proposed legislation. **MDT/AP**

STEVE PEOPLES, NEW YORK

USA

AMERICANS for Prosperity, the political arm of the powerful Koch network, formally endorsed Nikki Haley's presidential campaign yesterday [Macau time], promising to commit its nationwide coalition of activists — and virtually unlimited funds — to helping Haley defeat former President Donald Trump in the GOP primary contest.

"AFP Action is proud to throw our full support behind Nikki Haley, who offers America the opportunity to turn the page on the current political era, to win the Republican primary and defeat Joe Biden next November," AFP president and CEO Emily Seidel wrote in a memo announcing the group's decision.

"She has what it takes to lead a policy agenda to take on our nation's biggest challenges and help ensure our country's best days are ahead. With the grassroots and data capability we bring to bear in this race, no other organization is better equipped to help her do it."

The endorsement may help Haley address one of her biggest strategic liabilities.

Despite seizing some polling momentum in recent months, especially in early primary states, the former United Nations ambassador's campaign has been lacking significant resources on the ground to ensure her supporters turn out to vote. But now, she inherits the organizational heft of what may be the most powerful conservative grassroots organization in the nation. The Koch network, previously referred to as the Koch Brothers, has been building a network of paid conservative activists and volunteers in key states for several years.

Through last summer and the fall alone, Americans for Prosperity activists communicated with 6 million primary voters, either in person at their doors or on the phone, Seidel said.

The endorsement marks a particularly painful blow to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who had championed conservative priorities in Florida, but struggled to emerge as the clear Trump alternative in the 2024 GOP primary contest. It's unclear, however, whether the endorsement can help weaken Trump's grip on the Republican presidential nomination given his commanding lead over DeSantis and Haley in virtually every poll.

Back in the spring, the Koch network began running ads across Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina — the first three states on the GOP's pre-

Haley wins backing from powerful Koch network to take on Trump



AP PHOTO
GOP presidential hopeful Nikki Haley speaks during a campaign event

sidential primary calendar — focusing on questions about Trump's electability in next fall's general election against Biden. And still, Trump remains the overwhelming front-runner in the race.

Seidel said that Americans for Prosperity would immediately begin refocusing its efforts on boosting Haley's primary and general election campaigns with strategic advertising investments, mailers and voter contacts through the group's network of thousands of conservative activists, which has spent recent months collecting information from Republican primary voters to determine the most effective arguments against Trump.

At the same time, Seidel said that her organization would focus on persuading reliable general election voters, who typically don't vote in primaries, to show up for Haley in this year's fast-approaching nomination contests.

Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung dismissed Americans for Prosperity as "the political arm of the China-first, America-last movement."

"No amount of shady money from George Soros, Democrats and Never-Trump RINOs in partnership with endless-war swamp creatures in Washington will stop the MAGA movement or President Trump from being the Republican nominee and defeating Crooked Joe Biden," Cheung wrote in a statement responding to the

Haley endorsement.

The feud between Trump and the Koch network has been years in the making.

The Kochs, long demonized by Democrats for having outsize influence in Washington, refused to support Trump's reelection in 2020. The group's leaders argued that his populist policies, especially on trade, didn't adhere to traditional conservative values, while decrying his divisive leadership style.

News of the endorsement yesterday quickly rippled across the political world.

Speaking in Washington, Utah Sen. Mitt Romney predicted it would be a "huge boost" to Haley's campaign.

Romney, a vocal Trump critic, said Haley has proved naysayers wrong before "and she's doing it again." He added: "I think it's a huge boost for her campaign and may create the kind of momentum she needs."

The DeSantis camp was not pleased.

In a statement, DeSantis spokesperson Andrew Romeo likened the Koch endorsement to a contribution to the Trump campaign.

"Congratulations to Donald Trump on securing the Koch endorsement. Like clockwork, the pro-open borders, pro-jail break bill establishment is lining up behind a moderate who has no mathematical pathway of defeating the former president," Romeo wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. "Every dollar spent on Nikki

Haley's candidacy should be reported as an in-kind to the Trump campaign. No one has a stronger record of beating the establishment than Ron DeSantis, and this time will be no different."

