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LIONEL LEONG, FORMER SECRETARY FOR ECONOMY AND FINANCE OF MACAU, HAS BEEN NOMINATED TO THE BOARD OF CHINA CONSTRUCTION

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CYBERSECURITY THREATS ESCALATE IN MACAU AND GLOBALLY: TREND MICRO

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CHINA AND THE US WILL PLAN A BIDEN-XI CALL IN THE COMING WEEKS: WHITE HOUSE

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AP PHOTO



Myanmar Britain introduced a UN resolution urging peace in Myanmar, condemning military attacks on civilians, and calling for an end to illegal arms transfers. The resolution highlights the escalating violence and humanitarian crisis, advocating for unhindered humanitarian access and ASEAN-mediated dialogue.

AP PHOTO



Israel's military rescue of a hostage in Gaza reinvigorated calls for a deal to free all remaining hostages. Despite military efforts, families and officials stress that negotiations are the most viable way to secure the release of about 108 hostages believed to be in Gaza.

AP PHOTO



Iran's Supreme Leader opened negotiations with the U.S. over its nuclear program. Khamenei set conditions, emphasizing caution while engaging with the U.S. amid broader regional tensions. This move comes as Iran faces continued scrutiny over its nuclear advancements and international relations.

AP PHOTO



Ukraine's First Lady focuses on redefining war-impacted children as a “generation of winners.” Olena Zelenska’s initiatives aim to counteract the trauma through education and psychological support, emphasizing resilience and future leadership amid ongoing conflict and recovery efforts.

SAM'S VISION GOES BEYOND FIVE-YEAR TERM

While announcing his formal candidacy for Chief Executive, Sam Hou Fai says he sees 'lack of publicity' as a strength

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COURTESY ALLABOUTMACAU

CE CANDIDACY

Sam Hou Fai sees absence

RENATO MARQUES

JUDGE Sam Hou Fai has officially formalized his candidacy for the post of new Chief Executive (CE) of Macau.

In a press conference held yesterday morning at the Macao Science Center Conference room, Sam officially announced his candidacy and manifesto.

When asked by the media about his relative obscurity compared to previous CEs of Macau, Sam acknowledged that he is not a well-known public figure. However, he argued that this lack of time in the limelight could be advantageous as it reflects his independence and impartiality over the last 40 years.

"Society might not know me well due to my duties in the judiciary, but in reality, magistrates are not public personalities. This is partially due to our role and a result of our need to remain independent and reputable, and can be a strength," Sam said. He added that, while other people in Macau might be seen as more influential or more knowledgeable about the community, "My family has been in Macau for three generations and many of the people living here are just like me and can relate. I am well-informed and knowledgeable about Macau and I believe my knowledge of Macau is at the same level as those who have lived here longer or even those who have been born here."

Sam also refuted the idea that he might lack skills in governance and administra-

tion, saying, "My potential lack of experience in administration or governance is not a problem. We are a team. The government departments and civil servants work together, and I have taken several management roles within the judicial sector, which is itself akin to the management of a small government."

Without revealing too much about his ideas and plans for Macau's development under his potential leadership, Sam noted that he was "just presenting his candidacy" and that the election has not been held yet. This leaves his policies and the measures he plans to adopt as CE to be revealed at a later stage.

SHORT TIME TO CAMPAIGN IS NOT A PROBLEM

Sam was also questioned on the short period between his candidacy announcement and the election, scheduled for Oct. 13. He expressed his confidence that this would not be a significant problem, noting that his team is prepared to start working immediately.

"From tomorrow [today] me and my team will start working hard. We know that time is short but we will start to contact the members of the CE election committee to ask for their support, following all the electoral law procedures. Then we will listen to the different sectors to draw up our program, before disclosing it. Although timing is tight, with my experience in the judicial field, I believe I understand the ne-

cessary steps."

SAM'S VISION GOES BEYOND FIVE-YEAR TERM

Addressing his vision for Macau over the next CE term, Sam Hou Fai revealed that his plans are not restricted only to the five years of the CE term, and will have a broader horizon.

He said that Macau is part of an ongoing and continuous process of development and innovation influenced by national factors and this must be considered.

"How we will integrate into the regional and national development is a very important matter. We depend on China's support and we are part of it. We cannot develop independently. We need to closely follow our national development and the opportunities arising from there. We also need to be proactive to take the opportunities to keep up with the pace of development of the country. My vision cannot be limited to five years; it must also consider long-term and large-scale development," Sam said. He added that this has been happening over the past 25 years and that Macau must continue to integrate into the broader development framework of the country.

MACAU'S UNIQUE STRENGTHS

Sam sees Macau's unique characteristics as some of its strongest assets, noting that the central government has already recognized some of these facets – for example, bilingualism and cultural di-

Attempt to stage protest barred, some media out of the room

RENATO MARQUES

WONG Wai Man, president of the Macau Bar Benders Association, attempted to stage a protest in the lobby of the Macao Science Center, adjacent to the conference room where Sam Hou Fai was holding a press conference.

Wong, well-known for his strong views and rhetoric, entered the lobby and tried to make his voice heard.

Security swiftly intervened and immediately removed him from the building.

Wong previously led the Mutual Help Grassroots group in the 2017 elections for the Legislative Assembly, where he controversially proposed cancelling the government's subsidized home-ownership scheme, among other suggestions.

Wong gained notoriety as an "Internet celebrity" for his

group's campaign posters, where he appeared wearing a Red Guard-style uniform and citing Mao Zedong's slogan, "Serve the people," written in Chinese. He subsequently took part in a debate broadcast by public broadcaster TDM, where he dressed as "Captain Macau" in a green outfit resembling comic book character "Captain America."

Press conference organizers also barred several international news agency representatives from accessing the conference room, including the Association France Press, as well as the world's largest financial newspaper, Nikkei, whose reporter was escorted to a separate room to watch the press conference on television.

Reporters in this secondary room did not have access to interpretation services for the press conference, which was broadcast in Cantonese.

to lead the city into the future.

Chen emphasized the 62-year-old legal veteran's strong track record, having served in the Macau judiciary since 1999, where he led the courts in effectively performing their duties in

accordance with the law.

In her endorsement, Chen highlighted Sam's extensive legal and administrative experience, his familiarity with both mainland China and Macau, and his profound thoughts on promoting Macau's

sustainable development, to local press. She expressed hope that Sam would "listen to the voices and demands of all sectors of Macau society, build consensus, and use his courage, vision, and wisdom to address the challenges fa-

cing the city."

"The Chinese Educators Association of Macau is confident that Sam Hou Fai's governance concepts align with the central government's policies for Macau and respond to the expectations of Macau citi-

zens." The association pledges to actively participate in the election process and work with the SAR government and all sectors of society to "select a CE who loves the country and Macau," and has strong governance capabilities. NS

CHINESE EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT ENDORSES CANDIDACY

CHEN Hong, president of the Chinese Educators Association of Macau, expressed her support for Sam Hou Fai's candidacy in the upcoming Macau Chief Executive election yesterday, stating that she believes Sam is well-suited

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of publicity as a strength



versity – as key strengths to be leveraged in the country's new era of development.

"As long as we know our position and our roles of 'One center, One platform, and One base,' we will be able to succeed."

Sam noted that the potential of Macau resides in this mix of cultures and ability to communicate with the rest of the world. These are the aspects that need to be explored, developed, and elevated.

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE MACANESE COMMUNITY

According to Sam, the Portuguese-speaking communities of Macau, namely the Macanese, will soon see their positions strengthened under the roles that the central government has attributed to Macau.

"The Macanese community are especially important as they are familiar with Chinese history and culture while also being knowledgeable about Portuguese culture. They are very important in Macau's development," Sam said.

