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AP PHOTO



India's Supreme Court has established yesterday a national task force of doctors to enhance safety measures for healthcare workers following the rape and murder of a young doctor in Kolkata. This move comes amid nationwide protests demanding greater protection for medical staff and highlights the persistent issue of violence against women.

AP PHOTO



Pakistan is experiencing significant internet disruptions, attributed by some experts to the government's implementation of a national firewall. The slowdown is affecting businesses and causing widespread inconvenience, although the government denies these claims, attributing the issues to the use of VPNs by citizens.

AP PHOTO



Israel The Israeli military yesterday announced the recovery of six hostages' bodies, taken during Hamas' attack that initiated the ongoing conflict in Gaza. This development could intensify pressure on Israeli authorities to negotiate a ceasefire and secure the release of remaining hostages as U.S. and Arab mediators work towards a resolution.

AP PHOTO



Russia-Ukraine A major fire broke out yesterday at a Russian oil depot following a Ukrainian drone attack, highlighting the ongoing cross-border tensions and military confrontations. The incident marks a significant moment in Ukraine's military strategy, reflecting intensified hostilities in the region.

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AMID TOP SECURITY**

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CASINO MONEY EXCHANGE LICENSES RENEWED

The Macau government has granted renewals of money exchange licenses to the territory's six casino operators, according to a dispatch in the Official Gazette. The six concessionaires will continue to offer foreign currency and travelers check exchange services at their properties as part of long-standing pacts with authorities. However, the new legislation under consideration aims to criminalize illegal money changing and money laundering networks with up to five years' imprisonment. Analysts warn this proposed clampdown could dampen investor sentiment for the gaming industry in the short run as it recovers from pandemic impacts, but believe any negative effects will be short-lived.

TRAFFIC CHANGES ON AVENIDA MARGINAL FLOR DE LOTUS

Starting tomorrow, part of the traffic lane on Avenida Marginal Flor de Lotus towards Taipa will be temporarily closed over two phases to facilitate construction related to the pedestrian bridge project. The Transport Bureau announced the first phase will occupy the near footpath lane from Aug. 22 to 30, while the second phase will close the middle lane from Sept. 9 to 17. Motorists are advised to follow on-site traffic directions. In related news, one-way traffic on Avenida de Guimaraes will be implemented during this period, with limited access towards the Dr. Sun Yat-sen roundabout.

NIGHTCLUB HIGH LEADS TO COLOANE CRASH

A Hong Kong man in his 30s was arrested for suspected drug driving after crashing into a flower garden in Coloane, Friday. The driver, who entered Macau via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, appeared disoriented and could not explain the accident when police arrived. Officers found white powder around his nostrils and upper lip, prompting a urine test that confirmed the presence of ketamine. The man admitted to using drugs at a nightclub in Hong Kong. Additionally, police reported two other cases of drunk driving in the region over the weekend.

LOVE GONE WRONG: LOCAL WOMAN LOSES MOP500,000 TO ONLINE SCAMMERS

A middle-aged woman from Macau has fallen victim to an online dating scam twice, losing a total of MOP500,000. In May, she began a relationship with a man she met online, who convinced her to invest in cryptocurrencies. After initially reporting the scam, she encountered another man on the same platform. Over several weeks, he persuaded her to open six bank accounts and share her personal information. When she tried to withdraw her funds, he vanished, prompting her to seek police assistance. Authorities warn of increasing online scams targeting unsuspecting individuals.

NICK LEI

LAWMAKER SLAMS GOV'T FOR POOR COMMUNICATION AND DISCONNECT WITH PUBLIC NEEDS

NADIA SHAW

LAWMAKER Nick Lei expressed serious concern over the government's responsiveness to public needs during the legislative year.

In a Legislative Assembly work review session of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Macau, Lei raised a disconnect between government officials and the community they serve.

Lei criticized government leaders for their "lack of communication" and "self-satisfied governance," which he argues hinder effective administration.

He said many public departments remain detached from the realities faced by citizens, delaying necessary improvements in governance.

Lei highlighted several pressing issues, including outdated regulations on consumer rights that complicate the enhancement of legal protections.

He also raised concerns



about the unresolved problem of "brick dumping" in commercial buildings, which poses significant safety risks to residents.

He condemned the authorities for their passive approach, stating that they have allowed these issues to escalate without taking proactive measures.

The lawmaker emphasized the necessity of comprehensive public housing inspections, so as to identify and mitigate potential hazards.

He advocated for a regular

maintenance system to ensure residents' safety.

While the Macau New Neighborhood initiative offers community services such as shuttle buses between there and Hengqin, along with customs clearance, Lei noted there are still significant gaps in medical and educational facilities that require urgent attention.

Moreover, Lei criticized government officials for their inadequate response to public concerns and ineffective com-

munication channels, which obstruct the understanding of community needs.

He called for greater accountability among public officials and urged the government to enhance transparency and administrative practices.

During the session, the alliance reported receiving 5,637 requests for assistance, primarily related to labor, transportation and essential services.

Of these, 3,962 cases were followed up, while 1,293 consultations were completed, highlighting a need for government engagement on these matters.

Alliance chairman Si Ka Lon stressed the importance of addressing critical areas such as employment, housing and healthcare.

He called for expedited reforms in public administration to promote economic diversification and strengthen legal protections for local industries.

GAMING

MARINA BAY SANDS BANS FORMER EXECUTIVE FROM PROPERTY

VICTORIA CHAN

In a recent LinkedIn post, Andrew MacDonald, the chief casino officer of Resorts World Sentosa, revealed he has been banned from entering the premises of Marina Bay Sands (MBS) in Singapore.

According to MacDonald's post, MBS issued a "persona non grata" notice July 31, effectively prohibiting him indefinitely from accessing any of the property's facilities.

Previously, MacDonald worked for Las Vegas Sands, the parent company of MBS, for nearly 12 years before

stepping down at the end of 2021, during which he made monthly visits to the Sands properties in Macau.

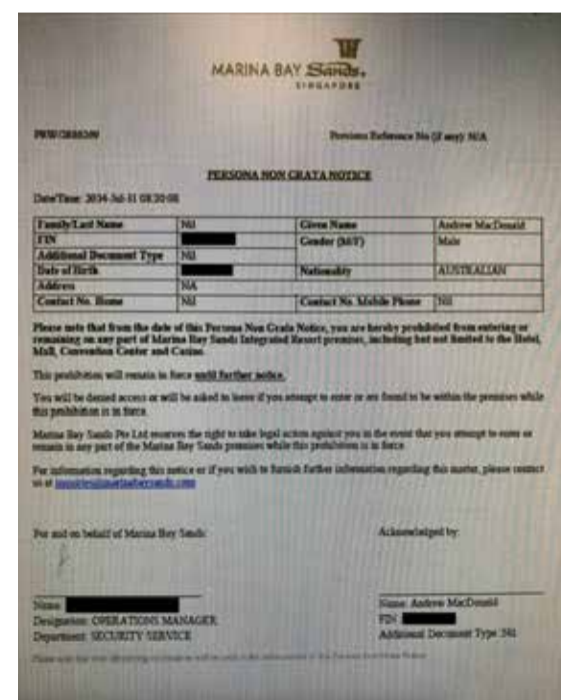
Gaming media outlet Inside Asian Gaming (IAG) reported the ban was issued due to concerns MacDonald may have been trying to poach customers and employees during a series of visits to the MBS property in late July, just before the ban was implemented. MacDonald has denied these allegations, stating that his visits were purely social and that he was accompanied by a close friend, Mike Sugrue, a former executive at

Crown Melbourne.

He acknowledged he did interact with two high-value players during these visits, but claimed it was purely by coincidence.