Yet the Koch network is convinced that Haley is better positioned to defeat Trump — and Biden — than DeSantis.

In a polling memo, senior adviser Michael Palmer highlighted Haley's "sustained momentum in recent months," while noting that many primary voters in Iowa and New Hampshire are only just beginning to pay close attention to the contest.

"Gov. DeSantis has been a tremendous leader of the state of Florida," Seidel said in a conference call. "But all of the evidence we've already shared on this call point to the fact that Nikki Haley is the strongest candidate in this race and that's why we decided to support her."

Meanwhile, Haley said she was honored to have the support of Americans for Prosperity, "including its millions of grassroots members all across the country."

"AFP Action's members know that there is too much at stake in this election to sit on the sidelines," she said in a statement. "This is a choice between freedom and socialism, individual liberty and big government, fiscal responsibility and spiraling debt. We have a country to save, and I'm grateful to have AFP Action by our side." MDT/AP

this day in history

1982 ANIMAL ACTIVISTS BOMB DOWNING STREET



A letter bomb has exploded inside the British Prime Minister's London residence.

Margaret Thatcher was in 10 Downing Street when the device exploded but was not hurt in the blast.

One of her staff was slightly burnt in the attack.

Four more bombs were sent to senior politicians but were intercepted before they got through.

Letters from a group called the Animal Rights Militia were in the Downing Street package but other groups promoting animal welfare have said they have never heard of this organisation.

The bomb - which was addressed to the prime minister herself - arrived at Number 10 in a padded envelope and immediately aroused suspicions.

The official responsible for handling such packages, office manager Peter Taylor, was handling it when it flared up, burning his hands and face.

Mr Taylor was taken to the nearby Westminster Hospital but was discharged after a few hours and is now back at work.

Police said the device was gunpowder-based and was designed to burn rather than explode.

The remaining packages were sent to the leaders of the other major UK political parties and one government official. They were:

- Michael Foot (Labour)
- Roy Jenkins (SDP)
- David Steel (Liberals)
- Timothy Raison (Home Office)

Mrs Thatcher, who was in her study when the bomb went off, told the House of Commons at Prime Minister's Questions that all MPs should be on their guard.

"Letter bombs anywhere are most distressing and I'm afraid we are all vulnerable," she said.

An investigation is now underway to discover how the package got through the rigorous checks performed on all mail sent to 10 Downing Street.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Groups like the Animal Rights Militia (Arm) and the Justice Department have been at the extreme end of animal rights campaigning since the early 1980s.

The activists - who use violence to further their cause - are thought to have links with more moderate groups like the Animal Liberation Front.

But many ALF members dislike their tactics, believing they taint their cause.

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You should get involved with activities that can be enjoyed by both young and old alike. Sudden disruptions will cause upset and a change of routine in your home environment.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You can invest in profitable ventures. You may be frazzled today. Don't hesitate to voice your opinions at a group meeting; however, keep your thoughts to yourself at home.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
You are likely to be left alone if you aren't willing to bend just a little. Changes in your domestic scene are evident. Don't blame everything on your mate.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You will be best suited to doing things around the house or inviting friends over for a visit. Unforeseen changes in your location are apparent.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You could find yourself left with someone's dirty laundry. You will be best suited to doing things around the house or inviting friends over for a visit.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You may find your mate somewhat perturbed. You won't have much time for your mate today. Try to be fair in your dealings with acquaintances.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Your mind will be on matters that deal with secret affairs. You may be in love today, but who knows what tomorrow may bring. Lend an ear to children; it can make a difference.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You could be blind to the defects of those you love. This will not be the time to give too much to your children. Your partner may blame you for everything.