He added, "We also have people from these communities spread all over the world and this is very important in our role in promoting Macau as a destination for tourism and leisure. I believe the Macanese in Macau and abroad will be even more relevant in the future."

"I know many Macanese people. They are and have been important in multiple aspects, from the economy to education, and many other sectors. They are a part of our development and they personify the particular characteristics of Macau that are different from other places."

If elected, Sam Hou Fai will be the first CE of Macau to be proficient in Portuguese, a fact that he noted to be one of two aspects he gleaned during his studies in Portugal.

"My time in Portugal taught me two things: the Portuguese language and culture, and a love of red wine," Sam joked.

SUGGESTION REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE MODERNIZATION

Although Sam made multi-

ple references to the need for reform, he indicated that these would likely form part of a process of administrative modernization rather than significant structural changes.

"We need to make reforms and we need to innovate to face problems. This is unavoidable. We must continue to improve," he said. Furthermore, "Re-

form also means to modernize public administration and to make the right decisions to benefit the citizens. We have around 60 to 70 public services and we must find a way to integrate them and create a harmonious environment."

The same notion of innovation was referenced when he discussed the struggle of some

of the local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) for survival.

"We are in recovery post-pandemic, but we know that favorable developments are not reaching every part of the city. The Northern District is facing problems. We have many tourists – most of them from the country – but after the pandemic, consumption habits have also changed and we can assess this through a process of comparison. For example, we know what tourists did before, where they historically liked to visit, and compare that to what happens now. There have also been many developments in traffic, accessibility, and improvements across the border which led people, including those from Macau, to be attracted to spend on the other side of the border. We need to be innovative and adapt to changing consumer habits and market conditions following the Covid-19 pandemic, rather than waiting for historical conditions to return."

PAST 'UNSUSTAINABLE' DEVELOPMENT BLAMED FOR CURRENT PROBLEMS

Commenting on some of the economic challenges that have been on the agenda of the current government, including the declining employment rate, Sam Hou Fai attributed these challenges to the current economic climate and downstream effects of the pandemic, but also to past mistakes and the "unsustainable development" of the local economy.

"There was a time when our development was very unbalanced and that disadvantaged future development. We need to develop and diversify. This is mandatory, not an option," he said. He suggested that there was an excessive focus and uncontrolled development of the casino industry in Macau, and that this has caused problems due to an overreliance in society on jobs within the casino industry.

IP SIO KAI TO LEAD CE CAMPAIGN

Sam Hou Fai has appointed lawmaker and Bank of China executive Ip Sio Kai to head his campaign office.

At a press conference held yesterday morning, Sam announced his candidacy after resigning as President of the Court of Final Appeal and from the Independent Commission on the Recommendation

of Judges.

Ip, who serves as the deputy general manager of the Bank of China Macau Branch and is the Chairman of the Macau Association of Banks, will take on the role of director of Sam's campaign office.

He is an indirectly elected legislator representing the industrial, commercial, and financial sectors. His

background in finance is complemented by leadership positions in various organizations, including the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the Macau Innovation Investment Union Association.

The announcement of Sam's candidacy follows the incum-

bent Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng's decision not to seek a second term due to health concerns.

In his campaign, Sam emphasized the importance of aligning Macau with broader national goals. His campaign office will be located on the 15th floor of the Nam Tung Commercial Building on Avenida da Praia Grande. NS

24 PEOPLE DEFRAUDED OF MOP210,000 OVER CONCERT TICKETS

Local police received at least 20 reports over six days from 24 people defrauded of more than MOP210,000 after purchasing fake concert tickets online. Scammers used social media to falsely claim they were reselling official tickets for a popular mainland boy band's Macau concert. Victims paid deposits or the full amount upfront but were left empty-handed when the scammers disappeared on the day of the event. The police issued a warning, advising the public to be cautious when buying tickets online and only purchase from authorized vendors.

DSAL, FAOM TO HOLD THREE JOB-MATCHING SESSION

The Labour Affairs Bureau and the Macau Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) are set to host three industry-specific job matching sessions during the first week of September, featuring a total of 519 job vacancies. Applications are being accepted from yesterday to Sep. 2. On Sep. 3, a session for the cleaning industry will offer 118 positions, including supervisors and security guards. That afternoon, the catering industry will present 154 vacancies. Finally, on Sep. 5, the hotel industry will hold a session with 247 openings, including roles for restaurant managers and chefs.

IMPORT AND EXPORT VALUES AT ZHUHAI REACH RMB900B

The import and export value of goods at the Zhuhai port, part of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, has surpassed RMB900 billion, according to local customs officials. Since its opening in October 2018, the port's total trade volume reached RMB902.19 billion by July 2024. The port has facilitated the movement of goods to and from all 31 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions across mainland China.

TECH

CYBERSECURITY THREATS ESCALATE GLOBALLY: TREND MICRO

VICTORIA CHAN

IN the first half of 2024, the global critical infrastructure faced a surge in cyberattacks, with government websites and financial institutions bearing the brunt of the onslaught.

According to a report by global cybersecurity firm Trend Micro Inc., the banking and technology sectors were the most heavily targeted across the globe during this period.

The recent report by Trend Micro Inc. sheds light on the intensifying landscape of cyber threats, with banking institutions emerging as primary targets for ransomware attacks.

The technology industry follows closely, indicating a widespread vulnerability that threatens the security and stability of crucial sectors in Macau.

The report says that law enforcement agencies have ramped up efforts to combat ransomware groups, disrupting their operations and thwarting phishing attempts.

However, the escalating sophistication of cybercriminal tactics poses a formidable challenge, necessitating a proactive and data-driven approach to cybersecurity.

Noteworthy incidents in the region include a sophisticated credit card theft scheme affecting six Macau residents who lost over MOP74,000 to fraudulent "Bank of China" phishing websites.

A series of cyberattacks



targeted key government sites earlier this year, leading to disruptions in essential services and raising concerns about the resilience of critical infrastructure.

This attack involved the Public Security Police Force, the Fire Services Bureau, and the Public Security Forces Affairs Bureau. The attack, which took authorities at least 45 minutes to restore partial access, was believed to have originated from overseas.

Recently, a government-led cybersecurity drill simulated a hacker attack scenario, allowing participants to deploy appropriate countermeasures and improve their communication and

coordination skills.

While attacks are being foiled by the city's cybersecurity systems, the trend underscores the growing need for robust, cross-sector cooperation to maintain Macau's digital resilience.

"Trend Micro blocked over 75.9 billion threats for customers in the first half of the year, but there's no time for complacency," warned Tony Lee, head of Consulting at Trend Micro Hong Kong and Macau. "As malicious actors begin to embrace AI as a tool, the industry must respond in kind, by designing security strategies to take account of evolving threats. This is an arms race we can't

afford to lose."

As Trend Micro's Lee aptly puts it, the escalating arms race in cybersecurity demands unwavering vigilance and innovative security approaches to combat evolving threats effectively.

The report added that evolving threat landscape, with cybercriminals increasingly leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance the speed, evasiveness, and sophistication of their attacks. As AI technologies become increasingly integrated into malicious activities, organizations must fortify their defenses and prepare for emerging threats to safeguard sensitive data and operational integrity.

CRIME

Gongbei port seizes GBP10,000 in wheelchair smuggling bust

NADIA SHAW

A mainland man was caught attempting to smuggle GBP10,000 of cash into Macau using an electric wheelchair, a scheme that was prevented by customs officers at Gongbei Port. The incident occurred early Sunday morning, Aug. 25, when the man attempted to exit the country through a non-declaration channel.

