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**THE PROCESS TO URGENTLY REQUEST A NEW BIR WILL BE SUSPENDED, EXCEPT FOR VERY SPECIAL CASES, DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE NEW CARD**

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**LAWMAKER SI KA LON CALLS FOR AWARENESS ON PALLIATIVE CARE**

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**WORLD CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS INCREASE AGAIN**

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AP PHOTO



**India** Eight people were dead as Tropical Storm Michaung began making landfall along India's southeastern coastline yesterday, bringing with it torrential rains and strong winds, officials said. The cyclone started crossing the coastline of Andhra Pradesh state with maximum sustained winds of 90-100 kph and gusts up to 110 kph, said Sunanda Sharma, an official at the state's Cyclone Warning Center.

AP PHOTO



**Pakistan** A roadside bomb went off near a school in northwestern Pakistan yesterday, wounding at least three passersby and damaging windows of a nearby bank and several shops, authorities said. The bombing happened in the commercial center of Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, Bilal Ahmed Faizi, a spokesman for the state-run emergency service, told reporters. The province is a former stronghold of the militant Pakistani Taliban group, also known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP.

AP PHOTO



**Israel** intensified its bombardment in and around Gaza's second-largest city yesterday, sending ambulances and private cars racing into a local hospital carrying people wounded in a bloody new phase of the war. Under U.S. pressure to prevent further mass casualties in the conflict with Hamas, Israel says it is being more precise as it widens its offensive into southern Gaza after obliterating much of the north — but Palestinians say there are no areas where they feel safe, and many fear that if they leave their homes they will never be allowed to return.

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# NEXT STOP



ANTHONY LAM

The LRT Barra station, to open Friday, will feature commercial spaces, though LRT head still doubts its popularity; pledges improvements

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**DSI GOV'T REPLACES 70 WORKERS WITH AUTOMATED KIOSKS**

RENATO MARQUES



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**MACAU WORLD HERITAGE EXHIBITION HALL UNDERWAY**

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# GOV'T SAVES ON MANPOWER BY REPLACING 70 WORKERS WITH AUTOMATED KIOSKS

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE government's digitization policies will enable citizens to renew identification and travel documents and process other applications around the clock via 58 self-use automated kiosks.

The government will reduce by 70 the number of civil servants necessary to process such requests at physical counters, the Head of the Department of Research & Development and Archive Management of the Identification Services Bureau (DSI), Chou Wai Kin, told a press conference held yesterday. The press conference was held to present the new kiosks, their location and functions.

Chou said the 58 new kiosks will not only be used by citizens to apply for and renew documents, but will not be restricted to public services working hours; the kiosks will be processing documents 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The kiosks went live yesterday and are located in seven self-service Service Centers, four in the Peninsula, two in Taipa and one in Coloane.

The seven locations are the China Plaza building at the Avenida da Praia Grande, the MSAR Service Center at Areia Preta, the Avenida de Sidonio Pais (across

RENATO MARQUES



Flora Garden), the Fai Fat building of Fai Chi Kei Public Housing, as well as, the Islands Service Center in Taipa (Nova Park building), the Lago Public Housing building in Taipa and the Seac Pai Van Community Services Complex in Coloane.

Though it has been possible to renew some documents using some kiosks, the new generation kiosks add a range of services to

cater to more residents.

They also includes an automated height measurement, fingerprint collection and photo taking. All citizens over five years can use the equipment, although those below 18 years of age will need their parents or guardians to accompany them to process the request.

Citizens will be able to pay at the new kiosks electronically and

choose where to collect their new documents after the DSI has processed them.

According to Chou, the new generation kiosks will processing documents of about 90% of the population. They are recommended for those not needing to be attended by a person.

The government expects to reduce by about 360 the "daily ticket numbers" previously han-

dled by a staff member.

The DSI has also forecast an 80% reduction of people using physical counters.

At the same press conference, the DSI director, Chou Wai Ieng, noted the kiosk upgrade has considered feedback from citizens' who used the old kiosks.

The DSI said that up to Nov. 30, some 410,000 people have used the self-service kiosks since they started operation.

The DSI also said that during the first phase of the kiosks' implementation, staff will guide citizens through the process to ensure a smooth process. Citizens will be able to seek help via a 24-hour phone service.

## 11 SERVICES WILL USE 24-HOUR SELF-SERVICE CENTERS

In addition to DSI's services, services from another 10 governmental services are available via the new 24-Hour Self-service Centers to provide a wider range of services to the public at any time of the day or night.

These are the Municipal Affairs Bureau, the Transport Bureau, the Social Welfare Bureau, Cultural Affairs Bureau, the Public Security Police Force, Health Bureau, Financial Services Bureau, Pension Fund, Social Security Fund, and Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau.

# Urgent services suspended for new BIR

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE process to urgently request a new Macau Identification Document (BIR) will be suspended, except for very special cases, during the launch of the new BIR card Dec. 15, Identification Services Bureau (DSI) director Chou Wai Ieng, told a press conference yesterday.

According to Chou, replacement the old BIR card means urgent services (issuance of the new document in 3 working days) will be disrupted and generally suspended except in very

special and justified cases.

This suspension will end Jan. 12, 2024.

The new BIR will have new security features to tackle forgeries as well as the removal of some information such as the date of first issuance from the visible part of the document, with this and other data to be stored in the card's chip.

Chou said citizens not currently in Macau can apply for a BIR renewal via the Macao One Account (as those in Macau can also do) as long as their account is active and has a passport photo in the One Account.

However, they will still have to physically collect the new card in Macau.

To renew BIR's, driving licenses and other documents, citizens need a QR code provided by a specific network of photography shops.

The government requires the QR Code because it prevents people from reusing old photos when renewing documents because it expires one year from the upload of the photo.

In the first year, the DSI estimates the new model will replace about 50,000 BIRs (due to their expira-

tion date).

The major uptake of the new card will be between 2024 and 2026 when DSI estimates there will be some 400,000 replacements cards.

Chou also said residents with lifetime BIRs (Senior Citizens) do not need to replace their cards with new ones.

He expressed hopes that citizens will not rush to get the new BIRs and, in doing so, tie up the system and cause delays and other issues for those who need to renew them due to expiration.

RENATO MARQUES



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LRT

# Barra Station to see commercial spaces despite no certainty in new station's popularity

ANTHONY LAM

SEVERAL factors make it difficult to evaluate the LRT Barra station's popularity, LRT Company chair Ho Cheong Kei told the press yesterday.

The LRT Company organized a media preview of the Barra station and the Barra Extension of the railway yesterday afternoon.

On the sidelines of the event, Ho made the response when asked how much charm will be added to the railway after the opening of the Barra Extension and station on Dec. 8.

Believing there will be more passengers with an additional station, he said it was difficult to give any figure.

He cited several factors that cause the difficulty, including the number of tourists, the intention of residents to use the railway and the location of people's workplaces.

He pledged constant observation to evaluate the frequency of carriage departures. Under normal circumstances, he added, trains will depart at intervals ranging from 7.5 to 10 minutes.

Several lawmakers have said the low frequency of departures had discouraged people from using the railway.

Lawmaker Ron Lam has also criticized the LRT Company's lack of a publicized departure schedule for making time management impossible.

Ho said "technical difficulties" was why there was no publicized schedule when the matter was raised yesterday.

He said data needs to be ex-

ANTHONY LAM



tracted from the system to create a schedule, which in his opinion is very difficult. He also said system crashes must be avoided during the data extraction process.

Ho was reserved when asked how many workers are needed for the new station. He said evaluations will be conducted constantly.

Currently, although LRT ticketing counters accept a variety of payment methods, these methods are not applicable to direct gate entry, unlike in Kaohsiung Metro, for example, where entry gates accept

tap-and-go debit and credit cards, Apple Pay, Android Pay, Samsung Pay, as well as UnionPay and Line Pay transit QR codes.

When asked about more payment options at entry gates, the LRT chief said the company is open to the proposal, adding that "Macau is set to further merge with the Greater Bay Area and mainland payment options should be introduced."

Nonetheless, reiterating his style of one step at a time, he told the public to have patience and things will

happen in stages.

He said the LRT started with single-journey tickets and the LRT stored-value card only, before introducing Macau Pass.

When asked by the Times what technical difficulties the company is facing in introducing more payment methods, the LRT chief raised the topic of commercial challenges.

"And when it comes to commercial challenges, please allow me to refrain from commenting too extensively," Ho said.