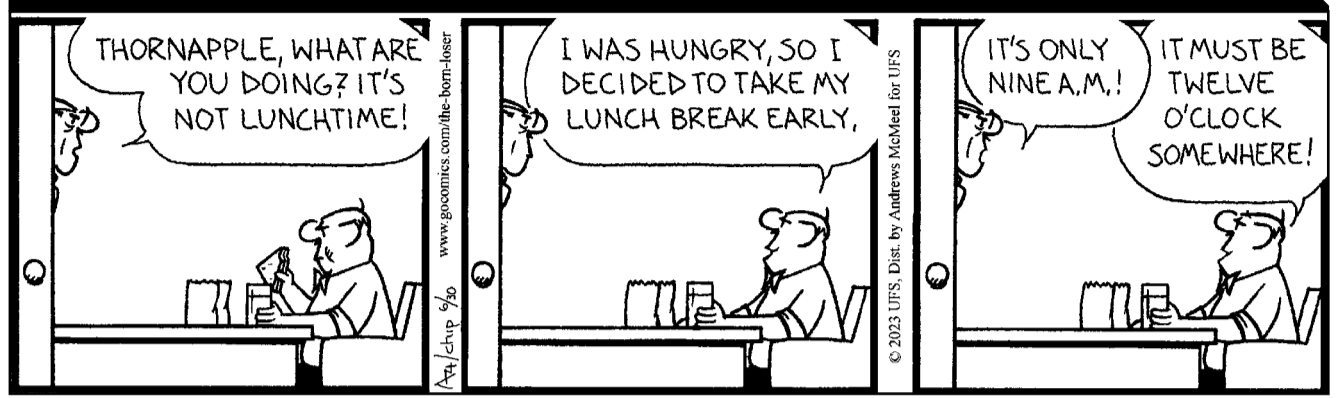
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Don't count on correspondence to clear up major problems. Do not get involved in joint financial ventures. Relatives may play an important role in your personal life.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Be sure to take care of the needs of your immediate loved ones first. Listen to a good friend who is truly looking out for your best interests.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Try not to be too lavish with your lover. Spending too much time talking to friends or relatives could easily turn into a debate that could lead to estrangement.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Romance will unfold if you take trips or get together with friends. Avoid functions that will bring you in contact with those you find difficult to get along with.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

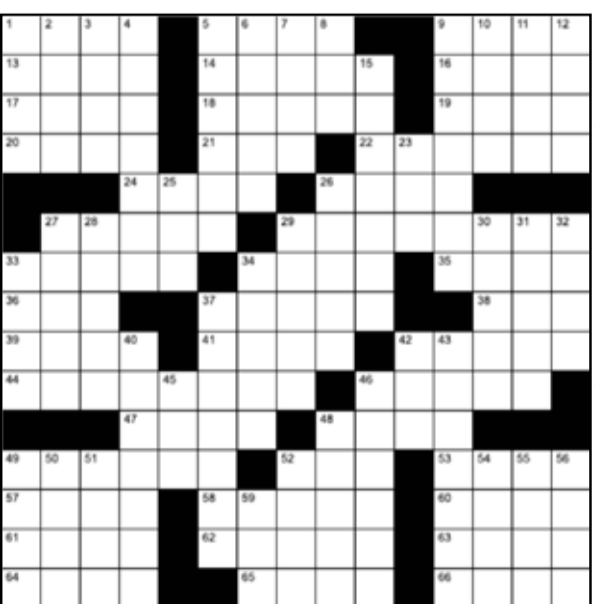
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	3	fine
Changchun	-15	-7	fine
Chengdu	7	15	overcast
Chongqing	12	16	rain
Fuzhou	16	20	overcast
Guangzhou	17	23	overcast
Guiyang	7	13	rain
Haikou	21	25	rain
Hangzhou	9	10	overcast
Harbin	-20	-12	fine
Hefei	0	5	overcast
Nanjing	2	7	overcast
Shanghai	8	11	cloudy
Taipei	19	21	rain
Wuhan	5	6	rain
Hong Kong	18	25	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	-7	1	snow
Frankfurt	-2	2	cloudy
Paris	2	6	rain
London	-2	5	cloudy
New York	5	11	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- What's more; 5- Mutual fund fee; 9- Noteworthy achievement; 13- Money-related; Abbr.; 14- Come about; 16- 1952 Winter Olympics setting; 17- Network of nerves; 18- Mead subject; 19- Picnic spoiler; 20- Greek peak; 21- Land in la mer; 22- Pretended; 24- "Peter Pan" dog; 26- Old Pontiacs; 27- Move to and fro; 29- Catapasm; 33- Approximately; 34- Stuff; 35- Minn. neighbor; 36- First name in Notre Dame football; 37- Fancy pancake; 38- It may come before long; 39- Permits; 41- Shelter for honeybees; 42- Author Dahl; 44- Barbaric; 46- Big fiddle?; 47- Curve; 48- Quartz grains; 49- Sharp turns; 52- Court fig.; 53- Hunk; 57- Raison d' ____; 58- Taken in; 60- Head light?; 61- Consumer; 62- Skin layer; 63- Ersatz butter; 64- Pudding ingredient; 65- Coarse file, angry tone of voice; 66- Bridge seat.

