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LACK OF BIRTH CERTIFICATES PUTS CAMEROON'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ON THE BRINK OF STATELESSNESS

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AP PHOTO



China-Japan The two governments announced Friday that they have reached a deal resolving their disputes over the discharge of treated radioactive wastewater from the tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean and Beijing's subsequent ban on Japanese seafood. Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said that the two sides have reached "a certain level of mutual understanding" that China will start working toward easing the import ban and will join the expanded monitoring of wastewater discharges from Fukushima Daiichi under the framework of the United Nations' atomic agency.

AP PHOTO



Japan's Rescue workers searched for at least six people missing yesterday after heavy rain pounded Japan's northcentral region of Noto, triggering landslides and floods and leaving one person dead in a region still recovering from a deadly Jan. 1 earthquake. The Japan Meteorological Agency on Saturday issued the highest alert level for heavy rain across several cities in the Ishikawa prefecture.

AP PHOTO



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet (pictured) said he was pulling his country out of a development agreement with neighboring Vietnam and Laos following protests that it was benefiting foreign interests. Critics on social media have focused on land concessions in border areas particularly with Vietnam, a highly sensitive issue because of Cambodia's historical antagonism toward its larger eastern neighbor. Authorities had arrested at least 66 people ahead of a planned August rally to condemn the Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam Development Triangle Area — or CLV-DTA.

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SMALLER HOMES, BIGGER BILLS

Local households have shrunk in recent years while grappling with rising expenses, latest gov't survey shows P3

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INFLATION RATE AT 0.74%

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 0.74% in August compared to the same month last year, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The most significant increases were seen in education (+5.03%), miscellaneous goods and services (+2.57%) and health (+2.05%). Prices also climbed for food and non-alcoholic beverages (+0.90%) and housing and fuels (+0.81%), mainly due to higher costs for dining out, vegetables and liquefied petroleum gas, along with rising rents. Conversely, transport prices fell 3.11%, and household equipment and services dropped 0.36%. For the first eight months of this year, the average CPI increased 0.93% compared to 2023.

HENGQIN INTEGRATES SIMPLE PAY

Hengqin has now integrated Macau's Simple Pay service, expanding the reach of the payment terminal launched in 2021. The Monetary Authority (AMCM) has reported several retail outlets are currently in a trial phase, primarily around the Macau New Neighbourhood community. Users can pay in Macau pataca via QR code, with support for mobile apps like MPay and Alipay. Since August 2023, the service has also been available for bus rides. In the first eight months of this year, there were over 230 million transactions totaling MOP19.64 billion, reflecting significant growth since the service's launch.

PJ ARRESTS MAN OVER AIRPLANE THEFT

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has arrested a 55-year-old mainland man for theft during a flight from Beijing to Macau. The arrest occurred at Macau International Airport after authorities reported he allegedly stole HKD39,000 from another passenger's suitcase. During the investigation, police found the suspect in possession of 13 types of foreign currency, including euros and US dollars, believed to be proceeds of crime. He is facing charges of qualified theft and is currently under the jurisdiction of the Public Prosecutor's Office.

IAO HON ESTATE FINALIZES PROPERTY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) has said it is pushing forward redevelopment of Iao Hon Estate, engaging with over 2,000 property owners across its seven housing blocks. These blocks, which include Hong Tai House and Kat Cheong House have seen the establishment of 63 management committees designed to unite residents and streamline decision-making. MUR has gathered signatures for the Urban Conditions Plan (PCU) and is actively reaching out to property owners living abroad. The proposed redevelopment will incorporate a 'vertical city' concept, transforming the low-rise buildings into high-rise structures with 30 floors while maintaining the current number of residential units.

TURBOJET

JETFOIL SERVICES RESUMED AFTER FOUR-YEAR HIATUS WITH 'TERCEIRA' DEPARTURE FROM HK

RENATO MARQUES

FERRY company Turbojet has resumed Jetfoil services between Hong Kong and Macau.

The company reinstated jetfoil journeys last Friday with the Jetfoil "Terceira," according to the Jetfoil Conservation Concern Group.

This was the first Jetfoil trip between the two regions since the pandemic interrupted the service.

"Today, after a four and a half years' wait, Turbojet resumed Jetfoil services with 'Terceira' setting sail from Hong Kong at 11:45 a.m.," the group said in a press statement.

"The Jetfoil Conservation Concern Group is glad to see this history of Hong Kong - Macau sailing resume and hopes more Jetfoils will return to service soon."

Doubts about whether Jetfoils would ever resume operations ended after several delays and postponements which the company said were mostly due to safety issues during the Macau Bridge construction.

The group noted the pandemic had led to major changes in maritime transportation between Hong Kong and Macau with the operator facing unprecedented challenges that led to the retiring of several older vessels.

Among the vessels scrapped during this period was the world's first Jetfoil, "Flores," named

COURTESY JETFOIL GROUP



after the Azorean Island and launched in 1974 as "Jetfoil One."

"Flores" had originally been the official Boeing sample to demonstrate its leading technology.

"Flores" is one of the jetfoils that has ended its days at Wang Tak Engineering and Shipbuilding Company Limited.

Citing sources within Wang Tak, the group said "Flores," unlike several other vessels, has not been dismantled after the group and several other parties called for its museological preservation.

Recently, the group has renewed calls to the gaming concessionaire MGM to include "Flores" in its revitalization project of Barra District and to link it to the next-door Maritime Museum.

MGM has so far rejected the idea citing several difficulties placing the vessel at this location.

The vessel "Terceira," which reinstated the service Friday, was completely revamped late 2023.

The vessel began operation in 1979 as the "Normandy Princess," and was operated by Jetlink for about one year on the UK and France route before sailing to Hong Kong.

To commemorate 50 years of sailing history between Hong Kong and Macau, Aero Editor has launched a new book, "Hong Kong - Macau High-Speed Ferries" (only available in the Chinese language), about the history, development and status of the business, including stories about the legendary Jetfoil fleet.

Although this type of vessel is considered less profitable due to operation and maintenance costs and the fact it only carries a small number of passengers, jetfoils have been well regarded due to their design, which allows the vessel to travel above the water surface to avoid the waves and turbulence that cause seasickness.

They have long been praised for their smooth and comfortable ride which is comparable to a jet aircraft more than a sea vessel.

Jetfoils are the oldest mass transportation in Macau serving three generations of citizens (since the launching of "Madeira" in 1975) and countless tourists from around the globe have traveled between Macau and Hong Kong.

COURTS

Suspended lawyer involved in Kong Chi case

ANOTHER defendant in the case involving former deputy prosecutor Kong Chi is a lawyer who has already been suspended from office by the courts, according to TDM.

Ho Kam Meng reported being linked to Kong's

controversial case.

Ho's profile has been removed from the Macau Lawyers Association website, signaling repercussions from an ongoing investigation.

Sources confirm the Macau Lawyers Association acted on an order

from an investigating judge to suspend Ho, according to the report.

The exact allegations against him remain unclear, but are reportedly related to misconduct during his legal duties.

It is still uncertain whether Ho will face

trial in connection with Kong's or if he will be tried separately.

Kong's retrial is set for July 2025 after the Public Prosecutor's Office successfully appealed a prior verdict acquitting him of several charges, including corruption and abu-

se of power.