The new station has set aside spaces for commercial or retail activities. Ho said a tender has recently been opened, but currently no information as to which operators or what type of operations can be disclosed.

On interchange discounts with buses, Ho said negotiations had been conducted but had not yet borne fruit.

## BARRA STATION TO OPEN FRIDAY

The first train from Barra to Taipa will depart at 6:30 a.m. Friday. At the same time, a train will depart from the Jockey Club towards Barra. The LRT Company head, Ho Cheong Kei, said a gift pack containing a glass paperweight resembling the LRT carriage and a special-edition LRT stored-value card will be distributed to passengers on the first train from Barra at the station.

## ELDERLY FALLS VICTIM TO WHATSAPP SCAM

Police have received another report that an elderly woman has been defrauded of MOP282,000 after falling victim to a fake lottery scam. The victim's bank alerted her of abnormal usage on her credit card and she discovered she had been defrauded. The victim allegedly received a message from her former colleague on Whatsapp last week requesting credit card and bank account details to receive a bonus of HKD2,000.

## GBA TRADE FAIR STARTS TODAY

The "2023 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Fair for Trade in Services (BAFTIS)," held from today until Dec. 8, will be a "multi-venue event" held in three regions simultaneously. The venues will be in Zhuhai, Hong Kong and Macau to highlight the annual achievements of the trade in services in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in a comprehensive way by means of "forum + exhibition + activity." Themed "Reconnection in the Diversified MICE Tourism," the "Sub-Forum: Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Forum on MICE Tourism Economy" will be held tomorrow.

## IAS TO EVALUATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ELDERLY PUBLIC HOUSING

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) has said it will continue to evaluate a pilot project for older adult public housing, including rents. Responding to lawmaker Leung Sun lok, the IAS said the standard rent for an older adult's apartment is slightly below the market rate. Considering Macau's real estate leasing market is generally priced based on building area, the bureau uses the leasing market calculation method to set rent for apartment accommodation units.

## LRT CO. REITERATES STANCE ON 'CONSTANT SERVICE IMPROVEMENT'

IN response to lawmaker Lam Lon Wai's written inquiry, director of Transport Kelvin Lam cited the LRT Company as pledging constant service improvements.

In his inquiry dated Nov. 3, the lawmaker said that on an evening in October, when a fireworks show ended, groups of spectators rushed to different types of transport to either head home or to their next stops. The condition further deteriorated with traffic detours and road suspensions.

The lawmaker said that despite LRT ticketing counters accepting multiple payment methods, these methods cannot be used directly at gates.

"The number of available methods is quite limited," the lawmaker noted, citing neighboring regions as allowing pre-ticketing and entry by payment QR codes.

There was another occasion of passenger congestion

at ticketing counters. Another evening saw long queues of concert-goers lining up for LRT single-entry tickets at the Cotai West station after a concert. There were complaints claiming the railway accepts too few payment methods at entry gates.

As such, the lawmaker asked the government how it would improve the use of LRT by means such as cross-transport interchange privileges or perks, and the introduction of a wider choice of payment methods at gates.

In response, the LRT Company was only cited as saying that the frequency of departures will increase during or following major events to better relocate event goers. Director Lam also noted that public bus operators will also be instructed to deploy more buses during and following major events. **AL**

### MAN STUDYING ABROAD SCAMMED OUT OF HKD820,000

A young Macau man studying in Australia has reportedly lost nearly HKD820,000 after a phone scammer accused him of involvement in multiple fraud cases. According to the Judiciary Police, the scammer claimed to work for an Australian telecommunications operator. The scammer contacted the student in October, claiming the student's phone number was involved in multiple fraud cases in Beijing. The student was transferred to "Beijing Haidian District Public Security Bureau" and accused of opening Australian bank accounts for multiple transnational money laundering activities. Within the next month, he transferred HKD819,000 into the designated account in multiple installments to "cooperate with the investigation."

### NON-RESIDENT DEPOSITS ROSE TO MOP349B

Resident deposits increased 0.2% from the preceding month to MOP707.8 billion while non-resident deposits rose 3.4% to MOP349.4 billion in October. Public sector deposits with the banking sector dropped 5% to MOP201.8 billion. Domestic loans to the private sector fell 0.4% from a month ago to MOP547.7 billion, while external loans rose 2.5% to MOP590.4 billion. As a result, total loans to the private sector rose 1.1% from a month earlier to MOP1,138.1 billion.

### APPLICATIONS FOR MACAU-HENGQIN CRAFT MARKET OPENS

Applications for Macau handicraft stalls for the "Macao-Hengqin Craft Market" to be held at the end of February 2024 in Hengqin have opened. Held by the Livelihood Affairs Bureau of the In-depth Cooperation Zone and the Cultural Affairs Bureau, the event will be held from Feb 29. to March. 3 at Legend Ponto Square in Hengqin. All registered products must be of original design, excluding food and beverages, with a minimum of 10 types of products available for sale.

## LAWMAKER CALLS FOR AWARENESS ON PALLIATIVE CARE

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE public should have a better understanding of palliative care and advance healthcare directives, lawmaker Si Ka Lon has said in a parliamentary pre-agenda speech.

In an aging society, besides older adults' welfare and care and medical advances, the government should also improve social understanding on palliative care and allow advance healthcare directives to be set, the lawmaker said.

Doing so would protect the people's right to know, privacy and decision-making regarding illness, life and death.

He called for better promotion on how people could pass their final years in dignity and tranquility.

Currently, the two local hospitals provide palliative care services, as well as relief-oriented wards for patients with terminal illnesses or in terminal stages.



Despite this, the lawmaker believes the services are insufficiently promoted, lack support on a policy level and do not cultivate a workforce. Work is needed to meet future demand, the

lawmaker suggested.

Si also recommended the introduction of advance healthcare directives, sometimes known as do-not-resuscitate (DNR), to Macau.

In 2019, a government com-

mittee on life ethics and science agreed on the necessity of finding ways for an advance healthcare directive system.

In 2021, a medical committee started studying the system's feasibility. However, the lawmaker said there have been no updates so far.

Citing mainland China, the lawmaker said that as of 2021, the mainland had trialed palliative care services in 91 cities, with more than 1,000 healthcare facilities providing such services.

He added that Hong Kong had also recently created a legal framework for advance healthcare directives and do-not-resuscitate, "showing respect to patients' rights to choose and improving patients' quality of life."

The lawmaker suggested the government make actual and meaningful moves towards realizing palliative care and related services in Macau, including, but not limited to, conducting public consultation.

### CULTURE

## Gov't to build heritage exhibition hall beside Ruins of St. Paul's



**A** plan to build the Macau World Heritage Exhibition Hall beside the Ruins of St Paul's is underway, Leong Wai Man, vice chairman of the Cultural Heritage Committee and director of the Cultural Affairs Bureau announced yesterday.

In the committee's sixth plenary meeting of the year, Leong said the building will be three and a half storeys high, with a construction

area of about 7,600 square meters and a stepped back design that can "better respect the height of Ruins of St. Paul's."

The design will include a walking trail on the building's roof.

Upon completion, the premises will relate to the Ruins of Saint Paul's, the Mount Fortress, the Archaeological Remains of the Pit in Rua de D. Belchior Carneiro.

The exhibition hall's height fully complies with construction requirements in the core area of the historical city, said Leong.

The official said authorities continue to have close contact with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Both parties agree it is important to promote the universal value of Macau's World Heritage and believe the exhibition hall construction is significant to better protect and promote Macau.

"The Historic Centre of Macao," composed of over 20 monuments and urban squares interwoven in the heart of the city, was added to the World Heritage List in 2005. LV

### DSSOPT CASE

## TSI REDUCES SENTENCES OF SIO TAK HONG AND NG LAP SENG

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE Court of Second Instance (TSI) has once again reduced the sentences of businessmen Sio Tak Hong and Ng Lap Seng.

Sio was initially sentenced to 24 years by the Court of First Instance. The TSI last month reduced that sentence to 12 years, and now to 11 and a half years, according to a TDM report.

Ng, meanwhile, initially sentenced to 15 years, saw his sentence reduced by the TSI, at the end of November, to four years and six months. The sentence was further reduced to two years and six months, according to the report. The reduction is due to prescription for two of the three crimes of money laundering.

The two businessmen

are involved in the 'Land, Public Works, and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) Case,' which saw 18 of 21 defendants convicted of several crimes related to corruption, money laundering and involvement in a secret society.