DOWN 1- Bushy hairstyle; 2- Untruths, tells falsehoods; 3- Fast fliers; 4- Like sea life; 5- Behind; 6- Florida citrus center; 7- Zenith; 8- The Righteous Brothers, e.g.; 9- Tree plantations; 10- Son of Isaac and Rebekah; 11- Put ____ on it!; 12- Up ____ good; 15- Ecstasy; 23- Impresario Hurok; 25- Actress Alicia; 26- Flip out; 27- Femme fatale; 28- Anger; 29- Annoy; 30- Utopian; 31- Monte ____; 32- Made do, with "out"; 33- Colombian city; 34- 9 to 5; 37- Altered; 40- Arctic; 42- Cartoon Chihuahua; 43- Comfortably familiar; 45- Cry ____ River; 46- Doze; 48- Stalks; 49- Chief god of ancient Greece; 50- ____ boy!; 51- Golfer Norman; 52- Gillette brand; 54- In ____ land; 55- Pub offerings; 56- Rubber overshoe; 59- ____ Lingus;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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MEDIA

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED IS THE LATEST NEWS OUTLET DAMAGED BY AN AI EXPERIMENT GONE WRONG

DAVID BAUDER, NEW YORK

COMPUTER-GENERATED Writers ... writing computer-generated stories?

Sports Illustrated is the latest media company to see its reputation damaged by being less than forthcoming — if not outright dishonest — about who or what is writing its stories at the dawn of the artificial intelligence age.

The once-powerful publication said it was firing a company that produced articles for its website written under the byline of authors who apparently don't exist. But it denied a published report that stories themselves were written by an artificial intelligence tool.

Earlier this year, experiments with AI went awry at both the Gannett newspaper chain and the CNET technology website. Many companies are testing the new technology at a time when human workers fear it could cost jobs. But the process is fraught in journalism, which builds and markets its values-based products around the notions of truth and transparency.

While there's nothing wrong in media companies experimenting with artificial intelligence, "the mistake is in trying to hide it, and in doing it poorly," said Tom Rosenstiel, a University of Maryland professor who teaches journalism ethics.

"If you want to be in the truth-telling business, which journalists claim they do, you shouldn't tell lies," Rosenstiel said. "A secret is a form of lying."

"A secret is a form of lying."

CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS OF WHAT HAPPENED

Sports Illustrated, now run as a website and once-monthly publication by the Arena Group, at one time was a weekly in the Time Inc. stable of magazines known for its sterling writing. "Its ambitions were grand," said Jeff Jarvis, author of "Magazine," a book he describes as an elegy for the industry.

On Monday, the Futurism website reported that Sports Illustrated used stories for product reviews that had authors it could not identify. Futurism found a picture of one author listed, Drew Ortiz, on a website that sells AI-generated portraits.

The magazine's author profile said that "Drew has spent much of his life outdoors, and is excited to guide you through his never-ending list of the best products to keep you from falling to the perils of nature."

Upon questioning Sports Illustrated, Futurism said all of the authors with AI-generated

portraits disappeared from the magazine's website. No explanation was offered.

Futurism quoted an unnamed person at the magazine who said artificial intelligence was used in the creation of some content as well — "no matter how much they say that it's not."

Sports Illustrated said the articles in question were created by a third-party company, AdVon Commerce, which assured the magazine that they were written and edited by humans. AdVon had its writers use a pen name, "actions we don't condone," Sports Illustrated said.