Kong, who has been on unpaid leave since 2022, was originally sentenced to 17 years in prison for his crimes but benefited from a lack of evidence on one key charge related to secret societies. LV

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Macau households shrinking yet spending rises

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL households have been shrinking in the past few years while also facing increased expenditure, according to a household income and expenditure survey (HIES) from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The HIES 2023/24, conducted from March 2023 to March 2024, has shown household sizes shrank from an average of 3.04 persons to 2.83 persons when compared with the previous survey held five years ago (2017/18).

The reduction is a result of the decrease of 6.8% in the proportion of households composed of three or more persons, which accounts for 54.2% of all household numbers.

The survey also noted one-person and two-person households grew notably by 25.9% and 25.3% respectively.

Despite the slight contraction of households, family expenditures have increased.

This is despite recurrent annual subsidies and financial aid



RENATO MARQUES

(e.g. cash handouts, old-age pensions, healthcare vouchers), and government welfare benefits to stabilize livelihood in response to the pandemic.

Average monthly household income rose slightly in real terms 0.4% from 2017/18 to MOP58,835.

The small increase in income was attributed to the shrinking household size, which saw monthly per-capita income (average monthly household income divided by average number of household members) rise 7.8% in real terms to MOP20,815.

Employment income remained the main source of household income, making up 67% of the total. Monetary transfer receipts came next, constituting 19.4%.

In 2023/24, the average monthly household consumption expenditure increased 1.7% in real terms to MOP38,115, compared to five years ago.

Monthly per-capita consumption expenditure rose 9.2% to

MOP13,484, which grew faster than the monthly consumption expenditure of households as the decrease in the average household size led to fewer household members sharing some of the recurrent expenses (e.g. rentals for dwellings, and electricity charges).

DSEC analysis of goods and services accounted more for the households expenses, "Housing & Fuels" represented 25% of the household consumption expenditure, although this section saw a drop of 1.9% from 2017/18.

Household spending on "Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages" ranked second, taking up 24.7% of the total, up 2.7% from five years ago.

There were 204,177 households in Macau, up 12,904 or 6.7% from five years ago.

The rise was driven by an increase of 10,223 households living in the Parish of Nossa Senhora de Fátima (Northern District), Taipa and Coloane.

The HIES, which is conducted every five years, aims to understand the consumption pattern

and income distribution of households in Macau.

According to DSEC information, the latest data will be used to update the Consumer Price Index basket of goods and services and their respective weights, as well as to revise the basis for calculating private consumption expenditure of Gross Domestic Product.

LESS EQUALITY IN INCOME DISTRIBUTION

DSEC analysis of income distribution equality in the HIES 2023/24 survey revealed the Gini coefficient has, in general, increased from 0.315 (in 2017/18) to 0.324.

Though this value is considered medium, it indicates an increase of income distribution inequality. The same analysis also notes that after excluding government subsidies and financial aid, the per-capita Gini coefficient was 0.396, which reveals government welfare benefits to balance and improve household income distribution are needed. The Gini coefficient is an indicator used internationally for measuring the degree of equality of income distribution.

The coefficient lies between zero and one, with zero indicating a perfect distribution and one the greater the level of income inequality.

COURTS

Song Man Lei appointed acting president of top court

NADIA SHAW

SONG Man Lei has been appointed acting president of Court of Final Appeal following the resignation of former president Sam Hou Fai, who is now running for Chief Executive.

As one of the two remaining judges on the three-member court, Song will hold this position until the incoming Chief Executive appoints a permanent successor.

Sam stepped down from the top court Aug. 28, paving the way for his candidacy in the upcoming CE election.

As cited in multiple reports, court sources note that Song's extensive judicial experience makes her a strong candidate for this interim leadership role. She has been a judge



on the court since January 2012.

Under Macau's Outline of Judicial Organizations Act, the most senior judge automatically assumes the presidency in the event of a vacancy.

Notably, she has served on the Court of Final Appeal longer than her colleague José Maria Dias Azedo, who joined in November 2019.

The court confirmed Song's appointment,

and she has already begun representing it at official functions.

Her first external engagement as acting president was on Sept. 19, when she met with Deputy Procurator-General Li Xiangdong from Guangdong Province.

Macau law mandates the Court of Final Appeal comprises three judges.

The new president of the top court must be a permanent resident of Macau who holds Chinese nationality and will be elected from among the judges, pending approval from the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress.

Currently, Song serves as the president of the Electoral Affairs Committee for the Election of the Chief Executive.



TRANSPORT

PUBLIC BUSES TO ACCEPT WECHAT PAY FROM HONG KONG, MAINLAND

LOCAL public buses will accept fare payments via WeChat Pay from mainland China and Hong Kong from Sept. 24, according to the Transport Bureau (DSAT).

Responding to the increasing use of electronic payment methods, the transport authorities have partnered with the Monetary Authority (AMCM), bus companies and payment institutions to offer passengers various payment options.

Starting tomorrow, users can pay bus fares using the mainland and Hong Kong versions of WeChat Pay by

scanning the ride code displayed on public buses.

The fare will remain MOP6 per trip, with no discounts for transfers or other reductions.

Since July 2023, the two primary bus operators, TCM and Transmac, have been trialing Alipay and WeChat Pay for bus fares.

Currently, nearly 92% of public bus fares support electronic payments, including options like Macau Pass, Easy Pay+, UnionPay (for local users), and Alipay (for mainland China and Hong Kong users). LV

MACAU BRIDGE MAY REMAIN OPEN DURING TYPHOONS

Local authorities are considering keeping the new Macau Bridge operational during a No. 8 typhoon signal, which typically prompts closures for other bridges. This potential exception is due to the bridge's wind protection barriers, designed to withstand winds of up to 117 kilometers per hour. Wong Kuok Heng, chief of the Public Work Bureau's infrastructure division, said real-time data will be collected during the next typhoon before any decision is finalized. Meanwhile, new roads in Urban Zone A will open tomorrow. The bridge's official opening date is yet to be announced.

ID INCREASES MACAU BRIDGE FUN WALK PARTICIPANTS

The opening of the Macau Bridge fun walk has generated significant excitement, prompting the Sports Bureau (ID) to increase participant slots from 10,000 to 17,000 due to overwhelming demand. Individual registration resumes at 10 a.m. Sept. 24, with 7,000 spots available. The walk, scheduled for Sept. 29, will cover about 6 kilometers across the bridge. Participants can collect wristbands and souvenirs from Sept. 26 to 28. Shuttle services will be provided on event day, ensuring easy access for all attendees. For updates, visit the Sports Bureau's website.

CIVIL SERVICE EXAM TESTS 6,500 CANDIDATES

The comprehensive competency assessment for the Associate Degree Diploma and Higher Specialty Degree in Civil Service, known as "350," commenced yesterday at 10 a.m. at eight locations across Macau. Candidates had 90 minutes to complete the exam, with over 6,500 individuals registered. Examination halls opened yesterday at 9:30 a.m., where many candidates arrived early. First-time examinees expressed mixed feelings; one candidate noted her month-long preparation and confidence, while another cited concerns about the difficulty of logic and grammar questions. Successful candidates will have their results valid for five years, enabling them to pursue various public service roles.

GOV'T SEES NO NEED TO REVIEW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAW AMID SPIKE IN CASES

NADIA SHAW

THE government has reaffirmed its commitment to the existing domestic violence law, even as reported cases continue to rise.

In the first half of this year, authorities recorded 29 suspected incidents of domestic violence, including cases involving spouses and children.

This increase comes despite an overall downward trend in reported cases since the law's implementation eight years ago.

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) has noted that while there has been a general decline in domestic violence reports since the law was enacted, the recent spike in incidents is concerning.