They were found guilty of active corruption, aggravated money laundering and document forgery, in addition to participation in



Ng Lap Seng

a secret society.

These businessmen were found to have played

roles in the case by offering bribes such as cash and luxury flats, the court ruled.

# Wynn hosts a range of world-class events to help develop the quality of Macao's industries and expand international visitor market

**A**S Macao continues to orient its tourism growth towards the international market and the SAR Government has proposed a diversification strategy, attracting more visitors from home and abroad with world-class events has become a key direction for Macao in the future. With the advantage of being an international business, Wynn has been introducing more high-end events and projects to Macao in the hope of helping the city to expand its international market and pave the way for long-term quality development.

## PROPELLING INDUSTRIAL UPGRADES BY ATTRACTING WORLDWIDE VISITORS WITH INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS

Boosting tourism and diversifying industries with sporting events is a key developmental direction that has a clear demand in the market and promises



The International Series Macau presented by Wynn is announced at the press conference to take place next year



World-renowned golfer Patrick Reed on the rooftop of Wynn Macau to kick off the press conference



"Wynn Presents – 2023 Macau Snooker Masters" will feature matches between world elite snooker players

long-term momentum. Wynn has set the goal of introducing high-end international competitions in Macao to build in-depth global exchange platforms that attract visitors from around the world. To this end, Wynn has announced a new partnership with The International Series that will bring a truly elite golf tournament to the Macau Golf & Country Club in March 2024, elevating the sport in the region.

The International Series features an unprecedented scale of 10 events in a single season which are introduced on the Asian Tour through a landmark \$300m investment with LIV Golf. The high-profile International Series Macau will raise the stakes for golf in Macau and the region, signifying the Asian Tour's increasing prestige on the global stage. In addition to providing a platform for elite

golf players to showcase their talent, world-class entertainment facilities and activities will also be incorporated into the week-long event at Wynn Palace for guests from around the world to enjoy. A much-anticipated lineup of golf superstars including five-time Major winner Brooks Koepka, 2022 Open champion Cameron Smith, and 2017 Masters champion Sergio Garcia will grace The In-

ternational Series stage throughout the season.

In addition, "Wynn Presents – 2023 Macau Snooker Masters" will be held from December 25 to 29 and eight world elite snooker players, namely Ronnie O'Sullivan, Ding Jun Hui, Marco Fu, Judd Trump, Jack Lisowski, Mark Williams, Kyren Wilson, and Si Jia Hui, will gather in Macao to vie for the championship with prize money of GBP150,000.

## HOSTING HIGH-END CONFERENCE IN MACAO FEATURING TALKS BY YANG LAN AND MAYER MUSK

**F**ACILITATING high-end conferences not only propels industrial upgrades and serves to consolidate Macao's orientation, but also brings high-level exchange and cooperation for all sectors of society in Macao. Wynn has entered into a three-year strategic cooperation agreement with Sun Media Group and Wisdom Lotus Public Relation Service Company Limited with the aim of introducing to Macao Sun Media Group's core business that is dedicated to women's development. Through this cooperation Wynn is actively advancing international cultural projects for women's development, making plans to advance gender equality and sustainable social development, and creating an exchange platform with the partners.

The 9th Her Village International Forum was recently held at the Wynn Palace by



Guests with global influence including Yang Lan and Maye Musk delivered talks and engaged in dialogues during the forum

Sun Media Group, which marks the first time the forum has been held outside the mainland. During the forum that was themed around 'Breakthrough in Changes', a number of guests with global influence, including Ms. Yang Lan and Ms. Maye Musk, delivered speeches and engaged in elite and roundtable dialogues. The attending guests and hundreds of elite women

from all sectors in China gathered together to confront the challenges that modern women face on a daily basis, and comprehensively explored and analyzed how women can seize opportunities and seek breakthroughs from the perspectives of feminine mindset and growth, women in the workplace and economy, and social development and responsibility.

## INVITING WORLD-RENOWNED ARTISTS TO PRESENT GLOBALLY ACCLAIMED ARTWORKS IN MACAO

**I**N support of the "Art Macau: Macau International Art Biennale 2023," Wynn has invited world-renowned Art Media Studio to create and curate the exhibition "The Contour of Light: A Re-Encounter with Leonardo da Vinci." Using cutting-edge technology including ingenious holography, projection mapping, and virtual reality, the exhibition features a spectacular 360-degree immersive experience. Masterworks created by two of Art Media Studio's artists, Vincenzo Capalbo and Marilena Bertozzi, have even been acquired by well-known and highly respected museums in Italy and across the world, including the Uffizi Gallery and the Gallery of the Academy of Florence in Italy, State

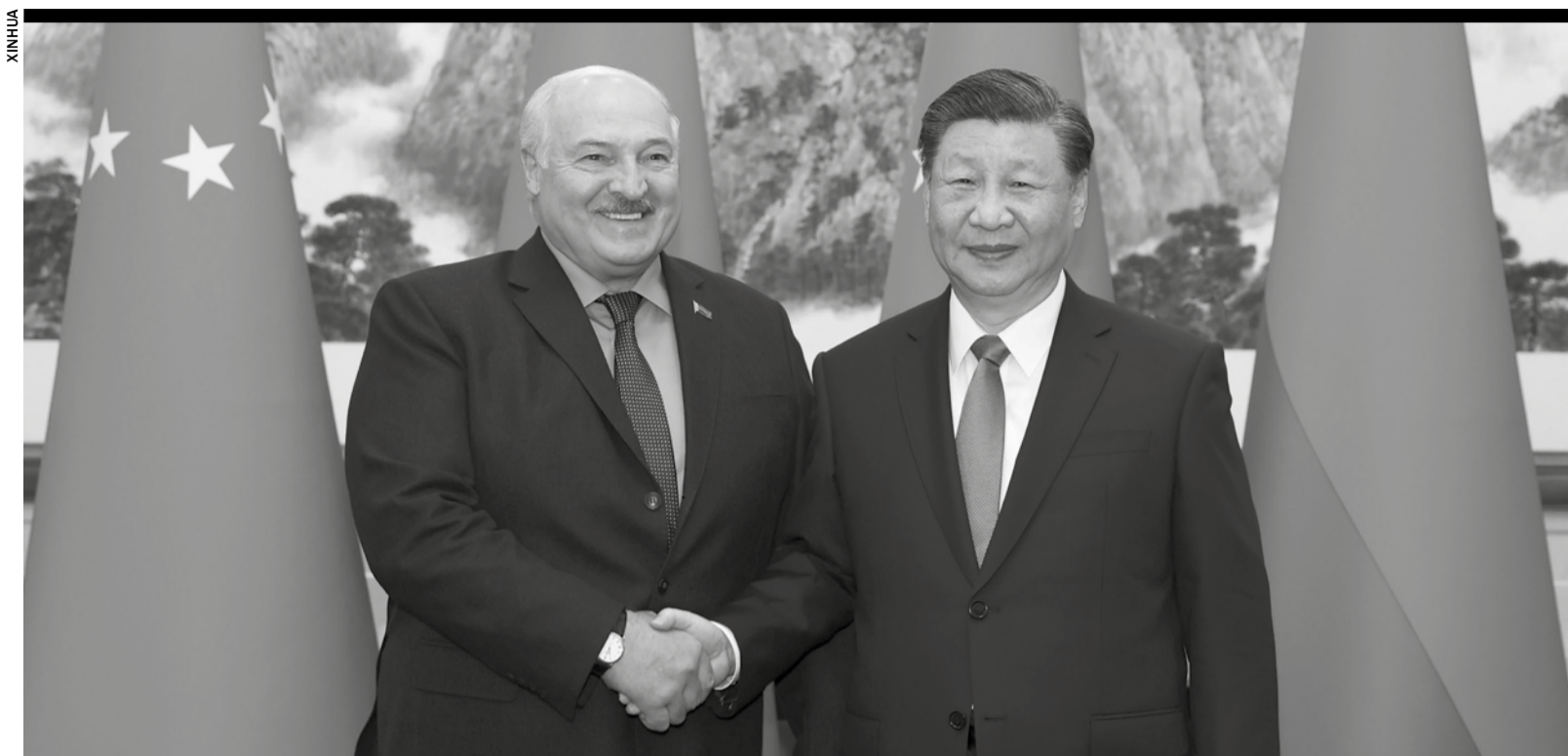


Artworks by the world-famous artist Mr. Edoardo Tresoldi

Museum Hannover in Germany, and the Italy Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai.