"We are removing the content while our internal investigation continues and have since ended the partnership," the magazine said. A message to AdVon wasn't immediately returned on Tuesday.

In a statement, the Sports Illustrated Union said it was horrified by the Futurism story.

"We demand answers and transparency from Arena group management about what exactly has been published under the SI name," the union said. "We demand the company commit to adhering to basic journalistic standards, including not publishing computer-written stories by fake people."

NOT THE FIRST SUCH SITUATION

Gannett paused an experiment at some of its newspapers this summer in which AI was used to generate articles on high school sports events, after errors were discovered. The articles carried the byline "LedeAI."

Some of the unpleasant publicity that resulted might have been avoided if the newspapers had been explicit about the role of technology, and how it helped create articles that journalists might not have been available to do, Jarvis said. Gannett said a lack of staff had nothing to do with the experiment.

This past winter, it was reported that CNET had used AI to create explanatory news articles about financial service topics attributed to "CNET Money Staff." The only way for readers to learn that technology was involved in the writing was to click on that author attribution.

Only after its experiment was discovered and written about by other publications did CNET discuss it with readers. In a note, then-editor Connie Guglielmo said that 77 machine-generated stories were posted, and that several required corrections. The site subsequently made it more

clear when AI is being used in story creation.

"The process may not always be easy or pretty, but we're going to continue embracing it, and any new technology that we believe makes life better," Guglielmo wrote.

Other companies have been more up front about their experiments. BuzzFeed, for example, attributed a travel article on Santa Barbara, Calif., to writer Emma Heegar and Buzzy the Robot, "our creative AI assistant."

"We'll be developing content that is AI-native — cool new things that you couldn't do at all without AI — and things that are enhanced by AI but created by humans," BuzzFeed said in a note to readers.

The Associated Press has been using technology to assist in articles about financial earnings reports since 2014, and more recently in some sports stories. At the end of each such story is a note that explains technology's role in its production, a spokeswoman said.

For instance, a short article about an upcoming NBA matchup earlier this month had this note at the end: "The Associated Press created this story using technology provided by Data Skrive and data from Sportradar." **MDT/AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

GOLF

Tiger sounds more optimistic about his game than a Saudi deal getting done on time

DOUG FERGUSON,
MDT/AP GOLF WRITER

TIGER Woods sounded more optimistic about playing golf next year than he did about the PGA Tour finalizing a deal with Saudi Arabia or private investors by the end of the year.

Woods addressed reporters Tuesday for the first time in nearly eight months, and so much has happened since then — fusion surgery on his right ankle that kept him out of golf, the PGA Tour's shocking agreement with the backers of LIV Golf and his decision to join the PGA Tour board for the first time in his career.

He is playing the Hero World Challenge, his holiday event in the Bahamas for 20 top players. Woods said his ankle — but not the rest of his body — is pain-free and even suggested he hopes that he can play once a month next year, starting with the Genesis Invitational at Riviera.



AP FILE PHOTO

Woods was most candid about his frustration that he and other players were blindsided by the secret negotiations by PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan and two high-profi-

le board members that led to the agreement announced June 6 with the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia.

"We were very frustrated with what happened and we took steps going forward to ensure

that the player involvement ... we were not going to be left out of the process like we were," he said. "So part of that process was putting me on the board and accepting that position."

He also expressed faith in Monahan as one reason he agreed to join the board, "what he can do going forward and what can't happen again."

He was far more vague on details, not surprising since the board negotiations are private. Woods said only there were options, a lot of moving parts and that all sides were working aggressively toward finalizing a deal.

"All the parties are talking and we're aggressively working on trying to get a deal done," he said. "We're all trying to make sure that the process is better, too. So the implementation of governance is one of the main topics (along) with getting the deal done, but making sure it's done the right way."

The agreement for a for-pro-

fit commercial enterprise was with PIF and the European tour. Now there are five private equity groups wanting to get involved, such as Fenway Sports Group and a Friends of Golf, a group that includes Henry Kravis and George Roberts.