IAS indicated 29 cases were documented in six months—an increase of 11 cases compared to the same period last year.

Despite this uptick, IAS maintains domestic violence rates are decreasing overall.

Lei Lai Peng, head of IAS's Department of Family and Community Services, said many abusers struggle with emotional management issues.

She announced ongoing educational outreach efforts to address these challenges.



"Over the years, we have seen from the analysis of domestic violence cases that many abusers likely have emotional management problems and agree to use violence. For this reason, we have been doing educational outreach in different aspects," she said during a press conference launching a new prevention campaign.

"Over the past three years, there has been a downward trend in the number of abusers who view violence as a solution. More and more residents are realizing domestic violence should not be used to solve

family problems," Lei added.

However, only 8% of reported domestic violence cases have resulted in formal accusations, with many being downgraded to lesser offenses.

This situation has led some lawmakers to call for legislative changes.

Despite these calls, IAS insists the current law is effective and does not require amendments.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has previously raised concerns about the law's exclusion of same-sex couples

and its inadequate enforcement.

In 2023, the Committee reviewed the city's third regular report on related issues.

In its concluding observations, the CESCR noted, "The Committee is concerned that the law on preventing and combating domestic violence does not cover same-sex couples, and about reports of its insufficient implementation in the context of a relatively high report rate with conversely proportionate low investigation and low prosecution rate."

CRIME

Man arrested for alleged sexual assault of young girl on bus

VICTORIA CHAN

ON Friday, Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a 51-year-old man for the alleged sexual assault of a girl under 12 years old on a public bus on her way to school.

According to the authorities, the incident occurred around 7 a.m. as the young victim was commuting to school.

The suspect, who claimed to be a security guard, was seated next to the child on the bus.

It's alleged that on three separate occasions, each lasting over 20 seconds, the suspect reached over and put his hand inside the girl's shorts.

He allegedly forcibly tou-

RENATO MARQUES



ched her inner thighs and private parts, ignoring her attempts to push his hand away.

Terrified but afraid to cause a scene, the young victim endured the abuse in silence.

Too afraid to call for help, the child instead stood and moved to the opposite side of the bus, trying to distance herself from the man.

Upon arriving at her stop, the shaken victim went straight to her school

and tearfully recounted the ordeal to her teacher, who then contacted the girl's parents and accompanied them to the police station to report the crime.

The suspect was later arrested at his workplace, and the authorities have charged him with aggravated sexual coercion.

The police have reiterated their zero-tolerance for criminal behavior targeting minors.

In the wake of this incident, the public has been urged to immediately contact the authorities if they witness or experience such situations.

The Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSED) has confirmed the bureau will continue to

educate students about the importance of reporting such incidents to trusted adults, including teachers, counselors and parents, and to contact the police when necessary.

DSEDJ's Wong Ka Ki said expressed deep concern after receiving notification from relevant departments and confirmed he had contacted the school the student attends, adding that teachers and counselors provided appropriate support, and the girl is currently emotionally stable.

Also, PJ said it prioritizes crimes against young people and maintains a strict "zero tolerance" policy toward any behavior that harms them.

To enhance self-protection awareness among youth, the police will continue educational initiatives in schools, "helping students develop a strong understanding of safety and the importance of reporting crimes."

FMCC Gala 2024 celebrates leaders in sustainability

NADIA SHAW

THE France Macau Chamber of Commerce (FMCC) celebrated significant strides in sustainability at its annual charity gala dinner Friday night.

Held in the Grand Ballroom of MGM Macau, the event recognized the winners of the Macau ESG Awards 2024, which honor organizations excelling in Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) initiatives across the region.

This year's awards highlighted contributions across three categories: Best NGO, awarded to Oxfam in Macau for impactful projects like "Paper Recycling and Supporting the Paper Recycling Workers" and the "Free Tutorial Project for Children from Low-Income Families"; Best SME, presented to C&C Lawyers and Notaries; and Best Project, which went to MGM for its comprehensive sustainability policy.

Notably, MGM Cotai achieved a three-star green building certification and the ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management certification.

FMCC chairman Rutger Verschuren expressed gratitude to all nominees and winners, emphasizing their dedication to ESG principles.

"These awards are vital for fostering positive change, en-



couraging other businesses to emulate this year's exemplary leadership," he said.

The gala drew around 300 VIPs, executives, and government officials from Macau, Hong Kong, and the Greater Bay Area to commemorate 60 years of Sino-French diplomatic relations.

Notable attendees included Christile Drulhe, the Consul General of France in Hong Kong and Macau; Zhang Guanyu, deputy director-General of the Economic Affairs Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR; Maria Helena Senna Fernandes, director of the Macao Government Tourism Offi-

ce; and Tai Kin Ip, director of the Economic and Technological Development Bureau.

The gala also raised MOP60,910 for Oxfam's "Paper Recycling" initiative aimed at enhancing sustainable practices and environmental stewardship in Macau through community involvement and education.

This year's event commemorated six decades of Sino-French diplomatic relations.

Guests enjoyed performances by the Sino-French jazz band Alice & The Wanderers – who flew in from Shanghai.

Verschuren noted, "This event demonstrates our chamber's commitment to fostering sustainability, innovation and

cross-cultural collaboration in Macau."

A key announcement during the evening was the introduction of "LeBooster Macau Hengqin," a new initiative designed to accelerate international business development aligned with Macau's diversification goals.

This platform will provide services such as market research, product testing, company setup and office space to support French and other global companies expanding their presence in Macau and Hengqin.

The project underscores FMCC's commitment to driving economic growth and innovation within the Greater Bay Area as a dynamic business hub.

SMG WARNS OF TROPICAL DEPRESSION THIS WEEK

As a tropical depression forms off the southeastern coast of China, moving toward Fujian, the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) has warned of potential thunderstorms until tomorrow with winds reaching Force 6 or higher. Residents should prepare for cooler temperatures due to persistent cloudiness and strong winds. Authorities have advised the public to stay informed about weather updates and heed any warnings issued. The bureau will continue monitoring the situation as the depression interacts with the northeast monsoon, potentially impacting travel and outdoor activities during this period.

HONG KONG-ZHUHAI-MACAO BRIDGE OPENS NEW INSPECTION HALL

Macau's Port at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HKZMB) will unveil its new vehicle inspection and release hall for outbound personnel starting at 3 p.m. Sept. 23. This facility, which complements the entry lane hall opened in April, enhances customs clearance efficiency and passenger convenience. Operating 24/7, it features an exit office, two manual inspection channels and a customs inspection room. Travelers are advised to follow on-site signs and staff instructions to ensure a smooth exit process. The current customs measures for vehicle clearance remain unchanged for eligible passengers.

MGTO PARTNERS WITH K-POP STAR MIYEON INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has teamed up with K-pop star Miyeon from (G)I-DLE to launch the "Experience Macao Limited Edition" international campaign. This initiative features an exclusive music video and an interactive online game to attract young travelers to Macau. Participants can engage in a fun quiz on the campaign website, ExperienceMacaoLimitedEdition.com, answering three daily questions about the city for a chance to win one of 100 Limited Edition Prize packages. These packages, created in collaboration with Klook, include round-trip flights, premium accommodation and exclusive cultural experiences at six integrated resorts in Macau.

Lawmaker calls on gov't to monitor casino social responsibilities

VICTORIA CHAN

LAWMAKER Leong Sun Iok has called for oversight of casino social responsibility programs.