MacDonald and Sugrue also said he encountered some MBS executives to help assist with their restaurant reservations but said the situation was nothing more than that.

In response to the incident, an MBS spokesperson clarified to the media outlet that the decision to restrict access to the property was not made lightly and that the resort has stringent



protocols in place to help guide it through such actions.

The sudden ban on the former global chief casino officer has raised

eyebrows in the industry, as it is relatively uncommon for such high-profile executives to be barred from competing properties.

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Major security measures in place for visit of China's olympic medalists

RENATO MARQUES

THE visit to Macau of a delegation of athletes that represented the People's Republic of China in the recent Olympic Games is to occur with to major security precautions.

According to information released by the Sports Bureau (ID), those who wish to take part in the gala event titled, "Our Pride! – Meeting with the National Olympic Athletes Delegation in Macau", which is scheduled to take place at the East Asian Games Dome on Sept. 1, must, among many other requirements, present a valid Covid-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) result that is negative.

ID also noted that tickets to the venue will be drawn from among those who have registered online to take part in the event.

Those accessing the venue must present their ticket, as well as subject themselves to a security inspection.

Entry will be refused to anyone



"who appears to be under the influence of substances that cause behavioral disturbances and/or violent behavior, or who is likely to cause violent, dangerous behavior or behavior that disturbs public order."

Both spectators and media are prohibited from entering the venue with cameras or filming equipment without prior authorization.

ID also remarked that, in both

the interior and outside area of the venue, it is forbidden "to use, possess, hold, offer for sale, sell, or possess with the intent to sell any political, promotional, commercial materials, or objects likely to cause harm (such as weapons, projectiles, flammable objects, explosive substances, glass or plastic bottles, or soft drink cans)."

Food and drinks, power banks, banners, posters, and umbrellas are also prohibited on the ve-

nue's premises.

The organization has warned the public tickets for the gala are non-transferable, meaning they cannot be sold, offered for sale, or used for any promotional or commercial purposes.

In addition to the restrictions in place concerning photography and filming at the event, its recording or broadcasting is not permitted.

Organizers also note that, in the

event a person enters the venue and then needs to leave, they will not be permitted re-entry.

The organizers finally warned that those "not feeling well" should "avoid going to the venue."

The Gala is expected to last almost two hours and is expected to commence at about 7:15 p.m. on Sept. 1.

The event is seen as the highest celebratory moment during the visit of the National Olympic Athletes Delegation, which takes place between Aug. 31 and Sept. 2.

According to organizers, the delegation will participate in various activities during its visit, including the sharing and exchanging of ideas with local youths and athletes, the abovementioned gala event, and visits to the city's iconic landmarks.

Organizers have announced 4,200 tickets will be raffled among those that register through the website (<https://reg.sport.gov.mo/pt/signup>) until 9 p.m. Aug. 24.

The results of the draw will be known at 3 p.m. Aug. 25.

AD

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RENATO MARQUES

HOSPITALITY

ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR CITY TRANSPORT TO 'MATCH HOTEL QUALITY'

THE Macau Hotel Association (MHA) is arguing Macau needs to significantly improve its transport infrastructure, to match the quality of service provided by the city's hotels.

The president of the Association, Luis Heredia, made the argument during an interview with the newspaper Tribuna de Macau.

Heredia's call to government is not new.

In January this year, Rutger Verschuren, another member of MHA's board, told the Times how the difficulty in accessing quality transport services across Macau was proving a major challenge to developing the city's tourism sector.

This public transport crisis, led by the issues surrounding taxi laws, as well as the non-existence of any kind of ride-hailing system, like Uber, continues to worry the sector, especially now the government has indicated it is not planning to legalize such a system.

According to Heredia, complaints about taxi services top the list of visitors' frustrations.

The taxi debacle must be addressed, he insisted, so the city's hotel guests are "fully satisfied" during their stay.

Heredia was questioned on the fact that, in 2023, the number of complaints related to services in the tourism sector reached a record.



He said it was only normal some tourists leave Macau feeling dissatisfied by their experience of the city, particularly those visitors who bring their families with them.

But the MHA president also said insufficient access to easy and convenient transport infrastructure, as well as the density of pedestrians in Macau's narrow streets, accounts considerably for this "lacking satisfaction."

Heredia said these difficulties relate more broadly to "Macau's characteristics" and are, therefore,

"not easy to manage."

Another aspect of concern for MHA is the hiring of manpower, added Heredia, who claimed there have been no noticeable improvements to this system.

Presently, the system is, in Heredia's words, "complex and time-consuming" and was this way "even before the pandemic."

To this end, he spoke of the importance of training, as well as the educational efforts made by local institutions, namely universities – but even these things, Heredia said, are insufficient if

Macau wishes to suppress all its manpower shortages.

Ultimately, Heredia emphasized the need for everyone to understand all the issues that surround the tourism sector.

These are not just related to hotel stays; they concern all the factors that interlink with these stays and the city's tourism more broadly.

Heredia said not much more could be done by hotels to improve the experience of their guests when those guests encounter difficulties commuting through

SUMMER OCCUPANCY SHOULD MATCH 2023

COMMENTING on the expectations around the hotel occupancy rate over the summer holidays, President of the Macau Hotel Association (MHA) Luis Heredia said this year's rate should be similar to last year's more than 90%, which saw the average price per night level at about 1,400 patacas. Heredia believes such a scenario might repeat itself this year. In his opinion, this is a good thing, as occupancy rates between 90% and 93% cannot be, in any way, bad for the industry. According to the MHA president, Macau has been receiving most visitors from close-range markets this summer, such as Hong Kong and Guangzhou. These markets have access to cheaper transport infrastructure, he said. Markets of further distance, he noted, are not yet so popular.

Macau during their stay, irrespective of whether they are arriving, leaving, or even finding a way to reach their favorite hotspots or restaurants in town.

TOURISM

Inbound visitors surge in July, nearing pre-pandemic levels

NADIA SHAW

IN July, the tourism sector showed strong signs of recovery through the arrival of 3,021,189 visitors, marking a 9.5% increase from the previous year.

This surge brings visitor numbers to 85.6% of the levels recorded during the same month in 2019, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The influx of tourists in the past month has been particularly notable, especially during June, which saw arrivals rise 18.4%.

Among these visitors, same-day tourists totaled 1,596,662, representing a year-on-year increase of 20.2%. In contrast, overnight visitors slightly declined by 0.5%



to 1,424,527.

The summer season typically sees a surge in travel as families and individuals take advantage of school holidays and favorable weather conditions.

This seasonal pattern often leads to increased travel activity, particularly for same-day visitors, who may prefer short trips during this period.

The 20.2% year-on-year increase in same-

-day tourists to 1,596,662 aligns with this trend, as many travelers opt for quick getaways to enjoy local attractions without the commitment of overnight stays.

Conversely, the slight decline of 0.5% in overnight visitors suggests that while many are eager to travel, some may still be cautious about longer stays due to lingering pandemic concerns or economic factors.

This could indicate a

shift in consumer behavior, where travelers prioritize flexibility and shorter trips, reflecting a broader trend observed in tourism recovery globally.

The average length of stay for visitors decreased marginally to 1.2 days, although overnight guests enjoyed a slight increase to 2.4 days.

A closer look at the sources of these tourists reveals the mainland remains the dominant

market, contributing 2,183,397 visitors in July, a 14.3% increase from last year.

Notably, individual tourists from the mainland also grew by 1.4%.

Meanwhile, visitors from Hong Kong decreased 10.9% to 589,026, while those from Taiwan increased significantly by 29.5% to 75,783.

International tourism also saw a remarkable recovery, with 172,983 foreign visitors arriving, a 33.3% increase year-on-year, recovering to 75.5% of the same period in 2019.