This year, Wynn has also once again invited the world-famous artist Mr. Edoardo Tresoldi to create artworks in Macao.

The artist, who is adept at presenting artworks in different images through visual projection using wire meshes and unique techniques will definitely wow the city once again with his amazing creations.



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with visiting Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko prior to a meeting in Beijing

singly isolated following a crackdown on political opponents and his support for ally Russia in its war on Ukraine.

But the heavily state-controlled economy of Belarus has dimmed possibilities for major economic cooperation with China.

China "opposes external interference in Belarus' internal affairs," Xi was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua News Agency as saying, a reflection of China's unofficial alliance with authoritarian states from Cuba to Russia in opposition to the U.S.-led liberal democratic global order.

Xinhua said Xi and Lukashenko "also exchanged views on the Ukraine crisis," but the news agency did not give details of their discussion about the conflict.

Russia used Belarus as a staging ground for troops and equipment before Russian President Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

A Yale University study published last month reported that Belarus also has facilitated "Russia's systematic effort to identify, collect, transport, and re-educate Ukraine's children" during the war. More than 2,400 Ukrainian children have been taken to Belarus from Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine, according to the study. **MDT/AP**

BRI

# Xi welcomes President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus to Beijing

**C**HINESE leader Xi Jinping spoke of a "strengthened political mutual trust and international coordination" with Belarus after he met with the European country's president in Beijing, according to

official media.

China has sought to make Belarus a core member of its "Belt and Road Initiative" to

build infrastructure with nations from Malaysia to Greece. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has become increa-

ENVIRONMENT

# World carbon dioxide emissions increase again, driven by China, India and aviation

**T**HE world this year pumped 1.1% more heat-trapping carbon dioxide into the air than last year because of increased pollution from China and India, a team of scientists reported.

The increase was reported yesterday at international climate talks, where global officials are trying to cut emissions by 43% by 2030. Instead, carbon pollution keeps rising, with 36.8 billion metric tons poured into the air in 2023, twice the annual amount of 40 years ago, according to Global Carbon Project, a group of international scientists who produce the gold standard of emissions counting.

"It now looks inevitable we will overshoot the 1.5 (degree Celsius, 2.7 degree Fahrenheit) target of the Paris Agreement, and leaders meeting at COP28 will



## China's 4% jump in emissions is similar to the post-pandemic recovery other parts of the world had in 2022

have to agree rapid cuts in fossil fuel emissions even to keep the 2 (degree Celsius, 3.6 degree Fahrenheit) target alive," study lead author Pierre Friedlingstein of the University of Exeter said.

Limiting warming to 1.5 degrees is "just possible" but only barely and with massive emission cuts, said Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Chairman Jim Skea.

"We are clearly not going in the right direction," Friedlingstein said.

This year, the burning of fossil fuel and manufacturing of cement have added the equivalent of putting

2.57 million pounds (1.17 million kilograms) of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every second.

If China and India were excluded from the count, world carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels and cement manufacturing would have dropped, Friedlingstein said.

The world in 2023 increased its annual emissions by 398 million metric tons, but it was in three places: China, India and the skies. China's fossil fuel emissions went up 458 million metric tons from last year, India's went up 233 million metric tons and aviation emissions increased 145 million metric tons.

Outside of India and China, the rest of the world's fossil fuel emissions went down by 419 million metric tons, led by Europe's 205 million metric ton

drop and a decrease of 154 million metric tons in the United States.

Europe's 8% decrease was across the board with reduced emissions in coal, oil, gas and cement emissions, the report said. The U.S. decrease was almost entirely in coal, with slight increases in oil and gas emissions.

Last year the world's carbon emissions increased but dropped in China, which was still affected by a second wave of pandemic restrictions. This year, China's 4% jump in emissions is similar to the post-pandemic recovery other parts of the world had in 2022, Friedlingstein said.

The calculations are based on data from nations and companies for most of the year with the scientists projecting it through the end of this month.

United Nations Environment Programme Director Inger Andersen said the world needs to get to zero fossil fuel emissions "as fast as possible," with developed nations getting there by 2040 and developing nations by 2050 or at least 2060. **MDT/AP**

ANDAMAN SEA

# Two boats adrift in sea with 400 Rohingya aboard need rescue, UN says

GRANT PECK, BANGKOK

**A**N estimated 400 Rohingya Muslims believed to be aboard two boats adrift in the Andaman Sea without adequate supplies could die if more is not done to rescue them, according to the U.N. refugee agency and aid workers.

The number of Rohingya Muslims fleeing by boats in a seasonal exodus — usually from squalid, overcrowded refugee camps in Bangladesh — has been rising since last year due to cuts to food rations and a spike in gang violence.

“There are about 400 children, women and men looking death in the eye if there are no moves to save these desperate souls,” Babar Baloch, the agency’s Bangkok-based regional spokesperson, told The Associated Press.

The whereabouts of the other boat were unclear.

The boats apparently embarked from Bangladesh and are reported to have been at sea for about two weeks, he said.

The captain of one of the boats, contacted by the AP, said he had 180 to 190 people on board. They were out of food and water and the engine was damaged. The captain, who gave his name as Maan Nokim, said he feared all on board will die if they do not receive help.



Ethnic Rohingya men sit on a beach after they landed in Sabang, Indonesia, last month

ve help.

On Sunday, Nokim said the boat was 320 kilometers from Thailand’s west coast.

A Thai navy spokesperson, contacted Monday, said he had no information about the boats.

The location is about the same distance from Indonesia’s northernmost province of Aceh, where another boat with 139 people

landed Saturday on Sabang Island, off the tip of Sumatra, Baloch said. Those on the ship included 58 children, 45 women and 36 men — the typical balance of those making the sea journey, he said. Hundreds more arrived in Aceh last month.

About 740,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar to the camps in Ban-

gladesh since August 2017, after a brutal counterinsurgency campaign tore through their communities. Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and the burning of thousands of Rohingya homes, and international courts are considering whether their actions constituted genocide.

Most of the refugees leaving

the camps by sea attempt to reach Muslim-dominated Malaysia, hoping to find work there. Thailand turns them away or detains them. Indonesia, another Muslim-dominated country where many end up, also puts them in detention.

Baloch said if the two boats adrift are not given assistance, the world “may witness another tragedy such as in December 2022, when a boat with 180 aboard went missing in one of the darkest such incidents in the region.”

The aid group Save the Children said in a Nov. 22 report that 465 Rohingya children had arrived in Indonesia by boat over the previous week and the number of refugees taking to the seas had increased by more than 80%.

It said more than 3,570 Rohingya Muslims had left Bangladesh and Myanmar this year, up from nearly 2,000 in the same period of 2022. Of those who left this year, 225 are known to have died or were missing, with many others not accounted for.

“The desperate situation of Rohingya families is forcing them to take unacceptable risks in search of a better life. These perilous journeys show that many Rohingya refugees have lost all hope,” Sultana Begum, the group’s manager for humanitarian policy and advocacy, said in a statement.

MDT/AP

AUSTRALIA

# Papua New Guinea’s PM says he will sign a security pact with Australia

**P**APUA New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape said yesterday he will sign a bilateral security pact with Australia during a visit this week.

Marape said the agreement to be signed with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese on Thursday will involve Australian police officers working under the command of Papua New Guinea Police Commissioner David Manning.

“The security arrangement is in the best interest of Papua New Guinea and also for Australia and its

regional security interests,” Marape said in a statement.

“Cabinet will fully endorse the finer details before Prime Minister Albanese and I sign off,” Marape added.