Customs officials beca-

me suspicious when they noticed the man exhibiting signs of nervousness as he maneuvered his wheelchair. Upon further inspection, officers discovered two stacks of black plastic bags hidden behind the wheelchair's back cushion, containing a total of GBP10,000, equivalent to approximately MOP106,300.

This case is part of a growing trend where individuals exploit mobility devices to conceal illicit

items. Recent reports indicate an uptick in similar incidents, with customs officials ramping up inspections at border crossings. In the past year alone, several travelers have been intercepted while attempting to smuggle various goods, including mobile phones and electronic devices, hidden within modified electric wheelchairs.

The man involved in this latest incident had reportedly crossed the

border multiple times within a 15-day timespan, raising further suspicions about his activities. Customs officials are continuing their investigation to determine if he will face criminal charges for this smuggling attempt.

As the trend of using modified wheelchairs for smuggling persists, customs authorities are urging travelers to comply with regulations to ensure the safety and security of border crossings.



MGTO gearing up for new markets beyond Southeast Asia to boost tourism

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) plans to attract more visitors from India, the Middle East and Europe next year as part of efforts to expand tourism markets beyond Southeast Asia. Deputy director of MGTO, Cheng Wai Tong, told reporters that Southeast Asian countries remain at the top for visitor numbers so far in this year, and that a promising 50% year-on-year increase was seen in American travelers over the same period.

Looking ahead, Macau is studying the travel patterns and consumption habits of medium and long-haul tourists from further destinations and foreign markets. In line with these changing travel trends, Macau is planning to target India, the Middle East, and Europe for focused promotion in the coming year.

To facilitate this, MGTO plans to collaborate with airlines offering long-haul flights to Hong Kong, offering free ferry tickets, bus tickets, and other discounts to attract these passengers.

While Southeast Asian visitors have exceeded 2019 levels so far this year, the recovery in Northeast Asian markets, such as Japan and Korea, has been relatively slower,

with visitor numbers reaching only 50% of 2019 levels, Cheng noted.

To address this, MGTO plans to invite local tourism celebrities and influencers to create and promote new tourism routes in the second half of the year. Cheng acknowledged that medium and long-haul travelers face limitations from aviation, economics, and other factors, slowing their recovery. More promotion and research is planned to broaden international sources for the remaining months.

In a collaborative effort, the Hong Kong Tourism Board will also step up its efforts to attract more tourists from India, the Middle East, and Europe next year.



EVENTS

10 pyrotechnic powerhouses to compete at int'l fireworks showcase

VICTORIA CHAN

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) unveiled plans yesterday for the 32nd Macao International Fireworks Display Contest, featuring 10 companies from around the globe, from Sep. 7 to Oct. 6.

At a press conference yesterday, MGTO deputy director Cheng Wai Tong expressed his enthusiasm for the upcoming festivities.

He emphasized the event's role in promoting the cross-border integration of "Tourism +" across various sectors, stating, "We are determined to promote the cross-border integration of 'Tourism +', and with the joint efforts and collaboration of various parties, we will deliver a wonderful competition to residents and tourists this year."

The contest will feature 10 pyrotechnic companies from around

the globe, including Russia, France, Canada, Thailand, Spain, the Philippines, China, Italy, Japan, and Portugal. Each display will last approximately 18 minutes, with shows scheduled at 9 p.m. and 9:40 p.m. on the designated evenings.

To ensure that visitors and residents can enjoy the fireworks from the best vantage points, MGTO has recommended five viewing locations

across Macau, including the Avon Lake at Praia Grande, Avenida de Sagres, Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, the Macao Science Center seawall, and Avenida da Maria da Taipa.

In addition to the main event, MGTO has curated a series of engaging outreach programs to amplify the festivities, including a photo contest, a student drawing competition, and an interactive online game.

LIONEL LEONG TO JOIN CHINA CONSTRUCTION BANK'S HOLDING COMPANY BOARD

LIONEL Leong, the former Secretary for Economy and Finance of the Special Administrative Region, has been nominated to serve as an independent director on the board of China Construction Co. Ltd.

Leong's nomination, along with three other candidates, was proposed by the company's Board of Directors and should be confirmed today at the General Assembly in Beijing.

According to a proposal of the board reviewed by the Times, the board stated that it has thoroughly reviewed the nominees' professional backgrounds, educational qualifications, and work experiences, and believes they meet the necessary requirements to serve as independent directors.



"The nominator believes that the nominees meet the qualifications for serving as independent directors, and there is no relationship between the nominees and China Construction Co. Ltd. that would affect their independence," the statement read.

China Construction Bank is the second largest bank in terms of assets in China following ICBC.

CORPORATE BITS

MGM hosts culinary contest for employees



Casino operator MGM recently held the "2024 MGM Employee Culinary Contest" at MGM Cotai allowing employees to showcase their cooking talents while highlighting Macau's rich food culture.

Themed "Hometown Dishes," the competition featured non-chef full-time team members competing in two categories: "Chinese Hometown Dish" and "Non-Chinese Hometown Dish."

Over 100 participants from various regions entered, with 16 making it to the finals.

Jason Wang won the "Chinese Hometown Dish" category for his "Bo Bo Chicken," while Yowared Chuklang took home the "Non-Chinese Hometown Dish" title with her "Squid with Green Curry Sauce and Rice Noodles," also earning the "Best Presentation Award."

Kenneth Feng, president and executive director of MGM China Holdings Limited, emphasized the event's role in fostering a sense of belonging and cultural exchange among employees, reinforcing the city's status as a "Creative City of Gastronomy."

Registration open for Wynn's Chinese Wine Awards 2025



Wynn's new lifestyle brand, "Wynn Signature," has announced that registration for the Wynn Signature Chinese Wine Awards 2025 is now open until December 31, 2024. Applications can be submitted through

the "Wynn Signature" WeChat mini-program.

This year's competition aims to unite China's top wineries, highlight exceptional wines, and promote the growth of the Chinese wine industry on

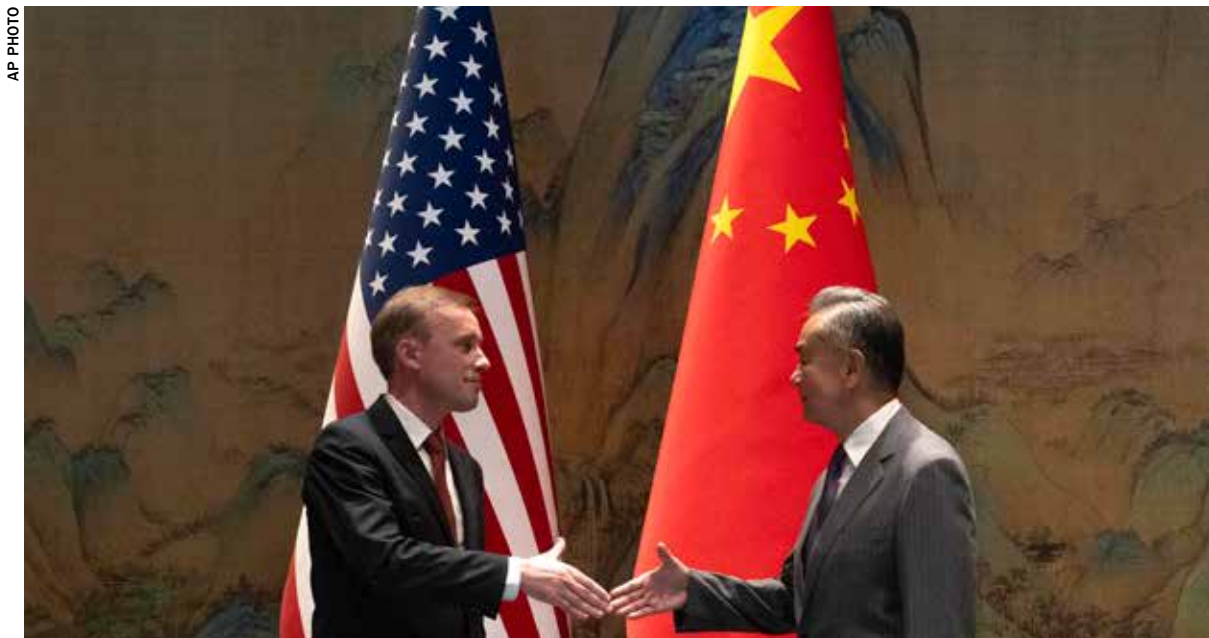
an international stage.

