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**AGREEMENT ON MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF DRIVING LICENSES INKED, DSAT ASSURES MAINLAND DRIVERS ENJOY NO PRIVILEGE IN MACAU**

P5

**MAINLAND OFFICIAL ACCUSED OF GAMBLING IN MACAU FOR OVER 11 YEARS**

P5

**BIDEN DECLARES ‘KYIV STANDS’ IN SURPRISE VISIT TO UKRAINE**

P8



**North Korea** fired two short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters yesterday in a widely condemned weapons test — its second in three days — that prompted Tokyo to request an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council. The firings follow an intercontinental ballistic missile launch Saturday and North Korea’s threats to take an unprecedentedly strong response to U.S.-South Korean military drills that the North views as an invasion rehearsal.

**Cambodia** A spectacular collection of centuries-old Cambodian jewelry has been returned to the Southeast Asian country, the latest treasures to be retrieved from the estate of well-known antiquities collector and dealer Douglas Latchford, who was accused of buying and selling looted artifacts. Cambodia’s Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts announced yesterday that 77 pieces of Cambodian jewelry from the Latchford family collection arrived back in their homeland on Friday.



**Japan’s** Prime Minister Fumio Kishida yesterday announced a new \$5.5 billion financial aid for Ukraine and will mark the first anniversary of the war by hosting an online Group of Seven summit with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Kishida said Ukraine still suffers under the Russian invasion and its people need help to rebuild their daily lives and infrastructure that’s been badly damaged by Russian attacks.



# HARBOUR SUBWAY REVISITED

**‘Old’ solution to build a subway network of tunnels for Inner Harbour problems now revived, architect told the Times** P3

NEW BARS

**KA HO PRISON READY BY 2024: GOV’T**

More on backpage

P2

PRIVATE VISIT

**NEXT PANDEMIC ‘INEVITABLE’: DURÃO BARROSO**

P2

PUBLIC WORKS

# PRISON TO MOVE BEHIND NEW BARS IN 2024

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE new prison facility in Ka Ho will finally enter into operations in 2024 after all the relocation procedures are concluded, the government assured the members of the Follow-up Committee for Public Finance Affairs of the Legislative Assembly (AL).

During this final process, a working group will be created to coordinate the relocation and trial operation of the new prison, the committee chairperson, lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng said in a media briefing after the committee meeting.

Admitting that the construction has suffered several long delays, a topic that raised concern for the members, the lawmaker noted that the government claims to have conducted an evaluation of the causes of the delays. Wong



concluded that besides the impact of the pandemic, the delays were mostly because the contractor failed to proactively solve the problems encountered in the construction process.

For the time being, it is not yet certain what the consequences of these delays will be. Wong stated only that the government has told the lawmakers that it will actively follow up on the reasons for

the delays and will supervise the construction process closely, especially in the progress and quality of the construction for the third phase of the project.

Lawmakers urged the govern-

ment to increase inspection and supervision, and strictly follow the regime that establishes sanctions such as fines for contractors who fail to comply with deadlines for the conclusion of public works.

Wong noted that the first two phases of the construction project have been completed, but that the second phase still needs some adjustments and improvements. The third and final phase is expected to be completed during the first two quarters of this year (finishing in June).

The project will then be handed to the new task force from the Correctional Services Bureau, which will coordinate the relocation from the current facilities to the new facilities, as well as testing the equipment and facility. This is anticipated to take between one year and 18 months to conclude.

## Next pandemic 'inevitable': Durão Barroso says during private visit to Macau

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE president of the global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI), former head of the European Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso said that one of the organization's tasks is to prepare for the next pandemic, as "it is inevitable."

Barroso was speaking to TDM/Canal Macau yesterday, after a private lunch with the Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng.

In the interview with the local broadcaster, Barroso noted that the Macau government is keen on maintaining the "specificity of the territory" due to its connection with Portugal, and he hopes that this cultural heritage will be preserved.



He also expressed his impression of Macau's economic progress and its dynamism despite the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Barroso also expressed support for the idea of cooperation and dialogue between all parties in the context of the dialogue between the People's Republic of China and the European Union, "even when there are differences."

Barroso's visit to Macau highlights the continued importance of MSAR's ties to Portugal and the potential for economic opportunities. As a prominent figure in the European Union, his support for dialogue and cooperation with China also signals the importance of diplomacy and engagement in resolving differences and addressing global challenges.

GAMING

## SANDS CHINA'S 2022 REVENUES PLUNGE 44%

LYNZY VALLES

**H**EAVERY losses have been recorded by Sands China as its total net revenues plunged 44.2% in 2022 to USD1.61 billion (HKD12.51 billion), compared to USD2.87 billion for 2021.

In its annual results announcement, the group posted a loss of USD1.58 billion last year, compared to a loss of USD1.05 billion in 2021.

Amid the business downturn heavily affected by border restrictions and a series of outbreaks in the city and neighboring regions, the company said it remains deeply confident in the future of Macau and considers Macau an ideal market for additional capital investment.

Back in July, the Macau government ordered casinos and all non-essential businesses to close from July 11 to July 18, in an attempt to control the



outbreak in Macau, which was extended through July 22. On July 20, the Macau government announced a consolidation period, which started on July 23 and ended a week after, whereby certain business activities were allowed to resume limited operations.

However, casino operations resumed, but with a maximum capacity of 50% of casino staff working at any point.

"Throughout the recovery process, we will remain deeply committed to our mission of enhancing the tourism appeal of Macau, creating local em-

ployment opportunities, investing in our people and Macau and providing growth opportunities for local businesses while protecting our environment," said Rob Goldstein, chairman and CEO of Las Vegas Sands.

According to the official, Sands China business strategy remains straightforward: "continue the execution of our Cotai Strip development initiatives by leveraging our convention-based integrated resort business model and world-class amenities to contribute to Macau's diversification."

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# 'Old' solution for Inner Harbour problems now revived

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE idea of creating a subway network of tunnels to serve transportation needs as well as providing flood prevention measures and tackling issues in Macau's Inner Harbour area is not new but seems to have gained renewed momentum recently, as new ideas based on this system are now being proposed.

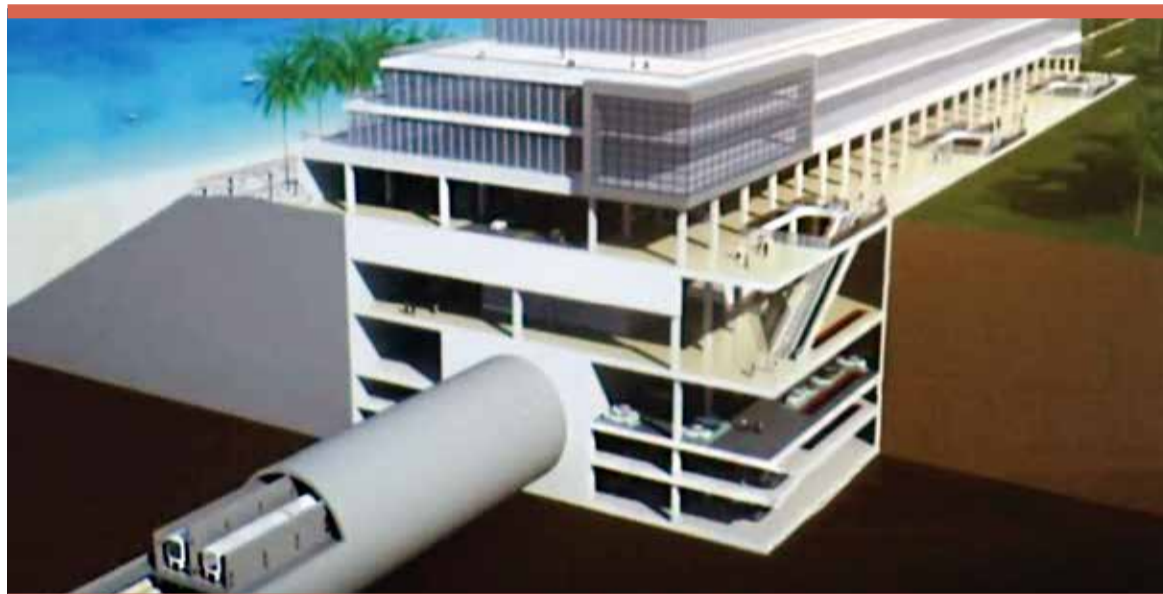
During a seminar on the development of the sea and coastal areas of Macau that took place last Friday (February 17), organized by the Civil Engineering Laboratory of Macau, Hue Rui, Senior Engineer from China Railway Siyuan Survey and Design Group, presented a solution that included the construction of these types of underground tunnels in the Inner Harbour area with multi-capabilities.