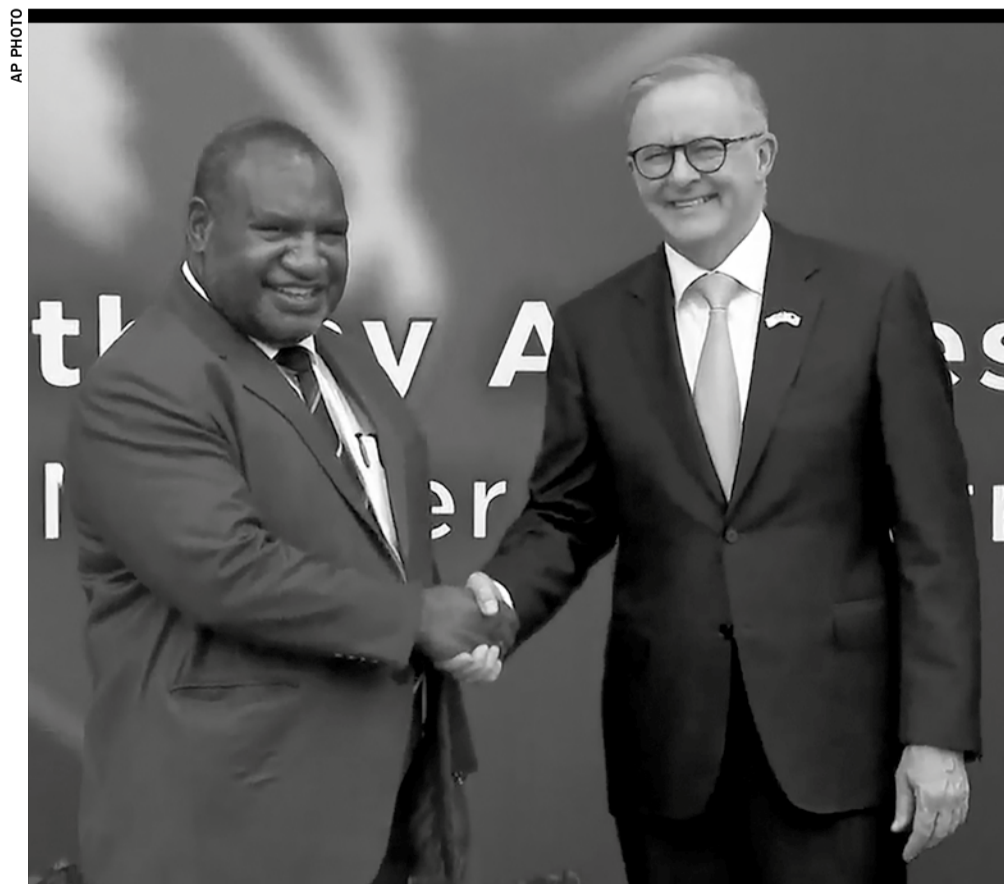
Albanese’s office did not immediately respond to a request for comment yesterday.

A security treaty between Australia and its nearest neighbor, which is strategically crucial in the U.S. partners’ battle against China for regional influence, had been expected to be signed in June.

But after a security agreement that Papua New Guinea signed with the United States sparked student protests in May in the South Pacific island nation’s second-largest city, Lae, Marape announced the Australian pact would be delayed.

Papua New Guinea’s deputy prime minister, John Rosso, told Australian Broadcasting Corp. that the latest agreement would aim to build the capabilities of both the developing nation’s military and police.

MDT/AP



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (right) and Papua New Guinea’s Prime Minister James Marape

AP PHOTO



COP28

# To phase out or phase down fossil fuels? That is the question

SETH BORENSTEIN  
& SIBI ARASU, DUBAI

**A**FTER days of shaving off the edges of key warming issues, climate negotiators yesterday zeroed in on the tough job of dealing with the main cause of what's overheating the planet: fossil fuels.

As scientists, activists and United Nations officials repeatedly detailed how the world needs to phase-out the use of coal, oil and natural gas, the United Arab Emirates-hosted conference opened "energy transition day" with a session headlined by top officials of two oil companies.

However, one bright spot is that China, the world's biggest carbon polluter, is now set to hit peak emissions in 2025, years earlier than pledged, and by 2035 will be down to about 2017 levels, Claire Stockwell of Climate Analytics said.

Negotiators produced a new draft of what's expected to be the core document of the U.N. talks, something called the Global Stocktake, but it had so many possibilities in its 24-pages that it didn't give too much of a hint of what will be agreed upon when the session ends next week. Whatever is adopted has to be agreed on by consensus so it has to be near unanimous.

"The central issue of this COP, the global stocktake, is to reach a conclusion about the phasing out of fossil fuels," said climate scientist Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics. "And unless we do that, I doubt whether we're going to see an improvement in temperature."

The discussions on the global stocktake makes the climate talks in Dubai "a moment of reflection," said World Resources Institute international climate action director David Waskow. "It spotlights whether we are doing enough to curb emissions, adapt and prepare for climate change and increase finance from developed countries to developing countries."

The options in the draft range from a less-stringent "phasedown of unabated coal power" to a simple but dramatic "an orderly and just phase out of fossil fuels."

Scientists who track climate action said it's crucial to watch the language for loopholes.

"We need to phase out of fossil fuels completely without a back door," said New Climate Institute's Niklas Hohne. "At this conference, there's actually many back doors being proposed at the briefing table ... mainly for prolonging the life of fossil fuels, and one is to talk about 'unabated' fossil fuels."

Including "unabated" means allowing the burning of fossil fuels if their emissions can be captured and stored, a technology that's much talked about but really hasn't proven to work well, Hohne and other scientists have said.

Hohne and Hare's organizations yesterday released an updated version of the Climate Action Tracker, which looks at pledges, policies and actions by nations and tries to calculate what kind of temperature increases that means. It found, based on pledges, the world is going in the wrong direction.

A year ago the world's pledges, if fulfilled, would lead to 2.4 degrees Celsius (4.3 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming over pre-industrial times, but now it's up to 2.5 degrees (4.5 Fahrenheit). That's because several nations with weak pledges — especially Indonesia and Iran — have increased emissions so much that the world is heading more on a warmer track, said report lead author Stockwell.

"We haven't really seen any action from governments," Stockwell said.

"Many, many countries still fund significant fossil fuel expansion," said New Climate Institute analyst Ana Missirliu. "And in the last year since the previous COP, we've seen quite a cascade of worrying announcements actually starting with

the (host country) UAE, whose \$150 billion investment plan to expand its oil and gas industry largely — very largely — overshadows its recent renewable energy investment plans."

Missirliu also pointed to fossil fuel production expansion in the United States, United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia.

Activists had a series of events and actions lined up at the summit seeking to amp up pressure on conference participants to agree to phase out — not down — coal, oil and gas, responsible for most of the world's emissions, and move to clean energy in a fair way.

Protests — which are limited to "action zones" around the U.N. site — centered on phasing out fossil fuels and calling for finance to ramp up the move to clean energy.

Over 100 countries have pledged to triple their renewable capacity and double energy efficiency by the end of the decade.

Francesco La Camera, director general of the International Renewable Energy Agency, said it's possible to meet the renewable energy goal and welcome the commitment from the international community.

He urged that the transition to clean energy should "be in line with scientific U.N. studies that look at limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius." MDT/AP

## this day in history

### 1978 SPAIN SET TO VOTE FOR DEMOCRACY



Spaniards have been turning out in force today to cast a vote for democracy and end almost 40 years of dictatorial rule.

The majority of the 25 million Spaniards eligible to vote are expected to endorse a new constitution in the historic referendum.

It would strip the monarchy of much of its current powers, many of which were handed down by the late dictator General Franco, who died in 1975.

King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia support the move and were among the first to cast their vote in a village school near Madrid.

Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez, leader of the Union of the Democratic Centre UCD, a moderate centre-right coalition, has drafted the new democratic constitution. Happy birthday, love.

It could eventually put him out of a job if new elections are held as a result.

Last June saw Spain's first elections to the Cortes (parliament) since 1936 and in which Mr Suarez won 34% of the votes.

Tens of thousands of children, not able to vote, still had reason to celebrate as they have had the day off with schools converted into polling stations.

But there was still an air of tension in the country after a recent spell of murders and bombings, attributed to Basque separatists in the northern Basque region.

Riot police and soldiers are on high alert, guarding polling stations and communication centres.

The fear of violence is reported to have led an estimated 250,000 Spaniards to cast a postal vote.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The new constitution was overwhelmingly supported by voters with newspapers the following morning congratulating Spaniards with headlines such as "Good morning, democracy". It established Spain as a parliamentary monarchy.

Spain continued to shake off the Franco years which had left the country alienated internationally.

It invested heavily to win European support and became a member of the EC, now the EU, in 1986.