The Southeast Asian market showed promising growth, particularly from the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore, while long-distance travelers from the United States increased 52.7%.

Macau continues to bounce back from the pandemic, with overall inbound tourist numbers for the first seven months of the year reaching 19,741,172, a 37% increase compared to last year.

LABOR

EARNINGS IN GAMING SECTOR RISING

THE city's gaming sector employed 52,518 full-time workers at the end of second quarter, reflecting a year-on-year increase of 825 employees, or 1.6%. However, the number of dealers fell slightly to 23,467, a drop of 208 dealers, or 0.9%.

According to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), June's average earnings for full-time employees in the sector rose to MOP26,750, an increase of 8.2% compared to the previous year.

Dealers saw an average salary of MOP21,660, up 6.5%, attributed to higher wages and extended working hours.

The recovery of tourism has led to increased demand for labor in the sector, with job vacancies surging by 385, marking a staggering 340.7% rise year-on-year, totaling 498. The job vacancy rate also rose to 0.9%, up 0.7 percentage points from the previous year.

During the second quarter, 1,492 new hires were reported, while 1,143 employees left their positions.

The recruitment rate climbed to 2.9%, up 1 percentage point, while the turnover rate slightly decreased to 2.2%. LV

MGTO surveys opinions on Tourism Master Plan second phase

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has launched a public survey to collect local respondents' opinions on the direction of the second phase of the Macao Tourism Master Plan.

The survey, launched yesterday, will be available for one month (until Sept. 21) to collect opinions from residents on several aspects related to tourism development.

"Through the survey, MGTO seeks residents' comments and perspectives regarding Macau's tourism development over recent years, as well as the future of this development. Responses will contribute to



the second phase review study," MGTO noted.

MGTO has commissioned research company Deloitte to oversee the study.

Deloitte will "reexamine the new environment, re-clarify new policies, readjust the new requirements, and re-appraise new trends."

An analysis will also be conducted on Macau's current tourism situation, as well as its trends, in the wake of the pandemic.

The study will also include a retrospective overview of tourism action plans in progress from 2021 to 2024.

Members of the public are

welcome to fill out the survey at www.macaotourism.gov.mo/en/r/masterplan_survey_2024.

According to the office, this study is part of an evaluation mechanism for the Master Plan that was proposed in a report in 2021, which noted changes in the tourism landscape beginning in 2020.

This first review study has amended the Master Plan which currently consists of 91 action plans, comprising 77 phased plans (up to five years) and 14 long-term plans (six years or more).

These will synchronize Macau's tourism industry with guidelines pertaining to China's development, better orientating the SAR government.

EPM hiring after firing controversy

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Macau Portuguese School (EPM) has announced it is seeking to hire five more teachers in preparation for the upcoming school year.

The hiring announcement on EPM's website comes just several days after the Portuguese government concluded an inquiry into the dismissal of several teachers from the school, which led to the renewal of the affected staff's special licenses for another year.

In a recruitment notice signed by director Acacio de Brito, who will be part of the selection panel, the teaching positions include two mathematics teachers and one teacher each for physics/chemistry, computer science, and French. Candidates will teach high school students. Applications are being accepted until Aug. 26.

The hiring announcement comes after a controversy earlier this year in which four EPM teachers and a psychologist had their contracts unexpectedly terminated by de Brito.

However, Portugal's Ministry of Education later overturned the dismissals, finding de Brito's decision lacked objective and transparent reasoning.

For the current openings, 40% of the selection criteria will be based on candidates' international teaching experience outside of Portugal. Qualifications will account for 30%, and subject-specific experience will make up the remaining 30%.

Throughout the dismissal dispute, de Brito and the EPM Foundation president denied any wrongdoing, saying 10 new teachers had already been secured for the 2024-25 year. The Ministry of Education also mandated that instruction in Portuguese language remain unchanged.

GAMING

CITIBANK: PREMIUM MASS DEMAND STRONG DESPITE CRACKDOWN

DEMAND from mainland high rollers continues to drive Macau's lucrative premium mass segment despite recent efforts to curb illegal money flows, according to analysts.

In a recent note, Citibank analysts George Choi and Ryan Cheung reported a year-on-year surge in premium mass play and an increase in "whale spotting," with

players betting up to HKD600,000 per hand during August visits.

"The fact that this happens after Macau criminalized illegal money exchanges means most players can still access funds through legal channels," the analysts wrote.

Citi's August premium mass survey observed a 35% jump in total wagers to HKD12.8 million, compared to the

REBECA ALMEIDA



same month last year.

The team spotted 655 premium mass players, contributing to a seasonally strong 40% rise in overall visitation.

While player numbers grew, the average

wager fell slightly by 4%, attributed to "more casual, less keen players" visiting in August.

However, Choi and Cheung stated, "We don't think this implies a decrease in player quality."

Galaxy Macau maintained a leading 29% market share of the observed premium mass wager, up from approximately 25% last month.

The biggest individual player of August was witnessed at City of Dreams betting HKD600,000 per hand, whose companion wagered HKD400,000 per hand. VC

CORPORATE BITS

MGM co-organizes new GBA youth exchange program



MGM recently collaborated with local government bodies to host the "New Greater Bay Area Youth Exchange Program" in Hengqin. This initiative aimed to support the city's economic diversification and

encourage youth engagement in regional cooperation, according to a statement issued by the gaming operator.

Over two days, participants explored Hengqin's indus-

trial, infrastructural, and cultural advancements, inspiring them to contribute to future development.

The program featured an opening ceremony and a campfire gathering where successful entrepreneurs shared insights on business opportunities in Hengqin. This initiative highlights the importance of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area as a national strategy, providing a vital platform for local youth.

Participants visited key sites, including the underground utility tunnel and the Hengqin Culture & Art Complex, deepening their understanding of Hengqin's strategic role.

Sands launches 'Joie De Vivre At The Parisian'



The Parisian Macao presents 'Joie De Vivre at The Parisian', a series of art events running from August 16 to November 16.

This initiative features art and photography exhibitions,

children's workshops, and limited-edition pink heart-shaped waffles, inviting guests to immerse themselves in the enchanting spirit of French culture and creativity.

In collaboration with local artists, the event supports Sands China's 'tourism + culture' initiative, as cited in a statement issued by the gaming operator.

Highlighting the arts, the Macau Art For All Society presents the 'Datascape - Post Photographic Art in Digital Era' solo exhibition by Kun Wang Tou, showcasing local talent and interactive art sessions. Simultaneously, the 'Sables D'Or' photography exhibition displays stunning architectural imagery from Sands China's properties.

Children's workshops led by artist Lai Sio Kit offer creative experiences in painting and lamp-making.

ENVIRONMENT

China is backing off coal power plant approvals after a 2022-23 surge

KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

APPROVALS for new coal-fired power plants in China dropped sharply in the first half of this year, according to an analysis released yesterday, after a flurry of permits in the previous two years raised concern about the government's commitment to limiting climate change.

A review of project documents by Greenpeace East Asia found that 14 new coal plants were approved from January to June with a total capacity of 10.3 gigawatts, down 80% from 50.4 gigawatts in the first half of last year.

Chinese authorities approved 90.7 gigawatts in 2022 and 106.4 gigawatts in 2023, a surge

that raised alarm among climate experts.

China leads the world in solar and wind power installations but the government has said that coal plants are still needed for periods of peak demand because wind and solar power are less reliable. While China's grid gives priority to greener sources of energy, experts worry that it won't be easy for China to wean itself off coal once the new capacity is built.