The most important ones would serve the potential "West Line" of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) linking Barra to Border Gate through the west side of Macau. Ideally, they will also function to retain, store and conduct flood water to the sea resulting from heavy rain or storm surges, which is one of the main problems of this district.

Hue noted that this solution could also create more parking spaces as well as other public facilities which have very limited space in this historical part of the city.

Iterations of this idea have been under debate for at least a decade. Back in 2013, the Center for Architecture and Urbanism (CURB) promoted a roundtable debate titled "The Inner Harbour Roundtable on the Revitalization of Macau's Vernacular Heritage," which resulted in a publication by the CURB with an overview and policy recommendations on the topic.

Among these recommendations published in 2014, is the construction of the underground tunnel as mentioned. According to the publication, "Floods are the most pressing environmental issue regarding the Inner Harbour. The city is in urgent need of a flood prevention program that should advance long-term, sustainable procedures to prevent water level rises. Construction of flood walls lining the waterfront is to be avoided because these will create an undesirable physical barrier between the city and the river; an integrated underground tunnel, reservoir, and pumping system is therefore recommended as a more adequate alternative."



To the Times, one of the mentors of the roundtable and documentation coordinator, architect Nuno Soares, recalled that this old idea came back when the government was considering building the LRT West Line in the sequence of the Taipa line, an idea that was later shelved but not yet completely abandoned.

"At this roundtable [back in December 2013], we had a gathering with 60 experts which resulted in an investigations report as well as a recommendations report in which one of these recommendations was that to solve the matter of flooding in the Inner Harbour as well as the LRT, we proposed an underwater tunnel that would have integrated a flood prevention system which is very close to this solution [from the Chinese engineering survey and design enterprise]. We thought (at the time) and still think this is the most suitable solution for the Inner Harbour," Soares said.

He added, "At the time, there were several options on the line for the LRT. However, all experts who worked with us unanimously agreed that the LRT solution at the ground level and elevated [as in the Taipa line] would have a lot of negative impacts in the area, leaving the only remaining solution to be in between an underground or an underwater tunnel."

Citing the conclusions of several studies as well as the debate among the experts, Soares said, "to opt [for] the underwater tunnel would have several advantages from a logistics point-of-view because it avoids roadworks and interrupting city life. This was the solution judged at the time to be wiser, and the solution that I continue to support today."

More importantly, the architect and urban planner said the solution does not compromise

the relationship between the city and the water, he noted, referring to ideas of building high walls and barriers that would disrupt the life of the city as we know it.

"Such a solution [building walls and levees] is the one that I find the most dangerous because although it can seem simpler in terms of infrastructure, it compromises the city's relationship with the water by creating a physical obstacle. In addition, in the case of floods caused by heavy rain, it can cause more water retention that can be itself a problem."

"I am in favor of this solution of an underwater tunnel, with a flood prevention system included, as long as there is no landfill. Alternatively, if it has one, this should be built at the same level of the current level so we do not lose the proximity with the water-side."

## EXISTING STUDIES HAVE BEEN OVERLOOKED

The urban planner, who is also a senior lecturer and head of the Department of Architecture and Design at the University of Saint Joseph, has told the Times that although it seems that the topic is still under significant scrutiny, many studies produced over the past decade and earlier point to similar solutions.

"There are many studies on this matter and some with enough maturity that from my end, I can say not only [that] I coordinated this book but also through the Chinese University of Hong Kong we have done several studies on the Inner Harbour, including several Master's degrees that tested the different solutions, including the buildup of walls, levees, and flood gate barriers, etc."

But it seems like there has been little attention paid to the serious academic research that has been produced on this matter. Academia has the obligation

to contribute to the development of the city and it has done so on many occasions. But it is also important that the dynamic forces of the city and also the government pay due importance and attention to the work [that] is being done in academia. Many matters have already been studied and these contributions are valuable to help inform the political decisions."

## RETURN TO WELL-ESTABLISHED IDEAS PROVES THE POINT

Addressing the fact that after several studies and much consideration, the government is now considering dropping the idea of building a tidal barrier in the Inner based on the conclusions of well-established studies, Soares noted that there are positives and negatives to this.

"The positive side [of the return to old ideas] is that the solution has some solidity. But on the downside, it also means that we have lost a lot of time because if there were already old ideas, [this] means there were already existing studies that would support them," Soares said, noting that on the line is not just the development and long-term future of the city but, situations that cannot be delayed and postponed as they interfere directly with the economy and with peoples' livelihood, he noted.

He also pointed out that these conclusions were first presented to the public in 2014, three years ahead of the passage of Typhoon Hato, which caused the loss of several lives and many assets. This is not a one-off situation, as was clear a year later with the passage of Typhoon Mangkut.

Despite the delays, Soares nevertheless believes that the political decisions are now going in a direction that he approved of as being "wise."

## GALAXY APPOINTS NEW CFO

Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) has announced that Robert Drake will be stepping down from his role as the group's CFO on Mar.1 to "pursue his personal interests." In a statement, the company disclosed that Drake will be replaced by the COO of its Japan Development division Ted Chan. Drake has been with GEG for over 15 years. Following his resignation, he will move into a role as a Senior Advisor for the group. GEG vice chairman Francis Lui said Drake has contributed to a number of significant milestones including: navigating the company through the global financial crises and the Covid-19 pandemic, inclusion of GEG as a constituent of the Hang Seng Index, opening Galaxy Macau Phases 1 & 2 and Broadway Macau, and, most recently, the successful issuance of GEG's new Macau gaming concession.

## VISITOR ARRIVALS DOUBLE YEAR ON YEAR IN JANUARY

Visitor arrivals in Macau surged 101.3% on year, albeit from a low base, to 1,397,748 in January. The figure represented a month-on-month rise of 259% which was ascribable to the easing of anti-epidemic measures for entry into Macau and the Chinese Lunar New Year holiday, showed the latest report from the Statistics and Census Service. Overnight visitors and same-day visitors soared by 234.5% and 29.1% year on year to 816,199 and 581,549, respectively. The number of visitors from the mainland increased by 54.5% year on year to 991,641 while visitors from Hong Kong and Taiwan region leapt by 704.3% and 139% year on year to 356,958 and 18,868, respectively.

## HENGQIN-MACAU PROJECT SELECTED AS THE NATIONAL KEY R&D PROGRAM

A project entitled "Research on the Technical System for the Regulation and Evaluation of Mesenchymal Stem Cell Therapy for Major Diseases, Such as Graft-versus-host Disease" with Professor Xu Renhe, associate dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Macau (UM) and chief scientist, was selected for funding under the National Key Research and Development Program of the Ministry of Science and Technology of China. The project is Macau's first project to be listed in the National Key Research and Development Program. The project is based on an agreement signed between the Hengqin government, UM and Zhuhai Hengqin Imstem Biotechnology in 2016 serving as part of their new efforts to jointly build a biomedical industry incubation center.

TRADE UNION BILL

# ABSENCES FOR UNION MEETINGS CONSIDERED JUSTIFIED

ANTHONY LAM

**I**N future, managers of trade unions will be entitled to take justified or reasonable leave in order to attend union "administrations" or meetings, a parliamentary committee has recently announced.

Lawmaker Chan Chak Mo, president of the parliament's Second Standing Committee, made the announcement after the committee concluded a recent meeting on the Trade Union Bill.

According to Chan, there is a proposed cap for these justified absences of six days per calendar year, which may be taken consecutively or intermittently. Employees will be required to notify their employers at least three days prior to the required



absence.

If the absence is unforeseeable, they will need to notify their employers as soon as possible and submit certifications.

He further revealed that at the meeting, some committee members asked whether employers would have the right to decline applications for such absences, should several trade union managers who work in the same company desire

to take such leave at the same time or during the same period.

committee members also requested that the government clarify whether an employee can participate in more than one trade union. Definitions of "trade union administrations" were also sought, as some committee members wondered whether annual dinners would fall under this heading.

It is proposed in the

Bill that, at the end of each season, local trade unions should report to the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) the activities organized or co-organized by non-Macau groups in which they have participated over that time period. Violators will be subject to a fine of MOP5,000.

Chan said that some committee members found this procedure burdensome and suggested it be changed to a warning.