The lawmaker from the Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) emphasized the need for the gaming industry to complement government efforts in supporting employment, training local talent and promoting economic diversification.

In a press conference on the legislative work review of FAOM's lawmakers, Leong recalled the new gambling license terms require gaming companies to bear



a series of social responsibilities.

FAOM has been urging the government

to closely monitor and disclose the companies' performance in this area,

to achieve the desired

economic and social benefits for the community.

One key area is protecting the employment of satellite field employees.

As the transition period for these workers expires next year, Leong expressed concerns over their job security and called for the government to provide clarity on the future of the satellite field operations.

Additionally, the lawmaker advocated for the extension and expansion of the government's consumption rewards program, which provides incentives for residents to boost local spending.

He also suggested gaming companies level-

rage their resources and events to further promote community economic revitalization, such as issuing coupons for participants to use at local businesses.

Leong emphasized the need for the government to dynamically evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts to revitalize the six major gaming-related areas and host large-scale events.

He stressed that non-gaming projects should focus on cultivating emerging industries, new economic growth points, and high-tech talent, in line with the direction of moderate economic diversification.

WUHAN MARKET

A new genetic analysis of animals may help find Covid-19's origin

MARIA CHENG, LONDON

SCIENTISTS searching for the origins of COVID-19 have zeroed in on a short list of animals that possibly helped spread it to people, an effort they hope could allow them to trace the outbreak back to its source.

Researchers analyzed genetic material gathered from the Chinese market where the first outbreak was detected and found that the most likely animals were racoon dogs, civet cats and bamboo rats. The scientists suspect infected animals were first brought to the Wuhan market in late November 2019, which then triggered the pandemic.

Michael Worobey, one of the new study's authors, said they found which sub-populations of animals might have transmitted the coronavirus to humans. That may help researchers pinpoint where the virus commonly circulates in animals, known as its natural reservoir.

"For example, with the racoon dogs, we can show that the racoon dogs that were (at the market) ...



were from a sub-species that circulates more in southern parts of China," said Worobey, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Arizona. Knowing that might help researchers understand where those animals came from and where they were sold. Scientists might then start sampling bats in the area, which are known to be the natural reservoirs of related coronaviruses like SARS.

While the research bolsters the

case that COVID-19 emerged from animals, it does not resolve the polarized and political debate over whether the virus instead emerged from a research lab in China.

Mark Woolhouse, a professor of infectious diseases at the University of Edinburgh, said the new genetic analysis suggested that the pandemic "had its evolutionary roots in the market" and that it was very unlikely COVID-19 was infecting people before it was identified

at the Huanan market.

"It's a significant finding and this does shift the dial more in favor of an animal origin," Woolhouse, who was not connected to the research, said. "But it is not conclusive."

An expert group led by the World Health Organization concluded in 2021 that the virus probably spread to humans from animals and that a lab leak was "extremely unlikely." WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus later said it was "premature" to rule out a lab leak.

An AP investigation in April found the search for the COVID origins in China has gone dark after political infighting and missed opportunities by local and global health officials to narrow the possibilities.

Scientists say they may never know for sure where exactly the virus came from.

In the new study, published last week in the journal *Cell*, scientists from Europe, the U.S. and Australia analyzed data previously released by experts at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention. It included 800 sam-

ples of genetic material Chinese workers collected on Jan. 1, 2020 from the Huanan seafood market, the day after Wuhan municipal authorities first raised the alarm about an unknown respiratory virus.

Chinese scientists published the genetic sequences they found last year, but did not identify any of the animals possibly infected with the coronavirus. In the new analysis, researchers used a technique that can identify specific organisms from any mixture of genetic material collected in the environment.

Worobey said the information provides "a snapshot of what was (at the market) before the pandemic began" and that genetic analyses like theirs "helps to fill in the blanks of how the virus might have first started spreading."

Woolhouse said the new study, while significant, left some critical issues unanswered.

"There is no question COVID was circulating at that market, which was full of animals," he said. "The question that still remains is how it got there in the first place."

MDT/AP

Seeking to counter China, US awards USD3 billion for EV battery production in 14 states

MATTHEW DALY,
WASHINGTON

THE Biden administration is awarding over \$3 billion to U.S. companies to boost domestic production of advanced batteries and other materials used for electric vehicles, part of a continuing push to reduce China's global dominance in battery production for EVs and other electronics.

The grants will fund a total of 25 projects in 14 states, including battleground states such as Michigan and North Carolina, as well as Ohio, Texas, South Carolina and Louisiana.

The grants announced Friday mark the second round of EV battery funding under the bipartisan infrastructure law approved in 2021. An earlier round allocated \$1.8 billion for 14 projects that are ongoing. The totals are down from amounts officials annou-

nced in October 2022 and reflect a number of projects that were withdrawn or rejected by U.S. officials during sometimes lengthy negotiations.

The money is part of a larger effort by President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris to boost production and sales of electric vehicles as a key element of their strategy to slow climate change and build up U.S. manufacturing. Companies receiving awards process lithium, graphite or other battery materials, or manufacture components used in EV batteries.

"Today's awards move us closer to achieving the administration's goal of building an end-to-end supply chain for batteries and critical minerals here in America, from mining to processing to manufacturing and recycling, which is vital to reduce China's dominance of this critical sector," White



te House economic adviser Lael Brainard said.

The Biden-Harris administration is "committed to making batteries in the United States that are going to be vital for powering our grid, our homes and businesses and America's iconic auto industry," Brainard told reporters Thursday during a White House call.

The awards announced Friday bring to nearly \$35 billion total U.S. investments to bolster domestic critical minerals and battery supply chains, Brainard said, citing

projects from major lithium mines in Nevada and North Carolina to battery factories in Michigan and Ohio to production of rare earth elements and magnets in California and Texas.

"We're using every tool at our disposal, from grants and loans to allocated tax credits," she said, adding that the administration's approach has leveraged more \$100 billion in private sector investment since Biden took office.

In recent years, China has cornered the market for

processing and refining key minerals such as lithium, rare earth elements and gallium, and also has dominated battery production, leaving the U.S. and its allies and partners "vulnerable," Brainard said.

The U.S. has responded by taking what she called "tough, targeted measures to enforce against unfair actions by China." Just last week, officials finalized higher tariffs on Chinese imports of critical minerals such as graphite used in EV and grid-storage batteries. The administration also has acted under the 2022 climate law to incentivize domestic sourcing for EVs sold in the U.S. and placed restrictions on products from China and other adversaries labeled by the U.S. as foreign entities of concern.

"We're committed to making batteries in the United States of America," Energy Secretary Jennifer

Granholm said.

If finalized, awards announced Friday will support 25 projects with 8,000 construction jobs and over 4,000 permanent jobs, officials said. Companies will be required to match grants on a 50-50 basis, with a minimum \$50 million investment, the Energy Department said.

While federal funding may not be make-or-break for some projects, the infusion of cash from the infrastructure and climate laws has dramatically transformed the U.S. battery manufacturing sector in the past few years, said Matthew McDowell, associate professor of engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology.

McDowell said he is excited about the next generation of batteries for clean energy storage, including solid state batteries, which could potentially hold more energy than lithium ion. MDT/AP

SRI LANKA

Presidential election goes into 2nd round of vote counting for first time in history

KRISHAN FRANCIS & SHIEKH SAALIQ, COLOMBO

MARXIST lawmaker Anura Kumara Dis-sanayake leads early official results in Sri Lanka's presidential election, according to tallies released yesterday by the Election Commission, but he is still short of the 50% needed for victory.