"We may now be seeing a turning point," Gao Yuhe, the project lead for Greenpeace East Asia, said in a statement. "One question remains here. Are Chinese provinces slowing down coal approvals because they've already approved so many coal projects...? Or are



Guohua Power Station, a coal-fired power plant, operates in Dingzhou, Baoding

these the last gasps of coal power in an energy transition that has seen coal become increasingly impractical? Only time can tell."

Greenpeace released the analysis with the Shanghai

Institutes for International Studies, a government-affiliated think tank.

The government has issued a slew of documents in recent months on reducing carbon emissions and accelerating

the shift to renewable energy.

The National Energy Administration unveiled a three-year plan in June to retrofit existing coal power units and equip newly built ones with low-carbon technologies. Another government plan released this month to "accelerate the construction of a new power system" took aim at bottlenecks and other challenges, including how to expand transmission of renewable energy.

China is also looking to nuclear power as it seeks to meet its carbon reduction targets. The State Council, China's Cabinet, greenlighted five nuclear power projects on Monday with 11 units and a total cost of 200 billion yuan (\$28 billion). **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

Taiwan conducts live-fire missile drills

TAIWAN'S military launched surface-to-air missiles in live-fire drills conducted yesterday in response to growing military pressure from China.

The exercises took place at the Jiupeng Military Base in a remote area in southern Taiwan. Among the missiles launched were Taiwan's domestically made Sky Bow III anti-ballistic missiles along with the U.S.-made Patriot PAC II and surface-to-air Standard missiles.

Self-ruled Taiwan is China's territory to be brought under Beijing's control by force if necessary.

Beijing in particular dislikes Taiwan's new President Lai Ching-te, who took office earlier this year and whom Beijing has called a separatist.

Taipei has boosted its deterrence capabilities in response. Missiles, both domestically built and U.S.-made, are key to its defense strategy.



A Patriot short-range anti-aircraft missile launcher is prepared during a drill in Pingtung County, southern Taiwan

Government spokesperson Sun Li-fang said all the missiles launched yesterday hit their targets.

"This shows our training is very strict and solid," he said.

Beijing did not immediately react to Taiwan's drill. China sends military jets and vessels near Taiwan frequently in what critics call an intimidation tactic.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said early yesterday it spotted five Chinese military jets and 11 ships close to its shores over the previous 24 hours. One aircraft

crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial demarcation zone between the two sides.

While its military is dwarfed by China's, Taiwan has bought high-tech weaponry from the United States, revitalized its domestic arms industry and extended the length of mandatory military service from four months to one year.

The U.S. is bound by its own laws to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself and considers all threats to the island as a matter of great concern. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

INDIA, MALAYSIA TO EXPAND TIES AS KUALA LUMPUR TRIES TO MOVE CLOSER TO BEIJING

INDIA and Malaysia will seek to expand economic ties and strengthen cooperation on defense and security, the leaders of the two countries said yesterday.

This came during Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's visit to India, his first since he took office in 2022, where he met with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi.

Recently, Anwar has sought to move closer to China, with whom New Delhi has been locked in a long-running border dispute. A key part of Modi's foreign policy has been to deepen trade and ties with other Asian countries, including Malaysia, to push back against growing Chinese influence in the region.

Both heads of state addressed reporters after signing a slew of new agreements, including digital technologies, tourism and traditional medicine. Anwar said the two countries have enjoyed good relations for years, adding that "we realized this must be strengthened in a mul-



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomes his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim upon his arrival at the Indian presidential palace during his ceremonial reception in New Delhi, yesterday

titude of areas," including construction, agriculture and military collaborations to safeguard both nations' borders.

Modi said the two had discussed cooperation in the defense sector, and that trade and investment between the two countries should grow while they collaborate on new industries like the production of semiconductors. He also stressed how the partnership between the two countries had grown, taking on "new momentum and energy" over the years.

Earlier yesterday, the Malaysian prime minister received a ceremonial

welcome at India's presidential palace Rashtrapati Bhavan before paying his respects to Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi at the Rajghat memorial site in New Delhi.

Bilateral trade between the two countries is strong at \$20 billion. Malaysia is India's 16th largest trading partner, while India is among the top ten largest trading partners for Malaysia. There are around 70 Malaysian companies operating in India and more than 150 Indian ones in Malaysia, where Indians comprise about 7% of the country's population. **MDT/AP**

AFGHAN REFUGEES

Philippines hosts US visa processing center for up to 300 Afghans resettling in America

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

THE Philippines has agreed to a request by the United States to temporarily host a U.S. immigrant visa processing center for a limited number of Afghan nationals aspiring to resettle in America, the treaty allies announced yesterday.

The Philippine government's approval of the request, which initially faced local concerns over potential security and legal issues, reflects how relations between Manila and Washington have deepened under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who took office in 2022.

The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said the agreement was undergoing final domestic procedures and needs to be finally

ratified by Marcos before it takes effect. It did not provide other details, including how many Afghans would be allowed to temporarily stay in the Philippines at any time while their special immigrant visas for resettlement to the U.S. are being completed.

A senior Philippine official, however, told The Associated Press that only 150 to 300 applicants would be accommodated in the Philippines under the "one-time" deal. The official who had knowledge of the negotiations agreed to speak on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to speak publicly.

Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Assistant Secretary Teresita Daza said Afghan nationals should secure a visa to enter the



President Joe Biden (right) and Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as they meet in the White House in Washington, last year

Philippines and would be subjected to "full security vetting." Each visa applicant can stay not more than 59 days.

The U.S. government will shoulder the costs for the stay of the Afghan nationals, including food, housing, security and medical and transportation expenses, Daza said. She added

that the U.S. government and the International Organization for Migration as manager of the unspecified facility where the Afghan visa applicants would be billeted, would ensure they have adequate social, educational, religious and other support.

The U.S. thanked the Philippines in a statement

by the State Department "for supporting Afghan allies of the United States" and added that it "appreciates its long and positive history of bilateral cooperation with the Philippines."

The Afghan nationals to be considered for resettlement primarily worked for the U.S. government in Afghanistan or were deemed eligible for U.S. special immigrant visas but were left behind when Washington withdrew from the country as Taliban militants took back power in a chaotic period in 2021.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken first relayed the request to his Philippine counterpart in 2022, and President Joe Biden discussed the request when Marcos visited the United States last year, Phi-

lippine officials said.

Marcos said last year that he was told by American officials that a maximum of 1,000 Afghan nationals would be allowed to stay in the Philippines at any one time while their special immigrant visas are being processed.

He said at the time there were difficult legal and logistical issues to address for the program to run as hoped.

Some Filipino officials have expressed fears the Afghan nationals could become targets of attacks while in the Philippines. Others raised legal questions about an arrangement where U.S. authorities would have a say in vetting who could enter the Philippines.

One prospective problem is what to do with Afghan nationals whose U.S. special visa immigrant application is indefinitely stalled or rejected, Marcos said and expressed concern that thousands of Afghan nationals could be stranded in the country while awaiting relocation to the U.S.

Marcos has rekindled relations with the U.S. since winning the presidency with a landslide margin two years ago. MDT/AP

INDONESIA AND AUSTRALIA FINALIZE NEW BILATERAL DEFENSE TREATY

INDONESIA and Australia yesterday finalized a new bilateral defense treaty that will enhance the neighboring nations' ability to operate their militaries in each other's territory.

The agreement was reached as Indonesian president-elect Prabowo Subianto, who also serves as defense minister, met with Australian officials at the country's Parliament earlier Tuesday.

The bilateral relationship is becoming increasingly important to Australians in face of growing tensions with China. New Australian prime ministers typically make Jakarta one of their first overseas destinations.

The pact will be signed within days, when Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles visits Jakarta.

Marles said the successful conclusion of negotiations after two years was significant for both countries' national security.