As the Bill proposes that trade unions are registered within three years of the promulgation of the law, some Committee members asked what the legal consequences would be if they do not do so.

The committee has concluded the first phase of study.

## SHORT FILM COMPETITION TO ENCOURAGE EXPLORATION OF COOPERATION ZONE

STAFF REPORTER

**A** total of 22 prizes worth MOP 85,500 are prepared for a short video creating competition, which aims to encourage young people in Macau to explore the "wonderful parts of life in Hengqin and Macau" by shooting short videos. Registrations and video submissions will be open from now until March 30.

Themed "the expected life in Macau and the In-depth Cooperation Zone," there is one gold prize each for the two competition divisions, with MOP 8,000 for the student winner and MOP 10,000 for the open competition winner.

In a press conference yesterday, deputy director of the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau, Sam Io Cheong, said that the competition is not only targeted

at showing the fine parts of Hengqin and Macau but is also trying to enable competitors "to understand and participate in the development of Hengqin-Macau integration."

Participants should hold a valid Macau ID. Non-tertiary educated or tertiary education students can join the student competition, and the open competition is for people aged 15 to 45. They can compete as individuals or in groups with unlimited members.

Seminars will also be organized to introduce the latest developments in Hengqin and Macau. Winners will be able to take a field trip to Hengqin or the Greater Bay Area.

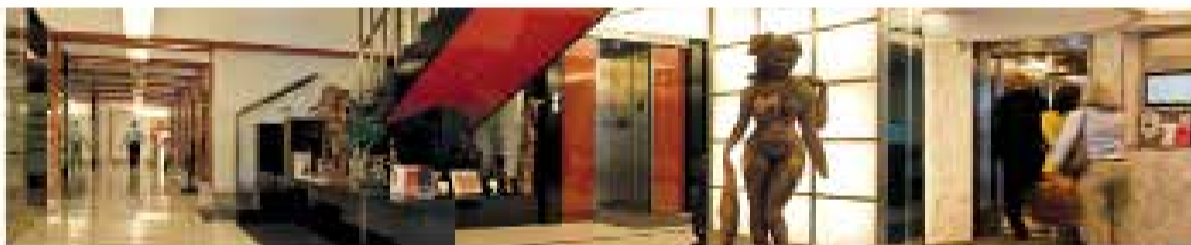
The result will be announced on April 20. Registrations, submissions, and announcement of awards will all be conducted online.

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# Mainland official accused of gambling in Macau for over 11 years

ANTHONY LAM

A former mainland official has been accused of privately gambling in Macau 112 times between 2007 and 2018 with public funds amounting to over 40 million Chinese yuan, a Chinese official publication has recently disclosed.

According to the latest edition of the Zhongguo Jijian Jiancha Magazine, the publication related to the disciplinary supervision body of the Chinese government, Mei Yunian, former deputy secretary and deputy director of the party group of the Yichang Development and Reform Commission, who lost over 5 million yuan during his 112 visits to casinos in Macau.

The article was written by Xie Shengli, member of the Standing Committee of the Yichang Municipal Party Committee, secretary of the Municipal Commission for



Discipline Inspection, and director of the Municipal Supervisory Committee of the same city.

The article disclosed that in 2007, Mei bought a lottery ticket for the first time. In a later official

visit to Macau and Hong Kong, he discovered casino gambling more stimulating than playing the lottery. The article noted he started alternating between gambling losses and wins.

During the three years of the Covid-19 pandemic, the article disclosed, Mei did not give up his "bad habit" and started online gambling. He even sacrificed his sleep and played Baccarat online overnight. It cost him over 18 million yuan.

In the attempts to settle his gambling debts, Mei not only borrowed money from his co-workers, service recipients and management targets, but also started his own company, took paid part-time jobs and appropriated public funds, according to the article.

Obtaining income from work outside of their official employment and the operation of businesses are prohibited for civil servants in mainland China.

The article even criticized the former official for taking a nap in the waiting hall at the Jinwan Airport in Zhuhai on his way back home after his official visit to Macau, "because he only had a couple of hours' sleep the previous two nights in Macau, as he spent most of his nights gambling in the casino."

In March last year, Mei was placed under investigation. Previous information showed that Mei was accused of committing serious violations of duty and illegal conduct following disciplinary reviews and supervisory investigations by the Yichang Municipal Commission for Discipline Inspection and Supervision. He was also subjected to detention measures.

The article demanded more in-depth education on gambling warning signs "because the family of Mei did not realize and impede his abnormal activity that turned [to] addictive gambling."

## DSAT assures mainland drivers enjoy no privilege in Macau

ANTHONY LAM

THE Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and the SAR government have signed an agreement to enable mutual recognition and exchanges of driving licenses between the Chinese mainland and the city.

Under the deal, which will take effect on May 16, the mainland and Macau will allow individuals holding valid driving licenses issued by authorities from each side to drive directly or obtain driving permits on the other side without an additional test, according to the MPS.

Lam Hin San, head of the Transport Bureau (DSAT), confirmed that no mainland driver will enjoy special privileges and bypass the law while driving in Macau.

Yesterday, the bureau organized a press conference to announce the driving license mutual recognition mechanism with mainland China.



From May 16, Macau drivers will not need to take driving exams in order to drive in mainland China. If they want to convert their Macau license into a mainland license, they can also do so without exams. This will apply to valid Macau driver license holders with permanent Macau residency.

The same arrangement will reciprocally apply to mainland drivers.

On how much the license conversion will cost, Lam said that mainland authorities will announce the rele-

vant charges and details in due course. Macau drivers will be able to get their licenses converted at authorized management offices across mainland China.

When questioned if mainland drivers will enjoy certain "special privilege," Lam reiterated that all violators of local traffic laws will be subjected to the same punishments.

He was also asked if the new mechanism will exacerbate illegal employment in driving - colloquially referred to as "cross-boundary drivers" - to which he

stated that tackling illegal employment is part and parcel of the government's agenda. "Cross-boundary drivers' will not be tolerated," the transport official emphasized.

Lam cited freedom of expression when questioned as to whether this provision is sincerely desired as its proposal had triggered objections and dissenting opinions, and emphasized that about 200,000 local drivers will immediately benefit from the scheme when it is enacted. Adding to that number is 2,500 current driving students.

About the load for the local road network, Lam said he did not see a strong demand for mainland drivers to drive in Macau. For the time being, there are 130 cars for rent in the city, but Lam found mainland Chinese tourists preferring free hotel shuttle bus and public bus services.

## MAIL TO EU TO REQUIRE CUSTOMS E-DECLARATION

ELECTRONIC Declaration will be required for parcels sent to the EU, Switzerland and Norway from March 1, the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT) reminded the public over the weekend.

Failure to do so may result in the mail being returned and fees not refunded.

The requirement concerns mail being sent to or transiting through the aforementioned three jurisdictions in the form of EMS, parcels, registered small packets and small packets, except letters, the CTT added.

The CTT reminds senders to submit customs information through its website (<https://cde.ctt.gov.mo>) or via the mobile app. The information concerned includes the recipients' address, email address,

local contact telephone number, HS Code, category of mail items, quantity, value, and weight. A QR code will be generated after the completion of the relevant electronic customs declaration.

Before posting the items, senders have to present the corresponding QR code to CTT's counter staff, who will check before mail acceptance whether there is any discrepancy between the corresponding declared information and the mail items.

The CTT reminds senders to provide a local contact telephone number and email address when posting, so as to supplement the customs declaration and cooperate with the inspection for the mailed items. Otherwise, the mail will be destroyed if returned, without a postage refund. AL



EXPLAINER

# WHY CHINA'S STAND ON RUSSIA AND UKRAINE IS RAISING CONCERNS

**N**EARLY one year after Russia invaded Ukraine, new questions are rising over China's potential willingness to offer military aid to Moscow in the increasingly drawn-out conflict.

In an interview that aired Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said American intelligence suggests China is considering providing arms and ammunition to Russia, an involvement in the Kremlin's war effort that he said would be a "serious problem."

China has refused to criticize Russia for its actions or even to call it an invasion in deference to Moscow. At the same time, it insists that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations must be upheld.

The question now is whether China is willing to convert that rhetorical backing into material support.

Yesterday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin accused the United States of "fanning flames and stoking confrontations" by providing Ukraine with defensive weapons, and said Beijing would "never accept (U.S.) finger-pointing and even coercion and pressure on China-Russia relations."

Here's a look at where China stands on the conflict.