The election held Saturday is crucial as the country seeks to recover from the worst economic crisis in its history and the resulting political upheaval.

The election, contested by 38 candidates, was largely a three-way race among Dis-sanayake, incumbent liberal President Ranil Wickremesinghe and opposition leader Sajith Premadasa.

Dis-sanayake, whose pro-working class and anti-political elite campaigning made him popular among youth, was leading with 47% of total votes counted, followed by Premadasa with nearly 28% and Wickremesinghe with 15%.



Anura Kumara Dis-sanayake

It was a strong showing for Dis-sanayake, who won just over 3% of votes in a previous presidential election in 2019, and suggests voters are fatigued with the old political guard, which has been accused of pushing Sri Lanka toward economic instability.

Wickremesinghe's Foreign Minister Ali Sabry congratulated Dis-sanayake on the social plat-

form X and said he hopes Dis-sanayake will "lead with a commitment to transparency, integrity, and the long-term good of the country."

"I wish Mr. Dis-sanayake and his team every success in their efforts to lead Sri Lanka forward," Sabry added.

However, neither Wickremesinghe nor Premadasa has conce-

ded defeat.

If no candidate secures at least 50% of the total votes there will not be a separate runoff.

The Sri Lankan election system allows voters to select three candidates on their ballots in the order of their preference. If no candidate secures a majority, the top two will be retained and the ballots of the eliminated candidates will be checked for preferences given to either of the top two candidates, and those votes will be added to their respective tallies.

The candidate with the highest number of votes after that will be declared the winner.

The election was a virtual referendum on Wickremesinghe's leadership of a fragile recovery, including restructuring Sri Lanka's debt under an International Monetary Fund bailout program after it defaulted in 2022.

Dis-sanayake, 55, leads the left-leaning coalition National People's Power, an umbrella of civil society groups, professionals, Buddhist clergy and students.

No major incidents were re-

ported during the vote but authorities declared a countrywide curfew until midday Sunday as a precaution, police said.

There were 17 million eligible voters and final results were expected yesterday evening.

The government announced Thursday that it passed the final hurdle in debt restructuring by reaching an agreement in principle with private bond holders.

At the time of its default, Sri Lanka's local and foreign debt totaled \$83 billion. The government says it has now restructured more than \$17 billion.

Despite a significant improvement in key economic figures, Sri Lankans are struggling with high taxes and living costs.

Both Premadasa and Dis-sanayake say they will renegotiate the IMF deal to make austerity measures more bearable. Wickremesinghe has warned that any move to alter the basics of the agreement could delay the release of a fourth tranche of nearly \$3 billion that is crucial to maintaining stability. **MDT/AP**

PHILIPPINES

Senator says China should do more to help fight cybercrime gangs

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

CHINA should do more to battle the illegal online gambling and scam call centers run by Chinese criminal syndicates in Southeast Asian countries often using forced labor, a Philippine senator who led an investigation into the centers said Friday.

The U.N. human rights office has said that such gangs have forced hundreds of thousands of people into participating in online scam operations, including false romantic ploys, bogus investment pitches and illegal gambling schemes.

Sen. Risa Hontiveros also called for stronger international cooperation to end cybercrime, saying that the gangs undermine the rule of law and could provide a platform for espionage activities, although she acknowledged there is no clear evidence linking the gambling hubs to Chinese surveillance operations.

A number of Chinese gambling complexes which have been shut down by Philippine authorities were located near a Philippine air force base north of Manila where American forces have been authorized to build a presence and near a residential compound inhabited by American diplomats and military officials, according to Hontiveros.

China has expressed alarm over increased U.S. military deployments in Asia, including in the Philippines, Washington's longtime treaty ally.

Chinese-run online gambling outfits are estimated to number more than 400 across the Philippines, and they employ tens of thousands of Chinese and Southeast Asian nationals, many of them illegally trafficked into the country, Philippine officials said.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered a ban on online gambling operations in July, saying they



Filipino Sen. Risa Hontiveros, who has led an investigation into the massive online gambling and scam operations in the Philippines, speaks at a news briefing in Manila, Philippines

have mocked Philippine laws and committed crimes including financial scams, human trafficking, torture, kidnappings and murder.

China has banned gambling, but most of the clients of the online syndicates which operate in the

Philippines were mainland Chinese citizens, who defy their government's prohibition, Hontiveros said.

"China is not doing enough, given her impressive powers that she has not been shy to wield and display on so many fronts," Hontiveros said.

"We would all benefit from more regional and international cooperation in, for example, making the social media companies more accountable for the use and misuse of their products and services, their platforms, for these malign operations," Hontiveros

told foreign news correspondents in a briefing.

There was no immediate reaction from Chinese officials in Manila or Beijing.

The Chinese government, however, has said it has cooperated with Filipino authorities in shutting down the online gambling and scam outfits of Chinese syndicates in the Philippines and rescuing large numbers of Chinese and other Southeast Asians who were illegally recruited and forced to run the illegal operations and scams.

Lucrative online gambling operations catering to Chinese citizens have also flourished in Southeast Asian countries allied with Beijing, including Cambodia and Myanmar, Hontiveros said.

The online gambling industry has flourished across the Philippines largely due to corruption in government regulatory agencies and big payoffs to officials, officials said. **MDT/AP**

Lack of birth certificates puts Cameroon's Indigenous people on the brink of statelessness

NGALA KILLIAN CHIMTOM, MAYOS

THE morning sun filtered through the forest canopy, casting dappled light on this village in Cameroon. For the Baka Indigenous community, it was a timeless image.

But a passing truck broke the silence and stirred up billows of dust, a reminder that the Baka now live an uneasy life along roadsides after being forced from their traditional homes.

The Baka and fellow Indigenous Bagyieli have lived in harmony with the forests of central Africa for generations. But mining and logging activities are encroaching, along with conservation areas, and government policy aims to integrate the ethnic groups into mainstream society.

Lives "were better when we were in the forest," said Rebecca Gwampiel, a 78-year-old Baka. She prepared yam porridge in front of a traditional hut constructed with arched saplings. In the dusty courtyard, children played football using bound banana leaves.

Among them was Francis, an 11-year-old who has quickly adapted to the new life and has aspirations. "I want to become a nurse," he declared. "I want to be able to treat my grandmother when she is sick."

But for many Baka children, such dreams go unfulfilled. Their lack of birth certificates poses a significant barrier — part of a wider global problem. They never saw the need for birth certificates when they barely interacted with the world beyond the forest. Even now, they live far from administrative centers and can rarely afford the transport to reach them.

"Without a birth certificate, he is stuck with me here in the village," said Francis' 61-year-old father, Bertrand Akomi. He himself was denied employment by a lumber company because he didn't have a birth certificate.

The document remains elusive for the more than 120,000 members of Cameroon's Baka and Bagyieli communities. Without birth certificates, they cannot obtain national identity documents and are excluded from the full benefits of citizenship.

"When births are not regis-



Henri Lema poses for a photograph outside his house in Nazareth village



Bilore Marie prepares a meal with porcupine meat at her house in Nazareth village

tered, how can you identify yourself as Cameroonian?" asked Banmi Emmanuel Dingha, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Cameroon's National Assembly, calling the document crucial for accessing education, healthcare and employment opportunities.

There is hope for change. Earlier this summer, Dingha and colleagues in the Cameroon parliament passed a bill allowing the country to accede to two United Nations conventions relating to the recognition of stateless people.