"What this agreement will do is provide for much greater interoperability between our defense forces, it will provide for much more



exercises between our defense forces, it will see us working together the global commons to support the rules-based order and, importantly, it will allow us to operate from each other's countries," Marles told reporters.

"And in that sense, this agreement will be the deepest, the most significant agreement that our two countries have ever made," Marles added.

Subianto described the agreement as "ironing out some legalistic details" and said that it achieved "great progress" in the two countries' defense cooperation.

Euan Graham, an analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute think tank, questioned the pact's strategic value to Australia.

Subianto made clear that Indonesia would remain non-aligned under his leadership, Graham said. This means Indonesia will remain among a group of countries that don't want to be officially aligned with or against any major power bloc such as the United States.

"The issue is that Indonesia doesn't share the same threat perception as Australia towards China," he added.

With around 275 million people, Indonesia has 10 times the population of Australia, which has fewer than 27 million people.

Subianto's overnight Canberra visit was his first to Australia since he was elected president in February. MDT/AP

AD

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AP PHOTO



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaking in Tel Aviv

GAZA STRIP

Blinken says Israel OKs a plan to break the cease-fire impasse

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said yesterday [Macau time] that Israel has accepted a proposal to bridge differences holding up a cease-fire and hostage release in Gaza, and he called on Hamas to do the same, without saying whether concerns cited by the militant group had been addressed.

The high-stakes negotiations have gained urgency in recent days as diplomats hope an agreement will deter Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah from avenging the targeted killings of two top militants that were blamed on Israel. The escalating tensions have raised fears of an even more destructive regional war.

Blinken spoke after holding a 2 1/2 hour meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier in the day, and will travel to Egypt and Qatar for further negotiations. The three mediators have spent months trying to end the war in Gaza, with the talks repeatedly stalling.

"In a very constructive meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu today, he confirmed to me that Israel supports the bridging proposal," Blinken told reporters, without saying what the proposal entails. "The next important step is for Hamas to say 'yes.'"

He added, however, that even if Hamas accepts the proposal, negotiators will spend the coming days working on "clear understandings on implementing the agreement." He said there are still "complex issues" requir-

ring "hard decisions by the leaders," without offering specifics.

Hamas has said it is losing faith in the U.S. as a mediator, accusing American negotiators of siding with Israel as it makes new demands that the militant group rejects. Blinken did not say whether the proposal addressed Israel's demand for control over two strategic corridors inside Gaza — which Hamas has said is a nonstarter — or other issues that have long bedeviled the negotiations.

Netanyahu said that he had a "good and important meeting" with Blinken and appreciated the "understanding that the United States has shown to our vital security interests, along with our shared efforts to release our hostages." He added that efforts are being made to release the maximum number of hostages in the first stage of a the cease-fire deal.

Blinken's ninth mission to the Middle East since the conflict began came days after mediators, including the United States, expressed renewed optimism that a deal was near. But Hamas has expressed deep dissatisfaction with the latest proposal, and Israel has said there were points on which it was unwilling to compromise.

Earlier, Blinken said it was a "decisive moment," and "maybe the last" opportunity to free the hostages and secure a cease-fire.

"It's also time to make sure that no one takes any steps that could derail this process," he said in a veiled reference to Iran. "And so we're working to make sure that there is no escalation, that there are no provocations,

that there are no actions that in any way move us away from getting this deal over the line, or for that matter, escalating the conflict to other places and to greater intensity."

Mediators will meet again this week to try to cement a cease-fire. Blinken will travel Tuesday to Egypt and Qatar, where Hamas maintains a political office.

The war began on Oct. 7 when thousands of Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250 others. Of those, about 110 are still believed to be in Gaza, though Israeli authorities say around a third are dead. More than 100 hostages were released in November during a weeklong cease-fire.

Dozens of Israelis demonstrated outside of the Tel Aviv hotel where Blinken was staying, holding photos of the hostages and demanding an immediate cease-fire.

"We know that only with vast help of the American administration a deal will come," said Yehuda Cohen, whose 20-year-old son, Nimrod, is being held hostage in Gaza. "We are here to say it out loud: Blinken, Antony Blinken, please push Netanyahu for a deal at any price because I want my son to be free."

Israel's counterattack in Gaza has killed more than 40,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, and devastated much of the territory. The war has plunged the territory of 2.3 million people into a humanitarian catastrophe, with aid groups now fearing an outbreak

of polio.

Blinken said the United States shares those concerns and is working on a plan with Israel to ensure vaccines are made available "in the coming weeks," saying "it is urgent, it is vital."

Late last week, the three countries mediating the proposed cease-fire — Egypt, Qatar and the U.S. — reported progress on a deal under which Israel would halt most military operations in Gaza and release a number of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the release of hostages.

The evolving proposal calls for a three-phase process in which Hamas would release all hostages abducted during its Oct. 7 attack. In exchange, Israel would withdraw its forces from Gaza and release Palestinian prisoners.

Hamas accuses Israel of adding new demands that it maintain a military presence along the Gaza-Egypt border to prevent arms smuggling and along a line bisecting the territory so it can search Palestinians returning to their homes in the north to prevent militants from slipping in. Israel said those weren't new demands, but clarifications of a previous proposal.

Late Sunday, Hamas said in a statement that Netanyahu has continued to set obstacles to a deal by demanding new conditions, accusing him of wanting to prolong the war. It said the mediators' latest offer was a capitulation to Israel.

"The new proposal responds to Netanyahu's conditions," Hamas said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1968 RUSSIA BRINGS WINTER TO 'PRAGUE SPRING'



Dozens of people have been killed in a massive military clampdown in Czechoslovakia by five Warsaw Pact countries.

Several members of the liberal Czechoslovak leadership have been arrested, including Prime Minister Alexander Dubcek.

The Soviet news agency, Tass, claims "assistance" was requested by members of the Czechoslovak Government and Communist party leaders to fight "counter-revolutionary forces".

But in a secret radio address, Czechoslovak President Ludvik Svoboda condemned the occupation by Warsaw Pact allies as illegal and committed without the government's consent.

US President Lyndon Johnson said the invasion was a clear violation of the United Nations Charter and that the excuses offered by the Soviet Union were "patently contrived".

"It is a sad commentary on the communist mind that a sign of liberty in Czechoslovakia is deemed a fundamental threat to the security of the Soviet system," he said.

The Czechoslovak authorities have ordered their vastly outnumbered army not to fight and are appealing to the public for restraint.

Czechoslovakia's abortive path to freedom began when Mr Dubcek, a Slovak, became Communist Party leader in January.

A programme of wide-ranging democratic reforms had been gathering pace in the face of Soviet disapproval and the rebirth of social and political freedom became known as the "Prague Spring".

In the capital of Prague today, crowds of people gathered in the streets chanting support for Mr Dubcek and imploring the foreign troops to go home.

Much of the resistance was centred around the Prague radio station. As the day progressed, Czechoslovak youths threw home-made missiles and even tried to take on Russian tanks. [...]

Soviet and eastern bloc commanders have now imposed an overnight curfew and are threatening to shoot on sight anyone caught breaking it.

All rail, road and airline routes out of Czechoslovakia have been closed as troops continue to enter the country - now estimated to number nearly 175,000 men.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Following the invasion, Mr Dubcek and others were banned from office and replaced with a famously repressive communist regime. All the reforms were annulled or abandoned.

The invasion drew condemnation from across the globe. Significantly many western communist parties and communist Yugoslavia and Rumania dissociated themselves from the USSR's actions.

As with Hungary in 1956, the West took no action. The Soviet defence minister is said to have recommended invading even if it meant third world war. Moreover, the US was in the middle of a presidential election campaign and entrenched in Vietnam.

The Communists were finally ousted on 24 November 1989 and Mr Dubcek made a triumphant return to Prague.