## DOES CHINA BACK RUSSIA IN ITS WAR ON UKRAINE?

China has tried to walk a fine — and often contradictory — line on the Russian invasion.

China says Russia was provoked into taking action by NA-

AP FILE PHOTO



TO's eastward expansion. Just weeks before the Feb. 24, 2022, invasion, Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin in Beijing for the opening of the Winter Olympics, at which time the sides issued a joint statement pledging their commitment to a "no limits" friendship. China has since ignored Western criticism and reaffirmed that pledge.

But China has yet to confirm the visit Putin has said he expects from Xi this spring.

China is "trying to have it both ways," Blinken said Sunday on NBC. "Publicly, they present themselves as a country striving for peace in Ukraine, but privately, as I said, we've seen already over these past months the provision of non-lethal assistance that does go directly to aiding and abetting Russia's war effort."

## HAS CHINA PROVIDED MATERIAL SUPPORT TO RUSSIA?

So far, China's support for Russia has been rhetorical and political, with Beijing helping prevent efforts to condemn Moscow at the United Nations.

Blinken, at a security conference in Munich, Germany, said the U.S. has long been concerned that China would provide weapons to Russia and that "we have information that gives us concern that they are considering providing lethal support to Russia in the war against Ukraine." That came a day after Blinken held talks with Wang Yi, the Chinese Communist Party's most senior foreign policy official, in a meeting that offered little sign of a reduction in tensions or progress on the Ukraine issue.

"It was important for me to share very clearly with Wang Yi that

this would be a serious problem," Blinken said, referring to potential military support for Russia.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, also expressed her concern about any effort by the Chinese to arm Russia, saying "that would be a red line."

Russian and Chinese forces have held joint military drills since Russia invaded Ukraine a year ago, most recently sending ships to take part in exercises with the South African navy in a key shipping lane off the South African coast.

## WHAT HAS CHINA SAID ON THE MATTER?

"It is the U.S. who kept providing weapons to the battlefield, not China," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said yesterday. "The principle

that China follows on the Ukraine issue can be simply put as promoting peace talks."

After the meeting between Wang Yi and Blinken, China's Foreign Ministry issued a statement that it has always played a constructive role in the Ukraine conflict by adhering to principles, encouraging peace and promoting talks.

The ministry said the China-Russia partnership "is established on the basis of non-alignment, non-confrontation, and non-targeting of third parties," and that the U.S. was adding "fuel to the fire to take advantage of the opportunity to make profits."

Beijing says it has continued a normal trade relationship with Russia, including purchases of oil and gas, as have other countries such as India. That trade is seen as throwing an economic lifeline to Moscow, but there have been no documented cases of China providing direct aid to the Russian military along the lines of the inexpensive military drones that Iran sells to Moscow.

## WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF CHINA AIDS RUSSIA?

There would be "real consequences ... were China to provide lethal assistance to Russia" or help Moscow evade sanctions in a "systematic way," Blinken said Monday in the Turkey capital, Ankara. He did not specify what measures Washington would take in response to Chinese military support for Russia, but said other countries would join the U.S. with similar actions.

Efforts to put a floor under ties that have deteriorated to their lowest level in decades have so far been unsuccessful. The U.S. has sought to limit Chinese access to the latest microprocessors and manufacturing equipment, and has continued to challenge Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea. **MDT/AP**

DIRE STRAIT

# Congress delegation visits Taiwan in tense US-China moment

**A** delegation of U.S. lawmakers met with the head of Taiwan's legislature yesterday as part of a five-day visit to the self-ruled island that comes as U.S.-China relations remain tense after weeks of trading accusations over a spy balloon.

The delegation that arrived Sunday includes Reps. Ro Khanna of California, Tony Gonzales of Texas, Jake Auchincloss of Massachusetts and Jona-

than Jackson of Illinois.

They are expected to meet President Tsai Ing-wen as well as business people. On Monday, they held talks with Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's founder Morris Chang, considered the father of the island's chip industry.

Khanna, a Democrat who represents Silicon Valley, said he was in Taiwan to learn about the island's role in the

semiconductor industry. Khanna and Auchincloss are both members of the new House select committee focused on competition with China.

He addressed the implicit threat facing their visit, as China opposes any form of exchange between Taiwan and foreign governments. China claims the island as part of its territory to be united by force if necessary, and has stepped up military

and diplomatic harassment of Taiwan.

"Our efforts to come here are in no way provocative of China, but consistent with the president's foreign policy that recognizes the importance of the relationship like Taiwan, while still seeking ultimately, peace in the region," Khanna said.

Head of Taiwan's Legislative Yuan, You Si-kun, used the speech to hit back at Wang Yi, the Chi-

nese Communist Party's most senior foreign policy official, who said over the weekend at the Munich Security Conference that Taiwan "has never been a country and it will not be a country in the future."

"Taiwan has never been ruled by the People's Republic of China for a single day," You said.

The delegation's visit follows a sensitive trip made by a senior Pentagon official on Friday, reported by the Financial Times.

A Pentagon spokesperson did not comment on the visit by Michael Chase, deputy assistant secretary of defense for China, repeating that "our

commitment to Taiwan is rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and within the region." Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it had no information about any such visit.

Tensions between the U.S. and China again ratcheted up last month after Washington accused Beijing of sending a spy balloon that was shot down over the American East Coast, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken canceled a trip to Beijing. Blinken also said over the weekend that the United States was concerned that China would provide weapons to Russia for its war in Ukraine. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



## MYANMAR

# 'I just want my legs back': landmine casualties soar

VICTORIA MILKO &  
DAVID RISING, BANGKOK

**T**HE 3-year-old boy had taken only two steps from his mother's lap when a deafening explosion rang out. The blast caught the woman in the face, blurring her vision. She forced her eyes open and searched for her son around the jetty where they'd been waiting for a ferry, near their small village in south-central Myanmar.

Through the smoke, she spotted him. His body lay on the ground, his feet and legs mangled with flesh peeled away, shattered bones exposed.

"He was crying and telling me that it hurt so much," she said. "He didn't know what just happened."

But she did.

### LANDMINES AND ORDNANCE

The boy had detonated a landmine, an explosive device designed to mangle or destroy whatever comes into its path.

Landmines have been banned for decades by most countries, since the U.N. Mine Ban Treaty was adopted in 1997. But in Myanmar, which isn't party to the treaty, the use of mines has

soared since the military seized power from the democratically elected government in February 2021 and armed resistance has skyrocketed.

Landmines are planted by all sides of the conflict in Myanmar, and they're responsible for surging civilian casualties, including an alarming number of children as victims, according to an AP analysis based on data and reports from nonprofit and humanitarian organizations, interviews with civilian victims, families, local aid workers, military defectors and monitoring groups.

In 2022, U.N. figures show, civilian casualties from landmine and unexploded ordnance spiked by nearly 40%. Experts say this and other official tallies are vastly undercounted, largely due to difficulties monitoring and reporting during the conflict.

Despite incomplete numbers, experts agree the increase in Myanmar is the largest ever recorded.

Virtually no area is immune to the threat. Over the past two years, mine contamination has spread to every state and region except for the capital city, Naypyitaw, according to Land-

mine Monitor, a group that tracks global landmine use.

The military also uses civilians as human shields, a practice widespread in the country for decades but raising alarms with increasing mine incidents. AP's analysis found the military, known as the Tatmadaw, forced people to walk ahead of troops to detonate potential landmines in their path, protecting their own troops.

The Myanmar military, which has acknowledged mine use in the past, didn't respond to a list of questions AP sent to their official spokesperson's email.

When the fighting moves on, landmines don't. Mines left behind can indiscriminately maim or kill those who happen upon them, years later.

It raises the specter of casualties for years to come. In countries including Egypt and Cambodia, people continue to die from millions of mines left behind long after conflicts have ended.

### RELEASING A MONSTER

"Leaving an activated mine like this is the same as releasing a monster," said a 26-year-old military defector who worked as a combat engineer platoon

commander in Myanmar.

Like most who were interviewed by AP, the defector spoke on condition of anonymity to protect himself and his family from military retaliation.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance have been a persistent issue in Myanmar for more than four decades. The problem has grown exponentially since the military takeover, with heavier use of landmines in more parts of the country, said Kim Warren, a U.N. landmine specialist.

In 2022, 390 people were victims of landmines and unexploded ordnance in Myanmar, more than a 37% increase from 2021, according to figures compiled by UNICEF. Overall, 102 people were killed and 288 were wounded, with children making up some 34% of the victims, compared with 26% in 2021.