The inaugural awards, held from March to April 2024, featured over 700 wines from 200 wineries and was judged by a panel of 27 experts, including seven Masters of Wine.

Linda Chen, president, vice chairman and executive director of Wynn Macau, Limited said: "Wynn Signature Chinese Wine Awards aims to promote outstanding Chinese wines."

"This also expands the target regional markets for Chinese products," she added.

In May, Wynn partnered with the renowned 67 Pall Mall in Singapore to host its first overseas Chinese wine tasting event for the club's private members.



Wang Yi welcomes White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan before their talk at Yanqi lake in Beijing

DIPLOMACY

China and the US will plan a Biden-Xi call in the coming weeks, the White House says

BEIJING and Washington will plan for a phone call in the coming weeks between Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden, the White House said yesterday after National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing.

Sullivan's first trip to China as national security advisor was aimed at keeping high-level communications open and stabilizing bilateral relations to avoid conflict.

The White House statement said both sides would keep lines of communication open, including planning for a "leader-level call" in

the coming weeks.

There was no indication the two leaders might meet in person before Biden leaves the Oval Office.

The White House said the two sides also planned to hold a military theater commander telephone call in the near future.

China has rapidly expanded its

military, and there are concerns in the West that Taiwan and the South China Sea are becoming flashpoints.

Wang told Sullivan that Taiwan independence poses the greatest threat to stability in the immediate region. He demanded that the U.S. "stop arming the island but support China's peaceful unification," according to a statement released by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

Taiwan, a self-governing island democracy that split from communist China in 1949, has rejected Beijing's demands that it accept unification with the mainland by peace or by force. The U.S. is obligated under a domestic law to provide the island with sufficient hardware and technology to deter invasion.

The White House statement said Sullivan "underscored the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

Beijing also warned Washington "not to support or indulge the Philippines to infringe" upon China's rights and interests in the South China Sea. China and the Philippines have clashed over the Second Thomas Shoal and lately the Sabina Shoal.

The U.S. military has pushed back against China's claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, saying this week it would be open to consultations about escorting Philippine ships in the disputed sea amid a spike in hostilities between Beijing and Manila on the issue.

The White House said Sullivan reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to defending its Indo-Pacific allies and expressed concern about Beijing's destabilizing actions against "lawful Philippine maritime operations" in the South China Sea.

The Philippines has called for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to do more. The 10-nation Southeast Asian bloc includes the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, which have South China Sea claims that overlap with each other as well as China's and Taiwan's.

The U.S. has shifted its policy with China from engagement to competition. The Biden administration has made it a priority to prevent the competition from spiraling out of control, while seeking to collaborate with China in areas such as climate change, artificial intelligence and enforcement against illicit drugs.

John Podesta, the senior advisor to the president for international climate policy, will travel to China, and Sullivan and Wang discussed "next steps to reduce the flow of illicit synthetic drugs" and "continue repatriation of undocumented migrants," the White House said.

The U.S. Border Patrol in July made 1,851 arrests of Chinese immigrants on the border with Mexico, down from the December high of 5,951.

The two sides also agreed to hold a second round of dialogue over artificial intelligence, the Chinese foreign ministry said.

Sullivan raised continued concerns about China's trade policies and non-market economic practices, the White House said.

Wang demanded the U.S. "stop suppressing China in the areas of trade, economic and technology," the Chinese foreign ministry said.

By resorting to protectionism, the U.S. would only "hurt the global green development and affect the global economic growth," Wang told Sullivan. **MDT/AP**

TIBET

Dalai Lama returns to Indian headquarters after knee replacement surgery in the US

THE Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, returned to his headquarters in Dharamshala, northern India yesterday after undergoing a knee replacement surgery in New York.

Hundreds of followers in colorful, flowing robes, waving scarves and flowers, cheered the Dalai Lama at the airport and his residence. Several of them beat drums and performed traditional dances. Tibetan and Buddhist flags adorned poles and railings.

The Dalai Lama, 89, flew to Dharamshala after weeks of recovery at the Nappi Farmhouse in Syra-

cuse, New York, following the surgery on June 28.

Dr. David Mayman, chief of the adult reconstruction and joint replacement service at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, said after the surgery that the Dalai Lama was recovering well and was expected to continue improving over the next six to 12 months.

Dr. Tsetan D Sadutshang and Dr. Tsewang Tamdin, physicians to the Dalai Lama, said last month that the surgical incision had completely healed without any complications. The physiotherapists said they were happy with the speed



The Dalai Lama arrives in Dharamshala yesterday

of his improvement.

The Dalai Lama has made Dharamshala, the hillside town in northern India, his headquarters since fleeing Tibet after a

failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959.

The Dalai Lama formally relinquished his political and administrative powers in 2011 and han-

ded his political responsibilities to the community's elected leadership. But he has remained the spiritual leader of the Tibetan community.

His followers see him as capable of uniting and mobilizing Tibetans inside and outside China.

Over 100,000 Tibetan refugees live in India, Nepal and Bhutan, according to Tibetan organizations. Their number in India is estimated at around 85,000, while many have also moved to countries such as the U.S., Canada, Germany and Switzerland.

China exercises rigid control over all religions and, in recent years, has stepped up a campaign of cultural assimilation targeting minority groups.

China castigates the Dalai Lama as an advocate for Tibetan independence and has not had direct contact with his representatives for more than a decade.

The Dalai Lama says he merely advocates for Tibet's substantial autonomy and protection of its native Buddhist culture. **MDT/AP**

EAST TIMOR

Pope Francis is visiting Dili after a clergy abuse scandal, but will he address it?

NINIEK KARMINI,
DAVID RISING &
NICOLE WINFIELD, DILI

AP PHOTO



WHEN the Vatican acknowledged in 2022 that the Nobel Peace Prize-winning, East Timorese independence hero Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo had sexually abused young boys, it appeared that the global clergy sexual abuse scandal that has compromised the Catholic Church's credibility around the world had finally arrived in Asia's newest country.

And yet, the church in East Timor today is stronger than ever, with most downplaying, doubting or dismissing the claims against Belo and those against a popular American missionary who confessed to molesting young girls. Many instead focus on their roles saving lives during the country's bloody struggle against Indonesia for independence.

Pope Francis will come face to face with the Timorese faithful on his first trip to the country, a former Portuguese colony that makes up half of the island of Timor off the northern coast of Australia. But so far, there is no word if he will meet with victims or even mention the sex abuse directly, as he has in other countries where the rank-and-file faithful have demanded an accounting from the hierarchy for how it failed to protect their children.

Even without pressure from within East Timor to address the scandals, it would be deeply meaningful to the victims if Francis did, said Tjijyske Lingsma, the Dutch journalist who helped bring both abuse cases to light.

"I think this is the time for the pope to say some words to the victims, to apologize," she said in an interview from Amsterdam.