He became chairman of the new post-Communist administration in what became known as the "Velvet Revolution".

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Benefit from the foundations you built. Don't spend what you don't have. The action is behind the scenes. Clarify directions. Set intentions and schedule them.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
Reach out. Connect and check in with your people. Teamwork provides satisfying results. Share nostalgic moments with friends. Reflect on past glories and future possibilities.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Provide leadership. Energize to meet professional deadlines and goals. Don't push someone or something before they're ready. Patiently navigate complications. Clean messes later.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Long-distance travel and long-term possibilities beckon. You can solve a puzzle to unlock a prize. Use something you've been saving. Study, research and learn.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Handle practical financial priorities. Work out project details and update the budget. Friends offer good advice and connections. Share resources, information and opportunities.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Make a special connection. An attraction is mutual. Collaborate on a shared passion project. Words get farther than action today. Listen and learn.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Slow to avoid accidents. Nurture your heart. Strengthen skills and practices for your work, health and fitness. Realize dreams with coaches, doctors and supporters.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Relax and have fun. Prioritize family and romance. Clean up messes. Beauty inspires. Enjoy beloved people and activities. Appreciate those who went before.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Domestic comforts draw you in. Share family support without getting pushy. Patience pays. Cook, clean and clear clutter. Beautification projects provide satisfying results.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Previously blocked communications channels open. Connect the dots. Think outside the box. Invest in efficiency. Get the word out about a creative project.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Cash flow rises and so do expenses. Stick to basics. Act on previously laid groundwork. Simplify expectations and logistics. Communication can provide a bridge.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Go for personal objectives. You know what you want but the road presents obstacles and pitfalls. Check your course, and modify speed for conditions.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

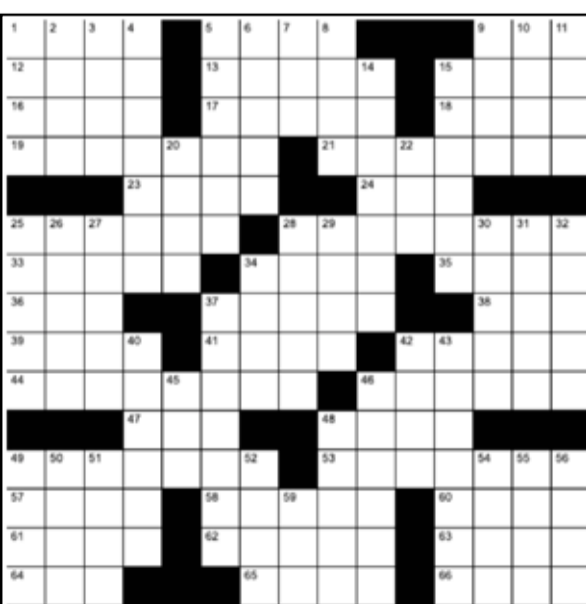
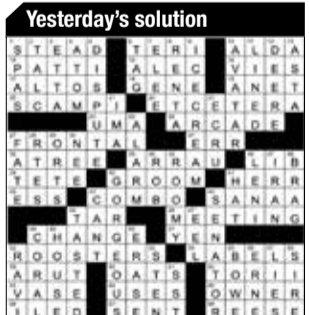
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	23	31	cloudy
Changchun	22	28	rain
Chengdu	26	38	cloudy
Chongqing	27	40	fine
Fuzhou	26	32	rain
Guangzhou	25	29	rain
Guiyang	20	31	cloudy
Haikou	26	33	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	26	35	rain
Harbin	20	26	rain
Hefei	24	33	cloudy
Nanjing	26	31	thunderstorms
Shanghai	28	34	rain
Taipei	25	31	rain
Wuhan	24	36	fine
Hong Kong	28	29	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	15	25	cloudy
Frankfurt	11	23	cloudy
Paris	12	23	cloudy
London	15	22	cloudy
New York	15	23	sunny

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Lends a hand; 5- Home to billions; 9- Baton Rouge sch.; 12- Reason to cancel school; 13- More than medium; 15- Sardine containers; 16- To ___ (exactly); 17- Creates; 18- Puts into service; 19- Rhinoplasty; 21- Cork; 23- Makes brown; 24- Before, before; 25- Astute; 28- Divinity; 33- Mall frequenters; 34- Did the butterfly; 35- Man-eating giant of popular folklore; 36- Colonnade tree; 37- Writers of verse; 38- It's a moray; 39- Would ___ to you?; 41- Pub potables; 42- Alloy of iron and carbon; 44- Written remarks; 46- Hotel patrons; 47- Eur. carrier; 48- Swiss river; 49- Extreme; 53- Assembly; 57- Thin woodwind instrument; 58- Birth-related; 60- Needle case; 61- Visionary; 62- Man from Muscat; 63- Drum sound; 64- ___ Lingus (Irish carrier); 65- Bric-a-___; 66- Auctioneer's cry;

DOWN 1- Strong ___ ox; 2- A big fan of; 3- Evil is as evil ___; 4- Add sugar; 5- Nutlike kernel; 6- Swedish imports; 7- Peeve; 8- Matures; 9- Speech issue; 10- Dagger; 11- The Beatles' "Back in the ___"; 14- Values highly; 15- Black gum; 20- Mouth bones; 22- Guadalupe gold; 25- Beer mug; 26- Greeting; 27- Send payment; 28- Twix's partner; 29- Panama and bowler; 30- Curved moldings; 31- Welcome; 32- Shouts; 34- Go it alone; 37- Countryman; 40- Simpler; 42- Deodorant brand; 43- Seesaws; 45- Tic-___-toe; 46- Irish tongue; 48- Appliance brand; 49- Civil rights leader Parks; 50- Busy as ___; 51- Activist; 52- Gyro meat; 54- Langston Hughes poem; 55- Void partner; 56- Put a fancy coat on; 59- Cigarette ingredient;



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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Drivers of motorcycle taxis, known locally as boda-bodas, ride with passengers on a street of Kampala

BODA-BODA

IN UGANDA'S CHAOTIC CAPITAL, MOTORCYCLE TAXIS ARE A SOURCE OF LIFE AND DEATH

RODNEY MUHUMUZA,
KAMPALA

THE young men perched on motorcycles looked dazed in the morning heat. But at the sight of a potential passenger, they furiously kick-started their machines and tried to outrace each other for the business.

For tens of thousands of men in Uganda's capital, Kampala, this is how to make a living. For others, the speeding motorcycles embody the city's chaos as an essential but menacing means of transport.

The motorcycle taxis, known locally as boda-bodas, are ubiquitous in East African capitals like Nairobi and Kigali. But nowhere in the region have boda-boda numbers been surging more dramatically than in Kampala, a city of 3 million people, no mass transit system and rampant unemployment.

An estimated 350,000 boda-bodas operate in Kampala, driven by men who come from all parts of Uganda and say there are no other jobs for them.

"We just do this one because we have nothing to do," said one driver, Zubairi Idi Nyakuni. "All of us here, other people even, they have their degrees, they have their master's (degrees), but they are just here. They have nothing to do."

The boda-boda men, who

operate mostly unregulated, have resisted recent attempts to dislodge them from the narrow streets of Kampala's central business district, frustrating city authorities and underscoring the government's fears over the consequences of angering a horde of jobless men.

"We must appreciate where the boda-boda comes from, how this whole phenomenon grew," said Charles M. Mpagi, spokesman for Tugende, a Kampala-based company that specializes in financing boda-boda purchases. "You have quite a large number of people that are young, who can't find jobs to do, whether in the public sector or the private sector, and they do not have significant alternative income to get into other enterprises."