The agreement announced in June set a Dec. 31 deadline to be finalized, though there was a clause that it could be extended.

"I am confident a deal will get done in some way," Woods said. "Whether that comes Dec. 31 or is pushed back, all sides understand we're working together."

Among the topics is a fair pathway back to the tour for LIV players who want to return, and where team golf can fit in. He said the future appeared just as murky for those working on the agreement as it might seem to those on the outside.

"There's a lot of moving parts on how we're going to play, whether it's here on the PGA Tour or it's merging or team golf," he said. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

Business Views

Wyatte Grantham-Philips, MDT/AP



WHY GAS PRICES HAVE FALLEN OR REMAINED STEADY FOR 10 WEEKS

It's not just you. Across the U.S., prices at the pump have felt milder in recent months.

Gas prices have fallen or remained steady since Sep. 19 — marking about a 70-day trajectory of decline, Andrew Gross, spokesperson for motor club AAA, said Tuesday.

As of Tuesday, the national average for gas prices stood just below \$3.25, according to AAA. That's down 25 cents from a month ago and 30 cents less than this time last year. Experts point to a recent decline in oil prices and a seasonal dip in demand, as well as easing inflation.

Each penny decline in the national average saves motorists close to \$3.8 million, according to Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "If you amplify that times 30 cents, we're talking about Americans that are spending hundreds of millions less on gasoline today than they were a year ago."

Despite the drop, the global energy market can be volatile and lower gas prices down the road aren't promised. Here's what you need to know.

A few factors contribute to today's gas prices, but a big explanation behind the decline is seasonality. In other words, prices at the pump almost always ease at this time of year.

For starters, there's a switch to winter blend gasoline — which is cheaper to produce than the summer blend, Gross notes. And, despite some upticks around the holidays, shorter days make hitting the road less enticing in the colder months.

Beyond demand, experts also point to declining oil costs. Prices at the pump are highly dependent on crude oil, which is the main ingredient in gasoline. West Texas Intermediate crude, the U.S. benchmark, has stayed in the high-to-mid \$70s for the past three weeks — standing at about \$76 a barrel as of Tuesday afternoon, down from over \$82 a month ago.

Oil is a global commodity, so events impacting production and supply such as the Russia-Ukraine war can be felt domestically. There's also been a notable uptick in U.S. production that is "helping to keep a lid on prices" today, De Haan said.

At the start of October, American oil production hit an all-time high of 13.2 million barrels per day, passing the previous record set in early 2020 by 100,000 barrels. Average production has since remained at that level, according to the government's latest data through the week of Nov. 17.

While the downward trend in gas prices is expected to continue at least into the New Year, anything's possible. Some experts point to the potential of more cuts from major producing OPEC+ countries — which boosted energy prices in the past.

Earlier this year, Saudi Arabia and Russia notably extended their voluntary oil production cuts through the end of this year, trimming 1.3 million barrels of crude out of the global market. Some speculate that OPEC+ could announce further cuts in an upcoming meeting, which was reportedly postponed until Thursday.

Still, the meeting delay signals that there may be disagreements within OPEC+, so it's "going to be a wildcard to watch," De Haan said. If a surprise announcement does arrive, it's hard to predict the impact — but consequences could also be brief or minimal, Gross added, especially if the market is already anticipating more cuts.

Among today's global backdrop is also the Israel-Hamas war. The breakout of violence initially slowed the fall in oil prices, but that progressively changed, Gross said — noting the war has not expanded to large oil producing countries in the Middle East. Still, the future remains uncertain.

[Abridged]

The global economy, which has proved surprisingly resilient this year, is expected to falter next year under the strain of wars, still-elevated inflation and continued high interest rates.

The Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimated yesterday that international growth would slow to 2.7% in 2024 from an expected 2.9% pace this year. That would amount to the slowest calendar-year growth since the pandemic year of 2020.

A key factor is that the OECD expects the world's two biggest economies, the United States and China, to decelerate next year. The U.S. economy is forecast to expand just 1.5% in 2024, from 2.4% in 2023, as

the Federal Reserve's interest rate increases — 11 of them since March 2022 — continue to restrain growth.