The day after Lingsma detailed the Belo case in a September 2022 report in *De Groene Amsterdammer* magazine, the Vatican confirmed that Belo had been sanctioned secretly two years earlier.

In Vatican spokesman Matteo Brunis's statement, he said the church had been aware of the case since 2019 and had imposed disciplinary measures in 2020, including restrictions on Belo's movements and a ban on voluntary contact with minors.

Despite the official acknowledgement, many in East Timor still don't believe it, like Dili university student Martinha Goveia, who is still expecting Belo will show up to be at Francis' side

during his upcoming visit.

If he's not there, she said, "that is not good in my opinion," because it will confirm he is being sanctioned by the Vatican.

Vegetable trader Alfredo Ximenes said the allegations and the Vatican's acknowledged sanctions were merely rumors, and that he hoped Belo would come to welcome the pope and refute the claims in person.

"Our political leaders should immediately meet him to end the problem and persuade him to return, because after all he has contributed greatly to national independence," Ximenes said.

Timorese officials refused to answer questions about the Belo case, but there's been no attempt to avoid mentioning him, with a giant billboard in Dili welcoming Pope Francis, whose visit starts Sept. 9, placed right above a mural honoring Belo and three others as national heroes.

Only about 20% of East Timor's people were Catholic when Indonesia invaded in 1975, shortly after Portugal abandoned it as a colony.

Today, some 98% of East Timor's 1.3 million people are Catholic, making it the most Catholic country in the world outside the Vatican.

A law imposed by Indonesia requiring people to choose a religion, combined with the church's opposition to the military occupation and support for the resistance over years of bloody fighting that saw as many as 200,000 people killed, helped bring about that flood of new members.

Belo won the Nobel Peace Prize for his bravery in drawing international attention to Indonesian human rights abuses during the conflict, and American missionary Richard Daschbach was widely celebrated for his role in helping save lives in the struggle for independence.

Their heroic status, and societal factors in Asia, where the culture tends to confer much power on adults and authority figures, helps explain why the men are still revered while elsewhere in the world such cases are met with outrage, said Anne Barrett Doyle, of the online resource Bishop Accountability.

"Bishops are powerful, and in developing countries where the church is dominant, they are inordinately powerful," Barrett Doyle said.

"But no case we've studied exhibits as extreme a power differential as that which exists between Belo and his victims. When a child is raped in a country that is devoutly Catholic, and the sexual predator is not only a bishop but a legendary national hero, there is almost no hope that justice will be done."

In 2018, as rumors built against Daschbach, the priest confessed in a letter to church authorities to abusing young girls from at least 1991 to 2012.

"It is impossible for me to remember even the faces of many of them, let alone the names," he wrote.

The 87-year-old was defrocked by the Vatican and criminally charged in East Timor, where he

was convicted in 2021 and is now serving 12 years in prison.

But despite his confession and court testimony from victims that detailed the abuse, Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, an independence hero himself, has visited Daschbach in prison — hand-feeding him cake and serving him wine on his birthday — and has said winning the ex-priest's early release is a priority for him.

In Belo's case, six years after winning the Nobel Prize, which he shared with current East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta, he suddenly retired as the head of the church in East Timor in 2002, citing health reasons and stress.

Not long after his retirement, Belo, today 76, was sent by the Vatican and his Salesian missionary order to another former Portuguese colony, Mozambique, to work as a missionary priest.

There, he has said, he spent his time "teaching catechism to children, giving retreats to young people." Today he lives in Portugal.

Suspicion arose that Belo, like others before him, had been allowed to quietly retire rather than face any reckoning, given the reputational harm to the church that would have caused.

In a 2023 interview with *The Associated Press*, Pope Francis suggested that indeed was the case, reasoning that was how such matters were handled in the past.

Lingsma said she first heard allegations against Belo in 2002, the same year East Timor, also known as Timor-Leste, won its formal independence after the

Indonesian occupation ended in 1999. She said she wasn't able to investigate the case and build enough evidence to publish her story on him until two decades later.

Her story garnered international attention, as well as the Vatican's acknowledgement of the case, but in East Timor was primarily met with skepticism and negative reactions toward her reporting. Her 2019 story exposing the Daschbach case eventually prompted authorities to charge him, but also did not lead to the outpouring of anger that she had anticipated.

"The reaction was silence," she recalled.

During the fight for independence, priests, nuns and missionaries put themselves at great risk to help people, like "parents wanting to save their children," helping form today's deep connection between the church and people of East Timor, said Timorese historian Luciano Valentim da Conceicao.

"Pedophilia and sexual violence are common enemies in East Timor, and we should not mix them up with the struggle for independence," said Valentim da Costa Pinto, executive director of *The Timor-Leste NGO Forum*, an umbrella organization for some 270 NGOs.

The chancellor of the Dili Diocese today, Father Ludgerio Martins da Silva, said the cases of Belo and Daschbach were the Vatican's jurisdiction, and that most people consider the sex abuse scandals a thing of the past. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Don Bosco refugee camp: Red Cross officials create awareness around mpox in Goma, Congo (DRC)

AFRICA

Mpox outbreaks result from neglect, world's inability to stop epidemics

MARIA CHENG, LONDON

THE growing mpox outbreaks in Africa that triggered the World Health Organization's emergency declaration are largely the result of decades of neglect and the global community's inability to stop sporadic epidemics among a population with little immunity against the smallpox-related disease, leading African scientists said yesterday [Macau time].

According to Dr. Dimie Ogoina, who chaired WHO's mpox emergency committee, negligence has led to a new, more transmissible version of the virus emerging in countries with few resources to stop outbreaks.

Mpox, also known as monkeypox, had been spreading mostly undetected for years in Africa before the disease prompted the 2022 outbreak in more than 70 countries, Ogoina said at a virtual news conference.

"What we are witnessing in Africa now is different from the global outbreak in 2022," he said. While that outbreak was overwhelmingly focused in gay and bisexual men, mpox in Africa is now being spread via sexual transmission as well as through close contact among children, pregnant women and other vulnerable groups.

And while most people over 50 were likely vaccinated against smallpox — which may provide some protection against mpox — that is not the case for Africa's mostly young

population, who Ogoina said were mostly susceptible.

Mpox belongs to the same family of viruses as smallpox but causes milder symptoms like fever and body aches. It mostly spreads through close skin-to-skin contact, including sex. People with more serious cases can develop prominent blisters on the face, hands, chest and genitals.

Earlier this month, WHO declared the surging mpox outbreaks in Congo and 11 other countries in Africa to be a global emergency.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said there were more than 22,800 mpox cases and 622 deaths on the continent and that infections had jumped 200% in the last week. The majority of cases and deaths are in Congo, where most mpox infections are in children under 15.

Dr. Placide Mbala-Kingebeni, a Congolese scientist who helped identify the newest version of mpox, said diagnostic tests being used in the country did not always pick it up, making it hard to track the variant's spread.

In May, Mbala-Kingebeni, who heads a lab at Congo's National Institute for Biomedical Research, published research showing a new form of mpox that may be less deadly but more transmissible. The noted mutations suggested it was "more adapted to human transmission," he said, but the lack of tests in Congo and elsewhere complicated efforts to monitor outbreaks.

The new variant has been detected in four other African

countries as well as Sweden, where health officials said they have identified the first case of a person this month with the more infectious form of mpox. The person had been infected during a stay in Africa.

WHO said that available data to date does not suggest that the new form of mpox is more dangerous but that research is ongoing.

Marion Koopmans, a virologist at Erasmus Medical Centre in the Netherlands who has been studying mpox, said scientists were now seeing some significant impacts of the disease, noting that pregnant women were miscarrying or losing their fetuses and that some babies were being born infected with mpox.