Still, Warren said, incidents are underreported.

Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan, Landmine Monitor's Myanmar expert, said his group counts only casualties it can confirm with confidence: "We've always been undercounting."

Experts concede the total number of casualties may seem small, with Myanmar's population of about 56 million, but say the rapid increase is distressing nonetheless. Experts are particularly concerned about children victims. Many are unaware of how lethal landmines and unexploded munitions are; some pick them up and play with them.

Many civilian victims encounter landmines during daily routines.

### KILLING FIELDS

In March 2021, two teenage cousins were working on a small family-run plot in Shan state. They'd just left to dig for sweet potatoes when the father of one of the boys heard a blast. He rushed to help but was too late. They'd been killed instantly. They'd triggered a mine.

The father, 47, tears up when he returns to the fields.

"But it's my family's business, so I have to come to the farm to make a living," said the man, who spoke on condition of anonymity to protect himself and his relatives.

Many victims and families won't know who was responsible for the blasts — the Tatmadaw or anti-military groups.

A member of a militia that operates in Sagaing said his group has removed nearly 100 mines thought to be planted by the military and plans to reuse them to augment its arsenal of homemade devices.

"A mine is an indispensable weapon to attack the enemy," said the member, who spoke by phone on condition of anonymity over the sensitive information and fear the military would retaliate against his family.

One man in Myanmar's western Chin state described how soldiers took him, his pregnant wife and their 5-year-old daughter captive, making them and 10 other civilians walk ahead, beating them with rifles if they refused.

"I thought: 'Today is the day I die,'" said the man, who also spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. They escaped — no mines detonated during their march.

Landmine Monitor documented similar incidents in other states, calling it a "grave violation of international humanitarian and human rights law."

Myanmar and Russia were the only states documented to have used mines in 2022, according to Landmine Monitor.

The group has also confirmed the military has been increasingly mining infrastructure such as mobile phone towers and power lines to deter attacks. Military-planted mines also are protecting at least two major Chinese-backed projects — a copper mine in Sagaing and a pipeline pumping station in northeastern Shan state that is part of China's Belt and Road initiative, Moser-Puangsuwan said.

"We are not aware of the situation you mentioned," a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to the AP in a fax. "The cooperation project between China and Myanmar is in line with the common interests of both sides and has brought tangible benefits to the people of Myanmar."

It made no reference to any of those who'd been maimed.  
MDT/AP

PUTIN'S WAR

# Biden in Ukraine ahead of war anniversary: 'Kyiv stands'

EVAN VUCCI, KYIV

**P**RESIDENT Joe Biden made an unannounced visit yesterday to Ukraine to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a gesture of solidarity that comes days before the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of the country.

Speaking alongside Zelenskyy at Mariinsky Palace, Biden recalled the fears nearly a year ago that Russia's invasion forces might quickly take the Ukrainian capital. "One year later, Kyiv stands," Biden said, jamming his finger for emphasis on his stand decorated with the U.S. and Ukrainian flags. "And Ukraine stands. Democracy stands. The Americans stand with you and the world stands with you."

The Ukraine visit comes at a crucial moment in the war as Biden looks to keep allies unified in their support for Ukraine as the war is expected to intensify with both sides preparing for spring offensives. Zelenskyy is pressing allies to speed up delivery of pledged weapon systems and is calling on the West to deliver fighter jets to Ukraine — something that Biden to date has declined to do.

In Kyiv, Biden announced an additional half-billion dollars in U.S. assistance, including shells for howitzers, anti-tank missiles, air surveillance radars and other aid but no new advanced weaponry.

Zelenskyy said he and Biden spoke about "long range weapons and the weapons that may still be supplied to Ukraine even though it wasn't supplied before." But he did not detail any new commitments.

Biden also got a short firsthand taste of the terror that Ukrainians have lived with for close to a year, as air raids sirens howled over the capital just as he and Zelenskyy were exiting the gold-domed St. Michael's Cathedral, which they visited together. Looking solemn, they continued unperturbed as they laid a wreath and held a moment of silence at the Wall of Remembrance honoring Ukrainian soldiers killed



President Joe Biden (center) shakes hands with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as they pose with Olena Zelenska, at Mariinsky Palace during an unannounced visit in Kyiv

since 2014.

Biden's mission with his visit to Kyiv, which comes ahead of a scheduled trip to Warsaw, Poland, is to underscore that the United States is prepared to stick with Ukraine "as long as it takes" to repel Russian forces even as public opinion polling suggests that U.S. and allied support for providing weaponry and direct economic assistance has started to soften. For Zelenskyy, the symbolism of having the U.S. president stand side by side with him on Ukrainian land as the anniversary nears is no small thing as he prods the U.S. and European allies to provide more advanced weaponry and to step up the pace of delivery.

"I thought it was critical that there not be any doubt, none whatsoever, about U.S. support for Ukraine in the war," Biden said.

The visit gave Biden an opportunity to get a firsthand look at the devastation the Russian invasion has caused on Ukraine. Thousands of Ukrainian troops and civilians have been killed, millions of refugees have fled the war, and Ukraine has suffered tens of billions of dollars of infrastructure damage.

Biden's visit also marked an act of defiance against

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who had hoped his military would swiftly overrun Kyiv within days. A year later, the Ukrainian capital stands and a semblance of normalcy has returned to the city as the fighting has concentrated in the country's east, punctuated by cruise missile and drone attacks against military and civilian infrastructure.

Though Western surface-to-air missile systems have bolstered Ukraine's defenses, the visit marked the rare occasion where a U.S. president has traveled to a conflict zone where the U.S. or its allies did not have control over the airspace. It wasn't immediately clear whether the U.S. had given advance notice of the trip to Moscow to avoid any miscalculation that could bring the two nuclear-armed nations into direct conflict.

The U.S. military does not have a presence in Ukraine other than a small detachment of Marines guarding the embassy in Kyiv, making Biden's visit more complicated than other recent visits by prior U.S. leaders to war zones.

Speculation has been building for weeks that Biden would pay a visit to Ukraine around the Feb. 24 anniversary of the Russian inva-

sion. But the White House repeatedly had said that no presidential trip to Ukraine was planned, even after the Poland visit was announced earlier this month.

Since early morning many main streets and central blocks in Kyiv were cordoned without any official explanation. Later people started sharing videos of long motorcades of cars driving along the streets where the access was restricted.

At the White House, planning for Biden's visit to Kyiv was tightly held — with a relatively small group of aides briefed on the plans — because of security concerns.

Asked by a reporter on Friday if Biden might include stops beyond Poland, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby replied, "Right now, the trip is going to be in Warsaw." Moments later — and without prompting — Kirby added, "I said 'right now.' The trip will be in -- to Warsaw. I didn't want to make it sound like I was alluding to a change to it."

Biden quietly departed from Joint Base Andrews near Washington shortly after 4 a.m. on Sunday, making a stop at Ramstein Air Base in Germany before making his way into Ukraine. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1972 NIXON MAKES HISTORIC VISIT TO CHINA



The American President Richard Nixon has arrived in China at the start of a week-long summit aimed at ending 20 years of frosty relations between the two countries.

His visit began with an unexpected audience with Chairman Mao Zedong at the leader's home. Few details have been released, but officials said the one-hour meeting involved a "serious and frank discussion".

After a modest reception at Peking airport, the president was formally welcomed at a lavish banquet held in the Great Hall of the People and hosted by Prime Minister Chou En-lai.

Mr Chou described Mr Nixon's long journey to China as a "positive move" responding to the wishes of the peoples of both countries.

He hinted at the years of tension between China and the United States - largely due to American support for nationalists in Taiwan - and credited both governments for "common efforts" to open the gate to better contacts at last.

The president responded positively. "There is no reason for us to be enemies," he said. "Neither of us seeks the territory of the other; neither of us seeks domination over the other; neither of us seeks to stretch out our hands and rule the world."

Using one of Mao's own quotations, Mr Nixon said it was time to seize the day and seize the hour "for our two peoples to rise to the heights of greatness which can build a new and better world".

There followed an elaborate round of toasts, in which the 800 guests at the banquet wandered from table to table clinking thimble-sized glasses containing Chinese firewater.

Commentators said the elaborate banquet was in marked contrast to the coolness of the president's reception at the airport.