JOBS ARE SCARCE AND UNDERPAID

About 76% of Uganda's 43 million people are under 35, according to government figures. Jobs are scarce in an economy where just 1% of 22.8 million employees make \$270 or more in monthly pay, according to central bank figures released earlier this year.

Uganda's unemployment rate — as a proportion of unemployed people to the total labor force — grew from 9% in 2019 to 12% in 2021, according to the most recent survey by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics. The unemploy-

ment rate for people between 18 and 30 was even higher, at 17%. For young people in urban areas, it was 19%.

President Yoweri Museveni, an authoritarian who has held power since 1986, has long embraced boda-boda men as mobilizers of political support. Political rallies come alive with the hooting from their motorcycles, whose commotion can bring communities to a standstill.

Motorcycles as a means of transport first emerged on the Uganda-Kenya border during political instability in the 1970s, with the term "boda-boda" traced to drivers who shouted "border, border" at potential customers.

At the time, they were also a quick way to transport smugglers and their merchandise.

Now they are everywhere in Uganda, taking children to school, people to offices, the sick to clinics and even the dead to their graves.

When Uganda's transport minister was wounded by gunmen who killed his daughter in 2021, a boda-boda man rushed him to the hospital. But the attackers also drove motorcycles and fled.

Annual police reports cite motorcycle taxis in abetting violent crime, and the number of fatal accidents related to motorcycles across Uganda grew from 621 in 2014 to 1,404 in 2021, according to the Ministry of Works and Transport.

"We've been struggling with these motorcycles," said Winstone Katushabe, a government commissioner in charge of transport regulation. "It is not a good situation."

A CULTURE OF NON-COMPLIANCE

A culture of non-compliance with traffic and road safety rules has proliferated among boda-boda men, he said, adding that establishing official motorcycle taxi stands in Kampala would help bring order.

Road safety regulations for motorcycles, first approved in 2004, are difficult to enforce because of the overwhelming number of boda-bodas. Traffic police look on as boda-boda men zip through traffic lights and overtake dangerously. They are often unable to make arrests because of the risk to public order as drivers quickly stand up for one another, causing a crowd.

The boda-boda phenomenon has grown as Uganda's president has stayed in power. In recent years, trying to weaken support among unemployed people for his opponents, Museveni has gifted boda-bodas to supporters and pledged to reduce the three-year licensing fee from nearly \$100.

The fee will drop to about \$35 under new rules announced earlier this month, according to the Transport Licen-

sing Board. That would make it even easier to become a boda-boda man.

The other entry price is about \$1,500 for a new motorcycle, often the Indian-made Bajaj.

Many boda-boda men acquire equipment on credit through companies such as Tugende. Others work for businesspeople who buy motorcycles in bulk and distribute them among drivers but can repossess them if drivers behind on payments.

Boda-boda men who lack driving licenses and crash helmets risk having their motorcycle impounded by police. Some drivers told the AP their aggressive behavior on the roads is driven by that fear of arrest or seizure.

Innocent Awita, a boda-boda man who dropped out of school in 2008, said there was "too much pressure" to keep his motorcycle. He's required to pay his employer the equivalent of \$4 a day in addition to fueling and maintaining it. A falling-out with his employer could render him jobless.

Some days are better than others, but Awita said he sometimes goes without enough earnings to make the daily payment.

"I can work for three days without getting anything. But if I get something the next day, that can save my life," he said. **MDT/AP**

BOXING

Tyson feels good after a health scare and ready for his rescheduled bout with Paul

BRIAN MAHONEY, NEW YORK

MIKE Tyson is 58 years old and coming off a health scare that forced the postponement of his return to the ring.

The boxer once considered the most dangerous man in the world could be putting himself in danger by putting the gloves on again. Yet he was quick to respond this week when asked why he was going through with his bout against Jake Paul.

"Because I can. Who else can do it but me? Who else is he going to fight to make this happen?" Tyson said, motioning toward the crowd at a packed press conference where fans cheered the former heavyweight champion and booed Paul.

"We've just got to listen to the facts. We've got a YouTuber fighting the greatest fighter that ever lived."

Tyson and Paul restarted the buildup to their match that is now scheduled for Nov. 15 at the home of the Dallas Cowboys in Arlington, Texas. They had been set to meet



Mike Tyson and Jake Paul face off during a news conference promoting their boxing bout, last May in Arlington, Texas

July 20 before Tyson became nauseous and dizzy on a flight from Miami to Los Angeles in May, with his representatives attributing the episode to an ulcer problem.

Tyson said Sunday he resumed training two or three weeks ago and feels fine.

"Hey listen, I'm just ready," Tyson said.

The undisputed heavyweight

champion 1987 to 1990, Tyson (50-6, 44 KOs) retired in 2005 before coming back for an exhibition match against Roy Jones in 2020. Fans seem excited for his return, with a number of them turned away Sunday because too many showed up for their press conference on the final day of the Fanatics Fest event in New York.

Paul (10-1, 7 KOs) sparred as

much with the fans who booed him as with the fighter across the stage.

"Hey New York, you're just like Mike Tyson," Paul said. "You were good 20 years ago."

Tyson's most dominant days are actually longer ago than that, and Paul understands that he probably wouldn't get much credit for a victory against such a diminished

opponent. Yet the former Disney Channel star who insists he will become a boxing champion said there is benefit to fighting Tyson even now.

"Big moments, big pressure, big stages, one of the greatest to ever do it, more experience than me, more fights than me, I'm going to learn a lot in this fight and through this training camp," Paul said. "So this is helping me in my future fights and everything that I want to accomplish."

He took a fight after Tyson had to pull out, stopping bare-knuckle fighting champion Mike Perry in the sixth round on July 20. Perry, like many of the fighters on Paul's resume, comes from the mixed martial arts world, rather than from a boxing background.

Paul will try to show what he hopes to become in boxing, or perhaps Tyson can demonstrate what he once was. He said his health problems won't prevent that.

"I had a small adversity. I got sick, but I'm better," Tyson said. "I feel good." **MDT/AP**

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Breast Surgery : Dr. Leong Iat Lun

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

Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

Paediatrics : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery : Dr. Lam U Lin

Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

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OPINION

The Conversation

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WHO IS THE 'LAUGHING BUDDHA'?

With his delighted expression, round belly, bald head and monastic robes, the "Laughing Buddha" is instantly identifiable. However, astute observers might wonder why this buddha does not look like the historical Buddha, who lived in India about 2,500 years ago.

Images of the historical Buddha, known as Siddhartha Gautama or Shakyamuni, depict him with a neutral expression, slim build, tightly coiled hair and monastic robes. If the Laughing Buddha isn't the historical Buddha, who is he, and how did he become so popular?

As a scholar of East Asian Buddhism who studies how and why deities transform over time, I see the Laughing Buddha as a key figure that shows how people have adapted Buddhism to different cultural and historical contexts.

One of the names for the Laughing Buddha is "Cloth Bag," which is pronounced "Budai" in Chinese and "Hotai" in Japanese. Cloth Bag was the nickname of a Chinese Buddhist monk who lived in the 10th century. He belonged to the Zen school of Buddhism, which is known for its stories about monks who reject conventional pursuits like wealth and fame.

Cloth Bag got his nickname because he wandered from town to town carrying a cloth bag full of treasures that he shared freely with children.

Chinese Buddhists, seeing Cloth Bag's legendary generosity, compassion and joy, concluded that he must not be an ordinary monk, but that he must be a human incarnation of the future Buddha, whose name is Maitreya.

Artists in China depicted Cloth Bag as a plump, laughing monk often surrounded by children or animals. In a traditional East Asian context, his round belly represents his generosity and abundance, and also symbolizes the positive qualities of wealth and fertility.