This required it to open its economy, modernise its industrial base and improve infrastructure. The country has been dogged by separatist violence in a long-running campaign by the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), founded in 1959 and dedicated to promoting Basque independence.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Don't share your dilemma with those you work with. You can help a close friend find solutions to personal problems. Business conducted in your own office will proceed smoothly.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You will enjoy lavish forms of entertainment and should consider making arrangements early. Find out all the facts before you jump to conclusions. Your irritability may drive your loved ones crazy.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Your health may have suffered due to neglect or abuse. Get involved in the activities of children. You need to take a break with the ones you love.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You can make a serious attempt at quitting those bad habits that you've picked up over the years. Make sure that you have all the pertinent facts before taking action.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Emotional upset may prevail on the domestic scene if you have neglected your duties or your mate. Curb your mood swings; they could result in loneliness. Go on business trips if at all possible.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Try to channel your energy into professional endeavors. You must make sure that all your personal documents are in order. You will be able to borrow money in order to invest.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You must be sure not to be frivolous, because as the saying goes, easy come, easy go. Concentrate on getting ahead financially and let your personal life settle down for a while.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Be careful not to push your luck or take too much for granted when dealing on either a personal or professional level. You are best to keep hard feelings to yourself.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Don't divulge secret information. Don't overspend on luxury items. You will have to face each issue separately and in person. Travel will be favorable.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You can convince others to follow suit. Mishaps due to preoccupation will be upsetting. A new relationship can be yours if you get out with friends.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Travel if it's needed to start the ball rolling. Your diplomatic approach and rather outgoing nature will enhance your reputation and bring you the support you need.

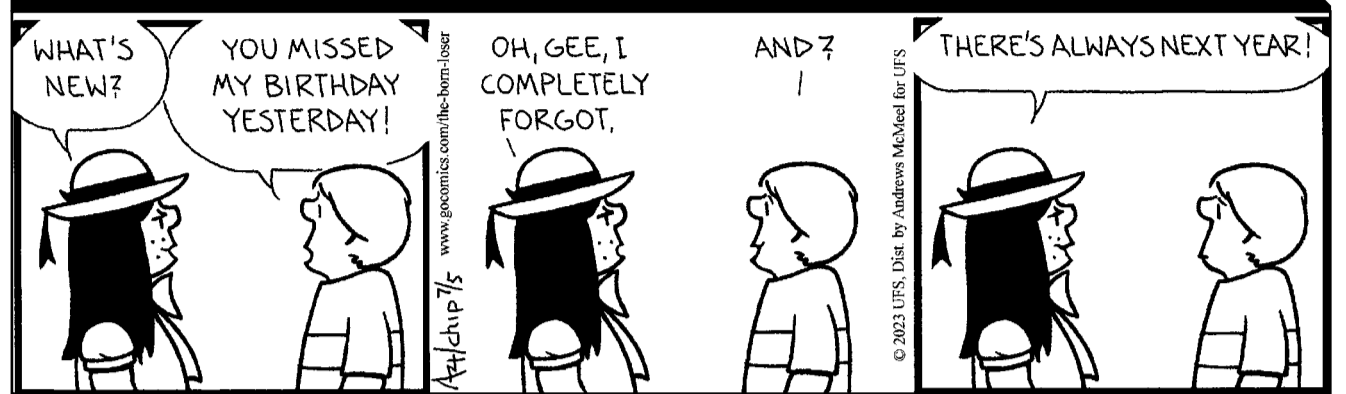


### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You can gain knowledge from dealing with foreigners. Your creative talent will prove to be lucrative if put to proper use. You are best not to say too much to colleagues.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



## SUDOKU

### EASY

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

### EASY+

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

### MEDIUM

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

### HARD

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

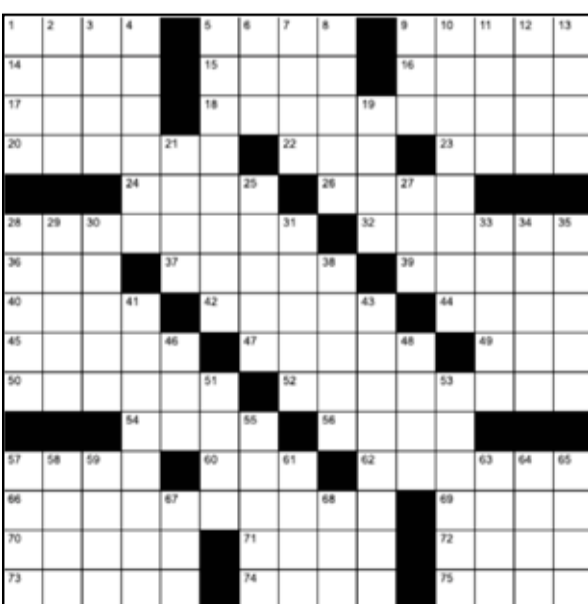
## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	0	9	cloudy
Changchun	-8	-2	fine
Chengdu	4	18	fine
Chongqing	9	18	fine
Fuzhou	13	23	cloudy
Guangzhou	14	19	rain
Guiyang	5	16	cloudy
Haikou	20	24	rain
Hangzhou	7	18	overcast
Harbin	-10	-6	fine
Hefei	5	16	fine
Nanjing	4	16	fine
Shanghai	8	16	cloudy
Taipei	17	19	rain
Wuhan	3	18	fine
Hong Kong	19	24	fine
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-17	-13	fog
Frankfurt	-1	4	rain
Paris	2	8	overcast
London	3	4	fog
New York	-1	6	overcast

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Willingly; 5- Remove from text; 9- Iraqi port; 14- Quechua speaker; 15- Get \_\_\_ the ground floor; 16- Cold mold; 17- Standard; 18- Offensive action; 20- Aphorism; 22- Alley \_\_\_; 23- Kitchen addition; 24- Dreg; 26- Not so much; 28- Carved female figure used as a column; 32- Relax; 36- Boxer Laila; 37- \_\_\_ firma; 39- Snake charmer's snake; 40- Costa \_\_\_; 42- Actress Witherspoon; 44- Steals; 45- Flowering tree of Hawaii; 47- Birth-related; 49- Rebellious Turner; 50- Ring combo; 52- Hostility toward women; 54- Weight; 56- Actress Sofer; 57- Apply powder to oneself; 60- LP speed; 62- Aria; 66- Peace of mind; 69- Langston Hughes poem; 70- Met highlights; 71- Analogous; 72- Air France destination; 73- Rich cake; 74- Repose; 75- Dorothy's dog;

DOWN 1- Navel buildup; 2- Are you \_\_\_ out?; 3- Light brown; 4- Clan; 5- Distance across a circle; 6- Chang's twin; 7- Trademark; 8- Matriculate; 9- \_\_\_-relief; 10- Estimator; 11- Roasting rod; 12- Civil disturbance; 13- Skin eruption; 19- Fencing sword; 21- Show to a table; 25- Femme fatale; 27- Animal pouch; 28- Monte \_\_\_; 29- Extra-terrestrial being; 30- Nouveau \_\_\_; 31- Night vision?; 33- D. ebumum, a tropical tree; 34- Living in a city; 35- Ashen; 38- Up and about; 41- Absolute ruler; 43- Convenience; 46- Barley bristle; 48- Single; 51- Yours and mine; 53- Small galley; 55- Chucked weapon; 57- Yonder thing; 58- Saab model; 59- Den of wild animals and dragons; 61- Bring into existence; 63- Other; in Oaxaca; 64- Duncel; 65- It's used to walk the dog; 67- "The Waste Land" monogram; 68- Bro's counterpart;



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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AD

AP PHOTO



People sit and reflect as the sun sets over the scenic Kadisha Valley, a holy landmark for Lebanon's Maronite Christians

## CLIMATE CHANGE & HERITAGE

# LEBANON'S CHRISTIANS FEEL THE HEAT IN ITS SACRED FOREST AND VALLEY

KAREEM CHEHAYEB, BCHARRE

**M**AJESTIC cedar trees towered over dozens of Lebanese Christians gathered outside a small mid-19th century chapel hidden in a mountain forest to celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration, the miracle where Jesus Christ, on a mountaintop, shined with light before his disciples.

The sunset's yellow light coming through the cedar branches bathed the leader of Lebanon's Maronite Church, Patriarch Beshara al-Rai, as he stood at a wooden podium and delivered a sermon. Then the gathering sang hymns in Arabic and the Aramaic language.

For Lebanon's Christians, the cedars are sacred, these tough evergreen trees that survive the mountain's harsh snowy winters. They point out with pride that Lebanon's cedars are mentioned 103 times in the Bible. The trees are a symbol of Lebanon, pictured at the center of the national flag.

The iconic trees in the country's north are far from the clashes between Hezbollah militants and Israeli troops along the Lebanon-Israel border in recent weeks against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war. The Lebanese government says Israel's use of white phosphorus and other incendiary weapons has burned tens of thousands of olive trees and other crops in the border area, and impoverished Lebanese farmers fear the shells have contaminated their soil.