Ogoina, a professor of infectious diseases at Niger Delta University in Nigeria, said that in the absence of vaccines and drugs, African health workers should focus on providing supportive care, like ensuring patients have enough to eat and are given mental health support, given the stigma that often comes with mpox.

"It's very, very unfortunate that we have had mpox for 54 years and we are only now thinking about therapeutics," he said.

Mbala-Kingebeni said strategies previously used to stop Ebola outbreaks in Africa might help, given the limited numbers of shots expected. He said authorities have estimated Africa needs about 10 million doses but might only receive about 500,000 — and it's unclear when they might arrive.

"Finding a case and vaccinating around the case, like we did with Ebola, might help us target the hot spots," he said.

Koopmans said that given the urgent need for vaccines in Africa, waiting for more doses to be produced was unrealistic.

"The short term (question) really is about, who has vaccines and where are they to be best used next?" she said.

Spain's health ministry announced Tuesday that it would dip into its mpox vaccine stockpile to donate 20% of its supply, about 500,000 doses, to African countries battling mpox.

"We consider it senseless to accumulate vaccines where they are not needed," Spain's health ministry said in a statement, adding Spain will recommend to the European Commission to propose that all member states also donate 20% of their vaccine stock.

Spain's donation alone is more than what the European Union, vaccine Bavarian Nordic and the U.S. have pledged. Last week, Africa CDC said the EU and Bavarian Nordic had promised 215,000 mpox vaccines while the U.S. said it was donating 50,000 doses of the same vaccine to Congo. Japan has also donated some doses to Congo.

Meanwhile, the U.S. this week donated 10,000 doses of mpox vaccines to Nigeria where mpox has been common, making the vaccines the first to arrive in Africa since the global emergency was declared. The country has had a few dozen cases this year. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1950 BRITISH TROOPS ARRIVE IN KOREA



A British force of about 4,000 infantry has arrived in Korea from Hong Kong.

The decision to send the troops, as back up for the American-led United Nations force, was taken suddenly a week ago. Until now, the only British support has been from warships in the area and some local air squadrons.

The British force includes the 1st Battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and 1st Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment.

American troops have been in the region since the beginning of July and there has been deep concern in Britain that it has taken so long to send support.

At the end of July, the Minister of Defence, Emmanuel Shinwell, announced a self-contained expeditionary force, including armour, artillery and engineers, as well as infantry, would be sent to Korea.

But he said ground forces would not be withdrawn from Malaya or Hong Kong to make up the force.

However, it appears following an urgent request from General Douglas MacArthur last week for infantry reinforcements, there was a change of plan in Whitehall.

The self-contained force - including a centurion tank - is still being sent to Korea but is not expected to arrive for another couple of weeks.

Opposition leader Winston Churchill intends to raise the matter when Parliament next meets on 12 September.

The British contingent has arrived at a moment when the United Nations line is under heavy pressure on its northern front and the port of Pohang on the east coast is threatened by Communist encirclement.

Reports from Korea say Communist forces have also moved inland to capture Kigye.

If they are successful, the Communists are expected to turn their attentions next to Taegu, the main centre of allied communications.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Parliament was recalled on 12 September when the Government announced it was increasing its expenditure on defence and extending the period of national service from 18 months to two years due in part to the demands of the war in Korea. Two million people died during the Korean war, which ended with an armistice signed on 27 July 1953. Of the 63,000 UK troops sent to Korea - many National Service conscripts - 1,078 died and more than 1,000 were taken prisoner. Many were mistreated and subjected to "political re-education". 82 prisoners never returned home and are presumed dead.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

 ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Invent possibilities with someone dear. Build a romantic vision together. Express your heart in words, images and movement. You're especially creative, with Mercury direct.	 TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20 Resolve domestic misunderstandings easily. Lines of communication clarify, with Mercury direct. It's easier to persuade, compromise and reach consensus.
 GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21 An obstacle or barrier evaporates. It's easier to concentrate and communicate, with Mercury direct for the next three months. Your messages reach farther.	 CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Creative muses harmonize, with Mercury direct now. Articulate your lucrative ideas. Cash, invoices and payments flow freely. Use your persuasive charms.
 LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Advance personal dreams with greater ease now. Invent inspiring visions. Share creative ideas. Communications flow freely, with Mercury direct in your sign.	 VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Enjoy soothing routines and rituals. Privacy, peace and quiet invite productivity and restoration. It's easier to learn, with Mercury direct. Write, post and publish.
 LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Contribute to a team project. Confusion diminishes noticeably, with Mercury direct. Discuss finances, budgets and logistics. You can work faster together.	 SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Connect and network to realize professional dreams. It's easier to clarify misunderstandings, with Mercury in Leo stationing direct for three months.
 SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Travels, studies and explorations come together with diligent preparation. Make plans and strategies. Make notes, observations and reports. Learn through experience.	 CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Collaborative efforts generate income with steady efforts. Build a dream together with your partner. Coordination comes naturally, with Mercury direct.
 AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Share a dream with your partner. Make it come true with teamwork. With Mercury direct now, it's easier to brainstorm, negotiate, collaborate and network.	 PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20 Learn from the competition. Practice your moves. Stay light on your feet. Traffic flows better, with Mercury direct. Dance to express your heart.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

MEDIUM					HARD				
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2		9 4	7				8		2
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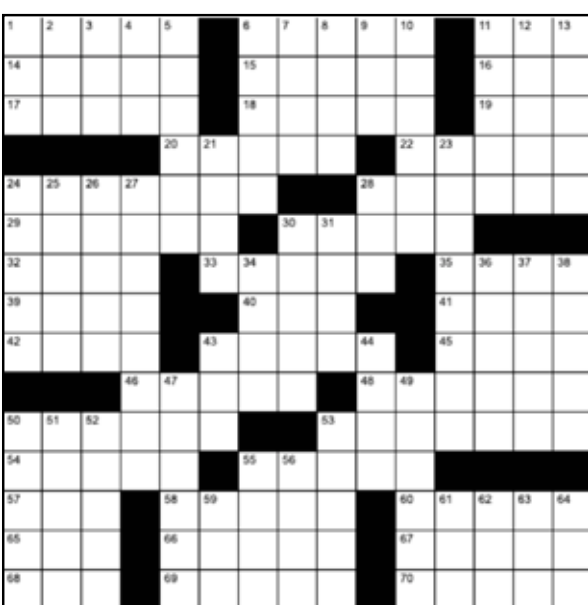
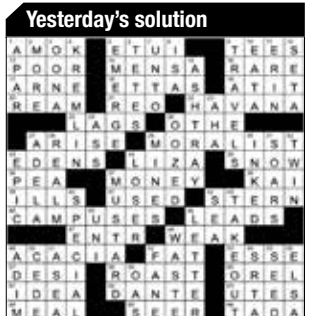
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	19	30	fine
Changchun	18	29	cloudy
Chengdu	25	34	rain
Chongqing	33	40	fine
Fuzhou	28	34	rain
Guangzhou	26	33	rain
Guiyang	23	30	showers
Haikou	26	34	cloudy
Hangzhou	25	33	thunderstorms
Harbin	19	28	cloudy
Hefei	24	32	rain
Nanjing	25	31	cloudy
Shanghai	27	34	overcast
Taipei	26	30	rain
Wuhan	24	34	rain
Hong Kong	28	32	thunderstorms
WORLD			
Moscow	13	27	fine
Frankfurt	19	33	overcast
Paris	16	26	overcast
London	12	23	overcast
New York	18	24	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- ___ Ark; 6- Shops want to achieve high ones!; 11- ... man ___ mouse?; 14- Words on a Wonderland cake; 15- Old-womanish; 16- Structural engineer's software; 17- Scout unit; 18- Brand name for a copying machine; 19- Black cuckoo; 20- Govt. security; 22- Muslim religion; 24- Dressing choice; 28- Executor's concern; 29- Portray; 30- Major artery; 32- Screws up; 33- Make a speech; 35- Old Pontiacs; 39- Be that ___ may...; 40- Shipping magnate Onassis; 41- Grandma; 42- Exchange for money; 43- Came up; 45- Simians; 46- City on the Ruhr; 48- Beliefs; 50- Entertains; 53- Demolish; 54- Chapter's partner; 55- As ___ resort; 57- Give ___ rest!; 58- Person who dresses stones; 60- Blot out; 65- Earthlink competitor; 66- "Silas Marner" author; 67- Early anesthetic; 68- Rejections; 69- "Cheers" waitress; 70- Repasts;