This historic visit was engineered by the president's national security adviser, Dr Henry Kissinger, during two visits to China last year. It is part of a policy of rapprochement aimed at restoring diplomatic relations between the two sides.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The BBC carried extended news bulletins of President Nixon's ground-breaking visit to China - which included a walk along the Great Wall. The Chinese people eagerly followed news of the visit and newspapers rapidly sold out. The main diplomatic achievement of the visit was the Shanghai joint communiqué which declared Taiwan to be part of China. Formal diplomatic relations were restored between the US and China in 1979 following a second communiqué which suggested a further weakening of US ties with Taiwan. However, in the years since, Taiwan has remained a sticking point in relations. Different US administrations have chosen to maintain links with Taiwan by selling arms. President Bill Clinton attempted to persuade China to improve its human rights record by offering better trading conditions. In February 2002, President George Bush visited China to mark the 30th anniversary of Nixon's historic trip. The two countries continue to disagree over Taiwan.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**



**ARIES**

**Mar. 21-Apr. 19**

This is a wonderful day to look into courses or hobbies that interest you. Opportunities to get involved in self-improvement projects will be rewarding.



**TAURUS**

**Apr. 20-May. 20**

Don't let any money slip through your fingers today. You can make new friends and get involved in new hobbies successfully. Spend time with friends and relatives.



**GEMINI**

**May. 21-Jun. 21**

Watch your weight gain due to water retention. Educational pursuits can bring interesting, helpful people. You will gain a lot if you listen.



**CANCER**

**Jun. 22-Jul. 22**

Do not react too harshly when dealing with partners. Your philanthropic contributions will bring you praise. Do not let them blow situations out of proportion.



**LEO**

**Jul. 23-Aug. 22**

Do not get involved with individuals who are already committed to others. You can get ahead if you are willing to take a partner.



**VIRGO**

**Aug. 23-Sep. 22**

You may jump from the frying pan into the fire if you make a move today. You are better off visiting friends or relatives than entertaining at home.



**LIBRA**

**Sep. 23-Oct. 22**

Uncertainties about your personal life are probable. Travel will be most enticing. Consider a cruise. Don't rely on others to handle the workload.



**SCORPIO**

**Oct. 23-Nov. 21**

You may not be too pleased with the actions of those you live with. You have been going through a period of change that has caused problems for you with your loved ones.



**SAGITTARIUS**

**Nov. 22-Dec. 21**

You may need to make a few alterations to your living arrangements. Someone you live with may feel totally neglected. Control your emotions and everything will fall into place.



**CAPRICORN**

**Dec. 22-Jan. 19**

You won't have much time for your mate today. Don't let your personal dilemmas interfere with your goals. Take time to deal with authority figures or government agencies.



**AQUARIUS**

**Jan. 20-Feb. 18**

Your best gains will come through helping others emotionally. Money can be made if you use your ingenuity. Don't lend or borrow.

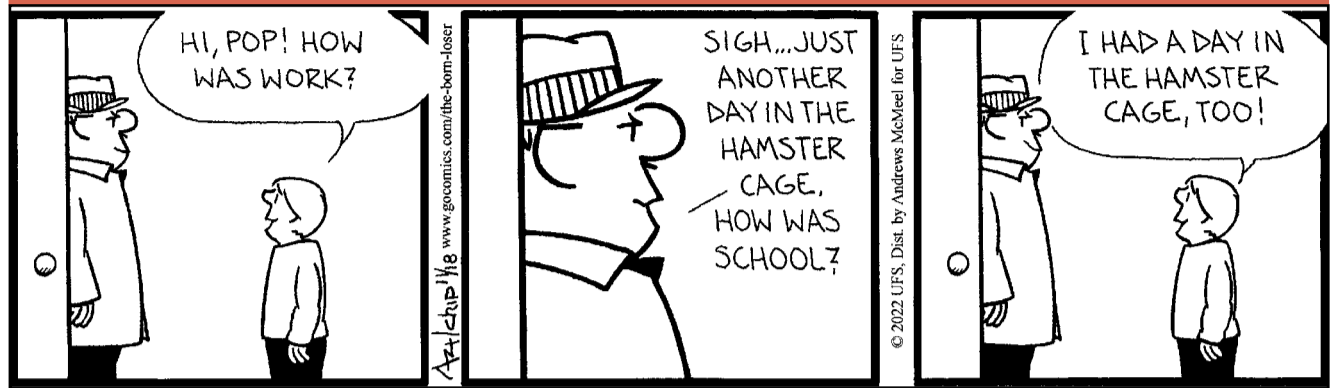


**PISCES**

**Feb. 19-Mar. 20**

You are going through a period of questioning. Don't expect the whole family to be overjoyed. Your involvement in interest groups may bring you popularity.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

**EASY**

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

**EASY+**

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

**MEDIUM**

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

**HARD**

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

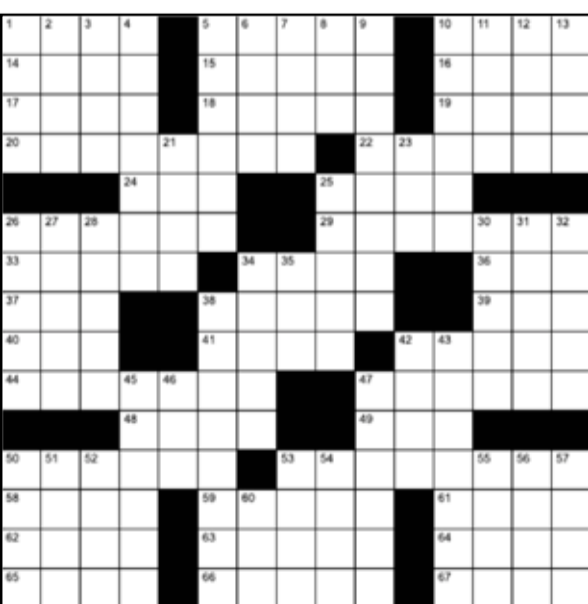
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	-6	4	cloudy
Changchun	-16	-3	fine
Chengdu	9	10	rain
Chongqing	9	12	rain
Fuzhou	8	13	cloudy
Guangzhou	12	22	fine
Guiyang	5	7	rain
Haikou	15	21	cloudy
Hangzhou	3	10	cloudy
Harbin	-20	-5	fine
Hefei	1	6	overcast
Nanjing	1	6	cloudy
Shanghai	4	7	cloudy
Taipei	12	14	rain
Wuhan	1	9	fine
Hong Kong	15	19	fine
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-16	-10	cloudy
Frankfurt	3	11	cloudy
Paris	7	14	fog
London	5	12	cloudy
New York	1	9	showers

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS** 1- Toward the mouth; 5- Civil rights org.; 10- Identical; 14- Speck; 15- Come about; 16- Trudge; 17- Greek temple; 18- Trio; 19- Grasp; 20- Begin; 22- Like a professor's jacket; 24- Perform; 25- Celestial body; 26- Probably; 29- Smart aleck; 33- Coming down; 34- It's got you covered; 36- Mimic; 37- 100 square meters; 38- Weeping; 39- Spy novelist Deighton; 40- \_\_\_-mo; 41- Rampant; 42- Blessed \_\_\_; 44- Jewish house of worship; 47- To-do list; 48- \_\_\_ Crunch; 49- Hole number?; 50- Adventurous expedition; 53- Animal that hunts; 58- Got older; 59- Assert as a fact; 61- Zip; 62- Java neighbor; 63- Trunk line; 64- Faucet problem; 65- Actress Raines; 66- "Arabesque" actress; 67- Work without \_\_\_;

**DOWN** 1- Old Dodge model; 2- Horse of mixed color; 3- Yours, in Tours; 4- Remove spots; 5- Write down; 6- Zwei cubed; 7- Farm measure; 8- Stage signal; 9- Beautify; 10- Globe; 11- Burn balm; 12- Shape; 13- Small whirlpool; 21- Gross; 23- Has been; 25- Cursed; 26- Copper and zinc alloy; 27- Ahead of time; 28- Rest atop; 30- Ancient physician; 31- Overtune; 32- Gossipmonger; 34- Monarch's rule; 35- Bumbler; 38- Hot and humid; 42- Crikey!; 43- Porch; 45- Former French colony of North America; 46- Long-jawed fish; 47- Tarzan, e.g.; 50- Kemo \_\_\_; 51- I've Got \_\_\_ in Kalamazoo; 52- Cut down; 53- Henry VIII's sixth; 54- Confirmation, e.g.; 55- Mountain lake; 56- "Garfield" canine; 57- Deeply moved; 60- John in England;



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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FILM

# 'ALL QUIET' WINS SEVEN BAFTAS, INCLUDING BEST FILM, AT UK AWARDS

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

**A**NTIWAR German movie "All Quiet on the Western Front" won seven prizes, including best picture, at the British Academy Film Awards on Sunday, building the somber drama's momentum as awards season rolls toward its climax at next month's Oscars.