That would "help to significantly reduce discrimination against persons who often are only victims of circumstances," the government said at the time.

Cameroon's actions are part of a commitment by African nations earlier this year to address the right to nationality and eradicate statelessness on the continent of more than 1.3 billion people.

The Indigenous people of Cameroon are mostly hunters and gatherers who are long

used to easily crossing lightly guarded international borders in search of food and game.

"The Bakas are not only in Cameroon. You find them in Congo, you find them in the Central African Republic, you find them in Gabon and you find them in Equatorial Guinea. And many of them move across forests that straddle all these countries," Dingha said.

Sebastian Bissolababa, a teacher at a government school in Mayos, emphasized the urgency. Many Baka students can't move on to secondary education or beyond, and companies often require identification papers, closing another route to integration into society.

The Indigenous Bagyieli, who live some 590 kilometers away in the southern Campo region, face similar challenges.

There, Henri Lema of Nazareth village was returning from hunting, with a porcupine dangling from his spear. He joined his wife, Bilore Marie, in preparing the evening meal.

As he sliced the porcupine, he expressed frustration with the lack of identification docu-

ments and the trouble it causes with paramilitary forces and other authorities.

"Each time I have to travel to Kribi (the district administrative headquarters), gendarmes disturb me because I don't have an ID card," he said. "I have to pay a bribe each time. And that's money I don't even have."

Simplice Nguimba is a senior government official in charge of, among other things, ensuring that the Bagyieli in Campo have access to nationality documents.

"In concrete terms, our actions are based on raising awareness, doing advocacy, monitoring and support for Bagyieli," he said.

Several other groups of Cameroonians also have risked statelessness.

The ongoing separatist crisis in the country's English-speaking North West and South West regions, and the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North region, have triggered internal displacement, resulting in the loss of birth certificates and national identity cards for many people. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1951 KING HAS LUNG OPERATION



Crowds have gathered outside Buckingham Palace for news of King George VI following an operation to remove part of his lung.

A bulletin on the King's health posted on the gates of Buckingham Palace this afternoon said "anxiety must remain for some days" but "his immediate post-operative condition is satisfactory".

The statement was signed by the five doctors who have attended the King and spent last night at the palace prior to the operation.

The decision to operate was taken on Friday after doctors noticed "structural changes" in the King's lung, which were giving cause for concern.

Nurses moved into the palace on Friday night and oxygen cylinders and other medical equipment arrived during the day yesterday.

The operation began at around 1000 today (Sunday) and took most of the morning.

The Queen was at the palace and she was the first to hear from the doctors how the King had withstood the surgery.

News of the King's condition was then telephoned to Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh at Clarence House and to Queen Mary and other members of the royal family at Marlborough House.

The King was apparently moved to the comfort of his own bedroom immediately after the operation. He is being attended by nursing staff round-the-clock.

The Princess and her husband spent more than an hour at the Palace this evening. Queen Mary had left after visiting for nearly an hour a little earlier.

Princess Margaret flew in from Scotland to join her parents. She drove direct to the palace from London Airport.

Prince Charles and Princess Anne are the only members of the royal family remaining at Balmoral.

The Prime Minister Clement Attlee, who had also flown back to London from Scotland, has been kept informed of the King's progress at Number 10.

Special prayers are being said in churches throughout the country for the King's recovery.

Crowds gathered outside the palace and filed passed the railings where the bulletin on the King's health had been pinned. Police officers kept the crowd moving.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The King appointed five Counsellors of State, including the Queen and Princess Elizabeth to deal with matters requiring the Sovereign's approval during his illness.

But he never made a complete recovery and died in February 1952, when it was revealed he had been suffering from lung cancer. He became King on the abdication of his elder brother, Edward VIII, to marry the divorcee Wallace Simpson.

George VI's refusal to leave Buckingham Palace during the years of World War II won him the respect of the British people. It is thought the traumatic times through which he led his country left him physically exhausted and contributed to his failing health and early death at the age of 56.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Alliances grow your enterprise. The next month favors partnership, delegation, and collaboration, with the Sun in Libra. Share the load and get more together.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Your work seems energized. Enjoy a busy and creative phase this month under the Libra Sun. Practice growing your physical health, fitness and vitality.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Let your heart be your guide this month under the Libra Sun. Love makes everything easier. You're especially creative, charming and attractive.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Domestic projects flower under the Libra Sun for a month. Home and family take priority. Put energy into reinforcing and strengthening your household infrastructure.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Creative expression, travel and research take the spotlight this month, with the Sun in Libra. Communication blossoms.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Pursue lucrative developments this month, with the Sun in Libra. Cash flow increases with focus and attention. Nurture financial growth and expansion.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 You have the advantage this month, with the Sun in your sign. Personal growth and development blossoms. Step into greater leadership.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Finish up old business this month under the Libra Sun. Get especially productive behind closed doors. Entering your annual completion and re-evaluation phase. Your dream life comes alive.

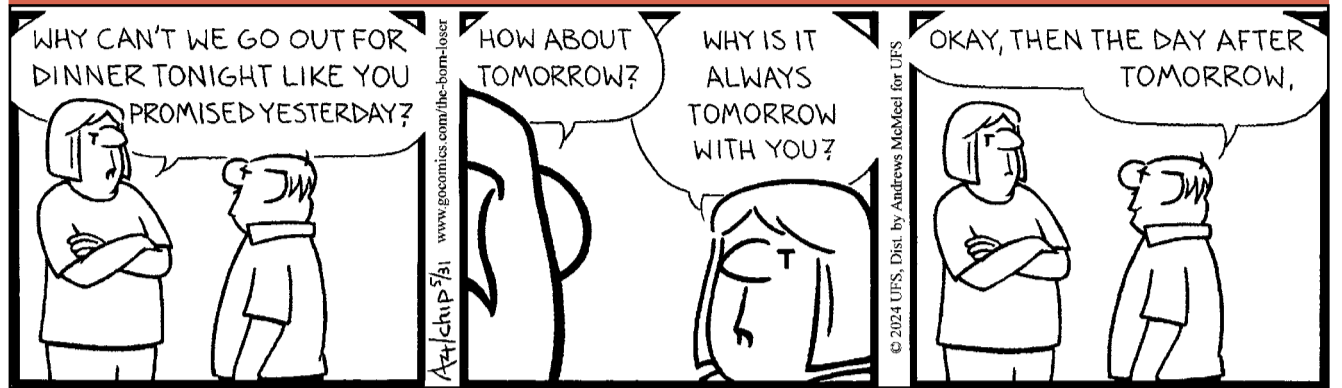
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Participate with meetings, parties, public events and community projects. Social connections thrive this month, with the Sun in Libra. Share resources, opportunities and solutions.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Focus on advancing your career this month, with the Sun in Libra. Assume greater responsibility and leadership. Grow professional skills toward your passions.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Pursue travel and educational destinations this month under Libra Sun. Spread your wings and explore. Make long-distance connections.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Increase your financial security. This month could get especially lucrative, with the Sun in Libra. Grow family fortunes with steady action.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