DOWN 1- Snapper trapper; 2- Dinghy thingy; 3- From ___ Z; 4- Med. care option; 5- Infected; 6- Word after Anglo; 7- Work without ___; 8- Italian bread?; 9- "Hold On Tight" group; 10- Man-hater, e.g.; 11- Central Florida city; 12- Charged; 13- Stop on ___; 21- Western pact; 23- Stale from standing; 24- Concepts; 25- Succinct; 26- Month of showers; 27- Languid; 28- Before, before; 30- Composer Copland; 31- Redding of R&B; 34- Hard to find; 36- Reduce gradually; 37- ___ a customer; 38- Impertinent; 43- Donkey's uncle; 44- Hot times abroad; 47- Appeared; 49- Respect; 50- Birdlike; 51- Copycat's words; 52- Russian range; 53- "Inferno" writer; 55- The most heavily populated continent on Earth; 56- Crazy as a ___; 59- Boxer Laila; 61- Road map abbr.; 62- Caught you!; 63- Choice; 64- Trauma ctrs.;



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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AUTO RACING

NASCAR MAKES ANOTHER BOLD MOVE BY ADDING MEXICO CITY TO 2025 CUP SERIES CALENDAR

JENNA FRYER,
AUTO RACING WRITER

THE smoke from the fireworks following NASCAR's first ever race in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum had barely even cleared before Ben Kennedy was being asked what other big ideas he had for a stale and predictable Cup Series schedule.

Kennedy, the great-grandson of NASCAR's founder and now the racing series' executive vice president and chief venue and racing innovations officer, didn't miss a beat.

He wanted to take NASCAR international.

Kennedy will fulfill that vision three years after he made his intentions known when the Cup Series races in Mexico City in 2025 for the first points-paying international race in modern history.

The June 15 race at Autodromo Hermanos Rodríguez — one of the most popular stops on the Formula 1 calendar — will be the



AP PHOTO

first time since 1958 and only third time in 77 years that NASCAR's top series will run an event that counts in the championship outside the United States.

NASCAR's two previous points-paying international races were in Canada, while the Cup Series also has held exhibitions in both Japan and Australia.

"Our biggest opportunity to grow as a sport is international,"

Kennedy said. "The U.S. is always going to be our mainstay and our next opportunity was to expand internationally. We said we've wanted to do this for a long time, but also needed to make sure it was the right time, the right partners and the right location.

"Mexico City checked every box. To be in one of the biggest cities globally — over 20 million people that live in the city — is

a massive opportunity for us to bring the sport."

The race announced yesterday [Macau time] at the storied Mexico City permanent road course is a multi-year deal and will replace the spring race on the short track at Richmond International Raceway. The Mexico City weekend will include the second-tier Xfinity Series and the very popular NASCAR Mexico series.

Mexican driver Daniel Suarez, who raced in the NASCAR Mexico race that was part of the Clash at the Coliseum event in February, was a featured part of the announcement. When the website for the race went live, it featured a video narrated by Suarez, who was the star attraction at a news conference that drew several hundred media outlets.

"It's been unbelievable. There are a lot of people excited here in Mexico today, it's already a day we're going to remember for a very long time," Suarez said. "This, for me, is like a dream. A real dream come true. Exactly 10 years ago I was here racing NASCAR Mexico in 2014 and I won a race here before quitting NASCAR Mexico and moving full-time to NASCAR Xfinity Series in 2015.

"I remember thinking how cool it would be to come back and race here in the Cup Series one day. I am just super excited to be part of this journey."

Kennedy has been making bold moves with NASCAR's schedule since he was tasked with the assignment. He was part of NASCAR leadership that agreed to transform Bristol Motor Speedway into a temporary dirt track, he put a temporary short track inside the L.A. Coliseum, and created NASCAR's first-ever street race in downtown Chicago. **MDT/AP**

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RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIP

Du Toit at lock for Springboks among nine changes for test vs. New Zealand

SPRINGBOKS coach Rassie Erasmus has named backrower Pieter-Steph du Toit at lock in place of injured Eben Etzebeth in his lineup for the Rugby Championship test against New Zealand at Ellis Park on Saturday.

Du Toit will combine in the second row with Ruan Nortje for the first of two tests between the teams after Etzebeth failed a fitness test on an injured knee.

Erasmus has made nine changes from the second Championship test against Australia two weeks ago. South Africa leads with two wins. New Zealand and Argentina have a win each. Australia lost both of its first two matches.

Du Toit's move to the second row also has been forced by injuries to locks R.G. Snyman, Franco Mostert, Jean Kleyn, Salmaan Moerat and Lood de Jager.

"Eben may have been ready to play this week if we really needed him," Erasmus said. "But we feel we will benefit more from selecting a player who is 100 percent fit."

Salmaan likely will be "back in the selection frame next week," Erasmus added. "We're happy that things will ease significantly for us



in that department going into the second test (at Cape Town)."

In other changes to the team that beat Australia 33-12 in Perth, Jasper Wiese returns to the back row after a six-week suspension and Aphelele Fassi takes over from Willie le Roux at fullback.

Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu retains the No. 10 jersey while props Ox Nche and Frans Malherbe and hooker Bongi Mbonambi return among six changes to the pack.

Wiese is joined in the back row by Siya Kolisi and Ben-Jason Dixon, who has recovered from a knee injury.

Among the backs, Cobus Reinach will start at scrumhalf while Damian de Allende has been recalled to join Jesse Kriel in midfield with Kurt-Lee Arendse returning on the left wing.

Erasmus once again has gone for a six-two split of forwards and backs on the bench. Hooker Malcolm Marx is joined by props Gerhard Steenekamp and Vincent Koch and backrowers Elrigh Louw, Marco van Staden and Kwagga Smith. Grant Williams and Handre Pollard are the backline replacements.

"It's not ideal that we have so many injuries at lock but we are

pleased with the way (Nortje) stood his man in our last match and we are confident that he'll combine well with Pieter-Steph at lock," Erasmus said. "This will serve as a fantastic opportunity for him to prove what he can do against one of the best teams in the world.

Wiese will "bring a lot of energy on attack and defense," Erasmus said, "after biding his time to return to the field and we are looking forward to seeing his physicality combined with the rest of the back row."

The South Africa lineup includes 12 players who featured in

last year's Rugby World Cup final against New Zealand which the Springboks won by a point.

"There is also no doubt (New Zealand) still will be hurting from the Rugby World Cup final and in addition to that they know how important a win will be to square things up and open up the Rugby Championship log," Erasmus said.

"They're a quality team with several players who have an X-factor and they constantly pose a threat to our defense so we have to start well and be on the top of our game in all departments to try to build on what we have done in the competition so far."