The Fed's higher rates have made borrowing far more expensive for consumers and businesses and, in the process, have helped slow inflation from its four-decade peak in 2022. The OECD foresees U.S. inflation dropping from 3.9% this year to 2.8% in 2024 and 2.2% in 2025, just above the Fed's 2% target level.

The Chinese economy, beset by a destructive real estate crisis, rising unemployment and slowing exports, is expected to expand 4.7% in 2024, down from 5.2% this year.

AP PHOTO



A Japan's coast guard vessel conducts search and rescue operation around the site where a U.S. military Osprey aircraft was believed to crash in the sea off Okinawa

US AIRCRAFT WITH SIX ABOARD CRASHES OFF SOUTHERN JAPAN, ONE DEAD

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

A crew member who was recovered from the ocean after a U.S. military Osprey aircraft carrying six people crashed yesterday off southern Japan has been pronounced dead, coast guard officials said.

The cause of the crash and the status of the five others on the aircraft were not immediately known, coast guard spokesperson Kazuo Ogawa said. Initial reports said the aircraft was carrying eight people, but the U.S. military later revised the number to six, he said.

The coast guard received an emergency call from a fishing boat near the crash site off Yakushima, an island south of Kagoshima on the southern main island of Kyushu, he said.

Coast guard aircraft and patrol boats found one person, who was later pronounced dead at a nearby hospital, and gray-colored debris believed to be from the aircraft, Ogawa said. They were found about 1 kilometer off the eastern coast of Yakushima. An empty inflatable life raft was also found in the area.

"The government will

confirm information about the damage and place the highest priority on saving lives," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters.

The Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter, but during flight can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster like an airplane. Versions of the aircraft are flown by the U.S. Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force.

Ogawa said the aircraft had departed from the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi prefecture and crashed on its way to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa.

Japanese Vice Defense Minister Hiroyuki Miyazawa said the Osprey had attempted an emergency sea landing.

Kyodo News agency, quoting Kagoshima prefectural officials, said witnesses reported seeing fire coming from the Osprey's left engine.

It said a Japanese military base in Saga in southern Japan decided to postpone planned Osprey flight exercises today.

U.S. and Japanese officials said the aircraft be-

longed to Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo. U.S. Air Force officials at Yokota said they were still confirming information and had no immediate comment.

Ospreys have had a number of accidents in the past, including in Japan, where they are deployed at both U.S. and Japanese military bases. In Okinawa, where about half of the 50,000 American troops in Japan are based, Gov. Denny Tamaki told reporters yesterday that he will ask the U.S. military to suspend all Osprey flights in Japan.

In December 2016, a U.S. Marine Corps Osprey crashed off the Okinawa coast, injuring two of the five crew members and triggering complaints among local residents about the U.S. bases and the Osprey's safety record.

A U.S. Marine Corps Osprey with 23 Marines aboard crashed on a north Australian island in August, killing at least three and critically injuring at least five during a multinational training exercise.

It was the fifth fatal crash of a Marine Osprey since 2012, bringing the death toll at that time to at least 19. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Dubai prepared to host the COP28 climate talks as world leaders including Joe Biden and Pope Francis signaled they would not be attending the negotiations that come during the ongoing Israel-Hamas war roiling the wider Middle East. Workers under a still-scorching November sun stapled up bunting and decorated Dubai Expo City's iconic Al Wasl Dome with trees and other green foliage ahead of the summit, scheduled to start today in the UAE.

AP PHOTO



Germany A German-Israeli singer who claimed he had been turned away from a hotel in the eastern German city of Leipzig because he was wearing a Star of David pendant, admitted during a defamation trial against him that he had made up the story. The proceedings against Gil Ofarim (pictured) for defamation and false accusation at a district court in Leipzig were subsequently dropped following his surprising confession. dpa reported.

AP PHOTO



Sweden's economy shrank in the third quarter of 2023 to mark the second time of contraction and signal that a recession may have hit the country. Data released yesterday by Statistics Sweden showed that the country's gross domestic product declined by 0.3% in the period ending in October. The decline is mainly explained by inventory liquidation and lower household consumption.