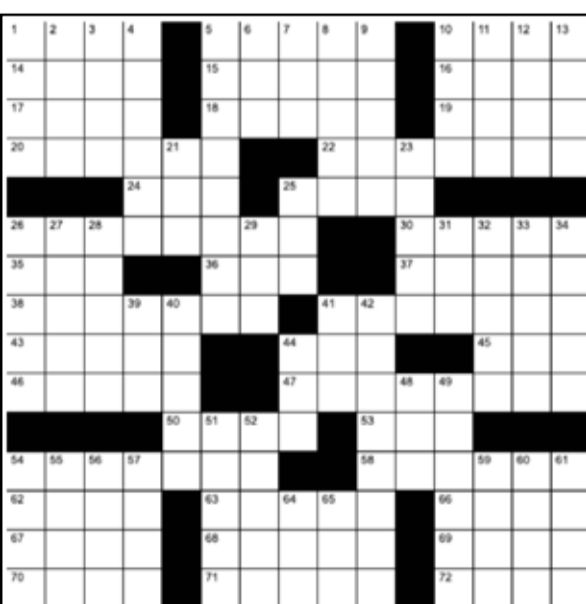
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	11	24	fine
Changchun	6	20	fine
Chengdu	19	33	cloudy
Chongqing	26	33	cloudy
Fuzhou	22	24	rain
Guangzhou	23	27	rain
Guiyang	15	25	fine
Haikou	24	26	thunderstorms
Hangzhou	19	25	cloudy
Harbin	8	19	fine
Hefei	14	23	cloudy
Nanjing	16	24	cloudy
Shanghai	21	27	rain
Taipei	25	28	rain
Wuhan	16	27	fine
Hong Kong	25	27	rain
WORLD			
Moscow	4	16	cloudy
Frankfurt	12	21	showers
Paris	14	19	thunderstorms
London	12	18	rain
New York	16	22	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Res ___ loquitor; 5- Sample; 10- Slovenly person; 14- Consider; 15- Proprietor; 16- Pocket bread; 17- ___ saw Elba; 18- Hotelier Helmsley; 19- Came down to earth; 20- Ice cream topped with syrup; 22- Flightless bird; 24- Highly respectful way of addressing a man; 25- Hammock holder; 26- Emasculate; 30- Now, in Nogales; 35- Sugar suffix; 36- Little bit; 37- Harder to find; 38- Defensive wall; 41- Mail charge; 43- Rho follower; 44- Test site; 45- Actor Jude; 46- Upright; 47- Qualified; 50- Math branch; 53- Bar bill; 54- More spacious; 58- Familiar with; 62- That's ___ haven't heard; 63- Bellini opera; 66- Sick as ___; 67- ___ best friend; 68- Keyboard key; 69- Stable female; 70- Baseballer Slaughter; 71- Blue book filler; 72- Auld Lang ___;

DOWN 1- Time to beware; 2- Lima's land; 3- Caught in the act; 4- In the thick of; 5- Put up with; 6- Feeling of being overwhelmed; 7- ___-Cat; 8- Pavarotti, e.g.; 9- Clear the boards; 10- Box; 11- Leslie Caron role; 12- Ear-related; 13- It's drawn in a lavatory; 21- Publicize; 23- Eye drops; 25- Koppel of "Nightline"; 26- Thicket; 27- Light ___; 28- Twilled fabric; 29- Make lace; 31- Covering for the head; 32- Toothbrush brand; 33- Stately; 34- ___ having fun yet?; 39- Onetime Jeep mfr.; 40- Singer LaBelle; 41- Buddy; 42- Death notice; 44- Lower limb; 48- Xenon, e.g.; 49- Construction pieces; 51- Actress Taylor; 52- Removes wrinkles; 54- Capital of Italy; 55- ___ even keel; 56- Vintner's prefix; 57- Fail to hit; 59- WWII event; 60- Ripped; 61- Archtype; 64- ACLU concerns; 65- Cry ___ River;



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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VA FAT (Taipa Village)
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77.10 m² / 830 ft² | HKD3,980,000



Nam Long (Taipa Village)
2 bed 1 bath
59.92 m² / 645 ft² | HKD3,650,000



Jade Garden (Taipa)
4 bed 3 bath
379.04 m² / 4,080 ft² | HKD 11,880,000



Ocean Garden Cattleya Court (Taipa)
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BOXING

Dubois beats up Joshua to retain IBF heavyweight title with brutal 5th-round knockout

DANIEL Dubois is no longer an accidental world heavyweight champion.

With a brutal fifth-round knockout of Anthony Joshua in front of 96,000 fans at Wembley Stadium, Dubois showed he might be the real deal — and the future of boxing's marquee division.

"Are you not entertained?" Dubois roared to the crowd after dominating the all-British title fight to complete his quest to legitimize his status as a heavyweight titleholder, three months after gaining the IBF belt vacated by Oleksandr Usyk.

The 27-year-old Dubois entered the ring first — an unusual twist given he was the champion — to strengthen the feeling this was being treated as a homecoming for Joshua, the decade-long darling of British boxing who was bidding to emulate the



Daniel Dubois, left, knocks out Anthony Joshua in the IBF World Heavyweight bout at Wembley Stadium, in London, Saturday

likes of Muhammad Ali and Lennox Lewis as a three-time heavyweight champ.

Dubois left the ring as the heavyweight's next big thing, having floored Joshua in the first

and third rounds before ending the fight 59 seconds into the fifth with a counter right that sent Joshua face first into the canvas.

Joshua's corner threw in the towel but that wasn't needed.

There was no coming back for a boxer whose best days look behind him.

"This is my time, my redemption story," said Dubois, who put himself in position to potentially fight the winner of the Dec. 21 rematch between WBA, WBC and WBO champion Usyk and Tyson Fury. "I'm not going to stop until I reach my full potential."

As for the outclassed Joshua, he vowed to continue boxing after a fourth defeat over the last five years. His promoter, Eddie Hearn, said he wanted to exercise the rematch clause.

This was the worst of all those losses, though. Joshua was saved by the bell in the first and third rounds after the knockdowns and put in a ragged performance throughout, with Dubois getting through his defense with ease.

Joshua never recovered from an overhead right late in the first

round that knocked him down. He stuck out his tongue toward Dubois as he returned to his stool but he was clearly hurt, disorientated and vulnerable.

The knockdown late in the third, off a big left from Dubois, dumped Joshua onto his backside through the ropes.

"I had a sharp opponent, a fast opponent," Joshua said. "But a lot of the mistakes were mine."

A record post-war boxing crowd in Britain witnessed a changing of the guard.

Joshua has been a marketing phenomenon for the past decade, selling out U.K. stadiums and making hundreds of millions of dollars mainly because of his punching power. He might be back, but surely not as a realistic title contender after slipping to 28-4.

Dubois (22-2, 21 KOs) is undoubtedly the future. He said after the fight that he wanted another shot at Usyk, to whom he lost in Wroclaw, Poland, last year — but only after sending the Ukrainian to the canvas with a disputed low blow from which Usyk was given time to recover.

Otherwise, there's potentially a money-spinning fight with the 36-year-old Fury in the offing.

"I'm a gladiator. I'm a warrior to the bitter end," Dubois said. "I want to go to the top level of this game." **MDT/AP**

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Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**PUNITIVE TARIFFS ON
 CHINESE EVs WOULD CAUSE
 IRREPARABLE DAMAGE TO
 TRADE TIES**

With the European Union due to vote very soon on imposing tariffs of up to 35.3 percent on electric vehicles made in China, last-ditch efforts to prevent China-EU trade frictions escalating and causing damage to their mutually beneficial economic cooperation have gained a rising sense of urgency.