From China, images of Cloth Bag as the Laughing Buddha traveled in two directions. They spread first in East Asia to countries such as Vietnam, Korea and Japan. Zen is a popular form of Buddhism in all of these countries, but it was Japanese Zen Buddhism that attained global popularity in the 19th and 20th centuries. This means that many images of the Laughing Buddha in the West are based on Japanese models.

Images of the Laughing Buddha also spread west from China to Europe, where 18th-century elites showed their aesthetic sophistication by displaying Chinese-style porcelain, including statues of the Laughing Buddha.

The Laughing Buddha's transformation into a global icon, results from both the fascination with Chinese porcelain in 18th-century Europe and the 20th-century spread of Japanese Zen Buddhism.

Today we see the Laughing Buddha in stores, homes and even as a brandname. A lot of people may know what the Laughing Buddha looks like, but few may be familiar with who he is or how he became so popular.

Japan's ruling party said yesterday it will hold a vote on Sept. 27 to choose its new leader after Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's surprise announcement that he will be stepping down.

The internal election must be held by the end of September, which marks the end of Kishida's three-year term and will only include the party's parliamentarians and its 1.1 million dues-paying members.

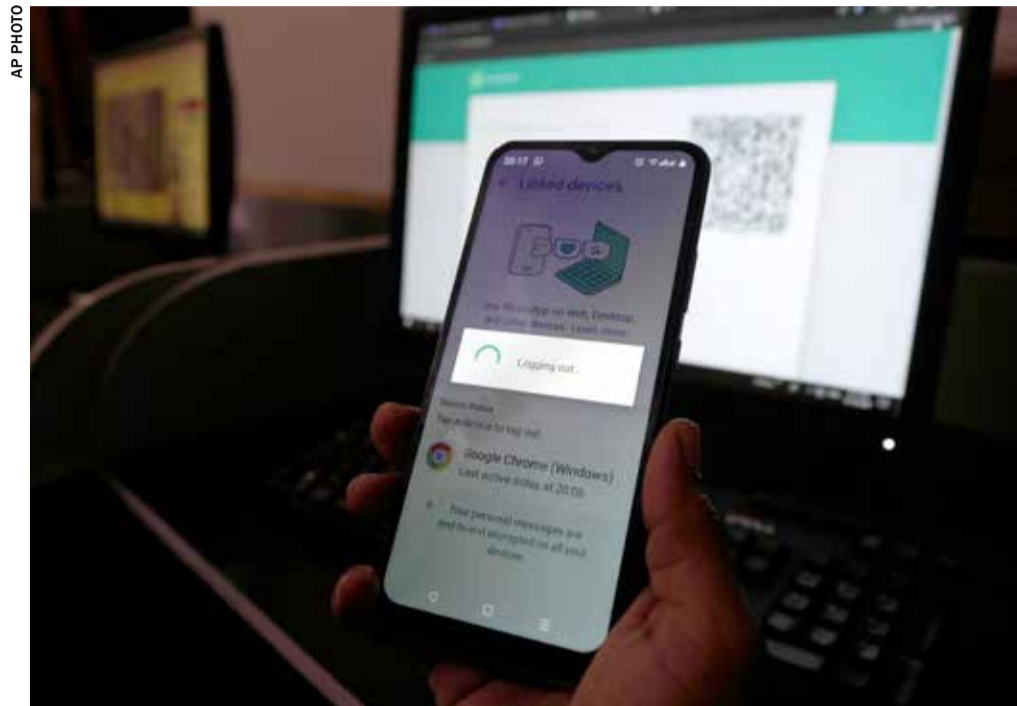
The winner will be the head of the Liberal Democratic Party and the country's prime minister as the party and its smaller coalition partner control Japan's two-chamber parliament.

Last week, Kishida — who took office in October 2021 — said he

was bowing out of the race to pave the way for a new leader to form a united LDP to make a fresh start to regain public trust, badly hurt by the party's extensive corruption scandal, causing his support ratings to dip below 20%.

Within days of the prime minister's declaration, local media has speculated nearly a dozen possible candidates, with some already announcing their interest in leading a party desperate for public support.

A younger lawmaker, former Economic Security Minister Takayuki Kobayashi, 49, was the first to announce his candidacy Monday.



AP PHOTO

AUTHORS SUE CLAUDE AI CHATBOT CREATOR ANTHROPIC FOR COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

MATT O'BRIEN, MDT/AP TECH WRITER

A group of authors is suing artificial intelligence startup Anthropic, alleging it committed "large-scale theft" in training its popular chatbot Claude on pirated copies of copyrighted books.

While similar lawsuits have piled up for more than a year against competitor OpenAI, maker of ChatGPT, this is the first from writers to target Anthropic and its Claude chatbot.

The smaller San Francisco-based company — founded by ex-OpenAI leaders — has marketed itself as the more responsible and safety-focused developer of generative AI models that can compose emails, summarize documents and interact with people in a natural way.

But the lawsuit filed this week in a federal court in San Francisco alleges that Anthropic's actions "have made a mockery of its lofty goals" by tapping into repositories of pirated writings to build its AI product.

"It is no exaggeration to say that Anthropic's model seeks to profit from strip-mining the human expres-

sion and ingenuity behind each one of those works," the lawsuit says.

Anthropic didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Monday.

The lawsuit was brought by a trio of writers — Andrea Bartz, Charles Graeber and Kirk Wallace Johnson — who are seeking to represent a class of similarly situated authors of fiction and non-fiction.

While it's the first case against Anthropic from book authors, the company is also fighting a lawsuit by major music publishers alleging that Claude regurgitates the lyrics of copyrighted songs.

The authors' case joins a growing number of lawsuits filed against developers of AI large language models in San Francisco and New York.

OpenAI and its business partner Microsoft are already battling a group of copyright infringement cases led by household names like John Grisham, Jodi Picoult and "Game of Thrones" novelist George R. R. Martin; and another set of lawsuits from media outlets such as The New York Times, Chicago Tribune and Mother Jones.

What links all the cases

is the claim that tech companies ingested huge troves of human writings to train AI chatbots to produce human-like passages of text, without getting permission or compensating the people who wrote the original works. The legal challenges are coming not just from writers but visual artists, music labels and other creators who allege that generative AI profits have been built on misappropriation.

Anthropic and other tech companies have argued that training of AI models fits into the "fair use" doctrine of U.S. laws that allows for limited uses of copyrighted materials such as for teaching, research or transforming the copyrighted work into something different.

But the lawsuit against Anthropic accuses it of using a dataset called The Pile that included a trove of pirated books. It also disputes the idea that AI systems are learning the way humans do.

"Humans who learn from books buy lawful copies of them, or borrow them from libraries that buy them, providing at least some measure of compensation to authors and creators," the lawsuit says. MDT/AP



AP PHOTO

Italy Search efforts resume off the coast of Sicily for six individuals, including a British tech magnate, missing after their yacht sank during a storm this week. The incident has prompted a complex rescue operation involving police divers, highlighting the dangers of maritime travel during severe weather conditions.



AP PHOTO

Haiti Police used tear gas against protesters demanding action against rampant gang violence. The demonstrations yesterday [Macau time] reflect growing public frustration with the government's inability to secure neighborhoods from increasing criminal control, exacerbating the country's longstanding issues of instability and violence.

Kenya The government is facing significant backlash as it attempts to reintroduce tax measures that had previously led to deadly protests. Reports from Nairobi, note that the proposed taxes, aimed at addressing the nation's debt, have reignited public and political opposition, defying the challenges of balancing fiscal responsibility with social stability.



AP PHOTO

Supermoon The first of this year's four supermoons presented a spectacular view, appearing larger and brighter in the night sky. This celestial event continues to captivate observers around the world, offering a unique astronomical phenomenon.