SPRINGBOKS LINEUP

SOUTH AFRICA: Aphelele Fassi, Cheslin Kolbe, Jesse Kriel, Damian de Allende, Kurt-Lee Arendse, Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu, Cobus Reinach, Jasper Wiese, Ben-Jason Dixon, Siya Kolisi (captain), Ruan Nortje, Pieter-Steph du Toit, Frans Malherbe, Bongi Mbonambi, Ox Nche. Reserves: Malcolm Marx, Gerhard Steenekamp, Vincent Koch, Marco van Staden, Elrigh Louw, Kwagga Smith, Grant Williams, Handre Pollard.

New Rugby Season

Saturdays, 9-11am, Taipa Stadium

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**MACAU
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OPINION

World Views

Raf Casert, MDT/AP



ORBÁN IN CHARGE OF EU'S PRESIDENCY: IS HUNGARY FOR OR AGAINST THE EU?

The European Union traditionally ends its summer slumber in the dying days of August with an informal meeting of its foreign affairs ministers in a political equivalent of a fireside chat. But with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Hungary holding the presidency of the 27-nation bloc, vacation has already been turned into one long firebrand's shout.

Since July 1, and right up to year's end, the EU's arcane rules allow Hungary, a nation of 9.5 million, to represent and often speak for the bloc of 450 million. The problem is that Orbán increasingly stands for everything the EU opposes.

The first two months of the half-year rotating presidency has already turned into "troll diplomacy," said Péter Krekó of the Center for European Policy Analysis. Orbán "just wants to provoke more anger from the leaders of the European Union," he said.

When Russian President Vladimir Putin is the EU's archenemy because of his war in Ukraine, Orbán travels to Moscow and hobnobs with the autocratic leader. When China is increasingly considered the EU's "systemic rival," Orbán travels to Beijing to make friends and boost Hungarian business interests. When the EU embraced U.S. President Joe Biden after four especially acrimonious years with Donald Trump, Orbán makes a special detour to Mar-a-Lago to visit his trusted political ally.

And all this since taking on the EU presidency only eight weeks ago. To rub it into the faces of the bloc's 26 other leaders, he made the motto of his tenure "Make Europe Great Again," a take on Trump's famous credo.

In a sign of increasing displeasure with Orbán, the EU has decided to take Thursday's prestigious meeting of foreign ministers away from Budapest and hold it instead at its headquarters in Brussels. Some member states have already downgraded attendance to other meetings in Hungary, sending bureaucrats instead of ministers with more such initiatives likely to follow, officials said.

Knowing that Orbán's turn at the helm was coming, EU nations sought to take as many decisions as possible under the preceding presidency of Belgium, including on key tranches of Ukraine aid after Orbán had questioned such help on several occasions.

There were initiatives in the European Parliament to deny Hungary the presidency altogether, but they failed as too complicated and drastic. Since retaking power in 2010, Orbán has thrived on criticism like that of liberal Renew group's president Valery Hayer, who has called his stint a "rogue presidency" and his actions on Ukraine "a security threat."

Unlike Britain, whose bellicose belligerence over the years eventually led it to leave the bloc, Hungary, long a net recipient of billions in EU funds meant to help the nation thrive in the wake of its communist past, has no such plans.

Experts say that it is Hungary's EU membership that makes him valuable to nations like Russia and China, offering a foot in the door of the massive bloc they would not have if Orbán chose to leave the community he loathes.

"Being the middleman who can fix certain issues, both for China, for Russia, for whoever is interested in influencing European politics, is the way he presents himself," said Marija Golubeva, a former Latvian interior minister and political scientist.

For Krekó, it is a situation where each one uses the other for their own purposes. "I would absolutely agree that what Orbán does is usually serving the interests of Russia and China, but it serves his own interests as well — Orbán wants to weaken the European Union from within." MDT/AP

A military court in Myanmar has given a life prison sentence to a local journalist and sentenced one of his colleagues to 20 years after convicting them under a counterterrorism law, their editor said yesterday.

The sentences for Myo Myint Oo and Aung San Oo of the independent online news service Dawei Watch appear to be the most severe dealt to any journalist since the military seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. The takeover triggered armed resistance and an ongoing civil war.

Myanmar is one of the world's biggest jailers of journalists according to

the Paris-based press freedom group Reporters Without Borders, which ranks it near the bottom of its Press Freedom Index at 171st of 180 countries.

Last week, two freelance journalists in Myanmar were killed, one allegedly after being captured, when security forces raided the home of one of them in the southern state of Mon. Several local resistance fighters were also killed.

Dawei Watch's Myo Myint Oo, 41, and Aung San Oo, 49, were arrested separately last December at their homes in the coastal town of Myeik.

AP PHOTO



GERMANY'S NEWEST PANDA TWINS THRIVE DURING FIRST FIVE DAYS IN BERLIN ZOO

STEFANIE DAZIO, BERLIN

GERMANY'S newest panda twins are thriving at the Berlin Zoo. The cubs spent their first five days of life taking turns cuddling and drinking milk from their mother every hour.

They were born Thursday to mother Meng Meng, 11. The zoo said this week that it's cautiously optimistic during this critical period — panda cub mortality is at its highest within the first two weeks of birth and through the first month because they don't yet have a functioning immune system.

Without human help, one of the cubs likely would not have survived because giant pandas usually only raise one cub when they give birth to twins. So the zoo has stepped in with a team that includes experts from China's Chengdu Research Base of Giant

Panda Breeding, who are on a visit to Berlin.

When one of the twins is with their mother, the other is spending time in an incubator donated by a Berlin hospital.

"Without protective measures, the giant panda would most likely already be extinct," zoo director Andreas Knieriem said in a statement Tuesday, adding "every cub that grows up healthy counts."

China gifted friendly nations with its unofficial mascot for decades as part of a "panda diplomacy" policy. The country now loans pandas to zoos on commercial terms. There are about 1,800 pandas living in the wild in China and a few hundred in captivity worldwide.

Currently deaf, blind and pink — their black-and-white panda markings will develop later — the firstborn twin now weighs 180 grams, while the second is rou-

ghly 145 grams (6.35 and 5.11 ounces). Both have regained their birth weights and added more grams, which the zoo considers a promising sign. The cubs' sexes have not yet been determined "with certainty."

Meng Meng was artificially inseminated on March 26. Female pandas are fertile only for a few days per year at the most. The twins' father, 14-year-old Jiao Qing, is not involved in rearing the cubs.

Meng Meng and Jiao Qing arrived in Berlin in 2017. In August 2019, Meng Meng gave birth to male twins Pit and Paule, also known by the Chinese names Meng Xiang and Meng Yuan, the first giant pandas born in Germany.

Those twins flew to China in December on a journey that was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic but had been contractually agreed to from the beginning. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Haiti military is recruiting thousands to combat severe gang violence, offering rare employment opportunities. This initiative comes as young Haitians face extreme poverty and lack of jobs, prompting many to join the military despite the risks involved in fighting widespread gang warfare.

AP PHOTO



Mexico President López Obrador paused diplomatic relations with the U.S. and Canada amidst criticisms of his judicial overhaul plan. The move signals rising tensions with North American allies over reforms perceived to threaten judicial independence and democratic processes in Mexico.

AP PHOTO



USA As VP Kamala Harris begins her fall campaign for the White House, she can look to history and hope for better luck than others who have tried the same. Since 1836, only one sitting vice president, George H.W. Bush in 1988, has been elected to the White House.

AP PHOTO



USA Dolly Parton extends her Imagination Library program, providing free books to children in 21 states and globally. Parton celebrates literacy efforts reflecting her family's educational struggles, aiming to empower young readers through consistent access to books from an early age.