Irish tragicomedy "The Banshees of Inisherin" and rock biopic "Elvis" took four prizes each.

"All Quiet," a visceral depiction of life and death in the World War I trenches based on Erich Maria Remarque's classic novel, won Edward Berger the best director award. Its other trophies included adapted screenplay, cinematography, best score, best sound and best film not in English.

Austin Butler was a surprise best actor winner for "Elvis." Baz Luhrmann's flamboyant musical also won trophies for casting, costume design and hair and makeup. Cate Blanchett won the best actress prize for orchestral drama "Tár."

Martin McDonagh's "Banshees," the bleakly comic story of a friendship gone sour, was named best British film.

"Best what award?" joked McDonagh of the film, which was shot in Ireland with a largely Irish cast and crew. It has British funding, and McDonagh was born in Britain to Irish parents.

"Banshees" also won for McDonagh's original screenplay, and awards for Kerry Condon as best supporting actress and Barry Keoghan for best supporting actor.



Cate Blanchett (Best Actress) was one of the big winners of the 76th British Academy Film Awards

The prizes — officially the EE BAFTA Film Awards — are Britain's equivalent of Hollywood's Academy Awards and will be watched closely for hints of who may win at the Oscars on March 12.

Madcap metaverse romp "Everything Everywhere All at Once," the Academy Awards front-runner, was the night's big loser, winning just one prize from its 10 BAFTA nominations, for editing.

Actor Richard E. Grant was a suave and self-deprecating host — with support from TV presenter Alison Hammond — for the ceremony at London's Royal Festival Hall, where the U.K.'s movie academy heralded its strides to become more diverse but said there was more to be done.

Grant joked in his opening monologue about the infamous altercation between Will Smith and Chris Rock at last year's Os-

cars. "Nobody on my watch gets slapped tonight," he said. "Except on the back."

Guests and presenters walking the red carpet on the south bank of the River Thames included Colin Farrell, Ana de Armas, Eddie Redmayne, Brian Cox, Florence Pugh, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Cynthia Erivo, Julianne Moore and Lily James.

Heir to the throne Prince William, who is president of Britain's film and television academy, was in the audience alongside his wife, Kate. William wore a tuxedo with black velvet jacket, while Kate dressed in a floor-length Alexander McQueen dress that she also wore to the 2019 BAFTAs.

Helen Mirren paid tribute to William's grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, who died in September. Mirren, who portrayed the

late monarch onscreen in "The Queen" and onstage in "The Audience," called Elizabeth "the nation's leading lady."

Britain's film academy introduced changes to increase the awards' diversity in 2020, when no women were nominated as best director for the seventh year running and all 20 nominees in the lead and supporting performer categories were white.

This year there were 11 female directors up for awards across all categories, including documentary and animated films. But just one of the main best-director nominees was female: Gina Prince-Bythewood for "The Woman King."

BAFTA chair Krishnendu Majumdar said the academy's soul-searching had been "a necessary and humbling process." He said the "vital work of levelling the

playing field" would continue.

"West Side Story" star Ariana DeBose opened the show by performing "Sisters are Doin' it for Themselves," with an added rap shoutout to some of the nominated women, including Blanchett, Michelle Yeoh and Viola Davis.

Blanchett said it had been "an extraordinary year for female performers. To be counted among them is really special."

It was a strong year for Irish actors at the BAFTAs, with Deryl McCormack up for the BAFTA Rising Star award — though he lost out to Emma Mackey — and Condon, Keoghan, Farrell and Brendan Gleeson all getting acting nominations for "Banshees."

McCormack hailed the event as "the Irish BAFTAs."

"It is a small country, but to see the talent that comes out of it is quite amazing," he said.

Writer-director Charlotte Wells won the prize for best British debut for the affecting father-daughter drama "Aftersun." Three-time Oscar winner Sandy Powell became the first costume designer to be awarded the academy's top honor, the BAFTA fellowship.

The harsh world outside showbiz intruded on the awards when Bulgarian journalist Christo Grozev, who works for investigative website Bellingcat, said he was now allowed to attend the awards because of a risk to public security. He features in "Navalny," a film about jailed Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny that won the best documentary BAFTA.

Jamie Lee Curtis, a supporting actress nominee for "Everything Everywhere," said the chance awards season provides to celebrate cinema was more important than who wins.

"It's a moment of celebration in the midst of everything," Curtis told The Associated Press on the red carpet. "It's hard out there. Everywhere. All at once. All the time." **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS

### 'The Night of Stars Concert' rocks The Venetian Macao



Presented by The Venetian Macao, "The Night of Stars Concert" was staged at Cotai Arena on Feb. 18.

The concert opened with the famous Cantopop diva Sammi Cheng, who

performed some of her greatest hits including "Eyebrow Dance," "Love for the Believer," and "Beautiful Life." Next, talented singer William So presented a range of classics such as

"Sad Kiss" and "Who". Singer-songwriter WeiBird captured the hearts of fans with signature Wei-style love songs "If I could", "Most Important Person in the World" and more.

Famed Cantopop singer Pakho Chau and emerging singers Cloud Wan and Janees Wong took fans through a musical journey with popular songs including "A Boat on the Ocean", "Wings of Desire" and "Across the Ocean to See You".

Finally, the night of entertainment ended with Hong Kong band Dear Jane's 2022 hits including "What Happened" and "Inno Per Gli Sconfitti".

### Chinese Great Wall Motors debuts ORA EV line in Macau



Great Wall Motors of China, as represented by Incheape Group plc in the Greater China Region, opened its pop-up showroom over

the weekend for the ORA electric vehicle brand at the Nova Mall in Taipa. ORA's Funky Cat 300 and 400 pro will be on show.

Smart drive-assist system is the core attraction of the brand. For example, when the car needs to be reversed, the 360-degree camera system will display the surroundings in the in-car monitor. The car can even automatically reverse to the desired position following pre-recorded routes. With this, the car can auto-park.

Among the awards ORA has attained is the 2022 Best in Class award accredited by the European New Car Assessment Programme. Great Wall Motors disclosed that ORA is on sale in several countries, such as Germany, the UK, Sweden, Malaysia and Australia.

FOOTBALL

# Champions League greats Liverpool and Real Madrid collide

JAMES ROBSON, MANCHESTER

Wednesday, 4:00  
Liverpool v Real Mad  
H 2.35, D 3.64, A 3.15

ODDSCHECKER.COM

**W**ITH 20 Champions League titles between them, Liverpool vs. Real Madrid is a meeting of two European soccer greats.

Their round-of-16 match at Anfield today [Wednesday, 4:00am] is also a repeat of last year's final in Paris, which saw Madrid win the competition for a record-extending 14th time after producing a series of improbable comebacks just to make it to the European showpiece at the Stade de France.

"I still shake my head and scratch my head," said former England coach and BT Sport analyst Glenn Hoddle. "I covered every one of those games and I still don't know



AP PHOTO

how they won it. They were out."

Madrid secured come-from-behind wins against Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Manchester City in each of the knockout rounds before beating Liverpool 1-0 in the final.

"They were like a boxer, they

were up against the ropes and they were halfway down the ropes and you're thinking the ref's going to step in and stop the bout," Hoddle said. "I don't know what happened, they just kept going. And they had that quality."

Where the Champions League

is concerned anything seems possible for Madrid, which won the trophy three years in a row from 2016-18 at a time when Barcelona was dominating the Spanish title.

But if any team can rival Madrid's ability to produce the unexpected in European club soccer's most prized competition, it is Liverpool.

There was the famous comeback from 3-0 down against AC Milan in the 2005 final before going on to win on penalties. And more recently the 4-3 aggregate win against Barcelona in the semifinals in 2019 after losing 3-0 in the first leg at the Nou Camp.

Madrid, however, has felt like a step too far ever since the draw was made last November.

After all, this is a Liverpool team that faces a fight just to qualify for next season's competition, let alone win it this year.

Jurgen Klopp has struggled to get his team firing after the depar-

ture of key forward Sadio Mane to Bayern Munich last summer and a host of injuries.