But the long-term survival of the cedar forests is in doubt for another reason, as rising temperatures due to climate change threaten to wipe out biodiversity and scar one of the country's most iconic heritage sites for its Christians.

The lush Cedars of God Forest, some 2000 meters above sea level near the northern town of Bcharre, is part of a landscape cherished by Christians. The preserve overlooks the Kadisha Valley -- Aramaic for "sacred" -- where many Christians took refuge from persecution over Lebanon's tumultuous history. One of the world's largest collections of monasteries remains hidden among the thick trees, caves and rocky outcroppings along the deep, 35-kilometer valley.

The United Nations' culture agency UNESCO in 1998 listed both the cedar forest and the valley as World Heritage Sites. They've become popular destinations for hikers and environmentalists from around the world. A growing number of Lebanese of all faiths visit as well, seeking fresh air away from the cities.

"People from all religions visit here, not just Christians ... even Muslims and atheists," said Hani Tawk, a Maronite Christian priest, as he showed a crowd of tourists around the Saint Elisha monastery. "But we as Christians, this reminds us of all the saints who lived here, and we come to experience being in this sacred dimension."

Environmentalists and residents say the effects of climate change, exacerbated by government mismanagement, pose a threat to the ecosystem of the valley and the cedar forest.

"Thirty or 40 years from now, it's quite possible to see the Kadisha Valley's biodiversity, which is one of the richest worldwide, become much poorer," Charbel Tawk, an environmental engineer and activist in Bcharre -- unrelated to Hani Tawk -- told The Associated Press

Lebanon for years has felt the heat of climate change, with farmers decrying lack of rain, and forest fires wreaking havoc on pine forests north of the country, similar to blazes that scorched forests in neighboring Syria and nearby Greece. Residents across much of the country, struggling with rampant electricity cuts, could barely handle the summer's soaring heat.

Temperatures have been above 30 degrees Celsius in Bcharre, not uncommon along Lebanon's coastal cities but unusual for the mountainous northern town.

Nuns in the medieval Qannoubin Monastery, perched on the side of a hill in the Kadisha Valley, fanned themselves and drank water in the shade of the monastery's courtyard. They reminisced about when they could sleep comfortably on summer nights without needing much electricity.

Already, there are worrying signs of the impact on the cedars and Kadisha.

Warmer temperatures have brought larger colonies of aphids that feed on the bark of cedar trees and leave a secretion that can cause mold, Charbel Tawk said. Bees normally remove the secretion, but they have become less active. Aphids and other pests also are lasting longer in the season and reach higher altitudes because of warmer weather.

Such pests threaten to stunt or damage cedar growth.

Tawk worries that if temperatures continue to change like this, cedars at lower altitudes might not be able to survive. Fires are becoming more of a potential danger.

Cedar trees usually grow at an altitude from 700 up to 1,800 meters above sea level. Tawk's organization has planted some 200,000 cedars over the years at higher altitudes and in areas where they were not present. Some 180,000 survived.

"Is it climate change or whatever it is happening in nature that these cedars are able to survive at 2,100 to 2,400 meters?" Tawk asked, while checking on a grove of cedars on a remote hilltop.

Local priests and environmental activists have urged Lebanon's government to work with universities to do a wide-ranging study on temperature changes and the impact on biodiversity.

But Lebanon has been in the throes of a crippling economic crisis for years. State coffers are dried up, and many of the country's top

experts are rapidly seeking work opportunities abroad.

"There is nothing today called the state ... The relevant ministries, even with the best intentions, don't have the financial capabilities anymore," Bcharre Mayor Freddy Keyrouz said. He said he and mayors of nearby towns have asked residents to help with conservation initiatives and Lebanese diaspora abroad to help with funding.

The Maronite Church has strict rules to protect the Cedars of God forest, including keeping development out of it. Kiosks, tourist shops and a large parking lot have been set far away from the forest.

"We don't allow anything that is combustible to be brought into the sacred forest," said Charbel Makhoul, a priest at Bcharre's Saint Saba Cathedral.

The Friends of the Cedar Forest Committee, to which Tawk belongs, has been looking after the cedar trees for almost three decades, with the church's support. It has installed sensors on cedar trees to measure temperature, wind, and humidity, watching for worsening conditions that could risk forest fires.

Below the forest in the Kadisha Valley, Tawk points to other concerns.

In particular, the spread of cypress trees threatens to crowd out other species, "breaking this equilibrium that we had in the valley," he said.

"We've seen them increase and tower over other species, whether it's taking sunlight, wind, or expanding their roots," he said. "It will impact other plants, birds, insects, and all the reptile species down there."

Steps to protect the valley have actually hurt its biodiversity by removing human practices that had been beneficial, Tawk said.

In the past, herders grazing their goats and other livestock in the valley helped prevent the spread of invasive species. Their grazing also reduced fire hazards, as did local families collecting deadwood to burn in the winter.

But residents left the valley when it became a heritage site and the Lebanese government implemented strict regulations. Few live there now other than a handful of priests and nuns.

"Trees have overtaken places where people lived and farmed," Tawk said. "Now a fire could move from one end of the valley to the other."

Sitting in a cave near the Qannoubine Monastery, Father Hani Tawk listened to the variety of birds chirping in the valley. He said he believes in the community's faith and awareness of nature, engrained since their ancestors took refuge here.

"When you violate that tree, you're intruding on a long history, and possibly the future of your children," he said. **MDT/AP**

TOKYO OLYMPICS

# Sullied by bid-rigging, bribery trials more than two years after Games closed

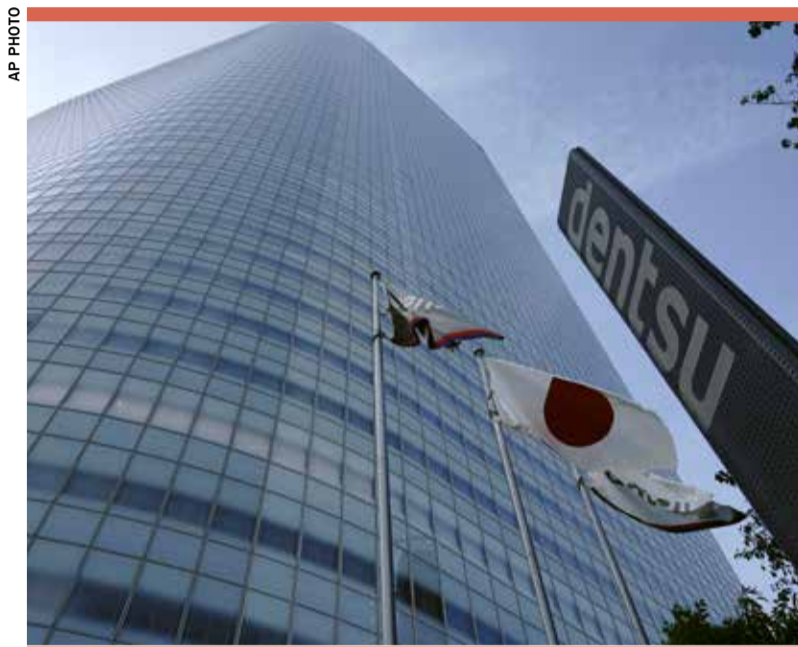
**T**HE bid-rigging trial around the Tokyo Olympics played out yesterday in a Japanese courtroom — more than two years after the Games closed — with advertising giant Dentsu and five other companies facing criminal charges.

Seven individuals are also facing charges from Tokyo district prosecutors in the cases, including Koji Henmi, who oversaw the sports division at Dentsu at the time.

Executives or management-level officials at each of the accused companies, and Tokyo Olympic organizing committee official Yasuo Mori, have been charged with violating anti-monopoly laws.

Among the companies facing charges are Dentsu Group, Hakuhodo, Tokyu Agency and event organizer Cerespo. All deal with event organizing, sports promotion or marketing.

Dentsu has a long history of lining up sponsorships and advertising with bodies like World



Athletics, headed by Sebastian Coe, and the Switzerland-based International Olympic Committee, led by Thomas Bach.

Genta Yoshino, the lawyer for Henmi, did not deny the bid-rigging took place. Speaking in Tokyo district court, he said no bid process was ever decided upon or set

up by the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee.

“Even if what happened gets categorized as bid-rigging, all my client did was abide by the organizing committee’s intentions, following their instructions,” Yoshino told the court, presided over by a panel of three judges.