The EU's 27 members are scheduled to vote on Sept 25 on the tariffs proposed by the European Commission on the grounds that Chinese electric car manufacturers have unacceptable competitive advantages thanks to high subsidies from the government. The tariffs, to be imposed on top of the bloc's standard 10 percent import duty on cars, will come into force by the end of October unless a qualified majority of 15 EU members vote against the levies.

In an advisory vote in early July, 11 countries approved the provisional rates, while four voted against them, and nine abstained.

A number of EU states have since expressed their opposition to them, and have called for dialogue and consultations. "We don't need another trade war," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said during his recent visit to China, adding that his country advocates talks to prevent potential damage to trade relations.

Given that Spain was among the major EU states that supported the European Commission's proposal to impose additional duties on Chinese-made EVs in the advisory vote in July, its change of mind, which reflects "rational and objective thinking", is especially welcome as that reflection on the matter shows the wisdom of finding a political solution to the dispute.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has voiced his support for Sanchez's position, saying that this "direction of travel is one that we share". And German Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck, in a meeting with visiting Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao on Tuesday, emphasized that the EU and China should avoid a damaging trade war at all costs.

"We absolutely want to avoid a trade conflict with spiraling tariffs that ultimately harms both sides," he said.

The EU has committed to phasing out the sale of conventional cars by 2035, and with their cutting-edge technology and products, Chinese EV companies are playing a pivotal role in driving Europe's green transportation revolution. Rather than imposing curbs on Chinese EV imports, it serves the EU's green transition ambition to deepen cooperation with China, given that its own automotive industry has been slow in shifting away from internal combustion technology.

In the age of economic globalization, restrictive trade measures will inevitably cause damage to all trading partners. Moreover, protectionist policies may fail as they often lead to higher domestic prices that reduce consumption, according to a report issued recently by the World Trade Organization.

Thus China has always called for reaching a solution with the EU in line with the WTO rules so as to avoid the escalation of the trade dispute. In an effort to ease the EU's concerns about Chinese EV imports, Chinese EV makers recently offered a minimum import price proposal, but it was rejected by the European Commission.

Olof Gill, the commission's trade spokesperson, said the commission had rejected "offers for price undertakings" by several Chinese auto exporters, as none of the offers could be "effectively monitored and enforced" to "eliminate the injurious effects of subsidies".

If the EU does impose hefty tariffs on Chinese-made EVs, it will not only disrupt the stability of the global automotive supply chain and compromise the global efforts to address climate change, but also lead to China taking countermeasures.

The commission's spokesman said that the EU remains "open to a negotiated solution", and China on its part is determined to persist in holding consultations with the EU "until the last moment". It is to be hoped that a solution can be found as a trade war is in the interest of neither side.

A bus carrying a Brazilian football team flipped on a road south of Rio de Janeiro on Saturday, killing three people and injuring at least six, authorities said.

Local media reported the three dead were players from the American football team the Coritiba Crocodiles of the southern Brazilian city of Curitiba.

The team was headed Saturday to Rio de Janeiro, where they were set to play in the country's American football championship. But the game was canceled following the deadly accident. Photos

circulating on local news sites and social media show the damaged bus laying on its side in the middle of the road.

"Our hearts are heavy with grief, and we ask everyone to send their prayers and positive energy," the Coritiba Crocodiles said in a statement Saturday. "In the face of this tragedy, all our efforts are focused on supporting the team members and their loved ones.

The injured were being treated in a hospital and local authorities said they will investigate the cause of the crash.



Gisele Pelicot speaks to media as she leaves the Avignon court house, southern France, last week

FRANCE

**SHOCKING RAPE TRIAL
 HIGHLIGHTS THE
 SYSTEMATIC STRUGGLES
 SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS FACE**

DIANE JEANTET, AVIGNON

THE trial of dozens of men accused of raping an unconscious woman whose husband repeatedly drugged her over the course of nearly a decade has highlighted the difficulties that sexual violence victims can face in France.

Dominique Pelicot, 71, and his 50 co-defendants face up to 20 years in prison if they're convicted at a trial that has shocked the world and riveted the French public.

Pelicot tearfully acknowledged in court that he's guilty of the allegations against him, and he said all of his co-defendants understood exactly what they were doing when he invited them to his home in Provence between 2011 and 2020 to have sex with his unconscious and unwitting wife, who divorced him after learning what he had done to her.

Despite evidence including meticulously archived photos and videos that Pelicot shot of the alleged rapes, some of the defendants' lawyers have scrutinized Gisele Pelicot's private life and motives, even questioning whether she was truly unconscious during some of the encounters. Although they must defend their clients to the best of their

abilities, the lawyers' tactics have outraged advocates for the sexually abused, who say the attorneys show that victim-blaming is alive and well in France.

"This trial is the trial of our society," 27-year-old Nathan Paris, who works in a youth shelter, said this week outside the Avignon courthouse. Paris, a victim of sexual violence himself, has made the trip from Marseille on several occasions since the trial began.

"The French population has evolved ... and I feel like justice has not evolved over that time," he said, vowing to keep coming back until the trial ends.

The co-defendants range in age from their 20s to their 70s and represent a cross-section of French men: There is a firefighter, a journalist, a nurse, a prison guard and a construction worker. Some are retired, some are unemployed and many have families of their own. One knew he had HIV when he raped Gisele Pelicot on six occasions and chose not to wear a condom, according to police. She didn't contract HIV, though she was found to have other sexually transmitted diseases, a medical expert testified.

Magali Lafourcade, a judge and general secretary of the National Consultati-

ve Commission of Human Rights who is not involved in the trial, said the fight against sexual violence in France has slightly improved since the start of the #MeToo movement, which has brought down some of France's most well-known actors and film directors, among other notables. Women have always talked, but their voices are now being heard more, she said.

"For a very long time, we saw the rape and killing of women by men as something that pertained to the private sphere — we thought we should not interfere with people's private lives," Lafourcade said.

"There has been a clear change, or revolution even, with this perception since #MeToo," she added.

Civic groups have lobbied hard in recent years so that judges, politicians and the media understand that sexual violence is not just a private affair, but also a societal, political and financial one, Lafourcade said.

French President Emmanuel Macron has promised to prioritize gender equality and combat violence against women. But France's public policies are still lagging, and more resources and effort need to be put toward going after sexual offenders, experts told The Associated Press. **MDT/AP**



New Zealand pilot held hostage for more than a year in the restive Papua region of Indonesia was freed Saturday by separatist rebels. Phillip Mark Mehrstens (pictured), a 38-year-old pilot from Christchurch, was working for Indonesian aviation company Susi Air when he was abducted by rebels from a remote airport on Feb. 7, 2023. "Today I finally got out. I am so happy to be back home with my family soon," Mehrstens told reporters in a news conference in the mining town of Timika. "Thank you to everyone who helped me get out safely and healthy."



Congo Authorities said they released 600 prisoners in the country's main prison on Saturday as part of a process aimed at decongesting overcrowded prisons. Justice Minister Constant Mutamba announced the move during a ceremony at Makala Central Prison in Congo's capital, Kinshasha. Makala prison, Congo's largest penitentiary with a capacity for 1,500 people, holds more than 12,000 inmates, most of whom are awaiting trial, Amnesty International said in its latest country report.



UN Facing a swirl of conflicts and crises across a fragmented world, leaders attending this week's annual U.N. gathering are being challenged: Work together — not only on front-burner issues but on modernizing the international institutions born after World War II so they can tackle the threats and problems of the future. The two-day summit started yesterday, two days before the high-level meeting of world leaders begins at the sprawling U.N. compound in New York City.