Ahead of the first-leg match at Anfield, Klopp can at least be encouraged by a recent upturn in form after back-to-back wins against Everton and Newcastle in the Premier League and goals from misfiring forwards Cody Gakpo and Darwin Nunez.

Suddenly Liverpool looks in contention again for a Champions League-qualifying spot, sitting seven points off fourth place Tottenham with two games in hand.

Then there is the Anfield factor, with an atmosphere that saw Barcelona wilt in that semifinals comeback and Manchester City repeatedly fall despite dominating English soccer in recent years.

Like Madrid's fans, the Liverpool crowd believes nothing is beyond their team when it comes to Europe after winning the trophy six times.

Joe Cole played for and against Liverpool and was part of a Chelsea team that lost in the semifinals at Anfield in 2005 and 2007.

"It's a huge club. It's as big a club in world football as any and it's got an expectancy and the fans drive it," said the BT Sport analyst. "In the ground they turn up for their team. It's a sight to behold to play for or against them." **MDT/AP**

AD

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OPINION

China Daily  
Editorial, China Daily

'GUARDRAILS'  
MUSTN'T BE AT COST  
OF CHINESE SECURITY

Wang Yi, director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, had "an unofficial engagement" with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the 59th Munich Security Conference.

Besides clearly stating China's standpoint on the balloon issue, namely that the US abused military force in shooting down a harmless civilian balloon, Wang also said that "if the US continues to dramatize, hype up or escalate the situation, China will surely respond by doing what is necessary", while "all consequences arising thereof shall be borne by the US side".

More than half a month after a Chinese meteorological balloon was blown off course and inadvertently traversed the continental United States, US politicians are still hyping up the issue. That is only exacerbating the tensions that already existed between the US and China.

The hyper-uppers of the incident know very well the balloon was harmless. After sensationalizing media reports blew up the balloon into a "spy" story, the North American Aerospace Defense Command issued a statement saying that its commander, General Glen Van Herck, "assesses the balloon does not present a military or physical threat".

It is the hardline anti-China clique formed in Washington that has been using the balloon to demonize China. Such is the political correctness in Washington, that it is self-preservation for any US politician to hesitate before "defending China" on the balloon issue, even though its harmlessness and civilian use are both established facts.

US President Joe Biden in his remarks on the incident on Thursday made it clear that the shooting down of the balloon was political theater for the domestic audience. Having undoubtedly been briefed on the nature of the balloon and its force majeure entry into US airspace he declared "make no mistake, if any object presents a threat to the safety and security of the American people, I will take it down" — 9/11 is still a deep wound in the American psyche.

The US has obviously overreacted. But behind that overreaction and the anti-China consensus, is the US' conception of security, which it views as something that is based on the insecurity of others. Its concept of "security" is interpreted as "hegemony" in other nations' dictionaries.

The meteorological balloon has long been "taken down" by an F22. But the threats from the sky in the minds of US politicians and the US public remain.

Quite a few politicians in Washington have repeatedly called for the establishment of "guardrails" for US-China relations. But such guardrails should not be built to maintain US hegemony at the cost of China's security.

RECORD 6,542 GUNS INTERCEPTED  
AT US AIRPORT SECURITY IN 2022

THE  
BUZZ

The woman flying out of Philadelphia's airport last year remembered to pack snacks, prescription medicine and a cellphone in her handbag. But what was more important was what she forgot to unpack: a loaded .380-caliber handgun in a black holster.

The weapon was one of the 6,542 guns the U.S. Transportation Security Administration intercepted last year at airport checkpoints across the country.

The number — roughly 18 per day — was an all-time high for guns intercepted at U.S. airports, and is sparking concern at a time when more Americans are armed.

"What we see in our checkpoints really reflects what we're seeing in society, and in society there are more people carrying firearms nowadays," TSA administrator David Pekoske said.

With the exception of pandemic-disrupted 2020, the number of weapons intercepted at airport checkpoints has climbed every year since 2010.

Experts don't think this is an epidemic of would-be hijackers — nearly everyone caught claims to have forgotten they had a gun with them — but they emphasize the danger even one gun can pose in the wrong hands on a plane or at a checkpoint.

AP PHOTO



Maria Elena Ríos holds her saxophone at the National Autonomous University of Mexico music department, in Mexico City

MEXICAN MUSICIAN FINDS  
REFUGE IN SAXOPHONE  
AFTER ACID ATTACK

MARÍA VERZA,  
MEXICO CITY

MARÍA Elena Ríos has conflicting feelings about her saxophone: She once blamed the instrument for bringing her to the brink of death — but it also has been her salvation.

Ríos, 29, thought her career as a musician and her devotion to her saxophone were what led her former boyfriend — an influential politician — to hire the men who splashed acid onto her face and body, disfiguring her. Later, she learned he simply couldn't accept that she had broken off their relationship.

Some of the attackers and the ex-boyfriend are in jail, but Ríos still had to come to terms with her instrument. Her love of the saxophone, in the end, is helping heal the psychological scars left by the terrifying attack.

"We are reconciling, little by little," Ríos said of the musical instrument. "I hated it, because I thought it was responsible" for the 2019 attack in Mexico's southern state of Oaxaca. She's performed live since then, but still wears a mask covering her lower face.

"It bothered my attacker a lot that I was a musician," Ríos recounts, "because he said we musicians were vagrants,

poverty stricken, that we just took drugs and that when I went to concerts I probably participated in orgies."

The ex-politician who allegedly ordered the attack is being held in jail while awaiting trial, as are two other men, but another remains at large.

Meanwhile, Ríos has joined a movement calling for greater punishments for acid attacks and says the saxophone is her "sword" in that battle on behalf of victims.

Mexico City legislators have proposed a bill bearing her nickname, "Malena," which would classify acid attacks as a distinct, serious crime equivalent to attempted femicide. Currently they are treated as simple assault or bodily injury.

Acid attacks are most common in South Asia, but also have been documented in many other parts of the world, including Latin America.

The Carmen Sánchez Foundation, started in 2021 to highlight the issue in Mexico, says government health data from 2022 suggests more than 100 women were attacked by chemicals or some kind of corrosive agent, though only 28 were reported to authorities.

Ríos remembers having to choose, at age 9, between playing soccer and joining one of the musical

bands that are a popular community activity in the rural villages in Oaxaca.

"I am not her anymore. I am not the beautiful young woman who played the saxophone anymore," said Ríos. "Today I can say I have been forced to become a defender of my own rights, and a defender of the rights of other fellow women survivors."

She was hospitalized for five months after the attack, and still recalls the sadness in her parents' eyes when she awoke in hospital.

She now attends musical classes in Mexico City, where she has taken refuge since the attack. The federal government has provided her with bodyguards because her attacker was wealthy and influential.

Ríos said she and her family were harassed before the attack, when she tried to break off the relationship. She says the harassment continues, and that she lives in constant fear for her life.

The man accused of ordering the attack, Juan Manuel Vera Carrizal, was a local legislator and businessman. He has declared himself innocent and his lawyers deny he had any involvement.

Even though he was jailed and expelled from his political party in 2020, Ríos says he still has influence. MDT/AP

AP PHOTO



Turkey U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday called for Sweden and Finland to be accepted into NATO "as quickly as possible," although his Turkish counterpart dismissed the possibility of any link between their accession and Turkey's request for F-16 fighter jets. Turkey has delayed the Nordic countries admission to the trans-Atlantic defense alliance, citing concerns over terrorism.

AP PHOTO



United Arab Emirates Russia offered weapons for sale yesterday at a biennial arms fair in the United Arab Emirates, ranging from Kalashnikov assault rifles to missile systems — despite facing sanctions from the West over its war on Ukraine. The event, held in Abu Dhabi, underscores how the Gulf Arab federation has sought to embrace Moscow while balancing its ties to the West.

AP PHOTO



Israel's government yesterday was pressing ahead with a contentious plan to overhaul the country's legal system, despite an unprecedented uproar that has included mass protests, warnings from military and business leaders and calls for restraint by the United States. Thousands of demonstrators were expected to gather outside the parliament, or Knesset, for a second straight week to rally against the plan.

AP PHOTO



UK South Korean star Son Heung-min was subjected to "utterly reprehensible" online racist abuse, Tottenham said yesterday [Macau time]. The Premier League club called for social media companies to take action after Son was targeted during the 2-0 win against West Ham. The forward scored four minutes after coming on as a second-half substitute.