Yoshino said his client merely did his best to make the Olympics a success. Henmi was under pressure from the IOC, which repeatedly expressed doubts about the ability of the Tokyo organizers, Yoshino added.

The organizing committee was headed at the time by Yoshiro Mori, a former Japanese prime minister who was eventually forced to resign as the head of Tokyo 2020. The CEO was Toshiro Muto, a former deputy director of the Bank of Japan.

The maximum penalty for a company convicted of bid-rigging is a fine of up to 500 million yen (\$3.3 million). An individual, if found guilty, faces up to five years in prison and a fine of up to 5 million yen (\$33,000).

Trials take months in Japan, sometimes years. The next session in the trial was scheduled for Jan. 15, 2024. It’s unclear when a verdict may come.

Dentsu was a key force in landing the Olympics for Tokyo in 2013. French prosecutors have

looked into allegations that IOC members may have been bribed to vote for Tokyo.

Once the Olympics landed in Tokyo, Dentsu became the chief marketing arm of the Games and raised a record \$3.3 billion in local sponsorship. Dentsu received a commission on the sales — sales that were at least twice as large as any previous Olympics.

The reports of corruption surrounding Dentsu also forced the resignation in 2019 of Tsunekazu Takeda, the head of the Japanese Olympic Committee and an IOC member who headed Olympic marketing.

Tokyo organizers say they spent \$13 billion to organize the 2020 Olympics, which were delayed a year by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a government audit suggests the expenditure might have been twice that. At least 60% was public money.

The Tokyo scandal ruined the chances of the northern city of Sapporo of landing the 2030 Winter Olympics. **MDT/AP**

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**Urology** : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

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**Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery** : Dr. Lam U Lin

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
Editorial, China Daily

**TRUST DEFICIT PRIMARY CHALLENGE TO OVERCOME**

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned on Sunday that the military alliance should “be prepared for bad news” from Ukraine as Russia’s special military operation there continues into its 22nd month.

“We have to support Ukraine in both good and bad times,” Stoltenberg said in an interview with German public broadcaster ARD. Commenting on the situation in Ukraine, Stoltenberg said that there had been no significant developments on the battlefield over the past few months and the course of events was difficult to predict, describing it as “a battle for efficiency, a battle for logistics”.

A few days earlier, ahead of the meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, he said there was intense fighting along the front line and NATO “needed to be prepared for more fighting”. The front line on the battlefield has basically remained unchanged this year despite the sustained supplies of military equipment and other support NATO has provided Ukraine.

Winter is expected to freeze the battlefield stalemate in place, while the upcoming US presidential and congressional campaigns have prompted speculation that Ukraine will receive less military and economic assistance from the United States, which has been the main sponsor of Ukraine.

The US has directed more than \$75 billion in assistance to the country since the conflict started nearly two years ago. Yet a recent Associated Press poll in the US showed nearly half of Americans think too much is being spent on Ukraine. An increasing number of Republicans are not in favor of sending more aid, and it is not clear if or when a request from the White House for additional aid will be approved by Congress. Considering all this, as well as the increasing casualties, economic suffering and destruction throughout the country, a negotiated settlement may be becoming a more tempting choice for Ukraine.

Continued hostilities benefit no parties, and dialogue and negotiation are the only viable solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. All countries should support Russia and Ukraine deescalating the tensions and working toward resuming direct dialogue as quickly as possible, which may pave the way for a cease-fire or even a permanent agreement based on the principles of the UN Charter.

That will mean turning a deaf ear to the insidious warmongering of hawks such as Stoltenberg, who as a cobwebbed Cold War warrior animated by outdated animosities has done much to harness NATO to Washington’s war chariot. Exhilarated by this, he is now keen for NATO to crusade into Asia.

In his remarks to the media after the NATO foreign ministers’ meeting he again tried to yoke China with Russia as an “aggressor”, and implied that Russia was becoming much more dependent on China, “mortgaging its future to Beijing”, as he said three times in a brief news conference.

It is such perfidious talk that makes it hard for some to embrace the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.

The issue of security bears on the well-being of all countries and peoples. Overcoming the trust deficits that exist is the primary challenge that needs to be overcome to ensure that the historical trends of peace, development and win-win cooperation prevail.

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS HAS NAMED ‘RIZZ’ AS ITS WORD OF THE YEAR**

**THE BUZZ**

Oxford University Press has named “rizz” as its word of the year, highlighting the popularity of a term used by Generation Z to describe someone’s ability to attract or seduce another person.

It topped “Swiftie” (an enthusiastic fan of Taylor Swift), “situationship” (an informal romantic or sexual relationship) and “prompt” (an instruction given to an artificial intelligence program) in the annual decision by experts at the publisher of the multivolume Oxford English Dictionary.

The four finalists were selected by a public vote and the winner was announced yesterday [Macau time].

Rizz is believed to come from the middle of the word charisma, and can be used as a verb, as in to “rizz up,” or chat someone up, the publisher said.

“It speaks to how younger generations create spaces — online or in person — where they own and define the language they use,” the publisher said. “From activism to dating and wider culture, as Gen Z comes to have more impact on society, differences in perspectives and lifestyle play out in language, too.”

American publisher Merriam-Webster included “rizz” on its list of the year’s top words but gave first place to “authentic.”

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**MOODY’S CUTS CHINA CREDIT OUTLOOK TO NEGATIVE, BEIJING DISAPPOINTED**

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

**C**REDIT rating agency Moody’s cut its outlook for Chinese sovereign bonds to negative yesterday, citing risks from a slowing economy and a crisis in its property sector.

Moody’s said the downgrade, its first for China since 2017, reflects risks from financing troubles of local and regional governments and state-owned enterprises.

The world’s second-biggest economy had been slowing before a 2020 crackdown on excessive borrowing brought on defaults by dozens of property developers. Those troubles have crimped local government finances and also imperiled some lenders, further dragging on the economy.

The need for government intervention to support banks and local governments poses “broad downside risks to China’s fiscal, economic and institutional strength. The outlook change also reflects the increased risks

related to structurally and persistently lower medium-term economic growth,” Moody’s said in a statement.

China’s Ministry of Finance said it was “disappointed” with Moody’s decision to lower the outlook.

“Since the beginning of this year, in the face of the complex and harsh international situations, and against the background of an unstable global economic recovery and weakening momentum, China’s macro economy has continued to recover and has been advancing steadily,” the ministry said, according to an online transcript of remarks at a Q&A session yesterday.

Shares retreated in China yesterday, with Hong Kong’s Hang Seng dropping 1.9% and the Shanghai Composite index down 1.7%.

Separately, Moody’s affirmed China’s A1 long-term local and foreign-currency issuer ratings.

The credit rating firm said it expects China’s economy to grow at a 4%

annual pace in 2024 and 2025, slowing to an average of 3.8% for the rest of the decade.

Factors such as “weaker demographics,” as the country ages, will likely drive a decline in potential growth to around 3.5% by 2030, Moody’s said.

To offset the weaker property sector, China will need “substantial and coordinated reforms” to support more consumer spending and higher value-added manufacturing to support strong growth, Moody’s said.

China’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic faltered after an initial burst of activity earlier in the year faded faster than expected. Despite prolonged weakness in consumer spending and exports, the economy is expected to grow at about a 5% annual pace this year.

China’s economy still has “huge development resilience and potential” and will remain an important engine for global economic growth in the future, the Finance Ministry said. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**Russian** President Vladimir Putin will make a one-day trip to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia focused on the Israeli-Hamas war and host the Iranian president in Moscow this week, the Kremlin said yesterday. Putin will make working visits to both countries, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. The talks will focus on bilateral relations, the war between Israel and Hamas and other international issues, Peskov said. Issues related to oil price caps under OPEC+ will also be on the agenda, he added.

AP PHOTO



**UK** A lawyer for Prince Harry yesterday challenged the British government’s decision to strip him of his security detail after he gave up his status as a working member of the royal family and moved to the United States. The Duke of Sussex has claimed that his safety is jeopardized in part because of hostility toward him and his family on social media and a relentless press that hounds him.

AP PHOTO



**Norway**’s minority center-left government and two large opposition parties made a deal yesterday to open the Arctic Ocean to seabed mineral exploration despite warnings by environmental groups that it would threaten the biodiversity of the vulnerable ecosystems in the area. Norway said in June it wanted to open parts of the Norwegian continental shelf for commercial deep sea mining in line with the country’s strategy to seek new economic opportunities and reduce its reliance on oil and gas.